

# COMMUNITY BENEFITS



PONT INTERNATIONAL  
**Gordie Howe**  
INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE

## 2024-2025 YEAR-IN-REVIEW REPORT

APRIL 2024 - MARCH 2025





Nearing construction completion, the **Gordie Howe International Bridge** will soon deliver much-needed transportation improvements to help move people and goods through the Windsor-Detroit gateway. It is also providing jobs and opportunities for growth to the Windsor, Ontario and Detroit, Michigan region and includes features that make this project truly distinctive.

The project is being delivered through a public-private partnership (P3). Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority (WDBA) is a not-for-profit Canadian Crown corporation

responsible for the delivery of the Gordie Howe International Bridge project, including oversight of construction and operations. Bridging North America (BNA) is WDBA's private-sector partner and is also responsible for delivering the Community Benefits Plan in collaboration with WDBA and the State of Michigan.

The Community Benefits Plan complements other positive outcomes integrated into the project including the multi-use path, mitigation measures and community engagement activities.

#### The project consists of four components:



THE BRIDGE



CANADIAN PORT OF ENTRY



US PORT OF ENTRY



MICHIGAN INTERCHANGE

## ABOUT COMMUNITY BENEFITS

On the Gordie Howe International Bridge project, community benefits are identified opportunities that can advance economic, social or environmental conditions for local communities. Community Benefits Plan initiatives provide positive outcomes for the Windsor-Detroit region and specifically focus on enhancing the Sandwich, Ontario and Delray, Michigan communities, the neighbourhoods closest to the project area.

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that the Sandwich community and land in Canada where the Gordie Howe International Bridge is being constructed sits on Anishinaabe Territory. The Anishinaabeg in the Windsor area are known as the Three Fires Confederacy which consists of the Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi Nations. This land has also served as a place of refuge for the Huron/Wendat people.

Cover Photo: 2024 Community Organization Investment funding announcement at Crowley Park.

# BACKGROUND

The mandate to include a Community Benefits Plan as an integral part of the Gordie Howe International Bridge project originated in the Canada-Michigan Crossing Agreement signed in 2012. Recognizing the opportunity to leverage the significant investment of this public infrastructure for the benefit of the Windsor/Sandwich and Detroit/Delray communities, Canada and Michigan incorporated the requirement for a Community Benefits Plan into the Crossing Agreement that includes:

- the manner in which stakeholders and community are to **continue to be involved**
- the manner in which host **community input** relating to community benefits and stakeholder involvement are to be factored
- the manner in which bidders plan to work with **local institutes of higher learning, unions and others**
- the manner in which **job training and local job development** will be encouraged.

The Crossing Agreement further states benefits will be shared equally amongst the two countries.

## VISION

Community Benefits on the Gordie Howe International Bridge project will deliver a series of initiatives, based on public input, that create measurable and positive results-based opportunities for the host communities. The plan is:

- providing economic opportunities in the host communities
- contributing positively to workforce development programs
- delivering neighbourhood improvements
- ensuring clear commitments and accountability from all parties for its delivery.



To ensure this vision is achieved, the Community Benefits Plan is specifically tailored to the project, satisfies all requirements of the Crossing Agreement, is based on community input and is measurable, quantifiable and achievable. The principles of the **I-Care Framework** continue to be followed, ensuring that Community Benefits shall be:



### INTEGRATED

an integral component of the project carried out during the construction and operation periods



### COLLABORATIVE

reflect the input of the host communities and be delivered through partnerships, ensuring that the interests of the respective communities are taken into account



### ACCESSIBLE

easy to understand, easily accessible, regularly measured and publicly reported



### REGIONAL

reflective of the character of the region, tailored specifically for the region and provide value to the region



### ENTERPRISING

comprised of new methods, ideas and innovative approaches to engage and benefit the neighbouring communities.

## DEFINING THE COMMUNITY



The approach to developing the Community Benefits Plan was defined by the local communities on both sides of the border, including:

- adjacent residents and businesses
- community groups
- public agencies
- educational institutions
- not-for-profit organizations
- elected officials
- workforce development organizations.

While the plan brings many benefits to the region, special attention was given to those who reside or provide services in the areas of Sandwich and Delray.

