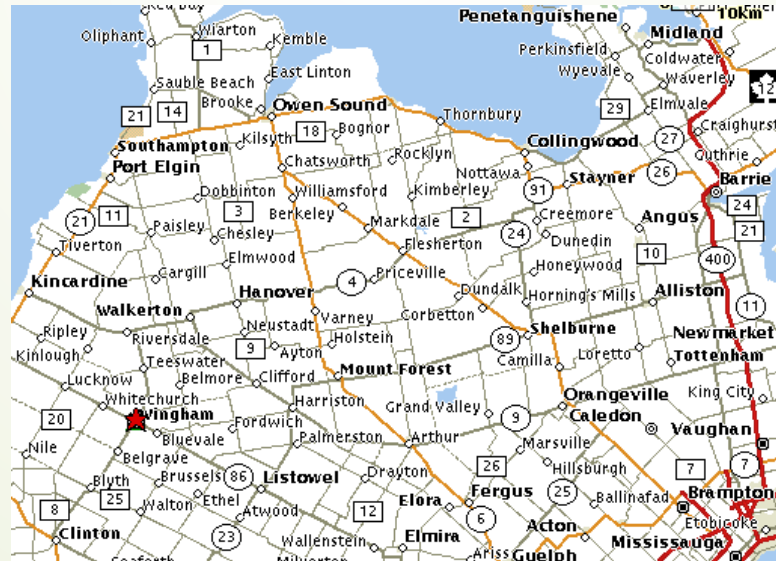


# First Impressions Community Exchange (FICE) Sponsored by OMAFRA

## WINGHAM (North Perth)



# Background

## Summary of participants

On Tuesday, August 9<sup>th</sup> a committee of five people from Walkerton and surrounding area participated in a F.I.C.E. exchange with the community of Wingham.

Their occupations are as follows: retail store owner, secretarial, financial advisor, recreation industry, and independent consultant.

Their roles on the day of the visit were new resident, business owner looking to expand, potential business investor, and two tourists.

The visit lasted from 10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. It was a beautiful, hot, sunny summer day.



# Impressions of **WINGHAM** – pre-visit

- A main street that is long and attractive
  - Mix of heritage buildings and new construction suggesting moderate growth
  - Variety of businesses
  - Equipped with an electric car charging station
  - Newer sidewalks and street lights
  - Neat and tidy community
- 



# Information found when searching for **WINGHAM**

One half of the committee had difficulty finding information on Wingham. The other half was impressed with the historical and background information found on Wikipedia. The Wingham Facebook page is very limited.


It was hard to find information on Wingham specifically without being aware that it is now called North Huron.

TripAdvisor is not complementary.

Wingham BIA website is excellent however, a physical location for the office proved harder to find. The BIA Facebook page had not been updated in almost two weeks.



# First impressions of five minute drive through of **WINGHAM**.

- Excellent entrance signs from south and north.
  - Long, clean, attractive main street. Neat and tidy appearance.
  - Beautiful historic buildings.
  - Good mix of commercial and green space.
  - Wide streets with ample parking, new sidewalks, beautiful flowers.
  - Not many vacant store fronts visible on drive through.
  - Most businesses looked open and ready for business.
  - Street banners are not unique.
  - North welcome sign far away from downtown.
- 



# Impressions of entrances to **WINGHAM**

The large brick signs at the north and south entrances to Wingham are impressive and welcoming. They are neatly landscaped and well maintained.

Flags at the south end are a nice added touch.

The sign at the north end is a long distance away from the start of the actual town. There is a long unused wetland area between the north sign and the perceived beginning of the town.

