



The Corporation of the City of Cornwall
Regular Meeting of Council
Report

Department: Planning, Development and Recreation
Division: Economic Development
Report Number: 2021-61-Planning, Development and Recreation
Prepared By: Bob Peters, Division Manager, Economic Development
Meeting Date: April 12, 2021
Subject: Economic Development – Activity Update

Purpose

To provide Council with an update on the activities of the Economic Development Department for the first quarter of 2021.

Recommendation

That Council receive Report 2021-61-Planning, Development and Recreation.

Strategic Priority Implications

Economic development activities support the City of Cornwall Strategic Priorities and help to establish Cornwall as the progressive sustainable choice along the St. Lawrence River in Eastern Ontario.

The activities outlined in this report follow recommendations in the Cornwall Economic Development Strategic Plan, which was adopted in 2016.

Background / Discussion

Cornwall's economy continues to feel the effects of the public health measures to counteract the effects of COVID-19. In January, Ontario implemented a province-wide shutdown which lasted for four weeks. Cornwall has since moved from the



Orange-Restrict level, to Red-Control, to an Emergency Brake Lockdown situation. As of Thursday April 8, the Province enacted a second Stay-at-Home Order.

The result of these restrictions has been the disruption of typical business operations, felt most notably in restaurant, retail, and hospitality sectors.

Disruptions have been offset to some extent by a variety of support programs offered to local small businesses. These include the Ontario Small Business Support Grant, where recipients will automatically receive a second payment equal to the amount of their first payment, for minimum total support of \$20,000 up to a maximum of \$40,000.

The Cornwall and Area Chamber of Commerce is administering a grant program to help local tourism-based businesses that have been negatively affected by COVID-19. It has also launched a new platform to support events and a complementary ride program to help people get to vaccine appointments.

The Cornwall & The Counties Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) continues to play an important role in helping local business owners navigate this new landscape.

As it did throughout 2020, Economic Development staff have made supporting local businesses a priority. Staff continue to collaborate with other City staff, regional EDOs, provincial and federal officials as well as local community organizations to respond to the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic.

The ChooseCornwall.ca website has become an important hub with well over 300 articles and other resources providing pandemic related information.

The Business Reopening Toolkit offers downloadable posters and graphic design files, fact sheets and sector specific workplace safety protocols - including a maximum occupancy calculator.

Regular email newsletters deliver timely business news to a growing list of over 7500 community and business leaders.

Major Development and Employers

For the most part, Cornwall's largest employers have continued operations with minimal disruptions.

Walmart Logistics is looking to hire an additional 150 people to manage its supply chain activities and bring much needed consumer and grocery goods to Canadians.



Olymel has welcomed 24 people from Mauritius and the Philippines to work in Cornwall and is currently recruiting to fill another 75 positions.

SigmaPoint has received a \$1 million investment from FedDev Ontario to help it boost manufacturing capacity, support made-in-Canada production and add new jobs at its Cornwall headquarters.

ZipGrow has moved into new, larger premises and signed a partnership agreement with Sodexo.

Leclerc, Lallemand, Ridgewood, Morbern and other employers are also maintaining high production levels and are very active in recruiting.

Work continues on the major expansion of the Loblaw / Shoppers Drug Mart Distribution Centre on Optimum Drive. Installation of equipment was delayed due to the pandemic, and the operators of the facility have begun to recruit.



Laframboise Group is currently expanding its new manufacturing complex on Vincent Massey Drive.

Saniton Plastic Corporation has established a plastic bottle manufacturing operation in the Cornwall Business Park.

OPG continues to invest in rehabilitation and revitalization projects at the R.H. Saunders Generating Station, although the Visitor Centre is expected to remain closed for the foreseeable future.

St. Lawrence College continues to offer alternative delivery methods to ensure its students are able to complete their studies. It is hoping to return to in-class instruction in September 2021.

