



## **Southwold Economic Development Committee**

# **Agenda**

**Thursday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at 8:00 am**  
**Township Council Chambers – Municipal Office Fingal**

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1. Call to Order
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Approval of the May 15, 2025 Minutes
4. Property Disposal and Acquisitions:
  - a. Former Firehall sold to Heather Harris (Evelyn's Market) – Closed August 8<sup>th</sup>
  - b. Commercial Plaza to be sold to DHP – To close January 15, 2026
  - c. Township purchased 35369 Fingal Line (immediately west of office) – Closed August 11<sup>th</sup>
5. Development and Infrastructure Updates:
  - a. Shedden/Fingal Sanitary Servicing
  - b. WWTP Updates for Shedden & Talbotville
  - c. Parks and Trails Master Plan Project
6. Elgin County Economic Development and Tourism Update
7. Rural Ontario Development Program – September 24 Intake
8. Sign Auction – 23 Signs Remain in Inventory
9. June 18 Resilient & Ready Joint Business Networking Event – Update/Feedback
10. New and Other Business:
11. Next meeting date, time and location
12. Adjourn



## **Southwold Economic Development Committee**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at 8:00 a.m.  
Council Chambers/Webex Meeting**

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Present: Deputy Mayor Justin Pennings  
Councillor John Adzija  
Steve Bushell

Regrets: Barry Harrison  
Michelle Hoffsuemmer

Staff/Resource: Aaron VanOorspronk, Director of Infrastructure and Development  
Jeff Carswell, CAO/Clerk  
Carolyn Krahm, Manager of Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives  
Tanya Wilson, Elgin Business Resource Centre

#### **1. Call to Order**

Deputy Mayor Pennings called the meeting to order at 8:06 am.

#### **2. Approval of Agenda**

The Committee approved the agenda for the May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025 meeting.

#### **3. Approval of the April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025 Minutes**

The Committee approved the minutes as drafted from the April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025 meeting.

#### **4. Development and Infrastructure Updates**

Director of Infrastructure and Development Services, Aaron VanOorspronk reported on the following matters:

- a. Shedden Property Sales – The Township has accepted proposals for the sale of the Commercial Plaza and Former Firehall. These sales are working through development of an Agreement of Purchase and Sale. It is anticipated the Former Firehall will close in the summer, with the Commercial Plaza not closing until early 2026 to provide notice to tenants and permit development of the new processing location for Evelyn's.
- b. Shedden/Fingal Sanitary Servicing – This project has started at the entrance to the future wastewater treatment plant and is moving north along Union Road. Staff are sending out weekly construction updates and the website and social media channels are being used to keep those in the affected are up to date.
- c. WWTP Updates for Shedden & Talbotville – The Shedden WWTP will be out for tender shortly and the recently received archeological clearance so earth moving at the plan site can begin. The Talbotville WWTP upgrade/relocation is moving forward through the Progressive Design Build Finance Operate Maintain RFP Development with Colliers.
- d. The Parks and Trails Master Plan Project has commenced with the consultant gathering information and conducting stakeholder interviews. A Public Open House was held on May 8<sup>th</sup>, although attendance was very low. A community engagement survey will be collecting responses until May 30<sup>th</sup>.

## **5. Sign Inventory**

An inventory of remaining community signs was provided to the Committee. There are 23 signs remaining. The Committee will plan to hold another sign auction in the fall.

## **6. Elgin County Economic Development Update**

Carolyn Krahn, Manager of Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives provided updates on the following matters:

- Elgincincentives Review – The consultant has completed the review, along with consultation and stakeholder engagement. The report to County Council recommends continuing with the program but with some potential changes including increasing grant funds and focusing on larger projects. Each participating local municipality will be required to adopt the CIP to implement locally.
- Economic Development and Tourism Strategy – there will be consultation with EDC's to help shape the priorities for the 5 year plan.
- Rural Networking Event – To be held June 18th at Prim Peony Event Co. Registration
- Economic Development website enhancements (will include promotion of

industrial lands) – the website was recently updated to create a micro Economic Development site to better address the unique needs. The site will continue to promote industrial land, provide an in-depth look at the supply of employment lands and include the investment attraction guide.

- Support Local Campaign and People of Elgin video series – the series continues to be very popular and well received
- Elgin County Business Guide

## **7. Business Networking Events**

Steve Bushell provided additional updates on the Cultivating Success 2025 Rural Networking Event and encouraged people to get the word out about the event

## **8. New and Other Business**

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## **9. Next Meeting date, time and location**

The next meeting was scheduled for September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at 8:00 am.

## **10. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 8:27 am.

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Chairperson, Justin Pennings

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Staff Resource, Jeff Carswell

# **Report to Economic Development Committee**

MEETING DATE: September 11, 2025

PREPARED BY: Carolyn Krahn, Manager of Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives, County of Elgin

SUBJECT MATTER: Economic Development and Tourism Updates

## **Introduction**

Elgin County's Economic Development and Tourism department continues to move forward on several projects to support businesses, strengthen tourism, and prepare for future growth. This report provides updates on staff changes, the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, the Elgincentives Community Improvement Plan (CIP), seasonal tourism promotions, and upcoming networking opportunities.

## **Discussion**

### **Department Update – Business Enterprise Facilitator**

The department is pleased to welcome Anne Kleinsteuber as the new Business Enterprise Facilitator. Anne is covering a maternity leave and brings enthusiasm and a strong commitment to building relationships and supporting entrepreneurs. She has already been active in connecting with local businesses, promoting them through social media, and taking a lead role in planning the fall networking event.

### **Economic Development and Tourism Strategy – Progress Update**

The County is in the process of updating its five-year Economic Development and Tourism Strategy to guide growth, investment, and tourism development. Work completed so far includes background research, stakeholder engagement through focus groups, interviews, and surveys, and an analysis of findings using the SCOAR® (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) framework. The review confirmed the County's strengths, such as its location, agricultural heritage, and strong business supports, while also identifying challenges like infrastructure and geography.

A county-wide working session was held on September 4, 2025, where stakeholders helped refine strategic priorities. Four main themes emerged: building stronger collaboration with municipal partners, enhancing tourism products and visitor experiences, supporting vibrant urban centres, and preparing communities for new business and investment opportunities. Feedback from this session is now being used to shape draft actions that will form the foundation of the updated strategy.

### **Elgincentives CIP Update – Engagement Strategy**

Earlier this year, the County completed a comprehensive review of the Elgincentives Community Improvement Plan (CIP). The review confirmed that the program has

delivered significant value, supporting nearly 290 projects with more than \$1.5 million in grants and leveraging over \$9.4 million in private investment. It also identified areas for improvement, including the need for higher grant caps, greater support for housing and adaptive reuse, and a simpler, more flexible application process.

Building on this review, the County is now updating the CIP, with the goal of relaunching the program in 2026. The project plan will focus on fostering community ownership, testing a renewed vision and scope, strengthening communication between stakeholders and staff, building awareness of program opportunities, and keeping participants informed throughout the process. Engagement activities will include a dedicated project webpage, a public survey, virtual workshops, presentations to Local Municipal Partner councils, and a statutory public meeting in early 2026. This process will ensure the updated program remains competitive and responsive to community priorities while continuing to drive local revitalization and investment.

### **Fall Backroad Elgin Map – Tourism Promotion Initiative**

To promote fall tourism across the County, Elgin Tourism has launched the new Fall Backroad Elgin map. The map highlights local seasonal attractions, including farmers' markets, apple orchards, adventure farms, and fall décor shops, along with seasonal events and experiences. Participating businesses have been provided with copies to share with customers, and the map is also available online through a QR code and the tourism website. Promotion is being supported by social media, newsletters, and print distribution at the Visitor Centre. This initiative celebrates Elgin's fall experiences and provides a simple tool for encouraging both residents and visitors to explore the County.

### **Cultivating Success Fall 2025 – Networking Event**

Elgin County, in partnership with the Economic Development Committee and regional partners, is preparing to host Cultivating Success Fall 2025: Small Towns, Big Ideas on October 15, 2025, at the Elgin International Club in West Elgin. This free evening event will bring together entrepreneurs, business leaders, and community stakeholders to share ideas and celebrate local success.

The keynote speaker will be Dr. Richard Peddie, former President and CEO of Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment, who brings extensive experience in corporate leadership and community revitalization. His presentation will focus on leadership lessons and the value of small towns as hubs for innovation and community life. The event will also feature opportunities for networking and collaboration, reinforcing the County's commitment to supporting local entrepreneurship and rural economic growth.

### **Conclusion**

The Economic Development and Tourism team is advancing key projects that support local businesses, encourage investment, and promote tourism across Elgin County. Staff will continue to provide updates on the strategy, CIP, and promotional initiatives as they progress. Feedback and questions from the committee are welcome.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Carolyn Krahn

Manager of Economic Development & Strategic Initiatives, County of Elgin

## Rural Ontario Development (ROD) Program Highlights

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/rural-ontario-development-program-rod-guidelines-community-development>

### Staff Notes/Comments

The \*\*Rural Ontario Development (ROD) Program\*\* is a funding initiative launched by the Government of Ontario to support economic growth, job creation, and infrastructure improvements in rural communities. It replaces the previous \*\*Rural Economic Development (RED) Program\*\* and offers \*\*\$20 million in cost-share funding over two years\*\* [1](<https://www.ontario.ca/page/rural-ontario-development-program>) [2](<https://centralcounties.ca/support/rural-ontario-development-program/>).

