

October 2026
2027-2032
Seaforth BIA
Strategic Plan

Seaforth
Spirit
is alive!



1. Introduction

Established in 1981, the Seaforth Business Improvement Area (BIA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening, revitalizing, and promoting Seaforth's vibrant downtown as a welcoming place to do business, shop, visit, and connect. The BIA's boundaries encompass much of historic downtown Seaforth, which is recognized as a Heritage Conservation District under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. Through collaboration with local businesses, property owners, community members, and the Municipality of Huron East, the Seaforth BIA works to support a thriving and distinctive downtown that reflects the community's history while embracing its future.

The Seaforth BIA is governed by a Board of Directors representing the local business and property-owner community, including one community-at-large representative and an appointed representative from Huron East Council. The BIA currently represents approximately 57 members, along with 14 associate members whose businesses are located outside the designated BIA boundaries. The organization is funded primarily through a levy applied to commercial property taxes within the BIA boundaries, supplemented by membership fees paid by associate members. Each year, the proposed budget is circulated to the membership for consideration at the Annual General Meeting before being submitted to Huron East Council for approval.

The 2027–2032 Seaforth BIA Strategic Plan provides a shared roadmap for the next five years, establishing a clear direction for how the organization will support the vitality, resilience, and continued evolution of Seaforth's downtown. The plan builds on the BIA's strengths, acknowledges changing economic and community conditions, and identifies opportunities to create lasting value for businesses, property owners, residents, and visitors.

Through focused priorities, achievable objectives, and collaborative initiatives, the Strategic Plan is intended to guide the BIA's investments, programs, partnerships, and advocacy over the coming five years. It provides a framework for measuring progress, responding to emerging opportunities and challenges, and ensuring that resources are directed toward initiatives that have meaningful impact. Above all, the plan reflects a shared commitment to maintaining Seaforth's unique character while fostering a dynamic, welcoming, and sustainable downtown for the future.

2. Background

To help shape and inform the 2027–2032 Strategic Plan, the Seaforth BIA engaged its members and the broader community through two complementary channels: an in-person Sip and Shape Seaforth engagement event and the online Huron East Asks Residents (HEAR) community engagement platform. BIA members were invited to share their ideas, priorities, and perspectives, while community members were also encouraged to contribute suggestions and identify opportunities for Seaforth’s downtown. The feedback gathered through these engagement activities provided valuable insight into the priorities and aspirations that have helped guide the development of this Strategic Plan.

2.1 Sip and Shape Seaforth

Property and business owners from across the Seaforth BIA District gathered at the Seaforth Golf Course on May 19, 2026, for an evening of networking, collaboration, and community visioning. Facilitated by Municipality of Huron East Economic Development Officer Taralyn Cronin, the session included a SWOT analysis and small-group discussions focused on key downtown themes. Participants shared feedback and ideas to help identify future initiatives and guide the continued development of Seaforth’s downtown core.

2.2 SWOT Analysis

A simple SWOT analysis was completed at the event and comments are listed below.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Clean • Friendly • Heritage and architecture • Sense of community • Easy to navigate • Main highway • Snow removal • Unique stores • Lots of necessities • 3 financial institutions • All amenities and services • Good variety of sports • Parks • Service clubs • Deep roots • Willingness to help	• Not enough parking spaces • Parking is sloped • Merchant parking • Tenant parking • Timing of intersection light • Lack of coffee shops • Non-enforcement of by-laws • Empty buildings • Lack of employment recruitment • Lack of walking trails • Lack of succession planning • Policing (no notification of scams or community watch program)

Strengths	Weaknesses
	• Lack of welcome packages for business owners and residents • Awareness of small business support • Lack of knowing what is happening in the community (residents and business owners)

Opportunities	Threats
• Dog grooming business • Clothing and thrift store • Building connections • More services (health resource centre) • More franchise models • Heritage resources (grants, loans, knowledge) • Electronic board/posters • Monthly newsletter • Sharing event flyers • BIA Shop to Win	• Commercial vacancies • Lack of employment opportunities • Youth retention • No education past elementary • Lack of accommodations • Aging population • Limited certified staff (more \$\$ in bigger centres) • Amazon and online shopping • No truck stop

2.3 Theme Discussions

At the Sip and Shape Seaforth event, attendees worked in small groups of three or four to share ideas and recommendations across five key themes. Each group had 15–20 minutes to discuss each theme before moving on to the next. The suggestions below have been organized by theme.