Commercial, Retail and Office

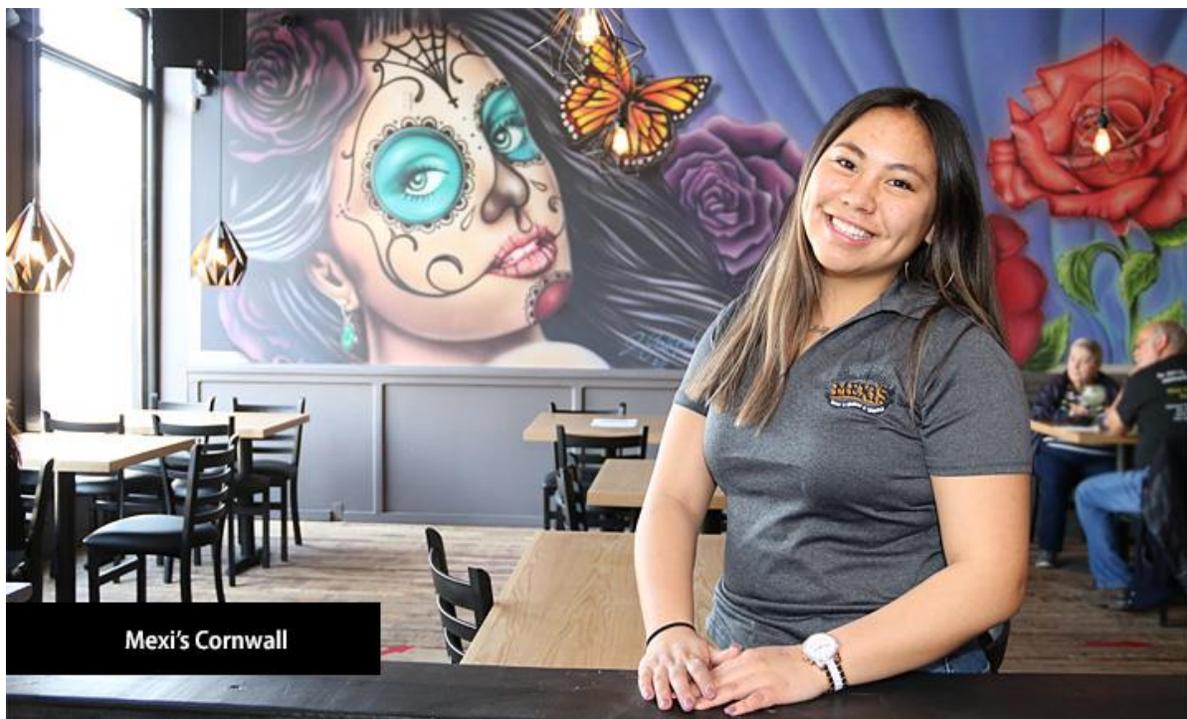
Despite ongoing economic disruptions, there is some positive activity in the commercial and retail sectors.



Fine's Home Hardware have tripled their footprint with a new store on Vincent Massey. TD Bank has opened a new branch at Pitt and Ninth and the LCBO has opened a new store at the SmartCentres plaza.

Businesses servicing the growing interest in outdoor recreational activities have seen an increase in business. This includes cycle shops such as Bicycle World and Total Cyclery as well as other sporting goods stores. Summerheights Golf Links and Archie's Golf Centre were popular in 2020 and are expecting another busy season.

New restaurants include Rudy's Pizzeria, Big Bites and Flavour Kingdom in Le Village and Mexi's on Pitt Street in the Downtown. Joey's Only has relocated to Second Street West and Tim Horton's has opened a new location on McConnell North.



SmartCentres is set to welcome SleepCountry and Mr. Puff's in the coming weeks, and the Iberville development in the East End is expected to welcome two new restaurants, Osmow's and Popeye's.

Shiny Bud has opened two new locations and has been joined by Pot of Gold in servicing the local demand for retail cannabis products.

MSi has established a call centre operation in Cornwall with plans to expand in the future.



In an effort to provide additional assistance to local small businesses, the City will once again be supporting local restaurants in expanding outdoor patios. The popular Pop-Up Shop program will be expanded, and entrepreneurs and artisans will be invited to book their spot later this month.

A new temporary farmer's market will open in June in the Civic Complex parking lot as a response to fill a gap created by COVID-19.

Prior to the pandemic, there was a significant amount of vacant commercial and office space in Cornwall. This situation has not improved.

The retail mix in many communities, including Cornwall, will be challenged as national retailers shrink their physical store network. A growing number of businesses and government offices are also reconsidering their physical footprint and are offering their employees the chance to work remotely. Consumers have also increased their use of online shopping platforms which are dominated by large international retailers such as Amazon.

All of these factors could have a negative impact on the sustainability of small local main street restaurants and retailers.

Sector Specific Marketing Efforts

The Department markets to decision makers in key sectors that align with the community's strengths. These efforts include sector-specific efforts in logistics, food processing, and advanced manufacturing along with commercial real estate.

Industrial vacancy rates in Cornwall continue to be very low, with available built space being very hard to find. In contrast, as noted above, there is a large amount of surplus office and retail space.

The Department has updated its various brochures as well as introduce new maps for the Cornwall Business Park. These resources include the 2020 Year in Review report which can be downloaded from ChooseCornwall.ca.

