



Economic Development Strategy Refresh 2025-2029

Kawartha Lakes Economic Development





Economic Development Strategy Refresh 2025-2029

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Kawartha Lakes is committed to complying with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) in order to create a barrier-free Ontario. We are committed to the four core principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity. We support the full inclusion of persons as set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the AODA. If this document is required in an alternate format, please contact accessibility@kawarthalakes.ca.

Land Acknowledgement

The City of Kawartha Lakes respectfully acknowledges that we are situated on Mississauga lands and the traditional territory covered by the Williams Treaties.

We are grateful for the opportunity to work here, and we thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land - for thousands of years. We recognize and deeply appreciate their historic connection to this place. We also recognize the contributions of Métis, Inuit, and other Indigenous peoples, both in shaping and strengthening this community and country as a whole. This recognition is connected to our collective commitment to make the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our community.



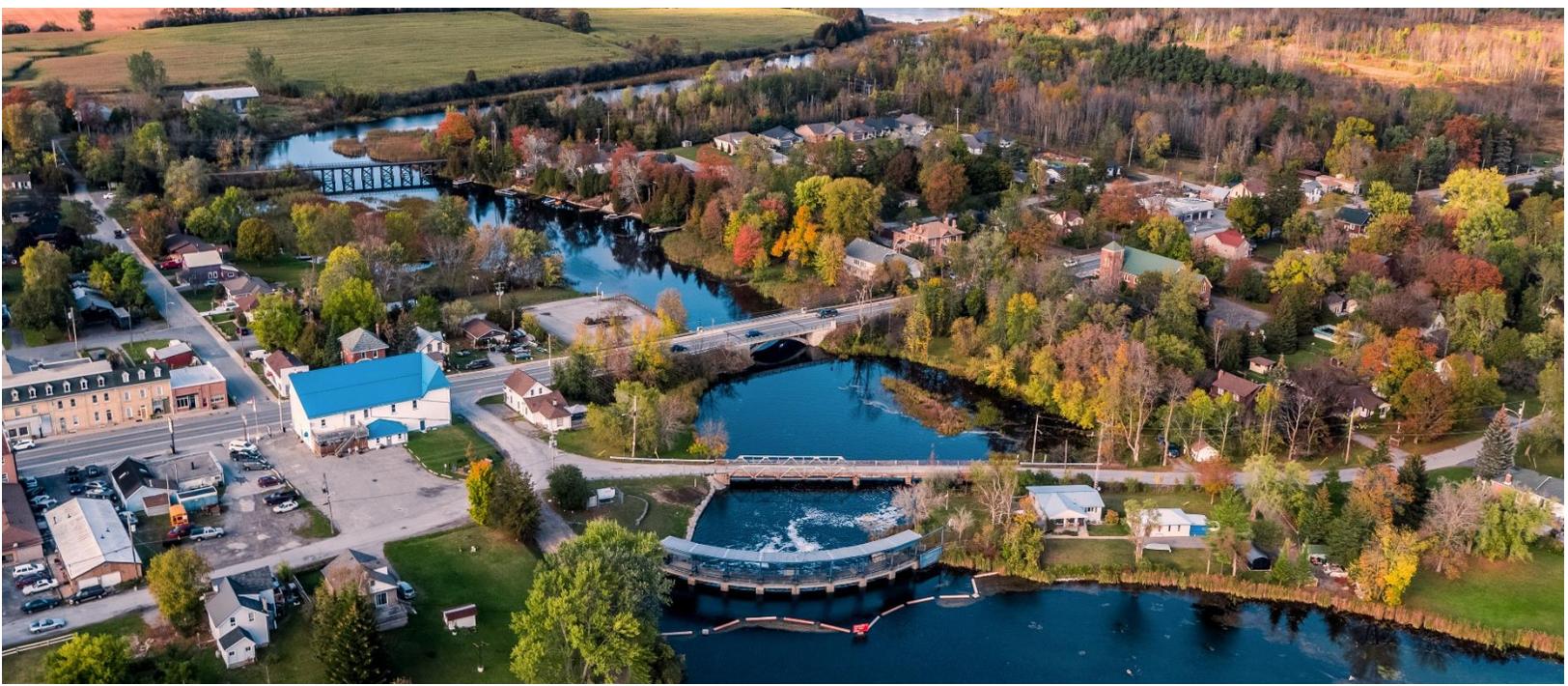
Executive Summary

The City of Kawartha Lakes (Kawartha Lakes) is a single tier municipality made up on towns, small villages, and rural gems connected by lakes, rivers, and bountiful farmland. Kawartha Lakes is located 90 minutes northeast of Toronto and is home to approximately 80,000 year-round residents, 30,000 seasonal residents, and welcomes over 1.6 million domestic tourists annually. The City of Kawartha Lakes is forecast to grow to 117,000 year-round residents and 39,000 jobs by 2051.

