



Report to Committee of the Whole

To: Mayor Linton and Members of Council

Report: PLN2019-16

Prepared By: Patricia Rutter, Economic Development Officer

Date: 19 Feb 2019

RE: Economic Development Strategic Action Plan

Recommendation:

THAT the Council of the Township of Centre Wellington adopt the Economic Development Strategic Action Plan as the strategic framework for the delivery of economic development services over the next 5-year planning horizon;

AND THAT Council direct staff to further report on the implementation of options presented in the Economic Development Strategic Action Plan in accordance with the financial resources available through the annual budget process for Centre Wellington.

Summary:

Report:

In April of 2018, The Township of Centre Wellington was awarded a grant of \$35,000 from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs under the Rural Economic Development Funding Program to complete an Economic Development Strategic Action Plan. In June, Council approved the hiring of McSweeney and Associates to undertake the consultation and preparation of the Strategic Action Plan.

During the summer of 2018, the consultants did a review of the various reports and documents impacting economic development in the township such as the Growth Management Strategy, the Community Improvement Plan and the Cultural Strategic Plan.

During September a public survey was launched asking residents of Centre Wellington their views on economic development with the township receiving 170 responses. The consultants conducted 16 one-on-one interviews with staff, councilors, business leaders and community champions. In October, focus groups sessions were held over two days in both Fergus and Elora with more than 54 community members participating. Representatives from various sectors including agriculture, tourism, culture and arts, Chamber of Commerce, staff and the Economic Development Task Force participated.

After those consultations, a working document identifying the themes that had emerged was prepared. On November 7th, a working session for about 45 member of the community representing all sectors was held at the Grand River Raceway to identify project and initiatives that addressed the themes.

The Economic Development Task Force was asked to provide comments and discussed the report with the consultants in early February of 2019. It is anticipated that the consultants will continue to work with us to prepare an implementation report.

Corporate Strategic Plan:

Economic Prosperity - The Township will help the business community to excel and expand, and to create jobs, so Centre Wellington's economic vitality keeps pace with its population.

Financial Implications:

Funding for this project was provided through a grant from the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) in the amount of \$35,000, the County of Wellington in the amount of \$25,000 and the Township of Centre Wellington providing \$10,000. Under the terms of the agreement with OMAFRA, the Economic Development Strategic Action Plan must be presented to Council for final approval by February 28th, 2019.

Consultation:

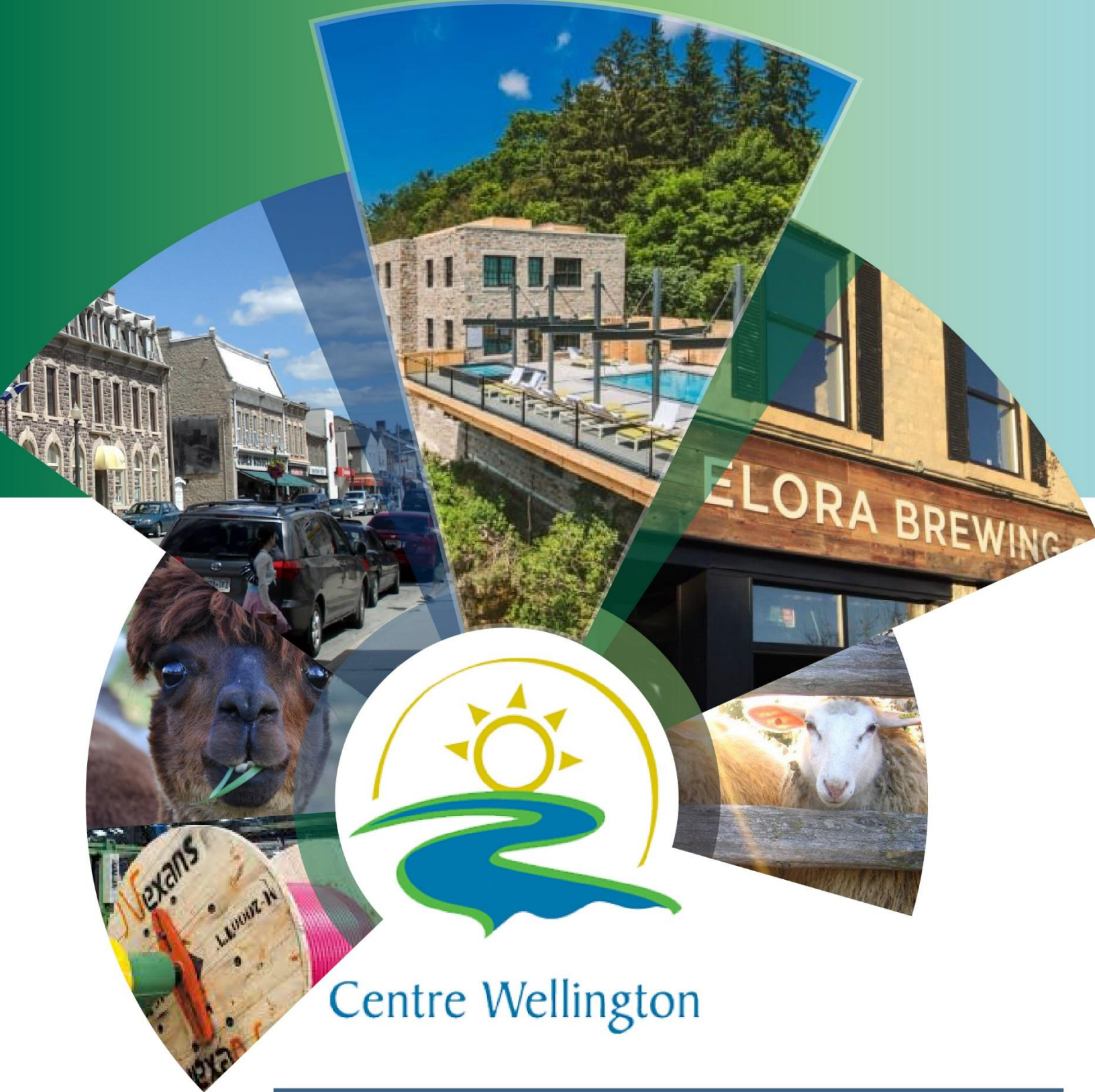
Consultation with the Chief Administrative Officer, the Managing Director of Planning and Development and the Economic Development Task Force.

