



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

Department: Planning, Development and Recreation  
Division: Economic Development  
Report Number: 2021-149-Planning, Development and Recreation  
Prepared By: Bob Peters, Division Manager, Economic Development  
Meeting Date: September 13, 2021  
Subject: Economic Development – Activity Report

**Purpose**

To provide Council with an update on the activities of the Economic Development Department for the previous six months.

**Recommendation**

That Council receive Report 2021-149-Planning, Development and Recreation.

**Strategic Priority Implications**

Economic development activities support the City of Cornwall Strategic Plan 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**

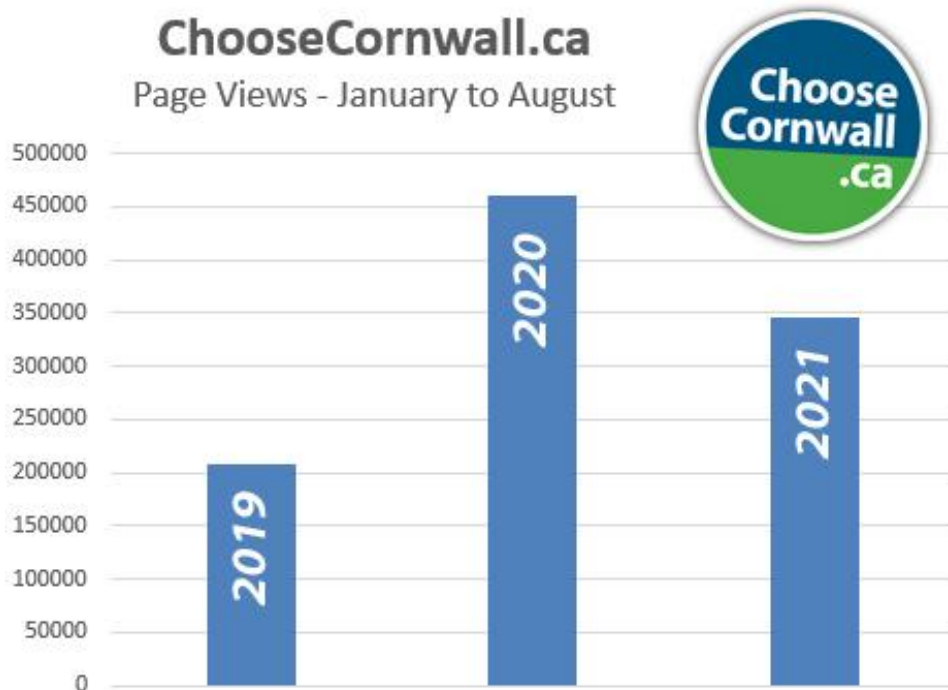
Cornwall's economy continues to rebound from the effects of the pandemic, however a number of public health measures continue to impact consumers and businesses alike. On July 16, the Province moved into Step Three of the Roadmap to Reopen, which relaxed many of the restrictions that were in place to



counteract the effects of COVID-19. Most recently, Ontario announced that proof of vaccination would be required in select settings starting September 22.

Cornwall Economic Development staff continue to support local businesses in adapting to an everchanging business environment. This includes City staff from a variety of other departments, regional EDOs, provincial and federal officials as well as local community organizations.

The ChooseCornwall.ca website has become an important information hub with a variety of articles and downloadable resources. Activity on the website increased significantly during the pandemic, and remains high, with the website delivering over 130,000 page views during the months of June, July and August: an increase of 64% compared to the same time period in 2019. From January to August, the website delivered 346,000 page views.



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. Many if not most, continue to hire to expand their workforce.



Leclerc and Olymel held separate job fairs in August, looking to hire over 100 additional people.

Cornwall's largest employer, Walmart Logistics, continues to recruit for multiple positions and is making ongoing physical improvements to its facilities.

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

Work is just about complete on the major expansion of the Loblaw / Shoppers Drug Mart Distribution Centre on Optimum Drive. Operators of the facility continue to recruit.

