

Check Against Delivery

King Chamber of Commerce: Mayor's Annual Luncheon

May 25, 2022

Speech by King Mayor Steve Pellegrini

I'm happy to see so many familiar and new faces. Even though we haven't held this event for two years, I'm happy to report King Township Council and staff have been busier than ever. Today will be about looking back at what we've accomplished and looking forward to what the future holds.

It's appropriate to start the presentation by discussing the impacts the largest health-care crisis in a century had on King Township.

It impacted everything, from the way we conducted our personal lives, to the way we ran government.

I'm proud of how Council and staff quickly adapted to the challenges the pandemic caused. During the lockdowns we maintained all essential services like waste, water, road and sidewalk maintenance and fire and emergency services.

As difficult as it was, the rapidly changing nature of the pandemic forced us to look at all aspects of our operations. Because of this, we were able to introduce many innovations.

The most important thing we needed to do was continue to deliver our essential services in the face of lockdowns. Thanks to a tremendous amount of work by our IT team and many others, our employees were able to work remotely. We recently heard from a change management consultant that such a move under normal circumstances could be expected to take a year to plan and a year to execute. We did it in a few weeks.

Under the guidance of our CAO Daniel Kostopoulos and the Senior Leadership Team, all departments within the Township looked for ways to use technology to deliver and, in many cases, expand services. Our award-winning website was updated to allow residents more options for online payments.

We implemented curbside pickup for things like green and blue bins and materials from the Library.

We offered recreation programs virtually.

We started livestreaming Council and Committee meetings as part of our commitment to transparent government.

I don't think anything better demonstrated how we served the community during the pandemic than the vaccination clinic we held last summer at the Trisan Centre. Over four months staff, volunteers and medical professionals from our community made it possible for 77,000 shots to be administered.

We had tremendous help from the business community.

I'd like to acknowledge the amazing work done by the Kingbridge Centre as it opened its doors to some of the most vulnerable people as a homeless shelter during the pandemic.

As lockdowns were introduced in 2020, Council and staff—in particular, our Economic Development division—realized we needed to support our business community.

As many of you know, something I'm always encouraging our residents to do is to shop locally as much as possible. During the pandemic, that literally made the difference between a business staying afloat or closing its doors forever.

In the face of COVID-19, we launched the Public and Private Lands Patio Program. This supported over 20 local businesses, enabling service continuity to their customers and our residents. The program in Schomberg was especially popular as I'll detail in a moment. Economic Development enhanced the #ShopKING campaign, intended to promote local shopping and dining in King, ultimately supporting our local economy and maintaining local employment opportunities.

We have seen positive results with 52 new businesses opening between 2019 and 2021 and 24 last year. This is incredibly good news considering how precarious things were for many businesses during the pandemic.

We were also able to distribute \$150,000 between 2019 and 2021 as part of our Community Improvement Plan. It targets specific areas within the Township and assists eligible businesses to receive grant funding for various initiatives such as new signage and accessibility features.

King now offers two different streams of the program for the villages of King City, Nobleton, and Schomberg, and the rural stream that covers several sections of rural King.

Exciting things are happening on Main Street in Schomberg.

In 2021, King Township received almost \$70,000 in funding through Ontario's Rural Economic Development (RED) program to undertake the actions in the Schomberg Main Street Revitalization Strategy.

Since 2020, Economic Development has partnered with Central Counties Tourism to partially fund the pop-up patio program on Main Street. Patios were installed on May 11 for the 2022 season.

We've also launched our Sidewalkable Saturday event series. The first one took place on May 14, and they will happen on three additional dates happening over the summer months. For more information on what's happening on Main Street, you can visit schombergmainstreet.ca.

Continuing on the theme of Main Street, we were recently able to secure \$116,000 in funding to revitalize the Schomberg Lions Parkette.

The funding comes from the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario program My Main Street, a \$23.25 million investment by the Government of Canada and delivered in partnership by the Canadian Urban Institute and the Economic Development Council of Ontario to support the revitalization of 200 neighbourhoods across southern Ontario.

My Main Street was created to help drive business and restore vibrancy to local communities across southern Ontario in the aftermath of COVID-19.

So, what else has the Economic Development Division been up to?

The recent review of the Community Improvement Plan looked to expand eligibility and led to the introduction of the Rural Resiliency Grants, in addition to the Village Vibrancy Grants. They also refreshed the Community Tourism Plan in 2021.

Many of you know Jamie Smyth, our Manager of Economic Development. Jamie, if you could say hello. I say this every year, but please make use of him. It's his job to make sure businesses in King succeed.

Please also make use of our online resources.

EconomickING is your one-stop-shop for information and resources if you are looking to start or expand your business in King. economicking.ca/

ExperienceKING is your destination to all things King has to offer residents, visitors, and tourists. experienceking.ca

Despite the financial pressures the pandemic placed on our operations, council directed staff to keep the 2022 increase as close as possible to zero per cent, while still offering quality services.

That's because we knew many families and businesses were struggling with reduced work hours and lost revenue.

The average increase for the Township portion of municipal tax has averaged only 1.11 per cent between 2018 and 2022, one of the lowest in the GTA.

Despite this we have still been able to fund some major capital projects which I'll be highlighting later in this presentation.

These include the Township-Wide Recreation Centre, \$2 million worth of bridge and culvert rehabilitation, Phase 2 of Tasca Park and the restoration of Cold Creek Conservation Area.

