

**Community Benefit Submission on the Gordie Howe International Bridge**



**WINDSOR/ESSEX  
COMMUNITY  
BENEFITS  
COALITION**

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## GREETINGS

The Windsor Essex Community Benefits Coalition (WECBC) was formed in July of 2017 to meet the challenge of helping inform a community benefit plan for the Windsor Essex region related to the Gordie Howe International Bridge. Our Coalition is made up of volunteers from community organizations, local institutions, and regional residents who wish to have community benefits leveraged to better the lives of all people in our region.

During the summer, the Coalition conducted numerous outreach events, including focus groups, public meetings and surveys, to collect the broadest input possible with respect to the WDBA Project. We respectfully submit this document which details our results. Our group offers our ongoing assistance, and we look forward to becoming a long term partner in this endeavour.

This is a living document, and as needs and priorities change in our region, the benefits we advocate for will also evolve.

The community benefit work that is occurring here in Windsor-Essex is a part of a broader movement that is developing across the county. We appreciate the input and support from Alejandro Bravo of the Broadbent Institute and Colette Murphy of the Atkinson Foundation, which also provided financial assistance for our process.

We are grateful for the efforts of the United Way Centraide and their staff for their leadership in helping form the WECBC, and in accumulating and distilling all the data, as well as their assistance in drafting this document.

Our biggest thanks go to our fellow Coalition members and to all of the members of the community who participated and provided input to this process that allowed for the creation of this submission.

For the WECBC,

Joan Mavrinac and Brian Gray, Co-chairs





## Introduction

The Gordie Howe International Bridge is a once in a generation infrastructure investment in Windsor-Essex County. As a requirement of this project, the successful proponents are mandated to deliver benefits to the community. The bridge will be located in Sandwich Town in West Windsor, with this neighbourhood projected to be most impacted by this development.

To ensure that the needs of the community will be met from the community benefits program in the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority(WDBA) process, an accelerated community consultation was undertaken which forms the foundation of the current document. Over an eight-week span in the summer of 2017, over 900 ideas were collected through focus groups, public meetings and community outreach events that engaged nearly 250 individuals and 52 organizations. Those ideas were then sorted into 16 action areas and verified through a multipronged validation effort that had over 640 touch points of engagement.

As a result of the engagement process this submission was drafted on behalf of the Windsor/Essex Community Benefits Coalition (WECBC). The WECBC is an independent community coalition of residents, community groups, and institutions in Windsor/Essex County who are striving to maximize the positive impact of the Community Benefits Agreement related to the Gordie Howe International Bridge. To ensure that the voices of those who are impacted by the project are heard, efforts were made to give residents of West Windsor and broader Essex County a “voice”. As a result, resident members of West Windsor from a variety of backgrounds comprise half of the Leadership Table’s membership.

This data and report was evaluated by the WECBC Leadership Table that acted as a steering committee to provide input on the drafting of this submission. The Leadership Table was governed by a key set of values and principles that are upheld by all members and extend beyond the scope of this project. Two resident co-chairs were democratically elected from the table membership to steer the meetings and progress on this report.

## Vision and Commitment

The Windsor/Essex Community Benefits Coalition (WECBC) believes that our region can be inclusive and thriving wherein all residents have equitable opportunities to contribute to building healthy communities and a prospering economy. Community benefit agreements are a proven approach to help achieve this vision, with this movement being centered on a concept of economic development bringing measurable, leading to permanent improvements to the lives of affected residents, and providing supports to disadvantaged or marginalized communities.<sup>1</sup>By leveraging community benefits through infrastructure opportunities, we can improve the lives of all residents in Windsor-Essex County.

## Key Values and Principles

Windsor/Essex Community Benefits Coalition:

- Strives to improve lives in Windsor/Essex County.
- Is an inclusive group recognizing the needs of a diverse community and will be responsive to those needs and priorities.

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<sup>1</sup>Community Benefits Agreements Making Development Projects Accountable by Julian Gross Legal Director, California Partnership for Working Families





- Will act transparently and ensure information collected and shared, and decisions made by the Coalition, will be available to all parties involved including the community.
- Recognizes that compromise and collaboration strengthen the overall position of the Coalition and results for our community.
- Advocates and acts on behalf of all residents of our region with special consideration for those who are directly impacted by development projects or those who lack opportunity in our community.
- Recognizes that partnerships are required beyond this Coalition to secure and leverage community benefits. Members proactively engage their networks and partners to strengthen and promote the coalition's recommendations to enhance the potential positive impacts of community benefits.
- Membership supports the collective decisions and outcomes that are agreed to by the leadership table.

