



2022

ELGIN COUNTY YEAR IN REVIEW

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

 www.progressivebynature.com

 www.elgintourist.com



CONTENTS


1 / NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTION

**2 / COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT &
DEVELOPMENT**

3 / BUSINESS SUPPORTS

4 / INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

5 / TOURISM

Life is beautiful in the Township of Southwold! One of the things I love is that we can see so many stars in the sky out here! - Leah M. 

I love Aylmer! The iconic thriving industrious small town vibe. - The Suite Retreat 






ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM SNAPSHOT

The past few years have been a time of change and challenges for the local community. Pandemic related lockdowns and restrictions have caused uncertainty and have forced local businesses and tourism operators to adapt to an ever-changing business environment. The past few years have also been a time of change for Elgin County Economic Development and Tourism. While pandemic related staff redeployments and other staffing changes presented new challenges, the Department worked together to embrace these challenges and to create a new strategic vision for how we engage the community to make Elgin County an amazing place to live, work, and play.

NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTION



Elgin County Economic Development and Tourism began 2022 by re-evaluating how we spend our time and resources so that we can better support our local entrepreneurs and foster an environment of opportunity for the County, its residents and businesses. We found that we need to re-engage our local business community to learn about their needs, let them know about the services we offer, and connect them to other relevant resources.

We learned that Elgin County is home to many innovative entrepreneurs who have not only adapted to the ever-changing business environment, but who have also thrived and developed creative solutions to the challenges they have faced. To support this amazing community, we will continue to champion the creation of a network of entrepreneurs that can work together to grow their businesses and attract new investment to Elgin County.

Adopted by County Council in June of 2022, the 2022-2025 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy will direct the efforts of the department over the next four years. As we continue to engage our business community, we are committed to re-imagining our services and rebuilding how we do economic development in Elgin County.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

WELCOME HOME CAMPAIGN

Over the years, Economic Development and Tourism staff have created several countywide, promotional videos to showcase Elgin County's stunning natural landscapes, exciting recreational activities, and friendly communities. These videos have generated interest in Elgin County and have encouraged tourism in Elgin County.

The demand for online video content has only increased, and it is important to keep video content fresh and current, as it is an excellent way to portray Elgin's quality of life to residents, visitors, and investors alike. In 2022, Economic Development and Tourism staff worked with a local videographer to create seven (7) short videos that feature each of the Local Municipalities within Elgin County. Together these videos were featured in a summer-long video campaign.

Over the past two (2) years, residents have used their homes in new and different ways. For many people, their homes became their office, their classroom, their shopping centre, and their entertainment destination. As many pandemic related restrictions were lifted in 2022, these videos were designed to encourage residents to re-explore their communities and to feel a sense of pride for where they live, work, and play. The videos featured familiar sites, people, and establishments, reminding residents why they chose Elgin County as their home. In addition to encouraging a sense of pride in residents, the campaign also targeted future residents, visitors, and potential investors.

Beginning in July 2022, the Local Municipal videos were featured on the County's social media platforms. Each video was featured for a period of one (1) week. During this week, social media posts were dedicated to businesses and tourist attractions located in that municipality.





WELCOME HOME CAMPAIGN ENGAGEMENT

8

VIDEOS

77K

VIEWS

1K

REACTIONS,
COMMENTS &
SHARES

Municipality of Bayham

Love Port Burwell. Don't ever change. Lovely beach and community. - L. Topping

Township of Malahide

Diverse and beautiful. All the comforts of home. - K. Pearson

Municipality of Dutton Dunwich

Nice to see my home territory. I was raised behind the general store in Iona Station.
- F. McBride

Town of Aylmer

Love it here everything you need!! - C. Breaton

Municipality of West Elgin

A great video of West Elgin and the beautiful amenities our community has to offer. Thank you Elgin County Economic Development & Tourism for this great feature!!!
- The Decorating Diva



