



FOUNDING OF STRATHROY  
In 1830 James Buchanan, the British Consul at New York City, acquired a tract of 1200 acres of unsettled land in Adelaide township. He transferred control of the property to his son John Stewart Buchanan (1815-1872) who settled there within the next two years. By 1836 John had built a sawmill and grist-mill on the Sydenham River. These pioneer industries formed the nucleus of a settlement which was named Strathroy by James Buchanan after his birthplace in county Tyrone, Ireland. The construction of a branch line of the Great Western Railway through the area in 1856 further stimulated the community and it was incorporated in 1860.

# Middlesex Community Living





## Vision Statement

Valued Citizens,  
Inclusive Communities.



## Mission Statement

Middlesex Community Living is committed to supporting citizens with an intellectual disability to achieve their fullest potential and to foster the development of inclusive communities.



# Structure of the Agency



## Board of Directors 2025-2026

Brenda Meulendyks (President)

Kylie Flegel (Vice President)

Lori Van Geffen (Treasurer)

Nancy Fernandes-Giles (Secretary)

Jason Furness (Director)

Mike Gleiser (Director)

Doug Payne (Director)

Olivia Tomchick (Director)

Jessica Tracey (Director)

Brent Cushman (Director)



# Supports and Services

- Group Living
- Supported Independent Living
- Host Family
- Community Respite
- Community Participation
- Employment Supports
- Passport Funding Administration







Sometimes it's the journey  
that teaches you a lot  
about your destination.

Drake

Our Journey...





# “A Welcoming Community Where Everyone Belongs”

Social Innovation Project





**#EVERYONEBELONGS**



Our  
Destination...



# The Idea...

- Talked about a 'community wide initiative' where services & businesses earn a Decal of Distinction for being inclusive & welcoming
- Social Innovation Proposal for \$100,000
- And so, the idea was born...





# Social Innovation

- MCCSS Employment and Modernization Grant  
– Social Innovation Proposal
- Relate to society, and the interactions among people & groups
- Build on a belief & commitment toward a better future
- Involve applying new thinking to generate novel ideas, to address a social need
- Often have larger scale pattern shifting impact
- Are good for society and people





# MCL Social Innovation Work Plan



1. Mobilize Then Organize
2. Map Out Community
3. Reach Out to Community Members and Inform of Project
4. Host Interactive Inclusive Community Forums
5. Develop Social Innovation Plan
6. Develop and Execute Communication Plan
7. Implement Plan and Build Momentum
8. Sustain Progress and Embed in Community
9. Reach Out and Scale Out