### 🔍 Program Objectives

The ROD Program is designed to help rural communities:

- Build capacity for economic development
  - Attract and retain businesses and investment
  - Strengthen regional partnerships and resilience
  - Address workforce development challenges
  - Transform community assets to drive economic growth
- [1](<https://www.ontario.ca/page/rural-ontario-development-program>)

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### 🏢 Who Can Apply

Eligible applicants include:

- Municipalities
- Not-for-profit organizations
- Indigenous communities or organizations
- Local services boards
- Small businesses with 1 to 20 employees



Projects must be located in eligible rural areas of Ontario  
[1](<https://www.ontario.ca/page/rural-ontario-development-program>).

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### ### 💰 Funding Streams

#### #### For Rural Communities:

##### 1. **Economic Diversification, Competitiveness & Capacity Building**

- Up to 50% cost-share
- Max funding: \ \$150,000

***This stream must implement an existing plan or strategy. There may be some elements in the 2020 Ec Dev Plan that may be considered eligible.***

##### 2. **Strategies and Plans**

- Up to 50% cost-share
- Max funding: \ \$50,000

#### ***Updated Economic Development Plan??***

##### 3. **Capacity Building Events**

- Up to 35% cost-share
- Max funding: \ \$10,000

***Maybe options, but cost share and max funding is limited.***

##### 4. **Workforce Development, Attraction & Retention**

- Up to 50% cost-share
- Max funding: \ \$150,000

##### 5. **Community Infrastructure Enhancements**

- Up to 35% cost-share
- Max funding: \ \$250,000 (large projects), \ \$25,000 (small projects)

***N/A – A Plan or Strategy for the Infrastructure Enhancement is a pre-requisite for a Community Infrastructure Enhancement***

#### For Rural Businesses:

~~—\*\*Business Development Stream\*\*~~

~~—Up to 35% cost share~~

~~—Max funding: \ \$10,000 for small brick and mortar businesses~~

~~[2](<https://centralcounties.ca/support/rural-ontario-development-program/>)~~

***N/A for Township***

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### 📅 Application Deadlines

The current intake period is **\*\*open until September 24, 2025, at 5 p.m. ET\*\***. Future intakes are scheduled for:

- Jan 19 – Feb 26, 2026
- Aug 17 – Oct 1, 2026
- Jan 18 – Feb 25, 2027

***Options based on the program criteria:***

***Updated Economic Development Plan – last completed in 2020. A 5 year review and update would be a logical exercise. And, this could tie into the Township's Strategic Plan being updated in 2023 and the Parks Master Plan currently being completed. An application for this would be relatively straightforward and not be overly intensive for staff to complete. The 2020 plan was about \$10,000.***

***This application would be bolstered by highlighting the significant amount of change experienced since 2020. Amazon, growth of Talbotville, Shedden/Fingal servicing and anticipated growth, Shedden business opportunities (commercial plaza sale, Evelyn's, etc)***

***Other options:***

***Capacity Building Events – could provide funding assistance with events similar to those already hosted but funding level is quite low. (35% of a relatively low cost)***

***Implementation of something from existing Economic Development Plan – some of the main things that would have more significant costs, ie. Branding have been completed.***

# Rural Ontario Development (ROD) program

Information Session





# Territorial Acknowledgement

# ROD Program Information Session

## Agenda

- Overview of the ROD program
- Business Development Stream
- Community Development Streams
- ROD program resources



# Overview

The Rural Ontario Development (ROD) program replaces the Rural Economic Development (RED) program.

This modernized and enhanced program will offer \$20 million in funding over 2 years.

The ROD program supports the objectives of Enabling Opportunity: Ontario's Rural Economic Development Strategy.

Deadline to apply in this intake is  
**Sept. 24, 2025 at 5 pm**



# Program Outcomes

The ROD program has eight outcomes :



Increased capacity and effectiveness for rural economic development



Jobs attracted or retained



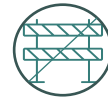
Workforce development challenges addressed



Transformed or modernized community assets that drive economic growth and resiliency



Regional partnerships that strengthen local economies and resiliency



Economic barriers addressed in rural Ontario, including those of Indigenous communities



Businesses attracted, retained and expanded



Investment attracted or retained



# Rural Ontario

Eligible projects would be located in Rural Ontario and primarily benefit rural Ontario.

Rural Ontario for the ROD program is defined as:

- all Statistics Canada census subdivisions (including lower-tier and single-tier municipalities) that either have a population of less than 100,000 people in the most recent Statistics Canada Census of Canadian Population, or;
- have a population density of 100 people per square kilometre or less, as identified in the most recent Statistics Canada Census of Canadian Population or;
- a rural postal code within areas considered urban. ("0" as the second character of a postal code identifies a rural postal code)



# Stream Overview

There are different guidelines and applications for the Community Development Streams and the Business Development Stream

## Community Development Streams



Applicants:

- Municipalities
- Not-for-Profit organizations
- Indigenous communities and non-profit organizations
- Local Services Boards





## Business Development Stream



Applicants:

- Small Businesses in Rural Ontario

# ROD Program Funding Overview

Streams	 <b>Economic Diversification, Competitiveness, and Capacity Building</b>	 <b>Workforce Development, Attraction and Retention</b>	 <b>Community Infrastructure Enhancements</b>	 <b>Business Development</b>
Audience	Municipalities, Not-for-Profit organizations, Indigenous communities and non-profit organizations and Local Services Boards			Small businesses in Rural Ontario
Description	Projects that support communities to build economic development capacity and implement strategies that increase competitiveness to retain businesses, attract investment and enhance growth	Projects that support communities to implement strategies and/or to undertake initiatives for attracting and retaining workers	Projects that update or transform community assets that have been identified as important to the community's economy	Projects to support small businesses to be economically sustainable, competitive and diversify their markets
Sub-streams and provincial cost-share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic Diversification and Competitiveness – 50% cost-share up to \$150,000</li> <li>Strategies &amp; Plans - 50% cost-share up to \$50,000</li> <li>Capacity Building Events – 35% cost-share up to \$10,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50% and cost-share up to \$150,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large projects - 35% cost share up to \$250,000</li> <li>Small projects - 35% cost share up to \$25,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>35% cost share up to \$10,000</li> </ul>
Assessment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Projects are selected using a competitive merit-based process</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eligibility</li> <li>Funds will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis</li> </ul>

# Intake Periods

Intake	Intake period*	Application deadline
Intake 1	June 24, 2025 – September 24, 2025	September 24, 2025, at 5 p.m. ET.
Intake 2	January 19, 2026 – February 26, 2026	February 26, 2026, at 5 p.m. ET.
Intake 3	August 17, 2026 – October 1, 2026	October 1, 2026, at 5 p.m. ET.
Intake 4	January 18, 2027 – February 25, 2027	February 25, 2027, at 5 p.m. ET.

\*dates maybe subject to change

# Resources and Supports

## Program Materials

[www.ontario.ca/RODprogram](http://www.ontario.ca/RODprogram)

- Program Guidelines
- Applications
- Recording of this session will be shared with participants

**Rural and Urban Areas** [Map](#)

## Questions General ROD Program

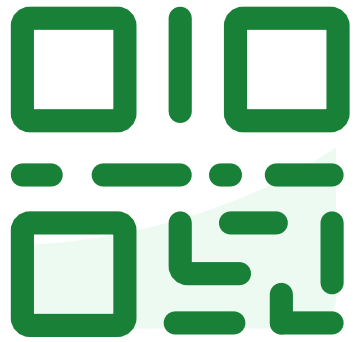
1-877-424-1300

[RODprogram@ontario.ca](mailto:RODprogram@ontario.ca)

## Virtual Coaching

- Community Development Projects ONLY\* - Appointments with MRA advisors can be scheduled at this [link](#)

\*Questions related to business stream projects may be directed to the General ROD program email/phone number noted above



**Join at [slido.com](https://slido.com)  
#RODprogram**

# Business Development Stream



# Business Development Stream Overview

- The ROD Program Business Development stream is application-based with all applications assessed based on the ROD Program Guidelines – Business Development.
- Projects are recommended based on **eligibility criteria**.
- Funds will be allocated on a **first-come, first-served** basis to eligible Applicants and Projects
- Businesses can get 35% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of \$10,000 in funding
- Applicants may submit a maximum of **one** application under the ROD Program
- Projects for the first intake are required to be **completed by March 31, 2026**.





# Who is Eligible

The following Currently Operating Businesses are eligible Applicants

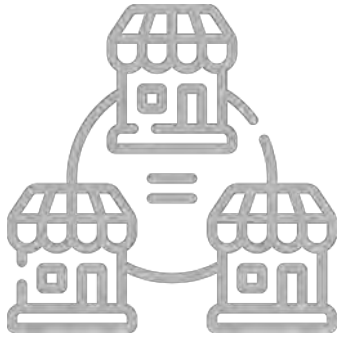
- Has one to twenty employees on its current payroll and for the duration of the project, excluding the owner(s) of the business
- Is physically located in Rural Ontario
- Is paying agricultural, commercial or industrial property tax, either directly or through rent or lease (Indigenous businesses are exempt from this requirement)
- Is not occupying a property that is considered solely residential under its Municipality's Official Plan and Zoning by-law (Indigenous businesses are exempt from this requirement)
- Is open for business/operating at the time of application
- Is in compliance with all applicable Requirements of Law and at the time of application and for the duration of the project, has no outstanding fees, levies or taxes owed to the governments of Ontario and Canada, or has made and maintained satisfactory arrangements for their payment



# Project Types

Applicant may select multiple project types within the application.

