



# "Full Picture" First Impressions Community Exchange

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**Augusta Township**

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**Township of North Stormont**

**October 2024**





# What is FICE?

- FICE stands for **First Impressions Community Exchange**
- Volunteers from two communities that are fairly far apart, travel to each other's communities and act as secret shoppers.
- They record their observations regarding community entrances, amenities, types of businesses, services, tourist attractions, among others.
- The observations are written in a report and presented back to the community.



# From Augusta to North Stormont

## Augusta Township

Population: 7,400

Average Age of the Population: 46

Population Density Per Square km: 23/315

Private Dwellings: 2950

## North Stormont

Population: 7,400

Average Age of the Population: 40

Population Density Per Square km: 14/515

Private Dwellings: 2,630

Distance Between: 100 km



# Visitor Demographics

- **Example:**
- **Number of Visits:** 1 Group
- **Visit Lens:** 4 volunteers went to North Stormont in one vehicle.  
One volunteer played a mother with younger children, one was a businessman, one was interested in agri-business, and one was a new resident.
- **Total Time Spent in North Stormont:** 6.5 Hours
- **Visit Date:** October 2, 2024

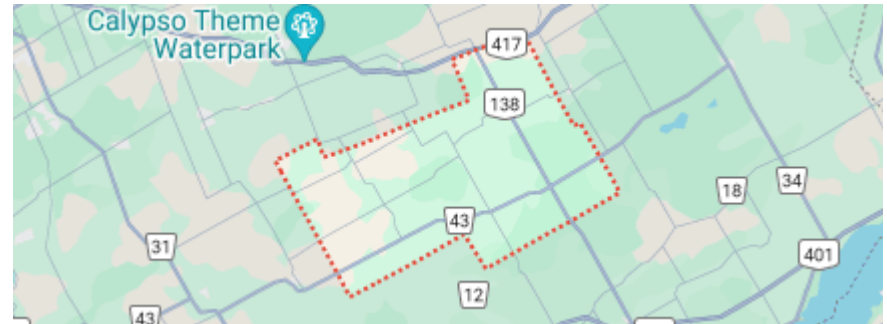


# Impressions Prior to Visit

- Our impressions were:
  - It was a rural municipality similar to Augusta.
  - It is a strong farming community.
  - There are several communities in the municipality.
  - One visitor owns property in North Stormont, so they were somewhat familiar with the area prior to the visit.

# Internet Searches

- Google Maps provided overview of location, close to 417, Ottawa & Cornwall.
- Website provided information in a well laid out and familiar format, although, there was no home button, which made it difficult to navigate back to the main page.
- On visitor thought the website felt 'canned' and lacked 'emotional flavour'.
- By googling, one visitor found several links to third party sites that provided information on interesting things for our trip.
- There is a facebook page, but it doesn't seem to be used with any regularity.



# First Impressions During Visit

- Although the day was rainy, the overall visit to North Stormont was very pleasant.
- Visitors noted that the communities were clean with lots of open spaces with amenities such as gazebos, play structures and walking paths.
- Visitors noted tourism-oriented maps at different places to help people explore and promote points of interest.
- Visitors noted the large number of farms - "Rural farmland with well-kept properties".



# Visual Appearances of Entrances

- Two visitors noted that the communities had nice introductory signage.
- Signage on the major routes appeared to be in good condition and utilized space to place other notifications and some with season appropriate decoration.
- It was noted that Avonmore and Monkland signage displayed some sign of wear.
- It was noted that there is an opportunity as signs are replaced to use new branding.
- It was noted that there was no signage saying, “Thanks for Visiting”.
- It was noted that there was a sign for SD&G but didn’t notice anything for North Stormont.





## Housing & Residential Areas

- Housing stock is primarily single detached housing in the mid to high-cost range.
- Few rental opportunities were seen.
- The residences seemed to be primarily mid to late 1900's with turn of the century stone houses and a few new builds sprinkled throughout. One new subdivision was noted.
- One visitor liked that it was grouped into communities that gave a sense of place.
- Greenspaces throughout the community were well kept and approachable.
- The communities were serviced with at least two water towers in the Township.



## Housing & Residential Areas (cont.)

- Overall, the housing in the Township looked to be well kept and in good repair.
- It was noted that there were some problem housing that was unfortunately in plain public view that might need to be addressed through property standards.
- It was noted that in every community there appeared to have retirement or assisted living housing available.