Attachments:

- [Appendix A - Centre Wellington Economic Development Strategic Action Plan Final](#)

Approved By:

Brett Salmon, Managing Director of Planning and Development
Andy Goldie, Chief Administrative Officer



Centre Wellington

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

January 2019

for the Township of Centre Wellington



McSWEENEY

inspiring economic sustainability®



Centre Wellington



*Funding for this project was provided by the Ministry of
Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the County of Wellington.*



McSweeney & Associates

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intro

1. INTRODUCTION

The Township of Centre Wellington is a municipal government located in Wellington County, in south-central Ontario. Although predominantly rural with 342 active farms, it includes two urban settlement areas: Fergus and Elora, both located on the Grand River. There are a number of small villages and hamlets scattered throughout the Township including Belwood, Ennotville, Inverhaugh, Oustic, Ponsonby, Salem and Speedside.

Based on the Province of Ontario's Places to Grow requirements, this growing Township of close to 30,000 residents is expected to receive 50% of all growth within Wellington County and 48% of all of its employment growth.

Centre Wellington is strategically located near the Toronto Waterloo Tech Corridor (Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph and Toronto) linking 15,000 tech companies and the GO Transit Commuter Rail Line (Toronto-Guelph-Kitchener).





1.1. Purpose for a Strategic Action Plan

As one of the fastest growing communities in Ontario, Centre Wellington is now facing and will continue to face residential and employment growth pressures as residents and businesses from nearby communities such as Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge and Halton and Peel Region, seek more affordable (and available) areas to live, work and conduct business. Centre Wellington is now taking a step forward to help balance its inevitable residential growth with commercial and industrial employment growth, guided by a long-term strategy for attracting investment, new jobs, non-residential assessment, and increased economic investment into the Township.

Centre Wellington has had an economic development strategy in place since 2003. Updated in 2011, it has been effectively guiding economic growth in the Township over the past 15 years.

This new 2019 Economic Development Strategic Action Plan will continue to provide a roadmap for sustainable employment growth for Centre Wellington by focusing on the growth of specific target sectors/industries, supporting the vital local agriculture sector and identifying opportunities for small business start-ups.

Centre Wellington will understand the key points of its value proposition to attract targeted industries and will understand the target markets from which investment will be attracted and how to attract those investments to the Township. The value proposition will also provide the foundation to develop a clear and distinct positioning of Centre Wellington within its broader market context.

The 2019 Economic Development Strategic Action Plan will continue to provide a roadmap for sustainable employment growth for Centre Wellington.



2. PROCESS FOLLOWED

The process followed to create the Township of Centre Wellington Economic Development Strategic Action Plan was comprised of a document review, statistical analysis and thorough and comprehensive community and economic development partner consultation.

The study began with a document review, followed by a statistical analysis of the Township's economy and demographics that yielded a current situational analysis report, community tour of the Township of Centre Wellington, after which a thorough consultation process was followed that included:

- A series of one-on-one interviews with businesses and economic development stakeholders;
- Focus group sessions with representation from the Chamber, BIA, Senior Township staff, Economic Development Task Force, Tourism, Arts Culture Heritage, Agriculture, and Business;
- An online survey; and
- A working session with key stakeholders.



This process led to the creation of a set of detailed realistic and doable immediate, short and long-term action items for the next five years with an aim of:

- Supporting and retaining existing businesses and jobs in the Township.
- Encouraging greater investment and job growth in the Township.
- Attracting new businesses and industries to the Township.
- Identifying business sectors that will complement and support existing businesses that the Township should work to attract and identify target sectors/industry cluster investment opportunities.
- Helping the Township achieve long-term employment growth.
- Provide solutions to overcome any investment readiness or development challenges, and to maintain and improve the Township's overall competitive business environment for the benefit of all firms large and small.

The Economic Development Strategic Action Plan is based on a comprehensive understanding of the Township, its economy, businesses and stakeholders, as well as their collective aspirations.

TOP
10

3. TOWNSHIP OF CENTRE WELLINGTON'S TOP 10 PRIORITY ACTIONS & TIMELINES

Experience indicates that presenting a small number of key strategic actions for communities to focus on is far more effective than an extensive list of items that seem impossible to implement. While the remainder of this strategy and the implementation plan will elaborate on these priorities, below are the **Top 10 Priority Actions**, focused on providing initiatives which are necessary to be carried out first and are the foundational actions required to realise the Township of Centre Wellington's economic vision. These initiatives are aimed at strengthening both the community and economy.