## Market or Product Diversification



Projects to support small Rural Ontario businesses to increase their competitiveness.

## Succession planning



Projects to support small Rural Ontario businesses to increase their readiness for business succession.

## Enhancing Cyber Security



Projects to support small Rural Ontario businesses to increase their cyber security.

## Accessibility



Projects to support small Rural Ontario businesses to increase their accessibility.

# Ineligible Projects

**The following projects are ineligible for funding :**

- submissions with incomplete applications
- projects that do not meet the eligibility criteria
- projects that do not benefit a business within Rural Ontario
- projects receiving any amount of other provincial funding
- debt restructuring, fundraising, or financing (for example, re-granting ROD program Funds)
- projects that will influence or lobby any level of government
- projects seeking funding for Major Capital Costs
- projects with the sole purpose of becoming compliant with current Requirements of Law, including accessibility laws
- projects seeking funding to ready a property for immediate or imminent sale

# Eligible Costs

## Eligible costs must be:

- reasonable and necessary to complete the project
- incurred within the period identified in the Contribution Agreement, between the Effective date (no earlier than October 1, 2025) and project completion date
- incurred in Ontario
- incurred by following a process that is transparent, fair and promotes the best value for money (i.e., prices must be competitive and not more than the fair market value)
- paid to an Arm's length third-party
- costs that reflect the actual costs to the Recipient, less any costs, including taxes, for which the Recipient has received, will receive or is eligible to receive, a rebate, credit or refund, whether or not the Recipient applied for that rebate, credit or refund

Applicants may contact the Province at with questions regarding the eligibility of any potential costs not explicitly addressed in the guidelines

Ministry determination of eligibility is final

# Workplan

- The Applicant must provide a detailed explanation of how the project will be successfully completed by filling out the project work plan and budget templates on the application form.
- The project workplan should list each activity required to complete the project and the anticipated start and end date of each activity. Applicants are encouraged to attach relevant supplementary documentation to support the application.





# Budget

## Budget

The project budget must:

- list the specific eligible cost items associated with each activity in the project work plan. Some activities may have more than one eligible cost (for example, a trade show may have the following costs: booth costs, printing, marketing or promotions)
- list eligible and ineligible costs

The Applicant is encouraged to provide as much detail as possible about cost items and may attach more detailed budget documents with the application.

## Quotes and estimates

- Quotes or estimates should include a category breakdown (specify all items per cost item) and are **mandatory** for all project costs over \$2,500
- Quotes can be provided either on supplier letterhead or as a screenshot from the supplier's website (screenshot must include website URL, itemized list and totals)



# Selection Process

Funds will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis to eligible Applicants and Projects.

1

## Basic Eligibility Criteria

An application must meet the following basic eligibility criteria to move on to Stage 2:

- a complete ROD program application and all mandatory documents received by the date and time indicated for the intake
- meeting all the Applicant eligibility criteria
- meeting all the project eligibility criteria
- the project takes place in and benefits Rural Ontario

2

## Approvals

- all eligible applications that complete Stage 1 will be reviewed by the Rural Economic Development Advisory Panel which will make non-binding recommendations
- The Minister of Rural Affairs retains the exclusive right to approve or reject any project at their sole discretion

3

## After Project Approval

- Applicant will be notified as funding decisions are reached, which is usually within three months from the posted intake closure date. However, timing may vary

# How to Apply

- 1 Download, save and complete the [application form](#).
- 2 Email [RODprogram@ontario.ca](mailto:RODprogram@ontario.ca) with:
  - a completed ROD Program application
  - quotes or estimates for costs of goods and services valued over \$2,500 to support the project budgetIf the attachments are greater than 10 MB, send multiple emails and ensure the subject line remains consistent.
- 3 The Province will only assess completed applications received by the ROD Program. The Province will send a confirmation email with an application number within 5 business days of the receipt of application.



# Questions





## Audience Q&A

① The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from

**slido**

# Community Development Streams

# Community Development Streams Overview

- The ROD Program Community Development Streams are application-based and projects are selected using a **competitive process**
- All applications are assessed based on the ROD Program Guidelines – Community Development
- Multiple applications from the same Applicant within the same Intake are allowed but are discouraged
- An Applicant may not combine or stack funding from multiple Ontario government departments or programs for the same project
- Applications for ROD Program Community Development Streams must be for projects that are not concurrently supported by other Ontario government funding sources
- Projects must take place in and benefit Rural Ontario



# Eligibility for the Community Development Streams

## Eligible applicants:

- a Municipality
- a Not-For-Profit organization
- an Ontario Indigenous community or Indigenous non-profit organization; or
- a Local Services Board

## Who is not eligible:

- an individual
- a business
- a research institution or organization whose core business or primary activity is research and development
- a not-for-profit organization that is not incorporated or a registered charity

# Project Roles

## Applicant

- the primary contact with MRA
- will submit the Application and, if successful, sign the Contribution Agreement with the Province of Ontario
- when working with a Partner, the Applicant is the contact for the project and assumes full responsibility for the project, including legal liability, receiving payments and submitting invoices

## Partner

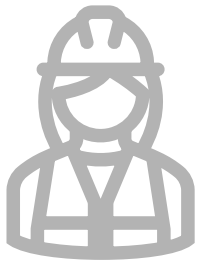
- Applicants **may** choose to work with a Partner on the project
- Partners are organizations or community groups that contribute financial or in-kind resources to the project
- To be considered a Partner, organizations or community groups must have a role in the project and provide either financial or in-kind support to the project

# Community Development Streams and Sub-Streams



## Economic Diversification, Competitiveness, and Capacity Building

- Strategies & Plans
- Economic Diversification and Competitiveness
- Capacity Building Events



## Workforce Development, Attraction and Retention



## Community Infrastructure Enhancements

- Large projects
- Small projects



# Strategies and Plans Sub-Stream

## Description

Projects will develop strategies or plans that will enhance the ability of the community to engage in Economic Development activities.

Maximum Provincial Cost Share

**50%**

Maximum Provincial Funding

**\$50,000**

## Project Type:

- Strategies and plans

## Example Projects:

- Economic Development strategy
- Housing plans for attracting and retaining workers
- Feasibility or Business Plans
- Community Improvement Plans





# Economic Diversification and Competitiveness Sub-Stream

## Description:

Projects in this sub-stream must implement an existing plan or strategy.

Maximum Provincial Cost Share

**50%**

Maximum Provincial Funding

**\$150,000**

## Project Types:

- Business Retention & Expansion
- Downtown Revitalization
- Entrepreneurship or Business Succession
- Regional Marketing or Outreach
- Technology Adoption / Innovation Initiatives



# Economic Diversification and Competitiveness

Project Types	Description
Business Retention & Expansion	Projects that proactively engage the local or regional business community to identify and implement actions that address barriers to growth
Downtown Revitalization	Projects that focus on identifying and implementing actions that improve and promote traditional downtowns
Entrepreneurship or Business Succession	Projects that support business start-up or succession in the community
Regional Marketing or Outreach	Projects that implement marketing or promotional activities outlined in an existing marketing or communications plan that will have an impact across multiple communities in a region
Technology Adoption/Innovation Initiatives	Projects that support businesses and/or communities to improve their digital capabilities and participate in the information economy



# Capacity Building Events Sub-Stream

## Description:

Events that support organizations in building community capacity to deliver Economic Development activities. Events must have an Economic Development skill development and/or training component.

Maximum Provincial Cost Share

**35%**

Maximum Provincial Funding

**\$10,000**

## Project Type:

- Events

## Example Projects:

- Asset based community development training
- Summits/conferences related to community Economic Development
- Community Leader skill development
- Regional Economic Development capacity building event



# Workforce Development, Attraction and Retention Stream

## Description:

Projects that support communities to implement strategies and/or to undertake initiatives for attracting and retaining workers.

Maximum Provincial Cost Share  
**50%**

Maximum Provincial Funding  
**\$150,000**

## Project Type:

- Attraction, retention and training of workers

## Example Projects:

- Collaborative labour attraction marketing campaigns
- Workforce-oriented policy/regulatory improvements
- Career days/events
- Youth training, Intern/apprentice matching system
- Welcoming community projects



# Community Infrastructure Enhancements Stream

## Description:

Projects improve physical Community Assets that have been identified as strategically important to the community.

There are small or large projects sub-streams that have different assessment criteria.