# Step 1: Mobilize & Then Organize





# Together we committed to:

## Specific Objectives

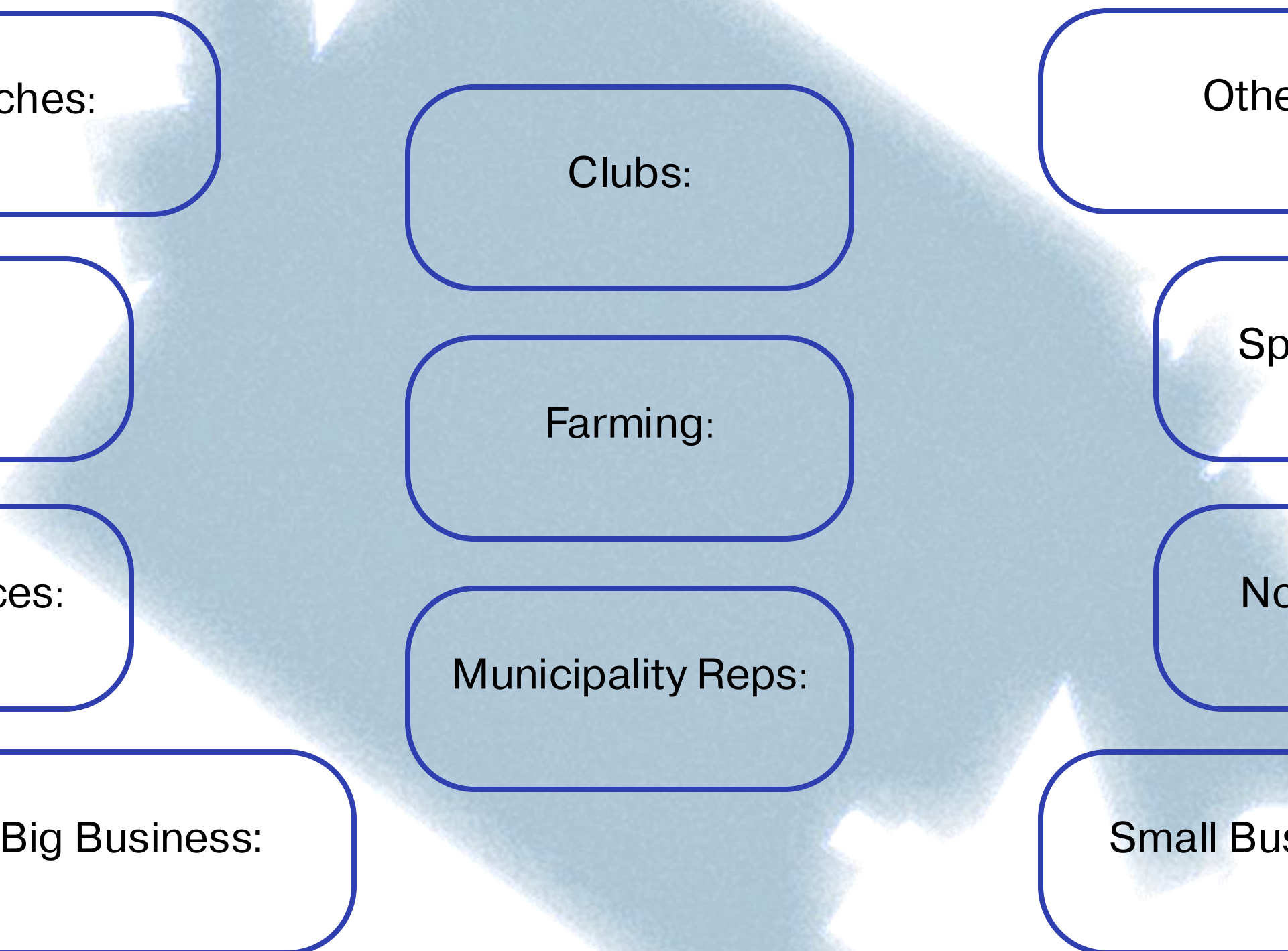
- Get Partners Working Together to a Higher Order
- Utilize Existing Resources and Infrastructures in the Community
- Open New Doors & widen existing ones for all people to enter
- Produce Break-Through Results

## Overarching goal

Middlesex Community Living will spearhead a social innovation initiative that promotes and achieves greater inclusion of all people in the community of Strathroy-Caradoc. Ultimately, the municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc will be established, and branded, as a 'Welcoming & Inclusive Community.'

