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Hastings

COUNTY

Economic & Tourism Development
2021 YEAR END REPORT

2021 was another busy, productive and successful year for Economic and Tourism Development in Hastings County. It also was far from normal considering the first half of the year involved emergency shutdowns and strict conditions placed on businesses. Once most restrictions lifted in June, the County was again host to a large volume of visitors converging on our area for staycations and daytrips. Realizing the pandemic was not going to end anytime soon, and the new challenges and opportunities, staff utilized the time during shutdowns to coordinate separate one-on-one meetings with all fourteen individual member municipalities. Discussions centred on identifying specific investment opportunities and objectives for economic and tourism development moving forward. The meetings led to the creation of six new strategic Actions and SMART Goals to best guide County-wide economic and tourism development and was approved by County Council. Alongside preparation and implementation of the new SMART Goals, the hard work by staff throughout 2021 as outlined throughout this report includes:



Meetings took place, and continue, with developers interested in building a new hotel in Bancroft and one in the southern area of the County;



Through our partnership with the Ontario East Economic Development Commission, and working in tandem with all member municipalities and local realtors, available commercial/industrial properties, land and buildings are now featured on an interactive and online site selection portal launched in 2021 to promote investment across the County;



Supported the revamp of HarvestHastings.ca to further expand the ability of consumers to purchase locally grown food products including training for producers on how to update their profiles and sell products through the new website. 173 local producers are listed on the new website and 64 were featured in the published 2021 magazine/directory;



Businesses seeking help, and anyone wanting help starting a business, continued to benefit from our in-house business coaching – 1-on-1 support;



Continued to promote and regularly updated a clearinghouse of information on government supports on the new [Hastings.ca](https://www.hastings.ca) website to help get businesses through shutdowns and restrictions;



During the first half of the year especially and throughout 2021, developed and promoted day-trip itineraries geared towards local residents to encourage them to support local businesses and explore local;



Through direct phone calls, emails and mass communications, staff regularly informed local business owners of financial support from senior levels of government that help modify their operations in order to safely serve the general public. This included grants to help with setting up an online version of their business, purchase of large-scale PPE or sanitizing equipment, implementation of digital tools, adding plexi glass partitions and the expansion of outdoor patio space among others;



Hosted virtual seminars during the first half of 2021 to assist willing local business owners with the development of new purchasable experiences/packages. Staff continue to work closely with the participants to help get their new offerings operational and marketed;



To elevate awareness of business opportunities, and in response to the SMART Goals report, staff commenced development of a unique new initiative to work with willing building owners to cover vacant commercial storefront windows with attractive window wraps. Formally launching in 2022, this campaign will strive to inspire entrepreneurs, both locally and from afar, to consider starting/moving their business to an available physical location, especially in the downtown areas.

The following report showcases key activities and achievements in 2021. Where noted, some of the outcomes are for the period following the adoption by County Council in 2017 of the new economic and tourism development mandate: the Economic Development Mandate and Operations Review.

INVESTMENT MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

With the influx of visitors from urban and surrounding areas, and the approval by County Council of the Economic Development SMART Goals, 2021 was a year of ramping up our economic development activities and some exciting marketing initiatives.

In order to provide more practical information to visitors, developers were contracted to expand the Hastings.ca website, ready to be launched for the summer season of 2022. Business and event listings, as well as more detailed information about our 14 member municipalities are some of the features that will be made available. In 2021 Hastings.ca saw a 20% increase in visitors, proving that the site is gaining recognition with a wider audience. The top three known locations of visitors in order are Toronto (13%), Belleville (10%), and Ottawa (4%).

A campaign to promote the vacant commercial properties in the downtown areas of Hastings County was also put into motion. By working with artist Peggy Collins to fill the windows of these empty storefronts with colourful images of businesses, it will be a combined marketing and streetscape beautification initiative set to be implemented in the spring of 2022.

In the meantime, blog posts and social media posts continued to focus on the people and businesses who make Hastings County such a unique and diverse place to live. Content was centred on highlighting new businesses, and inspiring visitors and residents to make Hastings County a year-round shopping and travel destination. Facebook followers grew to more than 2,953 (+17%) and Instagram followers grew to 2,430 (+29%).