In 2017, Kawartha Lakes adopted an Economic Development Strategy, focused on five key clusters (Agriculture and Food; Manufacturing; and Tourism) and emerging clusters of focus (Culture; and Innovation). Since 2017, there have been significant changes to the global, Canadian, and provincial economies and policy which have influenced local economic development in Kawartha Lakes.

In March 2024, Kawartha Lakes began the process of developing an Economic Development Strategy Refresh led by the Economic Development Division. This Economic Development Strategy Refresh builds on a solid foundation from the 2017 Economic Development Strategy and will be the foundational document upon which the Economic Development Division priorities, sector strategies, and work plans are to be developed.

This strategic road map will ensure that Kawartha Lakes achieves an environment conducive to attracting new and diverse businesses alongside supporting the expansion and retention of its current businesses. The Strategy Refresh strives to create a thriving economy and cultural vibrancy for Kawartha Lakes and positively positions the municipality towards the 2051 population and employment forecasts.



Invest In Kawartha Lakes

Kawartha Lakes stands at the precipice of a unique period. After being home to a population of approximately 70,000-80,000 residents since amalgamation in 2001, the municipality is projected to see explosive, double digit population growth through 2051. Projections suggest that by 2051 the municipality will be home to nearly 120,000 residents. With that growth comes significant opportunity for businesses, residents, and the municipality.

Through this Economic Development Strategy Refresh and other internal strategic documents, the Kawartha Lakes Economic Development Division seeks to pursue opportunities that leverage this growth aimed at proactively supporting positive community development. It is the goal of the municipality to be proactive, rather than reactive, moving into the future in support of investment in Kawartha Lakes.

Investing in Kawartha Lakes is not just about the traditional markers of economics – dollars, jobs, or infrastructure. It is about growing a vibrant community through investing in culture, which improves the local quality of life and builds a strong community; supporting tourism assets for local residents to experience that also happen to draw visitors to Kawartha Lakes; and building the necessary supports for young families and immigrants that help draw young residents and newcomers to the community, to help build a diverse economy that is resilient and sustainable.

Specific to the Economic Development Division, three distinct functions encompass economic development efforts. The three distinct functions are:



1) Sector and Community Economic Development



2) Culture



3) Destination Management

Going further, to be proactive within these three distinct, but related, functions, the Kawartha Lakes Economic Strategy Refresh is all about investment.

The Economic Development Division, through the Strategy Refresh, is focused on fostering full community investment in Kawartha Lakes. Looking at investment through a more comprehensive lens means that investment is defined as not only people investing money into the community but is also about people becoming invested in their community through sharing their time, passions, expertise and desire to make Kawartha Lakes a vibrant place to live, work and grow.

Through this new view of true investment, Kawartha Lakes will see a continued positive evolution in quality of life, cultural and arts communities, tourism visits, job opportunities and local business community investment.



How does Kawartha Lakes know when they are successful?

Taking a holistic approach to investing in Kawartha Lakes, the Municipality will devote their resources, expertise and time on helping people become completely invested in Kawartha Lakes. This means helping people to want to invest their money, their time, their experiences and their expertise into this dynamic and growing community.

The municipality is aiming to create a community that is diverse in terms of the people that live there, and the types of jobs that will be available to its residents. With a strong supply of successful businesses that support the local needs of the community as well as those focused on exporting, there will be a good business mix to support a full spectrum of employment opportunities.

This means Kawartha Lakes will be buoyed by a strong local economy focused on narrowing efforts to export-oriented, innovative, high growth businesses in the five key clusters: three established sectors including Agriculture and Food; Manufacturing; Tourism; and two emerging sectors including Creative and Cultural Industries; and, Innovation, that have been deemed as strong sectors for the municipality to pursue for investment.

Kawartha Lakes will be a welcoming community with an aim of supporting investments and businesses in the municipality, and will offer tools, support and the hands-on resources for all those businesses and investors that will help the municipality achieve the continued future positive growth it desires.

Partnerships and Relationships

A fundamental priority of all successful investment attraction programs is building and maintaining positive working relationships with key investors to understand their needs. As Kawartha Lakes focuses on a new definition of investment to drive their economic development efforts, it is critical that the municipality focus its efforts – as a priority strategic initiative – on building and maintaining positive relations and networks with economic development partners to support key investors.

For Kawartha Lakes to be successful moving forward with this newly refreshed strategy they must focus their resources and efforts on the intangibles of investment attraction – relationships, networks and personal interactions. This will require dedication and a continuing commitment.

The Economic Development Division works with a significant number of partner organizations and government ministries across all sectors to support programming.