Moving on to our most recent facility construction and renovation news, we recently broke ground on the Township-Wide Recreation Centre, which has been made possible with funding support from the federal and provincial governments, Seneca and local developers.

Scheduled to open in 2024, the centre will feature 124,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor facilities and is being constructed on 25 acres at the southeast corner of Seneca's King Campus.

In late 2019 and early 2020, King met with residents from across the Township to get their input into the features of the new centre. As a result of the feedback, and due to the funding received, a larger pool and second ice pad were included in the project plan. The centre will also feature a multi-use field house with access to future amenities that could include baseball and soccer fields.

Late last year, I was pleased to attend the grand opening the new King City Branch of King Township Public Library and King City Seniors' Centre.

Construction of the 21,000 square-foot building on King Road began in 2018. The bright, modern facility is nestled in the hillside across the road from King City Secondary School.

The Library Branch building includes meeting and study spaces, a reading lounge, book and out-of-the-box collections, public-use technology, children and teen areas and a Make-It Lab. The Seniors' Centre includes rental space, community space and program areas.

The Schomberg Community Hall renovations are progressing to create an energy-efficient and environmentally conscious space.

Home to the crafters markets during the Schomberg Fair and A Main Street Christmas, as well as countless community meetings and celebrations, the Schomberg Community Hall just may be the most loved building in the entire village.

Currently, work is continuing onsite with completion scheduled by summer 2022.

Upgrades will include a new elevator to make the building accessible to everyone.

Nobleton's award-winning Tasca Park is expanding, getting some amazing new amenities.

Council recently approved Phase 2 for the park which originally opened in 2016.

After consulting with the community, we came up with a list of new amenities including an off-leash dog park, permanent washroom facilities, tennis and pickleball courts, biking course, paving the trails and services for a community-led outdoor rink.

Tasca Park was previously recognized as one of the top 150 parks in Canada.

Osin Lions Park in Schomberg is scheduled to undergo redevelopment this year.

The project will include the replacement of aging play structures and surfaces. The new play area will be fully accessible and incorporate inclusive options, such as a "quiet corner". Additional site amenities include a large picnic shelter with accessible site furnishings, a beach volleyball court, skatepark and paved pathways to connect the park features.

We continue to make excellent progress on connecting people and places as part of our strategic priority of investing in infrastructure. There have been almost nine kilometres of new alternative transportation opportunities built, including trails, sidewalks and streetscaping.

This includes six new kilometres of trails in subdivisions and parks, almost nine kilometres of gravel roads converted to paved and 1.5 kilometres of upgraded roads. This work was completed as part of our 2021 paving program. I'm pleased to report we are ahead of schedule on our 10-year road improvement plan and we've paved more roads in the last three years than we have in the past three decades.

Work connecting more homes in Nobleton to the municipal sewer system continues with the completion of Phase 2, Contract 3. About 200 homeowners can now disconnect from their septic systems and at a lower cost than was initially anticipated. This is also good news for

the environment as connecting to the municipal system eliminates the issues that can often result from aging and failing septic systems.

We recently held an open house to help residents with their permit applications.

Speaking of the environment, we've continued to take a leadership role on the current climate crisis with the installation of a dozen electric vehicle (EV) charging stations throughout the Township.

This was due to a \$200,000 grant from the Ministry of Natural Resources which, when added to the Township's \$300,000 contribution, which amounts to over 20 charging connectors.

We know electric vehicles are the future of personal transportation. That's why we've started to put the infrastructure in place now that will allow our residents convenient access to charging stations.

This improved network is just the latest action we're taking on improving our community's overall sustainability.

Those of you driving on King Road between the Municipal Centre and Keele Street will no doubt have noticed the recent streetscaping project that is nearing completion. This phase included new sidewalks, a multi-use path, tree planting, decorative poles for banners and flowers and some road widening that enabled the installation of dedicated turn lanes into 2585 King Road.

One of the issues we hear most about from residents and businesses is access to high-speed internet in King Township. Although as a municipality we aren't directly responsible for the installation of broadband, we've taken a leadership role since 2017 with our King Connects program.

This commitment is a key action in our 2019-2022 Corporate Strategic Plan.

We've actively supported the installation of broadband and fibre across King, in partnership with the provincial and federal governments, private service providers and other community stakeholders.

Since the launch of King Connects, thousands of residents now have access to reliable high-speed internet.

So, what does the future hold? We'll continue to be guided by the 2019-2022 Corporate Strategic Plan.

We continued meeting the objectives of the plan, despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We just released its Year Three Annual Progress Report, including a forecast for 2022. The progress report details how the Township was on track or had completed 98 per cent of its key action items in 2021.

Community benefits for 2021 are trending in the right direction with 81 per cent gaining momentum.

Examples include an improved transportation network, increased waste diversion, more traffic-calmed neighbourhoods, and strengthened water and wastewater systems.

In summary — it's a great time to live and work in King Township!

Before I open the floor up to questions, I have a video to share that does a great job capturing everything that has happened since the last time we met.

You're getting a sneak peek before the general public when it's shown at the May 30 council meeting.

Before I open the floor to questions, just a reminder we have many great events happening in King this year.

We just celebrated Victoria Day in Nobleton with a spectacular fireworks display, thanks to King Fire and Emergency Services.

Next up is the King City Craft Beer and Food Truck Festival. It takes place on Saturday, June 11.

There are always great programs and exhibits taking place at the Library and Heritage and Cultural Centre.

You can find these events and many more on our Community Calendar at king.ca.

I'm now happy to take any questions you may have.