### **Delray Partnership**

Although predominantly focused on the Windsor-Essex region, the WECBC recognizes that our counterparts in Delray are also impacted by the construction and operation of the Gordie Howe International Bridge. We have, where possible in this submission, embedded collaborative elements of the Delray/South Detroit Community Benefit Coalition Community Advisory Group submission to the WDBA.

We recognize that the circumstances of the Delray Community Benefit request are different than those of Windsor/Essex County due to the nature of their community. We wholly support the specific benefit requests that they have made, and recognize the unique benefits that they are entitled to as a part of this process. We also recognize that where benefits match the particular needs of both communities these needs should be collaboratively deployed and supported.

### **Community Consultations Process**

This process began on June 21, 2017 with a public meeting at Mackenzie Hall and was carried out under the original timelines outlined by the WDBA with the expectation that the RFP for the proponents would close in October of 2017. As a result, a non-scientific community consultation was undertaken by the Windsor/Essex Community Benefits Coalition to garner input from the community in as broad and inclusive method as possible given the time constraints that were originally presented.

A small grant was received from the Atkinson Foundation totaling \$6,000 which supported the outreach process including refreshments for the community focus groups and meetings; printing costs; and the employment of a summer student to assist with coordinating and recording the community outreach information. The Multicultural Council of Windsor-Essex County provided in-kind translation services to translate the community outreach materials into other languages. Various community partners provided in-kind space meetings and focus groups. All other costs and activities were contributed in-kind by United Way/Centraide Windsor-Essex County.

Between July 5<sup>th</sup> and August 16<sup>th</sup> a total of 32 focus groups, public meetings and engagement events occurred across Essex County reaching a total of 241 individuals. Of the 32 engagement events, 17 were held in West Windsor and Sandwich Town providing access to the residents and groups facing the greatest impact. Through this outreach, individuals self-identified representation from 52 community groups, organizations or governing bodies from across the region.





Over 900 different community benefit ideas were collected and subsequently clustered into sixteen different action areas based on common elements. Input on these action areas was collected through four different processes: ranking exercises following each focus group; online survey; public validation meetings; and door to door outreach. The results were as follows:

- Post-Focus Group Ranking – 125 responses
- Online Survey – 351 responses
  - o Additional 65 responses gained through newcomer and settlement agencies with French, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese and Arabic translations being available.
- Community members attending two validation meetings – 48 responses
- Door to Door survey in West Windsor- 158 households were reached with a total of 54 households directly responding.

In total, 643 inputs were collected through this process to validate the sixteen action areas. Due to the non-scientific nature of the process, some duplication and overrepresentation of certain groups and populations is present within the responses. That being said, the door-to-door surveys in West Windsor and postal code tracked responses from the online surveys coming from Sandwich Town and West Windsor represented over 100 responses. Coupled with the direct outreach to the Sandwich community during the focus group process we feel that we have given a significant voice to this community as well as the broader Windsor-Essex region given the constraints with which we were presented.

Based on the vision, values and principles that guide the WECBC, we feel that the community benefit priorities discussed below, as well as some key best practices carried over from other communities, is representative of the overall community's needs and best interests.