# Local Government Services

- Visitors found the staff to be helpful welcoming and professional and the information they offered to be useful.
- One visitor found the business directory to be fulsome, though it was quite cumbersome to navigate, and was generally sterile in appearance.
- The Municipal office appeared to be dated and busting at the seams. It was noted that staff informed visitors that they are moving to the former school building , which seemed to be an excellent use of resources.





# Education & Health Services

- North Stormont has primary schools and one secondary school.
- Visitors drove by the primary schools and noted they seemed a little dated, but adequate.
- It was noted that there was a Doctor office and a dental cleaning office in the Township.
- It was noted there was a small pharmacy available at the doctor's office, but no other pharmacy service was seen, and it is likely residents would need to go to the larger neighbouring municipalities for that service that might be quite a drive for some.
- The closest hospital noted was in Glengarry.



# Emergency Services

- It was noted that each community had a fire department.
- EMS is provided by SD&G Counties.
- It was noted that some residents had a concern with the ability of the EMS to cover the Township if there are multiple calls or an event.
- It was noted that police services seemed to be adequate.



# Recreational Facilities

- It was noted that there was a recreation facility in each community.
- There appeared to be great deal of volunteer pride in North Stormont Community centres.
- Updates to facilities are done through grants and fundraising by the volunteers.
- There is an impressive roster of volunteers available that run and maintain the facilities.





# Recreational Facilities Con't

- It was noted that the recreation facilities had lots to offer residents including:
- Indoor Pickle ball
- Playgrounds
- Ice rinks (indoor and outdoor)
- Pool
- Organized sports
- Space for events
- Volleyball
- Monkland community centre served a dual purpose as post office but looked a little dated and in need of a facelift.



# Recreational Facilities Con't

- It was noted that the signage for recreation facilities were good, with a couple of notable exceptions where roadside signage either could be replaced with permanent structures or updated road signs.
- There are several service clubs such as; Lions Club, Legion, Rotary, Optimists and the Community centres served as places for social events, ie. Bingo.
- It was noted that there are several libraries available to residents.





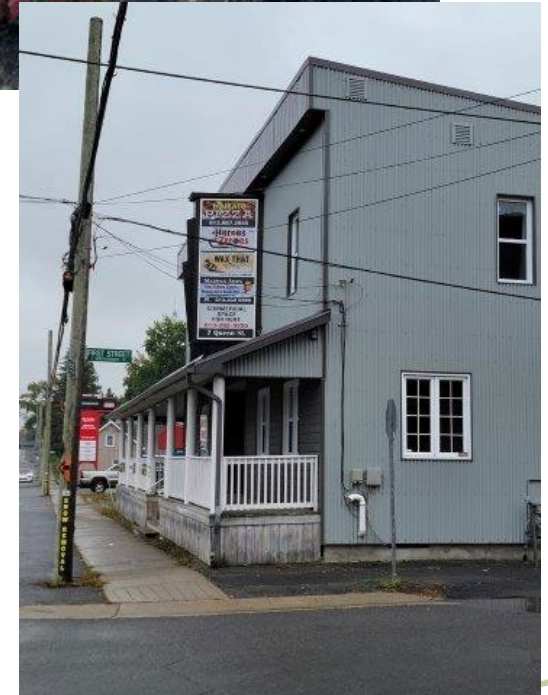
# Public Amenities

- Visitors noted the Boat launch and thought it to be a great amenity for the municipality.
- It was noted that residents have to travel to larger urban centres for entertainment. This it is to be expected in rural setting and residents probably want and expect quieter living.
- It was noted that there was little meaningful information/advertising on cultural/heritage sites in the community.