WELCOME HOME CAMPAIGN ENGAGEMENT

30

BUSINESSES
SPOTLIGHTS

144K

REACH

4K

REACTIONS,
COMMENTS &
SHARES

Country Grocery, Southwold

I miss living down the road from Country Grocery. Such friendly owners. And let's chat about their delicious baked goods and the pizza....yes, the pizza. - M. Dub-yah

Abby Mae's Gluten Free Bakery, Aylmer

Things I love to eat here: cupcakes, butter tarts and the white chocolate macadamia nut cookies! - R. Bortoluzzi

Otter River Farms, Bayham

We have gone twice a year for 8 years this is definitely a hidden gem and the owners Doug and Sandi are amazing. It's great in the winter too. - D. Cameron DeBuck

Harris Flower Farm, Central Elgin

Sunflower maze might be fun date night! And those flowers are gorgeous! - L. Mackness Fair

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

ELGINCENTIVES

In 2022, staff reviewed the Elgincentives Community Improvement Plan (CIP) and presented recommendations to County Council for how the program could be improved going forward.

Council also approved the continued funding of the Elgincentives CIP and directed staff to work with Elgin's Local Municipal Partners to review the program annually to ensure program alignment with community need. Council will identify annually during the budgeting process the extent to which they will participate in the Elgincentives program.

Through the Elgincentives Community Improvement Plan, Elgin County Economic Development offers grants to eligible business owners and tenants of lands and buildings in key sectors and areas of economic activity in order to:

- Stimulate economic growth and diversification.
- Enhance the quality of place for residents and visitors; and,
- Improve the stability and sustainability of the tax base.

2022 Elgincentives Snapshot



Applications Received - 17



Total Grants Approved - \$80,000



Total Grant Requests - \$132,093.76



Total Value of Approved Project Costs - \$591,566.77



BUSINESS SUPPORTS

BUSINESS ENTERPRISE FACILITATION

Entrepreneurs and small businesses are the backbone of Elgin County's economy and Elgin County Economic Development has made the support and cultivation of these businesses a priority. One of the main goals under the new strategic plan is to meet with local entrepreneurs, listen to their needs, and develop a good understanding of the local community's market, assets, and needs.

To have a boots on the ground presence in the community, the Department recruited and hired a full-time Business Enterprise Facilitator (BEF). The BEF has become the primary contact for entrepreneurs and small business owners in Elgin County. Through regular visits in each local municipality, the BEF has begun cultivating a network of direct contacts in the business community. Listening to the needs of local entrepreneurs, the BEF has worked with business owners to provide collaborative assistance in overcoming challenges by working with other economic development agencies, our local municipal partners, and other organizations to provide creative solutions.

Engaging with local business owners, the BEF has been able to connect businesses to relevant funding opportunities and to help market and promote local business through leveraging the County's networks and online presence to showcase Elgin's business community and local opportunities.





BUSINESS ENTERPRISE FACILITATION

150

BUSINESS VISITS

250

CONTACT CARDS
DISTRIBUTED

35

ELGIN CENTIVES
PRE-CONSULTATIONS

BUSINESS VISITS

While engaging with the local business community, the Business Enterprise Facilitator (BEF) has helped business owners identify current challenges and has worked with them to resolve these issues. Challenges have included confusion over local planning policies, uncertainty over who to contact regarding municipal infrastructure, questions about business loans, and inquiries about funding support for innovative solutions to labour shortages.

One business owner had questions about municipal policies on awnings. The BEF helped the owner to consult the municipality's downtown plan for confirmation that a new awning would not violate any existing policy.

Another business owner was planning an exterior façade project that included safety enhancements. The BEF connected the owner with Engineering Services to discuss implications to the existing sidewalk and highway.

A local entrepreneur had concerns that a municipal parking sign had been installed too closely to their business sign and was blocking its visibility. The BEF facilitated a conversation between the business owner and the local municipality.