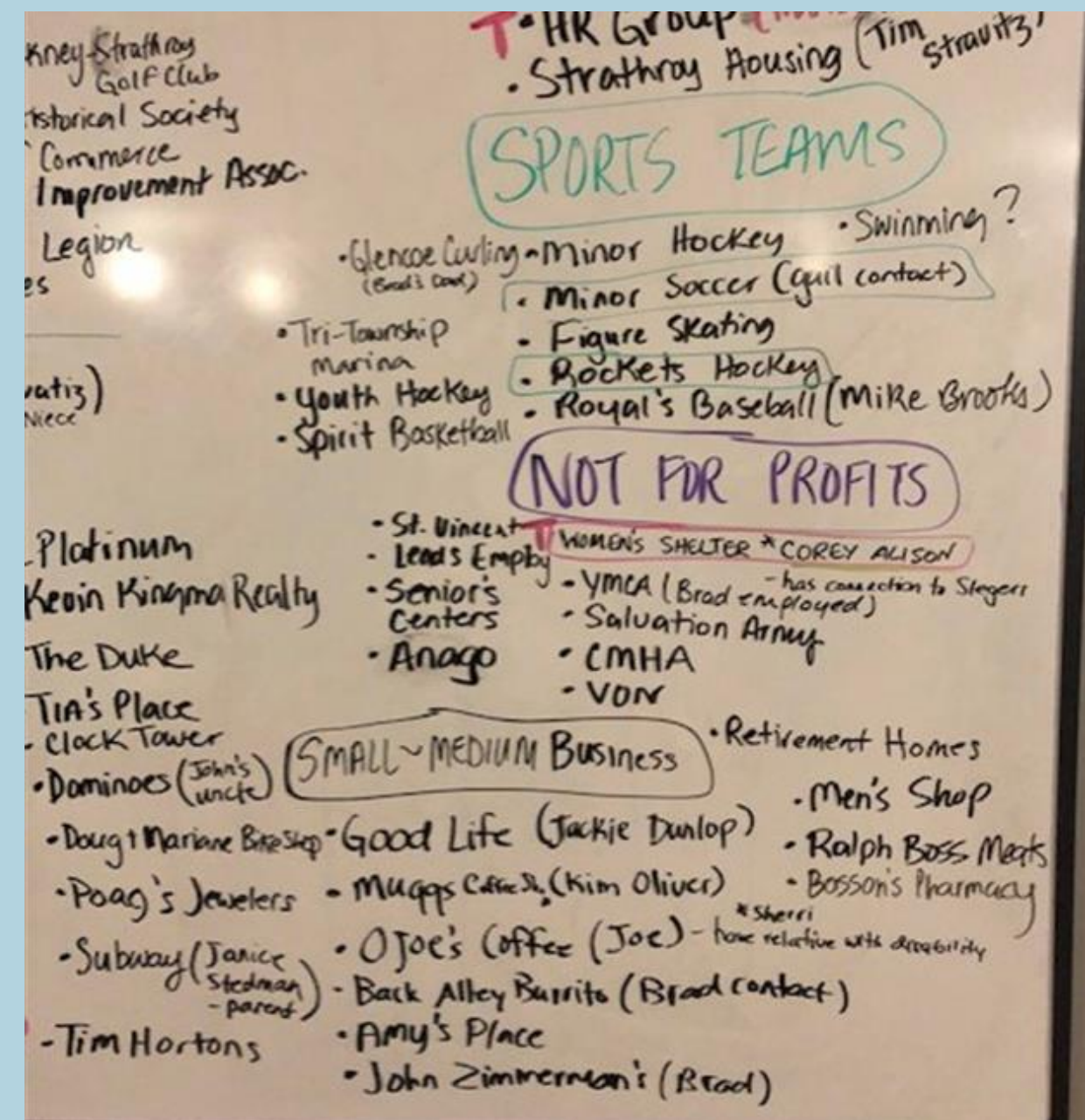
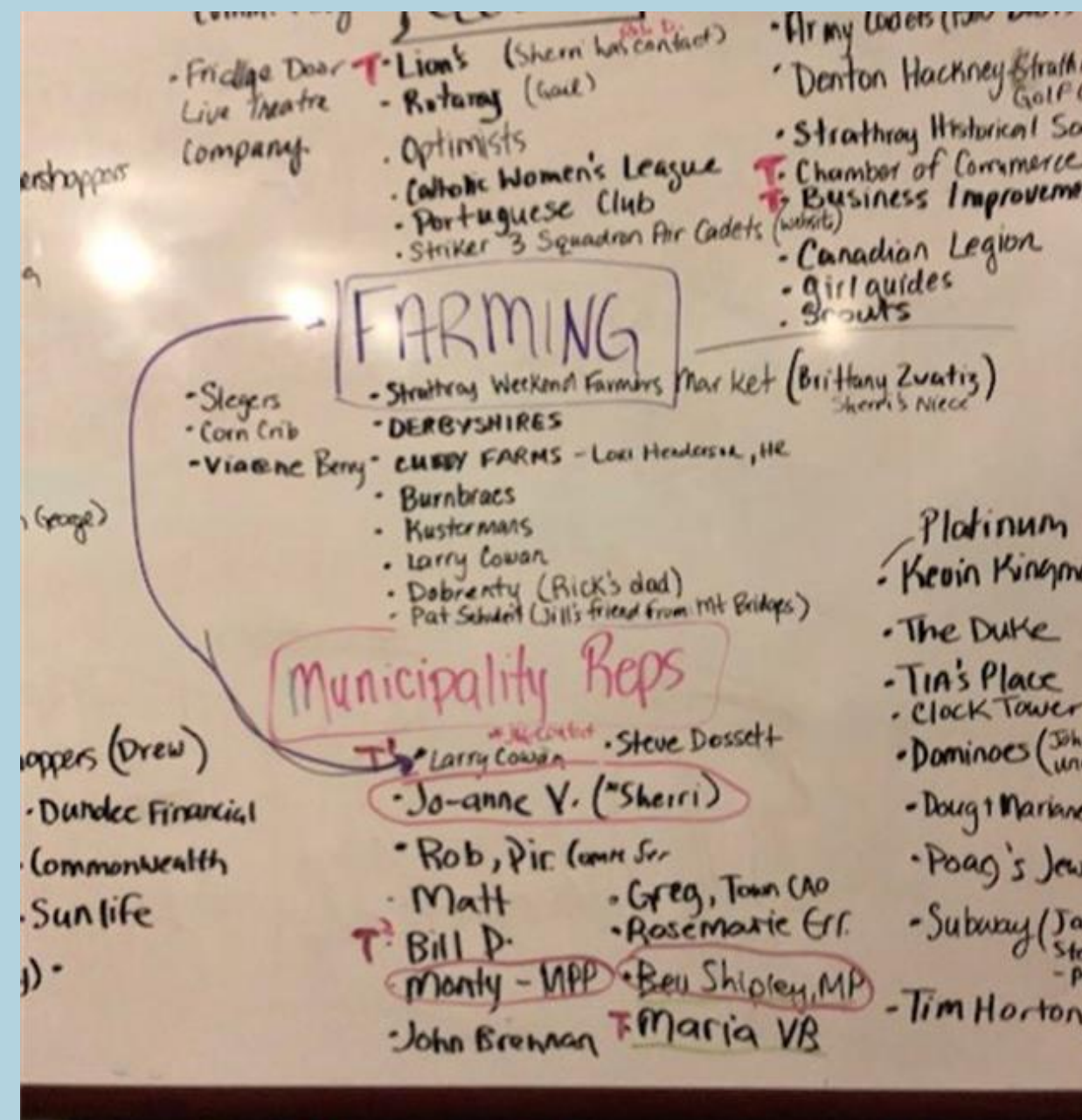