Business Attraction and Retention	Events and Community Engagement
• Sidewalk Sales • Online Survey to ask what community members would support * • Local participation of residents • Food! • Music in the downtown • Moonlight Madness • Signage, what does Seaforth offer • Kids free events • Personal connection (who are business owners?) • More involvement with the Centenaries (Advertising businesses during games) • Pamphlets at car shows to support our local community • Festivals ** • Coordinated events (bake/flower sales)	• Affordable housing/living • Clean windows/doors • Attracting more retail * • Local support to town business • Labour investment • Succession planning • Knowledgeable staff • Customer service • Employment opportunities and housing for young families • High school support • Updated storefronts * • Training for business management • More restaurants • Attracting services not currently in town ** • Senior shuttle * • Housing • Students in Seaforth being directed to co-ops in Seaforth specifically

Marketing and Promotion	Organization and Leadership
• Main Street bulletin board * • Business monthly email/newsletter and informational social media posts • Free support and education for businesses • Another nighttime event like ladies night • Banner on top of website • 2-sided bulletin listing businesses in town • Cross business support * • Go to events where targeted audience is	• Clear communication of the mandate of BIA for business to fully embrace • Does the community/businesses know what the BIA does * • Youth • Awards and recognition* • Collaboration between businesses ** • Support those in leadership roles • Open businesses after 5 once a month • New people on BIA Committee

Physical Enhancements and Beautification
• Parking beautification and signage * • Town Pride • Nature • More colour * • Perpendicular signs • Walking path from the arena to the optimist park and back to the arena • Lighting streets • Victorian awnings • Grants for building upkeep

* Top priorities

** Multiple votes for top priority

2.4 Huron East Asks Residents (HEAR) Feedback

The BIA also invited members and residents to share additional feedback through the HEAR online engagement platform, using the same five themes to guide their comments. The online portal remained open for nearly five months, providing an extended opportunity for community input. The following comments were received:

- “Something should be done about the shopfronts that are not in use. Opportunities need to be given to new businesses to use those spaces.”
- “There needs to be incentives for new business to join our community. We need more variety in the stores e.g. a clothes store, another café.”
- “Help people understand the importance of the community events calendar for newcomers and for community coordination.”
- “A thrift/second-hand store is needed. It is important that people are not left behind and can purchase things they need. Also aids the 3 R's.”
- “A nature trail or walking trail, active transport connecting links.”

3. Strategic Action Plan

Drawing on the feedback and ideas shared by BIA members and Seaforth residents, the Seaforth BIA Board of Directors developed a five-year Strategic Action Plan. The plan reaffirms the Seaforth BIA's mission and sets out objectives,

actions, and timelines under each of the five key themes. See **Appendix A** for the 2027–2032 Strategic Action Plan.

4. Conclusion

Seaforth has a strong foundation on which to build, including its heritage character, welcoming community, diverse businesses and services, central location, and strong network of community organizations. At the same time, the feedback identified important areas for continued attention, including commercial vacancies, business recruitment and succession, workforce availability, communication, customer awareness, parking, streetscape improvements, and opportunities to increase community participation.

Over the next five years, the Seaforth BIA will focus its efforts on five interconnected priorities: Business Attraction and Retention; Events and Community Engagement; Marketing and Promotion; Organization and Leadership; and Physical Enhancements and Beautification. These priorities recognize that a successful downtown requires more than attracting businesses—it also requires supporting existing businesses, creating reasons for people to visit, effectively communicating what Seaforth has to offer, maintaining a strong and engaged BIA, and continually investing in the appearance and experience of the downtown.

The Strategic Action Plan is intended to be a living document. Priorities, timelines, and initiatives may evolve as community needs, funding opportunities, economic conditions, and member priorities change. The BIA Board will review progress regularly, celebrate successes, and adjust its approach where necessary to ensure that its limited resources are directed toward initiatives that provide meaningful value to members and the broader community.

Ultimately, the success of this plan will depend on collaboration. The BIA cannot achieve these goals alone. Strong partnerships among businesses, property owners, Huron East, community organizations, residents, and other local partners will be essential. By working together and building on Seaforth’s existing strengths, the Seaforth BIA can help create a downtown that is welcoming, active, attractive, and economically resilient for years to come.