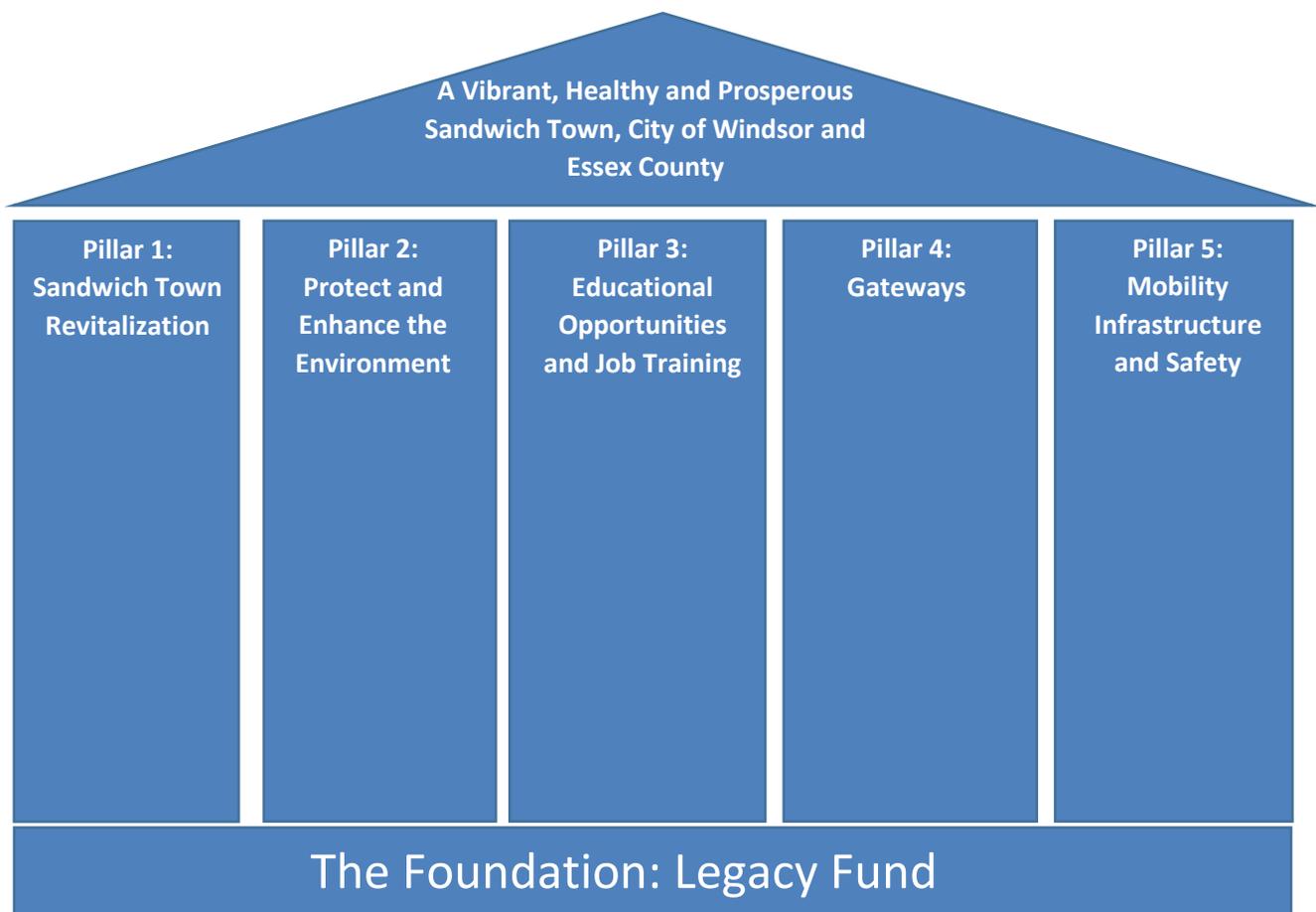




## **Community Benefit Priorities**

With a total of over 900 ideas put forward during the community consultation, these desired benefits were coalesced to sixteen key action areas which were further clustered into five thematic pillars. The various action areas and the components that align with them all originated from specific community ideas that were proposed during the consultation process. The pillars and action items that are outlined below align with the WDBA's I-CARE principles to maximize their positive impact and to maintain consistency with WDBA's Community Benefit process.<sup>2</sup>

We envision that the community benefits structured under these pillars will help Sandwich Town, the City of Windsor and Essex County as a whole to become a healthier, vibrant and prosperous region. The foundation of the five pillars and the entire community benefits program is the creation of a Legacy Fund which will support and sustain the positive impacts of the Community Benefits program into the future.



In many cases, specific action items within a pillar are not mutually exclusive to the pillar within which it is listed, as many of the proposed benefits connect across several pillars based on the interpretation or the prioritization of the benefit by individuals. These categories are not designed to constrain the benefit but rather are for sorting purposes.

<sup>2</sup> WDBA Community Benefits (2017) <https://www.wdbridge.com/en/info-centre-community-benefits>





## **The Foundation:**

### **Action Item: Creation of a Legacy Fund to Support the Community Benefits into the Future**

A foundational element of this community benefit program is ensuring that the community benefits provided by this project and any unforeseen impacts of the Gordie Howe International Bridge are mitigated. The WDBA has stated that they will be a part of the Windsor-Essex community so long as the Gordie Howe International Bridge exists, and that their responsibility is to oversee the bridge's operations into the future. To ensure that all impacts and benefits are guaranteed into the future and that the community has the fiscal capacity to maintain the provided benefits without undue burden on existing funds, a legacy fund must be established.

This fund would work in concert with existing community funders (e.g. Windsor-Essex Community Foundation, City of Windsor, County of Essex, United Way etc.) to fund projects and/or groups to carry out activities or programs that align with community priorities. This legacy fund would also enable supports to be created for any unintended consequences of the Gordie Howe International Bridge project that emerge over time or to adapt to shifting priorities and needs as time passes. This fund would be sustained over the long term by applying a percentage of annual toll revenue.

#### **Key Components**

- Fund would be supported through a percentage of toll revenue that is allocated each year to ensure its sustainability.
- Fund can be used to ensure that initial community benefits are sustained and maintained in the community so undue burden isn't passed on to the community.
- Fund needs to be reactive to community input and needs as they change over time.
- Fund would support organizations and programs across the region with grants that align with the WDBA future vision for community engagement and community priorities.