At the end of 2021, a campaign produced in partnership with Postmedia was launched, telling the stories of five different business owners who left the city to make their home in Hastings County. This campaign, targeting the Greater Toronto Area was seen by 156,000 individuals and received 19,467 “click throughs” proving an opportunity to attract urban residents and “lone eagles” to Hastings County.

28,104

Total Visitors to Hastings.ca
(up 20.7% from 23,284 in 2020)

48,376

Total Page Views on Hastings.ca
(up 9.35% from 44,238 in 2020)

746,000

Social Media Impressions
(up 144% from 305,485 in 2020)

FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS 2,953
(up +17%)

INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS 2,430
(up +29%)

BY THE NUMBERS

Hastings County supports new and existing businesses with 1-on-1 business coaching

249 Inquiries/requests for in-depth business assistance
(1306 since 2017)

53 Assisted projects
(398 since 2017)

16 Existing businesses assisted
(111 since 2017)

9 Businesses opened
(92 since 2017)

17 Jobs created
(137 since 2017)

\$980K in total investment by business owners [startup/
expansion costs] *(\$9.7 million since 2017)*

\$16.2M Pending new investment (projects in the
works with direct County staff assistance)

Despite the continued shutdowns and restrictions, our office provided in-depth assistance to at least 9 new businesses that opened in 2021. These new businesses, combined with several others that have been directly assisted, have invested close to \$10 Million into our local economy. From their own pocket, they have invested in new equipment, inventories, renovations and/or the purchase of property.

For every \$1 Hastings County has invested in economic development, approximately \$3 has been invested back into the community by private new and existing businesses Hastings County directly assisted.

BY THE NUMBERS

Hastings County supports new and existing businesses with 1-on-1 business coaching

County staff also supported requests from several businesses to help them with the development or expansion of their online presence. This included connecting businesses with Bancroft Business Improvement Area Association's Digital Main Street Program involving \$2,500 in grant money to improve digital operations.

Many businesses benefited from the Digital Main Street Program coordinated locally by the Bancroft Business Improvement Area Association:

61 businesses received direct help configuring an online store;

10 businesses chose to apply for a Digital Transformation Grant;

\$25,000 in funding went to local businesses to setup their online store
(more than 150 businesses approached and encouraged to apply)