Maximum Provincial Cost Share  
**35%**

Maximum Provincial Funding  
**Small – \$25,000**  
**Large - \$250,000**

## Project Types:

- Rehabilitation of cultural, historic, heritage or tourism attractions
- Redevelopment of vacant and/or underutilized buildings
- Streetscaping and landscaping



# Community Infrastructure Enhancements Stream

Project Types	Description
Rehabilitation of cultural, historic, heritage or tourism attractions	Minor Capital Costs projects that rehabilitate an existing cultural, heritage or tourism attraction, as identified through previously completed strategies and projects that establish its significance for Economic Development
Redevelopment of vacant and/or underutilized buildings	Minor Capital Costs projects to redevelop vacant and or underutilized buildings to achieve an economic development outcome
Streetscaping and landscaping	Minor Capital Costs projects identified through previously completed strategies that improve the design quality of public areas



# Ineligible Projects

- projects that do not meet the outcomes of the ROD program as outlined in the “Outcomes and Performance Measures” or align with the program streams
- projects that do not benefit Rural Ontario
- projects receiving any amount of other provincial funding
- projects seeking funding for academic research
- debt restructuring, fundraising, or financing
- projects that will influence or lobby any level of government
- projects seeking funding for major capital projects
- regional marketing and outreach projects that do not have an impact across at least two lower-tiers or at least two communities within a single-tier municipality, or that focus exclusively on tourism events
- projects that host events with the intent to primarily attract tourists or general community attendance
- those primarily benefitting an individual business
- projects that the primary purpose is to: support compliance efforts with current Requirements of Law or ready a property or asset for immediate or imminent sale

# Outcomes and Performance Measures

Applicants are required to describe in the application how their Project will support the ROD Program's outcomes and how the Project impacts will be measured.

Outcomes	Example performance Measures
<b>Increased capacity and effectiveness for rural Economic Development:</b> The process of strengthening people, organizations and communities' knowledge and skill sets to undertake and manage their economic development efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• number of people and businesses engaged</li><li>• level of satisfaction</li><li>• intent to adopt the information learned</li></ul>

# Outcomes and Performance Measures

Outcomes	Example Performance Measures
<b>Businesses attracted, retained and expanded:</b> The number of businesses that have opened, remained, and/or grown within a community that could reasonably be attributed to the activities of the Project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• number of businesses attracted, retained and expanded or</li><li>• the change in the number of businesses</li></ul>
<b>Economic barriers addressed in rural including those of Indigenous communities:</b> The reduction of obstacles that hinder Rural Ontario communities, organizations, or Indigenous communities from benefiting from growth and development; and can be reasonably attributed to the activities of the Project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• number of economic barriers or opportunities addressed</li><li>• description of economic barrier and how it was addressed</li></ul>

# Outcomes and Performance Measures

Outcomes	Example Performance Measures
<b>Investment attracted or retained:</b> The attraction of new investments from public and private sources or the retention of investments in a community that might not have occurred without the activities of the Project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• dollars of investment attracted and retained</li><li>• building permit value</li><li>• new property tax assessment</li></ul>
<b>Jobs attracted or retained:</b> The number of new paid positions created during or after the Project, that can be directly attributed to Project activities, which otherwise may not have been created; and/or the number of existing jobs that will be maintained within a community during or after the Project that can be directly attributed to Project activities and may otherwise have not been retained.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• number of jobs attracted and retained</li></ul>

# Outcomes and Performance Measures

Outcomes	Example Performance Measures
<b>Regional partnerships that strengthen local economies and resiliency:</b> Partnerships between two or more communities, that agree to work together to drive growth and adapt to economic circumstances. Regional, collaborative partnerships help pool limited resources, both human and financial to increase the project's effectiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• number of Partners involved in the Project</li><li>• contribution of the Partners towards the Project</li></ul>

# Outcomes and Performance Measures

Outcomes	Example Performance Measures
<b>Transformed or modernized Community Assets that drive economic growth and resiliency:</b> The enhancement of physical Community Assets that have been identified as economically important to the community. The improvement would lead to the rehabilitation and renewal of the assets that preserves and enhances the unique character of the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• dollars invested in physical Community Asset enhancement</li><li>• increased utilization of the Community Asset</li></ul>
<b>Workforce development challenges addressed:</b> Workforce challenges are acted on, fostering an adequate, equitable and/or stable Workforce in a community that could be reasonably attributed to the Project activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• number of Workforce development challenges or opportunities addressed</li><li>• Workforce and employer engagement</li></ul>



# Project Funding and Costs

## Approved Funding Payment

Generally, payments under the ROD Program are reimbursement-based following verification of proof of payment, with the exception of a 10% holdback. The 10% holdback will only be provided once the Final Report is received and accepted by the Province.

Where requested, the Province may provide an initial payment of 20% of the approved funding for successful projects following the execution of the Contribution Agreement provided certain conditions are met.

This initial payment is granted as a one-time approval by the Province.



# Project Funding and Costs

## Stacking

Stacking with other provincial sources of financing for the Project is not permitted.

Projects receiving other provincial funding are not eligible to apply for or receive funding under the ROD Program.

Funding from federal government programs can be used toward a project's total costs, if it is permitted under applicable federal programs.

## Funding sources for projects

Combined federal and ROD Program funding cannot exceed 90% of the project's eligible costs.

The Applicant must disclose all potential sources of funding for the Project.

In-Kind Contributions are not eligible for funding or reimbursement but can be noted on the application to demonstrate a commitment from Applicants and Partners.



# Extenuating Circumstances

- Applicants may request an increased provincial Cost Share and/or an amount of provincial funding for a Project that exceeds the maximum provincial funding amount, based on **significant barriers to or opportunities** for Economic Development
- Extenuating circumstances are **significant and unique** and are **not common across program Applicants**
- Applicants will be required to explain in detail, the significant barriers or opportunities and provide rationale for their additional funding request
- Approval of an increased provincial Cost Share or funding amount for a Project due to extenuating circumstances is in the Province's sole discretion
- Any such decision by the Province will be subject to additional provincial approvals that may impact Project timelines

Applicants who may be seeking increased Cost Share or provincial funding are encouraged to contact Ministry staff prior to making an application

# Eligible Costs

## \*Eligible costs must be:

- reasonable as determined by the Province
- necessary to complete the Project as determined by the Province
- identified within the Contribution Agreement
- incurred within the period identified in the Contribution Agreement; between the Effective Date (January 1, 2026) and Project completion date outlined in the Contribution Agreement
- incurred in Ontario
- incurred by following a process that is transparent, fair and promotes the best value for money (i.e., prices must be competitive and not more than the fair market value)
- paid to an Arm's Length third-party

\*Eligible and Ineligible Expenses are different depending on the Project streams and sub-streams, please refer to the Guidelines for specific details.

# Project Description and Need

- The Applicant should describe the project, the activities to be undertaken, what the project will achieve through the project activities and how the project will benefit Rural Ontario
- These should align with activities listed in the work plan and budget
- The Applicant should describe why this project is needed and how the project will address an economic development need or opportunity
- The Project need should reference any plans or studies where these needs or opportunities have been identified
- Supplementary information can be included as attachments when submitting the application





# Workplan

- The Applicant must provide a detailed explanation of how the project will be successfully completed by filling out the project work plan and budget templates on the application form
- The project workplan should list each activity required to complete the project and the anticipated start and end date of each activity
- Applicants are encouraged to attach relevant supplementary documentation to support the application





# Budget

## Budget

The project budget must:

- list the specific eligible cost items associated with each activity in the project work plan. Some activities may have more than one eligible cost (for example, a trade show may have the following costs: booth costs, printing, marketing or promotions)
- list eligible and ineligible costs including in-kind costs

## Quotes and estimates

- Quotes or estimates should include a category breakdown (specify all items per cost item) and Applicants may submit quotes and estimates for cost items over \$10,000
- Quotes can be provided either on supplier letterhead or as a screenshot from the supplier's website (screenshot must include website URL, itemized list and totals)



# Selection Process – Stage 1: Eligibility Screening

An application must meet the following basic eligibility criteria to move on to Stage 2:

- a complete ROD program application and all supporting documentation was received by the date and time indicated for the intake
- meeting all the Applicant eligibility criteria
- meeting all the Project eligibility criteria
- the Project takes place in and benefits Rural Ontario



## Audience Q&A

① The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from

**slido**

# Selection Process – Stage 2: Project Assessment

Indigenous community or Indigenous non-profit organization projects will be given additional consideration, in the assessment areas of:

- partnerships and community support
- financial commitment

For projects requesting less than \$25,000 in provincial funding, the applications will not be evaluated on the assessment criteria of:

- performance measures
- sustainability

Applications will be scored based on the following criteria and the criteria are listed in order of importance.