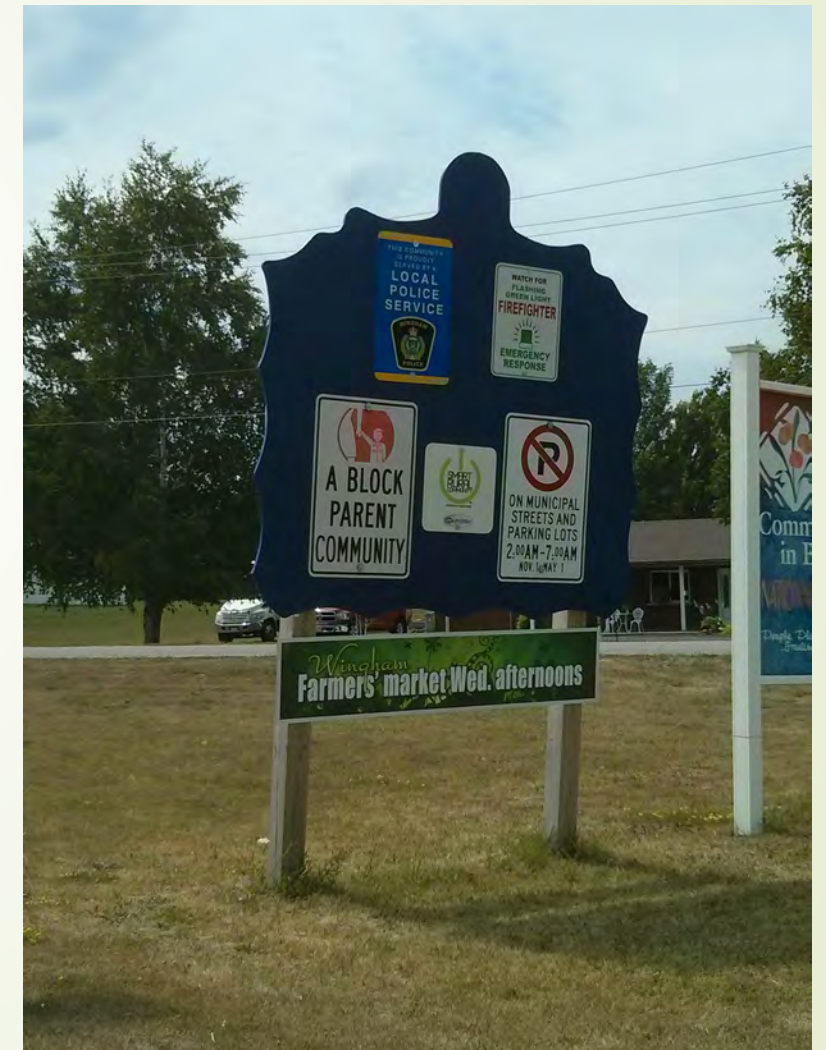
The historical signs in honour of Alice Munro are a nice recognition, however, the colour did not complement the existing Town of Wingham signs.


Secondary signage seems incomplete and there is little reference to service clubs.



Impressive “Welcome” signs

Limited recognition of service clubs





# Directional signage and visual appearance of **WINGHAM**

Two out of five participants did not find any directional signage.

Rating of visual appearance of all four entrances:

**North** – 60% Good    **40% Excellent**

**East** – 50% Satisfactory    **50% Excellent**

**South** – 25% Good    **75% Excellent**

**West** – 50% Satisfactory    **50% Excellent**





# Local Government Offices of **WINGHAM**

While the Municipal office is centrally located in one of Wingham's beautiful heritage buildings it is not well signed. The atmosphere within is not warm or inviting.

The glass partition creates a barrier for both staff and guests. Municipal staff are unable to see guests and/or acknowledge them.

Information pamphlets are limited and the one for the recreation department was not current.

Municipal staff were helpful but information requested had to be obtained from another location.

# WINGHAM

## Municipal Office

Beautiful heritage  
building centrally  
located but not  
well signed





# Rating/quality of the following:

**Streets** – 40% Good **60% Excellent**

**Street Signage** – 20% N.I. 20% Satisfactory 60% Good

**Street Lighting** – 75% Good **25% Excellent**

**Street Crossings** – 60% Good **40% Excellent**

**Traffic Signals** – 60% Good **40% Excellent**

**Sidewalks** – **100% Excellent**

**Parking** – 20% Satisfactory 20% Good **60% Excellent**

Most/Least appealing features:

- **Great sidewalks and ample on/off street parking.**
- **Very clean streetscape/ green space/ floral adornments**
- **Limited benches, sunny side of street could use awnings**
- **Limited street signage to points of interest**
- **Some downtown buildings in disrepair, some could use new facade**



# Great sidewalks, ample parking

## Clean streetscape, floral adornments



## Rating/quality of the following:

**Street Furniture** – 40% N.I.                      40% Satisfactory   20% Good

**Public Art** –            20% N.I.            40% Satisfactory            40% Good

**Public Parks** –    **100% Excellent**

**Walking/Cycling Paths** – 20% N.I.            **40% Excellent**    40% N/A

**Landscaping** –    60% Good                      **40% Excellent**

**Wifi** – 20% N.I.    20% Satisfactory   20% Good            40% N/A

**Public Washrooms/Drinking Fountains** – 25% Satis.            50% Good    **25% Excellent**

**Cleanliness of Downtown** – 20% Good            **80% Excellent**

**Waste/recycling Bins** – 20% Satisfactory    80% Good

Most/Least Appealing Features:

- **Parks, green space, flowers/landscaping are beautiful**
- **No recycling and very limited directional signage to points of interest**
- **Message on banners was great but design was not eye catching**