Appendix A: 2027–2032 Seaforth BIA Strategic Plan

Seaforth BIA 2027–2032 Strategic Plan

Mission of the Seaforth BIA

The Seaforth Business Improvement Area (BIA) is a non-profit organization established in 1981 for the purpose of revitalizing and maintaining Seaforth's dynamic downtown, and to promote the area as a business and shopping destination.

The Seaforth BIA aims to accomplish this through:

- Marketing
- Business Recruitment
- Streetscape Improvement and other amenities
- Seasonal Decorations
- Special Events

Strategic Priorities

1. Business Attraction and Retention
2. Events and Community Engagement
3. Marketing and Promotion
4. Organization and Leadership
5. Physical Enhancements and Beautification

1. Business Attraction and Retention

Objective: Support a diverse, resilient downtown business community while encouraging new businesses, investment, and succession.

Action	Timeline	Potential Partners
Partner with the Municipality of Huron East's Economic Development Officer (EDO) to keep a current listing of Downtown Seaforth vacant commercial spaces on the Huron East Available Properties Map.	2027; update as required	Huron East; BIA property owners
Identify priority business gaps and opportunities for Seaforth, based on member feedback, vacancies and community needs.	2027; review annually	Huron East; businesses; residents

Action	Timeline	Potential Partners
Partner with the EDO on a welcome and connection process for new businesses, including providing a welcome package to a new business owner, introduction to the BIA and connection to municipal/business support resources.	ongoing	Huron East
Promote available commercial spaces through the BIA website/social media and other appropriate channels.	Ongoing	Huron East; property owners
Partner with the EDO to organize a ribbon cutting for a new business; a sign of support for new business owners and/or growing businesses.	As required	Huron East; Huron County
Host at least one annual business networking or information session focused on topics identified by members (e.g. customer service, business management training, ect.).	Annually	Huron East; Huron County; local partners
Promote business succession planning resources and connect owners considering retirement or transition with available support.	2027–2032	Huron East; Huron County; business support organizations
Encourage local businesses to participate in employment, co-op, student and youth opportunities.	Ongoing	Schools; Huron East; employers
Explore opportunities to connect businesses with relevant training, funding and small-business support programs.	Ongoing	Huron East; Huron County; business support organizations
Encourage cross-promotion and referrals between local businesses.	Ongoing	BIA members

2. Events and Community Engagement

Objective: Create engaging experiences that bring residents and visitors downtown while strengthening connections between businesses and the community.

Action	Timeline	Potential Partners
Continue and enhance successful BIA events and promotions based on participation and member feedback.	Ongoing	BIA members

Action	Timeline	Potential Partners
Host a Sidewalk Sale or Downtown Shopping Event in conjunction with the annual Car Show.	2027–2028	BIA members
Explore a Moonlight Madness/nighttime shopping event, including opportunities for businesses to remain open after 5 p.m.	2027–2028	BIA members
Encourage coordinated promotions around existing community events, festivals, sports and tournaments.	Ongoing	Local organizations
Develop opportunities for businesses to participate in or promote their businesses at community events and sporting activities.	Ongoing	Community groups
Conduct an annual member/community survey to identify preferred events and gather feedback on existing initiatives.	Annually	BIA members; residents
Promote the community events calendar as a central resource for residents, visitors and newcomers.	Ongoing	Huron East
Explore opportunities for food, music and entertainment to be incorporated into downtown events.	Ongoing	Local businesses; entertainers

3. Marketing and Promotion

Objective: Increase awareness of Seaforth businesses, services, events and downtown experiences among residents, visitors and potential customers.

Action	Timeline	Potential Partners
Establish a regular BIA email and newsletter for businesses.	2027	Huron East
Develop a consistent social media content calendar highlighting local businesses, events, promotions and community stories.	Ongoing	BIA members
Create a “Shop Seaforth” / “Discover Seaforth”	2027-2028	Huron East

campaign that can be used year-round.		
Regularly feature individual businesses through social media, newsletters and other promotional channels.	Ongoing	BIA members
Develop a downtown business directory or map, available digitally and, where appropriate, in print.	2028-2029	Huron East
Install signage that fits with the character of the downtown to identify downtown parking areas.	2028-2029	Huron East
Explore the installation of an insert to promote downtown Seaforth in the washrooms at the Seaforth and District Community Centre.	2027-2028	Huron East
Develop coordinated seasonal marketing campaigns encouraging residents to shop locally.	At least 2 annually	BIA members
Establish an annual business recognition program or awards initiative.	2028 onward	BIA
Encourage businesses to cross-promote neighbouring businesses and local experiences.	Ongoing	BIA members
Install a locked bulletin board downtown where community events can be posted.	2027-2028	Huron East; community organizations
Attend or promote at events where Seaforth can reach targeted visitor audiences.	Ongoing	Tourism partners

4. Organization and Leadership

Objective: Strengthen the BIA as an engaged, representative and sustainable organization with clear communication and strong participation from its membership.