# Assessment Criteria

Assessment criteria	Strong ROD projects identify the following, through the application and supporting documents
<b>ROD Program outcomes:</b> The Project addresses one or more of the ROD Program outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong alignment with three or more ROD Program outcomes that will be addressed by the Project</li> <li>• Provide detailed description of how actions undertaken through the Project will address those outcomes</li> </ul>
<b>Project Description:</b> A detailed Project description outlining objectives, activities, Rural Ontario benefits, alignment with the workplan and budget, and the organization's capacity to successfully deliver the Project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a description of the project that includes:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ what the Project will accomplish and key activities</li> <li>◦ Rural Ontario benefits</li> <li>◦ alignment with workplan and budget</li> <li>◦ organizations capacity for project success</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

# Assessment Criteria

Assessment criteria	Strong ROD projects identify the following, through the application and supporting documents
<p><b>Partnerships and Community Support:</b> Communities or organizations beyond the Applicant that are offering financial and/or in-kind support for the Project.</p> <p>Please note organizations or community groups that provide a letter of support without committing financial or in-kind support are not considered Partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnerships are described and confirmed including how the Partners collaborate such as a:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>financial contribution</li> <li>expertise</li> <li>resources or staff</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant has identified as an Ontario Indigenous community or organization</li> </ul>



# Assessment Criteria

Assessment criteria	Strong ROD projects identify the following, through the application and supporting documents
<p><b>Project Need:</b> The Project addresses an economic need or opportunity that has been identified by the community (for example through a community consultation, BR+E, strategic plan, supporting evidence).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies why Project is needed</li> <li>• Describes how an economic need or opportunity that will be addressed by the Project</li> <li>• Barriers substantiated</li> </ul>
<p><b>Performance Measures:</b> A clear, well-supported plan for measuring Project impacts, with realistic, trackable performance measures aligned with ROD Program outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a detailed and well-supported description of how the Project impacts will be measured</li> <li>• The measures are realistic and can be tracked throughout the Project</li> <li>• Measures align with the ROD Program outcomes</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Project funding requested is less than \$25,000</li> </ul>

# Assessment Criteria

Assessment criteria	Strong ROD projects identify the following, through the application and supporting documents
<b>Project Work Plan and Budget:</b> The Project provides a detailed Project plan and budget that outlines eligible activities, their costs and realistic timelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides a detailed work plan and budget that supports the successful completion of the Project, including all the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ detailed description of eligible activities and their estimated cost</li><li>◦ realistic timelines to complete each activity</li><li>◦ costs align with work plan</li><li>◦ costs are reasonable</li><li>◦ Projects are completed by March 31, 2026, or March 31, 2027</li><li>◦ costs are supported by quotes or proposals if over \$10,000</li></ul></li></ul>

# Assessment Criteria

Assessment criteria	Strong ROD projects identify the following, through the application and supporting documents
<p><b>Sustainability:</b> The Project will contribute to longer-term economic development activities and outcomes after ROD Program funding ends, through activities like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implementation funding identified for strategies and plans</li> <li>• support for project outcomes after funding ends</li> <li>• activities to encourage sustainability (for example, knowledge transfer, sharing materials after an event)</li> <li>• sustainability plans</li> </ul>	<p>Demonstrates significant and specific efforts to encourage longer-term contributions to economic development after ROD Program funding ends</p> <p>OR</p> <p>The project funding requested is less than \$25,000</p>
<p><b>Financial commitment:</b> Applicant has made a financial commitment to the project that meets the Cost Share requirements of the stream.</p>	<p>The Applicant has secured a financial commitment equal to or greater than the required provincial Cost Share</p> <p>OR</p> <p>The Applicant is an Indigenous Community or Indigenous non-profit Organization</p>

# Selection Process – Stage 3: Approvals

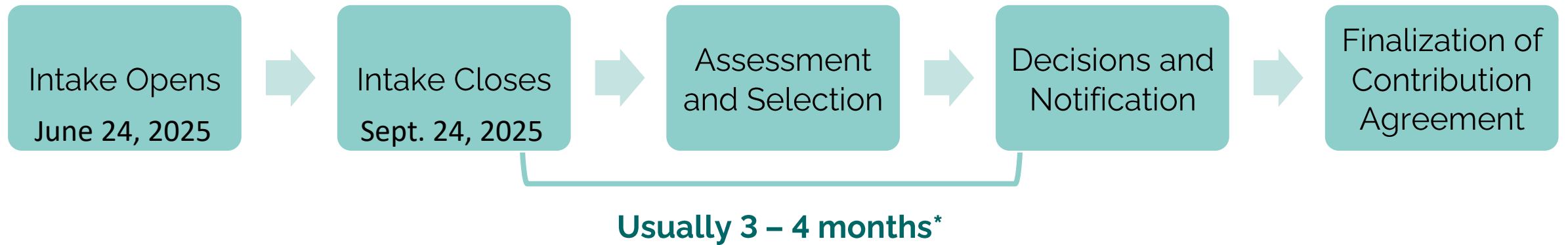
## Approvals

- all eligible applications that complete stage 2 will be reviewed by the Rural Economic Development Advisory Panel
- the Advisory Panel will make non-binding recommendations to the Minister of Rural Affairs on funding

## Reserved rights and non-entitlement

- The Minister of Rural Affairs retains the exclusive right to approve or reject any Project at their sole discretion and to reduce Cost Share and to reduce maximum funding amounts or both for those projects that have been approved

# ROD Program Process



**\*Timing dependent on number of applications received**

# How to Apply

- 1 Download, save and complete the [application form](#).
- 2 Email [RODprogram@ontario.ca](mailto:RODprogram@ontario.ca) with:
  - a completed ROD Program applicationApplicants are encouraged to include supplemental documentation with the application, e.g. :
  - quotes or estimates for costs of goods and services valued over \$10,000 to support the project budget
  - written confirmation/letters from partners confirming their financial or in-kind contribution to the project
  - feasibility studies, strategic plans, reports, relevant research, or
  - documentation that supports the need for the project and anticipated impactsIf the attachments are greater than 10 MB, send multiple emails and ensure the subject line remains consistent.
- 3 The Province will only assess completed applications received by the ROD Program. The Province will send a confirmation email with an application number within 5 business days of the receipt of application.

# ROD Program Resources

## Program Materials

[www.ontario.ca/RODprogram](http://www.ontario.ca/RODprogram)

- Program guidelines
- Applications
- Recording of this session will be shared with participants

## Rural and Urban Areas

[Map](#)

**Questions:** General ROD program

1-877-424-1300

[RODprogram@ontario.ca](mailto:RODprogram@ontario.ca)

## Virtual Coaching

- **Community Development Projects ONLY\*** - Appointments with MRA advisors can be scheduled at this [link](#)
- review the program guidelines in advance
- share a project summary or a draft application with the advisor in advance of the coaching call

\*Questions related to business stream projects may be directed to the General ROD program email/phone number noted above

Deadline to apply in this intake is  
**Sept. 24, 2025 at 5 pm**



# Attend a ROD Program Information Webinar

- **July 8, 2025**
  - 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. (English)
  - 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. (French)
- **August 20, 2025**
  - 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (English)
  - 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. (French)
- **September 10, 2025**
  - 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (English)
  - 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. (French)



Find more information [on our registration page](#)

# Feedback Requested

Please complete the zoom poll to provide feedback on this session





## Audience Q&A

① The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from

**slido**

# Questions

1-877-424-1300

[RODprogram@ontario.ca](mailto:RODprogram@ontario.ca)

[www.ontario.ca/RODprogram](http://www.ontario.ca/RODprogram)

Coaching Appointments with  
[MRA Advisors can be scheduled at this link](#)





TOWNSHIP OF  
**Southwold**



## Southwold Township Community Economic Development Plan

Mellor Murray Consulting  
June, 2020







**Recommended by the Southwold Economic Development Committee on June 16, 2020  
Adopted by Township of Southwold Council on June 22, 2020**

June 2020

## **Southwold Township Community Development Plan**

### **Project Management**

Alan Smith, Elgin County

### **Southwold Township Economic Development Committee**

Councillor Peter North, Chair

Councillor Justin Pennings

Steve Bushell

James Carder

Barry Harrison

### **Southwold Township Support Staff**

Ken Loveland, CAO

Jeff Carswell, Treasurer

Mark Maseo

Jessica Silcox

### **Consultant**

Aileen Murray, Mellor Murray Consulting



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## Introduction

The Southwold Township Community Economic Development Plan was created in collaboration with the Southwold Economic Development Committee, Southwold Township and Elgin County. This plan is intended to coordinate the efforts of volunteers, business and community leaders, municipal staff and other stakeholders committed to building the local economy.

This plan was assembled in several stages. Phase One included a resident survey and market threshold analysis conducted in 2017. Southwold Council held an economic development workshop to provide direction for the plan in June 2019. In July 2019, residents, community leaders and business representatives participated in a community workshop to provide their insights on the priorities and opportunities for Southwold's economic development plan. The Southwold economic development committee provided input throughout the development of this plan. Their direction and insights have been incorporated throughout.





## About Southwold Township

Southwold Township is a community of approximately 4,421<sup>1</sup> residents with urban centres in Shedden, Fingal and Talbotville. The Township is located in the centre of Elgin County with Lake Erie to the south. Southwold Township is adjacent to two large urban centres. St. Thomas (pop. 38,909<sup>2</sup>) is on the east and London (pop. 383,822<sup>3</sup>) is to the north.



Southwold is a predominantly rural community with a rich agricultural base. Highway 401 crosses the northern edge of the Township.

Community amenities include area fruit orchards, maple syrup bushes and on-farm markets, Southwold Prehistoric Earthworks, Shedden Keystone Complex, Fingal Wildlife Management Area and a summer camp and retreat centre.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada 2016 Census

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid



## Research

The economic and demographic analysis provided some key insights into Southwold Township.

- Southwold's median age is 44.7, slightly older than the provincial average
- Average household income is similar to the provincial average
- Typical annual shelter costs are \$15,700, much lower than Ontario's \$21,000
- Southwold's economy is highly connected with neighbouring municipalities. 90% of the 1,900 jobs are filled by residents from other municipalities. 90% of 1,600 employed Southwold residents commute outside the Township for work.