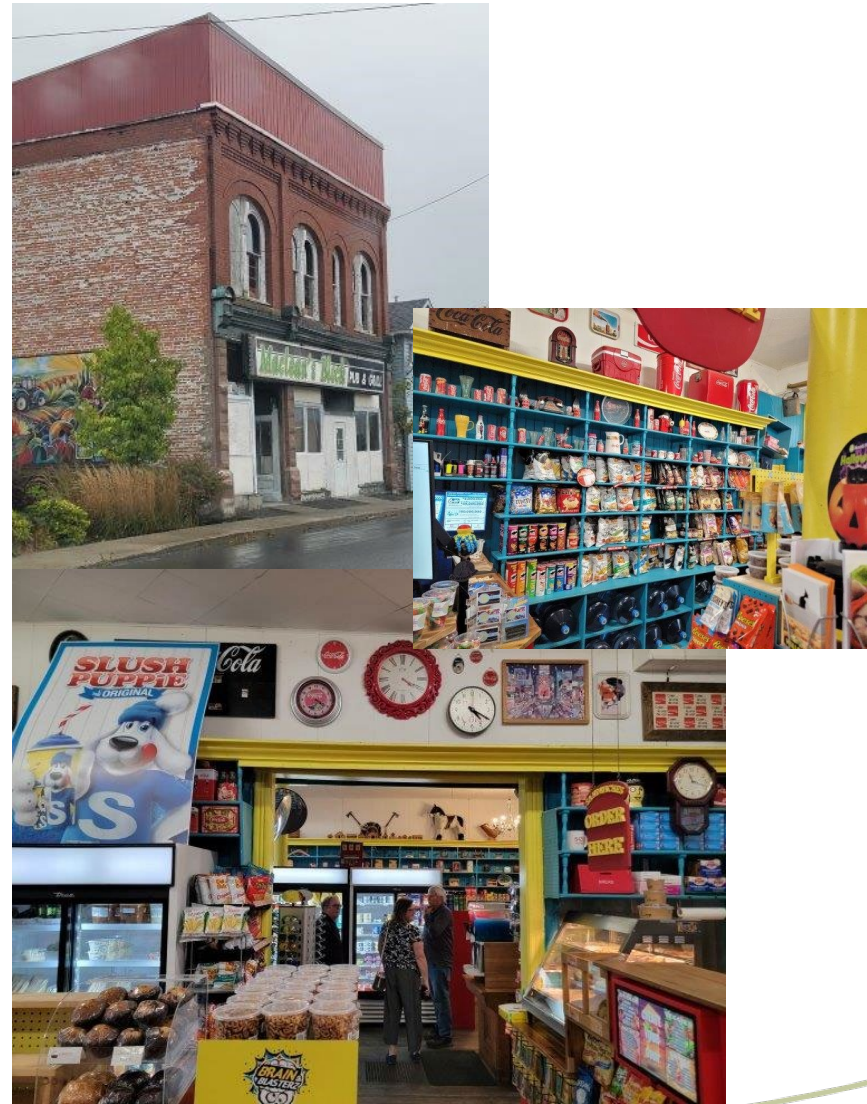
# Downtown Impressions

- It was noted that North Stormont didn't seem to have a traditional downtown core.
- It was noted that each community had its own hub with a cluster of businesses.
- Where we stopped, we found the residents and workers to be friendly and the areas to be well kept.
- The use of buildings to house multiple functions was a good use of space.
- The overall impression was good.



# Retail and Services

- Visitors found the customer service to be excellent.
- There was evident small-town atmosphere and pride.
- It was noted that the retail stores were well kept and pleasant to explore.





## Retail and Services (Con't)

- It was mentioned that there seemed to be a good mix of professional services throughout the entire municipality.
- One visitor noted a concern that the “mall” is unoccupied and if there are no plans for it, it could become an issue.
- There was a concern with the lack of a grocery store and potential travel distance to a grocery store.



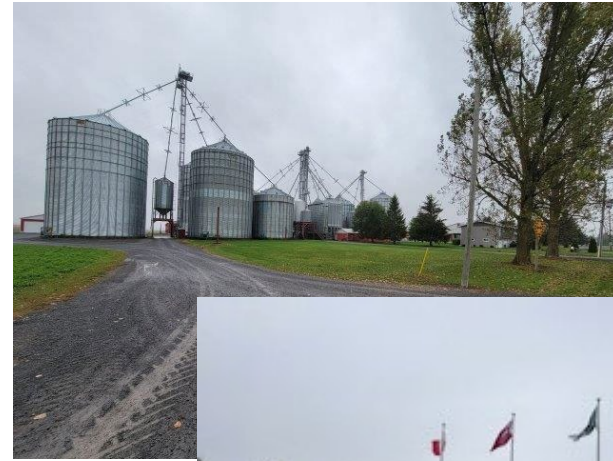
# Exploring Local Businesses & Restaurants

- There seemed to be a wide selection of food choices, and each community had some sort of food establishment.
- Our choice of lunch spot had good service and menu with local food choices, made to order food.
- It was noted however accessibility and parking might become a bit of an issue with retail stores that use older building.
- Although it was late in the year, there was evidence of local food activities such as farmers market and some roadside stands.
- One visitor noted there is an opportunity to have a local food themed festival.



