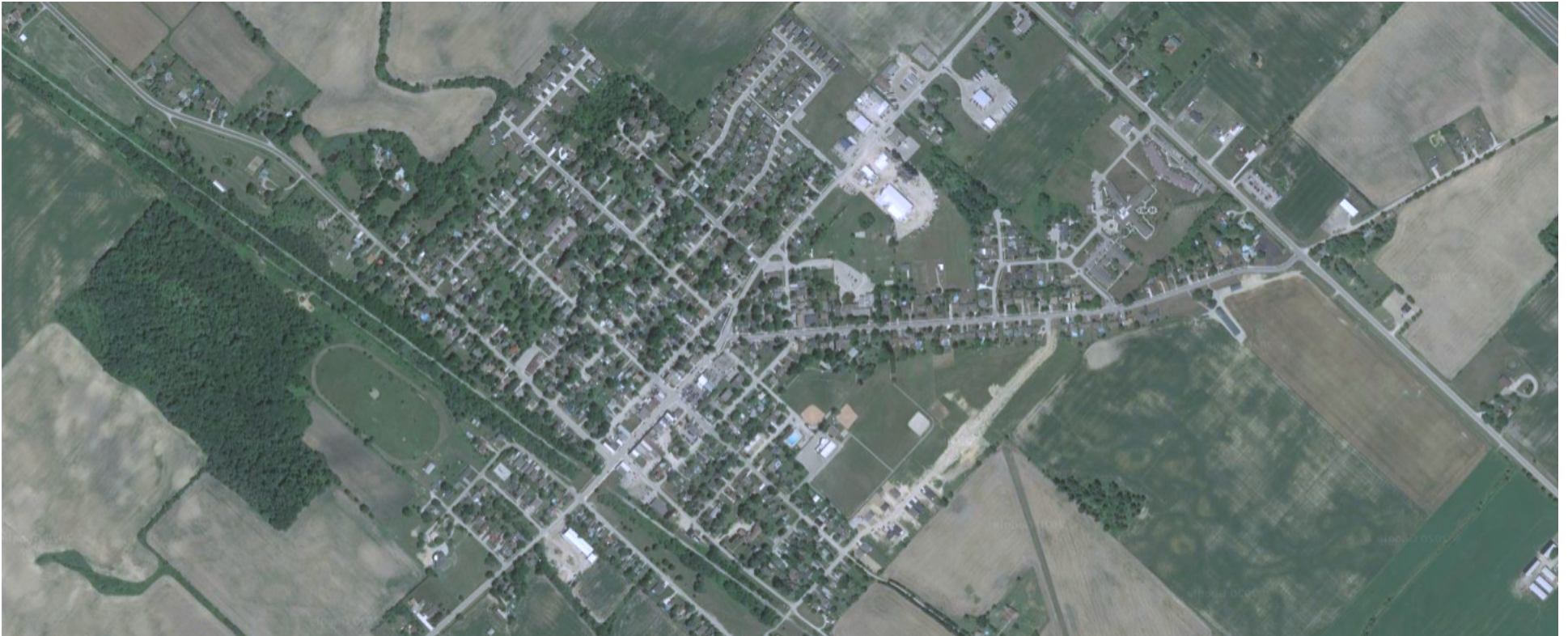




Municipality of  
**Dutton Dunwich**



**ElginCounty**  
*Progressive by Nature*



# MUNICIPALITY OF DUTTON DUNWICH

## Community Economic Development Plan



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CONSULTING

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## Dutton Dunwich Community Economic Development Plan

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Our thanks to the businesses and residents of Dutton Dunwich that contributed to the development of this plan.

Cover image: Google maps



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# 1 Introduction

This Community Economic Development Plan is the result of a collaboration between the Dutton Dunwich Economic Development Committee, the Municipality of Dutton Dunwich and Elgin County. This plan is intended to direct the collective efforts of the dedicated volunteers, municipal staff, local businesses and economic development stakeholders to build the local economy and leverage the economic opportunities across the region.

The Community Economic Development Plan was developed under the guidance of the Dutton Dunwich Economic Development Committee. The process of developing the plan consisted of three phases: research and analysis, stakeholder consultation and strategy development.