Another entrepreneur had expended significant resources to renovate a rental unit and was unexpectedly informed that the owner was selling the building. The entrepreneur had built a significant local client base but was unable to afford purchase of the unit on the short timeline provided. The BEF referred the entrepreneur to the Elgin Business Resource Centre for loan consideration.

A local farmer developed a technological innovation for a cucumber picking aid that dramatically reduces the required number of farm workers. The BEF connected the farmer to the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade to be considered for a grant opportunity.

BUSINESS SUPPORTS

SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CENTRE

The Small Business Enterprise Centre (SBEC) is funded by Elgin County, the St. Thomas Economic Development Corporation and the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Through their delivery of the Summer Company and Starter Company Plus programs, SBEC focuses primarily on business counselling, loans, and supports to youth.

Summer Company provides youth looking to become entrepreneurs for the summer with \$1,500 in start-up money to kick start their business, as well as ongoing advice and mentorship. Students also receive an additional \$1,500 in the fall after they have successfully completed the program.

Starter Company Plus provides entrepreneurs 18 years and older with up to \$5,000 and professional mentoring to expand or start a business in Elgin County.

Beginning in 2021, SBEC also oversaw the Horton Farmers' Market. The Market is a vibrant gathering place to buy fresh, local produce, socialize and experience community. This year, the Market offered the best fruits and vegetables, fish, meat, plants, herbs, flowers, soaps and lotions, honey, maple syrup, baked goods, artisanal foods and unique hand-crafted items our region has to offer.





SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CENTRE

27

BUSINESSES
STARTUPS

44

NEW JOBS
CREATED

9

BUSINESS
EXPANSIONS

\$59,000

DIRECT
BUSINESS
FUNDING

36

ELGIN COUNTY
VENDORS @ THE
HORTON FARMERS'
MARKET

\$606,000

VENDOR SALES
@ THE HORTON
FARMERS'
MARKET

INVESTMENT ATTRACTION

ONTARIO FOOD CLUSTER

In 2022, Elgin County maintained its membership with the Ontario Food Cluster, an organization whose mandate is to drive international investment to Ontario's food and beverage industries.

More information about the OFC can be found on their website:
www.ontariofoodcluster.com

MINISTRY INVOLVEMENT

2022 saw Elgin's relations with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade continue. These relationships have allowed Elgin to showcase its vacant buildings, properties, and business parks to those working directly with investment at the respective Ministries. As a result, Elgin was able to respond to various inquiries and requests for information for potential investment to Elgin County.

VACANT LAND INVENTORY

In 2021, the County of Elgin developed a Vacant Land Inventory to provide an overview of vacant industrial, commercial, and employment lands in Elgin County. The inventory has been posted on the Economic Development website and is designed to assist potential investors, businesses or site selectors in researching and identifying properties for potential new locations, expansion or relocation of their operations to Elgin County.





TOURISM AT A GLANCE

25,000

VISITOR'S GUIDES
DISTRIBUTED

6,000

ONLINE VISITOR'S
GUIDES REACH

77,000

VISITS TO TOURISM
WEBSITE

VISITORS TO KIOSKS & TOURISM VAN

4,240

PORT STANLEY
VISITOR CENTRE
(MAY - SEPTEMBER)

2,950

PORT BURWELL
LIGHTHOUSE
(MAY - SEPTEMBER)

1,620

TOURISM VAN
(ATTENDED 16 EVENTS)



#ELGINEATS

In it's first year, the Elgin Eats Campaign ran from January 6th to February 4th. The campaign was designed to support local restaurants that offered take out and/or delivery during closures and to encourage residents to support local businesses. Daily features regarding local restaurants were posted on the Elgin County Economic Development and Tourism Facebook and Instagram accounts using the hashtag #ElginEats. A full listing of local takeout options was also published on the Elgin Tourism website.

