

Economic Development Strategic Plan Update 2011-2014



The Purpose of the Economic Development Strategic Action Plan is to stimulate and guide economic growth for the Township of Centre Wellington in both an appropriate and sustainable manner.

Given Centre Wellington's high growth rate, a key challenge is to guide and shape future growth in order to preserve the unique characteristics and attributes of the community. Retaining the small town feel and values of the Centre Wellington community while experiencing such dramatic growth is inherent in this plan in order that the Township avoid becoming a generic suburb of the GTA. It is also necessary to ensure that existing businesses and industry are encouraged to expand and that new employment opportunities are created to allow residents of Centre Wellington to work in their own community.

The Strategic Plan Update developed here encompasses industrial land development; business retention and expansion; new business development; the role of tourism, recreation, arts and culture in our region; culinary tourism and communication along with downtown core area revitalisation.

Key Elements

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***Economic Development Strategic Action Plan 2003
Top Ten Economic Development Strategy Recommendations***

1. Hire an economic development officer to work closely with the EDC and implement this plan, including the following 9 initiatives:
Complete
2. Review and streamline the development approvals process, to ensure effectiveness, efficiency, quality, safety, service, accountability and value.
Complete
3. Maintain and further develop the web site specifically devoted to provision of economic development and related information, and strongly promoting the following key messages:
 - very high quality of life, with access to historical and natural amenities, arts and culture, “small town” way of life – great place to live and raise a family
 - excellent access to major markets
 - excellent place to start a home-based or small business
 - competitive and reasonable costs of doing business
 - excellent business infrastructure (land, labour, services, power, telecommunications)**Complete**
4. Initiate a business retention strategy – including personal visits to all existing employers with more than (say) 25 employees.
Complete
5. Designate and partially develop an industrial park area in the south end. **Outstanding**
6. Develop a transit system linking Fergus and Elora (and possibly Guelph). **Outstanding**
7. Develop coordinated plan for development and promotion of the arts, culture, recreation and tourism industry in Centre Wellington including development of the Elora Centre for the Arts. This must also consider development of a hotel/conference facility in Elora.
In progress
8. Lobby for and promote the idea of a post secondary facility in Centre Wellington, possibly a satellite facility of a nearby university or college. The old Fergus High School should be considered in this regard.
In progress
9. Ensure that there is sufficient commercial space allowed in the Official Plan to enable Centre Wellington residents to shop for many of their supplies locally, rather than being forced to Guelph or Kitchener/Waterloo/Cambridge.
Complete
10. Create a Downtown Improvement and Development Strategy, considering both Elora and Fergus together, following the Ontario Government’s Rural Economic Development and Data and Intelligence (REDDI)5 part approach.
In progress

Economic Development Strategic Action Plan Update 2011 Priority Projects Summary

Economy

1. Industrial Park Expansion is a priority as we run out of serviced industrial land. The Township is the primary developer of industrial land in our community. Purchase and service current available properties in Fergus and Elora.
2. Creative Economy – Develop a Smart Growth Business Park Strategy to enable growth of the knowledge based employment sector. In tandem, develop a Creative Economy Marketing Plan to communicate our community as a place to build creative industries and occupations.

Redevelopment

3. Complete the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) and develop a Brownfield Development Plan.

Business Retention & Expansion

4. With the support of both BIAs, conduct a Business Retention & Expansion study for Centre Wellington businesses.

Downtown

5. Retail & Commercial – continue to support both BIAs and FERA with a focus on downtown revitalization and beautification.

New Business Development

6. Pending grant approval, establish the Youth Incubator Program in the Fergus Marketplace.
7. Human Capital – provide governance training and support for not-for-profit volunteer organizations. In addition, facilitate and co-ordinate Education, Training and Labour Force Development in various sectors (eg hospitality).

Cultural Masterplan

8. Pending grant approval, work in conjunction with the Planning and Parks & Recreation Departments along with community stakeholders to develop a Cultural Masterplan for Centre Wellington Township.

County Economic Development

9. Continue to participate in the Wellington County Municipal Economic Development Group.

Tourism

10. Work with Provincial and Regional bodies to develop tourism product including the newly created Regional Tourism Organization and the well established Grand River Country.
11. Continue to provide Information Services at both Elora and Fergus locations supporting all marketing channels. Redesign and launch new tourism website.
12. Working in partnership with our tourism stakeholders, develop a strategy to promote and develop the areas of boutique conferencing, group and sport tourism and continued festival and events promotion.