Laframboise Group continues to expand and add capacity at its manufacturing complex on Vincent Massey Drive.

CMP Advanced Mechanical Solutions is establishing a 40,000 sf mechanical assembly operation in Cornwall. This is in addition to a 90,000 sf distribution facility it has operated since last year.

Saniton Plastic has established a plastic bottle manufacturing plant and is also producing its own TrueNorth brand of hand sanitizers.

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 has welcomed back over 1100 full time students to the Cornwall Campus, under strict public health and safety guidelines. International students account for approximately 15% of the student population.

### **Commercial, Retail and Office**

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

The Eastern Ontario Training Board has opened its new offices on Second Street in Downtown Cornwall. The 5,000 sf campus-style office is also home to the Newcomer Employment Welcome Services Centre, the Cornwall Chamber of Commerce and CÉSOC Settlement Program for Francophones.

The New Pitt Pouterie restaurant has opened at the corner of Pitt and Third, and Aurra Coffee has opened a coffee and taco stand on Brookdale.



SleepCountry and the LCBO opened earlier this year, and SmartCentres will be celebrating the opening of Winners and Mr. Puff's in the near future.

Work is proceeding at the Iberville commercial plaza in the East End, and two new restaurants - Osmow's and Popeye's - are expected to open in the Fall.

Cornwall Square is welcoming The Beauty Academy, which will operate a hair styling and beauty training centre on the main level of the mall.

I Sabourin Law Office has opened in Le Village, Mike's Printing and Apparel has opened in Downtown, and Bicycle World relocated their store to Ninth Street.

Western Canadian fuel retailer Centex has continued their foray into Ontario with the opening of a new gas station and convenience store on Brookdale Avenue.

Work is progressing on the Hampton Inn development on Vincent Massey. Once completed the new hotel will feature 80 rooms.



Local demand for retail cannabis products continues to attract retailers. Groove Cannabis has opened its doors at Eastcourt, while work is progressing on the High Ties store in Le Village and the Tokyo Smoke store at the Choice Properties Plaza at Ninth and Pitt.

The Cornwall Farmer's Market had a successful season and the central location proved popular with vendors and consumers.

A significant amount of commercial and office space in Cornwall remains vacant, especially on the office side with a number of large office complexes largely inactive. Demand for large scale office space is not expected to improve over the short-to-mid term.

Demand for retail space is also expected to be weak over the next two quarters, with the exception of quick service restaurants and small speciality retail.

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.

The Cornwall Chamber of Commerce has received \$110,000 in funding from FedDev Ontario to develop a shop local campaign. This is in addition to other programs available including the *Digital Main Street* program and the new *My Main Street* initiative.

In May the *Cornwall Living* magazine returned to profile many new businesses. It was followed by a new *Perch* magazine as well.



## **Residential Development**

There are a number of major new residential projects underway in the city. In addition to ongoing development of existing subdivisions, the following are some of the more recent major projects:

- Southbridge Care Homes (160 long term beds) – ongoing construction
- Revera (128 long term beds) – construction to begin soon
- Heritage Heights Retirement Home (80 units) – construction has begun





- Bell Tower (56 units) – ongoing construction
- Sunset Court (44 units) – nearing completion
- Prime Square (44 units) – construction to begin this fall
- Cornwall & Area Housing Corp. ( 77 units) – construction to begin soon
- Saunders Drive subdivision – a number of homes are under construction

### **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.

Over 3200 people have signed up for push notifications for new articles from ChooseCornwall.ca, an increase of 25% over the past 6 months.

Most trade shows and other in-person marketing events have been cancelled for 2021. The Department will participate in the National Job Fair later this fall, and will host a networking reception for the Ontario East Municipal Conference in October (the rest of the conference will be virtual).

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 has launched a new website with an interactive industrial real estate feature.

The Department has continued its 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.

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.

Cornwall has been profiled in a number of publications in Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto. Advertisements have highlighted the high quality of life in the region, the urban amenities found in the city and the relatively affordable housing.