TOP 10 ACTIONS	SUGGESTED TIMING	LEAD / SUPPORT
1. Identify all staffing resources and include defined roles and responsibilities for staff. Have in place adequate resources, both human and financial resources, allocated to Economic Development in order to accomplish the actions.	Immediate	CAO
2. Continue the process to acquire and develop industrial lands so that Centre Wellington has a supply of 'shovel ready' land to market;	Immediate	CAO, Planning and Development, Finance, Economic Development
3. Continue to undertake a comprehensive business visitation program which includes a tracking process to capture the results (issues, gaps or opportunities) of the discussions.	Immediate and On-going	Economic Development
4. Create an Investment Readiness Action Plan to include the development of a complete suite of investment ready information.	Immediate	Economic Development
5. Under the direction of the CAO, continue to work towards being a business-friendly community, by improving efficiency, shortening overall response times and reinforcing a seamless building application process.	Immediate and On-going	CAO, Planning and Development
6. Undertake 'due diligence' to determine the possibility and practicality of establishing an Economic Development Corporation with stable funding, resources and a dedicated budget with an aim of better implementing Centre Wellington's economic development program.	Immediate	CAO, Clerks
7. Continue to work through the Downtown Fergus Action Plan, as recommended by Roger Brooks.	On-going	Economic Development
8. To help engage all stakeholders as part of the Centre Wellington economic development program, develop a communications strategy targeting the business community.	Immediate	Communications, Economic Development
9. Continue to work on a collaborative approach to tourism, heritage, culture and the arts establishing shared goals between Township departments and the local organizations, i.e. BIAs, etc. and support and promote them in a coordinated manner.	Immediate and On-going	Economic Development
10. Create an Agriculture Advisory Committee that advocates for, and provides advice and guidance, on agricultural issues and is liaison between Centre Wellington and its farming community.	Immediate	Economic Development

Immediate = 2019-2020 | Short term = before the end of 2021 | Long term = before the end of 2023

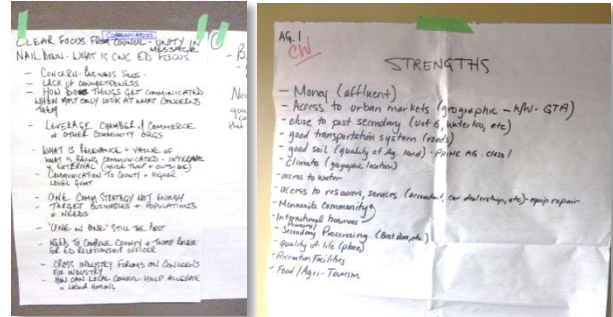


4. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

4.1. Strategic Action Plan Consultation Process

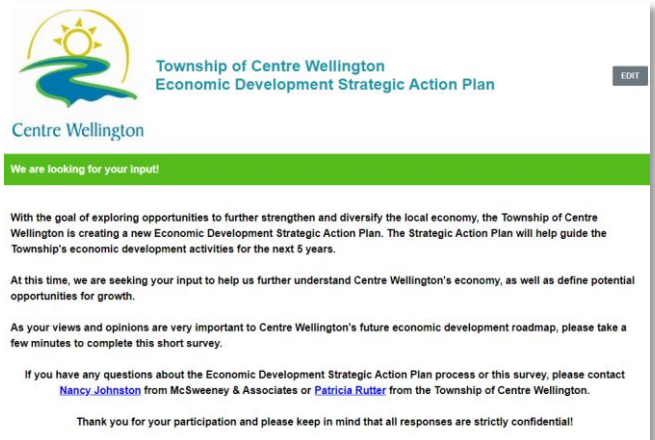
Approximately 300 stakeholders were consulted throughout this process.

The consultations consisted of confidential one-on-one interviews, an online survey open to the public, eight focus groups based on key stakeholder groups and a working session with targeted community leaders and economic development stakeholders.



4.1.1. Interviews & Online Survey

One-on-one interviews were undertaken with economic development stakeholders including members of the Economic Development Task Force, senior Township staff, Regional partners, the Mayor and Council, and key businesses. As well, there was an online survey posted for the general public to provide input. The same six open-ended questions were used to guide both the interviews and the on-line surveys. These questions probed into the major strengths and challenges of doing business in the Township and looked forward to help define future opportunities, aspirations and results. All participants provided feedback on these questions, contributing to a statistically significant result.



4.1.2. Focus Groups

Eight focus groups were held with representation from: the Economic Development Task Force; Senior Township staff; Tourism; Heritage, Arts and Culture; Agriculture; Business; Centre Wellington Chamber of Commerce Executive; and the two Business Improvement Areas – Elora and Fergus.

4.1.3. Working Session & Open House

The Working Session was held November 7, 2018 and was attended by approximately 40 participants including representation from the Mayor and Council, the business community, the agricultural community, Township staff, strategic partners, the Economic Development Task Force and other key community stakeholders.

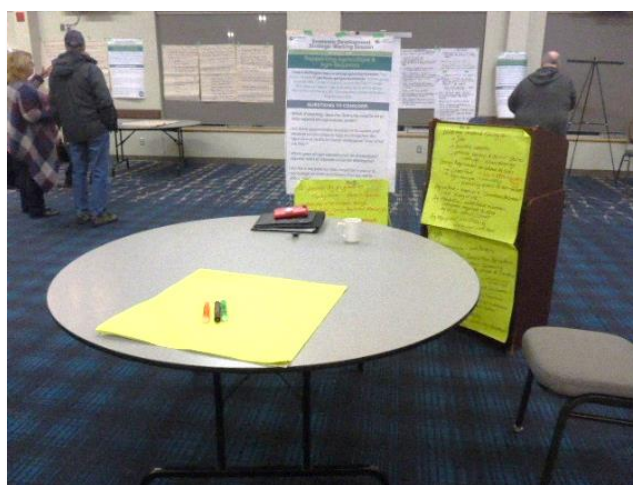


The purpose of the Working Session was to bring together economic development, community and business leaders to review the project findings, to get confirmation on the themes that were derived from the research, and to begin strategizing and crafting action items for each of those themes that emerged from the consultation process. Working groups identified actions that would address the challenges and opportunities under each theme.

The themes brought forward to the Working Session and validated were:

		
Creating a Competitive Climate for Business Retention and Expansion	Becoming More Ready for Investment	Planning for Sustainable, Distinct Downtown Cores
		
Strategic Communications, Connecting Partners and Conveying a Clear Message	Building Tourism and Arts, History and Culture as Main Economic Drivers	Supporting Agriculture and Agri-Business

In the evening of November 7th, after the Working Sessions were completed, an Open House was held presenting the results from the Working Session, as well as providing an opportunity for the community to add their input.



