



**Corporation of the County of Wellington**  
**Economic Development Committee**  
**Minutes**

November 29, 2022  
County Administration Centre  
Guthrie Room

Present                      Warden Andy Lennox  
                                 Councillor Jeff Duncan (Chair)  
                                 Councillor Diane Ballantyne  
                                 Councillor Matthew Bulmer

Regrets:                      Councillor Doug Breen

Also Present:                Councillor Campbell Cork  
                                 Councillor Steve O'Neill  
                                 Jesse Gault, Reporter, Guelph Today

Staff:                        Donna Bryce, County Clerk  
                                 Jana Burns, Wellington Place Administrator  
                                 Justine Dainard, Smart Cities Project Manager  
                                 Ken DeHart, County Treasurer  
                                 Scott Wilson, CAO

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**1.      Call to Order**

At 10:00 am, the Chair called the meeting to order.

With unanimous consent, Items 3 and 4 were added to the agenda.

**2.      Declaration of Pecuniary Interest**

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

**3. Delegation:**

3.1 Kristel Manes, Executive Director, Business Centre Guelph-Wellington

1/9/22

**Moved by:** Councillor Ballantyne

**Seconded by:** Councillor Bulmer

That the presentation by Kristel Manes, Executive Director, Business Centre Guelph-Wellington regarding an overview of programmes and services provided be received for information

**Carried**

**4. Councillor George Bridge County Economic Development Award Update - Verbal**

2/9/22

**Moved by:** Warden Lennox

**Seconded by:** Councillor Ballantyne

That Economic Development staff be directed to bring back to the Economic Development Committee several options around establishing an annual George Bridge County Economic Development Award.

**Carried**

**5. Economic Development Financial Statements as of October 31, 2022**

3/9/22

**Moved by:** Councillor Bulmer

**Seconded by:** Councillor Ballantyne

That the Economic Development Financial Statements as of October 31, 2022 be approved.

**Carried**

**6. Economic Development 2023 User Fees and Charges**

4/9/22

**Moved by:** Warden Lennox

**Seconded by:** Councillor Ballantyne

That the 2023 User Fees and Charges for Economic Development be approved.

**Carried**

**7. Preliminary 2023-2032 Ten-Year Plan: Economic Development**

5/9/22

**Moved by:** Warden Lennox

**Seconded by:** Councillor Bulmer

That the preliminary 2023-2032 Economic Development capital budget forecast and major operating budget impacts as set out in the report be endorsed and forwarded to the Administration, Finance and Human Resources Committee for inclusion in the County of Wellington's Preliminary Ten-Year Plan.

**Carried**

**8. November 2022 Economic Development Update**

6/9/22

**Moved by:** Warden Lennox

**Seconded by:** Councillor Ballantyne

That the Economic Development Committee approve the Economic Development November 2022 Report.

**Carried**

Staff was directed to review the inclusion of Instagram in the County's Social Media programme.

**9. Smart Cities Office - November 2022 Update**

7/9/22

**Moved by:** Councillor Ballantyne

**Seconded by:** Warden Lennox

That the Economic Development Committee receive the November 2022 Smart Cities Office report for information.

**Carried**

**10. County BR + E Municipal Implementation Fund**

8/9/22

**Moved by:** Warden Lennox

**Seconded by:** Councillor Bulmer

That the Economic Development Committee approve the 2022 BR+E Municipal Implementation Fund for the Townships of Centre Wellington, Mapleton and Puslinch.

**Carried**

**11. Economic Development Three-Year Plan**

9/9/22

**Moved by:** Councillor Bulmer

**Seconded by:** Councillor Ballantyne

That the Economic Development Three-Year Plan be received for information.

**Carried**



**12. Adjournment**

At 11:50 am, the Chair adjourned the meeting until January 17, 2023 or at the call of the Chair.

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Jeff Duncan  
Chair  
Economic Development Committee



## COUNTY OF WELLINGTON 2023 USER FEES AND CHARGES

Programme/Service:	<b>Economic Development</b>
Department:	Museum and Archives
Governance:	Economic Development Committee

Description	2022 fee	2023 fee	% change	HST (add/incl/na)
<b>Directional Tourism Signage Programme</b>				
<b>Wellington County Businesses</b>				
Option 1: Lump Sum Payment (3-Year Contract)	\$750 less 10% early payment discount	\$750 less 10% early payment discount	0%	Add
Option 2: Annual Payment Plan (3-Year Contract)	\$250	\$250	0%	Add
<b>Out of County Businesses</b>				
Option 1: Lump Sum Payment (3-Year Contract)	\$900 less 10% early payment discount	\$900 less 10% early payment discount	0%	Add
Option 2: Annual Payment Plan (3-Year Contract)	\$300	\$300	0%	Add

**Notes:**

Authority to impose fees and charges is set out in Part XII of the Municipal Act, S.O. 2001, c. 25 and in by-law #5597-18 of the Corporation of the County of Wellington.



# COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

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## COMMITTEE REPORT

**To:** Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee  
**From:** Ken DeHart, County Treasurer  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 29, 2022  
**Subject:** **Preliminary 2023-2032 Ten-Year Plan: Economic Development**

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### **Background:**

This forecast provides a high-level view of major budget issues and planned capital investments and serves as a guide for departments in preparing their detailed current year operating and capital budgets. The preliminary corporate ten-year plan will be considered by the Administration, Finance and Human Resources Committee on November 29, 2022 and the forecast will be updated at the time the budget is approved early in the New Year.

### **Major Operating Budget Impacts**

Staff are in the process of compiling the detailed 2023 operating budgets for each department. Major items expected to be reflected in the 2023 Economic Development Operating Budget include the following:

#### **Economic Development**

Staffing changes includes moving the Talent Attraction position from part-time to full-time as the vacancy for the position has been recently filled. The position has up to this point been fully funded through the IRCC programme, this change will result in 40% of the staffing cost being allocated through Economic Development going forward, with a budget impact of \$27,000 in 2023.

#### **Smart Cities**

The Smart Cities programme is continuing work on projects proposed when funding was first approved as well as additional initiatives that have been identified as the programme has evolved. The budgeted expenditures look to utilize the anticipated remaining funding available as 2023 marks the final year of the programme. The Smart Cities Project Manager position has been extended through to the end of 2023 in order to carry out the programme initiatives. The cost to the County remains staffing and related costs that have been in place throughout the existence of the programme and will cease as of the end of 2023.

#### **Ride Well**

The Ride Well provincial funding is set to end in March 2025. The contract with the service and software provider RideCo is set to end in October 2023. Staff are undertaking a service review with Dillon Consulting which will be completed in 2023 (\$22,000). The will review will consider the overall service and investigate alternative service models. While the ridesharing model was significantly impacted during COVID, ridership has steadily increased up to circa 550 rides monthly. Passenger revenue and contract costs have been adjusted down by \$18,000 and \$39,700 respectively based on experience to date in 2022, as well as anticipated use of the service in 2023. These changes result in a no net levy change for the service in 2023 as they are offset by the cost of the service review.

## Activities proposed throughout the 2023-2032 period

- **Talent Attraction** (\$20,000) – in its endeavour to tackle the shrinking labour force challenges in the County of Wellington, the Talent Attraction programme aims to draw in potential workforce by organizing an array of events, workshops and promotional activities starting 2023 to 2032 working with a budget of \$20,000 per year. Some of the prominent ones being annual summer multicultural festival with a goal of creating inclusiveness and belonging. Employer engagement events such as job fairs and networking events. Speed mentoring, diversity, equity and inclusion as well as employability skills training sessions to better equip our employers and amplify the County's top employer job vacancies. Co-create town attraction initiatives along with Tourism and community partners with the goal of newcomer settlement in rural communities.
- Funding for the countywide **Community Improvement Programme** (\$160,000) for local municipalities is maintained throughout the forecast under the transfer payments line. This budget line has been well underspent for a number of years. The 2023 budget includes an offsetting transfer from the Contingency and Stabilization reserve of \$80,000 in order to fund a portion of the programme should funding of projects exceed \$80,000 in a given year. This is intended to keep the total budget available for the programme, while recognizing the historical surpluses. It should reduce or eliminate potential variances going forward.
- **Invest Ready – Tax Increment Equivalent Grant (TIEG):** As part of the Community Improvement Programme, the County began participation in member municipalities' Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Programmes starting in 2019 and will provide the final funding amount of approximately \$15,000 in 2023.
- **Business Retention and Expansion Local Implementation Fund** (\$175,000) – will provide the County's local municipalities the opportunity to access funding for the direct execution of BR+E recommendations for activities that enhance the local economies.
- **Business Support Agency Funding** (\$97,500) – the County funds agencies upon receiving an agreed upon annual review of services and events to support our local economy. Agencies include; the Business Centre Guelph Wellington, Innovation Guelph, local Community Futures Development Organizations, LaunchIt Minto and the Western Ontario Warden's Caucus project.

## Capital

- Rural Broadband Improvements: The County continues its commitment of \$4.0 million over five years (starting in 2021) to complete the gigabyte fibre optic broadband buildout. The project will be funded by the General Capital Reserve, which includes transfers of \$400,000 annually from the operating budget.

## Recommendation:

That the preliminary 2023-2032 Economic Development capital budget forecast and major operating budget impacts as set out in this report be endorsed and forwarded to the Administration, Finance and Human Resources Committee for inclusion in the County of Wellington's Preliminary Ten-Year Plan.

Respectfully submitted,



Ken DeHart, CPA, CGA  
County Treasurer



**COUNTY OF WELLINGTON**  
**10 YEAR OPERATING BUDGET AND TAX RATE FORECAST**  
**Economic Development**

	Approved 2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
<b>REVENUE</b>											
Grants & Subsidies	528,000	383,000	143,000	31,000							
User Fees & Charges	104,200	89,700	89,700	48,700	34,700	34,700	35,300	35,700	35,900	36,100	36,300
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>632,200</b>	<b>472,700</b>	<b>232,700</b>	<b>79,700</b>	<b>34,700</b>	<b>34,700</b>	<b>35,300</b>	<b>35,700</b>	<b>35,900</b>	<b>36,100</b>	<b>36,300</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>											
Salaries, Wages and Benefits	840,500	953,700	826,400	865,100	898,900	931,600	962,400	994,100	1,027,300	1,061,300	1,099,400
Supplies, Material & Equipment	143,300	39,700	27,200	27,700	28,200	28,700	29,300	30,400	31,200	31,800	32,400
Purchased Services	797,200	667,100	477,200	307,700	273,800	285,000	297,000	308,100	319,200	326,300	333,500
Transfer Payments	462,500	447,500	432,500	432,500	432,500	432,500	432,500	432,500	432,500	432,500	432,500
Insurance & Financial	15,200	17,200	15,000	15,800	16,400	17,000	17,600	18,300	18,900	19,600	20,400
Internal Charges	8,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>2,266,700</b>	<b>2,132,200</b>	<b>1,785,300</b>	<b>1,655,800</b>	<b>1,656,800</b>	<b>1,701,800</b>	<b>1,745,800</b>	<b>1,790,400</b>	<b>1,836,100</b>	<b>1,878,500</b>	<b>1,925,200</b>
<b>Net Operating Cost / (Revenue)</b>	<b>1,634,500</b>	<b>1,659,500</b>	<b>1,552,600</b>	<b>1,576,100</b>	<b>1,622,100</b>	<b>1,667,100</b>	<b>1,710,500</b>	<b>1,754,700</b>	<b>1,800,200</b>	<b>1,842,400</b>	<b>1,888,900</b>
yr/yr % change		1.5%	(6.4%)	1.5%	2.9%	2.8%	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%	2.3%	2.5%
<b>DEBT AND TRANSFERS</b>											
Transfer from Reserves		(80,000)	(80,000)	(80,000)	(80,000)	(80,000)	(80,000)	(80,000)	(80,000)	(80,000)	(80,000)
Transfer to Reserves	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000
<b>Total Debt and Transfers</b>	<b>400,000</b>	<b>320,000</b>	<b>320,000</b>	<b>320,000</b>	<b>320,000</b>	<b>320,000</b>	<b>320,000</b>	<b>320,000</b>	<b>320,000</b>	<b>320,000</b>	<b>320,000</b>
<b>TAX LEVY REQUIREMENT</b>											
	<b>2,034,500</b>	<b>1,979,500</b>	<b>1,872,600</b>	<b>1,896,100</b>	<b>1,942,100</b>	<b>1,987,100</b>	<b>2,030,500</b>	<b>2,074,700</b>	<b>2,120,200</b>	<b>2,162,400</b>	<b>2,208,900</b>
yr/yr % change		(2.7%)	(5.4%)	1.3%	2.4%	2.3%	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%	2.0%	2.2%

[illegible]



# COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

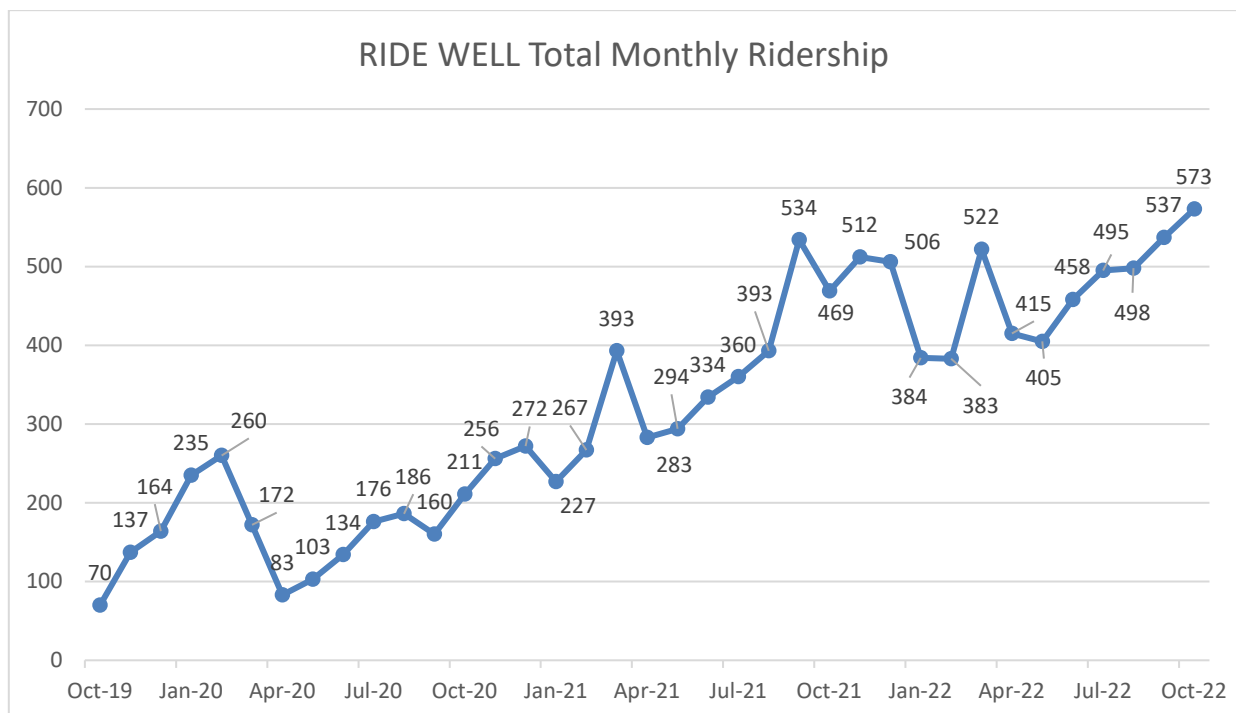
## COMMITTEE REPORT

**To:** Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee  
**From:** Jana Burns, Wellington Place Administrator  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 29, 2022  
**Subject:** Economic Development – November Report

### RIDE WELL Rural Transportation

RIDE WELL has continued its growth trajectory in September and October. September serviced 537 rides, while October saw 573 completed rides. These two months represent the highest monthly totals for the service to date. This was partly achieved by adding a fourth driver to the service, thus returning to a full roster in October.

Ridership data shows that despite 12 new riders joined the service last month, the increase is mainly due to the 88 existing users requesting rides more often. Average rides per user have increased, and while not substantiated, existing riders seem to be getting more comfortable with using the service regularly. Growth may also be a result of higher costs due to inflation and reduced alternative options in Wellington County. For example, Elliott Bus Lines no longer provides daily commuter service to Guelph, and Denny's Bus Lines only provides service between Guelph-Erin-Orangeville if there is sufficient demand. RIDE WELL has maintained its low price, which may be encouraging more people to use the service as fuel costs and inflation increase. The growth in the service is illustrated in the chart below.



Ridesharing has taken place consistently in 20% of rides, and is concentrated within Centre Wellington, and between Centre Wellington and Guelph.

The following table shows this type of monthly performance over the last quarter:

Month	Rides/ Bookings	Passengers /Seats	Unique users	New users	Average rides per user	Average Rides Per Day	New accounts registered
<b>August 2022</b>	498	512	88	13	5.7	22.6	53
<b>September 2022</b>	537	555	97	20	5.5	25.6	59
<b>October 2022</b>	573	588	88	12	6.7	28.7	41

In September, new RIDE WELL postcards were developed to quickly provide basic information about the service. So far, 1,000 postcards have been distributed to the local municipal offices, Victoria Park Senior Centre, RIDE WELL vehicles, and to Guelph-Owen Sound Transportation (GOST) buses. Distribution will continue into December across the County in effort to further spread the word about the service.

Radio Ads also continued through the month of October across all three Wellington County stations. To promote the service to youth, staff established a partnership with the Upper Grand District School Board's Continuing Education Programme. Youth between the ages of 15 and 29 will be able to use the service at a 20% discount to attend Continuing Education activities. Staff also continue to work with Dillon Consulting on the service review and are expecting a first draft in December.

#### **Community Improvement Programme (CIP)**

Congratulations to Reunion for completing their CIP in Puslinch. Reunion was approved for \$10,000 under the Invest MORE grant to renovate a vacant building, which was previously the Envers restaurant, in downtown Morriston.

