



Meeting Date: May 18, 2022

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## **Business Retention and Expansion project**

### **Recommendation:**

That Council of the Township of Whitewater Region receive this report for information purposes with an update on the survey completion for the Business Retention & Expansion project.

### **Background:**

The Business Retention & Expansion (BR+E) is a structured, action-oriented and community-based approach to business and economic development. This project is formatted by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). This project helps municipalities prioritize their efforts to support the existing businesses by identifying areas in the business sector that need assistance.

### **Goals of the Project:**

The Goals and Objectives of the project, as decided by the management and the project leadership team are to:

1. Increase the competitiveness of businesses within the Township.
2. Enable business development, investment, and job creation.
3. Identify the positive and negative attributes of the community as a place to do business.
4. Establish and implement a strategic action plan to support existing businesses.
5. Build and improve relations with existing businesses and the Township.
6. Provide businesses with a resource network for increased communication with the Township and other government funding opportunities.

### **Updated Timeline:**

- December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021- Soft launch of the project on social media & website update to provide more details to the public and businesses.
- February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022- Survey launch date to all businesses in Whitewater region
- April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022- Survey official close date and collect all the paper survey copies.

- May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022- Survey preliminary results presented
- June 2022- Community Partners Action Plan meeting
- August 2022- Action Plan Presentation to Council

### **Whitewater Region Business Statistics:**

According to Analyst data provided by OMAFRA from 2021:

There are currently 402 businesses in WWR with a NASIC code. These are businesses with a tax number and a business number recorded by the government. These include registered self-employed professionals, Agriculture farmers, and traditional businesses.

As part of the Survey, we contacted businesses by phone, email, in person and using mailed paper flyers. Our goal was to contact as many businesses as possible and make sure they were aware of the ongoing project. As a result, we reached 356 businesses totaling 88% of all registered businesses in this effort. Of which 175 were farms or Ag related and 181 businesses were listed as non-agriculture businesses.

80 different businesses answered the Survey in some form from all the businesses contacted. With 73 businesses completing the majority of the Survey. This leaves us with just over 20% successful response rate on the Survey. The Survey has a confidence level of 95%, with a 10% margin of error from our sample size.

### **Survey Response Highlights:**

77% of Business Owners rated Whitewater Region as a Good or Excellent place to do business

52% of businesses surveyed are planning on expanding within the next two years

94% of Business Owners rated Whitewater Region as having Good or Excellent overall quality of life

### **Strategic Plan:**

The completion of the BR+E survey supports the following 2020-2030 strategic plan action items:

- Undertake business retention to support existing major sectors
- Promote new and business expansion for underserviced sectors
- Connect with entrepreneurs, businesses, and investors regularly.
- Develop an economic development strategy
- Explore opportunities for skilled labour development and business succession

## **Volunteer Acknowledgement:**

This Survey was completed with the assistance of two community volunteers and the volunteer business leadership team. I want to thank *Jim Butterworth* and *Tatia Wallace* for their support during the survey stage and continued assistance during the data analysis stage. And thank my leadership team volunteers for their continued input and feedback on this project.

The leadership team includes:

Dave McGonegal - Renfrew County Beef Farmers of Ontario

Bev Buchanan - Buchanan Sand and Gravel

Cindy Jamieson - Jamieson Travel & Whitewater Inn

Jeff Black - Glasshouse Botanicals

Chris Thompson - Whitewater Brewery

Bill McGill - Summerhill Resorts

## **Next Steps:**

The team will be working with OMAFRA representative Karen Fischer to facilitate the survey data organization. This organization will assist with pulling the most common responses from the raw data to create the most beneficial action plan for Business success in Whitewater.

## **Attachments**

Attachment No. 1 – BR+E preliminary data report

Attachment N0. 2 – Survey Responses by Postal Code

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Reviewed By: Robert Tremblay, Chief Administrative Officer