5. A SNAPSHOT OF CENTRE WELLINGTON

A Snapshot of CENTRE WELLINGTON

Location

Centre Wellington is a township in south-central Ontario, Canada, located in Wellington County. The primary communities are Elora and Fergus. The area is agricultural but also includes industries such as manufacturing.

The township was established on January 1, 1999 by amalgamating Fergus, Elora, the Townships of Nichol, Pilkington, West Garafraxa and a part of Eramosa.

Centre Wellington is one of the fastest growing areas in Wellington County. Residents of Centre Wellington enjoy the benefits of small town living, rural life, the Grand River as well as close proximity to many urban centres.



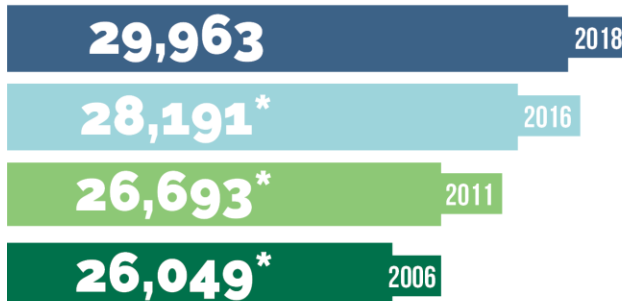
MARKET ACCESS

104km	.....	Toronto
137km	.....	Niagara Falls
168km	.....	Buffalo, NY
325km	.....	Detroit, MI
537km	.....	Ottawa

Demographics

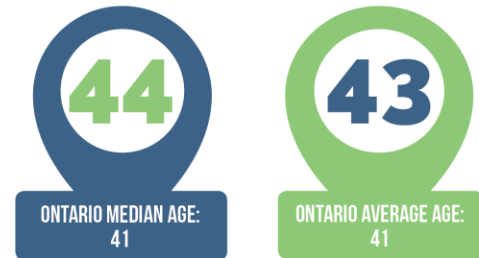


POPULATION



* Data sourced from Statistics Canada Census

MEDIAN & AVERAGE AGE



POPULATION BY GENDER



AGE PROFILE



12%

1 Year Mobility

Residents that had moved within the previous year

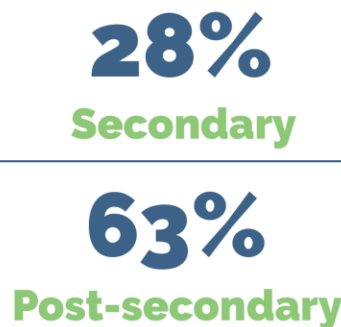


33%

5 Year Mobility

Residents that had moved within the previous 5 years

HIGHEST EDUCATION LEVEL



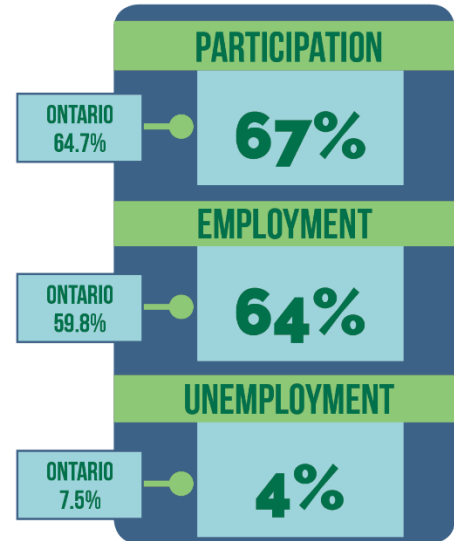
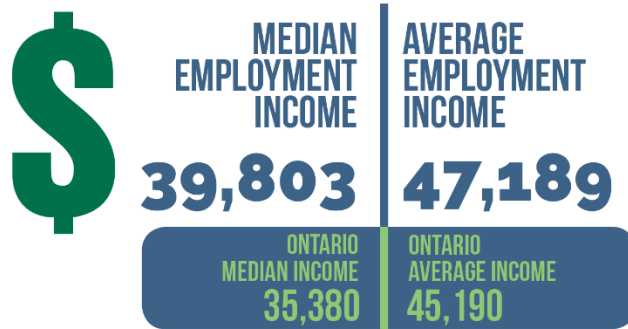
LANGUAGE



All data sourced from Manifold SuperDemographics unless otherwise specified.



Labour Force



RESIDENT LABOUR FORCE EMPLOYMENT

TOP 5 INDUSTRIES**



Manufacturing
(15%)



Health Care &
Social Assistance
(11%)



Retail
Trade
(9%)



Educational
Services
(9%)



Construction
(9%)

TOP 5 OCCUPATIONS**



Sales &
Service
(19%)



Trades, Transport
& Equipment Operators
(17%)



Business, Finance
& Administration
(14%)



Management
(12%)



Education, Law &
Social, Community &
Govt Services
(12%)