Local magazines *Cornwall Living* and *Perch*, along with other brochures and guides, form part of the Choose Cornwall welcome kit for new residents.

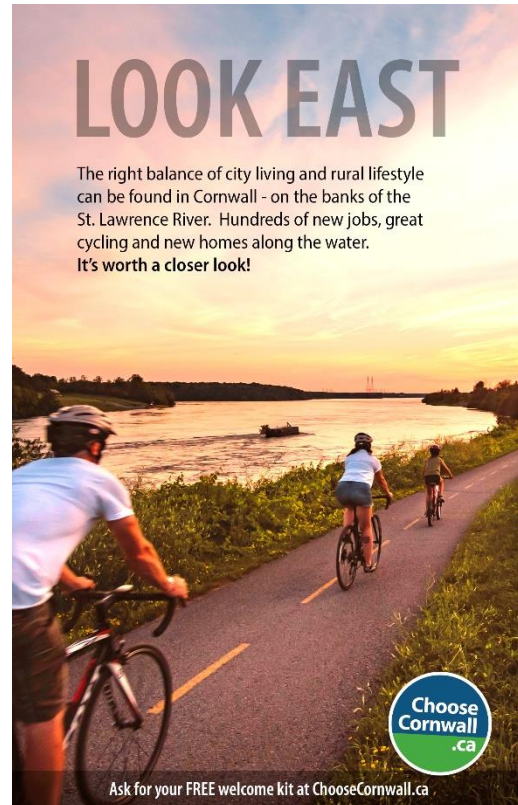
As major employers continue to report problems in recruiting new people, residential attraction efforts will continue. The availability of housing is expected to remain relatively scarce over the short term and is a mitigating factor.

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

In conjunction with Ontario's reopening framework, Tourism staff were busy planning and carrying out destination marketing efforts during the second and third quarters of the year with a primary focus on local and regional travel.

The tourism sector continues to be one of the most heavily impacted sectors from the pandemic, with a number of tourism-related businesses





(accommodations, attractions, live entertainment venues and others) having yet to fully resume regular operations. Workforce shortages are also a critical issue facing many tourism and hospitality businesses.

Despite these challenges, there are some positive signs for the local tourism sector with both local accommodations and businesses and Cornwall Tourism seeing a return of leisure travelers during the peak summer months.

## Marketing

In May, Cornwall Tourism published a new *Explore Cornwall Visitor Guide*, a bilingual publication highlighting attractions, amenities and experiences in the city and area. A total of 50,000 copies have been distributed (a second printing run is being considered). The guide is also available digitally on the Cornwall Tourism website.

In an effort to encourage staycations and patronage at local businesses, Cornwall Tourism once again partnered with local MP Eric Duncan and SDG Tourism to mail copies of the Cornwall and SDG Visitor Guides to every household in the riding.

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, sponsored content in select newspapers as well as digital efforts. A series of FAM (familiarization) tours and social media influencer campaigns have also been developed in partnership with Regional Tourism Organization 9 (RTO 9) to highlight unique food and drink, outdoor adventure and accommodation experiences in Cornwall.

The above efforts have been complemented by ongoing activity on the Cornwall Tourism social media platforms, all driving traffic to the *CornwallTourism.com* website.

Activity on the website has largely returned to pre-pandemic levels, with the website delivering 100,000 page views during the months of June, July and August, an increase of 24.5% compared to the same time period in 2019.





Cornwall Tourism secured funding under the Canada Summer Jobs program to assist with the hiring of two student tourism ambassadors for the summer months. A pop-up visitor information centre was established at the entrance to the Cornwall Civic Complex and Lamoureux Park and proved to be very popular.

The location of the visitor information centre is advantageous given its close proximity to the waterfront, the Downtown area and the cycling trails, with many visiting cyclists choosing to park and set off from the Civic Complex parking lot. Through a unique partnership with Destination Ontario, a third student from the Ontario Travel Information Centre in Bainsville joined the Cornwall Tourism team to provide additional visitor services support in Cornwall.