The Creperie is owned by two long time restaurant owners from Oakville, who relocated their Creperie to Morriston, based on the customer proximity both east and west, in addition to the heritage building. Reunion is now open to the public, and photos of the renovation are below.



FACADE: BEFORE



FACADE: AFTER



In October, County staff received and approved an additional project submitted by Arthur Ace Hardware. This project will convert three vacant commercial units at 480 Smith St., Arthur, ON into a new hardware store. The project has been approved for \$2,500 for a full façade improvement.

In total, the County received six CIP applications resulting in \$30,000 in funding for businesses in 2022. This low number can be attributed to post-pandemic recovery (material costs and labour, general uncertainty), as well as limited marketing for the Programme, as it is currently in review.

### **Holiday Experiences and Shop Local Campaign**

The new [Holiday Happenings](#) in Wellington County campaign promotes local events, and experiences, and supports local businesses during the Holiday season. From Christmas tree farms and unique downtown shops to parades and winter events, locals and visitors can see what is happening in each community. Along with identifying a selection of outstanding retail businesses and made-in-Wellington-County products, this initiative recommends food and drink destinations to round out the experience and to support local restaurants.

Truly collaborative, staff created this campaign with input from municipal partners and leveraged activities and shop local initiatives created by local BIAs, Chambers, and other organizations from across the County. The campaign is marketed primarily via social media and supported through radio and print ads.



### **Taste Real Farmers' Market Boxes**

Following the success of the Summer Farmers' Market Box Series, staff worked with the eight local markets to curate a [Holiday Farmers' Market Box](#) featuring a selection of foods, beverages, and crafts from local businesses. The Holiday Box enjoyed unprecedented uptake and sold out in just days, prompting markets to double their original allocation of boxes. In total 202 boxes were sold within 10 days resulting in \$15,958 in additional sales for local businesses. The total revenue

received by businesses for this initiative in 2022 is a remarkable \$44,091 with all of it going directly to local businesses.

The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) has selected Wellington County as a recipient of a [2022 Excellence Silver Award for the Taste Real Market Box Series](#) in the Innovation Programmes and Initiatives category. The award honours organizations for exemplary economic development marketing campaigns, projects, and programmes. This recognition follows the provincial Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO) 2021 Award received for the Farmers' Market Box Series earlier this year.

### **Tourism Strategy Development**

Staff are working with Deloitte Ltd on developing a Wellington County Tourism Strategy. Forty tourism businesses and stakeholders from across Wellington County participated in an Industry Stakeholder workshop on October 17 for an opportunity to provide their insights and input into the Strategy. Additional outreach components include 10 tourism stakeholder interviews, two meetings with the Wellington County Economic Development Group, a consultation with the Regional Tourism Organization, Visit Guelph, and Elora Fergus Tourism, as well as a familiarization (FAM) visit. The strategy will be completed in January 2023.

### **Gin Trail**


Ontario's first Gin Trail launched in June of this year featuring six distilleries across Wellington, Waterloo, and Perth Counties. The trail is a collaborative tourism product, developed by representatives of the Regional Tourism Organization 4 (RTO 4), Elora Fergus Tourism, the Elora Distilling Company, and County Economic Development. On October 17, staff facilitated a planning meeting for participating distilleries and tourism partners in Elora to review successes and discuss future plans for the trail.

The trail has quickly gained traction with provincial tourism partners, including Destination Ontario. The Gin Trail Passport has been selected to be displayed at five of their Tourism Information Centres. On November 16 and 17, a writer for the LCBO Food and Drink magazine visited all locations on the trail, exploring this new food tourism experience, with an article expected in Summer 2023.

### **Fall Rural Romp**

The [popular fall event](#) was held on September 24 showcasing 19 farm and food businesses throughout Centre and Southern Wellington County. The self guided tour included farms, farmers' markets, a brewery, a cidery, a distillery, a coffee roastery, a patisserie, and the Bradford Whitcomb Green Legacy Nursery. The event aims to connect locals and visitors with local food businesses and create an outstanding rural tourism experience.

Feedback collected shows visitor numbers varying by type of business and location, averaging at about 80 visitors and sales of up to \$4,000.



# Holiday Happenings in **Wellington County**

Discover Wellington County's many  
festive season highlights - from  
outstanding Holiday shopping to  
Christmas tree farms and local events.

**Explore all the exciting holiday  
happenings for each community.**

[www.experiencewellington.ca](http://www.experiencewellington.ca)



Spend an October weekend travelling along one of the province's butter tart trails and learning more about this well-loved Ontario treat.

GRAHAM PAINE METROLAND FILE PHOTO

# A sweet weekend escape

Discover one of the province's butter tart trails for a fun day of exploring and a very delicious sugar high

KAREN KWAN  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

**About this series** Wheels wants to inspire you to explore. This series of day trips and longer drives highlight great experiences you can have in the province, and show you why Ontario is "Ours to Discover."

Butter tarts, those delicious, flaky pastries filled with buttery, sugary sweetness that you can find in most supermarkets and country general stores across Ontario, date back to more than a century. In fact, recipes for them can be found in cookbooks dating from the early 1900s.

Ontario's even got a couple of butter-tart trails, including one in Wellington County and a Kawartha-Northumberland version. For the ultimate autumn day trip, we opted to try the closer-to-Toronto trail in Wellington County and explored a handful of its 23 stops.

**In the morning** Leaving Toronto, head west on Highway 401 before driving north on Highway 410. From there, continue along Highway 10 before turning west onto Highway 24 toward Erin. Make Holtom's Bakery your first stop on your butter-tart experience.

This charming spot has a nostalgic, old-fashioned bakery esthetic. Its family recipes, with everything baked from scratch, have been passed down for generations. Once you've picked up some of its butter tarts, spend some time exploring Erin.

This quaint town, and the surrounding communities of Guelph and Rockwood, has a picturesque Hallmark-movie vibe — for example, it's not hard to imagine bumping into that old high school flame while visiting the corn mazes at Thatcher Farms Butcher Shop, Bakery & Farm Market or Strom's Farm & Bakery.

Head next to Belwood Country Market in Belwood, about a 30-minute drive west of Erin. This spot is renowned for its butter tarts — it sells upward of 270,000 of them each year — with choices ranging from plain to raisin and pecan.



GEOFF ROBINS METROLAND FILE PHOTO

Be sure to visit the Wellington County Museum and Archives in Fergus to learn more about the history of this part of southwestern Ontario.



Along with a corn maze to explore, you can also pick up a pumpkin for Halloween from Strom's Farm & Bakery in Guelph.

METROLAND  
FILE PHOTO

There are also several unique flavours, including Skor, Reese's Peanut, white-chocolate blueberry and coconut-raspberry, as well as seasonal options (think dark chocolate cranberry for Christmas and maple bacon around Canada Day).

**Around noon** Next up, make the short drive to downtown Fergus to visit The Red Door and pick up some gluten-free butter tarts for your friends who can't indulge in the traditional versions. Enter through the red door on the side of the building and be prepared to enjoy a delicious lunch. Its menu has options for everyone, including those on restricted diets, such as its dairy-free soup of the day or its vegetarian portobello mushroom sandwich.

**In the afternoon** After lunch, head over to the Wellington County Museum and Archives. This National Historic Site operated as a poor house in the late 1800s, providing shelter and a place of work for the homeless and destitute. Now a mu-

seum, it features nine galleries that share the stories of the people and places of Wellington County.

From the museum, head to Gerrie's Garden Centre and Farm Market in nearby Elora. It's the Mennonite-style market you wish you had in your neighbourhood for all of your grocery needs. Add some of their gluten-free tarts to your cart and while you're there, pick up some fall decor for your garden.

If you're feeling the need for some exercise, park the car and explore the Elora Gorge Trails, an easy four- and a-half-kilometre path that delivers fantastic views of the gorge.

Drive next to the outskirts of Elora to Dar's Country Market where you can score gluten-free butter tarts along with local produce and a selection of gourmet foods. You won't regret picking up some of its juicy barbecue ribs or freshly baked chicken pot pies to enjoy for dinner once you get home.

Next up, stop into The Right Spot Restaurant & Baked Goods in the

## Drive guide

9 a.m. Leave Toronto

10 a.m. Holtom's Bakery

11 a.m. Belwood Country Market

Noon The Red Door

1 p.m. Wellington County Museum and Archives

2 p.m. Gerrie's Garden Centre and Farm Market

3 p.m. Dar's Country Market, The Right Spot and A La Mode

4 p.m. Arthur's Murals

5 p.m. HomeStyle Flavours

NOTE: TIMES ARE SUGGESTIONS ONLY

## For the drive

You'll have plenty to listen to as you explore the Wellington Butter Tart Trail. For the drive out, listen to CBC Radio's "The Butter Tart: Iconic Canadian Treat or Outdated Sweet?" in which foodies debate the dessert's status. And on the way home, check out North American Podcast's "An American Foodie Dishes on Ontario's Butter Tart Trail."

town of Alma. This family restaurant sells classic butter tarts (plain, raisin and pecan) but is known for its apple-cinnamon variety. Pastry lovers will also want to pick up a coconut-cream or lemon-meringue pie — customers have been known to drive for hours to enjoy a slice.

Next, drive to Drayton, known for its historic opera house from 1902, to pick up some butter tarts at A La Mode, a cute coffee shop located downtown. After, head north to Arthur, billed as Canada's most patriotic village, is to check out its historical murals, including the Pioneer Mural (which features images of the community's early European settlers) on the side of building that once housed the Arthur Registry Office.

Finally, make your last stop HomeStyle Flavours in the community of Palmerston. This horse and buggy-style business will give you a glimpse into the local Mennonite culture and its traditional baking techniques. If you need a healthy fix to balance all of the sweet baked goods you've been sampling, pick up one of its hefty sandwiches to share on the drive home.

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MAZES IN THE  
TORONTO AREA



**Talent Attraction and Newcomer Support**

The division is pleased to welcome Anuradha Dam, who joined the County at the start of November. Anuradha Dam is a professional immigrant, only four years ago she came to Canada and has already visited much of what Wellington County has to offer from a visitor's perspective. With a Masters degree in Business Administration, she has worked with the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, and most recently as the Business Operations Lead at Openly. Inspired by lessons learned from her own lived experience, she is passionate about helping fellow immigrants blend in. Through her Talent Attraction and Newcomer Support role at the County, Anuradha is committed to making the County of Wellington a welcoming place to work and live for all communities.

Over the month she has contributed greatly to the 3 year Strategic Plan. She also met with member municipal EDOs and Business Centre representatives at an event hosted recently by the Workforce Planning Board. The event, titled Labour Shortages: Working Towards Solutions, also provided the opportunity to meet with a few employers from the region to understand barriers and brainstorm solutions as a group. In December, Anuradha will focus on meeting with member municipal economic development representatives individually. She also has scheduled meetings with the Settlement Services team to discuss regional trends, barriers and how best the County can support newcomers and attract talent.

**Keep Well Fund Update**

In March 2020, the Keep Well Fund was established by Wellington County Council to support County businesses during the pandemic. The Fund was administered by the two Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDC) serving Wellington County, the Wellington Waterloo Community Futures and the Saugeen Economic Development Corporation. In total, \$891,400 in funding was distributed through the Keep Well Fund by the end of April 2020. This supported 290 jobs and provided 60 loans with an average loan amount of \$15,108. Businesses were thankful for the quick response and support provided through the CFDCs.

The County has become an example for other municipalities working with CFDCs. Other items of note are that the Wellington Waterloo Community Futures considers only one of the 60 loans as bad debt, all loans are current, and five have already paid in full.

Together the organizations have been repaid 50% and are expecting to fully recover the investment in the next two years, plus \$20,000 in interest. An update on the status of the Fund is below.



<b>Waterloo Wellington Community Futures</b>		
Loan Advanced	\$	740,400.00
Principal Paid 2020		(32,042.47)
	\$	708,357.53
Principal Paid 2021		(146,311.12)
	\$	562,046.41
Principal Paid YTD 2022		(128,522.23)
<b>Loan Principal Balance at September 30, 2022</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>433,524.18</b>
<b>Saugeen Community Futures</b>		
Loan Advanced	\$	151,000.00
Principal Paid 2021		(52,438.62)
	\$	98,561.38
Principal Paid YTD 2022		(18,359.08)
<b>Loan Principal Balance at September 30, 2022</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>80,202.30</b>
<b>Total Keep Well Loan Outstanding at Sept 30, 2022</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>513,726.48</b>

### **Attainable Housing**

The County Attainable Housing portfolio consists of a public awareness campaign, a CIP review to encourage more rentals, and municipal conversations to support local efforts. This portfolio was defined by the County Attainable Housing Taskforce in 2021 and includes senior staff and elected officials. The Taskforce met earlier this month to receive an update on the project, and decided to pause on the next meeting until further information is received concerning Bill 23.

The public awareness campaign ran through November on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. This was a reiteration of the importance of discussing housing options in the communities, and the real-life impact to the economy, volunteerism, community, and culture. Additional stories are being collected, including successes with additional residential units.

In the new year, staff will be working with member municipalities to facilitate public information sessions which augment an existing municipal economic development related event. Staff are also considering incorporating a speaker, to discuss what higher density developments can look like, and how yimbyism can be encouraged.

In person consultations began in September, have been by County Planning and Economic Development, and included Centre Wellington and most recently Wellington North. An update on these discussions and the campaign will be provided at the next Taskforce meeting.

### **Three Year Plan**

Staff sincerely look forward to presenting the 2023 to 2026 County Economic Development Plan for Committee review. A great deal of time, energy and thought has gone into preparing the Plan,

which was developed completely in-house, and in consultation with our member municipalities and strategic partners.

#### **Other Activities**

- OMAFRA will host Community Economic Development workshops February-March 2023, staff have offered the WCMA as a host site.
- Taste Real Newsletters sent: November 10
- Experience Wellington Newsletters sent: October 7, November 18
- 17 businesses joined the Taste Real programme in 2022
- Toque Magazine Feature: Majestic Water Buffalo, Erin, and a curated list of 'Top 10 Rural Bakeries worth a Trip'
- Christina was interviewed by the Toronto Star about [Butter Tart Experiences in Wellington County](#)
- Taste Real Display at the Fergus Fall Fair on September 16 – 18 and the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) conference on October 25 and 26
- Corporate visit at Cox Creek Winery on November 9
- 58 enquiries received total: Taste Real (25), Ride Well (15), Business Directory (5), General (4), Tourism (4), BR+E (2), CIP (2), Talent Attraction (1)
- Business e-newsletter sent September 9; October 18; November 8

#### **Recommendation:**

That the Economic Development Committee approve the Economic Development September Report.

Respectfully submitted,



Jana Burns  
Wellington Place Administrator





# COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

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## COMMITTEE REPORT

**To:** Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee  
**From:** Justine Dainard, Smart Cities Project Manager  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 29, 2022  
**Subject:** **Smart Cities Office – November 2022 update**

---

### **Background:**

Update on programmes within the Our Food Future project.

### **Experimental Acres**

Applications for the second year of the Experimental Acres Pilot in regenerative agriculture are now open. This pilot is designed to encourage a shift towards new practices which are focused on regenerating the soil health and biodiversity of their farm; it is also aligned with the targets of our Climate Change Mitigation Plan. Because these shifts in practice may take time to show the benefits, the pilot provides financial and social supports to help backstop the risk to the farmer.

For the 2023 growing season, both Dufferin and Grey Counties will participate with us. They will provide the financial support for any farmers located in their regions, and we will coordinate the programme while providing the social support and lab testing.

Applications will be open until the first week of January, and the online form can be found at [www.wellington.ca/ExperimentalAcres](http://www.wellington.ca/ExperimentalAcres).

### **Community Agriculture Grants**

Our Community Agriculture Challenge opened applications this summer and by mid-fall we received an excellent selection of applications, including several County-based projects. The review committee is currently deliberating, and the successful applicants will be offered support for the 2023 growing season.

### **COIL Activate**

A new cohort of businesses was accepted into the Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad (COIL) Activate programme last month. This programme is designed to help companies grow and scale in circular ways. COIL received a record number of applications, with a successful reach across Southern Ontario. There are currently thirty-six participating businesses, representing sectors from food to fashion to manufacturing. A quarter of these participants are local to Guelph-Wellington, and were considered extremely high quality applications; they will receive funding and financing, as well as mentorship, training and networking opportunities.

You can find out more information about COIL programmes at [coil.eco](http://coil.eco).

## Project Profile

It is the intent of the original funding that Smart Cities projects share what they learn, with the aim that lessons can be reproduced and scaled up across new regions. To that end, the team has had a busy fall with appearances around the world.

- Last month the Our Food Future project was recognized with a Special Mention award at the Milan Urban Food Pact Global Forum in Rio. This is an international accolade for the Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional Food Rescue and Waste Diversion pilot which has been running in the County and City for the last year.
- In November, our outgoing Executive Director Barb Swartzentruber was asked to speak on a Canadian panel at the COP27 UN Climate Change Conference in Egypt. This panel also included Evan Fraser, Director of the Arrell Food Institute at the University of Guelph, and Jo-Anne St. Godard, Executive Director of the Circular Innovation Council.
- Members of Our Food Future were also invited to speak at the Smart City Expo World Congress in Barcelona. As well as joining the delegation at the Canada Pavilion and meeting with city governments from around the world, we presented at two stage events.
- In December we will be presenting at an upcoming University of Guelph Arrell Food Institute event honouring their Highly Qualified Personal Scholarship Program.

## Annual Report

Our Food Future will be presenting an annual report to both the County and City councils in February. Previous annual reports remain available at our website: [www.foodfuture.ca](http://www.foodfuture.ca).

Recommendation:

That the Economic Development Committee receive the Smart Cities Office report for information.