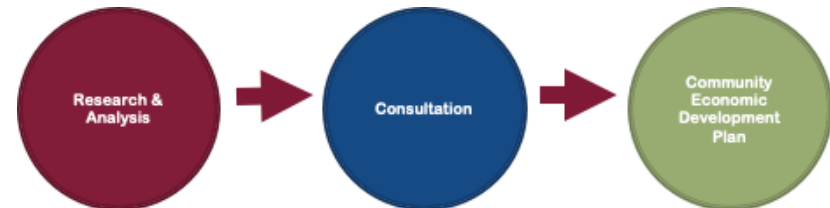
The creation of Dutton Dunwich’s Community Economic Development Plan includes three phases; research and analysis, community consultation and plan development.

The process of developing the Community Development Plan includes the following reports:

1. Economic and Demographic Analysis, April 2020
2. Consultation Summary, November 2020
3. Community Economic Development Plan (this document)
4. Community Development Handbook

This report provides a summary of the background research and analysis for the development of a Community Handbook. The Economic and Demographic Analysis completed in April 2020 provided a thorough breakdown of economic and demographic trends with the potential to impact Dutton Dunwich.

Figure 1: Community Economic Development Planning Process



The Community Consultation Discussion Paper, completed in November 2020, included the detailed report of the community engagement including individual interviews, resident survey and community workshop. The Dutton Dunwich Economic Development Committee met in December 2020 to review the key findings of these two reports and established four strategic priorities which will be the foundation of the Community Economic Development Plan including goals, objectives and specific actions, outlined in this report.

The Community Economic Development Handbook will be the final step of this process. This final document will guide the community efforts to address the economic challenges and opportunities, rebuild after the COVID-19 pandemic and create a strong and vibrant local economy.



## 2 About Dutton Dunwich

The Municipality of Dutton Dunwich is a community of 3,866 residents located in western Elgin County in southwestern Ontario. The local economy is based on a strong agricultural heritage and a combination of small, medium and home-based businesses. The Municipality's location on Highway 401 makes it an attractive location for businesses and residents seeking a small-town environment with easy access to larger urban centres and major markets.

The main population centres in Dutton Dunwich are Dutton, Duttona Beach, Iona, Iona Station, Wallacetown and Port Talbot.

Figure 2: Dutton Dunwich in Elgin County



Source: St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership

## 3 Economic and Demographic Analysis

Dutton Dunwich's population of 3,866 (Statistics Canada 2016) has remained relatively flat, with a decrease of .3% between 2011 to 2016. The population is aging, with one third of Dutton Dunwich's workforce eligible to retire by 2026.

The community has some new residential development which has offset the negative natural population growth rates (births minus deaths). New residents, who moved to Dutton Dunwich between 2011 and 2016, make up 19% of the population. Almost all of the new residents moved from elsewhere in Ontario. The workers in Dutton Dunwich have longer commutes than the Canadian average with 57% commuting more than 30 minutes one way each day.

Figure 3: Population Highlights

	• <b>3,866 Residents</b> 2016
	• <b>Relatively flat</b> Down .3% between 2011 to 2016
	• <b>Aging</b> 30% could retire in next 10 years
	• <b>19% new residents</b> — almost all intraprovincial
	• <b>Long commutes</b> 57% with >30 minute commute