Market Threshold Analysis identifies gaps in the local economy by comparing the proportion of firms by sector and employment compared to the Ontario average. The Market Threshold Analysis identified opportunities in the retail, finance, insurance, real estate and professional and other services sectors.

### Under-represented Sectors

 <b>Retail</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gasoline Stations</li><li>• Health and personal care</li><li>• Grocery stores</li></ul>	 <b>Finance, Insurance, Real Estate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vehicle Insurance</li><li>• General financial services</li><li>• Health insurance</li><li>• Life insurance</li></ul>	 <b>Professionals &amp; Other Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Restaurants</li><li>• Legal fees</li><li>• Health care (eye care, dental health, personal care)</li><li>• Other (funeral, hair grooming)</li></ul>
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## Community Consultation

A survey of 347 Southwold Township residents conducted in 2017 provided insights into their shopping patterns and preferences. They described Southwold Township as friendly and inviting with a strong community base. They said Southwold was quiet, peaceful and a nice place to live. They also referenced the rural countryside and agricultural base.

They expressed a strong desire for additional opportunities for jobs, stores and recreation in Southwold Township. The respondents said they shopped most regularly in St. Thomas followed by London and then Shedden and Talbotville. The most popular response to the types of businesses needed in Southwold included coffee shops, convenience and gas stores, restaurants and grocery stores. Other popular answers included recreation and activities, pharmacies and drug stores and medical services.

The respondents reported that the most popular features in Southwold Township were:

- **Local activities:** recreation opportunities, shopping, rural agriculture and farming,
- **Specific destinations:** Picard's Nuts, Fingal Wildlife Management Centre, Wayside Inn, Whistlestop antique store, Talbotville Berry Farm, Keystone complex
- **Events:** Rhubarb festival, tractor pull and Shedden fair



## Visioning Workshops

The second phase of Southwold's Economic Development Plan began in 2019 with consultation with the Southwold Township Council and a community workshop.

### **Southwold Council**

Southwold Council established the following priorities:

- Ensuring the former Ford Assembly Plan lands have the services required to attract investment
- Creating greater awareness of Southwold Township with branding, logo design and signage,
- Combatting Green Lane Landfill image
- Small business support and education
- Embracing change, innovation and collaboration
- Connecting residents, businesses and stakeholders.

Their vision for Southwold's future include a growing population with new residential development and small businesses with a reduced number of vacant properties, particularly in Fingal and Shedden. They expressed a desire for enhanced infrastructure in the Township's industrial parks, highspeed internet, cycling trails and public transit connections.

Southwold Council wants to collaborate with Elgin County on economic development efforts. Their key economic development priorities are: exploring transit options for residents and establishing an updated brand and logo for Southwold Township.



## Community Workshop

The Economic Development committee hosted a workshop for 15 local residents, businesses, community groups, regional and municipal government representatives in July 2019. The workshop highlights are summarized below:

### Economic Opportunities:

- existing industrial land (especially the former Ford lands).
- Proximity to London and St. Thomas
- Residential growth
- Southwold's lower tax rates
- Eco-agri-tourism

### Barriers to Realizing Southwold's Economic Potential:

- Limited financial resources
- Infrastructure: lack of natural gas, high-speed internet and local service amenities
- Community Vision: competing cultures/growth management

### Key Economic Development Initiatives:

- Marketing and branding plan
- Support for new and existing businesses
- Red tap reduction, supporting new ideas
- Development of industrial lands
- Capitalizing on on-farm services
- Supporting business diversity



Community Workshop July 10, 2019



## Vision and Mission

The vision and mission are the underpinnings of the community economic development plan. The mission is a statement of what the organization does and why. The vision describes the future the organization is working towards.

Southwold Township Council established the following Vision and Mission as part of its Corporate Strategic Plan in 2018.

### **Southwold Township Mission:**

Providing a healthy, safe community to all residents, businesses and visitors by providing services in an economical manner to further growth and prosperity.

### **Southwold Township Vision:**

- A thriving, community-oriented municipality that continues to grow and prosper by enabling and pursuing residential, agricultural and commercial growth opportunities through expansion of key municipal services.
- The sense of community will be strengthened by promoting a wide variety of consumer-friendly services, such as health, culture, connectivity, parks and recreation.
- Council and staff will serve the ratepayers of the community with a caring attitude focused on customer service.





## The Southwold Township Community Economic Development Plan

Southwold Township's Community Economic Development Plan is the culmination of the economic and demographic analysis and community consultation. It builds upon the Southwold Township Strategic Plan and provides focus for the economic development efforts. The vision statement was established by the Southwold Township Economic Development Committee in 2018. It describes the economic future this plan is intended to create for Southwold Township.

### Southwold Township Economic Development Vision (2018)

Southwold Township is a thriving centre of economic opportunity for business and residents and a welcoming destination for visitors.

### Goals and Objectives

Goals are the general intentions and ambitions that the community wants to achieve. Objectives are the precise actions or measurable steps to move closer to the goal. The following goals and objectives will provide the foundation for the economic development strategic actions detailed in the remainder of this report.

		Goal	Objective
	1	<b>Community Engagement</b>	Leverage resident and business volunteer efforts to implement Southwold's economic development plan.
	2	<b>Investment Readiness</b>	Provide the required elements to facilitate investment.
	3	<b>Branding/ Communication</b>	Establish professional branding, marketing tools and messages to share Southwold's value proposition for residents and businesses.
	4	<b>Business Development</b>	Bring increased commercial and community activity to the settlement areas in Fingal and Shedden. Attract and support a diversified business base. Expand Southwold's Tourism product offering.
	5	<b>Enhanced Infrastructure</b>	Support business and residential infrastructure needs.



## Strategic Actions

Strategic actions provide the detailed series of individual tasks required to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the Southwold Township Community Economic Development Strategic Plan.

	Goal 1	Community Engagement
	Strategic Objective	Leverage resident and business volunteer efforts to implement Southwold's economic development plan

The Community Economic Development Strategic Plan recognizes the critical role of the community in developing and implementing the economic development strategic plan. The Keystone Complex building is an example of what can be achieved in Southwold Township when residents, local business and government work together on a shared vision.

Like the Keystone Complex, the success of this plan is dependent on the ongoing engagement of local community leaders and businesses in partnership with local and regional government. The Economic Development Committee can continue to provide this leadership. Currently the committee membership is low. Additional members are needed to share the load and the responsibility of implementing the plan.

This plan provides a long list of actions that can contribute to the economic vitality of Southwold Township. It will be important to begin with some small, achievable goals to engage and motivate others. In the first year of implementation, the committee should establish two to three priority projects to establish the process and ways that they will work together, learning from their initial successes and challenges. These small steps will help to prepare the community for the larger, more complex initiatives in future years.

Connecting with the existing business members will be a critical first step. The committee should adopt a modified Business Retention and Expansion program using a combination of County and municipal staff, elected officials, economic development committee members and community volunteers to visit the businesses in Southwold.



These visits will serve a number of purposes:

- Creating an updated inventory of all local businesses and services
- Troubleshooting any local issues businesses are facing
- Review of all barriers to current business activity and growth
- Identification of any opportunities to support and grow their businesses
- Facilitate data driven decision making by Council
- Connect local businesses with local resources when and if they need assistance.

Volunteers should be encouraged to mobilize and support local community events such as clean up days in Fingal, Shedden and Talbotville, a community picnic, a night market, and a special seasonal community event for fall harvest or Christmas. These events are intended to reinforce residents' and local businesses' connections to the community while creating an environment that supports further economic activity and investment. Where possible, these events and other community activities should be held in the Main Street areas of Fingal and Shedden in order to animate the area.

The community can start to address the vacant storefronts in Shedden by establishing a pop-up business or shared office space in one of the vacant buildings at Shedden's four corners. This shared or temporary space would provide much needed room to grow for an early-stage business and mutual support and combined services such as internet and office services for a collection of independent business owners.

Southwold Township should build on its strengths as a friendly, neighbourly community by establishing a welcome committee for new residents and businesses. The committee would ensure residents and businesses are familiar with the local businesses, business communities and rich community activities and help them to become active engaged members of their new home.

The community should work with the Elgin Business Resource Centre and the Small Business Enterprise Centre to ensure that small business networking events and business seminars are held in the Township to further connect local businesses while supporting their profitability and growth.

The library is a hub of community activity. The community should ensure that the library has a collection of small business resources (as recommended by the Elgin Business Resource Centre and Small Business Enterprise Centre). The




community should also consider hosting small business seminars and networking events at the library to further reinforce the library's role as a source of small business supports.

### **Community Engagement Actions:**

1. Recruit additional economic development committee members
2. Establish 2 to 3 priority economic development projects per year
3. Develop a Southwold business retention and expansion program
4. Establish a volunteer event committee to host clean up days, a community picnic and/or night market
5. Establish a committee to host a special event
6. Create a welcome committee for new residents and businesses info on local businesses
7. Encourage the hosting of community events in Shedden's four corners.
8. Host Small business networking events
9. Ensure the library has small business resources and workshops
10. Open one of the vacant buildings in Shedden's four corners for pop-up businesses or shared offices.