## **Pillar 1: Sandwich Town Revitalization**

### **Action Item: Sandwich Town Historic Recognition and Preservation**

Related to the WDBA's theme of Regional Economic and Community Development, revitalizing Sandwich town was identified in the consultation process as a major priority. With the bridge crossing on the Canadian side being located in Sandwich Town, ensuring that the community is not adversely impacted by the bridge during construction and operations was a very important issue to residents. Given Sandwich Town's unique history in our region, provincially and nationally, there is an opportunity to promote the history of Sandwich Town as an attraction.

#### **Key Components**

- Ensure that the Bridge and surrounding lands recognize the indigenous history and legacy in this region.
- Restore and renovate the Sandwich Town Jail as a museum or historical attraction in the community with a development of a heritage complex that links various buildings, historic sites and attractions.
- Bilingual plaques and signage with historical information on buildings and the sites of former historic buildings positioned around Sandwich Town for tours and site-seeing opportunities.





- Funding for preservation and maintenance of historically designated buildings in Sandwich Town.
- Identification of local historic figures that can be celebrated in murals, statues or other art work with particular focus given to local indigenous figures, prominent women, or those involved in the Underground Railroad.

### **Action Item: Sandwich Town Neighbourhood Revitalization**

Sandwich Town, as the host community for the Gordie Howe International Bridge, will be the gateway for a significant portion of the traffic (vehicular as well as cyclists and pedestrians who cross the bridge) that enters the city.

Large portions of West Windsor currently face significant socio-economic challenges with higher rates of poverty, lower educational outcomes, and pockets of newcomer populations, prevalence of blight and vacant buildings, and risk of physical isolation from the rest of the city. Efforts at revitalization will be blunted without significant holistic investment in both economic and community initiatives.

#### Key Components

- Streetscaping from “Bridge to Bridge” on Sandwich Street will be required.
  - o This streetscaping ought to be designed to form a “complete street” that accommodates cyclists via separated bike lanes, pedestrians on a continuation of the riverfront walking trail network through Sandwich Town, and vehicular traffic on a traffic calmed road.
- Grants to support Façade improvement, building enhancements, community events (festivals) for both commercial and residential properties within the Sandwich BIA area.
- Small business incentives designed to help local businesses to take advantage of the new international crossing by enabling them to bid on procurement, take advantage of new market opportunities or expand operations to meet new demand as a result of the project.
- Fund community programs to support vulnerable populations in Sandwich Town and West Windsor.

### **Pillar 2: Protect and Enhance the Environment**

#### **Action Item: The Ojibway Shores Lands**

The Ojibway lands have become a symbol of the fragility of our local environment in this region. As the last naturalized area along the Detroit River, Ojibway Shores lands are considered as “the last piece of a puzzle” of environmentally sensitive and protected areas that represent significant ecological, historic and tourist potential. By ensuring these lands are protected and accessible to the public, we can preserve the at-risk species, demonstrate a commitment to ensuring a healthy environment, and create a legacy for future generations.

#### Key Components

- Ensure that the Ojibway Shores area remain in their natural state and are not developed.
- Ensure accessibility and connectivity to the Ojibway Shores site for the broader public as well as other sections of the Ojibway park complex.
- Enhancement of the Ojibway visitor centre to incorporate new learning and education opportunities.





- The Ojibway Shore lands represent an opportunity to connect protected spaces in Canada with the Detroit River International Wide Life Refuge, potential future expansion of protected areas to Fighting/Grassy Island further downriver.
- Consideration for a larger effort related to having the broader Ojibway complex to be designated as a provincial, national park or UNESCO designation.

### **Action Item: Environmental Monitoring/Protections**

One of the significant community benefit requests from the Delray Community in Detroit relates to the monitoring of environmental impacts of the Bridge and the traffic generated through their community. These monitoring platforms and practices should be implemented on the Canadian side of the crossing in collaboration with the research and monitoring efforts in Delray. Given the environmentally sensitive areas adjacent to the bridge, and the prediction of truck traffic from existing regional border crossings, monitoring the impact of that shift on the traffic corridors and broader neighbourhoods will be important for the health of residents and the environment in our region.

#### Key Components

- Air, Water and Environmental monitors placed along the Herb Gray Parkway and Bridge Plaza and connected to the environmental monitoring that has also been requested by the Delray Community.
- Mitigate animal strikes on local roadways by placing eco-passages and protective barriers.
- Establish partnership with the University of Windsor to carry out research on the long term environmental impacts and track the air quality monitoring.
  - o This work would be in collaboration with other monitoring and research being carried out in the Delray Community.

### **Action Item: Establishment of Greenspaces for Community Use**

The creation of Greenspace around the footprint of the bridge, along connective routes to and from the bridge and as a part of a broader community and environmental revitalization is an important benefit of this project. The acquisition and establishment of new green spaces/community parks/protected areas across the region will not only help beautify the communities but will help ensure that the environment is protected and enhanced.