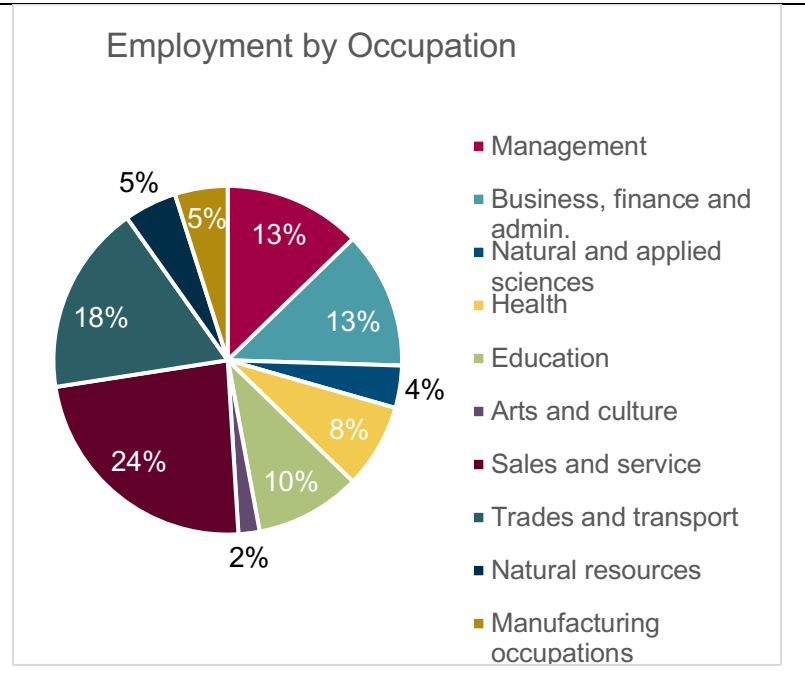
Source: Statistics Canada 2016



Top occupational sectors by number of jobs for residents of Dutton Dunwich are Sales and Service (24%) Trades and Transport (18%), Business, finance and administration (13%), Management (13%) and Education (10%).

There are twice as many workers in Dutton Dunwich employed in Natural Resources occupations compared to the Canadian average. They also have greater concentrations in Management (22%), Trades and transport (21%), Manufacturing (17%) and Health (11%) than Canadian averages.

**Figure 4: Employment by Occupation, Dutton Dunwich 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census

**Figure 5 Employment by occupation concentration, Dutton Dunwich (Canada = 1.00)**



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census



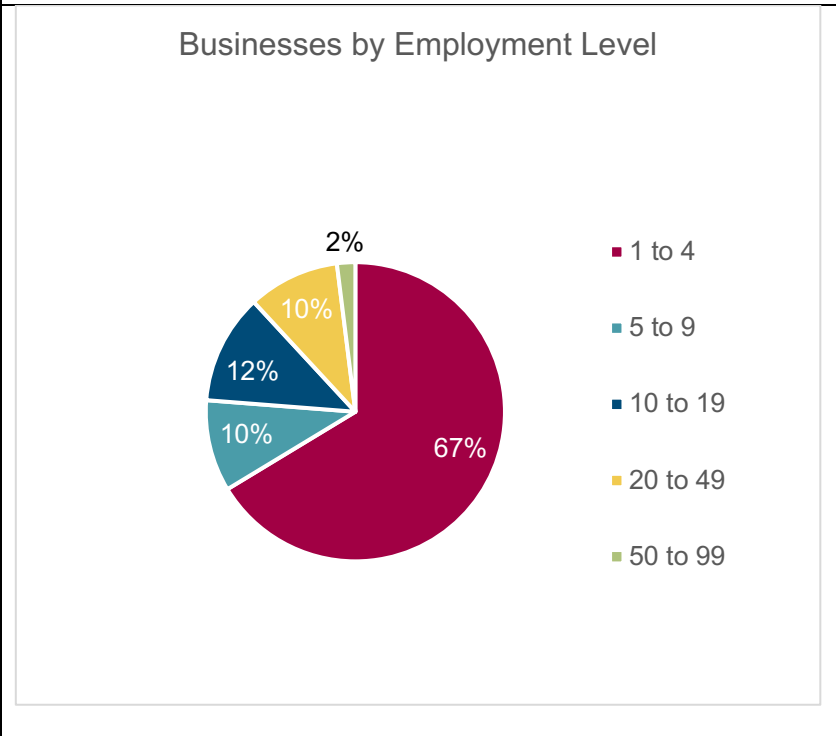
Typical of most rural communities, Dutton Dunwich has a higher share of self-employed and small businesses than the Canadian average. The top employment sectors in the Municipality are Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; Real estate and rental and leasing; Construction; Transportation and warehousing and Retail trade.

