

Action Plan Summary

In the absence of an economic development plan, the Town has by default adopted a laissez-faire approach to economic development. Before anything else, the Town leadership first needs to decide whether it wants to continue with the laissez-faire approach or adopt a more a supportive pro-active stance towards business. That decision materially affects what action to take, the level of effort and the resources to apply.

Council needs to enthusiastically embrace whatever position they adopt and be prepared to deal with some tough compromises as well as reap the rewards. To say one thing and then act differently is the worst possible outcome because this will further erode trust and goodwill no matter what position is adopted. What businesses want most of all is certainty and clarity. Once businesses know what the business climate will be, they can make their future business decisions accordingly.

It is impossible to present an action plan for all scenarios so the opportunities and action plan presented here presumes adoption of a pro-active approach. At the Town's current juncture, pro-active economic development means developing an economic development plan as a framework for decision making, putting a structure in place to support it, and having someone dedicated to moving things forward. Therefore, the first step is to hire an economic development person. Initially this person's responsibility would be to re-establish the Economic Development Committee with representation from all sectors of the business community for the purpose of drafting an economic development plan.

The economic development plan will detail the focus and scope of future economic development. (It should be consistent with the Town's overall strategic plan but since that is not ready yet some tweaking may be required later when it is available.) The plan will also detail the target measures, action plan how to get there and how quickly, with a more fulsome budget for the next fiscal period.

As a small town, Erin resources and budget are at premium so working with other jurisdictions to capitalize on opportunities and leverage resources will stretch Erin's economic development dollars. Furthermore, the economic development work undertaken by the County of Wellington provides a practical starting point to frame Erin's economic development focus. Therefore it is recommended that the Town of Erin adopt the County's four sectors (plus Retail) as priorities for economic development and follow their lead insofar as it makes sense for Erin.

The County's work is well underway so to the extent that Erin would like to influence this work to further Erin's interests, there is some urgency to get the resource person and Economic Development Committee in place. As a side note, since the Town already has an existing relationship with the Hills of Headwaters, it would likewise be beneficial to capitalize on relevant initiatives under that umbrella, and by extension, opportunities related to the 2015 Pan-Am Games.

The business community are equally important allies for successful economic development so priority must also be given to repairing the relationship between the Town and the business community. Many

said this survey was a good first step so another primary activity for the economic development person is to build on this success with further outreach.

Lastly, there are opportunities in the County's action plan that would have immediate benefit to businesses or be of value in the economic development planning process. An additional responsibility for an economic development person would be to participate in and capitalize on these immediate opportunities; Table 1 summarizes these opportunities.

In summary, the immediate action plan for the Town of Erin is:

1. Retain an economic development officer
2. Outreach to the business community
 - Follow up with interview participants wishing further information and help
3. Capitalize on the immediate opportunities available through the County of Wellington's economic development initiatives (as per Appendix 2), and secondarily with Hills of Headwaters
 - Partner with Mount Forest to conduct a First Impressions Community Exchange (Sept/Oct)
 - Develop a tourism opportunity leveraging the 2015 Pan-Am Games
4. Re-establish an Economic Development Committee
5. Develop an economic development plan for the Town of Erin
6. Develop a community profile with socio-economic information and imagery highlighting the competitive advantages of Erin

County Opportunities Relative to the Town of Erin's Current Situation

All of the activities proposed the County's BR+E Action Plan have value for the Town of Erin; it is a question of degree. Without an economic development plan that defines the focus, scope and priorities for Erin it is difficult to anticipate exactly how pertinent each of the activities will be to the Town of Erin. However, weighing all the factors discussed above, Table 1 evaluates how the County's planned activities have value for the Town of Erin.

Legend:

1 – Shape:

These are opportunities that will have direct application for Erin and therefore provide an opportunity to actively participate in shaping the initiative.

2 –Participate:

In some instances, these opportunities offer immediate value to local businesses. In others, they will provide valuable research for the future Economic Development Committee in the course of developing an economic development plan for the Town of Erin.