#### Key Components

- There are small parcels of land in and around the Ojibway complex that can be acquired to fill in gaps in the complex or to better provide linkages between various protected areas.
- Extending the waterfront trail network through the City of Windsor and the surrounding municipalities through property acquisition and rehabilitation.
- Supporting a nursery and tree planting in partnership with ERCA to create carbon offsets for the truck traffic through the community.
  - o Tree planting to be leveraged to help establish “Green-corridors” along major thoroughfares and trail networks.





### **Pillar 3: Educational Opportunities and Job Training Program**

#### **Action Item: Educational Programming and Supports**

Supporting educational opportunities and job training programs clearly aligns with workforce development opportunities identified by both the Delray Submission and the WDBA priorities. These supports must begin at a young age as children and youth make important decisions about their potential career paths while in school.

Given the socio-economic challenges in West Windsor, and our region being home to the highest child poverty rate in Canada, supporting educational programming is vital to our region's success. By exposing young people to opportunities and giving them access to specialized programs and equipment we can ensure that they are able to make informed decisions to pursue a career in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

#### **Key Components**

- Provide opportunities for local schools, afterschool programs and youth programs to engage and learn about construction and operations of the Gordie Howe Bridge.
- The WDBA and proponents need to support Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education in Windsor/Essex County by supporting programs, equipment and access for primary and secondary students to engage these subjects.
- Co-op and internship opportunities for young people in high school so they can be exposed to potential career opportunities.
- Fund scholarships for "high demand" sectors of the economy based on needs in our local economy to support this project and future career needs of our economy.

#### **Action item: Jobs Training and Employment Opportunity**

The community has put significant stock in ensuring that local residents receive opportunities related to training and employment as a part of the construction, maintenance, administration and operation of the Gordie Howe International Bridge. Although we recognize that certain restrictions (due to international agreements) do place constraints on local hiring provisions, there are significant numbers of priority populations (indigenous, newcomers, people living in low income) who live in proximity to the Gordie Howe International Bridge site who could be targeted for job training or employment support programs.

#### **Key Components**

- As has been widely reported a skilled trade shortage is a pressing issue locally. Funds should be targeted to ensuring that training programs are in place to fill required jobs.
- Partner with key local educational institutions, training centres and employment service providers to refer and support job retraining opportunities.
- Proponents and WDBA commit to maintain a minimum percentage of apprentices working on the construction and maintenance of the bridge.





- A minimum percentage of apprentice hours are utilized to support at risk/vulnerable populations. From other Community Benefit Programs a floor of 15% of total hours is a well-established standard.<sup>3</sup>
- All employees at the Gordie Howe International Bridge (construction, operations and maintenance) should be paid a living wage or better based on industry standards for Windsor-Essex County.

#### **Pillar 4: Gateway**

##### **Action Item: Attractive Plaza**

Aligning with a priority that the WDBA has already identified, ensuring that the bridge and plaza are an attractive, welcoming place is the first step in making an effective gateway to our community. The plaza and surrounding lands should be designed and landscaped in a way that is both aesthetically pleasing but also continues the designs of the Rt. Hon. Herb Gray Parkway.

##### Key Elements

- Welcoming signage and public art incorporated into the buildings/perimeter barriers in and around the plaza and surrounding landscape.
- Buildings and lands around the plaza are attractively designed, built and landscaped.
- Greenspaces ought to feature naturalized and indigenous flora and fauna.
- Pedestrian/bicycle access point to the plaza should have seating, restrooms and information points.

##### **Action Item: Tourism Information/Welcome Centre**

Ensuring that Windsor Essex is not bypassed by visitors and West Windsor is not further segregated by this project is vitally important. Potential issues could be augmented through a tourism information centre with easy to access information on the offerings of the various neighbourhoods and communities of Essex County.

Ideally, this centre should be located in the Plaza or as a part of a “Duty Free” facility. If this is not included in the proponents’ design of the plaza, then it needs to be situated in close proximity to the bridge with clear signage for travelers to easily access this resource.

##### Key Components

- Construct a tourism information centre, and partner with the community to gain provincial support for staff to operate the facility.
  - Bilingual signage needs to be placed on the approaches to the Bridge in both countries to provide information to travelers on the location of the information centre.
- The centre should be capable of hosting vendors and other exhibitions from local industries to promote and highlight local offerings.

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<sup>3</sup> Toronto Community Benefit Network (2016) The Case for 15%.

[https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/communitybenefits/pages/82/attachments/original/1466673506/The\\_Case\\_for\\_15\\_\(2\).pdf?1466673506](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/communitybenefits/pages/82/attachments/original/1466673506/The_Case_for_15_(2).pdf?1466673506)





- The WDBA should be required to open license the Bridge logo and images of the bridge during construction and operation so businesses and community groups can use it in advertisements and promotions representing our region to attract tourism and other positive economic benefits.