The following organizations are part of the Kawartha Lakes Ecosystem Network (KLEN), collaborating with Economic Development to drive growth, foster innovation, and support business success:

- Bobcaygeon and Area Chamber of Commerce
- Coboconk, Norland and Area Chamber of Commerce
- Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario
- Fenelon Falls and District Chamber of Commerce
- Fleming College
- Innovation Cluster
- Kawartha Lakes CFDC
- Kawartha Manufacturer Association (KMA)
- Lindsay District Chamber of Commerce
- Lindsay Downtown BIA
- Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
- Ministry of Farming, Agriculture and Agribusiness
- Ministry of Rural Affairs
- National Research Centre of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program (NRC IRAP)
- Ontario Centre of Innovation (OCI)
- Trent University
- VCCS Employment Services (VCCS)
- Workforce Development Board (WDB)

In activating this Economic Development Strategy Refresh, we are looking to grow the diversity of organizations we partner with to bring new resources and opportunities to Kawartha Lakes.



Priorities and Actions

Strategic Priority 1: Stimulate Investment in Business, Visitors and Cultural Sectors.

Why is this important?

Kawartha Lakes has a rich economic and cultural history. As the community continues to grow, the municipality plays a vital role in creating the conditions to stimulate investment.

Being 'investment ready' means understanding community vision and knowing what businesses need to succeed. It involves providing relevant information about the business climate and infrastructure to both existing and potential investors, as well as having the right strategies in place to support the Economic Development Division.

Being 'business friendly' means fostering a culture of excellent customer service, by both municipal staff and elected officials, while providing an easy experience for an investor to expand, start or relocate a business. It reflects community preparedness to attract business investment and ensure a smooth development process. This mindset encourages Kawartha Lakes to be ready for, and welcome, change.

Corporate Strategic Plan Alignment

A Vibrant and Growing Economy:

- Build economic development initiatives to support and expand existing businesses, attract new businesses and expand local employment opportunities.
- Encourage sustainable growth and development.
- Improve and expand critical and transformational infrastructure.

Good Government:

- Provide innovative and efficient service delivery for better customer experiences.
- Provide accountable government and responsible management of resources.

Objectives and Actions

Objective 1.1: Position Kawartha Lakes to attract new business investment.



Starting Actions:

1. Improve the development approvals process, policies, and communications to welcome business investment and innovation.
2. Support the development of employment lands and infrastructure for future business investment.
3. Develop an investment attraction program, defining key sectors to focus efforts.
4. Explore the feasibility of a Kawartha Lakes Municipal Accommodation Tax, a new non-property tax revenue tool, to promote tourism as an economic driver.
5. Strengthen the Development Concierge Program.

Objective 1.2: Collect, gather, and present data to support evidenced-based investment decision making.



Starting Actions:

1. Continue conducting the annual Kawartha Lakes Business Count.
2. Provide timely data online for businesses and cultural organizations, sourced from both municipal and third-party sources.
3. Continue and enhance sector and program-specific data collection.

Objective 1.3: Strengthen the Kawartha Lakes brand to attract investment.



Starting Actions:

1. Develop the Kawartha Lakes brand to attract new business investment.
2. Develop the Kawartha Lakes Tourism brand.
3. Strengthen the Kawartha Lakes Small Business Centre brand.

Objective 1.4: Continue to strengthen, and expand, partnerships to support investment and stimulate economic and cultural vibrancy.



Starting Actions:

1. Continue and grow Kawartha Lakes Ecosystem Network (KLEN).
2. Strengthen and foster relationships with external organizations and agencies to position Kawartha Lakes as an investment-ready community.



Strategic Priority 2: Invest to Support Vibrant Emerging and Established Businesses and Cultural Organizations.

Why is this important?

Businesses and cultural organizations in Kawartha Lakes drive the local economy and create a vibrant community that both residents and visitors are proud of. Supporting businesses throughout their life cycle—from startup to innovation, growth, and resilience—helps sustain a thriving local economy. In the same way, the health of cultural organizations is fundamental to the cultural vibrancy of the community.

A diversified economy means that a community can be resilient through economic downturns. The advantage of a diversified economy is that a community is not reliant on a single industry, allowing it to remain flexible and maintain a sustainable cycle of economic activity.

Five (5) key clusters of focus for the Economic Development Division were identified in the 2017 Strategy and are re-confirmed in this strategy. These clusters (a regional concentration of industries) support the health of the broader local economy. The five (5) key clusters are:

- Agriculture and Food;
- Creative and Culture Industries;
- Innovation;
- Manufacturing; and
- Tourism.

With the projected population growth and available land (even if not serviced), Kawartha Lakes has the opportunity to grow and attract businesses, enhance the tourism experience and expand on its cultural assets to make it a more vibrant and holistic community.

Corporate Strategic Plan Alignment

A Vibrant and Growing Economy:

- Build economic development initiatives to support and expand existing businesses, attract new businesses and expand local employment opportunities.
- Encourage sustainable growth and development.

Objectives and Actions

Objective 2.1: Deliver evidenced-based, partner-engaged, strategy-led sector and business development programs to support the sectors of agriculture, tourism, arts, culture, heritage, small business, advanced manufacturing and innovation.