**Figure 6: Top 5 Sectors by Number of Firms**



Source: Canadian Business Patterns, 2019

**Figure 7: Businesses by Employment Level**



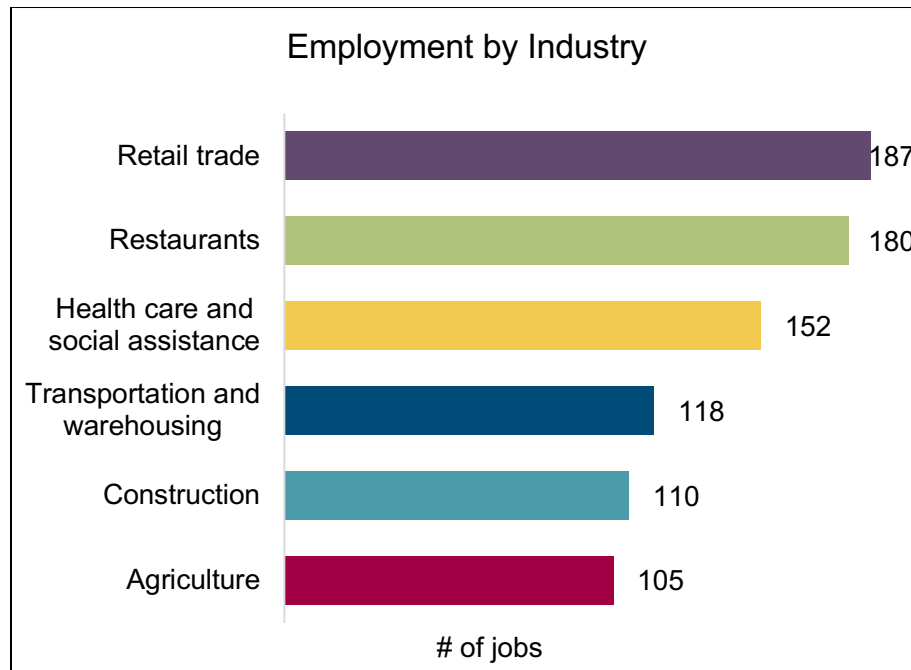
Source: Canadian Business Patterns, 2019



Dutton Dunwich's economy is dominated by micro-businesses. Two-thirds of all employer businesses have between one and four employees. Just 2% of businesses have between 50 and 99 employees. There are no businesses registered with 100 or more employees.

An estimate of total employment in the community can be derived using the Business Patterns data. As of June 2019, there were an estimated 1,100 people working in Dutton Dunwich across all sectors including residents of Dutton Dunwich and those commuting in as of June 2019. The top employment sectors are Retail trade with an estimated 187 workers followed by restaurants with 180 and health care with 152 workers.

**Figure 8: Estimated employment by industry, top employment sectors**



Derived using Canadian Business Patterns, June 2019

The Dutton Dunwich Economic and Demographic Analysis includes a detailed summary of each industry sector in Dutton Dunwich, with and without employment.





## Market Threshold Analysis

A market threshold analysis is a first-level assessment of potential business opportunities for Dutton Dunwich. These opportunities are based on potential local demand such as personal and business services, retail and health care. Other export-focused opportunities such as agriculture, tourism, manufacturing and transportation can be developed using an asset and attribute-based review of the community.

Many people in Dutton Dunwich have long commutes to work every day. The top destination for work is the City of London. A review of locally available services could identify potential gaps and opportunities to attract those services to the community. Providing local options for services rather than requiring residents to commute elsewhere to shop and access personal services and entertainment gives residents local alternatives and generates incremental tax revenue for the municipality.

Dutton Dunwich has an urban centre (population centre) located in its geographic centre. Dutton has a population density of 865 people per square kilometre compared to 13.1 people per square kilometre across the municipality<sup>1</sup>. This small but concentrated population centre of 1,400 people is located right off Highway 401. It is an ideal location for local services, retail and other local market activity. The proximity to Highway 401 provides an additional opportunity for businesses that could capture the travel market.

<sup>1</sup> For comparison, the City of London has a similar population density as the Dutton population centre.

Figure 9 The Dutton Population Centre



Source: Google Maps

The following section provides a summary of the specific industry sub-sectors that have a greater concentration or lower concentration of businesses adjusted for population size. The sub-sectors with greater concentrations indicate that Dutton Dunwich may have inherent strengths and could potentially build upon that strength to further grow the sub-sector.