Respectfully submitted,



Justine Dainard  
Smart Cities Project Manager



# COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

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## COMMITTEE REPORT

**To:** Chair and Members of the Economic Development Committee  
**From:** Jana Burns, Wellington Place Administrator  
**Date:** Tuesday, May 17, 2022  
**Subject:** **County BR+E Municipal Implementation Fund**

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### Background

Implemented in 2016, the Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) Local Implementation Fund provides member municipalities the opportunity to access funding for the direct execution of BR+E activities to enhance the local economy. A request for 2022 BR+E municipal funding has been received from the Townships of Centre Wellington, Mapleton and Puslinch.

### Township of Centre Wellington

Centre Wellington has submitted a second application, requesting \$5,000 to develop a Quick Facts document as a tool for business attraction and retention in the community. The document outlines the strategic advantages of investing in Centre Wellington and the County of Wellington, and township staff will use the document when meeting with businesses.

An application was received by the Township earlier this year, where Committee approved \$20,000 to operate the downtown shuttle bus. The approval of this application would allot the total \$25,000 available to the Township of Centre Wellington in 2022 through the BR+E Fund.

### Township of Mapleton

Mapleton has submitted their application for \$25,000 to deliver the Mapleton Community Improvement Plan (CIP), and to install a large mural in downtown Drayton. The Mapleton CIP has been a tool used to build economic resiliency and improve business outlook for the community. The mural in Downtown Drayton is expected to beautify the downtown core to increase foot traffic and encourage tourism in the community. The \$25,000 would cover 75% of the total project cost of \$33,500.

### Township of Puslinch

Puslinch requests \$25,000 to make amendments to their Our Corridor Community Improvement Plan. The amendment will better align the Township CIP with County goals and provide more opportunity for investments in their community. In total, the \$25,000 requested from Puslinch through the BR+E Fund would cover the full amount of these two activities.

### Return on Investment in 2022

In 2022, municipalities accessed 100% of the \$175,000 made available by the County. This resulted in a leveraged investment of \$258,500 from the seven member municipalities. Of the \$175,000 spent by the County, an additional \$258,500 was spent by member-municipalities to

deliver the projects for which they submitted applications. This results in the BR+E Fund having an ROI of 148% or 1:48 in dollars being spent on economic development activities across Wellington County in 2022.

**Recommendation:**

That the Economic Development Committee approve the 2022 BR+E Municipal Implementation Fund for the Townships of Centre Wellington, Mapleton and Puslinch.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Burns', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jana Burns  
Wellington Place Administrator





**COUNTY OF WELLINGTON  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION  
PLAN 2023 - 2026**



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The County Economic Development team is pleased to present its plan of activities for the next three years. This document, prepared by staff, communicates the areas of focus to help businesses and support the communities in Wellington County. In addition to internal brainstorming, consultations were held with member municipalities, business support agencies, and non-profit partners, those individuals with whom staff are proud to serve the County. A final in-person workshop with the Wellington County Economic Development Group ensured the proposed County activities align with locally planned efforts and individual community priorities.

It is November 2022, the hopeful end of the Covid-19 pandemic and time for revisiting the basics of economic development. The resiliency of the local economy has been thoroughly tested. Supply chains required restructuring, those that could digitized or tested new ideas, and many economic relationships have been re-formed. The County benefitted from a strong rural community culture, and many actions took place to confirm that local support. Council was responsive with the establishment of the County Keep Well fund, \$1M in pandemic relief loans provided to businesses across Wellington County. The business directory continued to be a crucial resource for supporting the local economy. RIDE WELL provided essential transportation for Social Services when their Wellington Transportation programme was suspended. The Smart Cities Office also provided emergency food and business support through immediate programming. The International Economic Development Corporation just this month recognized the County with an award for its Taste Real Market Boxes, an innovative collaboration with the eight local farmers' markets in getting product to customers at a time when customers were not able to shop in person.

Today, a shortfall of immigration, a low vacancy rate for housing, and a disconnect between employer and employee expectations, presents opportunities for intervention. The three-year Economic Development Action Plan focuses on addressing local challenges and being proactive in preparing the local economy to be more resilient. Staff have proposed activities that are intentionally creative and actionable. The areas of focus are as follows:

- Business support.
- Workforce attraction and retention.
- Attainable housing.
- Rural transportation.
- Broadband internet.
- Circular economy.
- Tourism development.

## 1.1. **THANK YOU**

County Economic Development staff are grateful for the contributions of the following individuals. Their time provided to a survey, a workshop, and consultations resulted in this document being one which focuses on the core concepts of economic development, and an environment which is truly collaborative.

Township of Centre Wellington, Manager of Economic Development	George Borovilos
Town of Erin, Economic Development Officer	Robyn Mulder
Guelph Eramosa Township, Chief Administrative Officer	Ian Roger
Township of Mapleton, Economic Development Manager	Aly Hill
Town of Minto, Director of Economic and Community Development	Belinda Wick-Graham
Township of Puslinch, Chief Administrative Officer	Glenn Schwendinger
Township of Wellington North, Economic Development Officer	Dale Small
Township of Centre Wellington, Manager of Community Development	Kristen Drexler
Township of Centre Wellington, Tourism Development Coordinator	Joao Corrolo
Wellington-Waterloo Community Futures	Rick Whittaker
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs	Rian Omollo
Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade	Laura Gibson
Saugeen Economic Development Corporation	Rose Austin
Guelph Wellington Business Enterprise Centre	Kristel Manes
Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin	Charlene Hofbauer
Innovation Guelph	Linda Horowitz
Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership	Leen Al-Habash
Wellington Federation of Agriculture	Janet Harrop
County of Wellington, Director of Planning	Aldo Salis



## 1.2. THE TEAM



The County Economic Development division is composed of three economic development officers, a federally funded Talent Attraction position, a Coordinator, and an Administrative Assistant. Smart Cities funded staff consist of a Smart Cities Project Manager and a Sustainability Coordinator. The Manager (currently vacant) reports to the County Council via the Economic Development Committee of Council. Economic Development is within the Wellington County Museum and Archives department. Together, the division provides business support services, manages countywide programmes, conducts economic planning, and runs events in support of and in conjunction with member municipalities.




The Economic Development division leads and participates in activities that grow and develop Wellington County. The County differentiates itself from member municipal economic development efforts as the County perspective is regional and beyond.

1. The County conducts work beyond municipal borders to align goals (County Community Improvement Programme business incentives).
2. The division elevates the work undertaken in the individual municipalities (international investment attraction).
3. Staff lead larger countywide initiatives to leverage larger opportunities (broadband buildout, Taste Real).
4. County economic development will fill the gap where member municipalities do not have the funds to participate in certain initiatives, do not have the staff or expertise, or where the projects are better suited at a regional level.

In 2012, the Wellington Municipal Economic Development Group (WMEDG) was formed, consisting of representation from: Ministry of Agricultural Food and Rural Affairs, Wellington Waterloo Community Futures, Innovation Guelph, Business Centre Guelph Wellington, Saugeen Economic Development Corporation, Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership, Waterloo Wellington Dufferin Workforce Planning Board, Wellington Federation of Agriculture, and an Economic Development representative from each of the member municipalities.

The group meets in person once a month and has proven to be successful in incubating new programmes, sharing information, and collaborating on economic development initiatives.

An overview of the WMEDG partners and their areas of focus are as follows:

Organization	Primary Contact	Organizational Role	Organizational Focus
 <p><b>Wellington Waterloo Community Futures (WWCF)</b></p>	Rick Whittaker General Manager	WWCF is a not-for-profit organization supported by the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario). WWCF offers support, financing, and training for rural businesses in Wellington County and the Region of Waterloo.	WWCF is focused on continuing to provide business loans, business coaching, and expanding community economic development partnerships.
 <p><b>Saugeen Economic Development Corporation (SEDC)</b></p>	Rose Austin General Manager	Promotes sustainable economic and social development throughout Wellington North, Minto, Mapleton, and surrounding communities in adjacent Counties to collaborate, positively impact economic growth, support youth retention and development, growth and retention of local business; and integrate efforts to leverage newcomer attraction to the region.	SEDC is focused on supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs through loans, grants, and workshops, focusing on advancing women economically, attainable housing, and workforce development.
 <p><b>Workforce Planning Board - Waterloo, Wellington, Dufferin (WFPB)</b></p>	Charlene Hofbauer Executive Director	Leads local workforce development by identifying local labour market needs, trends, and priorities. Works with communities and stakeholders to develop action plans to address identified issues and needs.	WFPB is focused on awareness and support for in-demand careers, supporting employers' recruitment and retention practices, and local labor market planning.

 <p><b>Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership (GWLIP)</b></p>	<p>Leen – Al-Habash Project Manager</p>	<p>Mobilizes community stakeholders in support and research opportunities to improve Guelph and Wellington County immigrant integration. Recent support and research activities have included identifying immigrant housing barriers, refugee settlement, and community neighborhood snapshots.</p>	<p>GWLIP is focused on raising awareness and support for making communities more welcoming to newcomers. In addition, there will be a further focus on the barriers newcomers are facing in the community and elevate their voices in public processes.</p>
 <p><b>Innovation Guelph (IG)</b></p>	<p>Alison Crumblehulme CEO</p>	<p>Provides mentorship and business support programmes and services geared to help innovative enterprises to launch, grow, and thrive in Guelph and Wellington County.</p>	<p>IG is focused a focus on providing support and programming for startups and small/medium-sized enterprises. Clean Tech and Green Energy enterprises will be a primary lens of focus. In addition, innovation Guelph would like to increase the mentorship and business support programmes and services to deserving equity groups.</p>
 <p><b>Business Centre Guelph Wellington (BCGW)</b></p>	<p>Kristel Manes</p>	<p>It serves as an entry point for Guelph and Wellington County entrepreneurs to help individuals get into entrepreneurship and support existing entrepreneurs with consultative advice to grow and expand their small businesses in Guelph and Wellington County.</p>	<p>BCGW is focused on championing the innovation of future-focused business models, such as cooperatives, social enterprises, and circular economy.</p>
 <p><b>Wellington Federation of Agriculture (WFA)</b></p>	<p>Janet Harrop President</p>	<p>Wellington Federation of Agriculture works for farmers' economic, environmental, and social well-being. The WFA is a local county affiliate of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and will liaise with the OFA to all levels of government, commodity, and rural groups to meet these needs.</p>	<p>WFA is focused on Housing for the next generation of farmers and agricultural workers; increased value-added processing; identifying missing inputs; Advocacy for Agricultural Land Sustainability</p>

<b>Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)</b>	Rian Omollo Senior Program Analyst	OMAFRA is the Ontario Ministry that works to build the agriculture, food, and rural sectors of the Province. OMAFRA also has the responsibility of providing regulatory oversight in those sectors to ensure compliance.	OMAFRA works to strengthen the agricultural, food, and rural sectors of Ontario by investing in innovative technologies, reviewing policy, undertaking investment attraction, and providing data collection and analysis support.
<b>Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT)</b>	Laura Gibson Regional Manager	MEDJCT is the Ontario Ministry that works to grow the local economy by supporting job creation, attracting investment, and developing market opportunities. MEDJCT is active internationally and manages a large network of foreign trade, and investment offices in key markets around the world.	MEDJCT supports job creation, innovation, and trade for all Ontarians. They have a range of programmes and services available to help business innovate and compete in today's global economy. MEDJCT also continues to build strategic partnerships and work to promote and bolster Ontario's economic competitive advantage.

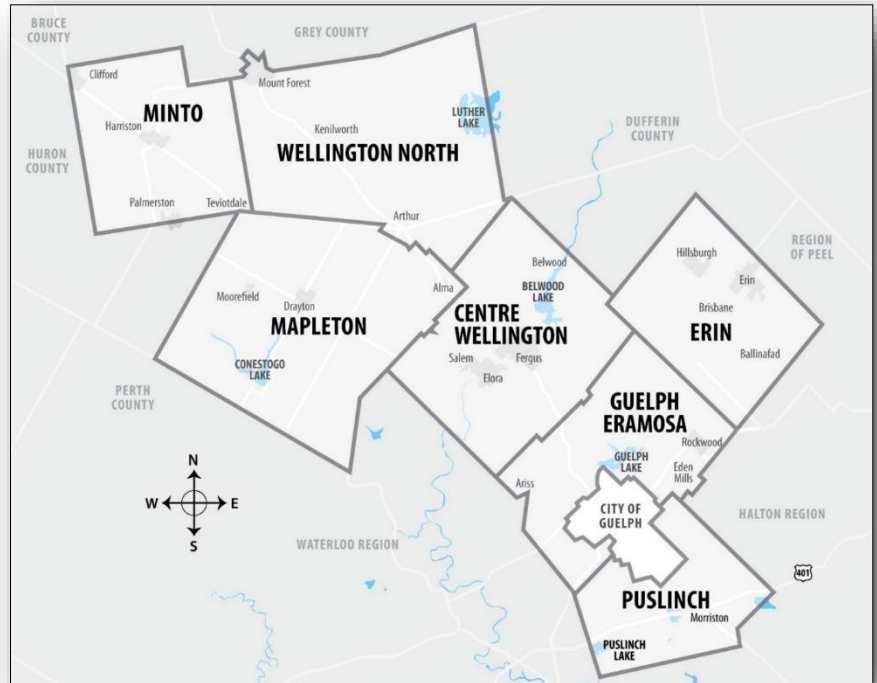
## 1.3. LOCAL ECONOMY

Wellington County is in Southwestern Ontario, just over one hundred kilometres west of Toronto. Wellington County is the upper-tier municipality of seven-member municipalities. The County expects its population to grow to 160,000 by 2051, a 60,000 person increase from 2020.

The County is close to major highway corridors such as Highway 6, 7, 10 and 401; and other significant air, freight, and deepsea ports. This central location allows for ground access to 200 million within a 12-hour drive and the quick movement of goods to various international markets. In addition, the County has access to a well-trained workforce due to its proximity to multiple post-secondary institutions nearby, such as the University of Guelph, University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, and Conestoga College.

The County of Wellington has a vibrant economy, with manufacturing, agriculture, health care and creative professional sectors being primary focus sectors. Of the jobs in Wellington County, the manufacturing sector employs 18%, construction employs 13%, and health care and social assistance employ 8.2%.

The joint strength economically of Wellington County and its member municipalities is agriculture. A majority of the land in Wellington County is prime agricultural, making it some of the most fertile land in the province. As a sector, agriculture is a strong driver of economic activity, further amplified by area institutions like the University of Guelph, which has a rich history in agricultural research, education, and innovation. Now more than ever, it is essential to focus efforts on protecting this economic asset for future generations. To preserve the value of this economic asset, we partnered with the City of Guelph to create the Our Food Future programme, emphasizing the benefits of circular economy practices.



# WELLINGTON COUNTY ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT

<p><b>Population</b></p> <p><b>102,250</b> residents (2021)</p>	<p><b>Population Growth</b></p> <p><b>12.5%</b> (2016-2021) vs <b>5.7%</b> percent in Ontario</p>	<p><b>Population Projection</b></p> <p>Expected to grow to <b>160,000</b> by 2051.</p>
<p><b>Local Government</b></p> <p>County of Wellington (upper level) and <b>7</b> member municipalities.</p>	<p><b>Geography</b></p> <p>Wellington County covers <b>2,610 km<sup>2</sup></b> of land in Southwestern Ontario.</p>	<p><b>Households</b></p> <p>Wellington County has an estimated <b>36,040</b> households in 2021.</p>
<p><b>Average Household Income</b></p> <p>The estimated average household income in Wellington County was <b>\$123,772</b> (2021).</p>	<p><b>Average Household Income</b></p> <p><b>\$88,901</b> (Minto, Wellington North)</p> <p><b>\$126,691</b> (Mapleton, Centre Wellington, Erin)</p> <p><b>\$170,976</b> (Puslinch, Guelph/Eramosa).</p>	<p><b>GDP</b></p> <p><b>\$4,073 M</b> (2020)</p> <p>To be added in for January 2023</p>
<p><b>Average Age</b></p> <p><b>42</b> years.</p>	<p><b>Immigration</b></p> <p>Newcomers to Canada make up nearly <b>11.5 percent</b> of Wellington County's population</p>	<p><b>GHG Emissions</b></p> <p>13.82 tonnes per capita</p>
<p><b>Labour Force</b></p> <p>Wellington County labour force was estimated at <b>58,164</b> in 2021. A 1.8% increase from 2020 to 2021.</p>	<p><b>Local Jobs</b></p> <p>Wellington County had an estimated <b>47,249</b> local jobs in 2021.</p>	<p><b>Unemployment Rate</b></p> <p>The rural unemployment rate was estimated to be <b>5.9 %</b> (2022).</p>
<p><b>Business Count</b></p> <p>Total number of businesses with one employee or more in Wellington County is estimated at <b>3,600</b>.</p>	<p><b>Top Sectors of Employment</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Manufacturing</b></li> <li><b>Construction</b></li> <li><b>Retail Trade</b></li> <li><b>Health Care</b></li> <li><b>Agriculture</b></li> </ol>	<p><b>Growth Sectors</b></p> <p>Wellington County saw 277 new manufacturing jobs, 163 new health care and social assistance jobs, and 83 new construction jobs (2021-2022).</p>

# GROWTH AND ENGAGEMENT



497  
(-75)

New Residential  
Units (2020)



4,572  
(+2.3K)

RIDE WELL Rides  
Completed  
(2021)



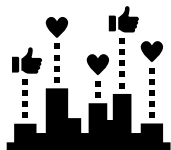
600  
(+109)

EcDev Enquiries  
(2021)



+9%

Jobs Created  
(2016-2019)



\$82.5K  
(+\$22.5k)

CIP Investments  
(2021)



3,085

SWIFT rural  
broadband: properties  
added to service area  
(2020-2023)



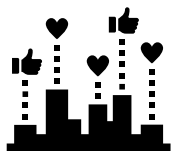
64%  
(-9%)

Member-  
municipality fund  
(BRE)  
(2021)



4.06K  
(+22.37K)