Culinary Tourism

13. Savour Elora Fergus – continue to support our local food network and work to ensure continuity of funding for this fundamental program.

Communication

14. Infrastructure Development: develop and implement a comprehensive signage system from the borders into the urban centres, continue work to enhance local parks, and work to increase the accommodation inventory in the region.

The department of Economic Development promotes the Corporate Communications Plan for the Township of Centre Wellington.

Projects Overseen by the Economic Development Committee

Economy

- Industrial Park Expansion is becoming a priority as we run out of serviced industrial land. The Township is the primary developer of industrial land in our community.
- Targeted attraction strategy is focused on some key growth areas to bring in new industrial business operations that provide employment.
 - Green & Clean Technologies are growth sectors from environmental to energy products.
 - Home product sector has been a significant growth sector for us as our projected residential growth and proximity to other areas with growth are making us a logical centre for home products such as water heaters and stairways.
- Creative Economy is about opportunity, innovation and prosperity. This targeted activity to attract knowledge based jobs is the future for our community. We feel that 4,000 jobs can be created in this sector alone over the next 20 years.
 - Smart Growth Business Park Strategy is a concept that addresses the need to develop office space to allow for the growth of several thousand knowledge based jobs as Centre Wellington pursues its role in developing a creative economy. This will meet our need in an environmentally friendly way while incorporating active transportation programs utilizing our current and future trail systems.
 - Creative Economy Marketing Plan will be a comprehensive plan to communicate our community as a place to build creative industries and occupations.
 - Broadband is a key component to allow these new jobs to grow outside of the urban areas by providing access to many rural and home-based businesses to high speed internet.
- The Community Solar energy project is a growing concept that could see several community stakeholders come together and create electrical generation projects using solar power using the expertise, time and talents of several residents.

Redevelopment

- Community Improvement Plan is a program that is being developed to enhance the look of the downtown cores and provide some financial assistance in partnership with private business. Brownfield Redevelopment Plan is a program similar to a Community Improvement Plan that will support rehabilitation and redevelopment of contaminated sites within the Township. This plan can be partially funded by other levels of government and private enterprises.
- Downtown Design Guidelines will provide guidance to current and future landowners in the two downtown cores in an effort to preserve the historical nature and character of these communities.

Business Retention & Expansion

- Business Retention & Expansion study is an international program supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This questionnaire-based program is delivered by community volunteers under the direction of a coordinator. Funding for this program is 50% from OMAFRA and also staffing from Service Ontario.

Downtown

- Retail & Commercial
 - Fergus Elora Retail Alliance is a formation of the Elora BIA, Fergus BIA, Centre Wellington BIA and the Township of Centre Wellington to market and promote local shopping within Centre Wellington.
 - Downtown Revitalization is an activity carried out in partnership with the two BIAs to beautify and create better use of the downtown by residents.

New Business Development

- Youth Incubator – Fergus Market Place is a plan to engage youth in entrepreneurship through a program in partnership with the Guelph Wellington Business Enterprise Centre, Wellington Waterloo Community Futures and several local business people and organizations. We are currently investigating available grant funding options.
- Human Capital
 - Education, Training and Labour Force Development is in conjunction with other service providers to analyze needs in our community as well as delivery of programs.
 - EFT to explore the possibility of a professional development component targeted specifically at those volunteer organizations that run major events. The guidance could help direct and train new boards or refresh and refocus existing boards. Many of these events are actively promoted by EFT on a local, provincial and national level and it is important that they have resources available to sustain them. Through this series of customized sessions we will plan to re-energize the governing organizations of events and increase the potential for sustainable success with volunteer-based groups drawing tourism dollars to our region.

Cultural Masterplan

- Cultural Masterplan is a document to be prepared which will drive inclusion of culture into our Official Plan. This program may be funded through a Creative Community Prosperity Fund offered by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.
 - Organize Cultural Roundtable bringing together many business and cultural stakeholders to consult on the development of the cultural masterplan.
 - Municipal Cultural planning is looking at the community through a different lens that captures the essence of what makes Centre Wellington the community that it is.
 - Cultural Mapping documents the historical, natural, built and human resources of the community.

- Enhancing culture through tourism has been an ongoing activity that will continue through our tourism services.
- Promote Fergus Grand Theatre through joint marketing efforts with our tourism team and the Parks and Recreation Department.