# Lovely parks & green space



Banners need to be eye catching



Outstanding entrance sign



# Rating/quality of the following:

**Public Transportation -** 100% N/A

**Bus stops/shelters/shade -** 100% N/A

**Active Transportation -** 100% N/A

## Summary:

- **Would like to see local cycle route maps linking downtown to rural areas not just Huron County cycle maps**
- **As there is no public transportation etc. the only comment is that the flow of traffic was steady and not impeded in anyway.**
- **No traffic congestion. One note, when leaving the ball diamonds and making a left turn south to downtown was busy and because of the bridge to the right visibility is limited.**

# Compatible or conflicting land uses:

Compatible – park next to a museum, daycare next to a park

Appears to be well zoned with a mix of commercial and service businesses and park space

The Alice Munro garden next to the museum is a lovely spot

Conflicting (?) – Church located next to a pub but both appear to have been in their current locations for some time, hopefully without conflict.







# Rating/quality of the following:

**Overall Appearance** – 100% Good

**Window Displays** – 20% Satisfactory 80% Good

**Business Signage** – 60% Satisfactory 40% Good

**Cultural heritage/historical features** – 40% Good **60% Excellent**

**Vacant buildings** – 20% Urgent Attention 60% Satis. 20% Good

**Storefronts** – 20% N.I. 20% Satisfactory 60% Good


**Store Accessibility** – 40% N.I. 40% Satisfactory 20% Good








## Most/Least Appealing Features:

- Many attractive & diverse businesses
  - Sandwich boards/welcome signs with Wingham logo are consistent
  - Some facade improvement needed especially on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> floors
  - Some businesses should consider sign updating
  - 20+ vacant storefronts, vacancy rate is concerning
  - Excellent job of window displays in vacant storefronts which cleverly disguise the number of vacancies
  - Wheelchair accessibility is an issue with some businesses
  - Window displays were not eye catching
  - Awnings could be utilized on west side of street to provide much needed shade
  - Ample parking but signage to Municipal lot not visible
- 



# Summary of Professional Services, Healthcare, & Social/Support Services

- Good mix of services. Locals seem pleased with the town overall
- Local real estate agent did not seem interested in helping to secure a location for a potential second location
- Hospital well located and identified. Residents expressed pride in having local healthcare available
- Hospital undergoing renovation and expansion
- Senior centre relocated but unable to find new location
- Good mix of healthcare services available
- Limited signage on service groups, only one recognized for service
- Adult Daycare was closed

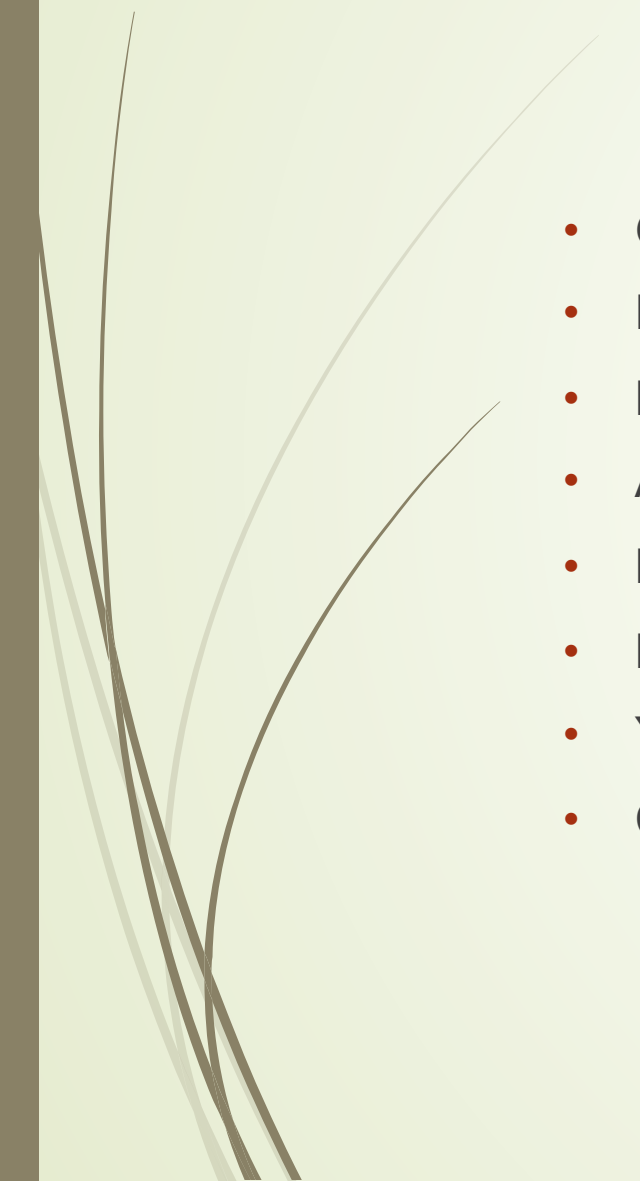


# Restaurants & General Customer Service

- Limited selection of restaurants, some attempt to serve local
- Customer service was good. Waitress not knowledgeable about community. Food was good
- Customer service at downtown businesses was not always good.
- While people we spoke to expressed overall satisfaction with the town there didn't seem to be a real sense of downtown pride
- Business owners expressed concern for municipal taxes being highest in the Province
- Business owners identified Westcast as major contributor to economy
- Business owners seem trusting and happy to be there