Starting Actions:

1. Deliver training programs and workshops for business and cultural organization development (Signature Experience tourism program, local food workshops).
2. Implement and update cluster and sector development strategies:
 - Agriculture and Food Action Plan;
 - Cultural Master Plan;
 - Destination Development Plan; and
 - Archaeological Management Plan.
3. Create cluster and sector plans for Innovation and Manufacturing.

Objective 2.2: Support the growth and development of emerging and established businesses and cultural organizations.



Starting Actions:

1. Support businesses in key clusters to grow through business advisory services and 'piloting' businesses through the municipal development process.
2. Deliver the Kawartha Lakes Small Business Centre program.
3. Collaborate to expand resources and services available in Kawartha Lakes to support the lifecycle of businesses in key clusters and cultural organizations.
4. Partner with innovation-focused organizations to provide specialized resources to Kawartha Lakes businesses.

Objective 2.3: Strengthen funding programs to stimulate innovation and sustainability of not-for-profit cultural and economic development support organizations.



Starting Actions:

1. Deliver and refine the Economic Development Fund to stimulate local economic development activities and cultural organizations.
2. Review the funding landscape (municipal, provincial, federal, non-public sector) to identify opportunities and gaps.
3. Continue to partner with and support local Chambers of Commerce in their delivery of hyper-local visitor information services.



Strategic Priority 3: Invest to Foster a Skilled Sustainable Workforce.

Why is this important?

The current and future workforce in Kawartha Lakes will, in large part, define the success of the local business and cultural sector. Investing in partnerships and initiatives to address current workforce challenges and position Kawartha Lakes with the workforce for the future will support a vibrant economy.

Having a skilled workforce means that the businesses in the community can successfully operate with local workers. Employers need individuals who are properly trained for their jobs and have access to training opportunities within the region, as well as safe working environments.

Building community is essential. It is important to have the infrastructure in place to ensure that workers have transportation—whether public or private—to their places of employment and that they have access to housing and a great quality of life.

Corporate Strategic Plan Alignment

A Healthy Environment:

- Support environmental sustainability and resilience in our community.
- Protect and preserve natural areas including greenspaces, waterway, parks, trails, and farmlands.

An Exceptional Quality of Life:

- Increase affordable and attainable housing.
- Improve the health and well-being of residents.

A Vibrant and Growing Economy:

- Improve and expand critical and transformational infrastructure.
- Ensure a range of programs, services and supports are available and accessible to those in need.

Good Government:

- Build a collaborative, supportive, inclusive and equitable community.

Objectives and Actions

Objective 3.1: Work with businesses and partners to identify and respond to workforce challenges, gaps and opportunities.



Starting Actions:

1. Engage with key clusters to identify challenges and seek creative solutions to address opportunities.
2. Develop partnerships with local First Nations and Métis Councils to advance economic opportunities for Indigenous people in Kawartha Lakes.
3. Support the work of partners such as VCCS and other sector-based organizations to provide innovative solutions to challenges.
4. Support businesses to invest in equity, diversity and inclusion including advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.
5. Pursue a Local Immigration Partnership program.

Objective 3.2: Foster partnerships with educational institutions to develop a pipeline of young talent.



Starting Actions:

1. Continue partnering to facilitate connections between youth and businesses to educate about local career opportunities.
2. Work with Fleming College and Trent University on youth retention initiatives.

Objective 3.3: Connect new residents to the local economy and cultural sector.



Starting Actions:

1. Identify opportunities to reach new residents.



Strategic Priority 4: Invest in Places of Economic and Cultural Activity.

Why is this important?

Kawartha Lakes is known for its stunning natural environment and rural community charm. Investing in the quality of place, specifically in areas of economic and cultural activity will support the vibrancy of our growing communities.

Placemaking involves building the community through the process of creating quality spaces that people want to live, work, and play. It encompasses everything that Kawartha Lakes has to offer throughout the entire geographic area – lakes, waterways, greenspaces, urban centres including towns and villages, farms, businesses, and a population made up of seasonal cottagers, visitors, full-time residents, and Indigenous communities.

Kawartha Lakes is a “community of communities,” with 24 towns and villages scattered across the municipality. After two decades, during community engagement for this strategy it was noted that many residents still see themselves as local to their own urban area rather than Kawartha Lakes. Downtowns serve as the centres of the community, acting as public meeting spaces and commercial hubs. Economically vibrant main streets are the heart and soul of the community.

Businesses seek to locate in communities where a strong quality of life will allow their employees to enjoy their life outside of work. As the municipality grows and becomes more diverse, it will be essential to support residents while successfully integrating newcomers into Kawartha Lakes, ensuring that everyone is respected and contributes to the local economy.