County Economic Development

- The Wellington County Municipal Economic Development Group was formed to coordinate the economic development efforts of the seven municipalities and the county. The committee is made up of the County, seven municipalities, OMAFRA and two Community Futures' offices. Last year this group produced a Festival and Events guide for the County and is working on a database of manufacturers. This committee meets monthly and has sub-committees working on specific projects. Centre Wellington Township will continue to have participation through its Economic Development personnel and Mayor.

Tourism

- Provincial, Regional involvement:
 - Work with Provincial and Regional bodies to develop tourism product including the newly created Regional Tourism Organization (RTO4) which has us partnered with Wellington, Guelph Waterloo Region, St. Jacobs, Perth, Stratford, and Huron.
 - Building and leveraging partnership opportunities, workforce development and attracting investment when possible.
 - Contribute to strategic plans of provincial tourism plan and how it relates to the community of Centre Wellington.
 - Grand River Country is a collaborative partnership within Grand River Watershed producing niche outdoor product and promotional marketing materials such as *Trails Take Flight*, self driving tours and *Journey the Grand* connecting the neighbouring communities with a tourism focus within the GRCA jurisdiction.
- Information Services:
 - Provide information services in both Fergus and Elora on a year round basis. Both offer walk in information services, restroom facilities, maps, local information as well as regional and provincial destination editorial.
 - Both facilities offer year round service, hours reflect physical traffic and accommodate late night initiatives and events such as Christmas late night shopping, extended hours during premier signature events such as Elora Festival and Fergus Scottish Festival.
 - Web, electronic, toll free and front line reception offered in both communities.
 - Satellite information kiosks are offered at key locations throughout Centre Wellington. Along with 2 info centres, satellite locations are offered at CW Sportsplex, Grand River Raceway, Weigh Scale building downtown Fergus, Breadalbane Inn.

- Information is offered and provided to additional businesses or locations upon request including non-traditional locations such as centrally located gas stations, coffee shops, real estate outlets.
 - Staff is responsible for web maintenance, social media, county partnership initiatives and several public websites requesting local information.
 - During the renovation period of the Elora Mill special programs are in place to support servicing their customer base.
- Renew tourism website - elorafergus.travel - this site is being revamped to move it to the new platform that the Township website is on which will assist in the ability to update the site and make it current. It is currently receiving about 35,000 first time visitors a year.

Tourism Stakeholders' Strategy

- Boutique Conferencing:
 - Offering unique secondary market to our existing businesses, the offer of corporate and business retreat functions capitalizing on the splendid backdrop of scenic gorge and surrounding riverscapes. The offer to delegates - unique settings for plenary sessions, extreme team and corporate building workshops and breakaway motivational sessions perfect for groups 10-100.
 - This opportunity is just starting to gel after 3 successful national and provincial conferences set in Elora and Fergus. National Outdoor Writers of Canada, Federation of Ontario Bed and Breakfasts, Fly-fishing Championships of Canada, OMAFRA provincial annual retreat and the upcoming Canadian Ornamental Blacksmith Association to be held in July 2011. All are proven events that show Centre Wellington is ideal for corporate retreats, product launches and small to mid size conferences featuring unique settings, facilities and extraordinary experiences for breakaway sessions.
- Sport and Group Tourism:
 - There is an opportunity to collaborate with other township departments to help promote events from sports tournaments to dog shows. We can provide better value and support to our space and facility rentals by creating a suite of available services in order to maximize both their enjoyment of this area and dollars spent locally.
- Festivals and Events:
 - Promotion and support of marketing local festivals, events, activities of a tourism nature within community. Provide information to Tourism Ontario, FEO, free web and provincial guide listings for local events. Maintenance and stewardship of Wellington County Festivals and Events Guide now entering into its second year.
- Coordinate July 1st celebration in Elora during the day and Fergus in the evening.

Culinary Tourism

- Agri-food sector cluster is a new concept for the Southwest Ontario Region to market collectively as an international hub for food development, safety and production. This initiative is being spearheaded by the University of Guelph and will allow us to participate in the development and attraction of new food business in the province.
- Savour Elora Fergus is the culinary tourism program that capitalizes on a grant from OMAFRA to leverage our tourism capacity to market and support local foods. This Provincial and National award winning program will continue to market our community, along with the Taste Real stakeholders through our tourism sector.
 - Elora Farmers' Market has been a five year partnership which has seen exponential growth and has now expanded to the Grand River Raceway for the winter. Market relocating to a new riverfront location in Bissell Park for the summer.
 - Taste Real is a joint initiative of stakeholders in Guelph and Wellington. It is creating a brand and promoting local food products and their producers in the county. By creating local food ambassadors; it aims to bring buyers, sellers, processors and, importantly, farmers to build capacity for the local food movement and the sustainability of local food providers.