Over 2500 people have signed up for push notifications for new articles from ChooseCornwall.ca, an increase of 25% in this quarter.

Most trade shows and other in-person marketing events have been cancelled for 2021. The Department did participate in an online version of the Restaurant Show as part of the Ontario East and Ontario pavilions, however as expected, the trade show experience does not translate well in the online world.

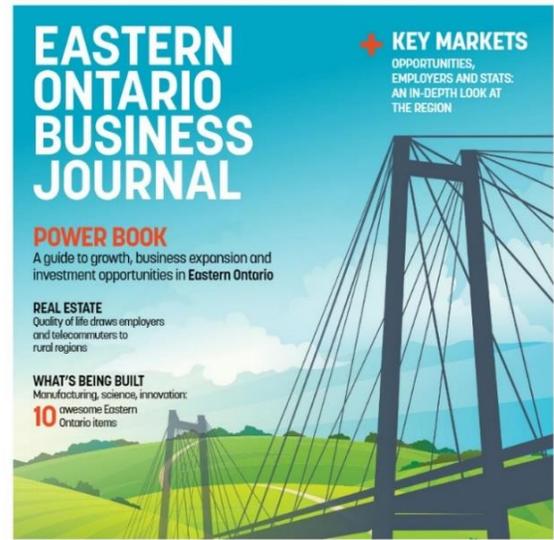


The Department continues to work in partnership with regional, provincial, and federal officials to facilitate trade and attract foreign investment.

One key focus includes various marketing initiatives with the Ontario East Economic Development Commission. Cornwall is part of the Regional Marketing Committee and is chair of the Logistics effort which has led to a number of qualified investment leads. Ontario East will soon launch a new website with an interactive industrial real estate feature.

The Department has renewed a partnership with the Ottawa Business Journal to promote local investment opportunities to business leaders in Ottawa and Eastern Ontario.

The partnership has led to a number of articles on Cornwall, with local companies being profiled to their sizeable readership. The Eastern Ontario Power Book is the latest effort and is expected to reach readers in mid-April.



In part due to the above marketing efforts, interest in Cornwall, in particular the Cornwall Business Park has been extremely strong with qualified interest from several companies. There are currently approximately 140 serviced acres available for sale, with an additional 260 acres available upon completion of the extension of Nick Kaneb Drive.

Resident Attraction

Work continues to attract new residents to Cornwall. Efforts are targeted at young families and individuals that will augment the local workforce and meet the needs of local employers. The Economic Development Department works closely with groups involved with assisting newcomers to settle in Canada.

The Regional Immigration Pilot of the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program has been renewed for another year. In January, a webinar was held to provide updates to major employers and community stakeholders. Interest from potential candidates remains high.

A section of the ChooseCornwall.ca website has been set aside to speak directly to individuals who have the flexibility to work remotely and may consider a move to Cornwall. This information includes a downloadable brochure.

Cornwall is highly profiled in the second edition of STUFF magazine which continues to reach guidance counsellors, employment agents and job seekers via print and online platforms.



The Department has temporarily put on hold efforts to reach graduating students at Canadian universities and colleges as many career fairs have been postponed. The status of the National Job Fair in Montreal, normally scheduled in October, is unclear. Videos from last November's Virtual Cornwall Job Fair continue to receive views on the Choose Cornwall YouTube channel.

New editions of local magazines such as "Cornwall Living" and "Perch" are expected to be published in the coming weeks. These magazines, along with other brochures and guides, form part of the Choose Cornwall welcome kit for new residents.

Over 200 welcome kits were distributed in the first quarter of 2021.

As major employers continue to report problems in recruiting new people, residential attraction efforts will continue. The availability of housing is expected to remain relatively scarce over the short term and is a mitigating factor.

The Department assists local companies in their recruitment efforts by posting job opportunities on the ChooseCornwall.ca job board. This section of the site remains extremely popular, and more and more companies are finding it very helpful in attracting quality candidates.

Tourism staff have continued to work on destination marketing plans and activities with a focus on local and regional travel given the ongoing travel restrictions and safety measures in place due to the pandemic. These efforts will gradually be expanded to national and international audiences as measures are lifted and leisure travel resumes. In addition to tourism efforts, staff have also provided general economic development support to the local business community during the pandemic.