### **Action Item: Gateway to our Region**

The Gordie Howe International Bridge represents a new gateway to our region, and as a result it provides an opportunity to create clear connectivity to the attractions, offerings and points of interest in our community.

#### Key Components

- Clear bilingual signage designed with a consistent theme should be deployed:
  - o Signage should begin on the US side of the bridge (on I-75 approaches) so travelers are aware of the location of information facilities and broader points of interest. The reverse should be true for the 401 leading to US crossing into Delray.
  - o On the Herb Gray Parkway additional signage added to connect bridge traffic with attractions and connections that are along the parkway route and to the county municipalities and the attractions within them. This signage must extend down the 401 across the length of Essex County.
- “Trail Head” style maps and bilingual wayfinding signage should be placed at the bridge and across the region connecting existing trail networks (both cycling and walking) and highlighting local tourist attractions.
  - o These “trail heads” should also feature cycle repair equipment (air pump, wrenches on tethers etc.) to enable individuals who breakdown on the bridge (or trail) to conduct basic repairs so they can get home.
  - o Ideally water fountains and washroom facilities would be at some of these trailhead/way finding locations.

### **Pillar 5: Mobility Infrastructure and Safety**

#### **Action Item: Connectivity to the Bridge**

Although this crossing is designed as a bypass for West Windsor and eliminating the “six red lights” from North American international trade, it must be ensured that this crossing does not segregate and isolate the residents of West Windsor and deprive our region of social and economic opportunities. This community connectivity was also identified by the WDBA and must not only focus on the automobile but also other forms of connectivity including: public transit, cycling and walking.

#### Key Components

- Sheltered transit stops need to be placed at the bridge plaza for workers, pedestrians and transit use who wish to access the bridge.
  - o Space should be included for the possibility of shuttle service or tourist buses unloading parties to walk or cycle across the bridge
  - o Consideration should be given for the Bridge plaza being a transfer point as part of a broader regional transit network between Windsor and LaSalle (and beyond).





- Cycle infrastructure including secure locations to lock bicycles for employees and tourists needs to be placed in and/or around the plaza.
- Ensure that pedestrian access to the bridge avoids major truck/automotive traffic routes.

### **Action Item: Cycling Infrastructure**

Following the announcement of the cycle lanes on the Gordie Howe International Bridge the opportunity to leverage cycling to attract visitors, generate economic activity and improve connections across our region was recognized by a number of community stakeholders. In Detroit, the Greenways Coalition as well as the Delray Community Benefits group has recognized how effective cycle infrastructure can help drive positive change forward by attracting people to communities and enhance active and healthy lifestyles.

Currently, there are a number of gaps in Windsor-Essex Cycling infrastructure, not only in proximity to the Gordie Howe International Bridge, but across the region as a whole. This project provides an opportunity to close those gaps and create greater connectivity and accessibility to cycle across the region.

#### Key Components

- All bike infrastructure provided as a part of this project should conform to best practices and safety standards: physically separate bike lanes on roads, clear bilingual signage/road markings at intersections etc.
- The cycle lanes on the bridge must connect to broader infrastructure on both sides of the border.
  - o Connections between the Bridge site and the Riverfront Trail network via separated bike lanes through Sandwich Town.
  - o Connections to the Herb Gray Parkway Trail network.
  - o Connections to the county by leveraging the County Wide Active Transportation Study proposes significant connections and investments in cycling infrastructure to maximize existing networks and leverage future projects in the County.
    - There are “last block” gaps in cycling infrastructure between the Herb Gray Parkway Trails and the Town of LaSalle cycle trail network. If these gaps are filled it will lead to an increase in accessibility of cycling infrastructure into LaSalle and the County beyond.
- Fund the establishment of a cross border bike share program that would facilitate cycling across the Gordie Howe International Bridge and exploring the surrounding communities.

### **Action Items: Safety Training and Equipment**

Also identified by the WDBA is the need to ensure community safety while not burdening the local municipalities. The presence of a multiple international crossing in a single municipality places a significant burden on municipal services, in particular to ensure the safety of residents and travelers.

By ensuring that local first responders have the training and equipment to deal with potential situations related to the Bridge, including high angle rescue, water rescue, spill cleanup and recovery, is important for public safety and the ongoing operation of the crossing.

#### Key Components





- Pre-positioning of spill cleanup and other water rescue equipment downriver from the Gordie Howe International Bridge to enable rapid response to a spill or incident.
- Provide funding for equipment and training for first responders from across the region to handle an emergency on the Gordie Howe International Bridge or Detroit River in proximity to the bridge.

