

THE ECONOMIC OBSERVER

MIDDLESEX COUNTY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEWSLETTER

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SOUTHWEST ECONOMIC ASSEMBLY: FORGING REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

On May 23rd, 2006, business, education and government leaders from Southwest Ontario converged in the City of Stratford for a two (2) day regional economic development summit, the Southwest Economic Assembly.

The focus of the economic assembly was to cooperatively establish the foundation for a new regional economic development partnership. Through regional cooperation and leadership, individual municipalities would be able to leverage their existing marketing resources, implement broader based economic strategies i.e., labour development and collaborate more effectively

with federal and provincial governments.

The assembly utilized a series of workshops based on four economic sectors common in south western Ontario. Each sector discussion focused on following three issues: positive results of greater economic cooperation, changes required to make a regional approach successful and priorities that will encourage economic cooperation.

The consensus of the assembly's participants was to continue to pursue the development of a regional economic partnership.

The County of Middlesex was represented at the assembly by Warden Joanne Vanderheyden, Steve Evans (Deputy CAO) & Jay Brown (Economic Development Officer).

PROPOSED SOUTHWEST REGION



MIDDLESEXMAP: DEMAND FOR INTERACTIVE GIS MAPPING SYSTEM CONTINUES TO GROW

On August 9th, 2005, the County of Middlesex officially launched the public phase of the Middlesex Geography Network (MGN), Middlesex Map.

MiddlesexMap is an online GIS map viewer that allows residents and visitors the opportunity to retrieve critical GIS information based on a property address, identify significant geographic sites,

view aerial photography, locate community recreational facilities, parks and generate custom maps of Middlesex County.

Since its launch, the Interactive GIS map viewer has received over 305,000 requests for maps between August 2005 and April 2006, an average of 33,888 map requests per month.

The County of Middlesex

continue to update and expand MiddlesexMap's content every month including new aerial photography scheduled for the fall of 2006

MiddlesexMap may be accessed through the County of Middlesex website:

www.county.middlesex.on.ca



Look for this icon on Middlesex County's Website

BEYOND CITY LIGHTS 2007: SHOWCASING THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Sponsored in part by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), Beyond The City Lights is an annual conference series promoting the success of rural tourism in eight (8) regions throughout Ontario. The premise of the conferences is to provide tourism stakeholders with the opportunity to learn more about the agri-tourism and rural tourism industry through interaction with successful small business owners and communities.

Southwestern Ontario's Beyond The City Lights

2007 Tourism Conference will be hosted by the County of Middlesex. An organizing committee will be established to select the location of the event, host a reception and stage the tourism workshop.

Previous Beyond The City Lights conferences have been successfully staged in Port Stanley (Elgin County), Petrolia (Lambton County) and Blenheim (Chatham-Kent).

If you are interested in participating on the organizing committee for Middlesex County, please contact Elaine Flook, Rural

Business Consultant, OMAFRA at elaine.flook@omfra.gov.on.ca or contact Jay Brown, Economic Development Officer at jbrown@county.middlesex.on.ca or 519-434-7321 ext. 347.

BEYOND THE CITY LIGHTS LOGO



BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION: KICK STARTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN YOUR COMMUNITY

No matter the size of the community or municipality, community leaders are all interested in building strong vibrant local communities. Businesses and the jobs they create are critical components of strong economies. Strong local economies cannot exist without a growing business/job creation sector. Supporting the development and growth of local businesses is fundamental to achieving this objective.

Strategies such as business recruitment, strategic alliances and partnerships, entrepreneurship, workforce development, downtown revitalization, tourism development, etc. are often implemented as part of an

overall economic development strategy. An increasing number of municipalities have begun to focus on providing greater support to their existing business sectors over the past few years.

Business retention and expansion (BR+E) is a community-based economic development strategy with a focus on "taking care of, nurturing and supporting" businesses already existing in the community. A structured business survey is utilized as a means of beginning a dialogue with local businesses with the intent of identifying issues, concerns and potential opportunities and taking action where appropriate.

BR+E works to improve the competitiveness of local businesses by identifying and addressing their needs and concerns and building on business development opportunities. This is crucial to the sustained viability of communities since businesses that stay competitive are more likely to remain and expand in the community.

The Municipality of Lucan Biddulph completed a pilot BR+E program resulting in the formation of a municipal economic development committee, development of a municipal marketing project with Fanshawe College and an increased involvement in the development of a regional museum in the municipality.

For more information on BR+E and the pilot project in Middlesex County, please contact Jay Brown, Economic Development Officer at 519-434-7321 ext. 347.