### **Conferences, events and sport tourism**

In April, Tourism supported the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada (UELAC) 2021 conference which was hosted virtually from Cornwall over four days, with 200-plus delegates registering from around the world. Tourism staff continue to lend support to other major sport tourism events including the 2021 World Junior A Challenge in December and numerous professional fishing tournaments in the summer and fall.

### **Tourism product development**

Staff have been working closely with entrepreneurs to support and assist with new tourism experiences and activities in the city. These experiences have the potential to attract additional visitors to Cornwall and by extension, spin-off visits and purchases at other local businesses and amenities. Some of these new businesses include:

- Waterfront Tours (waterfront pedicab tours)
- The Craft Shack (waterfront craft beer and entertainment)
- Cornwall Food Tours (food tour picnics and in-person food tours)
- Boatingery Adventure Trends (kayak rentals at Guindon Park)
- Escape Bicycle Tours (multi-day bike tours from Ottawa).

Staff have also been working closely with the team at the Native North American Travelling College on Cornwall Island to highlight this unique tourism offering in the area.

The Tourism Development Fund is in place to support new event and tourism product development. The Fund 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 June to review two applications for the Tourism Development Fund. To date in 2021 the TDCC has awarded just over \$80,000, \$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.

### **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).

The housing market has been extremely strong through the pandemic with contractors and developers at capacity and significant new housing starts. Even still, the shortage of housing for new workforce needs has encouraged the municipality to develop new programming for hi-density residential in key areas of the city using a tax increment funding strategy through the Heart of the City CIP.

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:

- 1 Second St E – Prime Square construction has started
- 113 Second St E – new location for Ming & Associates and BDO
- 116 Pitt St – new restaurant Carrots~N~ Dates, owners relocating from Windsor to open their second location in Cornwall
- 12-16 Second St E – the relocation of Eastern Ontario Training Board and the Chamber of Commerce to the newly renovated space took place on June 1<sup>st</sup>.
- 180-182 Ninth St W – new location for Menard~Robertson custom home builders
- 24 Ninth St E – relocation of Bicycle World
- 30 Sixth St E – new location for the Seaway Valley Theatre Company
- 146 Chevrier – Centre Charles-Emile Claude continuing with infrastructure renovations to continue help serving the community



## **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 21 different webinars from mid January to the end of June with over 140 businesses participating. Topics included business planning, marketing, use of social media, financial planning, work-life balance, etc. The Centre will be releasing a new schedule of webinars that will take place over the next three months.

### **Summer Company**

Summer Company operated with a full complement of seven (7) students participating. Businesses included an ice cream shop, tutoring, flower crowns, lawn maintenance, on-line retail, plant sales and the sale of chicks and eggs.

All seven students were able to operate with COVID-19 distancing regulations and successfully completed the program.

### **Starter Company PLUS**

The spring cohort of Starter Company PLUS had 29 applicants who worked through the program and produced business plans and financial forecasts. Of the 29 there were 9 applicants approved for a total of \$32,700 in grants. Businesses covered a broad spectrum – bath products, metal art, canvas art and jewellery, footcare, a law office, maple products, microgreens, fitness program and nutrition. CBEC staff continue to work with these entrepreneurs as they continue to build their businesses.

Following an August intake, CBEC staff are just beginning to work with a new cohort of 31 applicants. Grant pitches are scheduled for November 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. 31 videos were produced as part of the Exploring Main Street video series. The videos have proven to be very popular, garnering over 20,000 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 75 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 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

A total of 54 businesses have taken advantage of Digital Consult Program to date, for a total of 75 consultations.

Information on upcoming webinars and local support programs is regularly updated on [BusinessEnterpriseCentre.ca](http://BusinessEnterpriseCentre.ca).





## Report Approval Details

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Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Sep 9, 2021

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

**Mark A. Boileau - Sep 9, 2021 - 10:10 AM**

**Tracey Bailey - Sep 9, 2021 - 12:11 PM**

**Maureen Adams - Sep 9, 2021 - 3:29 PM**