20 LOCAL RESTAURANTS FEATURED

201,510

REACH

3,355

REACTIONS

384

COMMENTS

Peter's Pizza, Aylmer

Worth the drive to aylmer! Best pizza ever!
T. Crosby

New Sarum Diner, New Sarum

Saving this link to put it on my list to visit.
D. Carson Clarke

Tall Tales Cafe, Wallacetown

The breakfast burrito was delicious. Thanks for the recommendation.
D. James

Shannon's Country Diner, Rodney

We tried Shannon's a couple of month's ago - food was delicious and plentiful!
C. Paradis

Beach Patties, Port Burwell

Thanks for posting. We went for lunch, It was soooo good. We will definitely go back.
B. A. Connors

The Edible Journey, Port Stanley

Love love love the food here. Ellen's passion for healthy food is evident in every serving.
C. Noble

TOURISM

SAVOUR ELGIN

Savour Elgin is the County's culinary trail that takes visitors on a delectable journey to the area's finest food and drink establishments, farmers' markets, and agritourism operations.

NEW MEMBERS

In 2022 Savour Elgin welcomed 1 new member to the program:

Natterjack Brewing Co. is a family owned and operated microbrewery nestled along the north shore of Lake Erie, in the hamlet of Eagle. Head brewer, Daniel Soos, is committed to making fine quality, small batch, unique beers, and is always crafting new and tasty brews to honour his late brother and excellent brewer, Matthew Soos.



EXPLORE ONTARIO



33K REACH

1K REACTIONS

In June 2022, Elgin County Tourism hosted travel influencer Katherine Palumbo from Explore Ontario for a weekend in Elgin County. As a part of the community spotlight, Explore Ontario featured Elgin County on their Instagram feed and shared detailed descriptions of local stops with their followers.

Stops included;

Nature's Oasis, Solo on Main, Fire Hall Market, Quai du Vin, Clovermead, Beach Patties, and the Port Burwell Provincial Park.

TOURISM

CYCLE TOURISM

The County of Elgin held a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the official launch of the Highwheel Way Cycling Route and the unveiling of the Doolittle Mural on June 28th at the Port Bruce Pavillion. This event coincided with Ontario Bike Month, a month dedicated by the Province to demonstrate the importance of cycling for maintaining healthy lifestyles, reducing traffic congestion, and increasing economic development through cycle tourism.

Cycling has become an ever-popular form of transportation within the County of Elgin for residents and visitors alike. When the County's Engineering Department created a cycle route on Imperial Road (Highway 73), from the Town of Aylmer to the village of Port Bruce, staff from the County's Economic Development and Tourism department leaped at the opportunity to brand this route. Drawing upon knowledge from other County departments, as well as politicians from the Town of Aylmer and the Township of Malahide, the name Highwheel Way: from Pedal to Paddle was formed. This name celebrates Elgin's cycling history through not only a branded bike route but also on a mural that honours a historic local cyclist, Mr. Doolittle.





FALL FOR ELGIN VIDEO CAMPAIGN

OCTOBER 18-31

The Fall for Elgin Campaign officially launched at the beginning of October, and it is designed to promote fall activities in Elgin through social media posts, website updates, radio ads, digital ads, and TV spots.

As a part of the Campaign, Elgin County's own IT Coordinator Jeremy Sharkey had the opportunity to be a star in Elgin County Tourism's 2022 fall promotional video.

Jeremy, his wife Jessica, and their two daughters ventured out on an Elgin County road trip to help show residents and visitors alike how to explore new places and share exciting experiences with one another.

30K REACH

15.8K VIEWS

421 REACTIONS,
COMMENTS &
SHARES

Looked like an amazing road trip & family fun.
M. McRaid Niessen

We buy honey crisp apples regularly at Great Lake Farms. The best!!
T. Bisker

Good to see Solitude Nature Reserve is getting the recognition it deserves!
J. Thiessen

MEET THE TEAM



CAROLYN KRAHN

Manager of Economic
Development, Tourism & Strategic
Initiatives



DELANY LEITCH

Business Enterprise Facilitator



LINDSEY DUNCAN

Tourism Officer



www.elgintourist.com
www.progressivebynature.com