Those sub-sectors with a lower concentration may indicate areas with potential to better serve local demand by providing additional services. The two nearby urban centres of London and St. Thomas are most likely servicing much of the local demand. There may however to an opportunity to retain a greater share of the consumer demand locally.

One caution with Market Threshold Analysis is that it is restricted to the municipal boundaries which means that it does not consider competing businesses that may be just outside the municipal boundaries and satisfy some of the local demand for those goods and services.

The areas of potential opportunity based on Market Threshold Analysis are: Retail (especially food and beverage); Finance, insurance and real estate; Professional services; Health care (especially physical therapists, Home health care and day care with employees) and: Accommodation.

The Dutton Dunwich Economic and Demographic Analysis includes a detailed market threshold analysis based on the 2019 Business Counts data from Statistics Canada.

### Areas of Opportunity Based on Market Threshold Analysis



Retail- especially food and beverage



Finance, insurance and real estate



Professional Services



Health care – physical therapists, home health care, day care (with employees)



Accommodation



## 4 Community Consultation

The community engagement process was designed to collect feedback from residents, businesses, elected officials and other stakeholder groups. The following engagement efforts were included to inform the development of the Community Economic Development Plan.

- Meetings with the Dutton Dunwich Economic Development Committee
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Public Survey
- Public Meeting

The Dutton Dunwich Economic Development Committee provided guidance and input on the strategic planning process and the interim reports during the course of the development of the Community Economic Development Plan.

A total of 10 one on one interviews were conducted between July 28 and August 12, 2020 with businesses, community leaders and other organizations that contribute to Dutton Dunwich's economic development.

The community survey was conducted during a volatile period. Dutton Dunwich residents received a printed copy of the survey in the midst of a State of Emergency in March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Municipal offices, along with most retail operations and collection points for the survey, were closed for an extended period of time. As a result of these closures, the survey collection period was extended into May 2020. There were 157 online and 171 printed surveys completed between March and May 2020.

Approximately 28 residents and Economic Development Committee members participated in an online community workshop on October 20, 2020 to hear about the Community Development Planning process and to provide input.

The following sections provide a summary of the findings from the various consultation efforts:

### Interview Themes

#### **Community**

Residents are very supportive of local business and value the individual customer service they receive. The new residential development in Dutton is a great opportunity, creating greater demand for expanded retail and service offerings. Dutton is a complete community with all the services and amenities families need to get established. It will be important to make new residents feel welcome and to integrate new residents into the community

#### **Internet Access**

There has been an increase in the number of people leaving urban centres in favour of smaller communities but they need internet services to successfully transition. It will be important to encourage home based businesses. Dutton's high speed and reliable internet services will be a key selling feature. Affordable and reliable internet access is still a challenge for rural homes and farms.

#### **Locating in Dutton Dunwich**

The small independent businesses in Dutton Dunwich were all established by people that live in Dutton Dunwich. The



Municipality would be an excellent opportunity for businesses with up to 50 employees. The industrial land in Dutton is not “shovel-ready”. It is owned by several individuals and investment is required to bring services and an internal roadway onto the property. There are no property details available on the website. The individuals interviewed gave mixed reviews on addressing regulatory matters.

### **Tourism**

Key tourism assets include Pearce Provincial Park, Backus Page Museum, Duttona Beach, Port Glasgow<sup>2</sup> and community parks and recreation. There are no conventional accommodations but there are some Airbnbs. Additional wayfinding is needed from Highway 401.

### **COVID-19**

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been uneven. Some businesses experienced minor inconveniences. Some have staff working from home and others were closed completely. Some retailers actually saw increased sales as a result of the pandemic.

## **Resident Survey Themes**

### **Shopping Patterns**

Dutton Dunwich was the most popular location for residents for quick errands, groceries, automotive repairs, medical appointments, coffee shops, personal care, professional services, recreation and activities.

London was the most popular destination for clothing, furniture, appliance, TV & electronics, hardware, paint and plumbing, restaurants, culture and entertainment.

### **Improvements to existing businesses**

The most common responses by residents for improvements for local businesses were around hours, building facades, product variety, grocery store expansion, additional restaurants and hardware store improvements.