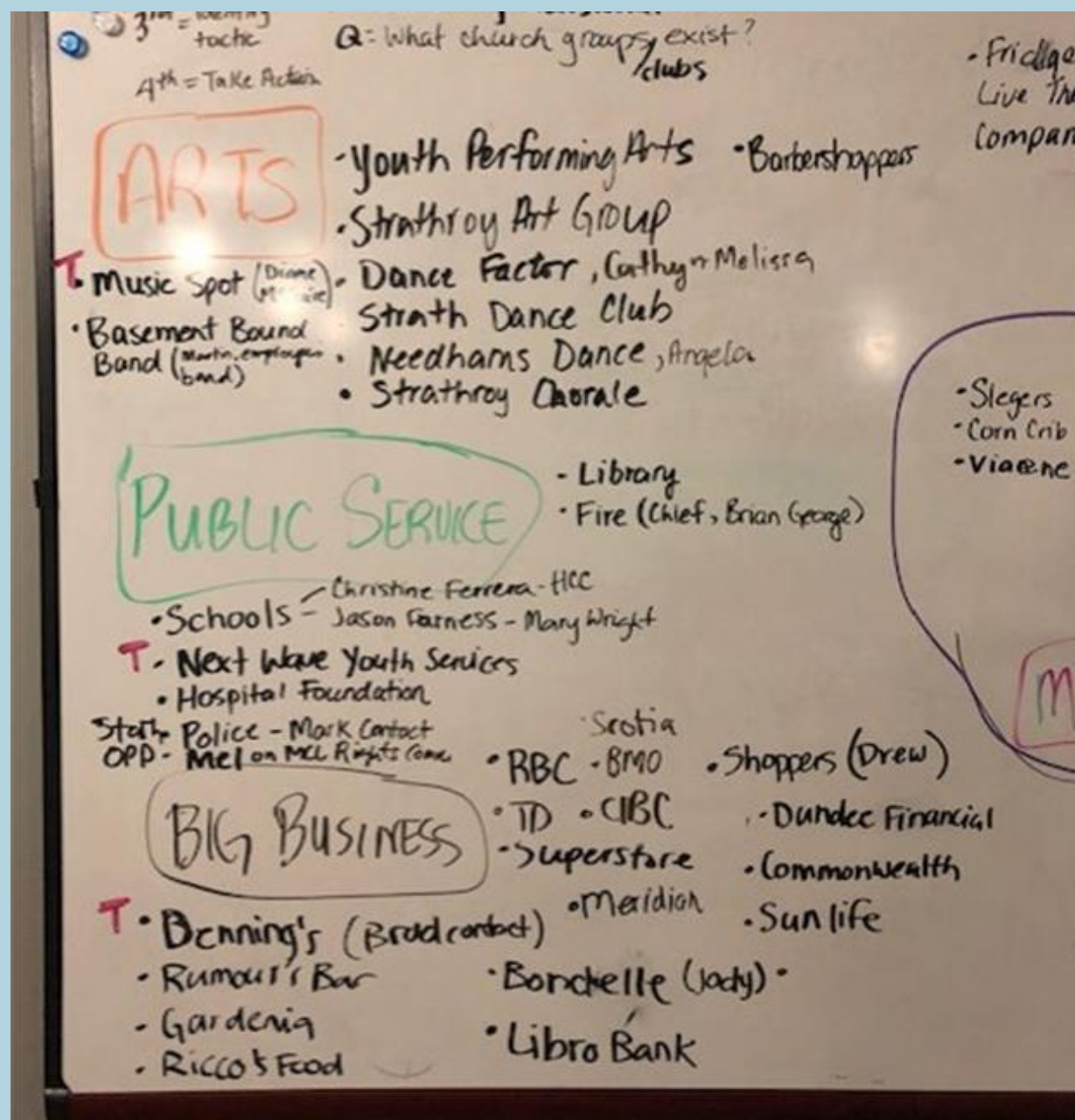


