



Report to Council

Department: Development Services
Division: Economic Development
Date: June 20, 2022
Prepared by: Nelson Silveira, Economic Development Officer
Report Number: Economic Development-2022-10
Subject: My Main Street Local Business Accelerator Program
Number of Pages: 5 plus attachments

Recommendation(s)

That Economic Development-2022-10 entitled My Main Street Accelerator Program prepared by Nelson Silveira, Economic Development Officer dated June 20, 2022, be received.

Purpose

To provide Council with an update on the My Main Street Local Business Accelerator Program.

Background and Discussion

In December of 2021, the Town of Essex was approved for funding through the My Main Street Local Business Accelerator Program. The Town was one of 65 successful applicants in southern Ontario that has received funding for a dedicated Main Street Ambassador contract position, customized marketing research, data analysis, and non-repayable funding contributions for small businesses in Essex Centre and Harrow downtowns. The My Main Street Program has been supporting businesses in our downtown communities through:

- I) **Dedicated Main Street Ambassador:** A non-repayable contribution of **\$57,500** towards the 12-month salary and equipment purchases of a Main Street Ambassador for our downtown main street areas in Essex Centre and Harrow who interacts with and provides support to businesses.
- II) **Community Market Profiles:** Secondary market research to understand our community's trade area, demographics, how residents spend their money, their mobility, how they consume media, and what types of products and services are missing from our local community. My Main Street has completed a Community Market Profile for Essex Centre and Harrow which are attached to this Council report. Administration will be analyzing the data collected in the Community Profiles to better understand our target markets and assist us in advancing future marketing and business development efforts.
- III) **Market Research Reports:** Interested businesses will have the opportunity to have individually tailored Market Research Reports which provide information on the demographics and shopping habits of customers that buy products and services in Essex Centre and Harrow.
- IV) **Grant Application:** Ten \$10,000 non-repayable contributions to support local businesses for a total of \$100,000 are available to eligible businesses in Essex Centre and Harrow. Five are available for existing businesses, while five are available for new businesses. Businesses will be able to apply for funding to assist in the implementation of improvements or fill market gaps based off their individual Market Research Reports.

My Main Street is also seeking to prioritize equity-deserving groups and historically marginalized communities through all aspects of program delivery to encourage local economic opportunities to diversify local main streets.

My Main Street Program in Essex Centre and Harrow

The Main Street Ambassador has been collaborating with businesses throughout Essex Centre and Harrow to familiarize them with the program and the wide range of benefits associated with the Market Research Reports and potential grant funding opportunities.

Of the 176 occupied commercial spaces in downtown Essex Centre, 74 of those meet the eligibility criteria for the My Main Street program. In Harrow, there are 77 occupied units in the downtown, 27 of those meet the eligibility criteria. This program focuses on providing direct support to independently owned traditional retail, restaurant, and service-based businesses. Professional services like accountants and lawyers, or corporate retailers and restaurants are not eligible for support under the My Main Street program.

Administration commenced recruitment of businesses in mid-March 2022 and will continue our efforts until the end of the program in February 2023. Business enrollment in the My Main Street program is completely voluntary and accelerated by the Main Street Ambassador.

The following table describes work currently underway through the My Main Street program:

My Main Street Highlights To Date

	Main Street Essex Centre	Main Street Harrow
Number of Businesses Contacted and Engaged	74	27
Businesses in Queue for Market Research Report	3	4
Market Research Reports Completed	7	4
Grant Applications Submitted for Funding	3	1
Grant Applications Approved for Funding*	0	0

*Once a business completes a Market Research Report, they will be eligible to apply for one of the ten \$10,000 non-repayable contributions to be used for leasehold improvements, external façade improvements, equipment, inventory, technology, or marketing. Funding requests must align and be supported by recommendations made in the applicant's Market Research Report. First round of funding will consist of five approved applications by end of Q3 2022. The remaining five grants will be approved by Q4 2022.

Next Steps

The My Main Street program expires February 3, 2023. Administration continues to connect with business owners in the Main Street to understand challenges and opportunities in their business and support them wherever possible. The Main Street Ambassador is focused on supporting Main Street businesses in accessing and making sense of the market research in their community while also recruiting and assisting businesses in their business support applications. In addition, the Local Business Accelerator program is identifying opportunities in the market research and leveraging pre-existing supports and offerings within the Town of Essex, including referring and directing businesses to programs offered by Small Business and Entrepreneurship Centre, Essex Community Futures Development Corporation, and Digital Main Street.

Financial Impact

The My Main Street Local Business Accelerator Program in the Town of Essex is fully funded by the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario. My Main Street is a \$23.25-million investment made by the Federal Government to help drive business and restore vibrancy to local communities across southern Ontario in the aftermath of COVID-19.

Consultations

Tom Coke, Main Street Ambassador

Link to Strategic Priorities

- ☐ Manage, invest and plan for sustainable municipal infrastructure which meets current and future needs of the municipality and its citizens.
- ☐ Create a safe, friendly and inclusive community which encourages healthy, active living for people of all ages and abilities.
- ☐ Provide a fiscal stewardship and value for tax dollars to ensure long-term financial health to the municipality.
- ☒ Manage responsible and viable growth while preserving and enhancing the unique rural and small town character of the community.
- ☐ Improve the experiences of individuals, as both citizens and customers, in their interactions with the Town of Essex.
- ☐ Improve the Town's capacity to meet the ongoing and future service needs of its citizens while ensuring the corporation is resilient in the face of unanticipated changes or disruptions.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	My Main Street Accelerator Program - Economic Development-2022-10.docx
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- EA_EDCO-MMS_CommunityProfiles_Town of Essex - Harrow_20220216.pdf- EA_EDCO-MMS_CommunityProfiles_Town of Essex - Essex Centre_20220216.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jun 13, 2022

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



Lori Chadwick, Director, Development Services - Jun 13, 2022 - 10:01 AM



Doug Sweet, Chief Administrative Officer - Jun 13, 2022 - 10:29 AM