Communication

- Infrastructure Development
 - Signage – a comprehensive signage system has been developed from the borders into the urban centres including buildings and parks.
 - Parks – enhancement and development of parks for the use of tourists.
 - Tourism attraction – new product development in the area of tourism attractions.
 - Accommodation expansion to increase the number of fixed roof accommodation (such as new motel in Fergus and expansion of the Elora Mill with more rooms).
- Marketing Communications & Promotion

Assist all departments when requested with marketing ideas and promotional concepts.

 - Brand protection and development

In 2006 a branding program and style guide was developed for the Township. The ongoing protection and, when necessary, expansion of the brand is economic development's responsibility.

 - Promote Township of Centre Wellington in all things we do.
 - Graphic Services with support of a number of grants we have been able to provide some level of in house graphic design services to support the efforts of economic development, tourism and all Township departments.
 - promote the Corporate Communications Plan for the Township of Centre Wellington

Staffing

- We have two full time regular staff being the Manager of Economic Development and the Tourism Marketing and Destination Management Coordinator.
- We have one full time contracted staff person in the role of Culinary Tourism Coordinator.
- Ten part time staff make up the support group for the tourism department. These people are contracted through the Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce.

Public Notification

A Public Information Session was held on Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at the Centre Wellington Community Sportsplex, Fergus. Notice of this information session was circulated to the two local newspapers (Fergus- Elora News Express, Wellington Advertiser) and via email to the Elora and Fergus BIAs, Centre Wellington Chamber and Tourism Stakeholders' distribution lists. A copy of the attendance list is available on request. Based on the feedback received no changes were required to the Strategic Plan Update 2011-2014.

Appendix 1

The Economic Development purpose and mandate is:

1. to ensure that sufficient jobs are created in the community to enable most residents to have the choice to live and work here (*which creates a strong sense of identification with and commitment to the community*), and to ensure a balance in the available jobs from business and the supply of jobs from the labour force (*which ensures that employers are able to fill the job positions they have in order to grow and expand their businesses*);
2. to ensure that there is a reasonable balance between the commercial/industrial and the residential assessment and tax base (*which puts the community on a strong financial basis upon which to offer services and amenities to residents*);
3. to create a diversified local economic base (*which enables the community to better withstand periods of economic downturn, and thus continue to offer services to residents*);
4. to accomplish 1, 2, and 3 above by encouraging growth and development of the local economy through the provision of infrastructure and information; and
5. to adopt a proactive role in encouraging businesses to invest in the community, either through the growth and expansion of existing businesses, or through new investment from outside the community.

Economic Development Committee

Membership

- Elected Officials (3)
Two councilors and the Mayor
- Economic Development Manager
- Elora & Fergus Tourism - Coordinator
- Community Representatives (7)
Wellington Waterloo Community Futures – Manager or designate
OMAFRA – Community Project Officer or designate
Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce – Manager or designate
Elora BIA – Administrator or designate
Fergus BIA – Administrator or designate
Guelph Wellington Enterprise Centre – Manager or designate

Sub-committees

- Community Improvement Plan
- Eco Business Park (finishing in 2011)
- Parking
- Centre Wellington Creative Economy Roundtable

Appendix 2

Tourism goals & objectives

- **Background**

Elora & Fergus Tourism has been evolving since the late 1870s. However the last 10 years have seen this centralized through the amalgamation of Centre Wellington. The Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce filled the role of destination marketing organization with funding from the Township for both operation of information centres and marketing the community as a tourism destination. In the past 5 years the role of tourism marketing and management has become a recognized pillar of economic development. These responsibilities have been administered by the Township. In the past 3 years, a more encompassing group has evolved into a tourism stakeholder collective from a variety of tourism accommodators, attractions, events and tourism businesses. The goal of this group is to change the presentation of the community to the public from a day trip destination to one for short getaways.
- **Objectives**

Elora Fergus Tourism will continue to focus on the following key initiatives: Destination Development, Marketing & Management - including stakeholder coordination, community awareness, resource stewardship, collaborative marketing and promotion, web maintenance, publicity and media relations, development and enhancement of tourism product within in area.