EcDev Webpage  
Views  
(2021)



59  
(+18%)

New Businesses  
(2021)



\$92.5K  
(\$0)

Direct Business  
Support  
Organizational  
Funding  
(2021)



190  
(+14)

Taste Real Partner  
Businesses  
(2022)



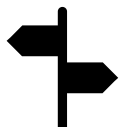
26  
(-14)

# Of EcDev  
Newsletters (2021)



23

Newly Circular  
Businesses  
(2020-2021)



65  
(+15)

# Of Tourism Signs  
(2021)



31.6K  
(+189)

EcDev Newsletter  
Views  
(2021)

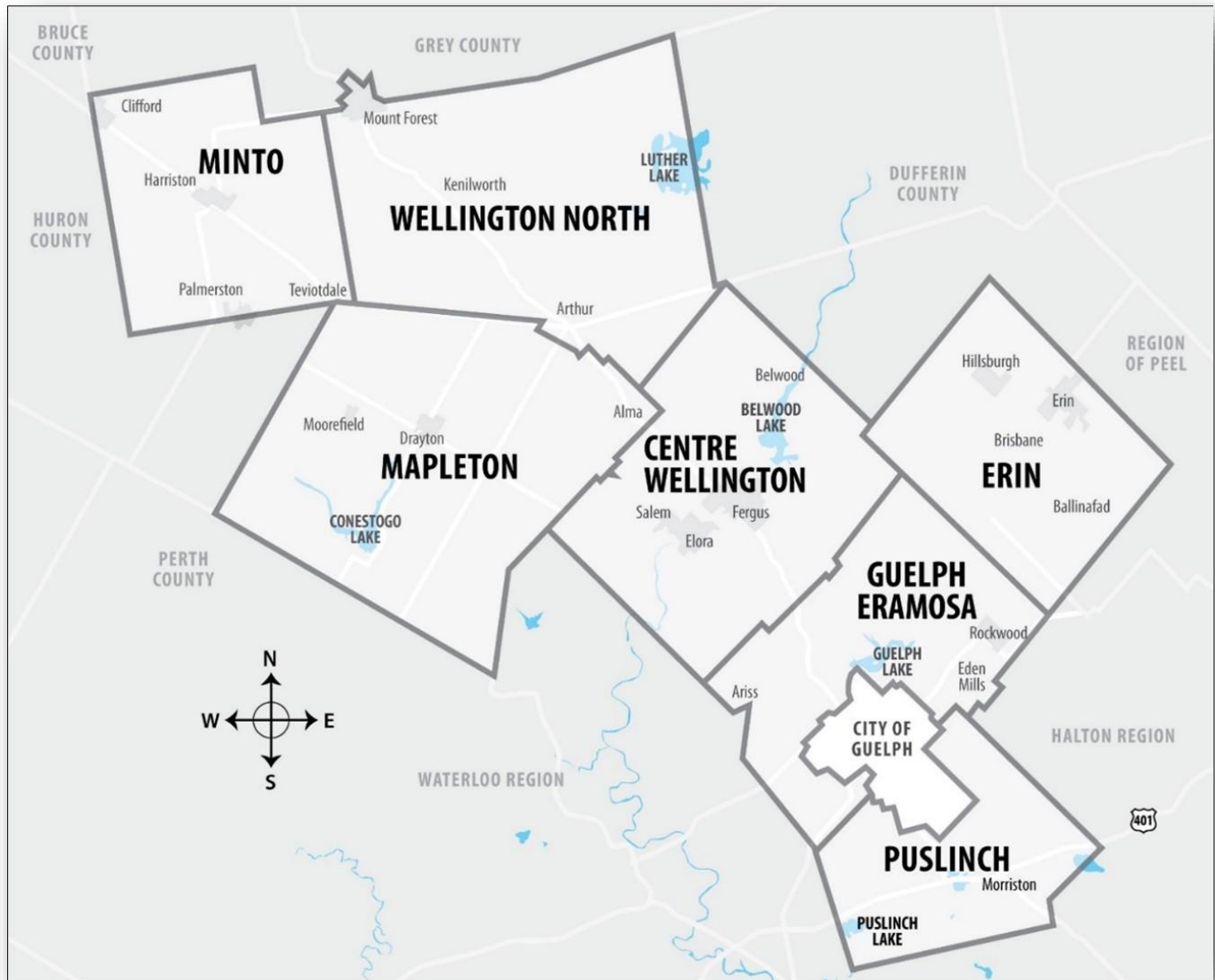


5.35K

EcDev Newsletter  
Subscribers  
(2022)



## 2. MEMBER MUNICIPALITY COMMUNITY PROFILES



Wellington County consists of seven member municipalities stretching across a diverse geography, varied economic strengths, demographic, and cultural uniqueness.



## 2.1. TOWNSHIP OF CENTRE WELLINGTON

**Population:** 31,093

**Projected Population:** 58,900 (2051)

**Average Age:** 43

**Geography:** Land Area is 407.54 kilometres squared

**Settlement Areas:** Fergus, Elora/Salem

**Business Count:** 1,426

**Average Household Income:** \$115,287

**Median Household Income:** \$101,000

**Labour Force Participation:** 60%

**Labour Force:** 18,651

**Local Jobs:** To be added in for January 2023

**Top Sectors of Employment:** To be added in for January 2023

**Growth Sectors:** To be added in for January 2023

**GHG emissions:** Estimated at 9.59 tonnes per capita

**Website:**

<https://www.centrewellington.ca/en/index.aspx>



Centre Wellington is the largest township in Wellington County and offers both a small town and a rural lifestyle. Centre Wellington is an established tourism destination and the hub for many tourists to the County of Wellington. The charming heritage towns of Fergus and Elora offer a thriving cultural scene with many locally-owned one-of-a-kind shops and specialty stores. Centre Wellington is anchored by the natural beauty of the Elora Gorge, which offers picturesque walking trails, ziplining, rafting, and tubing opportunities.

Centre Wellington is well positioned for the anticipated population growth in the future and has a diversified economy with strengths in hospitality and tourism, arts and culture, manufacturing, and agriculture. Centre Wellington is developing a new 58-acre business park with anticipated sales occurring in 2023. Centre Wellington's industry areas of interest are Agriculture/Agri-Food, Creative Economy, Health Care, and Manufacturing. In addition, Centre Wellington is home to Jefferson Elora, one of the County's largest employers.

## 2.2. TOWN OF ERIN

**Population:** 11,981

**Projected Population:** 26,300 (2051)

**Average Age:** 43

**Geography:** Land area is 297.75 kilometres squared

**Settlement Areas:** Erin, Hillsburgh

**Business Count:** 519

**Average Household Income:** \$152,724

**Median Household Income:** \$127,000

**Labour Force Participation:** 66%

**Labour Force:** 7,865

**Local Jobs:** To be added in for January 2023

**Top Sectors of Employment:** To be added in for January 2023

**Growth Sectors:** To be added in for January 2023

**GHG emissions:** Estimated at 7.60 tonnes per capita

**Website:** <https://www.erin.ca/>



The picturesque Town of Erin is a rural community lush with rolling countryside, meandering rivers, small settlement areas, and quaint village settings. Its bustling downtown, Erin village, is a medley of adorable shops and lovingly preserved buildings. Nearby Hillsburgh offers a relaxing and picturesque pond adjacent to the Hillsburgh Library, also serving as a connection point to the 47km Elora Cataract Trailway. Erin is known for its equine and agri-tourism culture, while also accompanying and bordering the Town of Caledon and Halton Hills. Erin acts as an active member of Headwaters and Central Counties Tourism, with visitors having the opportunity to watch various equine events throughout the year, create wonderful memories on family farms, or attend the well-established Erin Fall Fair.

The Town of Erin has access to many population growth areas and areas of significant economic activity in the Province of Ontario, such as: Toronto, Peel Region, Halton Region, Guelph, Waterloo Region, and Orangeville. Erin is in close proximity to significant land transportation routes (Highway 10, Highway 124, Highway 410, Highway 401, Highway 407, and Pearson International Airport), allowing for access to a large domestic and international customer base. A new Wastewater Treatment plant is currently under construction, its supply of undeveloped industrial land is primed for business attraction in the near term. The Town of Erin's focus areas from a business attraction and retention perspective include Agri-Food and Agriculture related activities, Tourism, Advanced Manufacturing, Environmental and Clean Technologies, and Professional Services.

From a local business perspective, Erin's value proposition for local business investment is strong, its population is expected to double by 2051, allowing its local business to cater to a growing customer base.

## 2.3. GUELPH ERAMOSA TOWNSHIP

**Population:** 13,904

**Projected Population:** 14,700 (2051)

**Average Age:** 42

**Geography:** Land area is 291.73 kilometres squared

**Settlement Areas:** Rockwood

**Business Count:** 463

**Average Household Income:** \$142,964

**Median Household Income:** \$129,000

**Labour Force Participation:** 61%

**Labour Force:** 8,466

**Local Jobs:** To be added in for January 2023

**Top Sectors of Employment:** To be added in for January 2023

**Growth Sectors:** To be added in for January 2023

**GHG emissions:** Estimated at 8.31 tonnes per capita

**Website:** <https://www.get.on.ca/>



Guelph/Eramosa is a growing and vibrant rural community mixed with stunning landscapes and natural wonders. The Rockwood Conservation Area has served as a popular filming destination offering its mesmerizing scenery and formations. Boasting over eleven municipal parks and over 81 kilometers of trails. Opportunities to explore The Kissing Bridge, the Ignatius Jesuit Centre farm and walking trails, or have a beach day at either Guelph Lake or Rockwood. Guelph Eramosa is home to many well-known festivals and cultural events, such as the Hillside Festival and Eden Mills Arts Festival.

Guelph Eramosa Township is centrally located and shares a border with growth and innovation areas like the City of Guelph, Waterloo Region, and Halton Region. In addition, Guelph Eramosa has close access to key transportation routes such as Highway 401 and Highway 7 and three international airports (Toronto Pearson, Waterloo International, and Hamilton International). Guelph/Eramosa has many assets to continue as a vital economic contributor to Wellington County; with an ample supply of un-serviced and developed employment lands, steps must be taken to further their development. Additionally, Guelph/Eramosa has a strong agriculture and agri-food sector, home to a large amount of prime agricultural land.

## 2.4. TOWNSHIP OF MAPLETON

**Population:** 10,829

**Projected Population:** 14,400 (2051)

**Average Age:** 35

**Geography:** Land Area is 534.87 kilometres squared

**Settlement Areas:** Moorefield, Drayton

**Business Count:** 317

**Average Household Income:** \$112,063

**Median Household Income:** \$109,000

**Labour Force Participation:** 58%

**Labour Force:** 6,267

**Local Jobs:** To be added in for January 2023

**Top Sectors of Employment:** To be added in for January 2023

**Growth Sectors:** To be added in for January 2023

**GHG emissions:** Estimated at 24.33 tonnes per capita

**Website:** <https://mapleton.ca/>



The Township of Mapleton is a community rich in heritage and culture. Mapleton has a strong arts and culture scene anchored by the Drayton Festival Theatre, among one of Canada's most successful professional theatres. Mapleton is an agriculture and agri-food powerhouse within Wellington County; the Mapleton Farmers' Market offers an opportunity to sample some of the locally grown and produced products.

Mapleton is home to some of Wellington County's largest agricultural producers and growers, thanks to Mapleton's abundant amount of prime agricultural land in the County. From a growth perspective, Mapleton has been constrained by the lack of servicing capacity for many years but is working through plans to increase its servicing to allow for the expansion of their employment lands and residential development within its urban boundary. Economically, Mapleton is focused on developing and supporting: Agriculture, Tourism, Health Care, and Creative Economy sectors. Additionally, there is a focus on local entrepreneurship, arts and culture, local business promotion, and local food opportunities.

## 2.5. TOWN OF MINTO

**Population:** 9,094

**Projected Population:** 15,200 (2051)

**Average Age:** 42

**Geography:** Land Area is 300.19 square kilometres

**Settlement Areas:** Palmerston, Harriston, Clifford

**Business Count:** 385

**Average Household Income:** \$90,383

**Median Household Income:** \$84,000

**Labour Force Participation:** 57%

**Labour Force:** 5,207

**Local Jobs:** To be added in for January 2023

**Top Sectors of Employment:** To be added in for January 2023

**Growth Sectors:** To be added in for January 2023

**GHG emissions:** Estimated at 20.74 tonnes per capita

**Website:** <https://town.minto.on.ca/>



Visiting Minto's three revitalized downtowns boasts an unexpectedly diverse array of entertainment, shopping, history, and food options – from the [Grey-Wellington Theatre Guild](#) and the [Norgan Theatre](#), to antique shops and everyday essentials, [The Palmerston Railway Heritage Museum](#), renovated libraries, and independent eateries. Minto offers many fresh local food options, including the one-of-a-kind [Farmers' Market in Palmerston](#), or find handmade goods at the [Makers' Markets](#) located throughout Minto.

The Town of Minto is located on the north-western boundary of Wellington County, well-situated mid-way between the major centers of southern Ontario and popular recreational areas along the eastern shore of Lake Huron and south Georgian Bay. It is only a 1 to 1 ½ hour drive from the municipality to Canada's "Golden Horseshoe" industrial heartland, like Toronto and Hamilton, and under an hour to Kitchener-Waterloo and Guelph. The City of Owen Sound offers Great Lakes port and shipping facilities, as does the Town of Goderich, situated approximately one hundred kilometers to the southwest. Minto has a strong manufacturing appeal anchored by one of the County's largest employers, TG Minto. Minto is primed for population growth of ~60% between 2020 and 2051. Minto is focused on continuing to invest and innovate in rural community development and creating a strong sense of place.

## 2.6. TOWNSHIP OF PUSLINCH

**Population:** 7,944

**Projected Population:** 10,000 (2051)

**Average Age:** 46

**Geography:** Land Area is 214.62 kilometres squared

**Settlement Areas:** Aberfoyle, Morriston

**Business Count:** 228

**Average Household Income:** \$198,987

**Median Household Income:** \$133,000

**Labour Force Participation:** 59%

**Labour Force:** 4,659

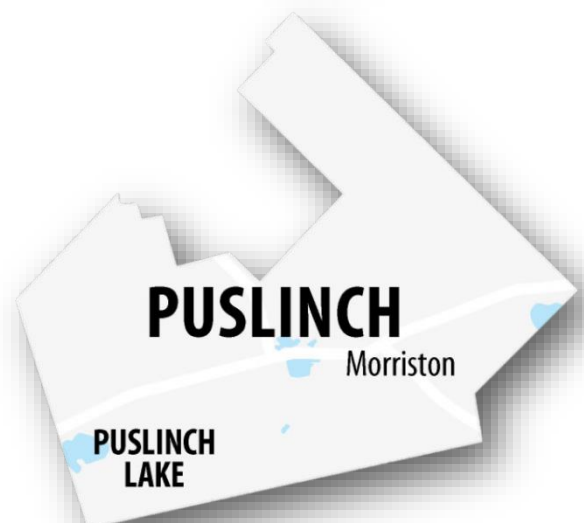
**Local Jobs:** To be added in for January 2023

**Top Sectors of Employment:** To be added in for January 2023

**Growth Sectors:** To be added in for January 2023

**GHG emissions:** Estimated at 10.09 tonnes per capita

**Website:** <https://puslinch.ca/>



Puslinch has the laidback feel of country living while still having convenient access to urban amenities near major cities. Just minutes from Guelph, Puslinch offers immense recreational facilities at the Puslinch Optimist Center and activities and events year-round. The Aberfoyle Antique Market provides opportunities to explore and purchase many locally made and sourced products. Puslinch has many natural environment assets with dense woodlands and scenic views from Starky Hill; or Puslinch Lake.

With the continued growth of warehousing and logistics across the Greater Toronto Area, Puslinch's location to major transportation and goods movement corridors, including Highway 401, Highway 6, CP Mainline, CN Mainline, Waterloo International Airport, Pearson International Airport, Hamilton International Airport, and the Port of Hamilton. Puslinch is proximal to notable innovation and growth centres like Waterloo Region, Hamilton, and the broader Greater Toronto Area. Puslinch's access to well-educated talent and residents with occupations and educations from nearby institutions in high paying and in demand industries in the nearby centres allows Puslinch to enjoy a higher level of resident financial prosperity than other parts of the County. Ongoing economic focuses within Puslinch include: growing its industrial base and diversifying its agricultural industries.

## 2.7. TOWNSHIP OF WELLINGTON NORTH

**Population:** 12,431

**Projected Population:** 20,500 (2051)

**Average Age:** 42

**Geography:** Land Area is 526.31 square kilometres

**Settlement Areas:** Mount Forest, Arthur

**Business Count:** 500

**Average Household Income:** \$87,418

**Median Household Income:** \$78,000

**Labour Force Participation:** 57%

**Labour Force:** 7,079

**Local Jobs:** To be added in for January 2023

**Top Sectors of Employment:** To be added in for January 2023

**Growth Sectors:** To be added in for January 2023

**GHG emissions:** Estimated at 16.11 tonnes per capita

**Website:** <https://www.wellington-north.com/>



Wellington North encompasses endless walking and cycling

trails, unique stores, gift shops, and fashion destinations that dot this unique destination on the mountain top. Take a stroll through Arthur, Canada's Most Patriotic Village and check out the many murals that are located throughout the town, or visit and experience why Mount Forest proudly calls itself, High, Healthy and Happy. Find fresh produce and goods at the Farmers' Market, and see for yourself why Wellington North is an agricultural hub. Hosting one of the top 100 festivals in Ontario, watch fireworks fly at the Fireworks Festival, learn about the historic landscape at Mount Forest Museum and Archives, and Lynes Blacksmith Shop, or catch a show at the Grey Wellington Theatre Guild, and simply explore all the treasures Wellington North has to offer.