# Step 2: Map Out Community - Template



Churches:	Clubs:	Other:
Arts:	Farming:	Sports Teams:
Public Services:	Municipality Reps:	Not-for-Profit:
Big Business:		Small Business:







# Step 3: Reach Out to Community Members & Inform of Project



Radio Advertisement



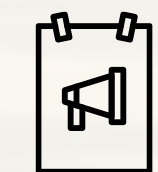
Word-of-Mouth



Email



Facebook



Posters



# Step 4

## Hosted Interactive Inclusive Community Forums

1st – A facilitation handbook was prepared by PMB and Committee members were trained to co-facilitate the community forums

2nd – MCL Project Coordinator organized signage, ‘welcome gifts’, updated website, etc.

3rd – Hosted two Community Forums – 1 pm & 6 pm

4th – The forums were live streamed

\*Over 50 community members of all ages participated





# Community Forums Involved:

1. Large group activity - “Where We Are From & Where We Belong”
2. Participants completed a short Pre-Project survey to ask how “welcoming” and “belonging” they view Strathroy-Caradoc today
3. Small group work to define:
  - a. What “Welcoming” looks and feels like
  - b. What “Belonging” looks and feels like
  - c. Who belongs in Strathroy-Caradoc
  - d. Where people go in town and on-line
4. Large Group activities to explore “In what other ways might we create an inclusive community?”
5. Creative Corner to design Decal of Distinction
6. Speakers Corner - the importance of living in “A welcoming community where everyone belongs.”







Community Forum Participants



# A Welcoming Community Where Everyone Belongs





# Step 5: Develop Social Innovation Plan

✓ ACCESSIBLE

Description here

✓ COMPASSIONATE

✓ FRIENDLY

✓ HELPFUL

✓ SAFE



#EVERYONEBELONGS

- These 5 Criteria/Attributes of a welcoming community surfaced
- 3 indicators for each criteria were defined
- 5 Decals of Distinction Prototypes were designed by a graphic artist based on creative corners drawings by participants
- Committee members chose this Decal & created the #hashtag



# 5 Criteria & 3 Indicators

## **Accessible**

- Place of business or service is physically accessible to all people
- Employees, & volunteers where applicable, receive training on having a welcoming attitude – one that is open to all people
- Information is provided to customers & visitors in a variety of formats, for example, using words & photos, etc ...

## **Compassionate**

- Employment or volunteer opportunities are provided to a wide variety of people, including some that may require adaptations to the workplace or other accommodations
- A kind & caring approach is extended to all customers & visitors - everyone matters
- Efforts are made to intentionally support the success of other local people, services, businesses, clubs, etc...

## **Friendly**

- Visitors & customers are acknowledged with a smile, a wave, a nod, or handshake
- Good listening & friendly responsive action is what you can expect here
- Efforts are made to thank all customers and visitors for coming in

## **Helpful**

- TIME is contributed to support local people & initiatives
- TALENTS & skills are contributed to support local people & initiatives
- TREASURES - funds or things - are contributed to support local people & initiatives

## **Safe**

- The physical space is clean & clutter-free to reduce harm, hazards, or accidents
- Personal privacy is respected both during in-person & on-line interactions
- The place is well lit





## Step 6: Develop & Execute a Communication Plan



# Step 7: Implement the Plan & Build Momentum

- Project Launch at the Mayor's Breakfast
- Biz after Biz
- Keepin' it Local Magazine







# Mayor's Breakfast































I alone cannot change the world,  
but I can cast a stone across the  
water to create many ripples.

*Mother Theresa – 1910-1997, Saint*