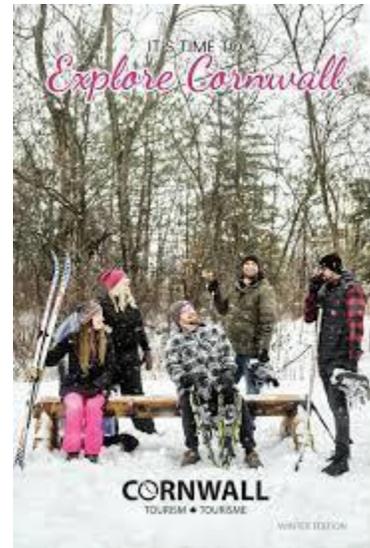
Marketing

In mid-February, Cornwall Tourism distributed a new *Explore Cornwall Winter Guide* that highlighted winter offerings in the Cornwall area. Over 10,000 copies were distributed locally and the guide was also made available on the Cornwall Tourism website. Work is now underway on the Spring/Summer edition of the visitor guide.

Advertising campaigns for 2021 are focused on a number of key areas including cycling, outdoor adventure and leisure travel. This includes profiles in select specialty publications (2021 Cycling in Ontario Guide, Prescott-Russell Visitor Guide, Summer Fun Guide) as well as digital efforts (OntariobyBike.ca, GoAdventureGuide.com).

Trade shows have been cancelled in their traditional formats however the tourism office is participating in some virtually (Outdoor Adventure Show, 2021 Sport Events Congress). Trade shows have traditionally been an effective venue to help raise Cornwall's profile in external markets.

Staff have carried out ongoing marketing activities promoting Cornwall's trails and outdoor spaces including Guindon Park. A series of Google Ads have run to promote Cornwall trails and parks. In addition, 7 mailboxes have been installed in key locations in local parks to hold maps and guides. At Guindon Park alone, over 100 maps were being taken each week during the winter months.





In March, a new “I Love Cornwall” hot air balloon photo booth was introduced in Lamoureux Park to help spread some Cornwall pride and usher in the warmer weather. The photo booth will be placed in the park on select days when the weather and pandemic regulations permit it.



Funding

Cornwall Tourism secured \$10,500 from the RTO 9 Partnership Fund to support winter marketing efforts in Cornwall and SDG Counties this past season. An additional grant of \$41,000 was secured through the Ontario Reconnect Festival & Event program to support winter experiences including Holiday Sparkle, winter activities in Lamoureux Park and the new fat bike and snowshoe trails in Guindon Park.

Tourism staff helped to promote the new Tourism Business Support Program offered through the Cornwall and Area Chamber of Commerce (with federal funding). The program provides Covid-19 recovery support to tourism businesses with non-repayable funding of 80% of eligible costs normally to a maximum of \$4,500. The program is fully subscribed with over 50 applications from Cornwall, SDG and Akwesasne. New applications are being placed on a wait list.

Events

Cornwall Tourism partnered with SDG Tourism and Taste Buds to host Get Dished during the month of February. Over 30 restaurants participated in the event and offered a featured item for delivery or take-out throughout the month. The event helped to generate direct sales for local restaurants while also showcasing local food and drink and the importance of supporting local.



Conferences and sport tourism

Tourism staff continue to lend support to two major events that are planning to proceed this year – the United Empire Loyalists’ Association of Canada 2021 conference (May 2021, virtual format) and the 2021 World Junior A Challenge (December). Staff are also supporting a number of professional fishing tournaments that are confirmed including the Renegade Bass Tour (August), the Franny Cup (October) and the Big Bass Challenge (October).

Tourism product development

Staff have been working closely with entrepreneurs to support and assist with new tourism experiences and activities in the city. Some new ones that will launch this year include Cornwall Food Tours, Waterfront Tours (trishaw tours), multi-day bike tours to Cornwall with Ottawa’s Escape Bicycle Tours and Silver Star Sailing School (sailing tours), among others.

Many local events make use of the Tourism Development Fund, which is supported by revenues from the Municipal Accommodation Tax and is overseen by a separate, stand-alone entity, the Tourism Development Corporation of Cornwall (TDCC).

The TDCC met in March to review five applications for the Tourism Development Fund. To date in 2021 the TDCC has awarded just over \$78,000, \$25,000 of which is for the Cornwall Arts Centre, the second installment of a previously awarded application for \$25,000 a year for four years.

As noted above the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the local tourism sector. This directly impacts event organizers, accommodation providers and local merchants and restaurants. The NAV CENTRE has been closed to the general public since mid-March 2020.

Despite the above, industry experts remain optimistic that demand for accommodations will be strong in the future. As a result, there has been some interest from developers and work continues on the development of a new 80 room hotel on Vincent Massey.

Cornwall Tourism continues to profile positive tourism information on its social media accounts and on its website at CornwallTourism.com.