	Goal 2	Investment Readiness
	<b>Strategic Objective</b>	Provide the required elements to facilitate investment

Investment readiness refers to the community's tools and capacity to address, receive and support business investment. Communities that are investment-ready have the appropriate combination of physical land and buildings, community data, planning policies and procedures, economic development expertise and marketing tools to support business retention, expansion and attraction.

Southwold Township should start by compiling the typical economic development community profile data and ensure it is available on the Southwold Township website and is shared with Elgin County Economic Development.

The community can highlight the key features for business in a one page 'lure brochure' as a tool to initiate discussion with existing and prospective businesses. The brochure will also support the County's investment attraction efforts. A digital version of the brochure is appropriate in most instances.

The Township should be proactive in assembling as much data as possible on the former Ford property. This information should include the property status including when it would be available for purchase and redevelopment, the environmental status and the servicing on-site. The former Ford property information package should also include information on Elgin County's brownfield incentive programs and other relevant programs that could help offset the environmental remediation and infrastructure investment costs on the property.

The Township should also have a database of available industrial and commercial land and buildings in Southwold Township. The inventory should include information on the owner and sales agent, asking price, property specification, servicing, permitted uses and accompanying maps. This information should be available online if possible.

Finally, the community should identify business ambassadors for the community with a proven track record in the community who are prepared to share their experience doing business in Southwold Township. These ambassadors can




provide testimonials for inclusion in the lure brochure and meet with prospective investors if required to address their individual questions.

### **Investment Readiness Actions**

1. Compile economic development data to share on the Southwold website and with Elgin County's Economic Development Department
2. Create a small one-page lure brochure with links to the Southwold and Elgin County economic development website
3. Compile data on the former Ford lands including status, environmental conditions, servicing, brownfield programs and potential funding programs
4. Prepare a database of commercial and industrial land and buildings in Southwold
5. Use local business ambassadors to help make the case for investment.



	Goal 3	Branding/ Marketing
	<b>Strategic Objective</b>	Establish professional branding, marketing tools and messages to share Southwold's value proposition for residents and businesses

Southwold Township's current logo is dated and doesn't reflect the changing economy and future opportunities for investment. The Township should invest in a new logo and branding package to reinforce its progressive vision. The community has many strengths and opportunities that should be highlighted in the economic development data and promotional material. The branding should include key messages targeting new and existing residents and prospective and existing businesses.

Southwold Township's website should be expanded to include more information on the economic development opportunities in the community. The Community Profile data (outlined in goal 2) should be compiled and prominently displayed on the Township website and shared with Elgin County Economic Development and the local business community.

Commercial opportunities are tied to the residential growth anticipated in Southwold Township (especially Talbotville). The website should include information to support resident attraction and integration. Both the industrial/commercial and residential webpages should provide links to the broader data available on the Elgin County website.

The website should include a directory of all Southwold businesses including home-based and small businesses. This directory can be the foundation for a shop local program that encourages residents and local businesses to support Southwold based businesses. The website is also an appropriate platform to profile successful Southwold Township businesses. The community can further support the local business base by celebrating a local business leader of the year.





## **Branding/ Marketing Actions**

1. Update Southwold's branding to reflect the changing economy and future opportunities
2. Establish consistent, key messages targeting prospective and existing residents, and prospective and existing businesses
3. Build on the strengths and opportunities in the community (safe, affordable, family, friendly, open spaces, proximity to larger centres, available property)
4. Compile Southwold's community profile data (demographics, business profile, servicing, resources)
5. Update the Southwold Township website to include resident and business attraction info with links to Elgin County
6. Establish an inventory of Southwold businesses (include home-based and small businesses)
7. Develop a shop local program featuring home-based and small businesses
8. Profile success stories on the Southwold website
9. Celebrate a local business leader of the year.



	Goal 4	Business Development
	<b>Strategic Objective</b>	Bring increased commercial and community activity to Fingal and Shedden. Attract and support a diversified business base. Expand Southwold's tourism product offering

Community stakeholders expressed a desire for increased commercial and community activity in Fingal and Shedden. A downtown development task force consisting of the businesses and property owners in the downtown should meet and identify the desired fixed asset improvements required to make the downtowns more attractive. These elements may include repairs to the existing sidewalk and roads, investment in planters and street furniture and updated signage.

Community volunteers should be encouraged to plan and host special events such as a farmers' market, night market, food truck event and entertainment in the downtowns. (previously referenced in Goal 1)

Establishing a Business Retention and Expansion program (also referenced in Goal 1) will provide an opportunity for local business to provide insights on their experiences doing business in Southwold Township. The visits will help inform Southwold on the issues local businesses are facing. It also provides an opportunity to share information with the businesses on funding programs and other business supports to retain and expand these businesses.

The four corners in Shedden is a well-trafficked intersection. The Township should work to establish the junction as a centre of community activity and pride. The Township should consider providing one of the empty storefronts for short-term rental to Southwold businesses over the business Christmas season in November and December. Local community groups such as the Scouts, Guides or 4H should be encouraged to set up a Christmas tree, cider/hot chocolate and gift-wrapping service at the four corners in the weekends leading up to Christmas. The four corners would also be an excellent location to stage a food truck type event.

The Township should build on the growing popularity of cycling, Elgin County's cycling initiatives and the relatively less populated roadways (compared to the GTA) to encourage the four corners as a cycling rest or rally spot, complete with designated parking, picnic tables, a repair centre, bike rack and signage showing cycling routes of various distances or themes.



The market threshold analysis data completed in Phase One of this project should be updated to provide current market potential. This data can identify specific businesses to target to establish operations in Southwold Township. An initial target group may include businesses located elsewhere in the region who may be open to establishing a satellite operation.

Southwold Township can support the sale or lease of available properties in Southwold Township by profiling available land and buildings in the community. These efforts could include providing detailed property information on the Southwold Township website (including the realtor contact information). The local high school and elementary schools could be engaged to develop window décor for vacant commercial space to beautify the location and add visual interest while also providing the owner/realtor contact information. The Southwold library (located in Shedden) should investigate the potential for extending WiFi access to the downtown area to support local residents and businesses needing access and providing another source of traffic in the community.

The Township should also ensure it is leveraging all County economic and tourism efforts. For example, Elgin County and the Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation (SWOTC) are supporting the development of Alternative Accommodation such as Airbnb and VRBO operations to encourage tourism activity in the region.

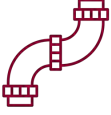
### **Business Development Actions**

1. Establish a downtown development taskforce to:
  - Identify required improvements, e.g. Sidewalks, roads, planters, signage, street furniture
  - Host special events to increase traffic
  - Organize farmers' markets, night markets, food truck events and/or entertainment
2. Establish regular business visits (BR&E) trouble-shoot, provide info on funding, business supports



3. Bring additional activity to Shedden's four corners:
  - Short-term rental for November/December
  - Scouts/4H to sell Christmas trees, cider, gift wrapping service
  - Food trucks
  - Establish a cycling rest or rally spot with parking, picnic tables, repair centre, bike rack, maps
4. Share market threshold analysis data
5. Target existing businesses located elsewhere to open a branch in Southwold
6. Profile available properties on Southwold and Elgin County websites
  - Prepare sales sheets for available properties (for website and realtors)
  - Develop window décor (with high school, elementary school students), provide contact info
  - Wi-Fi in library to extend to downtown
7. Host a workshop for alternative accommodation with Elgin County and SWOTC



	<b>Goal 5</b>	<b>Enhanced Infrastructure</b>
	<b>Strategic Objective</b>	Support business and residential infrastructure needs

Southwold Township must ensure that it has the infrastructure to ensure existing businesses can prosper and grow and to make sure the community can compete for investment with other jurisdictions.

The community has recognized the opportunity for greater economic activity resulting from recent residential growth. Continued residential growth is also dependent on the provision of the appropriate water, waste water, power and broadband servicing.

Communities are recognizing that broadband access is becoming just as important to business development and attraction as other hard infrastructure elements. Broadband access is important across industries including Southwold's agriculture sector, target industries such as retail, finance, real estate and professional services, tourism related businesses and home-based businesses.

Southwold Township should explore opportunities to expand inexpensive and reliable broadband services throughout the Township with providers who are targeting rural communities such as Packetworks. The Township should continue to support the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) Initiatives to access government funding and support for a regional broadband network across the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus region.

The Economic Development committee, Township and County staff should establish and agree upon priority areas for infrastructure enhancements. With these priority areas established, they should prepare for future budgets and funding programs by developing the business case and preliminary estimates for the required infrastructure investments. The business community should be encouraged to provide specific information on the impact these infrastructure enhancements would have on their businesses. Once completed, the business case and investment requirements can be shared with the local MPP and MPs so they are able to advocate for Southwold Township as the opportunity arises.



Southwold Township should also explore opportunities and examples of other rural communities that have engaged in private public partnerships to support infrastructure investment.