### **Types of businesses needed**

The most commonly referenced businesses needed in Dutton Dunwich were: Dollar/junior department stores, clothing, licensed restaurant/ bar, grocery (and specialty food) and a Tim Horton's.

### **Sector Focus**

The largest share of respondents recommended focusing on commercial businesses followed by industrial development, then residential and agriculture followed by tourism.

### **Shopping Frequency**

The majority of residents reported they shopped in Dutton Dunwich once a week or more for quick errands (gas and convenience store) and groceries. A full 73% of respondents shop in Dutton Dunwich whenever they can.

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<sup>2</sup> Port Glasgow is actually in the neighbouring community of West Elgin but was referenced by survey respondents as a tourism asset that attracted visitors to the area.



## Community Workshop Themes

### **Economic Opportunities**

Workshop participants said the key economic development opportunities were: housing and related population growth, attracting a junior department store, small manufacturing operations and agriculture related businesses/

### **Barriers**

Barriers to Dutton Dunwich's economic development including a lack of promotion, competition from larger centres including London and St. Thomas, retail leakage to larger and neighbouring jurisdictions, regulations and red tape, limited amenities for new residents and ensuring new residents feel welcome.

### **Priorities**

Workshop participants identified the following priority areas for Dutton Dunwich's economic development efforts: housing

diversity, promoting the community for resident and investment attraction, modernizing the core and providing additional amenities for residents. They felt Dutton Dunwich needed to improve its social presence with local events that build community and encourage residents and businesses to work cooperatively. They also spoke about the relationship with the school and providing work opportunities for students.





### **Future Vision**

The participants vision for Dutton Dunwich included a growing population, diverse economic (incorporating commercial, agriculture, manufacturing and tourism businesses), a full range of locally available goods and services and a larger tax base. They further noted that support from Council, including sufficient staff to support economic development would be an important contributor to future success.



## 5 Strategic Priorities

Strategic priorities are those areas of focus that will matter most to Dutton Dunwich’s economic development success over the next few years. The following priorities will provide the basis for the goals, objectives and actions outlined in this strategy.

	<b>Economic Development Tools</b>	Dutton Dunwich needs to develop the capacity and tools to effectively attract investment. The Municipality must ensure it has the necessary resources, data and processes in place. Understanding Dutton Dunwich’s value proposition and the investment targets’ needs. Making the case for investment in Dutton-Dunwich.
	<b>Population Growth</b>	Attracting and retaining residents with a diverse supply of housing. A growing population will increase the local market for existing businesses and attract new investment, build the tax base. Leveraging Dutton’s internet services as a key asset to support home based and local businesses.
	<b>Local Business</b>	Building a collaborative model. Supporting the local business so that they continue to operate and grow. Understanding and addressing barriers facing local businesses. Encouraging local residents and businesses to support the local business community. Supporting home based and small businesses.
	<b>Thriving Downtown</b>	The downtown is the heart of the community. It is the centre of commercial activity and community events and is central to a community’s tourism activity. Efforts should build upon the appeal of the quaint small-town features and unique retail and service offerings. Businesses should be encouraged to improve the appearance and accessibility of their buildings.



## 6 Goals and Objectives





Goals, objectives and actions are the building blocks of the Community Economic Development Plan.

**Goals** describe the broad end-state we want to achieve.

**Objectives** are the desired results we want to achieve as a result of the goal.

**Actions** are the specific measurable steps required to achieve the goals and objectives.


Together the goals, objectives and actions detail what we want, what it will achieve, and the recommended steps to get there. The following section provides a summary of the goals and related objectives followed by the detailed actions.

		Goal	Objective
	1	Investment Readiness	To provide the resources and tools to attract and retain investment.
	2	Population Growth	To increase the market for local businesses and support local workforce demands.
	3	Strong local businesses	To create an environment where local businesses prosper.
	4	Thriving downtown	To increase economic activity and investments in the downtown.



## 7 Strategic Actions

The following pages outline the actions recommended to achieve Dutton Dunwich’s goals and objectives. These actions were developed recognizing the Municipality’s size and related human and financial resources available to implement the Community Economic Development Plan.