Cornwall Planning Programs Evaluation Group

Efforts to engage local property owners in improving their properties continue with the administration of community improvement plans, overseen by the Cornwall Planning Programs Evaluation Group (CPPEG).

CPPEG continues to review applications within the CIP's Policy Areas under three community improvement plans in place: Heart of the City CIP, Brownfields CIP and Renaissance Housing Rehabilitation Program.



Notable projects include:

- 113 A Pitt – new mini storage facility.
- 12-16 Second St W – renovation of the building to accommodate the relocation of EOTB, Newcome Employment Welcome Services and the Chamber of Commerce.
- 150 Pitt/26 Second West – interior and exterior renovations to the unit at 150 Pitt to increase the number of commercial units.
- 213-217 Pitt - new façade for Oasis Spa.
- 780 Sydney – Wesleyan Church constructing a new parking area.
- 711 Pitt - Miller Hughes Ford is moving forward with the construction of the new parking area from land purchased from the Wesleyan Church. Site Plan Control has been completed and engineering plans are prepared.
- 100-106 Pitt - New residential units on the second floor.
- 145 Pitt – Soon to be home to a new downtown business: Mike's Printing and Apparel.
- 33 First East – Renovations have commenced on this vacant building.
- 150 Edward – Construction of the Bell Tower in the Cotton Mill District continues.
- 910 Montreal - The owner of the property has engaged an architect and engineer for plans for a new apartment building.



The Renaissance Housing Rehabilitation Program has initiated the start of the process for financial assistance to six (6) residential redevelopment projects within the Renaissance Policy Area.

Cornwall Business Enterprise Centre

The Cornwall Business Enterprise Centre (CBEC) remains busy connecting with area entrepreneurs to discuss business planning, marketing, and financial forecasting.

Webinars

CBEC ran 9 different webinars from mid January to the end of March with over 100 businesses participating. Topics included business planning, marketing, use of social media, financial planning, work-life balance, etc. The Spring series will be announced shortly.

Summer Company

Summer Company will once again operate this summer. Seven (7) students are currently working to develop their business plans and financial forecasts. All seven students have proposed businesses that will be able to operate with COVID-19 distancing regulations.

Starter Company PLUS

The winter cohort of Starter Company PLUS had 14 applicants who worked through the program and produced business plans and financial forecasts. Of the 14 there were 6 applicants approved for a total of \$27,000 in grants. Businesses covered a broad spectrum - a sailing school, trucking, sweet & savoury pies, mobile physiotherapy, water heater installation and repair and personal training. CBEC staff continue to work with these entrepreneurs as they continue to build their businesses.

Following a March intake, CBEC staff are currently conducting initial interviews with 40 new applicants to determine the mix of webinars that will be required over the next 2 to 3 months. The next grant pitches are scheduled for June 2021.

Exploring Main Street Video Series

Local "main street" businesses have been featured with short promotional videos that can also be used by each business to augment their website and other marketing efforts. 23 videos have been produced as part of the Exploring Main Street video series. The videos have proven to be very popular, garnering over 10,000 views so far – and counting. The videos were produced by two local



videographers and fully funded via the Digital Main Street program. The videos are hosted on both the Choose Cornwall and Cornwall Business Enterprise Centre You-tube channels and have been profiled on social media.



Digital Main Street Program

Over 24 businesses in Cornwall and SDG area are improving their online presence with the help of the Digital Mainstreet program.

Digital Consult Program

The Digital Consult Program provides one-on-one consultations with local experts in a variety of topic areas, including finance, marketing, legal matters, etc. The program is available to any business that needs advice as they operate through and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants are able to access a maximum of three consultations. A grant of \$32,000 was obtained to run this program which began in December and will conclude by September 30th, 2021.

A total of 20 businesses have taken advantage of Digital Consult Program to date.

Information on upcoming webinars and local support programs is regularly updated on BusinessEnterpriseCentre.ca.



Medical Recruitment/Scholarship

The Medical Scholarship program continues to be promoted via ChooseCornwall.ca, the City website, social media, and sector specific efforts. There a number of students actively considering applying for the medical scholarship in 2021.

The Adopt a Medical Resident program is expected to wrap up at the end of the second quarter.

Efforts to facilitate the recruitment of medical professionals to Cornwall continues as well. A physician has been successfully recruited so far this year, and more are expected this year pending Medical Recruitment Agreements.



Report Approval Details

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Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Apr 8, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Bob Peters - Apr 8, 2021 - 2:52 PM

Mark A. Boileau - Apr 8, 2021 - 2:55 PM

Maureen Adams - Apr 8, 2021 - 3:47 PM