Corporate Strategic Plan Alignment

A Heathy Environment:

- Support environmental sustainability and resilience in our community.
- Protect and preserve natural areas including greenspaces, waterway, parks, trails, and farmlands.

An Exceptional Quality of Life:

- Improve the health and well-being of residents.
- Ensure a range of programs, services and supports are available and accessible to those in need.

A Vibrant and Growing Economy:

- Build economic development initiatives to support and expand existing businesses, attract new businesses and expand local employment opportunities.
- Improve and expand critical and transformational infrastructure.

Good Government:

- Build a collaborative, supportive, inclusive and equitable community.

Objectives and Actions

Objective 4.1: Identify, lead, and partner on place-making opportunities to attract residents, visitors and businesses.



Starting Actions:

1. Continue the Cultural Centre project.
2. Develop a municipal signage and wayfinding strategy.
3. Identify spaces and opportunities (Heritage Conservation districts, public art, tourism location activations).
4. Review strategic municipal assets for their potential to contribute to economic vibrancy, and partner to encourage similar investments in public lands, with a particular focus on employment lands, waterfronts, and downtowns.
5. Continue the Million Dollar Makeover (Community Improvement Plan CIP) program and consider additional CIP opportunities to stimulate private sector investment.

Objective 4.2: Support downtown revitalization, intensification, beautification and activation.



Starting Actions:

1. Engage communities in Kawartha Lakes and Provincial Downtown Revitalization programming.
2. Explore upper story redevelopment potential in downtown buildings.
3. Identify opportunities to connect the cultural sector to downtowns.

Objective 4.3: Protect and support agricultural land.



Starting Actions:

1. Work with the Planning Division to update planning and development policies and regulations using an agricultural system approach to enhance a geographically continuous agricultural land base to support and protect the long-term viability of agricultural lands, local food production, the agri-food network and on-farm diversified uses.
2. Explore and engage in activities that support vibrant agricultural lands through agribusiness, primary production and value-added agriculture.
3. Partner with organizations to support the protection and improvement of agricultural lands.

Objective 4.4: Lead, partner and foster heritage conservation.



Starting Actions:

1. Continue to support heritage planning and conservation through designation, permitting, heritage conservation districts and heritage inventories.
2. Deliver the municipal Collections Management program.
3. Lead heritage outreach programming to celebrate the connection to, and importance of, place.
4. Complete and implement the Archaeological Management Plan.



Strategic Priority 5: Invest in Resources to Support an Exceptional Economic Development Program.

Why is this important?

These are the enablers to support reaching program outcomes. The Economic Development Division needs support to execute this strategy and run with it, with a solid backing from all other Departments within the Municipality. It is about collaboration and moving forward in a coordinated fashion where staff and elected officials are all 'singing from the same song sheet'.

Corporate Strategic Plan Alignment

Good Government:

- Provide innovative and efficient service delivery for better customer service.
- Build a collaborative, supportive, inclusive and equitable community.

Objectives and Actions



Objective 5.1: Improve collaboration between municipal staff to integrate an economic development lens on strategic municipal initiatives, where appropriate.



Objective 5.2: Improve access to, and communication of, Economic Development programming.



Objective 5.3: Deliver regular reports on activities and outcomes of the program.



Objective 5.4: Invest in technology to support customer service and value-added activities.



Objective 5.5: Continue to invest in professional development.



Objective 5.6: Complete an operational review to ensure the Division is adequately resourced to best support program outcomes.



Process Followed

The Economic Development Strategy Refresh followed a four-step process as outlined below. During each step, relevant and valuable information and input was gathered and then built into each of the steps and final Economic Development Strategy Refresh. The process included the through analysis of reports, economic analysis, and consultations with the community, staff and elected officials. An Implementation Plan will be developed and used by the Economic Development Division over the next five years as a workplan.

Step 1: Discover

Research the community.

- Community Analysis and Situational Analysis.
- Document review.
- Informal Investment Readiness Assessment.

Step 2: Define

Consult with the community.

- One-on-one interviews.
- Online survey.
- Focus groups.
- Staff Priority Setting Session.

Step 3: Develop

Build the plan.

- SCOAR®.
- Working Session.
- Develop the Actions.
- Action Planning Session with staff.
- Draft Strategy.
- Final Strategy.
- Implementation Plan.

Step 4: Deliver

Present the results.

- Presentation to Kawartha Lakes Committee of the Whole.
- Approval by Kawartha Lakes Council.
- Implementation of the 5-Year Strategy.



Step 1: Discover

Research the Community

Community and Situational Analysis

The Situational and Community Analysis presents a statistical perspective of Kawartha Lakes through a quantitative lens. These reports are informational pieces crafted in early 2024 and do not prescribe a certain solution; instead, they present a statistical perspective within the local context. The analysis assesses socio-demographic profiles, housing and income data, the local labour force, and industry-specific economic drivers within Kawartha Lakes (see **Appendix 4**).