Wellington North is a well-diversified and ever-evolving Township in Wellington County. Wellington North boasts a strong industrial and manufacturing employment base, coupled with a strong agriculture and agri-food business sector. Wellington North's sectors of focus include Manufacturing, Construction, Agriculture/Forestry, Retail, and Health Care.

The Township is home to one of the County's largest employers, Musashi Auto Parts Inc, an anchor business in Wellington County, which supports Ontario's robust automobile and auto parts sector. Economically, the Township is focused on supporting pending population growth through investments in local wastewater capacity and the streetscapes of its largest urban centers Arthur and Mount Forest. The Township is anticipating 58% population growth between 2020 and 2051.



# 3. MEMBER MUNICIPALITIES

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In preparation of this report, staff provided a questionnaire to member municipal economic development representatives, seeking information on economic development actions, barriers, and focus for the next three years. The results highlighted the significant geographical, cultural, and economical differences between communities. For simplicity, staff have grouped the municipalities and the general themes observed in the economic development priorities, challenges, and opportunities:

### **Northern Wellington County (Mapleton, Minto, Wellington North):**

The northern municipalities rely more heavily on agriculture, retail, and manufacturing sector employment. Historically, this region has experienced more challenges in workforce attraction than other areas of the County. Recently, the issue of housing affordability has grown in this region, primarily due to residents being unable to compete with Greater Toronto Area (GTA) resident in-migration. The cost of living in the north for an average earning resident exceeds any income increases. As a result, local employers have difficulty retaining and attracting staff. Rising fuel costs and limited alternative rural transportation options has compounded these pressures on local employer's ability to attract and retain out-of-market staff.

#### **Areas of focus:**

- Developing more welcoming and inclusive communities
- Downtown beautifications/improvements
- Diversity and inclusion plans
- Attainable housing



### **Centre Wellington:**

Central Wellington is poised to receive the most growth over the near term. Centre Wellington is a strong hub of economic activity in the County, particularly manufacturing, tourism, the arts, and professional services. With two of the County's most populated urban centers (Elora and Fergus) and its visitor appeal, the area is experiencing growth-related pressures, such as inadequate parking, limited rental unit supply, and high housing costs. Rising fuel costs are putting further pressure on local employers' ability to attract and retain out-of-market staff from Guelph, further compounded by wage stagnation and limited rural transportation options.

#### **Areas of focus:**

- Diversifying its tax base through investments into servicing and selling municipally owned employment lands.
- Raising Centre Wellington's profile as a prospective business location; through marketing, and updated Community Profiles.
- Contributing to the creation of more attainable housing.



## **Southern Wellington (Erin, Guelph/Eramosa, Puslinch):**

These communities have the unique advantage of proximity to the GTA's large urban centers, major transportation corridors, Highway 6, 7, 10, 401 and three international airports (Toronto, Hamilton, and Waterloo). In addition, low vacancy, and high prices in the GTA's warehousing and logistics real estate market have led to large warehouse and logistic centre investments due to their affordability and strong location from a goods movement perspective.

The area is home to higher-earning commuters who work in the nearby GTA and Waterloo Region. The median household income figure highlights similar affordability challenges that the rest of the County faces. Lack of diverse housing options and reliable transportation options to the regions, compounds employers' challenge in obtaining workers.

### **Areas of focus:**

- Addressing infrastructure capacity limitations by studying and/or implementing increased water and wastewater capacity to unlock additional residential and employment land.
- Maximize underutilized employment and industrial lands by encouraging and collaborating with identified owners to service, develop and/or sell appropriately zoned land parcels.

Increasing contact with the business community and encouraging greater community collaboration. Encourage actions through organizations like the Chamber of Commerce and/or local BIA's.

## 4. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS



## 4.1. BUSINESS ATTRACTION, RETENTION, AND EXPANSION

Business Attraction, Retention and Expansion (BRE) aims to support local businesses so they can move to, grow, create jobs, and stay in Wellington County. BRE is a core economic development activity that builds competitiveness for the region by fostering a strong business ecosystem.

Wellington County Economic Development first undertook BRE function in 2014 by conducting business surveys to understand sectoral (i.e. agriculture, manufacturing, healthcare, and the creative economy) challenges in Wellington County. The County has since held periodic business surveys to understand what the business community needs and how to support them accordingly. For example, in 2020 the County surveyed 435 businesses to gather feedback on how COVID-19 impacted them, and what support they needed from the government moving forward. The results were shared with local municipalities and various actions were taken based on the feedback, such as shop local campaigns and providing regular updates to businesses on funding and resources available to them.



In 2016, the County expanded its BRE activity by creating a fund that each of the seven municipalities could access yearly to implement their own business support activities. Each municipality can request up to \$25,000 in funding from the County following an application and internal review process. This has led to several hyperlocal BRE projects, such as local community improvement programmes, LaunchIt Minto, and the Centre Wellington Tourism Shuttle Bus.

There has been interest from the member-municipalities to further collaborate with the County on BRE efforts. One staff member (James) will be dedicated to providing expanded direct business support over the next 3 years. Economists have predicted several challenges for businesses including labour shortages, inflation, supply chain disruptions, and an economic recession. BRE will be crucial to supporting businesses through these challenges. The following strategic priorities are designed to help the County maintain a strong, competitive business ecosystem through economic challenges.

Strategic Priority	Description
<b>BRE Fund</b>	The BRE Fund will continue to be offered to local municipalities. Each of the 7 local municipalities have accessed the fund to either continue existing programmes, or try new ones that directly support businesses in their communities. An overview and metrics are presented in a separate report to January Committee.
<b>Boots on the Ground support</b>	A core BRE activity is regularly meeting, communicating, and networking with businesses and large employers in each of the communities and helping them connect to resources that are available to them. As a regional municipality, the County will leverage its network of partner organizations, governments, non-profits, and private sector stakeholders to ensure businesses have a point of contact.

<b>Celebrate and promote successes</b>	Wellington County businesses have shown resiliency by innovating, adapting, or pivoting their products and services. There is significant value in celebrating business accomplishments and promoting them to the community. This encourages buying local, which strengthens economic supply chain resiliency, creates local job opportunities, and builds economic, social, and environmental sustainability.
<b>Collaborate with partner organizations to support small businesses</b>	Wellington County has a strong network of strategic partners. These partners should be leveraged to find new innovative ways to support the business community. This includes hosting events, cross-promoting webinars, and other sessional resources, and providing mentorship opportunities.

<b>Strategic Priority 1 – BRE Fund</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Commencing</b>
<b>Liaison with Municipalities</b>	The County will continue to work closely with its local municipalities to ensure they are finding value in accessing the BRE fund, and that they have quality projects in the works for the County to support.	Lead	2023
<b>Review Return on Investment (ROI) annually</b>	The County provides an annual look at the return on investment from BRE Fund projects. This will be a continued practice as a means to measure success. Member municipalities benefit greatly from this Fund, where significant projects would not have been possible without County support.	Lead	2023

<b>Strategic Priority 2 – Boots On the Ground Business Support</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Commencing</b>
<b>Direct Business Consultation</b>	Consulting with businesses about their immediate and long-term needs will enable the County to be strategic, anticipating the supports needed. Enough cannot be said about having an individual that can be contacted for business support at the County level. The County will look at accompanying local EDOs and municipal representatives on local tours/visits of businesses within the County.  We have recognized a need for a stronger role in providing accessible business support services to the County businesses in collaboration with the municipalities. There is also a need to reconnect with businesses that were surveyed in 2020 that were looking for assistance. The County can also leverage its existing network to help connect large employers when they are undertaking new projects, innovating, and/or talent attraction.	Lead	2023
<b>Develop County Economic Development Overview Handout</b>	Several member-municipalities currently undertake regular boots-on-the-ground support.		

	Other upper-tier municipalities, such as Grey County's Made In Grey, have specific BRE webpages that outline resources available. Whereas Bruce County targets entrepreneurs by providing a business plan template, Wellington County will develop a departmental overview that highlights support and opportunities available to businesses at the regional level. This will accent the County's existing digital presence and provide a physical handout for businesses to reference and find contact information. The County will also work with member-municipalities to distribute these handouts when they have business meetings in their municipalities.	Lead	2023
<b>Undertake Business Attraction Communication</b>	The County will meet with local, provincial, national, or international businesses that are interested in expanding or growing their business in Wellington County. As part of this action, the County will explain the strategic and competitive advantages of locating in Ontario and Wellington County. Business attraction strengthens the County's economy by bringing new, high-quality jobs to the region.	Lead	2023

### Strategic Priority 3 – Celebrate and Promote Business Success

Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Identify business innovation and success through the COVID-19 pandemic</b>	When businesses shut their doors during the COVID-19 pandemic, some had the opportunity to innovate, pivot, or try something new. Several of these new ventures resulted in significant business growth. The County will look to identify who these businesses are, what led to the success, and how they plan to move forward.	Lead	2023
<b>Promote business success on digital channels</b>	The businesses that are identified from the previous action will be promoted on the County's digital channels (i.e. social media, webpages, newsletters) to celebrate them and notify the public of their new offerings.	Lead	2023
<b>Host Business Celebration Events</b>	Collaborating with relevant partners, the County will develop a plan for hosting industry-specific events to celebrate these successes. This will provide valuable B2B networking opportunities as well as additional exposure to neighbouring business activities.	Lead	2023-2025

### Strategic Priority 4 – Collaborate with Partner Organizations on Supporting Small Businesses

Action	Description	Role	Commencing
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<b>Pilot a business competition with partner organizations</b>	The County, the Business Centre of Guelph-Wellington, and Innovation Guelph will deliver business competitions. The competitions will result in supports being offered such as valuable expert mentorship time. The County would receive valuable feedback as part of this competition (i.e. a survey completion to be entered into a draw), while businesses will have a new opportunity to receive additional expertise and support. The County will also look at being more involved and support local municipal business plan competitions hosted by member municipalities.	Lead	2023
<b>Participate and support regional networking opportunities</b>	County Economic Development will continue to participate in tradeshow, conferences, and local committee meetings where local businesses will be in attendance. This provides an opportunity for networking and educating businesses about the County's BRE support and efforts. For example, the County participates in the annual Innovation Expo hosted by Innovation Guelph, and in Ontario Food Cluster events.	Lead	2023

<b>Strategic Priority 5 – Sector Specific Support</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Commencing</b>
<b>Support Agriculture</b>	With an average of \$60M to \$80M per year in construction activity, and the research, soil quality and regional expertise, agriculture is a strong and diverse sector in Wellington County. To support the sector and its over 3,200 jobs, the County will revisit the Food and Beverage Industry Strategy, work with partner agencies and Smart Cities to encourage agrifood start ups, and better understand the unique offerings and problems that need to be solved locally. In addition to unique local strengths, several international trade agreements position the County well for international investment attraction. The County will continue to participate in the Ontario Food Cluster, seek knowledge transfer and value-add opportunities to benefit the County, and promote Wellington County as a global investment site for food.	Lead	2023
<b>Support Manufacturing</b>	Manufacturing represents 8,700 jobs in Wellington County, and 10% growth in jobs in the last 5 years. Industrial development activity has increased steadily over the last five years, with significant expansions made in several industries. Understanding how to support these industries (i.e. plastics) will be a priority. Also of importance will be understanding the land and infrastructure capacity,	Lead	2024



	with the County undertaking an employment land strategy.		
<b>Support Health Care</b>	The health care sector in Wellington County has grown to 3,800 jobs. Notable is the number of health-related businesses that have opened in the last five years, many in the downtowns.	Lead	2023
<b>Support Professional Services</b>	While representing over 3,000 jobs in Wellington County, the professional and creative services sector has grown the most in the last five years. The implementation of the County Tourism Strategy will support this sector, as will connecting to businesses in this sector and promoting Wellington County as a place where creative professionals can thrive.	Lead	2023

The County works closely with the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) to support its top sectors, as these sectors are representative across Southwestern Ontario. The WOWC advocates and engages with other levels of government as one united voice on opportunities, common needs, and issues of critical importance to Southwestern Ontario. The Caucus represents the voice of 15 upper and single tier municipalities representing 20% of the province's population. WOWC is focused on advocacy and partnerships supporting high-speed internet, Attainable Housing, Workforce Planning, Rural Transportation, and Infrastructure funding.



## 4.2. COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

The Invest WELL Community Improvement Programme (CIP) allows the County of Wellington to provide grants, and loans to support business projects that significantly impact the community. The Invest WELL CIP budgets **\$160,000 per year** to support the seven member-municipality CIPs.

The County has engaged RCI Consulting Inc to complete a CIP review and update. The updated document will better align with County goals and improve internal review processes. The new CIP document will be put forward for council adoption in 2023.

Programme information can be found at [www.wellington.ca/cip](http://www.wellington.ca/cip).



Elora Distilling Company

Strategic Priority	Description
<b>CIP Promotion</b>	Focus will be on creating connections with local businesses that are investing in the community. By recognizing and celebrating their completed projects, staff hope to encourage other businesses to participate in a community improvement programme by showcasing the value this type of investment brings to the community.
<b>Invest in County-wide Goals</b>	<p>Reviewing the Invest WELL CIP will ensure the programme targets projects will contribute to making Wellington County more resilient. The review will also seek to ensure the programme is efficient, scalable, and innovative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Land Strategically: Redevelop vacant/underutilized lands to grow employment.</li> <li>• Provide Rental Housing: Upgrade or create new rental housing, promote mixed-uses, and downtown residential intensification.</li> <li>• Improve Buildings and Infrastructure: Adapt buildings for reuse, incorporate sustainable features, and upgrade utilities/servicing.</li> <li>• Diversify the Economy: Create new on-farm diversified or agriculture-related uses, new business in a target sector, and new business in downtown areas.</li> <li>• Promote Tourism: Increase short term accommodation options, enhance tourism assets, and participate in tourism promotion.</li> </ul>

Strategic Priority 1 – CIP Promotion			
Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Collaborate with Member Municipalities</b>	The County will work with member municipalities to make it easier for potential applicants to access information. Staff will hold joint CIP presentations and information sessions with member municipalities. In addition, early discussions with both County and member municipal representatives will enable a more effective process for applicants.	Support	2023
<b>Distribute Marketing Materials</b>	As mentioned in the BRE section, the County will also develop a brochure that outlines resources available to the business, which include information about the Invest WELL CIP. The County will provide these materials when visiting businesses for future project considerations and to spread the word about the CIP.  The County has also developed a webpage that highlights all the completed CIP projects with before and after photos at <a href="https://www.wellington.ca/en/business/ed-completed-cip-projects.aspx">https://www.wellington.ca/en/business/ed-completed-cip-projects.aspx</a>	Lead/Support	2023
<b>Proactively follow-up with CIP recipients upon completion of their project</b>	Building relationships with the recipients is an opportunity for the participant to provide feedback and facilitates future partnership opportunities.	Lead	2023
<b>Explore new visualization marketing tools or avenues.</b>	Businesses often need guidance on what types of projects would be eligible for funding under a CIP. This action aims to understand the benefits of providing visualization tools when presenting the CIP as an opportunity to businesses. These avenues could include video production, QR code links to similar completed projects on handouts, or partnering with colleges and universities as a means to provide digital renderings.	Lead	2024
<b>In-person Certificate Presentations</b>	A certificate presentation should be conducted once a business has completed their CIP project. This is an effective way to show participants that the County is excited to support them and their projects, and it provides a connection for any future projects. Presentations should involve any of the following: the local mayor or councillor, the local economic development representative, the County economic development representative.	Lead/Support	2023

Strategic Priority 2 – Invest in County-wide Goals			
Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Clarify internal roles and responsibilities for Tax Increment Equivalent Grants (TIEG).</b>	The TIEG requires involvement from Economic Development, Treasury, and in some instances Planning staff at both the County and member-municipalities. This internal review process will be improved to ensure greater consistency and role clarity among stakeholders when administering tax increment equivalent grants.	Lead	2023
<b>Establish a Community Improvement Plan Working Group with Member Municipalities</b>	The County will create more dialogue, awareness, and continuous improvement opportunities and resolve challenges experienced with the Community Improvement Plan amongst the County and the member municipalities. It is anticipated that the group will meet at least two times a year with discussions which may include upcoming CIP applications or areas for process improvements.	Lead	2023
<b>Review the Community Improvement Programme to better align with County priorities.</b>	The County has hired RCI consulting to revise the Invest WELL CIP programme to be more impactful, transparent, and aligned with County priorities (attainable housing, promoting tourism, improving building reuse/sustainability.)	Lead	2023
<b>Develop an annual CIP report to Council</b>	The annual CIP report highlights to Council the projects funded by the CIP, return on investment, successes, and rejected applications from the previous fiscal year.	Lead	2023



## 4.3. TALENT ATTRACTION AND NEWCOMER SUPPORT

Retaining and growing businesses in Wellington County requires a labour force that is adequate in supply and sufficiently skilled to meet employer demands. The County has committed to proactively attracting immigrants and newcomers, from anywhere in Canada, to support the local economy. While the County works on talent attraction, at the same time, companies must be aware of their role in helping create the right workplace environment that would help attract and retain the best talents.



In recognition of a growing workforce challenge, the County benefits from being part of the bigger picture, as a member of the Western Ontario Warden Caucus (WOWC) - a strategic regional economic development planning body. As the County designs and implements its own newcomer attraction portfolio, the County will continue to support the WOWC Workforce Planning as its Strategic Priority 1 in its Economic Development Strategic Plan.

The year 2021 saw 9 in 10 recent immigrants living in one of Canada's 41 census metropolitan areas (CMAs), which are large urban centres of over 100,000 residents – as was the trend over the past 50 years. However, the share of recent immigrants who have settled in Canada's largest urban centres continued to decline, falling from 56.0% in 2016 to 53.4% in 2021. In contrast, an increasing number of recent immigrants have settled outside these key urban centres, strengthening population growth: 4.4% in small urban areas and 3.2% of recent immigrants settled in rural areas.