# GOVERNANCE, REPORTING AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Community Benefits Plan includes a robust documenting, tracking and reporting structure that demonstrates transparency and accountability. Annual and quarterly reports are available on the project website.

## LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUP

The project team values public participation and community engagement. Since 2019, the Local Community Group has worked with the project team as informal partners on the implementation of the Community Benefits Plan. Sixteen members collectively represent the communities of Delray/Southwest Detroit, Sandwich/west Windsor, Windsor-Essex County and the Greater Detroit Area.

Group members contribute by:

- participating in quarterly meetings
- providing feedback on Community Benefits initiative implementation.

A list of current Local Community Group members is available on the project website.

## COMMUNITY BENEFIT PRIORITY AREAS



Aesthetics, Landscaping and Green Initiatives



Economic Benefits



Tourism



Community Partnerships



Local History and Culture



Food Security and Wellness



Community Safety and Connections

The Community Benefits Plan originally had four priority areas that had been identified through community consultation. In 2023, the project team completed a second round of community consultation to reaffirm the original priority areas and added three new ones: food security and wellness, local history and culture and tourism. These formed the basis for subsequent calls for proposals.

## The Community Benefits Plan is comprised of two components:



**THE NEIGHBOURHOOD INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY** focuses on collaborating with stakeholders and community members through consultation to develop and implement a community betterments strategy based on priorities identified through public consultation.



**THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATION STRATEGY** is geared toward engaging businesses and individuals and focuses on supporting workforce, training and pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship opportunities.

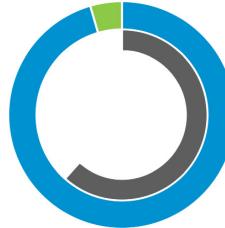


## NEIGHBOURHOOD INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

The Neighbourhood Infrastructure Strategy includes \$23 million in direct community investments for Sandwich/west Windsor and Delray/Southwest Detroit. As of March 31, 2025, just over \$1 million remains unallocated. These funds will be invested into the host communities before March 31, 2026.

All investments relating to Community Benefits are noted in Canadian funds.

**\$23 million in direct community investments to be spent over six years**



**Allocated funds: \$21,960,763**  
**Funds disbursed: \$14,174,057**  
**Unallocated funds: \$1,039,237**  
(as of March 31, 2025)

### Community Investments as of March 31, 2025:

#### Tourism



#### Local History and Culture



2019-2024  
2024-2025

#### Food Security and Wellness



#### Economic Benefits



#### Community Partnerships



#### Community Safety and Connections



#### Aesthetics, Landscaping and Green Initiatives



**Over \$14 million invested in community-identified priorities**



## NEW COMMUNITY BENEFITS INVESTMENTS

To invest unallocated funds, a call for proposals was held in summer 2024 in alignment with the community priority areas. Recognizing the unique opportunities the bridge opening will bring for tourism and economic development, an expansion of these two priority areas occurred to allow for a more regional approach that encouraged cross-border collaboration. In January 2025, \$3.5 million was invested in 11 new initiatives and 12 existing ones. The selected projects include:

CANADA	US
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal Education Centre Pow Wow and Youth Camps – Aboriginal Education Centre - Turtle Island (University of Windsor)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After School and Summer Programming – Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bi-National Tourism Trail Experience – Tourism Windsor-Essex Pelee Island</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bilingual Bridge for Businesses – Puente Cultural Integration, LLC</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Francophone Tourism in Windsor-Essex – Association des Communautés Francophones de l'Ontario Windsor-Essex-Chatham-Kent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>International Heritage Camp Freedom at Midnight – Detroit River Project</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Night Light Arts and Cultural Festival – Art Windsor-Essex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience Southwest Detroit – Southwest Detroit Business Association</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sandwich BIA Beautification, Events and Programming – Olde Sandwich Towne Business Improvement Association</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Healthy Habits Programming – Community Health and Social Services Center</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sandwich Town Bicycle Tourism – Olde Sandwich Towne Business Improvement Association</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Luz y Sonido (Light and Sound) – Inside Southwest Detroit/Motor City Street Dance Academy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Meal and Intergenerational Socialization Program – South Asian Centre of Windsor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Southwest Detroit Community Food and Wellness – Southwest Detroit Community Development Corporation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>West Windsor Business Development Program – Small Business &amp; Entrepreneurship Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program – Accounting Aid Society</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Triple Tree Impact-Greening Sandwich Program – Essex Region Conservation Authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Environmental Healing – Congress of Communities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uniting the West End Afterschool Program – Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>West Windsor School Lunch Program – United Way Centraide Windsor Essex Chatham-Kent</li> </ul>	

Since the Plan's launch in 2019, the project team has partnered with over 90 US and Canadian partners leveraging local resources and enhancing efforts already underway by local government and agencies. Visit the project website for more information on Community Benefits Plan initiatives and delivery partner updates.