Document Review

Alongside the Community and Situational Analysis, a Document Review was undertaken in order to provide a better understanding of the direction the municipality is taking. Key documents, policies and the municipal website were reviewed to provide background information on Kawartha Lakes. The role of the Economic Development Strategy Refresh is to ensure that it aligns with the Corporate Strategy Goals and Objectives (see **Appendix 2**), as well as strengthening and supporting Master Plans and Strategies within the corporation.

The following Kawartha Lakes documents were reviewed:

- Cultural Master Plan 2020-2030
- Active Transportation Master Plan 2024
- Agriculture and Food Action Plan 2020-2024
- Budget and Business Plan 2024
- Strategic Community Improvement Plan 2018
- Community Safety and Well Being 2022-2025
- Transit Master Plan 2018
- Destination Development Plan 2020
- Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan 2024-2027
- Economic Development Strategy 2017
- Growth Management Strategy (underway)
- Official Plan 2012

Informal Investment Readiness Assessment

An informal assessment of Kawartha Lakes investment readiness was undertaken with the Economic Development Division. The basic tools and assets required for investors was reviewed including the Economic Development website, investment marketing tools, employment lands, and how site selection requests are handled. The results are reflected in the actions.



Step 2: Define

Consult with the Community

The consultation process used to develop the Economic Development Strategy Refresh was meaningful and intensive. Participants were actively engaged, representing key partners from the community, local businesses, Kawartha Lakes staff and elected officials, and other external organizations that support economic and business development.

Community Consultation

There were **149 participants** throughout the consultation process. Consultations were based on six open ended questions.

- 28 one-on-one phone interviews were conducted with key partners.
- 39 participants engaged in six focus groups (Agriculture; Industry and Trades; Support Organizations; Services; Arts and Culture; and Retail and Hospitality).
- 82 or responses were gathered through an online survey that was available to the public.

A priority setting session was also held with municipal staff to determine the priorities that they see as most important to undertake in the next 5-10 years. By leveraging internal expertise based on their day-to-day understanding of Kawartha Lakes was essential in determining realistic and meaningful priorities that can help move Kawartha Lakes forward.



Step 3: Develop

Build the Plan

SCOAR[®] Analysis

Once the background research and initial consultations were completed, the ‘developing’ process began with a summation of the findings of the initial consultations and data analysis, presented through a Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results (SCOAR[®]) Analysis. The SCOAR[®] was used as the fundamental basis to determine the four themes, as directed by consultation.



The SCOAR[®] is a detailed analysis of the current situation involving statistical analysis of the local economy, regional competitive outlook, trends and forecasts, investment readiness assessment, strengths/weaknesses/opportunities review using the McSweeney exclusive SCOAR[®] analysis.

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis has a “50%” focus on “negative” aspects of analysis. A Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR) analysis emphasizes the positive, though it fails to address barriers or challenges to economic growth that every community faces. Our SCOAR[®] Analysis provides greater balance than either SWOT or SOAR analysis.

The results of the Kawartha Lakes SCOAR[®] analyses can be found in **Appendix 3**.

Working Session

29 participants engaged in the half-day working session in June 2024, to review consultation findings and begin to draft realistic and doable actions. Participants included representatives from agriculture, community, business, local organizations, and municipal staff.

The Strategic Working Session provided an opportunity for participants to start developing a set of draft strategic actions to form the base of Economic Development Strategy Refresh.

Through the working session, the following four themes, were agreed to reflect the current and future need of Kawartha Lakes.

Being Investment Ready

Having the reputation of being a “business friendly community” that supports business investment.

Community Building Through Placemaking

Creating vibrant downtowns and supportive communities to help to build the economy.

Being Connected

Building partnerships and working collaboratively to support economic development initiatives across Kawartha Lakes.

Diversifying the Economy

Increasing the number of businesses through the attraction, retention and growth of business investment.

Strategic Priorities and Actions

Upon completion of the external consultation process, the five themes from the Working Session were developed into five Priority Areas of Focus.

Priority 1

Stimulate investment in business, visitors and cultural sectors.

Priority 2

Invest to support vibrant emerging and established businesses and cultural organizations.

Priority 3

Invest to foster a skilled sustainable workforce.

Priority 4

Invest in places of economic and cultural activity.

Priority 5

Invest in resources to support an exceptional economic development program.

To ensure that the actions aligned with the aspirations and vision of Kawartha Lakes, a virtual strategic planning session was held with staff from the Economic Development Division.

Collaboratively, McSweeney and Associates and municipal staff co-developed strategic actions that are realistic and doable over the next five years.

Step 4: Deliver

Present the Results

The final Economic Development Strategy Refresh was completed in October 2024 and presented to the Kawartha Lakes Committee of the Whole meeting in November 2024.