### **Action Item: Mitigation of Construction and Large Truck Traffic**

During the construction phase of this project, there is significant concern respecting the impacts of construction equipment traffic on residential/commercial areas, in both Delray and Windsor-Essex. Similar concerns were expressed regarding the monitoring of the ongoing traffic, and the environmental and health impacts of the post-construction shift of large numbers of trucks from Huron Church Road to the Herb Gray Parkway

#### Key Components

- Clearly identify and communicate where construction staging areas will be located, as well as routes that will be traveled by trucks during the construction period.
- Following the completion of the Bridge, designated truck routes through the City of Windsor prioritizing access to the Gordie Howe International Bridge should be implemented and designed to keep trucks off of residential/commercial streets where possible.
  - o Concern was explicitly expressed about Sandwich Street (in the historic area) with regards to increased truck traffic damaging historic buildings.

### **Action Item: Technologically Innovative Bridge and Plaza**

The Gordie Howe International Bridge has an opportunity to be a leader in advance technology use, green energy generation and climate resiliency in an attractive and eco-friendly plaza. This leadership can be leveraged by our region to position ourselves for new economic opportunities while ensuring that this infrastructure remains relevant for future generations.

#### Key Components

- Efforts should be made to ensure that the bridge space is adaptable to emerging technologies over its life span (autonomous cars, EV charging points at parking facilities; prescreening transponders etc.).
- Green energy generation on the plaza and surrounding building – bladeless wind turbines, solar panels, and green roof technology should be integrated on buildings.
- Porous concrete and other storm water/heat mitigating practices put in place in the plaza.
- Any other buildings or facilities constructed as a part of the community benefit process should be constructed using the same materials and technologies to ensure that the broader community receives these benefits.





## **Key Best Practices Related to Community Benefits**

There are a number of key best practices that have been developed both in Canada and internationally around the deployment and operation of Community Benefits Agreements that need to be included as a part of this project.<sup>4</sup> These Community Benefits tend to be grounded in a set of foundational principles including:

- Decision-making around the benefits should be inclusive and open,
- Recognition of indigenous heritage, culture and history on this land,
- Economic development strategies should create opportunities for workers and residents,
- Ensuring the sustainability of the project both in longevity of benefits but also in terms of social and environmental impacts,
- Ensure economic development creates real, measurable positive change.

From these core principles the following specific best practices need to be engaged to ensure the Gordie Howe International Bridge moves forward in the most successful manner.

### **Official Recognition and Support to the Windsor-Essex Community**

A key learning of community benefit work both in Canada and internationally is that there is often a significant gap in trust, credibility and capacity in the community between residents and the project governance bodies. As a community that has experienced the impacts of an international border crossing, these gaps in trust, credibility and belief, whether perceived or actual, exist related to the Gordie Howe International Bridge among the residents of Sandwich Town and broader West Windsor. The Windsor-Essex Community Benefit Coalition can help bridge these gaps by being officially recognized by the Windsor Detroit Bridge Authority and formally partnering moving forward, as we lend community credibility that will be hard to earn by an external government body or a proponent who is new to the community.

As a broad based community coalition made up of residents, local organizations and key institutions, which is mandated to be proactive in its outreach and engagement, we have the capacity to engage and activate the community throughout the bridge construction process. This was demonstrated during the consultation for this submission, as we conducted proactive outreach to the community providing education to and an opportunity for input from a variety of groups that the WDBA and proponents had yet to engage.

Varying perspectives that were engaged directly informed the identification of the community benefit priorities that are included in this submission. Although outreach such as this seems to be beyond the mandate of the WDBA, it is this gap that can be filled through a formal agreement and the supporting of a staffed office for our coalition moving forward.

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<sup>4</sup> Dina Graser (2016) Community Benefits in Practice and In Policy: Lessons from United States and the United Kingdom. [http://atkinsonfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/atkinson\\_cbreport\\_fa.pdf](http://atkinsonfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/atkinson_cbreport_fa.pdf); Atkinson Foundation, (2016) Making Community Benefits a Reality in Ontario. [http://atkinsonfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/atkinson\\_cbsummary.pdf](http://atkinsonfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/atkinson_cbsummary.pdf); United Way Canada (2017) Supplemental Policy Paper Community Benefit Agreements: Empowering Communities to Maximizing Returns on Public Infrastructure Investment. <http://www.unitedway.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/UWCC-Supplemental-Policy-Paper-Community-Benefits-Agreements.pdf>





Supporting staffing to continue community engagement and capacity building related to this project will enhance the independent voice of the community to provide feedback, enable the proactive monitoring of the day to day progress of the construction and various Community Benefit projects, and create an accessible space that the citizens of the community can access to gain information; all of which will provide a level of credibility and confidence to the community, and will enhance the WDBA and proponent's standing within the community.