## CANADA AND US

- Windsor-Detroit Regional Cycling Trail Guide – Bike Windsor Essex in partnership with Detroit Greenways Coalition
- Community Organization Investment

## LOCAL HISTORY AND CULTURE

### Arts-Based Youth Programming Art Windsor Essex (AWE)

The 27-week Sandwich Visionaries program attracted more than 1,300 school-aged children in Sandwich/west Windsor, to a series of drop-in workshops that provided local historical and cultural learning through creative activities. Participants explored drawing, animation, storytelling and community design to help create a sense of inclusion.



Photography by: Frank Piccolo

## International Heritage Camp Freedom at Midnight Detroit River Project

A three-week experience, Camp Freedom at Midnight provided local youth an opportunity to explore the international heritage of the Detroit River and the legacy of the Underground Railroad. Campers engaged in environmental education, outdoor art and hands-on activities like fishing and sailing. The camp concluded with the Emancipation Celebration Kid's Edition, with over 60 youth from Windsor and Detroit celebrating freedom and justice.



International Heritage Camp Freedom at Midnight experiencing the Detroit River.

## ECONOMIC BENEFITS

### Bilingual Bridge for Businesses

#### Puente Cultural Integration

The Bilingual Bridge for Businesses program provided resources and support for more than 40 small businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs in Southwest Detroit. More than 300 participants received coaching, technical assistance, events and workshops.

*“Bridget and her team at Business Alianzas have helped me so much with my business so far. They have given me a lot of valuable information and resources. I am very happy to be part of the program.”*

– Erika Aguirre, Au Pro Painters

## FOOD SECURITY AND WELLNESS

### Healthy Habits Programming

#### Community Health and Social Services Center (CHASS)

The Healthy Habits program helped Southwest Detroit families access fresh produce at 10 outdoor mercados located in the CHASS parking lot from August to December 2024. More than 2,000 visitors attended the mercados, with over 150 families using wellness vouchers provided by CHASS to purchase fresh produce. The program also offered cooking classes, food box distributions and nutrition education throughout the year.



Southwest Detroit families visiting CHASS.

### School Lunch Program

#### United Way/Centraide Windsor-Essex Chatham Kent

Through its School Lunch and Summer Meal program, United Way provided over 1,230 students from General Brock Public School, St. James Catholic Elementary and Sandwich Teen Action Group summer camps with more than 24,000 free meals. To support the program, United Way worked with 15 local businesses and 30+ volunteers.

*“For many of our kids, this meal is not just about nourishment, it's about feeling cared for and valued. Having access to a healthy, delicious lunch every week gives them the energy and focus to succeed in the classroom while easing the financial burden on families who are already stretched thin. You've not just filled plates, but you have also filled hearts with hope and gratitude.”*

– Kim Capaldi, Principal St. James School

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

## Capacity Building Summits

In November 2024, Windsor and Detroit Capacity Building Summits hosted approximately 70 people from local non-profit and charitable organizations. The summits, held in partnership with Pillar Nonprofit in Canada and Co.act Detroit, focussed on building organizational and community capacity to drive future investment in the two cities. Attendees learned about grant writing, reporting, strategic planning, data fundamentals and fundraising.



Windsor Capacity Building Summit in November 2024.

## Youth Environmental Healing Program

### Congress of Communities

More than 50 Southwest Detroit teens participated in the Congress of Communities' (CoC) Youth Environmental Healing program, which offered nearly 30 events focussing on environmental stewardship, gardening and wellness. Participants provided up to 500 hours of service to care for the land, vegetable and butterfly gardens, resulting in 112 pounds of fresh produce shared with the community.