	<p><b>Goal 1: Investment Readiness</b></p> <p>Objective: To provide the resources and tools needed to attract and retain investment.</p>
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The term “investment ready” refers to the community’s ability to respond to a prospective investor’s needs. This includes having serviced, and appropriately zoned land or buildings, a streamlined approvals process and the necessary community data to invest and begin operations in a timely manner.

Dutton Dunwich staff, County staff, economic development committee members and volunteers must agree on the roles and responsibilities of the various community stakeholders on who and how existing business and prospective business needs will be addressed. An annual workplan and budget are also key to ensure necessary resources are allocated to undertake the Community Economic Development Plan.

The Economic and demographic analysis conducted as part of this process provided much of the typical economic development data to be shared on the Dutton Dunwich website. The website should include contact information for anyone needing additional information or assistance. A business directory is important to show the successful businesses already located in Dutton Dunwich. It can also be a powerful referral tool by providing links to the individual businesses’ websites.

The inventory of available buildings and lands is typically one of the highest sources of traffic on an economic development website. These lists typically include information on the property size and dimensions, access routes, services and capacity, zoning, permitted uses, sales price or lease rate and the contact information for the owner or real estate professional.

The website should also include information about any incentive or other funding programs available for existing and prospective businesses and any other supports available.






The Market Threshold Analysis conducted as part of this project identified several target sectors. Dutton Dunwich should assemble this data along with the other key community assets and selling features to develop key messages and materials to promote the investment opportunities by sector to share with prospective investors and key investment influencers including the Elgin-St. Thomas Small Business Enterprise Centre, Elgin County Economic Development and local real estate professionals. Dutton Dunwich staff and the Economic Development Committee should also stay in regular contact with the County to ensure it is up to date on the County's economic development efforts, and any programs that may benefit the Municipality or its business community.

#### **Recommended Actions:**

1. Establish an annual workplan and budget for community economic development initiatives with roles for Elgin County, Dutton Dunwich staff, Economic Development Committee members and community volunteers.
2. Compile a directory of local businesses.
3. Prepare an inventory of available buildings and land.
4. Compile and promote economic development data targeting local businesses, prospective investors, economic development stakeholders and influencers.
5. Expand and regularly update the economic development content on the Dutton Dunwich website, link to County website.
6. Make the case for investment in Retail; Finance, insurance and real estate; Professional services; Health care and; Accommodation.
7. Leverage and participate in County economic development initiatives.



	<b>Goal 2: Population Growth</b>
Objective: To increase the market for local businesses and support local workforce demands.	

Attracting new residents to Dutton Dunwich is critical to offset the flat natural population growth rate and the aging workforce. There are a number of factors that individuals and families consider when deciding to relocate. Dutton Dunwich can help grow the population by promoting the community's many benefits including proximity to major centres (for employment and expanded retail, service and entertainment offerings), fast and reliable internet services (in Dutton), community amenities, friendliness and high quality of life. Dutton Dunwich should collaborate with local real estate professionals and residential developers to ensure they have the information they need to promote Dutton Dunwich's selling features.

Equally important to attracting residents is retaining them. A welcoming program for new residents can help integrate newcomers to the community and ensure they are able to take advantage of the community's many events and amenities. Research indicates that individuals that feel connected with their community are more likely to invest and stay in their community. A Facebook page or similar social media platform is an easy way to provide residents with additional information on the municipal programs and community events and encourage them to get involved.

Finally, the Municipality should explore the opportunities to expand the residential offerings in Dutton Dunwich to accommodate all budgets and lifestyles and support residents at all stages of life from singles and young families to empty nesters and retirees.

**Recommended Actions:**

1. Make the case for living in Dutton Dunwich.
2. Promote Dutton Dunwich for new residents on the Municipal website with links to local real estate professionals and developers.
3. Develop a welcome program for new residents.
4. Establish a Facebook page for new and existing residents focused on municipal programs and community events.
5. Explore options to expand existing residential options to accommodate a range of lifestyles and budgets.



	<p><b>Goal 3: Strong Local Businesses</b></p> <p>Objective: To create an environment where local businesses prosper.</p>
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Dutton Dunwich must ensure it has created an environment that is supportive of existing businesses, attractive to prospective investors and encourages growth while removing any barriers to growth. The online directory of businesses, also referenced in Goal 1, should be regularly updated and tracked to monitor changes in economic conditions and identify gaps business services and opportunities for further investment. This directory is an important component of any efforts to encourage residents and businesses to support local businesses.