Action	Timeline	Potential Partners
Develop a clear orientation package for new BIA Board and committee members outlining the BIA mandate, roles, responsibilities and current priorities.	2027	Huron East
Clearly communicate the role and mandate of the BIA to all members.	2027; ongoing	
Develop a member communication channel where meeting dates, newsletters, surveys and promotions and events can be shared.	2027	
Create additional opportunities for members to provide input between AGMs, such as short surveys or member roundtables.	Ongoing	BIA members
Establish committees or short-term working groups for specific projects when appropriate.	Ongoing	BIA members
Develop a strategy for recruiting new Board and committee members.	2027-2028	BIA members
Create opportunities for youth and newer community members to participate in BIA initiatives.	2027-2032	Schools; community organizations

Action	Timeline	Potential Partners
Provide regular recognition of volunteers, businesses and community partners contributing to BIA initiatives.	Ongoing	
Develop an annual work plan based on the Strategic Action Plan and available budget.	Annually	
Conduct an annual review of Strategic Plan progress and report key accomplishments to members.	Annually	
Maintain strong communication and collaboration with Huron East and other community organizations.	Ongoing	Huron East; community partners

5. Physical Enhancements and Beautification

Objective: Maintain and enhance Seaforth's attractive heritage downtown while improving the experience for businesses, residents and visitors.

Action	Timeline	Potential Partners
Develop an annual downtown beautification plan identifying priority areas for improvements.	Annually in September for the next year	Huron East
Continue seasonal decorations and identify opportunities for additional colour and visual interest downtown.	Ongoing	Huron East; BIA members
Explore improvements to parking areas, including signage, appearance and wayfinding.	2027-2029	Huron East

Action	Timeline	Potential Partners
Investigate opportunities for additional perpendicular business signage where appropriate and permitted.	2027–2029	Huron East; BIA members including property owners
Explore streetscape lighting improvements and enhanced evening visibility.	2027–2032	Huron East
Encourage property owners to maintain storefronts, windows, doors and building exteriors. Communicate with property owners with commercial vacancies about the importance of keeping their storefront clean and maintained.	Ongoing	BIA property owners
Promote available municipal grants and other funding opportunities that can assist with façade, accessibility and building improvements.	Ongoing	Huron East
Explore opportunities for additional heritage-sensitive streetscape features, such as awnings, planters, banners and public art.	2027–2032	Huron East; BIA members including property owners
Explore opportunities for walking connections and trails linking downtown with nearby recreational/community destinations.	2027–2032	Huron East; community organizations
Investigate opportunities for community-led beautification initiatives such as planters, gardens or seasonal displays.	Annually	Community groups

Action	Timeline	Potential Partners
Advocate for improvements to pedestrian experience, accessibility, parking and downtown wayfinding where appropriate.	Ongoing	Huron East

Monitoring and Evaluation

The 2027–2032 Seaforth BIA Strategic Plan provides a clear roadmap for strengthening Seaforth’s downtown as a vibrant place to do business, shop, visit, and connect. Developed through direct input from BIA members, property owners, businesses, and community members, the plan reflects both the strengths of Seaforth and the challenges facing the downtown.

Progress toward the objectives outlined in this Strategic Plan will be monitored and measured annually to ensure the BIA is achieving meaningful results for its members and the broader community. Measures of success will include increases in Facebook and Instagram followers and webpage traffic; the recruitment of new BIA directors and increased participation from BIA members; growth in the number of volunteers supporting BIA initiatives; the introduction and success of new events and promotions; and positive feedback from BIA members through surveys, discussions, and other engagement opportunities. These measures, along with the completion of actions identified in the Strategic Action Plan, will help the Board assess progress, identify areas for improvement, celebrate successes, and adjust priorities where needed. By regularly reviewing these indicators and reporting key accomplishments to members, the BIA can ensure that its efforts remain responsive to member needs and continue to contribute to a vibrant, active, and economically resilient downtown.