Staff people would also be able to leverage other resources to enhance positive outcomes by, for example, enabling co-op placements, internships and other educational learning opportunities that can also be a platform for young people to learn about local social issues and community development challenges related to this project and beyond. The staff could also assist or lead partnership creation to enhance the community benefit positive impact by leveraging other resources to increase sustainability

### **Clear Lines of Communication; Service Standards; Dispute Resolution**

Accessibility to information on a project such as this is vitally important with clear channels of communication with timely responses so the average resident can easily be kept informed. According to research, West Windsor is home to a number of vulnerable populations that face a range of barriers. For example, many do not speak either English or French, do not access news and information through traditional channels, or are unable to attend community meetings.<sup>5</sup>

Both the WDBA and the eventual proponent should be required to designate staff within their own organizations to be key points of contact to answer community questions and concerns. These individuals would be designated community contacts and would strive to disseminate information in partnership with the WECBC staff person to the community.

This point of contact should be prescribed specific service standards with the goal of being a conduit for the community to access and receive information. Although we recognize that not every question has an immediate answer, ensuring that residents receive timely responses is important to maintaining confidence in this project and its partners. This confidence would be reinforced by having a clearly defined dispute resolution mechanism through which residents can raise issues and disputes, and mitigation efforts to rectify the issue can be implemented. Staff people for the WECBC could act as a potential conduit for any disputes, complaints or through which issue would flow to the WDBA and proponent in a transparent and timely manner.

### **Transparent Targets for Community Benefit Deliverables with Plans for Sustainability to Ensure Lasting Benefit**

Establishing, measuring and maintaining clear targets for the community benefits program are vitally important for ensuring confidence in this program and the broader work of the WDBA. As a perception that the Gordie Howe International Bridge is behind schedule/facing indeterminate delays exist within the media and broader community, by setting and meeting key timelines and targets related to the community benefits we can help build confidence in the process and the project overall.

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<sup>5</sup> United Way (2016) Taking Back our Neighbourhoods.

<https://www.weareunited.com/servlet/eAndar.article/385/Taking-Back-Our-Neighbourhoods-Report>





All community benefits should have targets clearly assigned to them. These targets and deadlines must be openly shared with the community and justification for their specific levels outlined. Where possible, targets should be set with community consultation and partnership and not in isolation of the work that other community groups are already undertaking in West Windsor. For longer term programs and supports, at minimum, annual reports should be drafted and released to the community outlining the specific targets and positive impacts of the community benefit that was delivered that year.

To support many of the projects and ideas outlined here will require ongoing operating support beyond the initial capital allocation of the Community Benefit Program. Dollars should be set aside to ensure that initial investments as a part of the community benefit program are sustainable in the future with toll revenue (or other sources) being used to maintain these benefits in perpetuity.





## Appendix 1: Leadership Table Membership

<b>WECBC Leadership Table Co-Chair</b>	
<b>Brian Gray</b> – Community Resident	<b>Joan Mavrincac</b> – Community Resident
<b>Table Membership</b>	
<b>Adam Vasey</b> – Director of Advocacy and Outreach, The Downtown Mission	<b>Brian Hogan</b> – President, Windsor District Labour Council
<b>David Hanna</b> – Community Resident	<b>Eric Hill</b> – Executive Director, CanAm Urban Homes
<b>Janice Kaffer</b> – CEO, Hotel Dieu Grace Health Care	<b>Jessica Fontaine</b> – Community Resident/University Student
<b>John Fairley</b> - Vice President, St. Clair College Communications and Community Relations	<b>Kathleen Thomas</b> – Executive Director, Multicultural Council Windsor Essex
<b>Keely Murdock</b> – Community Resident	<b>Larry Silani</b> - Director of Strategic Initiatives, Town of LaSalle – Resource Member*
<b>Leo Gil</b> – Outreach Staff, Our West End Neighbourhood Renewal	<b>Lorena Shepley</b> – Community Resident
<b>Lori Newton</b> – Executive Director, Bike Windsor Essex County	<b>Lorraine Goddard</b> – CEO, United Way/Centraide Windsor-Essex County
<b>Jelena Payne</b> - Commissioner of Social Services City of Windsor – Resource Members*	<b>Mary Ann Cuderman</b> – Community Resident / Sandwich Business Owner
<b>Mike Cardinal</b> – Community Resident /Sandwich Business Owner	<b>Michelle Suchiu</b> – Executive Director, Workforce Windsor Essex
<b>Rlta Higgins</b> – Community Resident	<b>Peter Berry</b> –Harbour Master, Port of Windsor
<b>Terrance Kennedy</b> – Community Resident	TBA - University of Windsor

\*Resource members are non-voting members of the table. Their role is to provide information sharing and to be a conduit into their various organizations regarding technical support.