*"It's been amazing to see the garden come to life and know that I helped create it. I feel proud of what we've accomplished and excited to keep learning about how we can make a difference."*

– Youth Environmental Healing Program participant

## Southwest Detroit Youth Programming

### Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation (DHDC)

DHDC provided year-round programming designed to inspire and equip the next generation of leaders, innovators and critical thinkers. About 375 young people from Southwest Detroit explored hands-on learning in robotics, urban arts and digital media, and developed technical and soft skills through activities including cooking classes, resume-building workshops, manual arts and construction.



DHDC youth programming.

## ProsperUS - Ignite Academy

### United Way/Centraide Windsor-Essex Chatham

#### Kent

United Way's Ignite Academy program provided out-of-school support for students grades 2–7 at General Brock Public School in Sandwich. In 2024, 29 students received daily academic, recreational and cultural programming including 90 one-on-one literacy sessions and 264 math interventions. Some student participants noted the program provided them with a strong sense of belonging, while caregivers reported improvements in academic performance and emotional wellbeing.



Ignite Academy students at General Brock Elementary School.

## Community Organization Investment (COI) Initiative

In July 2024, \$200,000 was invested in 13 charitable or non-profit organizations in Sandwich/west Windsor and Delray/Southwest Detroit. A full list of investments can be found at [www.gordiehoweinternationalbridge.com](http://www.gordiehoweinternationalbridge.com).



Society of Saint Vincent de Paul received funding to purchase a new commercial fridge/freezer for its Caring Hearts food distribution program in Sandwich to allow storage of perishable foods. Funding also expanded the Helping Hands Friendship Centre program, which helps to reduce social isolation amongst Sandwich residents.

In Southwest Detroit, Unity in Our Community Timebank received funding to host physical and cultural activities including zumba and yoga classes, community bike rides and a Fiesta event encouraging residents to explore local parks and recreational spaces, promoting physical activity and community connections.

## COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CONNECTIONS

### Community Outreach Programming

#### Assumption Cares

Assumption Cares expanded its services to include the development of a community hub offering free services to Sandwich/west Windsor seniors, students, families and individuals in need of a safe space. Between August and December 2024, the hub served 450-500 individuals per week through its produce program, provided 60-75 families with children's supplies, and delivered 152 monthly food boxes to families. In total, community events welcomed over 875 participants.

### AmeriCorps Urban Safety Programming (AMUS)

#### Wayne State University

The AMUS program engaged local youth to increase public health and safety by providing residents with prevention activities and interventions. AMUS members secured 15 vacant properties, cleaned 15 community lots and alleys, and hosted five Health and Safety Community Events at Clark Park in Southwest Detroit. Participants also created five Safe Routes to School and provided 350 no-cost home safety assessments to identify and mitigate risks.



AmeriCorps youth members in Southwest Detroit.

## AESTHETICS, LANDSCAPING AND GREEN INITIATIVES

### Environmental Stewardship Programming

#### The Greening of Detroit

During the year, Greening of Detroit ran two programs for Southwest Detroit young people. Through the TreeKeepers Kids initiative, more than 500 students participated in classroom and outdoor learning, including tree planting and park enhancements. The Green Corps Summer Youth Employment Program employed 95 youth, maintained over 1,800 trees, and supported community planting events.

## **Green Space Development at Maryvale The Summit Centre for Preschool Children with Autism**

The Summit Centre enhanced their outdoor green space to create a safe, naturally designed outdoor area for children with autism and their families. The new space provided a welcoming environment to support motor, social and independence skills for approximately 70 children each month.



The new outdoor green space at the Summit Centre.

## **Tri-Centenary Canoe Monument Association des Communautés Francophones de l'Ontario Windsor-Essex-Chatham-Kent (ACFO WECK)**

ACFO-WECK unveiled a new Tri-Centenary Canoe Monument at Queen's Dock Park in Sandwich. The cultural landmark and educational site recognizes the influence of early French settlers in the region. Students from St. Clair College also provided geotechnical investigations to support the construction, adding an experiential learning element to the project.

*"The opportunity for students to work on this project provided real-world experiences which we are able to tie to in-class learning."*

– Dr. William Tape, a professor in the School of Engineering Technologies, St. Clair College

## **Neighbourhood Green Improvements**

The second and final tree giveaway for Southwest Detroit residents took place in spring 2024 with Greening of Detroit. Approximately 500 trees in a variety of species were provided to residents living in the 48209 zip code.