BY THE NUMBERS

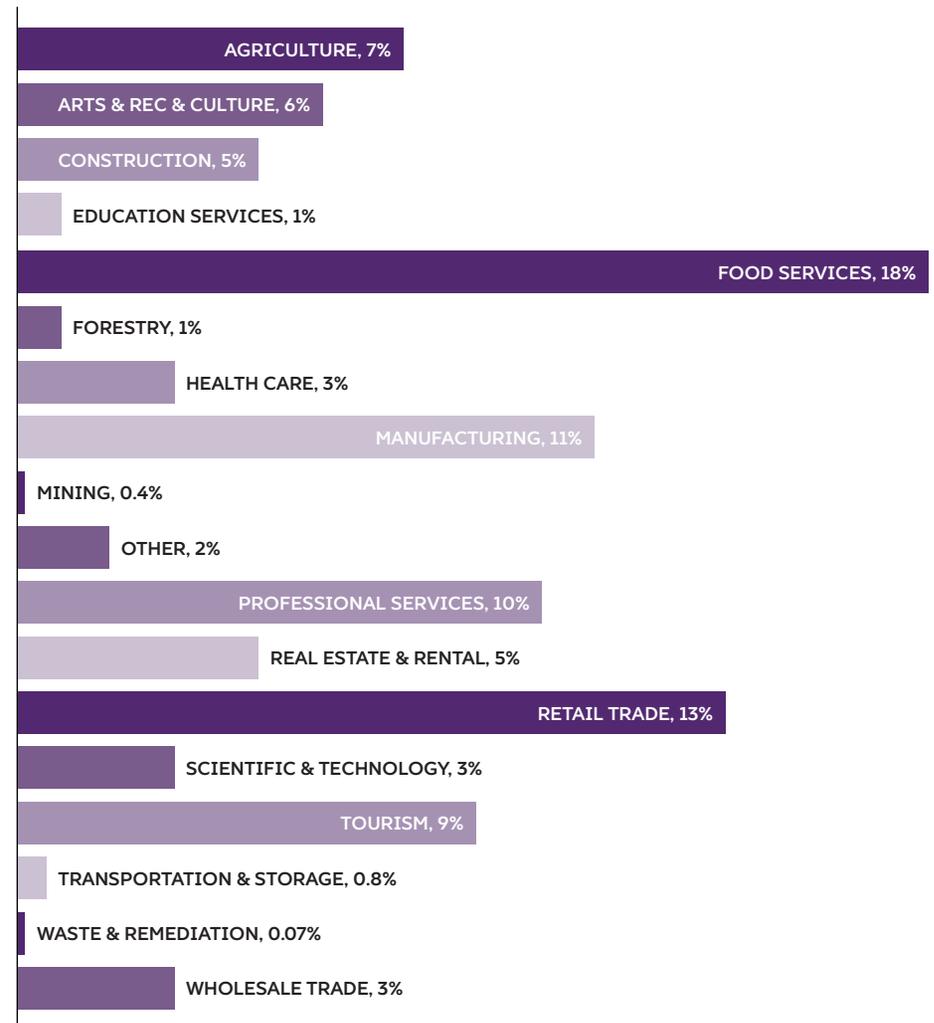
Return On Investment

For every \$1 Hastings County invests in Economic and Tourism Development, \$3 is an estimated average rate of return in local spending (through private jobs created).

When jobs are added by private business, employment income and spending power in our local economy increases. Once these earnings are received by the workers they are spent on local taxes, savings or various goods and services. A large portion of the expenditure on goods and services will flow to other Hastings County residents.

According to a report that was published by the consultants Prairie Research Associates using Statistics Canada data, it has been estimated that approximately .36 cents of every \$1 a worker in Ontario earns may remain in the local economy. Utilizing the most recent census where it indicates the average total individual income in Hastings County is \$38,646, it could be inferred that each of the 137 workers is spending on average \$14,028 of their income annually in the local Hastings County economy. This means an extra \$1.9 Million (\$14,028 X 137 workers) is spent locally, and annually through new private jobs connected to in-depth assistance provided by Hastings County.

PROJECTS BY INDUSTRY





PRESENTATIONS, NETWORKING & SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Throughout the year, economic and tourism development staff go above and beyond to lend their support to local organizations and participate in various meetings and events and identify opportunities for partnerships and collaboration.

1. County staff coordinate and Chair meetings of the Municipal Economic and Tourism Development Partners Group;
2. Participated in Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization Board meetings and regional Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) partner meetings;
3. Attended Harvest Hastings Board meetings and AGM and facilitated visioning sessions;
4. Participated in North Hastings Economic Development Commission meetings and facilitated visioning sessions;
5. Presented a formal overview of our work at the Hastings Federation of Agriculture AGM;
6. Attended and presented formally at Bancroft Business Improvement Area Association meetings;
7. Work closely with Bancroft Area Forest Industry Association (BAFIA) and meetings with their Board and President;
8. Regularly attend Ontario East Economic Development Commission Investment Marketing Team Meetings;
9. Attend bi-monthly meetings with senior economic development staff at both the Cities of Belleville and Quinte West, Prince Edward County, Quinte Economic Development, Town of Brighton and relevant stakeholders invited from time to time to share information, best practices, ideas and other projects.

Staff also worked hard to make sure that businesses, especially those that rely on visitors for revenue, were taking advantage of grant opportunities announced by provincial and federal governments. For example, staff personally telephoned more than 125 accommodators, retailers and restaurants to inform them of the Tourism Recovery and Innovation Program administered by both Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization and Regional Tourism Organization. Thirteen businesses across our fourteen municipalities chose to apply and a total of \$200,220 was delivered to help add or expand an outdoor patio, purchase new outdoor furniture, help acquire PPE and sanitizing equipment, add plexiglass and barriers to protect staff/customers and several other measures.