Execution of the strategy will begin immediately after approval from Council for the Economic Development Strategy Refresh. An Implementation Plan will be developed and will be a staff working document that for each of the actions, sets out the partners, timelines, and resource implications.



Appendix 1: Critical Issues Outside the Scope of this Strategy

During the consultative process a number of issues were discussed that are top-of-mind for Kawartha Lakes residents and partners, but do not fit within the scope of this Strategy Refresh and are not necessarily economic development, tourism and culture initiatives. Most pertinent were the impacts of climate change on Kawartha Lakes, the rising cost of housing in relation to incomes for residents, social issues and access to transportation. These issues are discussed here, with the understanding that they are not directly accompanied by actions in this Strategy Refresh.

The key to note here is that the following issues do affect all economic development initiatives in one way or another. The Economic Development Division needs to understand the challenges and to be a part of the solution.

Housing

A consistent theme across the board was the perceived lack of attainable housing. This issue is not isolated to Kawartha Lakes, as it is pervasive in communities across the entirety of Canada. That does not, however, lessen the impact on current residents within Kawartha Lakes. A lack of attainable housing means young families struggle to move to the area, employers struggle to fill roles, retired individuals are forced out of their longstanding properties, and residents facing financial struggles face uncertain housing futures, among other challenges.

Though a pressing issue for residents and business across Kawartha Lakes, and discussed thoroughly during the consultative process, housing solutions fall outside the scope of this Economic Development Strategy Refresh.

Solutions are being actioned through the City of Kawartha Lakes and County of Haliburton Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020-2029 and the Municipal Housing Pledge (2023).

Public Transportation

During the consultation process there was much discussion about local transit and its accessibility. Kawartha Lakes provides public transit, but with very limited routes throughout Kawartha Lakes. As the population increases in Lindsay the need for a more robust transit system will be required. A lack of or limited access to public transportation makes it difficult for employers, employees, young families, youth, seniors and students to move throughout Lindsay, without even considering moving people throughout the entirety of the municipality. Without transit, residents with limited incomes find it difficult to get around, employers cannot rely on employees without their own vehicles, and retired individuals have limited access to community necessities, among other challenges.

Solutions are being actioned through the City of Kawartha Lakes Lindsay Transit Master plan 2018.

Climate Change

The current federal government and provincial governments have made commitments to reducing emissions and single-use plastics, increasing the number of electric vehicles, encouraging home retrofits, and adopting nature-based and technological solutions to clean up the environment and the economy. However, municipalities are on the front lines of climate change, and it will ultimately fall on communities to mitigate and adapt to changing climates, with changeable levels of support.

Consultations made clear that one of the greatest strengths Kawartha Lakes has is its beautiful natural amenities, including an abundance of clean lakes and waterways, green spaces, agricultural lands, and forests.

As climate change has more of an impact, natural resources will be impacted. Notable to Kawartha Lakes, the changing climate will impact lakefront developments due to potentially rising water levels and more varied weather patterns, as well as shorter seasons for traditional winter events (like skiing seasons). Considering these local impacts, respondents were asked how Kawartha Lakes could help to ensure that the municipality is minimally affected by future climate change predictions. Though some respondents felt there was nothing the Municipality could do, the majority felt that at least some initiatives should be considered.

Solutions are being actioned through the Kawartha Lakes Healthy Environment Plan (2018) and its forthcoming update.

Appendix 2: Corporate Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

Kawartha Lakes completed a Corporate Strategic Plan that builds on the actions, priorities and momentum that has been building over the last number of years and reflects the values, vision and mission of the municipality. Each of the Strategic Priorities included in the Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan 2024-2027 are aligned with the Economic Development Strategy Refresh and will be supported through actions identified in the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Priorities



A Healthy Environment



An Exceptional Quality of Life



A Vibrant and Growing Economy



Good Government

A Healthy Environment

- Support environmental sustainability and resilience in our community.
- Protect and preserve natural areas including greenspaces, waterways, parks, trails and farmlands.
- Increase waste diversion and resource recovery.

An Exceptional Quality of Life

- Increase affordable and attainable housing.
- Improve the health and well-being of residents.
- Ensure a range of programs, services and supports are available and accessible to those in need.

A Vibrant and Growing Economy

- Build economic development initiatives to support and expand existing businesses, attract new businesses and expand local employment opportunities.
- Encourage sustainable growth and development.
- Improve and expand critical and transformational infrastructure.

Good Government

- Provide innovative and efficient service delivery for better customer experiences.
- Provide accountable government and responsible management of resources.
- Build a collaborative, supportive, inclusive and equitable community.