**by labour force employment

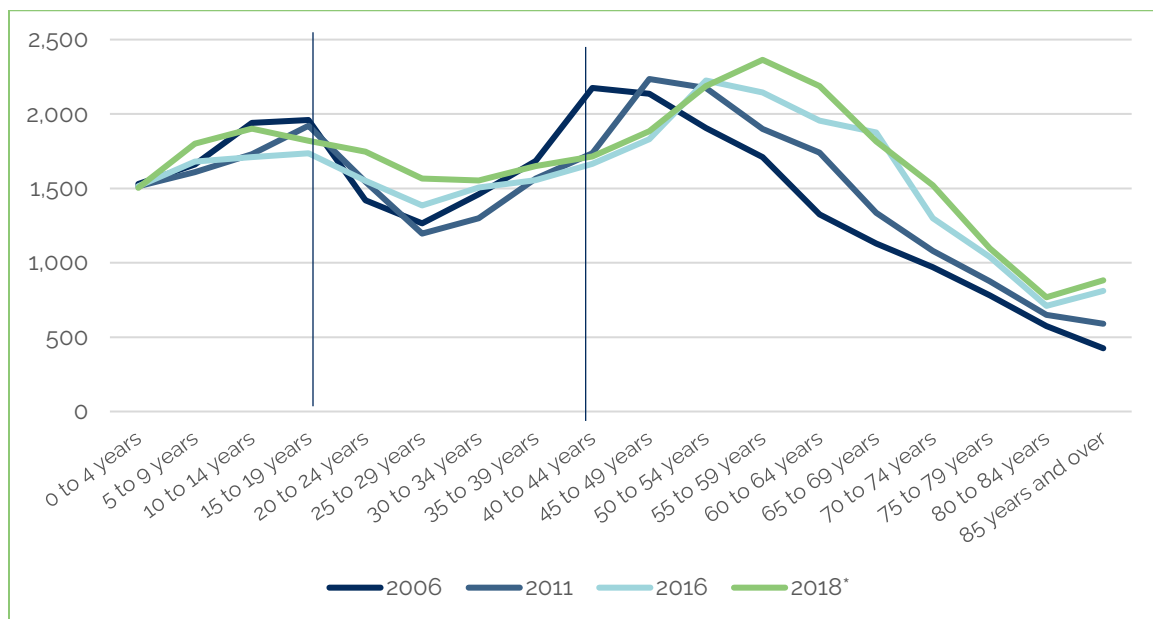
All data sourced from Manifold SuperDemographics
unless otherwise specified.



5.1. Executive Summary of the Situational Analysis

POPULATION: An overview of Centre Wellington's demographics found that the population is growing slightly faster than Ontario (**8.2 % growth over the past 2 census periods compared to 4.6% growth in the province**). Centre Wellington's population growth is driven primarily by a mature adult population (ages 50 and over), however, there has also been growth, to a lesser extent, in young adults moving to the community (ages 25-35). It is important to keep in mind that these two adult groups require very distinct housing and recreational programming.

Population by Age, Centre Wellington, 2006-2018



Source: McSweeney & Associates from Statistics Canada Census data 2006, 2011 and 2016, and Manifold Data Mining Inc. SuperDemographics 2018

PROSPEROUS ECONOMY: Overall the community boasts a prosperous community where **residents have a median employment income 13% higher than that of the province**. This is partly due to a well-educated resident base, where more than half (54%) of the residents ages 25 to 64 attained education at the college level or above. Male and female residents have distinct education backgrounds; males primarily hold degrees or diplomas in the fields of 'Architecture, engineering and related technologies', while women primarily hold degrees or diplomas in 'Health and related fields' or 'Business/management and public administration'.

WORKFORCE: The local workforce also boasts **higher participation and lower unemployment rates compared to Ontario**. When examining the local labour force by age and gender, men ages 15 to 24 were found to have, by far, the highest unemployment and lowest participation rates. This group of men remains an underutilized labour group likely because they are still in school, as indicated by the low participation rate; however, the high unemployment rate (relative to women in the same age group) indicates that men in this age group are looking for work but remain unemployed. Another underutilized labour group is women ages 24 and over. This group has a participation rate significantly lower than men in the same age group.

LABOUR FORCE: Educational Services, Construction, and Retail sectors have the largest labour surpluses; that is, workers with the skills needed to work in these sectors leave to work in other communities. These sectors which could be further attracted into the local economy as they can be well supported by the local workforce. On the other hand, the municipality has large labour gaps in the manufacturing and health care and social assistance sectors, which presents an opportunity to attract these workers to live in the community.

In total, **the local economy supports approximately 13,643 jobs**. The secondary labour force area sustains approximately 374,107 jobs. This figure grew by 9% over the past five years (2013 -2018). The following are a subset of the key occupations identified in the primary and secondary labour shed (those that are growing, emerging, and concentrated), which can be leveraged for labour-based investment attraction:

- Managers in agriculture, horticulture and aquaculture
- Mechanical, electrical and electronics assemblers
- Supply chain logistics, tracking and scheduling co-ordination occupations
- Auditors, accountants and investment professionals
- Longshore workers and material handlers
- Creative designers and crafts persons

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT BASE: Based on employment and exports sales, **farming and manufacturing of machines, metals, motor vehicle parts remain important economic drivers/sectors**. Ventilation, heating, air-conditioning and commercial refrigeration equipment manufacturing is an emerging industry downstream from manufacturing, with concentrated employment levels relative to the province. This industry is the 3rd largest employer after farms and motor vehicle part manufacturing and had 17% employment growth between 2013-2018.

POTENTIAL AREAS OF INTEREST: The Centre Wellington economy also has a potential wood product cluster in the works, as the local economy has seen significant growth in Household and institutional furniture and kitchen cabinet manufacturing, and Lumber, millwork, hardware and other building supplies merchant wholesalers. These two industries are also concentrated in terms of employment in the community, relative to the rest of the province.

Lastly, Architectural, engineering and related services and Utility systems construction are also industries of interest for Centre Wellington, as they are well supported by the labour force and existing industries.

The local economy has also seen a surge in small businesses related to management, scientific and technical consulting services to support these industries.



5.2. Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Aspirations And Results (SCOAR™)



The following comprehensive SCOAR™ (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) Analysis was prepared by analyzing the current statistics and data, a document review plus the feedback from elected officials, staff, community stakeholders, and residents engaged in the consultation.