# Industry & Transportation

- It was noted that farming appeared to be the biggest industry.
- No conflicting land use was noted.
- It appears that South Nation Conservation is probably the biggest single employer in the area.
- It was noted that roads were well maintained.
- The lack of transportation was to be expected in a rural community.







## Noted Positive Features

- Rural atmosphere but not overly remote, quiet, well-kept farms and houses.
- Active hubs in each community
- Roads well maintained
- Good mix of small businesses
- Great agricultural/farmland
- Large volume of active volunteers that are proud of community.
- Well maintained and fulsome community centres and nice public spaces.





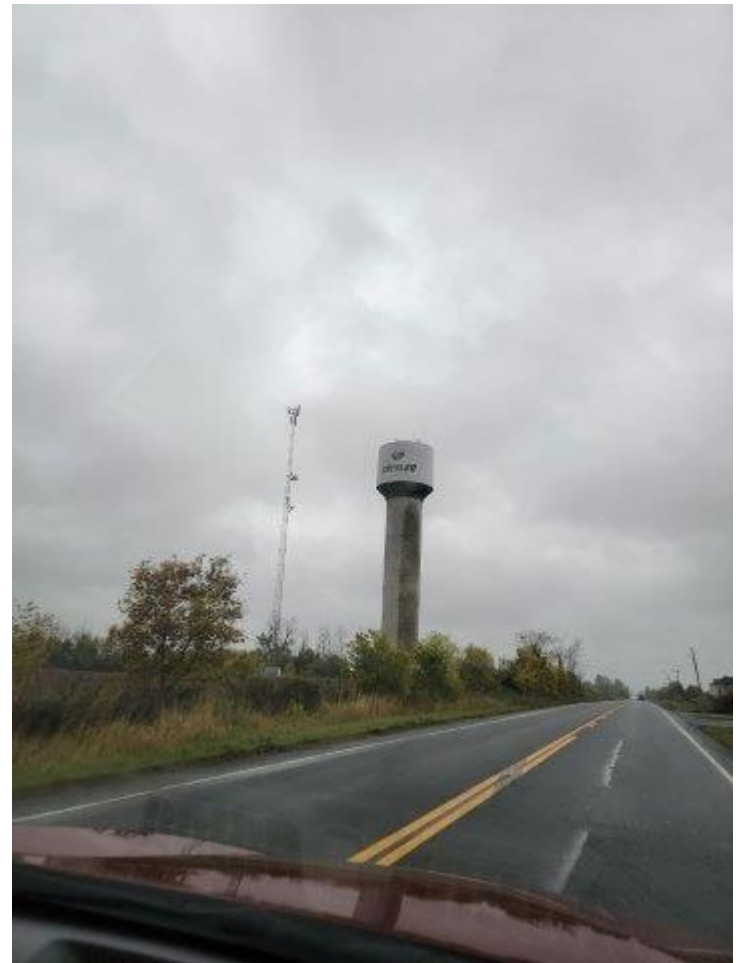
# Potential Obstacles

- One Resident noted that EMS had potential shortfall in response times.
- Potential long-term vacancy in the abandoned mall.
- No big industry
- Access to health care and groceries
- Appeared to be little housing growth
- Lack of transportation/mobility issues.



# Potential Opportunities

- Potential to expand business and population.
- New housing developments to attract newcomers from urban areas like Ottawa and Cornwall.
- Branding slogan. It was noted that the only place the slogan “it’s a good place to grow’ was seen is on the Facebook page. Opportunity to utilize branding more.
- Beautify water towers with artful murals.
- Develop an Economic Development Committee.
- Leverage unique culture/festivals that invite tourists to experience North Stormont.



# Quick Wins

- Foster a culture that caters to the aspirational seeking authentic experiences.
- Development of tangible culture of local goods, farm to table etc.
- Update website to make it more user friendly and easier to navigate. (home button so user can easily get back to the home page rather than toggling back several pages and some links are not working.
- Utilize new brand at every opportunity
- Add more pictures of the Recreation facilities and playgrounds to showcase these great gems in each community.





# Take Aways for Our Community

- Vastness can be conquered and celebrated.
- One visitor would like to explore how to start a volunteer run and bring communities together.
- Encourage Recreation centres to create fund raising opportunities for large capital projects to top up any grant opportunities.
- One visitor would like to create authentic destinations and celebrate Augusta's diversity.



# Questions?

