

# WHAT'S IN STORE FOR 2021?

## MAYOR AND CHAMBER GM CAUSTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC FOR YEAR AHEAD

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Following a year of unprecedented changes, 2021 may be a time for optimism and striving for a return to normal life.

"There's nothing I love more than to hear the soccer fields and baseball diamonds busy in the summer," said Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette. "It would be nice if we can get back to celebrating Canada Day in the Glen, fall fairs, beer festivals, and other events that make our town so great."

While the vaccine rollout is underway, Town of Halton Hills projects will also be arriving this coming year including an affordable housing project at 17 Guelph St. in George-

town and the development at the McGibbon Hotel.

Bonnette said design plans for projects like Phase 2 of the Gellert Centre and Trafalgar Sports Park would also be released in 2021.

"The Town will continue to work on important files such as climate change, equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism," Bonnette said.

For local business, 2021 will continue to be a challenge.

For the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, 2020 presented some unique hardships.

"Prior to this year, most people viewed the Chamber as a networking opportunity," Melanie Frazer, general manager of the Halton Hills Chamber of

Commerce, said. "Without having events we were really forced to focus on pillars our members needed."

From advocacy at the municipal and provincial level, to education, the Chamber pivoted to maintain relevance for its membership.

"Education was a really big thing in 2020, and we're going to continue that for next year," Frazer said. "People in a small- or medium-sized business don't have time to figure out what to do next."

Through virtual seminars and online events, the Chamber provided immediate benefits to businesses looking to navigate the global pandemic.

"Businesses that have not taken the time to look at what their customers want from there are going to struggle in this upcoming year," Frazer said.

While Frazer said some



Chamber of Commerce photo

Chamber of Commerce GM Melanie Frazer and Mayor Rick Bonnette recently led a virtual meeting to discuss the past year and plans for helping businesses recover in 2021.

businesses struggled through 2020, many had surprisingly good years.

"Some of them are having the best year because people are shopping locally," she said.

However, a more locally focused customer will still need to be with e-commerce models.

"People are no longer

walking down Main Street and finding that cute, little store," Frazer said. "They're looking for it online."

The Chamber will launch a new website in 2021 with an enhanced directory to help drive e-commerce.

With more support from the Chamber on the way,

Frazer said the Town of Halton Hills has also been a benefit to business owners.

"Halton Hills is in a really funky stage of growth," Frazer said. "We're still small but we're growing and growing quickly."

With more than 1,400 businesses in Halton Hills, Frazer said the Town has done a great job retaining businesses and understanding what makes Halton Hills attractive.

For 2021, Frazer said supporting local businesses was important.

"Amazon will still be here when this is over," Frazer said. "But the little niche businesses make all the difference in Halton Hills. They're the ones who support our teams and donate to the hospital."

*THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY: With an extremely challenging 2020 finally over, we wanted to hear from community leaders about what lies ahead in 2021.*

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