- Strong agricultural base
- Tourism through the natural heritage, cultural heritage, and cultural industries
- Diverse, vibrant mix of industrial, commercial and rural businesses
- Quality of place
- Two strong urban cores of Fergus and Elora
- People and community
- Competitive geographic location
- Township commitment to supporting economic development



- Lack of availability of lands and buildings for business
- Perceptions and misconceptions about Centre Wellington
- Challenges for the agricultural and farming community
- Workforce and business development challenges
- Urban cores suffering from success of area
- Infrastructure restraints
- Tourism, heritage, arts, culture issues due to underappreciated value of this sector
- Lacking a business focused Township able to handle the demands of growth
- Community constraints affecting the Township



- Agriculture and agri-business
- Have an inventory of shovel ready lands and buildings available with infrastructure to support it
- Tourism, Heritage, Arts and Culture as a significant economic driver
- Better communications to get the word out about the realities of the Township
- To enhance downtown cores
- To build on business development and entrepreneurship



- To attract and retain investors to Centre Wellington.
- To have a supportive township that communicates effectively, connects partners and conveys a clear message to the businesses and residents.
- To have two strong urban cores – Elora and Fergus – working together to strengthen the urban centres of Centre Wellington.
- The Township will be well resourced to support economic development.
- Building a strong tourism, arts, and culture as a main economic driver for Centre Wellington.
- Having a diverse, young workforce to support local industry.
- To continue to support a strong sustainable agricultural sector and grow the sector by encouraging on farm businesses.



- **To attract and retain investors to Centre Wellington.**
 - There will be an inventory of shovel ready employment lands and commercial/industrial space for new businesses interested in locating to Centre Wellington.
 - Businesses will be a priority for the Township
- **To have a supportive township that communicates effectively, connects partners and conveys a clear message to the businesses and residents.**
 - Businesses and residents will have a clear understanding of what is happening in Centre Wellington
- **To have two strong urban cores – Elora and Fergus – each with their own uniqueness working together to strengthen the urban centres of Centre Wellington.**
 - Coordinated programming for Elora and Fergus to capitalize on their uniqueness and benefit from their close proximity to each other

- **The Township will be well resourced to support economic development.**
 - There will be an annual economic development budget that supports the economic development program.
 - Staff in the Township office, including Mayor and Council, will have a greater understanding of economic development and its importance
 - There will be a strong relationship between the businesses in the Township and the Economic Development staff
- **Building a strong tourism, arts, and culture as a main economic driver for Centre Wellington.**
 - Centre Wellington will be a destination for the arts and culture
 - Centre Wellington will have increased the number of people visiting the Township, both day visits and overnight stays
- **Attracting and building on a diverse, young workforce to support local industry**
 - There will be a younger demographic population of skilled workforce living and working in the community.
- **To continue to support a strong sustainable agricultural sector and grow the sector by encouraging on farm businesses.**
 - The Township will continue to see agriculture as a leading sector in the Township with a strong younger demographic population

6. TOWNSHIP OF CENTRE WELLINGTON'S STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

The following action areas have been derived through a rigorous process that included a thorough study of the Township's economic base analysis, a target sector review, a full consultation and stakeholder engagement exercise and the Township of Centre Wellington SCOAR™. These strategic areas of focus, not weighted and in no particular order, are where the Township of Centre Wellington should centre their economic development resources.



Strategic Actions

Priority #1

To ensure the most effective and efficient strategic plan implementation, the Township would benefit from identifying all staffing resources and including defined roles and responsibilities for staff. And to have in place adequate resources, both human and financial resources, allocated to Economic Development in order to accomplish the actions.



BR+E

6.1. Theme #1 – Creating a Competitive Climate for Business Retention and Expansion

The **majority of investment and business development opportunities** that occur in any community will come from existing businesses already operating in the community. Creating a competitive climate is a **process of forming a secure and cost-effective environment for existing businesses and entrepreneurs to remain in or expand their business in Centre Wellington**. For the Township of Centre Wellington, this means understanding the existing business community needs while ensuring the base economic development and community foundations are in place to allow existing businesses the opportunity to keep or expand their business in the Township.

1. Continue to undertake a comprehensive business visitation program which includes a tracking process to capture and follow up on the results (issues, gaps or opportunities) of the discussions.
2. Celebrate local business by:
 - ✓ continuing to support the Chamber of Commerce's Business Excellence Awards program, and
 - ✓ communicating a series of good news stories about local business successes.
3. Develop a program to attract a young, skilled workforce to move to Centre Wellington to support the local business labour shortages by:
 - ✓ exploring options to providing access to transit and transportation mobility options for workforce to access local job opportunities i.e. on-demand, uber, public transit; and
 - ✓ working with Wellington County to develop a housing strategy to attract developers with an aim of building an attainable and diverse mix of housing.
4. Continue to support the success of the Centre Wellington Small Business Centre located in Fergus, while maintaining annual funding, expanding its role for providing seminars and helping to promote its business services within the local business community.
5. Build on the expertise that is found in the new hospital to plan and work with the County to develop a regional medical hub around the new hospital.





6.2. Theme #2 – Becoming More Investment Ready

Investment readiness is about a community's ability and preparedness to attract and secure investment. It is a process of creating an environment for any investor to expand, start or relocate a business in or to Centre Wellington. Being investment ready - able to **provide the appropriate information about business climate and infrastructure** - will greatly impact the Town's ability to successfully retain and attract investment to the community. Becoming more 'ready for investment' could mean engaging in any or all of the following: investment readiness assessments, ensuring the Township has an inventory of places for business to do business, has the needed municipal services (hard and soft) to service the business community, community profile, value proposition, and a website with a breadth of information for investors.

1. To increase the available industrial land:

- ✓ Encourage development and redevelopment of vacant and underutilized commercial and industrial lands.
- ✓ Continue the process to acquire and develop industrial lands (serviced and dry) to increase Centre Wellington's supply of 'shovel ready' land to market.
- ✓ Promote existing dry industrial zoned lands and establish development timelines for these lands.
- ✓ Continue to support and promote financial incentives for industrial properties including the Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Program and Brownfield Financial Tax Assistance Program to increase the availability of industrial lands in the Township.
- ✓ Aim to have at a minimum, one 'certified' site listed with the Ontario' Investment Ready Certified Site Program.