"40-80% of new jobs that are created come from existing businesses in your community"

David Birch, MIT
Business Retention & Expansion International (BREI)

MIDDLESEX HOME & LEISURE SHOW 2006

On Saturday April 29th, 2006, the Strathroy & District Chamber of Commerce staged a new consumer retail event at the Gemini Sportsplex in Strathroy, Ontario; the Middlesex Home & Leisure Show.

The one (1) day event provided seventy-three (73) business exhibitors an opportunity to showcase their products to an audience of over six

hundred (600) consumers from the region.

With no admission cost, consumers attending the home & leisure show were treated to the opportunity to win over eighty (80) door prizes, to sample products from several local businesses and view hourly demonstrations.

The 2006 Home & Leisure Show was sponsored in part by the County of

Middlesex, the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc and the Strathroy & District Chamber of Commerce.

With the success of the 2006 show, the 2007 event organizing committee have already begun to plan for next year's event scheduled for Saturday, April 28th, 2007 at the Gemini Sportsplex.

For information on next years Middlesex Home &

Leisure Show or to reserve your exhibitor space please contact Shannon Churchill at 519-245-7620 or refer to the show's website at www.homeandleisureshow.com



MIDDLESEX COUNTY'S NEW OFFICIAL PLAN

On July 11, 2006, an amendment to the Middlesex County Official Plan will be presented to Middlesex County Council for final approval. The official plan amendment was developed as part of a five (5) year review process required by the Planning Act.

The newly amended official plan contains the following changes:

- A proactive policy that

supports local municipalities in promoting economic development opportunities adjacent to 400 series highways.

- A policy that supports the retention of educational, health, cultural and religious facilities in County communities.
- Enhanced environmental policies to ensure that the County's significant

natural features are protected for future generations.

- Agricultural policies that protect farmland and promote the agricultural industry.
- Policies that promote alternative energy systems.
- Policies that protect our groundwater and promote water conservation and protect municipal water supply.

The Official Plan is an important tool as it sets out a long term vision for Middlesex County and provides that necessary balance between efficient, cost effective development and the protection of our natural resources. These are fundamental requirements ensuring our economic prosperity.

THE RICH HISTORY OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES PROFILED IN HERITAGE TRAIL SIGNS

Recognizing the historical importance and tourism potential of local history, the County of Middlesex in conjunction with the Community Futures Development Corporation of Middlesex County and local municipalities have initiated a municipal heritage trail signage program.

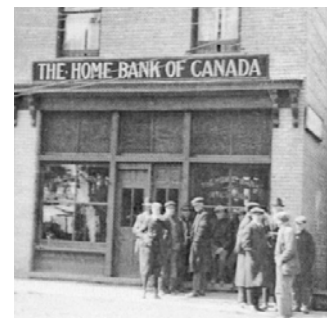
Working in partnership with local historians and

volunteer heritage groups, local municipalities identify key historical sites to be promoted on a series road side signs. Each sign provides a detailed description of the heritage building, community, event or site.

The Middlesex County heritage trail signs have a consistent size, layout and construction allowing

tourists to easily identify heritage tourism sites across Middlesex County.

The municipalities of Lucan-Biddulph and Southwest Middlesex have produced over twenty-five (25) heritage trail signs in Middlesex County. The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc is currently implementing the heritage trail signage program.



**THE COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX
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The Department of Planning & Economic Development is responsible for the co-operative delivery of economic development programming and services in the municipality. The Department provides leadership in the cooperative marketing, promotion and positioning of Middlesex County as an ideal business and tourism location.

For further information please contact:

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C E N T R E O F S U C C E S S

MIDDLESEX COUNTY PLOWING MATCH 2006

With the success of the 2002 IPM, the County of Middlesex recognized the potential opportunity of developing an agricultural tourism based event in the municipality.

Given the long and successful history of the Middlesex County Plowing Match, the Department of Planning and Economic Development became involved in the Plowing Match's organizing committee. The Department has served as a resource to the committee members by developing marketing materials including the

Plowing Match's logo, event signage, poster production & website, www.eteamz.com/middlesexplowmen.

The Middlesex County Plowing Match is unique event offering attendees an opportunity to witness farmers from south western Ontario compete in a plowing match utilizing modern, antique and horse drawn plows. In addition, the plowing match showcases VIP plowing by local dignitaries, the Queen of the Furrow competition, horse shoe pitching and an evening banquet.

The 2006 Middlesex County Plowing Match is scheduled for Monday, September 4th at the farm of Wes & Christine Hodgson, 35510 Maguire Road, RR #2 Ailsa Craig, Ontario. Admission to the plowing is by donation to a local charitable organization.