The County embarked on promoting Wellington County as a welcoming place to live and work, to help attract newcomers as early as 2015. Through the Talent Attraction and the Newcomer Support Programme, with support from Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), some strides have been made. However, much more needs to be done to create a more welcoming community for newcomers and supporting businesses in becoming more inclusive and welcoming workplaces.

Strategic Priority	Description
<b>Support for employers becoming more diverse and welcoming.</b>	This priority focuses on supporting employers to make their workplaces more respectful and open to diversity. In addition, this priority helps connect employers with resources to develop strategies and awareness of necessary accommodations to help create successful newcomer integration. Finally, this programme helps guide local businesses on the benefits of newcomers to their companies and workforce.
<b>Create more welcoming communities</b>	As Wellington County becomes more diverse, residents and businesses must be sensitive to newcomers. This priority aims to make residents and businesses aware of the benefits of having newcomers, as well as how being welcoming and friendly to them is essential to their transition into the community. A welcoming County has community-wide benefits; newcomers come with diverse skills and experiences needed for Wellington County to continue to be a thriving place to live, work, and play.

<b>Be a relevant and trusted partner to newcomers</b>	This priority focuses on ensuring that Wellington County positions itself as an attractive destination for newcomers and ensuring that we have the support and services necessary to make their transition successful into their new community. This will include working with existing communities, long-time residents, and employers to ensure preparedness and harmonious co-existence.
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<b>Strategic Priority 1: Support for employers becoming more diverse and welcoming</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Commencing</b>
<b>Facilitate employers' forums, workshops, or events under Workplace Diversity and Inclusion</b>	This action will work closely with Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin to proactively address ongoing hot topics, such as immigration programmes, building HR strategies for Diversity and Inclusion, and making workplace more inclusive. Facilitation methods may include forums, workshops, or events. In addition, partnering with LaunchIt will assist in delivering and hosting workshops and connecting with employers in the northern part of the County. Employers are expected to gain capacity, relevant tools, and perspectives from the presentations of DEI experts.	Lead/ Partner	2023
<b>Facilitate one-on-one employer engagement sessions about talent attraction needs/barriers</b>	This action aims to emphasize awareness on the talent attraction problems faced by employers and connect best possible solutions through talent attraction supports. The County would discuss labour/ resources challenges being experienced by employers, become familiar with regional needs and trends, speak to the benefits of newcomers, and ways to overcome these challenges. Engagement methods may include individual employer meet and greet sessions, and employer "mentoring newcomers" volunteer opportunities to give back to the community.	Lead	2023
<b>Develop and distribute Talent Attraction information materials to local community organizations</b>	This action will develop and distribute materials to economic development, as well as update the Newcomer Support webpage for better user experience to ensure businesses and newcomers know that we exist and how we can help them. In addition, efforts will be focused on the County's industries that are most in need of talent, and to help build awareness of the type of employers and jobs that are available. Proactive flyer distribution to these industries allows for a constant reminder of talent attraction services and the benefits newcomers could have on their business. Materials would be distributed to stakeholders like: Chamber of Commerce, Trade Organization, Support Service Providers, and others.	Lead	2023



Strategic Priority 2: Create more welcoming communities			
Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Plan and host Multi-Cultural Festival(s) and/or events</b>	This action will look at working closely together with Settlement Service Providers, the Local Immigration Partnership, and member municipalities with an aim to acknowledge, appreciate, and celebrate the multi-cultural diversity located within the County. It provides an opportunity to build stronger connections and awareness of the cultures among residents. Events may include community get togethers, celebrating religious events, and others. This may also include utilising the exhibits at the WCMA to showcase “Immigrants - then and now”.	Partner	2023
<b>Make Wellington County “Welcoming Community” public awareness campaign</b>	The County will work closely with Settlement Services and aim to raise awareness among community residents of the importance of immigration and the role each member of the public plays in making sure the community is welcoming. A public awareness campaign may include setting up social circles with community leaders and video promotions of local newcomer success stories within the County.	Partner	2023
<b>Support and encourage newcomer welcoming initiatives in member municipalities.</b>	This action aims to encourage initiatives that make newcomer integration into the community successful. The County will encourage the provision of appropriate (culturally sensitive) welcome packages and the hosting of newcomers’ welcome events in all member municipalities.	Lead/ Partner	2023
<b>Facilitate the creation of Newcomer Welcoming tours.</b>	In partnership with Tourism, this action will allow newcomers to experience and become familiar with key points of interest in the County. The newcomer welcoming tour will also create an opportunity for newcomers and members of the broader community to socialize and develop connections.	Partner	2024
<b>Develop and deliver “Creating a Welcoming Community” training.</b>	This action will work with a Subject Matter Expert/ DEI Expert and aim to remind elected officials and senior management of the importance of newcomers and how to be more welcoming and highlight barriers newcomers face in the community and its effect.	Support	2024

Strategic Priority 3: Be a relevant and trusted partner to newcomers			
Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Develop and execute a multi-channel promotional strategy focused on elevating</b>	This action aims to elevate prospective newcomer awareness of Wellington County, as a place to live and work. The multi-channel promotional strategy may include participating, sharing information/resources, and representing Wellington County at expos such as	Participate	2023

<b>newcomer awareness of Wellington County.</b>	Immigrant Business Expos, Path to Prosperity Expos, and the Newcomers Canada Global Talent Expo to amplify awareness.		
<b>Facilitate a series of forums and events to engage and connect with newcomers in the community.</b>	This action will be in partnership with Settlement Services and Local Immigration Partnership and will aim to create a space for newcomers to come together and share their experiences, ask questions, meet others, and learn from special presentations targeted to their needs. This is beneficial for the County as it creates an environment for continual feedback and an ongoing relationship with newcomers. Initiatives may include informational sessions, social gatherings, and other group sessions.	Partner	2023
<b>Support local growers of ethno-cultural products</b>	People feel welcomed when they can find products they enjoy in their local grocery store. It is difficult for new farmers to launch, but there is an opportunity for existing farmers to grow new crops that are in demand. Farmers can often be unaware of where to find seeds, how to grow and importantly, how to market these products. In collaboration with Smart Cities, Innovation Guelph, and Taste Real, niche markets will be explored by facilitating an industry discussion day “Growing ethnic products in Wellington County” involving the entire value chain (where to resell, what parts of the animal to use).	Support	2024
<b>Work with WOWC, International Student Experience University Guelph</b>	The Federal Government is continuing its ambitious plans of attracting immigrants by setting targets of 465,000 permanent residents in 2023, 485,000 in 2024 and 500,000 in 2025. Partnering with university and college co-op departments within the County, the attraction of international student talent will be done by making them aware of the County’s top industries and making employers aware of the international student talent pool that is available.	Partner	2023

## 4.4. TOURISM

Tourism is a key part of Economic Development and plays an important role in attracting investment, talent, and sales to a region.

The County is home to key tourism destinations, including Elora-Fergus, the Aberfoyle Antique Market, the Grand River Conservation Areas, and many outstanding festivals and events that attract significant numbers of visitors to the area. Currently, the County of Wellington's Economic Development division undertakes limited initiatives to support the local tourism sector.



Through the award-winning Taste Real Local Food programme, the County promotes local farm and food businesses and actively promotes culinary and agritourism experiences. We work closely with municipal stakeholders to amplify local festivals and events through the Top 5 Things to do in Wellington County campaign, the online Festival and Events calendar, and the Experience Wellington website. The CIP and Tourism signage programmes further support tourism businesses locally. Beyond that, we have not had an active tourism mandate to date.

Leveraging the \$85,000 received as part of the 2022 FedDev Tourism Relief Fund, the County is developing a tourism strategy to establish the County's role within the local tourism eco-system. The plan will identify strategic opportunities to support the sector and enhance the County's positioning as an appealing rural tourism destination. This includes strategic business support and network building activities, fostering tourism product development, and actively telling the story of Wellington County to attract visitor spending and economic opportunity.

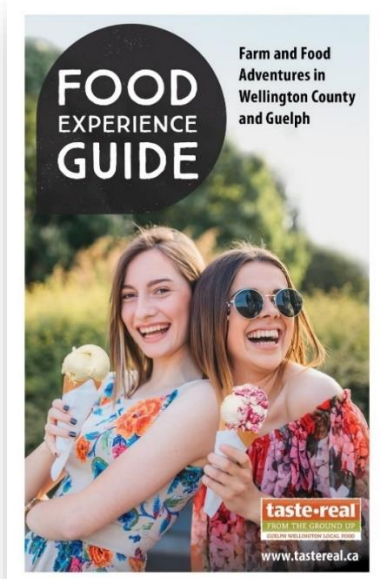
Strategic Priority	Description
<b>Strengthen the Tourism Network and Operators</b>	Staff will create an inventory of tourism assets and businesses, and facilitate networking, learning and collaboration opportunities across the sector. Leveraging the expertise, funding, and priorities of the Regional Tourism Organization, Elora Fergus Tourism, and local business support organization (i.e. BIAs, Chambers), the team will identify gaps and opportunities identified through business feedback.
<b>Facilitate Tourism Experience Development</b>	Staff will foster the development of market-ready tourism products and experiences to encourage visitor spending in all areas of Wellington County. This includes supporting industry-led and partner-led tourism product development as well as create seasonal/product focused self-guided trails. Working with other County Departments and organizations, the team will identify gaps and opportunities and elevate underutilized tourism assets. Staff will continue to collaborate the Wellington County Museum and Archive's Destination Development study and future visitor experience focused projects.

<b>Market and promote Wellington County experiences</b>	Telling the story of Wellington County in an authentic and engaging way is key to encourage visitation and support local businesses. To allow for more strategic outreach and allocation of marketing dollars, staff will create a marketing and communications plan, refine our online presence, and update photo and video assets. Staff will continue grow engagement in the Tourism Signage initiative and further engage with regional and provincial partners to amplify our messaging.
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<b>Strategic Priority 1 – Strengthen the Tourism Network and Operators</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Commencing</b>
<b>Establish the County's role and positioning within the Tourism Sector</b>	Informed by the results of the Tourism Strategy, staff will identify Wellington County's role within the local tourism sector, and its positioning within the wider context of local, municipal, and provincial support organizations. This will help to leverage partnerships and avoid duplication of efforts as actions are undertaken to support the industry.	Lead	2023
<b>Inventory and assess our local tourism sector</b>	Create an inventory of Wellington County's tourism assets (i.e.: accommodations, tourism operators, hospitality, events, infrastructure, and natural features, etc.) to create a better understanding of the tourism landscape.	Lead	2023
<b>Enhance information sharing and knowledge transfer in our Tourism Sector</b>	Develop a sector-specific mailing list to inform operators of applicable opportunities, as well as create business to business connections.	Connect	2023
<b>Create sector specific networking and learning events and opportunities</b>	Work with partners to create industry-focused networking events, training workshops, and support tools to increase tourism readiness, and foster collaboration. Potential partners (RTO, Elora Fergus Tourism, Visit Guelph, BIAs, Chambers).	Connect	2023
<b>Engagement with cultural sector and creative businesses</b>	Fostering and growing the cultural sector and businesses, establishing Wellington County as a place where creative professionals can thrive.	Connect	2024

<b>Strategic Priority 2 – Facilitate Tourism Experience Development</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Commencing</b>
<b>Support development of industry-created tourism products</b>	By providing connections and project support, staff will foster industry-led tourism product development such as businesses expanding current operations to include a tourism aspect (i.e., agri-tourism), or businesses interested in offering a collaborative tourism experience (i.e., Gin Trail). Staff will foster ongoing consultations with the community emphasizing inclusivity and regenerative tourism goals. Staff can assist with navigating the	Support	2023

	development process and accessing seed funding where possible.		
<b>Identify opportunities and partnerships for underutilized tourism assets</b>	Building upon the findings of the tourism strategy, staff will investigate and consult with member municipalities on the activation of underutilized tourism assets and activities. Examples include cycle tourism, trails, Grand River access points etc. Development of these assets will depend on future funding opportunities.	Lead	2024
<b>Develop an array of day-tripping itineraries and trails</b>	Trails and self-guided itineraries are an excellent tool to encourage individuals visiting a tourism hot spot, such as Elora, to explore more rural destinations and hidden gems in Wellington County. Staff aim to create several food, cultural, and activity-based itineraries to spread out visitor spending to all areas of Wellington County. Since butter tarts continue to be a favourite way to engage visitors, staff will investigate the viability of re-instating the Butter Tart Trail, a trademark owned by the Township of Wellington North.	Lead	2023
<b>Partner or facilitate events and initiatives to create visitor experiences</b>	In keeping with creating great visitor experiences, staff will engage with opportunities and events highlighting Wellington County as a destination. Wellington County will host the Culinary Tourism Alliance's Feast On The Farm Event on October 1 and 2, 2023.	Partner	2023
<b>Review upcoming County capital projects for tourism implications or opportunities.</b>	To take advantage of opportunities to improve critical tourism assets during capital project construction, or the potential impacts to tourism assets.	Connect	2023
<b>Participate in the Museum and Archives – Destination development study</b>	A key tourism asset in Wellington County, staff provide input and support for the WCMA's destination development project and ideas on how to activate the site from a visitor lens.	Support	2023





Strategic Priority 3 – Market and Promote Wellington County Experiences			
Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Revise Experience Wellington website</b>	The existing Experience Wellington website will be reviewed, content updated, and improved upon for the customer experience. An environmental scan of other destination websites will be undertaken and a list of desired features for inclusion in a future Wellington County website refresh will be made.	Lead	2023
<b>Develop an Experience Wellington marketing and engagement plan</b>	Informed by the Tourism Strategy, staff will develop an Experience Wellington Marketing and Engagement Plan in partnership with the Communications team. This will allow us to develop key messaging, maximize our reach, and allocate marketing dollars strategically.	Lead	2023
<b>Produce and promote a video series of Seasonal Tourism experiences in Wellington County</b>	This action focuses on the successful rollout of the recent Seasonal Tourism videos to assist in storytelling efforts. The videos will be promoted via social media.	Lead	2023
<b>Develop an authentic photo and video collection</b>	Staff will work with the Communications team to examine how to collect more authentic, user-generated and County-owned image and video assets to use for marketing purposes.	Support	2023
<b>Publish the Wellington County Food Experience Guide</b>	The Local Food Map is a well-loved tool to connect consumers with local farms and food business. Staff will continue to publish the printed map on a biennial basis, adding an online map version.	Lead	2024
<b>Seek out new signage locations and proactively contact businesses</b>	The County Tourism signage creates awareness of tourism businesses across Wellington County. Staff will continue to grow the signage programme and increase the number of participating businesses.	Lead	2023
<b>Digitize County Signage locations and client information into GIS.</b>	A digital map will be created to make County signage more accessible and trackable for internal staff.	Lead	2024
<b>Work with the County Roads Division to identify upcoming public works projects and any impacts to County signage.</b>	Staff will work with Publics Works to understand their short- and medium-term projects/activities within road corridors. Staff will explore ways to reduce the impact to signage visibility and downtime, including re-location and reinstatement.	Lead	2023



4<sup>th</sup> Line Cattle Company



## 4.5. SHOP LOCAL SUPPORT

Shopping locally has enjoyed some unprecedented attention over the last few years as the pandemic disrupted supply chains, especially in the grocery sector.

Consumers sought out local options to purchase food and supplies, and many farm and food businesses adapted their sales and delivery models to fit with these new demands and ever-changing health regulations.

With retail storefronts closing their doors to in-store traffic, many retailers pivoted to offer a variety of new sales channels, including phone and online while restaurants offered take-out and prepared food options to be reheated at home.



Downtown Erin

This challenging time led to some business closures, yet others embraced the change and adapted. This led to new products, new avenues for sales, and in some instances, a new service delivery model. These efforts resonated with many consumers, and staff saw incredible support showcasing pride of place in community members making an effort to buy local, promoting businesses through social media, purchasing gift cards, and shining a light on local like never before.

Municipalities and Chambers ran a variety of shop local and gift card campaigns, and the County efforts included the creation of a Takeout Food Map, a Picnic campaign, a farmers' market box series, a holiday food and gift guide, and seasonal shop local itineraries.

Over the next three years, staff aims to build on the momentum and continue to work with local businesses and partners (municipalities, chambers, etc.) to keep shopping locally front of mind. This means assisting businesses with expanding into new commerce options, creating, and maintaining an online presence, supporting the downtowns, and providing reasons for locals and visitors to eat, shop, and play locally. Staff will also continue to work with farm and food businesses to highlight local food options through the award-winning Taste Real Programme.

Strategic Priority	Description
<b>Broaden Shop Local support</b>	Having built a strong shop local food brand through the Taste Real programme, staff will leverage the successes and support shop local opportunities for businesses within and outside the food/ag sector. Staff will focus on strengthening downtowns, provide access to business support, and increasing a digital presence and sales opportunities.
<b>Taste Real</b>	Leveraging Wellington County strong agricultural sector and rich local food offerings, staff will strengthen local purchasing relationships through food service and directly through residents. Key deliverables include the facilitation of local events, the production of the Local Food Map, and assistance to the Farmer's Market Working Group.