The directory can serve as a mailing to share information on programs and incentives any other economic development programs with local businesses. It can also be used to conduct a survey of local businesses on current insights and the opportunities and barriers to their individual business operations.

Consumer support of shop local programs has increased significantly as a result of the COVID-19 health crisis and related economic crisis. These programs can take a number of forms including special seasonal events, cooperative promotions and passport programs with rewards or extra savings programs. These programs are particularly successful when they profile local business success stories and help connect consumers with the people in their community.

The survey respondents reported that Dutton enjoys high internet speeds and reliability. Internet is now an essential service for the many home-based and non-employer businesses in the Municipality. Working from home is also expected to remain an important consideration for residents post COVID-19. Expanding similar service levels into the rural areas in Dutton Dunwich would be a great support for agricultural and other businesses outside Dutton.

The Municipality should also review its bylaws and policies regarding home-based businesses to ensure that it provides sufficient flexibility to support the growth of home-based businesses.

Finally, the economic development committee should host regular economic development forums to introduce and then in subsequent years update businesses and residents on the implementation of the Community Economic Development Plan. This forum, held annually or biannually, would also provide an opportunity to inform businesses of new programs and funding, recruit program volunteers, encourage supporting local businesses, and provide insights on new business trends.



### **Recommended Actions:**

1. Create and post an online directory of local businesses. (Goal 1, Action 2)
2. Host business networking events and workshops in the community.
3. Provide regular updates on small business supports, incentives and funding programs including programs such as Elgincentives, Digital Main Street and other economic recovery programs.
4. Survey local businesses and provide regular updates on evolving business needs.
5. Establish a shop local program.
6. Support coordinated promotional programs.
7. Profile local business success stories.
8. Support the expansion of reliable and affordable internet in the rural areas.
9. Review existing bylaws and policies to support home-based businesses.
10. Host a regular community economic development forum to update businesses and residents on economic development efforts, learn about new programs and opportunities and get involved in community economic development efforts.



	<b>Goal 4: Thriving Downtown</b>
Objective: To increase economic activity and investments in the downtown.	

The downtown represents the pulse of the community. Its economic activity and appearance sets the tone for the economy and the image of the community. A Downtown Improvement Team is an effective way to engage downtown businesses and volunteers in the upkeep and improvement of the downtown area. Clean up days in the spring and pre-Christmas period can provide a team building and important contribution to ensuring the downtown is welcoming for the tourism and Christmas shopping seasons. The committee should also set up a wish list of street furniture and seek sponsorship from the local business community and service clubs wishing to demonstrate their role as community builders.

In many downtowns, property owners are not located in the community and therefore a special effort is required to ensure these property owners are aware of the many programs and opportunities that can help fill vacant spaces and support the regular maintenance and building improvements.

The survey of residents indicated a need for additional signage directing visitors and residents to places of interest and facilitating wayfinding through the Municipality. Dutton Dunwich should work with Elgin County to determine how it can best leverage the County's signage program to address the Municipality's wayfinding requirements. It may also want to consider establishing some common design guidelines to ensure a cohesive look to signage within the downtowns.

The downtown businesses should be encouraged to work cooperatively on promotional programs and community events. They should also be encouraging business to establish common hours of operation, starting with common weekend hours to ensure local residents that want to shop local can do so.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the role of outdoor patios and animating downtown streets. The Municipality should review its bylaws and incentives to ensure that the existing guidelines provide sufficient flexibility to support outdoor patios.



### **Recommended Actions:**

1. Establish a downtown improvement team to identify and address downtown improvements, host clean up days and develop a street furniture, plantings and lighting wish list.
2. Engage and inform downtown property owners of business development, Community Improvement Plan, accessibility requirements, and window wrap and display programs.
3. Expand and participate in the County's signage strategy to direct travelers from Highway 401 and Highway 3 throughout Dutton Dunwich.
4. Expand combined marketing activities.
5. Encourage retailers to maintain common business hours.
6. Review bylaws and incentives to support outdoor patios.