2. Undertake an Investment Readiness Assessment to:

- ✓ Create an Investment Readiness Action Plan to include the development of a complete suite of investment ready information including:
 - ✓ a comprehensive economic development website with current data and information
 - ✓ a community profile and quick facts
 - ✓ investment marketing plan
 - ✓ a full suite of marketing collateral (based on the marketing plan)
 - ✓ real time inventory of available properties including land and buildings, serviced industrial lands and industrial/commercial properties
 - ✓ a formal process in place to service leads and respond to investment attraction and expansion requests (RFPs)
 - ✓ understanding and implementing appropriate financial tools to encourage development and redevelopment

3. Create a database of commercial and industrial space available to connect opportunities with land/buildings (similar to Wellington County's 'farm-link').

4. Continue to support SWIFT and Wellington County to provide broadband throughout the Township.

5. To be aware of and be able to communicate the priority infrastructure projects (i.e. Bridges, municipal services upgrades, increased water and waste water treatment, roads, municipal

facilities, telecommunications upgrades, improvements to the electrical grid, etc.) to ensure existing and potential investors clearly understand where the Township and local/provincial utilities are investing in Centre Wellington's community infrastructure.

6. Under the direction of the CAO, continue to work towards being a business-friendly community, by improving efficiency, shortening overall response times and reinforcing a seamless building application process.
7. Develop a 'development approvals process' card for all non-residential developers to help them better understand the development approvals process in Centre Wellington.
8. Undertake 'due diligence' to determine the possibility and practicality of establishing an Economic Development Corporation with stable funding, resources and a dedicated budget with an aim of better implementing Centre Wellington's economic development program.
9. To ensure the most effective and efficient strategic plan implementation, the Township would benefit from identifying all staffing resources and including defined roles and responsibilities for staff to ensure successful implementation of the economic development program.
10. Continue to engage and support an effective Economic Development Task Force that would provide advice and recommendations to the Mayor and Council and economic development staff on economic development and business development issues.



6.3. Theme #3 – Continue Planning for Sustainable, Distinct Downtown Cores

Main Streets are often the centres of the community acting as public meeting spaces and commercial centres of activity. Economically vibrant main streets that are the heart and soul of the community, often providing an identity for the area and demonstrating pride in the community. Centre Wellington's unique urban centres are in varying states of growth, retail mix and vibrancy.



1. Continue to work through the Downtown Fergus Action Plan, as recommended by Roger Brooks, including:
 - ✓ Creating district gateways into downtown Fergus;
 - ✓ Creating and implementing a vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding signage program and implementing it;
 - ✓ Undertaking a Retail Mix Study and, if needed, developing a retail recruitment program to improve mix of businesses in downtown; and
 - ✓ Encouraging downtown businesses to extend hours to best support their clients needs.
2. Work with the appropriate departments in the Township and County, and in alignment with the Centre Wellington Transportation Master Plan, help improve flow of traffic through the downtowns through traffic calming and reduction and where possible re-routing of truck traffic.
3. Undertake a parking strategy (as per the CIP program) aligning with the Centre Wellington Transportation Master Plan, to help improve parking in the downtowns while looking at innovative solutions to resolve the limited parking availability.
4. Undertake a review of zoning bylaws pertaining to the downtowns to ensure that ground floor commercial spaces are used for intended commercial purposes only.
5. Undertake a housing strategy for urban centres in conjunction with Wellington County to ensure securing a diversity of attainable housing options.
6. Work with the Fergus BIA to assist in the hiring of a full time Manager/Director.
7. Continue to support the Community Improvement Plans initiated and implemented by the County to support the BIAs.
8. Reinvestigate and reinvigorate the 'shop local' promotion and that Economic Development continue to be the lead.

6.4. Theme #4 – Conveying a Clear Message Through Strategic Communications and Creating Partnerships

Communications involves creating dialogue between the Township and other levels of government, local business and residents. **Conveying a clear message ensures** that stakeholders are aware of what is really taking place in the Township and what economic development work is underway as well as the investment opportunities that currently exist. To continue growing the Township's economy, it is important that the Township's business and residential communities be unified and provide a stronger message about how great Centre Wellington is as a community to live and do business.

1. To help engage all stakeholders as part of the Centre Wellington economic development program, develop a communications strategy targeting the business community to:
 - ✓ Leverage the Chamber of Commerce and other community organizations to help to spread the word about Centre Wellington's business success stories;
 - ✓ Clarify roles and responsibilities of the Township vs the County and communicate the differences;
 - ✓ Develop and implement cross industry forums to discuss industry concerns;
 - ✓ Provide greater opportunity for input and education from residents and businesses through various means of effective communications, and
 - ✓ Communicate the CIP program to the business community, residents and council as to the importance and the results.
2. Create and deliver an ongoing training and education program to help Township council, Township staff and/or the community to better understand:
 - ✓ The value and necessity of working together to support the local businesses in Centre Wellington;
 - ✓ The value of farming as not just a 'way of life' but also its relevance as innovative, commercial businesses in the Township; and
 - ✓ The value of economic development what sustainable growth means to the community and stakeholder roles and actions.
3. Continue to develop and implement a comprehensive Centre Wellington signage program throughout the Township.
4. Continue to strengthen the relationships between the County and Township economic development offices through projects that will instill collaboration, communication and participation in the Wellington County Economic Development Group.



6.5. Theme #5 – Building Tourism and Arts, History and Culture as a Main Economic Driver

Centre Wellington has a rich arts and culture scene, complemented by the Township's storied history. **Arts, history and cultural assets help shape the community into what it is today. Tourism is about attracting people** to enjoy Centre Wellington. This includes attracting business and leisure travellers, hosting sporting events, eco-tourism activities, etc. This is also about enticing local residents to spend their leisure time enjoying what Centre Wellington has to offer. Arts, history and culture, as a part of the Tourism sector, are important to consider not only as an economic driver, but also a community building block.