# Variety, consistency, residents' knowledge

- Good variety of businesses, inconsistent hours
  - Retailers unable to offer selection of large box stores
  - Museum & music stores are treasures
  - Accessibility is an issue
  - Lots of vacancies
  - Mostly positive attitude but concern about taxes & vacancies
  - Young residents expressed concern about long term opportunities
  - Community described as “sleepy”
- 



# Tourism


- No clear brand or slogan identified except “shop local” & “home team”
  - No local attractions, events or festivals noticeable
  - The museum is well done for such a small town & the acknowledgement of Alice Munro with signs and garden is notable
  - Secondary blue signs at town entrance are underutilized
  - Maitland River is a natural attraction that is not acknowledged or used, perhaps areas for fishing or paddling could be investigated
  - Trail entrance is impressive but lack of information is a problem but could be corrected and built on
  - River & wet land could be better marketed
  - Alice Munro Festival has not been updated since 2012
  - Tourist Information Centre/Office was not easy to find, Museum had some tourist information
- 



# Entertainment

- Overall there is an abundance of recreation, sports, and entertainment opportunities however, signage to the majority of them is poor
- Non existent night life
- Museum is well done and a local treasure
- No evidence of theatre or bandshell





# Rating of overall entertainment & recreation facilities to specific groups:

<b>Seniors</b>	–	20% N.I.	40% Satisfactory	40% Good
<b>Families</b>	–	20% Satisfactory	40% Good	<b>40% Excellent</b>
<b>Single Adults (31-64)</b>	–	20% N.I.	20% Satis.	60% Good
<b>Young Adults (20-30)</b>	–	20% N.I.	40% Satis.	40% Good
<b>Teenagers (13-19)</b>	–	20% N.I.	60% Satis.	<b>20% Excellent</b>
<b>Children (6-12)</b>	–		25% Good	<b>75% Excellent</b>

## Most/Least Appealing Features:

- Many great recreation choices available but programming difficult to find
- Lots of activity

# WINGHAM has many recreation choices





# Taste, Sight, Smell, Sounds

The overall consensus was that there was no unique taste or flavour that stood out however, the meal at the pub was unique and delicious.

Wingham has a pleasant and inviting fresh air vibe that characterizes its downtown.

Impressive entranceway signs and the long main street, coupled with beautiful parks and heritage buildings made a good impression.

The hanging baskets and pink flowers were eye catching and appealing.

Other than vehicular traffic there were no noticeable noises in the downtown, very quiet.





# Perception & outstanding features:

Generally the pre visit perception the committee had was fairly accurate.

Driving through the town it looks prosperous but a walk through shows many empty shops. The high vacancy rate was surprising.

The heritage buildings, parks, and river were some of the most outstanding features but the museum was exceptional.

Improvements to store offerings, customer service, food choices, and/or an attraction of some kind would go a long way toward having repeat visitors.

Overall a nice experience visiting Wingham.





# Top five positive features:

1. Heritage Buildings
2. Welcome/Entrance Signs
3. Cleanliness
4. Green space/parks
5. Recreational choices

## Additional positives:

- Friendly & helpful
- Good traffic flow
- Ease of parking




# Three potential opportunities available to **WINGHAM**


1. Capitalize on history of broadcasting, Alice Munro Festival, and the Maitland River.
2. Public art and/or build on literary theme.
3. Take advantage of sports facilities through sponsorship of tournaments for baseball, basketball, volleyball, and hockey.

## Additional ideas:

- Increase and improve signage to capitalize on existing features
- Recognize existing businesses such as Westcast, Britespan, Royal Homes





# Five biggest obstacles /challenges facing **WINGHAM**

1. Empty store fronts
  2. Increasing cost of infrastructure
  3. High taxes
  4. Aging residents / Rural depopulation
  5. Growth potential
- 

# Actions recommended to implement right away (in no particular order)

1. Improve all directional signage
2. Partner with conservation authority to improve surrounding open space
3. Public art project(s), new banners
4. Facade improvement and business recruitment
5. Informative map and information about trail system





The Municipality of Brockton, specifically the  
Town of Walkerton,  
would like to thank OMAFRA  
for sponsoring the F.I.C.E. program  
and the  
Town of WINGHAM  
for participating in this exchange.  
Thank you.