3 – Premature:

These opportunities are too premature to evaluate the value to the Town of Erin because other planning activities have to play out first, e.g. sewage treatment plan, community vision and

strategy, or they are geographically distant from Erin. Nevertheless, they are of worthy of watching for lessons learned and/or future application with modification.

Table 1

Opportunity	Action By the end of 2014		Action After 2014	
Promote Wellington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment sector profiles ED website with videos DFAIT Latin America trade convention Festivals and Events Guide 	2 2 2 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Familiarization tours (by sector or general investment) Get on the radar of the Investment Branch of MEDTE Develop potential for agri-super region Discuss potential for newcomers strategy* RTO4 tourism development (enrich existing assets i.e.: Grand River, festivals, trails, IPM) Research on how to promote Wellington – lifestyle - we are a health and wellness community (Safe Community, Active Transportation, Quality of Life, spas, Taste Real) Create a video to highlight Signage strategy 	1 2 3 3 3 1 1 2
Support businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link companies with apprentices* ED website business resources list Greater media promotion of WWCFDC Minto Small Business Incubator (replicate elsewhere?) 	1 2 2 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a “Wellington Mentors” business resource E-newsletters for businesses (highlight a new business, show business resources, funding for apprentice hiring, land available, industry networking etc.) Discuss how to communicate financing beyond the traditional bank 	2 2 2
Encourage our downtowns to leave an indelible impression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss opportunities for encouraging residential/commercial mix downtown 	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “First Impressions” for each downtown in Wellington Municipal Community Improvement Plans Research on successful Community Improvement Plans (IntraWest assessment of our downtowns) 	2 1 2
Advocate for level playing field in utilities infrastructure (natural gas, electricity, internet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate BR+E results with various Ministries 	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As per County Council recommendation 	3
Training gaps for small/medium sized businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer 3 workshops (i.e.: management skills, cost control, health and safety, marketing) in various locations across Wellington Map who is providing what training 	2 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traveling business coach hired for one year (export to accounting advice) Out of the box training “When you run into a cash flow problem, what do you do?” 	2 2

Opportunity	Action By the end of 2014		Action After 2014	
	when, to cross promote using one calendar, host on ED website			
Support business networking opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WOWSA Wellington North Showcase Waterloo Regional Innovation Summit Mapleton Business Networking Event Mayor's Breakfasts Northern Wellington Young Professional's Network 	3 3 2 3 2 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host 2015 Wellington business symposium (futurist speaker, use sector profile to show what's in your own backyard, offer training, networking, tradeshow, awards?) 	2
Business directory for promotion and supply chain development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an online business directory for Wellington 	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance of online business directory 	2
Workforce skills gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wellington Waterloo Manufacturing Day*Oct 3 Working in Rural Wellington Health Care Human Resource Strategy 2014-2017 Labour Market Plan Wellington Waterloo Dufferin (June consultations begin) 	2 1 2 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce careers demanded and available locally to grade 10 students, showing full career path (how did I get here in my career)* County to engage school board and career counsellors to formalize partnership Speakers' Bureau 	1 2 2
Affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion on how do we encourage people to buy a home in Wellington (affordable options?) 	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion on how to encourage developers to build multi-unit dwellings (linked to DCs? Financing?) Discussion to involve Wellington builders. Research redevelopment of downtowns as affordable attractive options 	3 3
Vacant land/building inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create relationship with Guelph Wellington Real Estate Board 	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipalities to encourage local inventories to be promoted via real estate board 	2
Explore employment commuting patterns*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of cost-shared rural transportation models 	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is this a workforce skills gap (commuters that could possibly work locally) or is this a transit problem (workers can't get to their workplace) 	1
Provide consistency in municipal business development services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MEDTE to introduce themselves to municipality and offer support to business enquiries 	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing of municipal development process, sharing best practices with local building, planning and ED officials, to provide upfront expectations for process and timelines 	2
Develop local food sector in Wellington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taste Real Local Food programme 	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop business to business event beyond Wellington, partnering with Waterloo to encourage greater value chain development 	2