### **Enhanced Infrastructure Actions**

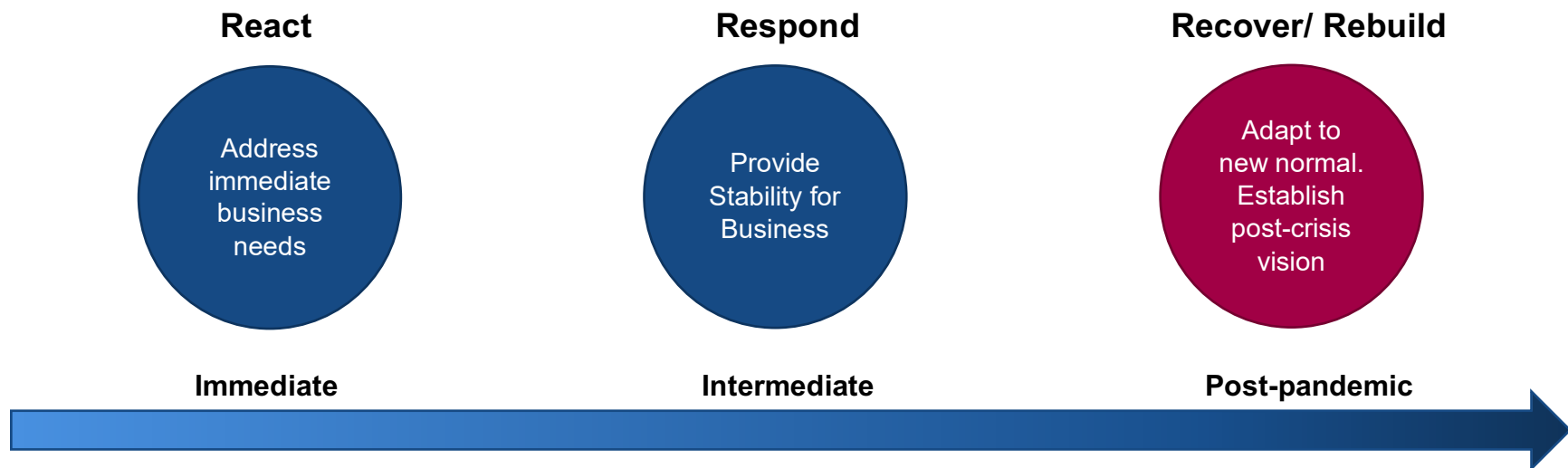
1. Work with broadband providers to expand offering in Southwold
2. Support the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) initiatives
3. Develop an infrastructure investment strategy:
  - Identify priority areas for infrastructure enhancements
  - Prepare preliminary estimates and funding application info to be incorporated into future funding programs
  - Assemble business testimonials on the potential for Southwold with infrastructure enhancements
  - Share infrastructure requirement information with local MPP, MPs
4. Research private/public partnership examples for future infrastructure investment



## COVID-19 and Economic Development

This Community Economic Development Plan was developed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. This plan provides the vision of the economic future in Southwold Township and steps to achieve that vision. They are based on fundamental economic development principles, investment readiness, community needs and desires.

The pandemic has resulted in a health and economic crisis. The State of Emergency declared in Ontario (March 17, 2020) effectively shut down all non-essential businesses in the province. At the time of writing this report, governments and businesses are addressing the immediate needs for business during the COVID crisis and are beginning to consider the intermediate-term plans to return business stability as restrictions begins to ease.



The recommended actions in this strategy will help Southwold Township recover and rebuild the local economy as the pandemic crisis dissipates. The actions are identified as short-term (overlapping with the pandemic recovery or within one year post-pandemic), medium-term (two to three years post) and long term (four years plus). Some recommendations for community events may have to be postponed, others may need to be modified to reflect changing norms for events.





The economic recovery efforts for Southwold Township should align with the three phase model of react, respond and recover as follows:

### **React**

This phase focuses on assisting businesses to remain viable until they can generate revenue again. The Southwold Economic Development Committee should work with Elgin County and other local economic development partners to advise local businesses on the various government programs designed to provide funding support. The committee may also want to follow the examples of other communities in Ontario who are establishing shop local programs, gift card sales, Go Fund Me campaigns and digital and Ecommerce programs to address the loss of revenue.

This is a good time to update Southwold's business directory, establishing benchmark data to track changes to the local economy as a result of the pandemic. The Southwold Economic Development Committee will want to remain engaged with the Elgin-St. Thomas Economic Resiliency and Recovery Task Force, to stay informed on pandemic responses and programs. It will be important to support regional data collection including business surveys to ensure Southwold's needs are included in the survey results.

### **Respond**

This phase identifies and addresses what businesses need to restart operations. The Economic Development Committee should work with Elgin County Economic Development, other economic development partners and other levels of government to provide businesses with information on how to keep their staff and customers safe. Businesses will need access to information on new operating protocols. They may need assistance in accessing PPE equipment. They may also benefit from consultation with business advisors on strategies to adopt their business models as consumer behaviour and safe practices evolve.

### **Recover**

In the longer-term, the economic development committee should monitor any changes and identify any emerging gaps in the local market. The pandemic may also create some opportunities for the local economy. For example, resident attraction efforts may be bolstered by the growth of work from home options and greater interest in moving out of the density in the GTA.



## Implementation Plan

Goal 1	Community Engagement		
Objective	Leverage resident and business volunteer efforts to implement Southwold's economic development plan		
Actions		Time Frame	Priority
1. Recruit additional economic development committee members		Immediate	High
2. Establish 2 to 3 priority economic development projects per year		Short	Medium
3. Develop a Southwold business retention and expansion program		Immediate	High
4. Establish a volunteer event committee to host clean up days, a community picnic and/or night market		Medium	Medium
5. Establish a committee to host a special event		Medium	Medium
6. Create a welcome committee for new residents and businesses info on local businesses		Long	Nice to do
7. Encourage the hosting of community events in the four corners area		Medium	Medium
8. Host small business networking events		Medium	Medium
9. Ensure the library has small business resources and workshops		Short	High
10. Open one of the vacant buildings in Shedden's four corners for pop-up business or shared offices		Long	Medium



Goal 2	Investment Readiness		
Strategic Objective	Provide the required elements to facilitate investment		
Actions		Time Frame	Priority
1. Compile economic development data to share on the Southwold website and with Elgin County's Economic Development Department		Medium	High
2. Create a small one-page lure brochure with links to the Southwold and Elgin County economic development website		Medium	High
3. Compile data on the former Ford lands including status, environmental conditions, servicing, brownfield programs and potential funding programs		Medium	High
4. Prepare a database of commercial and industrial land and buildings in Southwold		Medium	High
5. Use local business ambassadors to help make the case for investment.		Long	Medium



Goal 3	Branding/Marketing		
Strategic Objective	Establish professional branding, marketing tools and messages to share Southwold's value proposition for residents and businesses		
Actions		Time Frame	Priority
1. Update Southwold's branding to reflect the changing economy and future opportunities		Medium	High
2. Establish consistent, key messages targeting prospective and existing residents, and prospective and existing businesses		Medium	High
3. Build on the strengths and opportunities in the community (safe, affordable, family, friendly, open spaces, proximity to larger centres, available property)		Long	Medium
4. Compile Southwold's community profile data (demographics, business profile, servicing, resources)		Short	High
5. Update the Southwold Township website to include resident and business attraction info with links to Elgin County		Short	High
6. Establish an inventory of Southwold businesses (include home-based and small businesses)		Immediate	High
7. Develop a shop local program featuring home-based and small businesses		Long	Medium
8. Profile success stories on the Southwold website		Long	Medium
9. Celebrate a local business leader of the year.		Long	Nice to do



Goal 4	Business Development		
Strategic Objective	Bring increased commercial and community activity to Fingal and Shedden. Attract and support a diversified business base. Expand Southwold's tourism product offering.		
Action	Time Frame	Priority	
1. Establish a downtown development taskforce to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify required improvements, e.g. Sidewalks, roads, planters, signage, street furniture</li> <li>Host special events to increase traffic</li> <li>Organize farmers' markets, night markets, food truck events and/or entertainment</li> </ul>	Medium	Medium	
2. Establish regular business visits (BR&E) trouble-shoot, provide info on funding, business supports	Short	High	
3. Bring additional activity to Shedden's four corners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short-term rental for November/December</li> <li>Scouts/4H to sell Christmas trees, cider, gift wrapping service</li> <li>Food trucks</li> <li>Establish a cycling rest or rally spot with parking, picnic tables, repair centre, bike rack, maps</li> </ul>	Medium	Medium	
4. Update and share market threshold analysis data	Long	Medium	
5. Target existing businesses located elsewhere to open a branch in Southwold	Long	Nice to do	
6. Profile available properties on Southwold and Elgin County websites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare sales sheets for available properties (for website and realtors)</li> <li>Develop window décor (with high school, elementary school students), provide contact info</li> <li>Wi-Fi in library to extend to downtown</li> </ul>	Long	Medium	
7. Host a workshop for alternative accommodation with Elgin County and SWOTC	Medium	Medium	



Goal 5	Enhanced Infrastructure		
Strategic Objective	Support business and residential infrastructure needs		
Action	Time Frame	Priority	
1. Work with broadband providers to expand offering in Southwold	Medium	High	
2. Support the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) initiatives	Ongoing	Medium	
3. Develop an infrastructure investment strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify priority areas for infrastructure enhancements</li><li>• Prepare preliminary estimates and funding application info to be incorporated into future funding programs</li><li>• Assemble business testimonials on the potential for Southwold with infrastructure enhancements</li><li>• Share infrastructure requirement information with local MPP, MPs</li></ul>	Medium	High	
4. Research private/public partnership examples for future infrastructure investment	Long	Medium	