## **Delray Home Improvement Program**

January 2025 saw the completion of the four-year \$4 million Delray Home Improvement Program. The program provided free home repairs to 106 residences near the Gordie Howe International Bridge project sites in Delray. Repairs and improvements included 61 window replacements, 55 roof repairs/replacements, 44 HVAC improvements and 19 door replacements.

*"I couldn't open or close the old wooden windows I had. I feel safe with all the work they did. This was like all my Christmases and birthdays put together."*

– Southwest Detroit homeowner





# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

The Workforce Development and Participation Strategy focuses on connecting jobs, training and contracting opportunities to local workers, students and contractors to leverage existing local resources to maximize these opportunities. These initiatives focus on resources from Windsor/Essex, the City of Detroit and Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

From September 2018 to March 31, 2025, the following workforce statistics have been achieved on the project:



**14,300+**

individuals oriented to the project in Canada and the US

**41%**  
are local\*



**420+**

co-op students placements on the project



**290+**

local\* businesses engaged on the project

**49**

Indigenous Peoples in Canada engaged on the project



**795+**

pre-apprentices/apprentices assigned to the project



Between January 2021 and March 2025, over

**\$7.9 million**

was spent on small-scale purchases under \$25,000 (CDN) from local\* businesses.

In 2024-2025, the project exceeded the established 20% local workforce goal with 41% of individuals oriented to work on the project being local to the City of Detroit or within 100 kilometres of Windsor-Essex County.

## BUILDING BRIDGES, BUILDING CAREERS

The project team takes pride in hiring local students to further their educational experiences through a variety of skills and specialized developmental opportunities.

One of these students is Lauren Quesnel, a University of Waterloo civil engineering student, who completed two co-op terms with WDBA in 2022 and 2023. Lauren returned to work on the Gordie Howe International Bridge project in a new co-op role in 2024, joining Bridging North America gaining experience with the Canadian Bridge team revising design drawings.

*“What excites me about working on the Gordie Howe International Bridge project is of course that it is an iconic structure, but also the complexity and scale, and international collaboration. It is a rare and unique opportunity that I am grateful to be a part of!”*

– Lauren Quesnel, Assistant Project Coordinator, BNA



## COMMUNITY

The project team continued to engage the public and stakeholders through educational experiences and workforce development and training opportunities.

**Between April 2024 and March 2025, the Community Benefits team participated in:**



**56**  
Engagement activities



**15**  
Educational activities

## BUILDING WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

### Vollmer Inc.

A key subcontractor to Bridging North America since the project's design phase, Vollmer Inc. has played an important role in preparing the facilities at the Canadian Port of Entry. Their crews were responsible for the installation of mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire-fighting systems at many of the buildings. Vollmer Inc. is headquartered in Windsor, Ontario.

*"From our initial involvement with the project at a design-build level in 2017-2018, and to see it come from concept to implementation to reality has been incredible."*

- Rodney Munro, Electrical Division Manager, Vollmer Inc.

### City Shield Security Services, LLC

City Shield Security Services LLC is a Detroit-based, Woman-Owned Small Business. The company joined the Gordie Howe International Bridge project in 2020 to conduct COVID-19 screening and continues to provide security services for the three US project sites.

*"Our company couldn't be prouder watching the progress of the project over the last five years knowing that this is one of the most significant critical infrastructure projects of this century, right here in Detroit..."*

- Al Shenouda, Managing Partner, City Shield Security Services

## 2025 COMMUNITY BENEFITS LOOKAHEAD

- Completion of Sandwich Street enhancements
- Construction of the Windsor Trail Connection
- Installation of custom bike racks at the Ports of Entry and local parks
- Fabrication and installation of the Windsor-Detroit Cross-River Tour signs
- Funding release for the 2025 Community Organization Investment recipients
- Supporting delivery partner community engagement and communications opportunities
- Continued support of programming partnerships
- Identification of final Neighbourhood Infrastructure Strategy investments

**For more information about specific Community Benefits Plan initiatives or progress of Community Benefits Plan implementation, visit the project website or connect with us:**

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