1. Continue to work on a collaborative approach to tourism, heritage, culture and the arts establishing shared goals between Township departments and the local organizations, i.e. BIAs, etc. and support and promote them in a coordinated manner.
2. Undertake a sports tourism feasibility study to determine the community requirements needed to attract more sports events and to maximize the recreation assets of Centre Wellington.
3. Increase the volunteer base in Centre Wellington by:
 - ✓ connecting with the local businesses and engaging their employees; incentivizing volunteerism;
 - ✓ creating a volunteer recognition program; and
 - ✓ developing an inventory of volunteers to draw from when required.
4. Enhance the tourism experience in Centre Wellington for those attending events by providing:
 - ✓ tourism information (hard copy and on-line);
 - ✓ easily accessible parking;
 - ✓ public washrooms;
 - ✓ wayfinding signage;
 - ✓ an event shuttle service;
 - ✓ consistent store openings; and
 - ✓ an enhanced waste collection program.
5. Complete an accommodations study to determine if there is a need for more and varied accommodations to support and increase overnight stays in Centre Wellington.
6. Work with the Elora Centre for the Arts to help them to develop a sustainable model to maintain its viability as a key asset for the arts, culture and heritage of the area.
7. Work with the local tourism organizations to provide training for the local businesses and tourism providers to help them become more confident in using technology to connect with their customers.

8. Continue to partner with and support the RTO4's 'Heritage Destination Development – Elora and Fergus' project.
9. Continue to support Centre Wellington's Cultural Action Plan 2013 including:
 - ✓ Identify, budget for and provide municipal space for arts and cultural groups to utilize including: shared office, rehearsal space, studio, storage, services, equipment, etc.; and
 - ✓ Acknowledge the value of heritage by better protection of heritage assets and promoting heritage properties by coordinating heritage tours, information on heritage properties.



6.6. Theme #6 – Continue Growing Innovative Agriculture and Agri-Business

Centre Wellington has **a strong agricultural sector**. This sector consists of 342 farms and 972 businesses (highest number of businesses in the Township), is strategically located within an agri-food hub around the City of Guelph. With several modern high-tech dairy farms and a strong Mennonite community, the Township has a vibrant, healthy, yet broad agriculture base.



1. Continue to work with the County to capitalize on the agritourism opportunities and expand the sector to include the promotion and development of activities such as rural weddings, on-farm events, farm tours, local food movement, breweries, markets and connect with the urban areas of Elora and Fergus. Promote events and activities beyond the farming community.
2. Be inclusive and encourage collaboration and engagement with the local Mennonites to enhance Centre Wellington's agricultural community.
3. Ensure zoning bylaws are up to date to allow for adequate on-farm housing for on-farm employees.
4. Create an Agriculture Advisory Committee that advocates for, and provides advice and guidance, on agricultural issues and is a liaison between the Township of Centre Wellington and its farming community.
5. Work with the Agriculture Advisory Committee to develop relationships with local farm groups, (eg. Ontario Federation of Agriculture, etc.) to provide a database with municipal, county, provincial, federal regulations and processes that affect agricultural operations.
6. Connect with the University of Guelph research facilities located in Centre Wellington and work with them to determine how the Township of Centre Wellington can best benefit from the research and development and satellite agricultural programs that takes place at the research facilities.
7. Develop an online inventory of industries and businesses in Centre Wellington that provide support and services to the agricultural sector.
8. Work with Wellington County and the Upper Grand District School Board to help create an education program aimed at educating students on careers in agriculture. Promote the careers that can be found in rural Centre Wellington (i.e. Career Cards from Perth County).
9. Complete a business case/feasibility study, with Wellington County to determine if there is a need to establish an Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre of Excellence similar to Northumberland County's not-for-profit, small-batch food-processing facility that supports and advances a sustainable regional local-food economy.
10. Support grassroots local food production through the promotion of the 4 community kitchens and by establishing programs focused on using the kitchens.



6.7. Other Areas of Focus but Not Specific Actions

Organizational Changes to Centre Wellington Economic Development and Tourism

1. Role clarity for economic development, tourism and planning & development and better define the jobs, responsibilities, etc. to ensure there efficient and effective delivery of economic development program and reduction of duplication.
2. Need buy in on economic development from all departments in the Township.
3. Educating council on economic development by getting in front of council frequently so that they are aware of the status of economic development initiatives.

Clarify Roles and Responsibilities of The Township and The County Economic Development Departments

1. In order to continue to build a collaborative partnership between the Township of Centre Wellington and Wellington County there is a need to identify, clarify and map out the roles and responsibilities "who needs to do what" for each level of government in the following specific areas:
 - ✓ Downtown Elora and Fergus
 - ✓ Land use development process and create a brochure
 - ✓ Investment attraction
2. Continue to participate in the Wellington County Municipal Economic Development Group and work cohesively to support and not duplicate the County's initiatives including:
 - ✓ Diversifying the economy by supporting municipal business retention and attraction efforts.
 - ✓ Marketing the region for investment and worker attraction.
 - ✓ Developing rural transit.
 - ✓ Assisting in downtown development.
 - ✓ Providing data analysis and research for regional and local decision making.
 - ✓ Exploring alternative housing solutions (County as lead, facilitate conversations i.e. developers)
 - ✓ Acting as a voice for regional and industry issues.
 - ✓ Growing the Taste Real programme.
 - ✓ Celebrating our businesses and their achievements.
 - ✓ Making connections with industry, Province, Feds.
 - ✓ Working with the member municipalities to develop strategies (i.e. develop and market 401 corridor)
 - ✓ County tourism promotion providing linkages to primary focus areas.

External Projects

If the project is a win, the 'Smart Cities Challenge', spearhead by the City of Guelph, Wellington County and the University of Guelph. should be leveraged to support and grow Centre Wellington's agri-food sector.