TOURISM IMPACTS

The hardest hit sector across Ontario and Canada continues to be tourism and hospitality. With stay-at-home orders and travel restrictions in place for the first half of 2021, Hastings County staff were careful balancing marketing efforts with Provincial and Public Health orders. While a major focus of our marketing in 2021 continued to be centred on hyper-local tourism and encouraging local residents to shop, eat and play local, staff continued getting ready for when restrictions would ease including publishing itineraries, trip ideas and inspirational stories to our website Hastings.ca. This helped keep Hastings County top-of-mind and increase brand awareness. As a result, data collected shows Hastings County did see a regular flow of visitors from the local region and an increase in seasonal residents. This combined with “staycationing” by Ontarians helped the Hastings County communities and businesses enjoy some positive outcomes regarding visitation, overnight stays and spending at local businesses. To illustrate how visitation and spending compares to pre-pandemic levels, 2019 data is used for comparison.

TOTAL UNIQUE VISITORS TO ALL 14 MEMBER MUNICIPALITIES COMBINED:

1.3 MILLION IN 2021
8.55% increase from 1.2M in 2019

(Source: Environics Analytics – Mobilescapes Extracts)

MONEY SPENT AT RETAIL, TRAVEL & ENTERTAINMENT, AND SERVICE BUSINESSES IN ALL 14 MEMBER MUNICIPALITIES:

\$122.2 MILLION IN 2021
17% increase from \$104.1 in 2019

(Source: Anonymized credit and debit card transaction information processed by Moneris)



\$21M *(up from \$7.9M in revenue in 2020)*

Accommodation sales



47,525 *(up from 27,223 in 2020)*

Guests at Local Accommodation Businesses



\$30M *(down from \$32M in 2020)*

Spent at local retailers & restaurants

(Source: Telephone survey at accommodations, retailers, and restaurants January 21 to February 8, 2022 by MDBInsight. Note: a telephone survey wasn't conducted prior to 2020. Therefore 2020 data is only available for comparison.)

SHORT TERM ACCOMMODATIONS

- Number of booked listings: 2,688 in 2019 and 3,716 in 2021 (38% increase)
- Short term rental number of booked nights 86,122 in 2019 and 144,846 in 2021 (68% increase)
- Occupancy rate up an average of 15% throughout 2021 compared to 2019

(Source: AirDNA)

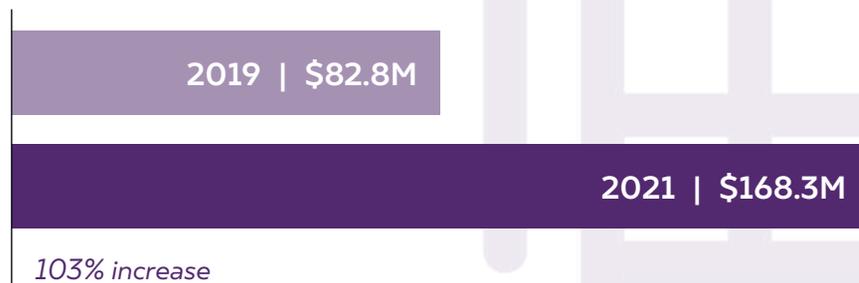
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

A high level of construction activity and housing sales was experienced across Hastings County in 2021. To illustrate how building activity and housing sales compares to pre-pandemic levels, 2019 data is used for comparison.

NUMBER OF BUILDING PERMITS



TOTAL DOLLAR VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY



(source: Building Departments for all fourteen Member Municipalities.)

\$557,339

AVERAGE SALE PRICE

122% increase in sale price over 2019

2,625

HOMES SOLD

13% increase over 2019

(source: local Real Estate Boards)

**Population increase 5%
in 14 member municipalities
combined.**

(source: Statistics Canada 2016 and 2021 Census of Population)