<b>Shop Local Marketing</b>	Staff will amplify the shop local messaging by supporting local initiatives, creating applicable seasonal campaigns, and highlighting the excellent made-in Wellington County products and businesses.
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### Strategic Priority 1: Broaden Shop Local Support

Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Increase Online Presence</b>	Providing businesses the opportunity to expand their digital footprint through online point of sale systems and website creation/enhancements will allow for a greater online presence and bring on more opportunities to expand their shop local objective into the digital age of retail. Staff will connect businesses with available expert resources and organizations, such as Digital Mainstreet.	Connect	2023
<b>Strengthening the Downtowns</b>	This action will aim at emphasizing the importance of community downtowns. Staff will work with the member municipalities to understand what is done to support downtown merchants. This may include helping them to diversify their sales opportunities, signage, storefront improvements, beautification, using the CIP to encourage patios, for example. This may also include supporting existing BIAs, Chambers, and the municipalities to recruit new businesses to the downtowns. The Roger Brooks Destination Assessment will be used as a guide.	Lead	2023
<b>Provide ongoing business consultations</b>	This action leverages our expertise in the agri/food sector but can be applied to businesses across the board. Staff provide consultations and connections along the food value chain to assist with the development of new products, processing, training, funding and more. This action aligns with BRE activities.	Connect	2023

### Strategic Priority 2: Taste Real

Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Continue the annual delivery of the Fall and Spring Rural Romp Events.</b>	The Rural Romp has been a signature event in Wellington County for 16 years. Staff continually evolve the event and adapt to feedback received. The Rural Romp highlights and celebrates local food offerings throughout the County, and encourages visitors and residents to explore many of Wellington County's local farm and food experiences.	Lead	2023

<b>Develop an updated Local Food Map in both print and online mediums.</b>	The Local Food Map will be updated and made available in both print and online formats. This action will allow the map to be accessible to a broader audience of residents, growers, and producers.	Lead	2023
<b>Facilitate Wellington County Farmers' Market Working Group</b>	Farmers' Markets play an essential role in the local food fabric. This action aims to strengthen local farmers' markets by leveraging the stakeholder position at the Wellington County Farmers' Market Working Group to promote collaboration, continual improvement, best practices, and building partnerships. Continue facilitating the award-winning Farmers' Market Box initiative, the Farmers' Market Trail, and other collaborative projects.	Connector	2023

<b>Strategic Priority 3 Shop Local Marketing</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Commencing</b>
<b>Amplify partner shop local campaigns</b>	Staff will work with local partners (Municipalities, BIAs, Chambers) to support shop local campaigns by utilizing County communication channels.	Support	2023
<b>Business highlights and advertising in local media</b>	Work with local media to showcase Wellington County businesses and products. Facilitate the production of the quarterly Toque Magazine business feature.	Lead	2023
<b>Create seasonal marketing campaigns highlighting locally made products</b>	Through the creation of seasonal shop local campaigns, staff will amplify awareness of local products and businesses informing residents about excellent options available locally. These campaigns correspond with holidays, such as the Holiday Food and Gift Guide, or seasons (Nurseries and Greenhouses in the Spring).	Lead	2023



## 4.6. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The County understands the importance of the need to attract and maintain employees to sustain its economy. While workforce demand may not have changed, there have been significant changes to labour market trends. It is more difficult to attract workers to traditional industries, on which the local economy relies. This fact is coupled with lesser interest in youth entering such industries, and employers' expectations of workers not meeting labour market realities.



Wellington Perforated

Data from the Workforce Planning Board shows certain populations, specifically aged 20 to 24, have disengaged from the labour market. These realities present the need for supporting local employers. Staff have seen that employers who have invested in their employees, with skill building and culture development, have seen lower turnover rates.

By identifying strategic opportunities for skills development and training partnerships, analyzing workforce and labour force metrics on a continuous basis, and committing to workforce attraction and retention efforts, the County and its business climate will work to improve and be proactive towards workforce development opportunities and challenges.

Strategic Priority	Description
<b>Skills Development and Training Partnerships</b>	This priority aims at preparing and enhancing the skill acumen and training opportunities to those within the County. The County will work with partners to identify industry skill gaps and facilitate the appropriate training programmes as well as support the creation of employment readiness sessions. Inspiring today's youth, the County will seek to visit elementary and high schools and talk about local opportunities available right now in in-demand sectors and the salaries that accompany them.
<b>Workforce and Labour Force Metrics Analysis</b>	The County will monitor and analyze commuting patterns into and out of the County as it relates to local and out-of-County employment figures. With collaboration from the Wellington-Dufferin Workforce Planning Board and additional partners, the County will continue to develop and maintain connections geared towards the compilation of workforce and labour market research and the execution of an employment gaps and housing gap analysis within the County.
<b>Workforce Attraction and Retention</b>	This priority aims at emphasizing the importance of workforce attraction and retention within the County. Retaining and attracting new employees in County businesses requires that the expectations between employees and employers be bridged. The County will meet with employers to understand expectations, and will also study salaries, culture, and perceptions in specific industries across the region. The County can provide employers with educational tools known as "In the Eyes Of." Expanding upon existing workforce resources will broaden the capabilities to attract and retain employees in a variety of job sectors, which will create the potential for a sector-specific workforce recruitment pilot to be initiated within the County.

Strategic Priority 1 – Skills Development and Training Partnerships			
Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Explore Skills Development Training Programmes for In-Demand Industry Sectors</b>	The County will support the Wellington-Dufferin Local Planning Board in identifying localized training models and expanding professional connections to support industries and provide support for people to move into in-demand and in-need sector training. This will include, but not limited to, additional institutional connections apart from Conestoga College and establishing more programmes into communities which solve labour force gaps, like Drive Forward solved the need for AZ and DZ drivers.	Support	2023
<b>Develop Employment Readiness Sessions</b>	The County will support the creation and marketability of employment readiness sessions through the Wellington-Dufferin Workforce Planning Board, with a partnership with the Career Education Council being explored. These sessions will enable participants to learn skills for navigating the workplace with success, create opportunities to be taught practical job readiness skills, as well as provide the opportunity to meet, network, and discuss important topics related to soft skills and answers to important career questions by a sector-specific expert. These will assist those entering the labour force for the first time, high school students, as well as immigrants coming into Canada.	Support	2023
<b>Expand Partnerships for Youth Skilled Trades Programmes</b>	This action aims at supporting the Wellington-Dufferin Workforce Planning Board in connecting with local employers, education, and skill development organizations. An element of youth outreach through elementary and high school visits will take place to showcase to students the exciting career opportunities in local in-demand sectors, such as manufacturing and agriculture, and their accompanied salaries across the County. The County will also look at working with member municipalities and their existing partners, such as the Career Education Council, to support events surrounding career pathways, job recruitment and volunteering.	Lead/Support	2023



Strategic Priority 2 – Workforce and Labour Force Metrics Analysis			
Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Analyze ongoing workforce commuter patterns in and out of the County</b>	This action will look at analyzing ongoing workforce commuter patterns in and out of the County, as well as work-from-home trends and figures, and pursue a partnership with Community Futures for support. This will help the County understand the flow of workers travelling from home to work, specifically to see the demographics that represent those with local jobs and those who commute out of their municipality within the County, and to understand what underlying factors may influence these choices.	Lead/Support	2023
<b>Continue developing and maintaining connections geared towards workforce and labour market research</b>	The County will develop and maintain connections that are geared towards workforce and labour market research, in order to understand patterns that relate to industry gaps, employment gaps, and additional variables that may influence the overall workforce development potential within the County.	Lead	2023
<b>Employment Gap &amp; Housing Gap Analysis</b>	This action aims to produce an employment gap and housing gap analysis for the County in partnership with the Wellington-Dufferin Workforce Planning Board. Looking into existing employment gaps, housing gaps, and insight from various sector representatives and stakeholders, the County will conduct a more in-depth review of how these existing gaps, for both current and future labour force participants, affect the total economic climate within the County and for member municipalities.	Lead/Support	2024

Strategic Priority 3 – Workforce Attraction and Retention			
Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Expanding upon Existing Resources</b>	The County will support the Wellington-Dufferin Workforce Planning Board in the expansion of existing resources that are currently being used as they relate to workforce development. Findyourjob.ca will have its access broadened and marketability expanded into a labour market information intelligence resource for Employment Ontario, local government, jobseekers, and employers. The County would also support the Planning Board in the development of employer accounts that would let employers customize labour market information (LMI) dashboards for their industry and organization to be able to view this information in real-time.	Support	2023



<b>Conduct a Workforce Recruitment Pilot</b>	Agencies and sector representatives will be consulted upon to gather information and interest in pursuing a workforce recruitment pilot, and to understand the major shortfalls in accessing all types of talent within each sector. The County will co-lead this action with the Wellington-Dufferin Workforce Planning Board in order to conduct an initial workforce recruitment pilot with the healthcare sector.	Lead/Support	2024
<b>Continue with Day in the Life Videos</b>	The County will look at providing financial support to the Wellington-Dufferin Workforce Planning Board for the continued creation and promotion of content in the Day in in Life videos, as well as recruitment for summer students to act as videographers for these video segments. These feature videos will continue to feature in-demand local occupations where turnover rates are higher and act as an information resource to help with workforce development and increase the potential to attract new talent across County-wide in-demand sectors.	Support	2023
<b>Develop “In the Eyes Of” Information Resources</b>	The County will meet with employers to understand organizational expectations, including studying salary grades and wages, workplace culture, and perceptions in specific industries across the region. The County can then provide employers with educational tools known as “In the Eyes Of.” The County will execute a campaign to get the word out to employers.	Lead/Support	2023



## 4.7. ATTAINABLE HOUSING

A space that one calls home is a fundamental part of one's identity. As population and workforce gaps grow, and demands are on the rise, housing supply options and expected growth targets are at a crossroads. The current economic and housing climate is calling for the development of new housing options, different than the traditional single-family detached home Wellington County has seen to date.

With the goal of increasing the stock of rentals and higher density housing options, the County created an Attainable Housing Taskforce in 2021, with elected officials and senior staff providing direction in three different areas. A public awareness campaign educates the public on the realities of lack of housing, and for the role of the community in being open to new housing options. Policy changes to improve the housing development environment within the County and member municipalities are also being explored, as is using the CIP to incent property owners to invest in creating and renovating units to increase the rental housing stock. The goal is to increase the number of housing units available that the County's workforce is trying to obtain, housing that is affordable to their income and satisfies their personal needs.



Strategic Priority	Description
<b>Public Awareness Campaign</b>	The public has a significant role in helping enable more housing options in Wellington County. Educating and raising public awareness on the importance of attainable housing within the County and ways that individuals can contribute to its creation. Through a marketing campaign, which will include real local stories on the impact of housing in day-to-day lives, and a variety of public events with speakers from diverse backgrounds in the housing community, staff look to emphasize the importance of increasing housing types and densities within the County.
<b>Improve the Housing Development Environment</b>	This priority focuses on continual improvement to the process of developing housing in the County. Staff will work alongside the Planning Department to encourage the streamlining of the housing development process in Wellington County.
<b>Maintain and Expand upon Opportunities for Rental Housing Stock</b>	This priority focuses on maintaining and creating opportunities to generate additional rental housing units in the County. Working with our various partners, including existing landowners, we can collaborate on utilizing the CIP programmes, partnerships, and planning tactics to encourage the creation of additional rental units.

Strategic Priority 1 – Public Awareness Campaign			
Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Encourage public discussion</b>	Staff will collect and share impact stories as part of the campaign to emphasize the realities the current housing climate is having on singles, seniors, families, workers, immigrants, and businesses. Staff will support member municipalities at their local public information sessions as they pertain to the importance of housing options. Various campaigns will be developed, including community being defined by its relationships and spaces, rather than its built form.	Lead	2023
<b>Facilitate public engagement sessions</b>	This action aims to build local knowledge and capacity for the public to be open to and better understand alternative housing options and land ownership. The goal will be to facilitate discussions with the goal of creating a more accepting attitude in understanding the need for housing options in the community. Speakers relevant to the topic will be engaged to provide insight on the subject.	Lead/Support	2023

Strategic Priority 2 – Improve the Housing Development Environment			
Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Improve County and Municipally Adopted Housing Literature</b>	County Planning staff and member municipalities will review and adjust the language of their plans, policies, and bylaws to encourage housing development outside of single-family detached dwellings within the County. This will include updating the County Official Plan, including the implementation of Community Planning Permit System policies.	Support	2023
<b>Identify and enhance underutilized lands</b>	Staff will support Planning and Housing staff, and member municipalities, in identifying underutilized properties with the potential for developing housing.	Support	2023
<b>Develop Housing Incentive Programmes</b>	This action aims to work alongside member municipalities to research and implement County CIP programmes that would be enticing for members of the development and non-profit community to participate in, to encourage more housing projects within the County.	Support	2023

Strategic Priority 3 – Maintain and Expand Upon Opportunities for Rental Housing Stock			
Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Maintain Regional Partnerships</b>	Staff will continue to build relationships with community organizations, including non-profits, and serve as a conduit between them, partner organizations, municipal planning departments, and funding sources as it pertains to housing. Work alongside the Western Ontario Wardens’ Caucus, the Centre Wellington Healthy Growth Advisory Committee, and other groups with an objective to combat housing issues.	Support	2023
<b>Explore land for housing</b>	The County will discuss with and encourage community organizations and businesses that own land to maximize the utilization of their land and purpose by undertaking an attainable housing project component. This initiative compliments efforts towards business attraction and sector development.	Support	2023
<b>Collect Housing Metrics</b>	As a benchmark, data will be compiled as it relates to new units created across Wellington County. Staff will support the Planning Department in improving the consistency in the collection of local building data. Additional metrics can include social media traffic on posts relating to housing, attendance rates for public information sessions, types of enquiries as it relates to housing, and the uptake on CIP programmes that correlate to new housing or additional investment onto existing housing stock.	Support	2023
<b>Promote the creation of Additional Residential Units (ARUs) in the County</b>	This action will look at public awareness, education, and promotion of the creation of additional residential units to new or pre-existing homes within the County.	Support	2023

## 4.8. OUR FOOD FUTURE

The Smart Cities Office launched in 2020 when the County partnered with the City of Guelph to create the Our Food Future project. Awarded \$10M by the INFC to build a Circular Economy (CE) within our regional food supply chain, the work of Our Food Future is contributing to local resiliency by designing waste out of the system.



The high-level goals of this project are to:

- Increase access to affordable nutritious food
- Create new circular businesses and collaborations
- Increase economic value of waste

The Circular Economy (CE) is emerging as a key tool in sustainable planning and strong stewardship action. In opposition to our linear economy – which relies on extractive resources and expects to produce waste – circularity sees waste as a design flaw. By identifying ways to connect by-products to new value chains, we are creating greater efficiency and resiliency. The Circular Economy approach aligns with climate action plans, net zero targets, and Indigenous world views.

Since 2020, the Smart Cities project has gone from strength to strength, adding an additional \$5.7M in federal and private funding. It has launched COIL – the Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad – to extend business support to all of Southern Ontario, and the Zero Waste Economic Transformation Lab (ZWETL) to apply circular practice shift to non-food sectors. It just announced the creation of the Circularity and Climate Solutions Hub which will develop systems to scale environmental solutions. The Smart Cities project has garnered national and international awards, and the world is now looking at our region as a centre of expertise and leadership in Circular Economy.

Our Food Future is funded only to the end of 2023. A plan is being drafted to continue the momentum of our work and identify a strategy to keep existing partnerships and programmes running.

Strategic Priority	Description
<b>Continued expertise in circular economy practices</b>	Our municipality demonstrated a commitment to innovative partnerships by launching the Our Food Future project. The County will meet the original triple bottom line goals of the initial project – waste reduction, food security, and business growth – and continue to be seen as a leader in CE in additional sectors. This leadership advantage will attract innovative businesses and investment opportunities focused on the Net Zero economy.
<b>Supporting the evolution of agriculture</b>	<p>Agriculture is undergoing rapid transformation. The changing climate is putting new pressures on crops and animals through extreme weather events and shifting growing zones. Global commitments and recent federal policies and funding recognize these new challenges; they now require greater carbon sequestration and fewer Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions to be achieved through emerging best practices and technology solutions.</p> <p>As one of the largest drivers of our region’s economic activity, our agricultural sector is positioning to thrive in these new conditions and will need support for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New best practices: As farmers adapt, they will require help to backstop risk, encourage uptake, and verify place-based results.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New connectivity: As fibreoptic and expanded cell networks reach our rural areas, data-driven machinery will demand new labour force skill sets and protection from cybersecurity risks.</li> <li>• New focus on adaptation: Food security planning must be grounded in a climate resilient agri-food system at a regional, coordinated level.</li> </ul>
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Strategic Priority 1: Expertise in circular economy practices			
Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Meet the initial goals of Our Food Future</b>	Increasing value from waste, building access to nutritious food, and training newly circular businesses are components of our triple bottom line goal of “50/50/50 by 2025”. This overarching benchmark will be met by the end of our funding in December 2023.	Co-Lead	2020-2023
<b>Continue to reduce waste in innovative ways</b>	The IC&I green bin pilot has been a successful example of innovative and circular waste reduction, providing service to local businesses and rescuing edible food for local residents. The County will work with Solid Waste Services to ensure we can promote expansion of these service routes.	Partner	2024-2025
<b>Continue to deepen our support for food security</b>	Working in partnership with public health agencies, large emergency food organizations in Guelph, and local not-for-profits, the County will continue to build circular connections to support our most vulnerable households.	Partner	2024-2025
<b>Continue to connect local businesses to CE training and funding opportunities</b>	The COIL programme of Our Food Future has established an extensive system of scaled funding and training streams which will continue to expand. Sharing these ongoing opportunities with WMEDG partners will position our businesses for success.	Partner	2024-2025

Strategic Priority 2: Supporting the evolution of agriculture			
Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Develop the Experimental Acres</b>	Farmers are moving towards climate friendly best practices and need sector support during this transition. The Experimental Acres has been designed as a municipal tool to do this while coordinating connections to additional funding. The County will evaluate and evolve the current pilot and share what is learned with other municipalities.	Lead	2023
<b>Host and participate in knowledge events for agriculture</b>	The County will continue to promote regenerative agriculture and soil health knowledge by convening and attending events, conferences, and partnership meetings for the agricultural sector.	Partner	2023



<b>Investigate opportunities related to agricultural technology</b>	Broadband expansion, precision technology and cybersecurity issues will impact agriculture in our region over the next three years. The County will pursue pilots and partnerships to strengthen our region's readiness for these innovations.	Connector	2023-2025
<b>Food security planning grounded in a resilient agri-food system</b>	The County will contribute to the Planning Department's future Climate Adaptation plan, supporting a coordinated approach to local food hubs, future weather stressors, pests, and new growing zone challenges.	Partner	2024



Experimental Acres at Falk Farm, Erin

## 4.9. BROADBAND INTERNET AND CONNECTIVITY

The internet is essential to our families, farms, and businesses. For Wellington County to remain competitive in today's global economy, broadband internet must be available to every address in the County.

Broadband internet roll out is being handled by the Provincial government. The Province through Infrastructure Ontario will provide internet service providers (ISP) and telecommunication companies an opportunity to bid for the opportunity to connect communities, including those in Wellington County. Wellington County has allocated approximately \$4 million, demonstrating our proactive commitment to ensuring broadband internet is delivered quickly and effectively. The \$4 million will help accelerate reviews, approvals of infrastructure installations, and be used as an incentivization tool for ISPs and Telecommunication companies to exceed service performances included in their proposals.



The County is working closely with our previous SWIFT partners and the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus in their advocacy efforts to speed up the installation of broadband internet and to ensure the chosen ISP's deliver the speeds and service capacity indicated in the provincial RFP's.

The province has publicly committed to having broadband internet available across the Province by 2025.

Strategic Priority	Description
<b>Internet investment readiness</b>	This priority aims to ensure that we are ready when SWIFT 2.0 expansion activity begins. The County will be pre-emptively prepared by allocating funds for the possible creation of incentives to fill gaps in service. This action also ensures we are advocating Wellington County's needs to other forms of government and proactively developing an awareness of Wellington County.
<b>Ensuring digital equity</b>	The expansion of connectivity will benefit many, but equity will remain a concern. Fibreoptic networks will need to be balanced with lower-cost cell tower coverage in order to ensure accessibility for all residents. Expanded networks also introduce opportunities for enriching County functions such as newcomer attraction, tourism, and emergency preparedness. Examples may include a dedicated hot spot programme for newcomers, an electric trolley between anchor tourism communities, and emergency management communication hubs.

Strategic Priority 1 - Internet investment readiness			
Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Re-establish the County Broadband Working Group</b>	<p>This action aims to ensure the County is organized and aligned across its departments and able to mobilize to deliver on broadband. The group will be focused on advocacy, planning discussions with chosen ISPs, and ensuring our municipal permitting process is able to respond quickly to the influx of permit requests during construction.</p> <p>During construction, this group will address and triage high-priority incidents and deficiencies. The group will triage high-priority issues during construction.</p>	Facilitate	2023
<b>Collect internet speed data throughout the County over a multi-year period.</b>	<p>This action aims to collect baseline internet speed data. This data is not publicly available to the County. This data will aid our understanding if SWIFT 2.0 is delivering on the forecasted internet speeds and identifying areas requiring improvement.</p> <p>Through targeted mailouts and social media posts, members of the public will be encouraged to run speed tests and submit the data to the University of Guelph's R2B2 Lab for analysis.</p>	Lead	2023

Strategic Priority 2 - Ensuring digital equity			
Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Tracking digital services</b>	Mapping the gaps in service and understanding the rollout of expanded coverage will highlight the range of choices available to our residents. Working with Social Services and poverty action groups will allow the County to plan supports where they are needed, such as adding public wifi spots.	Partner	2023



# 4.10. RURAL TRANSPORTATION

In 2015, Wellington County conducted a rural transportation study with the Rural Ontario Institute to understand existing service providers and public transit demand levels. The rural transportation service providers in the County of Wellington are summarized in Appendix “B”. Around the same time, Economic Development completed 400 Business Retention and Expansion surveys with businesses, and we heard that transportation was a barrier for their workers.



In 2018, the County received provincial funding to pilot a rural transit model. RideCo Inc., a Waterloo-based technology company, was hired to build an app and develop an on-demand transit service to meet the needs of County residents across a large geographic region. The service works by pooling passengers travelling to similar destinations in one vehicle, thereby reducing the number of vehicles needed while maintaining the on-demand functionality. The pilot is ongoing but is set to end in 2025. A service review is currently underway with Dillon Consulting Ltd. to help determine how the programme will operate beyond its pilot phase. Aside from requiring a full-time dedicated staff position, the service is heavily subsidized by public funding. The service is likely to continue needing subsidy to maintain its affordable, low-cost rate for the public. RIDE WELL was also initially intended to help attract talent to communities and extend employers’ reach to a larger talent pool. However, the end-user to date has been residents that have limited alternative options for frequent essential trips. For example, customers tend to use the service to get to lower-income employment, to appointments that they cannot drive to, or to complete essential errands such as grocery shopping and banking.

The review by Dillon Consulting will help determine long-term options for transportation in Wellington County. This will include cost implications, cost-benefit analysis of different service models (i.e., fixed-route, feeder services, etc.), administrative requirements, and potential funding opportunities.

As part of the review, the following strategic priorities have been identified for rural transportation in Wellington County:

Strategic Priority	Description
Review RIDE WELL pilot and determine sustainability	This priority will explore longer-term options for improvement of the Ride Well services in line with the recommendations identified in the Wellington County Roadway Master Action Plan.
Connect and foster an integrated rural transportation network	Many transportation service providers have ceased operation due to low demand throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Wellington County will continue to expand dialogue among transportation partners that remain and seek ways to integrate and cross-market one another’s offerings. For example, Ride Well and Guelph Owen Sound Transportation (GOST) have agreed to partner on marketing and explore

	transit opportunities. This action seeks to continue finding new pathways and partnership opportunities to enhance transit connectivity in Wellington County.
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### Strategic Priority 1: Review RIDE WELL pilot and determine sustainability

Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Conduct cost-benefit analysis of the RIDE WELL pilot service to understand future implications</b>	This action aims to objectively assess the cost implications with the service in relation to its benefit to better understand cost implications of continuing an on-demand transit model.	Lead	2024
<b>Review the RIDE WELL Pilot Project and determine long-term administration and sustainability of the service</b>	<p>This action aims to study the RIDE WELL programme and determine the successes, shortcomings, and suitability of the model as a continued rural transportation service offering.</p> <p>The study will also help determine what organization is best equipped to deliver the service in the future (e.g., County, Private, Social Enterprise, Member Municipality, Non-Profit).</p> <p>The review will provide a cost-benefit analysis of alternative service models that may be more efficient. This will be conducted based on data and findings from the RIDE WELL pilot.</p>	Lead	2022
<b>Develop a Lessons Learned and Best Practices Report based on the experience with RIDE WELL as a rural transportation option</b>	This action aims to provide a best practice guide of what the County learned from the RIDE WELL Pilot project. By aggregating user data, surveys, and operational challenges experienced, we will create a guide that indicates who the programme supported, whom it did not, challenges/barriers observed, failures/success of the operating model, and functionality required for it to be a viable rural transportation option.	Lead	2025

### Strategic Priority 2: Connect and foster an integrated rural transportation network

Action	Description	Role	Commencing
<b>Study and seek integration of all Wellington County transportation options into trip-planning apps and mapping solutions</b>	This action aims to integrate RIDE WELL's service offering when users are trip planning on various applications (e.g. Google Maps). This would consist of last kilometer services from existing bus stops to destinations. This action would start with integrating RIDE WELL and explore integration of other options in the County thereafter.	Leader	2025

<b>Undertake targeted outreach campaign to grow Youth and Seniors Ridership</b>	This action aims to raise awareness of transportation options available, and proactively reach target demographics. Additionally, this is an opportunity to get specific demographics comfortable with current and potential future technology. This action will encompass outreach to community organizations. Outreach tactics may include presentations, print flyers, and coupons.	Lead	2023
<b>Identify intersecting transportation networks and discuss integration and partnership opportunities with service providers</b>	Staff will study the existing transportation networks in the County and proactively approach and discuss opportunities for partnerships or integration. This action aims to increase the interconnectedness between transportation providers in Wellington County to maximize the rider's convenience and options.	Lead	2023
<b>Prepare for future transportation infrastructure</b>	<p>Guelph is expected to receive high speed rail service into the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) by 2026. This will bring local communities even closer to Toronto and Waterloo Region. In addition, the Region of Waterloo is currently undergoing a \$30.2M airport expansion.</p> <p>Wellington County is strategically located to benefit from these infrastructure investments. It will lead to workforce attraction, new development, and growth of the region.</p> <p>This action will start preparing for these benefits. The County will analyze commuter patterns and plan for potential high-traffic routes between hubs of activity. The County will also plan for sustainability by exploring the electrification/automation of transit fleets.</p>	Partner	2025





## 5. MEASURING SUCCESS AND PROGRESS ROI












## 5.1. MEASURING PROGRESS


Many of Economic Development's contributions are intangible and difficult to track impact of every action. Staff have established a series of aspirational goals for each programme. These aspirational goals provide us a sightline to incrementally work towards in local communities. The County will compare its actions to this desired future state to ensure alignment with the economic vision for the community. Economic Development will prepare an annual report to the County Economic Development Committee demonstrating where the County is on the path to achieving the strategic priorities and success measures, while highlighting successes and challenges encountered along the way.

Programme	Strategic Priorities	Success measures
<b>Attainable Housing</b> 	Public Awareness Campaign	<p>Successful submission of public impact stories to the County that have generated ongoing online public engagement and media traction to stress the importance of attainable housing.</p> <p>Strong public interest and attendance to public information sessions surrounding the topic of attainable housing.</p>
	Improve the Housing Development Environment	<p>Greater amount of housing development proposals being submitted to the County and member municipalities as a result of improving and opening up municipally adopted literature (i.e. bylaws, strategic and official plans).</p> <p>Greater amount of housing development applications geared towards housing that is not just single-detached family homes; more housing stock variations becoming present within the County.</p>
	Maintain and Expand Upon Opportunities for Rental Housing Stock	<p>Greater number of ARUs being developed with new housing projects.</p> <p>Greater number of ARUs being developed within or adjacent to existing housing within communities throughout the County.</p> <p>Increased rental housing stock within the County.</p>
<b>Talent Attraction and Newcomer Support</b> 	Support our employers becoming more diverse and welcoming	<p>Host 1 employer workshop/ event per year.</p> <p>Onboard at least 3 employers as mentors to newcomers per year.</p> <p>Connect with at least 30 employers per year.</p>
	Create more welcoming communities	Successfully advertise local newcomer(s) success stories promotional video.

		<p>Host 4 newcomer events/ workshops per year with approximately 10 newcomers in attendance.</p> <p>Successfully support the delivery of welcoming communities training.</p>
	Be a relevant and trusted partner to newcomers.	<p>Enhance content and informational resources on Newcomer Support webpage.</p> <p>Increased engagement with international students.</p> <p>Increased engagement with newcomers.</p>
<b>Workforce Development</b> 	Skills Development and Training Partnerships	<p>Market and share at least 2 additional skills development and training programmes looking to address employment and industry gaps.</p> <p>Successful creation of employment readiness sessions within the County.</p> <p>Establish at least 3 additional connections with local employers, educational institutions, and skills development organizations.</p> <p>Visit a minimum of 10 schools (elementary and high schools) to promote early-on career interests for in-demand sectors in the County.</p>
	Workforce and Labour Force Metrics Analysis	<p>Successful accumulation and interpretation of data from workforce commuter patterns in and out of the County.</p> <p>Maintained partnerships with communities and organizations to enhance workforce data and metrics.</p> <p>Establish a quantitative and qualitative connection between sets of data outlining gaps in the housing market (i.e. affordability, variability, availability) and their relation to employment gaps within the County.</p>
	Workforce Attraction and Retention	<p>Enhanced content and scope of Findyourjob.ca, as an enhanced resource relating to workforce development.</p> <p>Develop at least 1 workforce recruitment pilot within the County.</p> <p>Continued production of Day in the Life videos for in-demand local occupations.</p> <p>Creation of “In the Eyes Of” information resources for employers within the County.</p>

<b>Rural Transportation</b> 	Review RIDE WELL pilot and determine sustainability.	<p>Develop fully costed budget overview of the current Ride Well service and prepare future cost implications for running a more permanent service. This includes providing estimates for gas-tax or alternative funding opportunities.</p> <p>Develop alternative service models with costs and comparisons to the pilot.</p> <p>Develop list of roles and responsibilities required to operate service to determine departmental suitability.</p>
	Connect and foster an integrated rural transportation network.	<p>Establish marketing and cross-promotional partnerships with at least 5 transportation services in Wellington County.</p> <p>Reach at least 10% of users as youth, and 20% of users as seniors (as of October 2022, youth account for 3% of total completed rides, and seniors account for 11% of total completed rides).</p> <p>Establish at least 3 new partnerships with neighbouring municipal transportation services.</p>
<b>Community Improvement Programme</b> 	CIP Promotion	<p>Invest full CIP budget by 2025.</p> <p>Deliver at least 7 CIP presentations in collaboration with member-municipalities.</p> <p>Meet with at least 35 CIP participant businesses.</p> <p>Participate in at least 20 certificate presentations with businesses.</p>
	Invest in County-wide Goals	<p>Maintain current evaluation lead time of a maximum of 3 business days.</p> <p>Organize and host a CIP working group meeting 4 times per year (once each quarter).</p> <p>Provide an annual report to council that details the number of CIP participants, the investment amount, and the return on investment each year.</p>
<b>Broadband Internet</b> 	Internet investment readiness	<p>Increase km of new fibreoptics and number of addresses passed.</p> <p>Convene municipal broadband working group.</p>
	Ensuring digital equity	<p>Expand number of public wifi and charging spots.</p> <p>Attract increased cell coverage expansion.</p>

Programme	Strategic Priorities	Success Measures
<b>Our Food Future</b> 	Expertise in circular economy practices	Growing number of local businesses getting Circular Economy training and support.
	Supporting the evolution of agriculture	Expand number of Experimental Acres pilot sites and County partnerships. Support and host 2-3 soil health events/year.
	Enable the County's climate goals	GHG emissions reduction through programme activities.
<b>Experience Wellington County</b> 	Support our tourism network and operators	Create a tourism inventory and contact list. Host three Tourism Networking / Learning Workshops.
	Facilitate tourism experience development	Create ten trails, itineraries, or experiences.
	Market and promote Wellington County experiences	Create one Marketing and Communication Plan.
<b>Shop Local</b> 	Broaden Shop Local Support	Connect ten businesses with Digital Mainstreet.  Successful downtown development initiatives for at least 5 businesses, including elements such as improved signage, storefront improvements, and beautification.  Support County BRE staff with conducting Business Consultations and BRE interviews within member municipalities.
	Strengthen the Taste Real Programme	Host two Rural Romp Events/Year.  Create two versions of the Local Food Map (online and print).  Facilitate the Farmers' Market Box Programme (Summer and Holiday Box).
	Highlight our local businesses and products	Coordinate and leverage Shop Local Campaigns by partner organizations and municipalities.  Run three annual seasonal Shop Local Campaigns.  Facilitate four annual Business Highlights in Toque Magazine.

Programme	Strategic Priorities	Success Measures
<b>Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction</b> 	Business Retention and Expansion Fund	All 7 municipalities access \$25,000 each year.
	Boots on the Ground Business Support	<p>Connect and network with 10 largest employers in Wellington County.</p> <p>Set up over 50 virtual or in-person meetings with businesses that need support.</p> <p>Deliver departmental overview to over 100 businesses.</p>
	Celebrate and Promote Business Success	<p>Develop and publish at least 10 success stories each year.</p> <p>Host at least 1 business celebration networking event.</p>
	Collaborate with Partner Organizations on Supporting Small Businesses	<p>Pilot a business competition as a creative way to gather feedback, and for businesses to receive promotion and possible mentorship resources.</p> <p>Attend at least 3 regional business events each year.</p>
	Sector Specific Support	Set up meetings with County's largest employers in each of the following sectors: Agriculture, Manufacturing, Health Care, and Professional Services, to assess needs for sectoral support.



# APPENDIX B – RURAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICE PROVIDERS IN WELLINGTON COUNTY

Wellington County is host to a variety of different transportation options. The following table outlines the existing transportation options available to residents and visitors:

Transportation Service	Description
RIDE WELL	Wellington County's own rural transit pilot service, funded in part by the Provincial Government until 2025. Ride Well provides on-demand service, door-to-door across Wellington County and Guelph. The service operates Monday to Friday, 6:00am to 7:00pm, and it uses ridesharing technology to pair similar trips and passengers together. More information is available at <a href="http://www.ridewell.ca">www.ridewell.ca</a>
Wellington Transportation	This service is operated by the Community Resource Centre of North and Centre Wellington. They use a fleet of volunteer drivers to help low income and seniors complete essential trips such as getting to work, getting to medical appointments, and getting to the grocery store.
Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada (VON) Transportation Services	Volunteer and paid drivers provide seniors and adults with disabilities transportation to medical appointments, grocery shopping, adult day programmes, and other appointments.
Guelph Owen Sound Transportation (GOST)	Owen Sound's pilot service for daily commuting between Guelph and Owen Sound with stops in Mount Forest, Arthur, Fergus, Elora, and Guelph. The service runs 7 days a week, and a full schedule can be found on the GOST webpage: <a href="https://www.owensound.ca/en/living/guelph-owen-sound-transportation.aspx">https://www.owensound.ca/en/living/guelph-owen-sound-transportation.aspx</a>
GO Transit	GO buses travel through the County and Guelph with stops in Aberfoyle, Rockwood, the University of Guelph, and Guelph Central Station.
Denny Bus Lines Ltd.	Offering commuter service from Erin to Guelph. There is not a set schedule, and the service runs when there is sufficient demand.
Fergus-Elora Taxi	Taxi services with a licensed Accessible vehicle, located in Fergus, Ontario.
Dan's Taxi	Taxi services located in Fergus, Ontario.
TJ's Taxi Services	Listowel-based taxi company with a fleet located in Mount Forest, Ontario.
Red Car Services	Shuttle service based in Guelph to provide intercity transportation, including frequent trips to and from the Toronto Pearson International Airport.
Driverseat Guelph	Location in Guelph provides airport shuttle services, medical drop-offs, employee shuttles, and wedding transportation options.

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