Appendix 3: SCOAR[®] Analysis



Strengths

- A community of communities: Kawartha Lakes still has a small-town feel and is tight knit, being made up of several communities each offering unique charm, services and experiences.
- Strong and collaborative network of business support services that aid in business attraction and investment: Including the unique Kawartha Lakes Ecosystem Network (KLEN), 4 Chambers of Commerce, Lindsay BIA, the Innovation Cluster, Small Business Centre, Kawartha Lakes Community Futures Development Corporation (KLCFDC), Launch Kawartha.
- Close proximity to the Greater Toronto Area: Close enough to continue to have its own identity but not too close to be affected by the neighbouring urban population.
- Access to two post-secondary institutions: Fleming College Frost Campus with strong ties to Trent University in nearby Peterborough.
- Diverse economy: Home to over 6,867 businesses from home based to international manufacturers. Key sectors include Advanced Manufacturing; Agriculture and Food; Culture; Tourism; and Innovation.
- Quality of life and affordability is higher than Ontario: Only 19% of residents are spending 30% or more of total income on shelter costs, compared to 28% of Ontario residents.
- Outstanding natural environment: Trent Severn Waterway, 250 lakes and rivers, four provincial parks, five conservation areas, greenspaces bringing an influx of seasonal population of tourists and cottagers offering a mix of recreational activities for all ages.

- Rich in arts and culture and heritage: amid many grassroots arts and culture initiatives are cultural facilities including the Grove Theatre, Globus Theatre, Kawartha Settlers' Village, Academy Theatre, Kawartha Lakes Museum and Archives, Maryboro Lodge, and the Arts and Heritage Trail.
- Strong agricultural sector: 1,265 farms, over 275,000 acres of farmland, GDP of over \$370 million, and total farm cash receipts of \$170 million. Home to many agricultural-based businesses, Kawartha Choice FarmFresh local food program.
- Significant population and employment growth: expected to grow from a 2021 population of 79,247 to 117,000 residents and 39,000 jobs by 2051.
- Transportation connections: Kawartha Lakes Municipal Airport, easy access to two international airports, near to a vast rail and intermodal network, and road connections to the 400 series highways. Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority.
- Strong community amenities: Hospital, emergency services, 20 community centres, 30 schools, 14 libraries.
- Opportunities abound with significant growth projected: being outside the GTA with ample opportunity to grow business.

Challenges

- Development process in the Municipality: perceived to be difficult for businesses in navigating the development process. Businesses feel that they aren't forewarned of policy and fee adjustments that affect the development process (i.e., new fee structure).
- Development Concierge Program is limited in its ability to make a difference: economic development is limited to affect change, and the Concierge Program isn't wholly understood by the business community as to how it works.
- Limited serviced vacant employment lands and buildings: makes it difficult to grow industry with residential development adjacent to industrial lands.
- Inconsistent broadband and cell coverage; particularly in the more rural areas.
- Not enough businesses with good paying jobs: residents leave the municipality to work.

- Appears that there is still a lack of a distinct identity for the City of Kawartha Lakes: it is more defined by communities (Lindsay, Fenelon Falls, Bobcaygeon) than it is as the City of Kawartha Lakes.
- Lack of public transportation limits community connectivity for all: a heavily car-dependent community creates increased traffic and the ability for those without vehicles to commute.
- Limited local workforce: with the appropriate skills to support the local businesses.
- Lack of attainable/affordable and diverse housing: needed to accommodate the mix of residents and potential residents moving to the municipality.
- Great deal of NIMBYism: with a lack of diversity in the past there is a difficulty in accepting change in the diversity of the population.
- Land competition: there has been a reduction in farmland area of 5.1% since 2011 and displaced by other land uses.
- Limited infrastructure to support growth: especially around servicing capacity.
- Heavily reliant on the residential tax base.
- Current residential population is an aging demographic: median population is 49 years as compared to Ontario at 41 years with slightly lower population of youth (13.1% vs Ontario at 15.3%) but more significantly the 15-64 age cohort is 57.6% vs Ontario at 65.6%.

Opportunities

- Modernizing municipal functions: by streamlining the development process, to be timely and work together as a team support and help businesses navigate through the process and to be creative and flexible when it comes to non-traditional business opportunities.
- Give the Economic Development Division more authority to support businesses through the development process: all divisions need to be excited about economic development and work with them to help to create a culture to support business investment in Kawartha Lakes.
- Attract a greater number of diversified employment opportunities: to strengthen the existing sectors and to explore new sectors.

- Help to grow the arts and creative industries: by building partnerships with external organizations and continue to educate the elected officials and community on the importance of the arts to the economic vibrancy and quality of life of Kawartha Lakes.
- Continue to support the agriculture sector: by ensuring that decision makers have a better understanding of the problems agriculture is facing, protecting farmland, while growing the agri-brand and encouraging high value agriculture.
- More investment in the downtowns: to create vibrant areas and improve the quality of life for Kawartha Lakes.
- Making newcomers welcome in Kawartha Lakes: embrace newcomers and their skills and cultures that they are bringing to Kawartha Lakes.
- Develop and clearly communicate a vision and brand for the municipality: promote this vision and brand to differentiate Kawartha Lakes from other regions in the area. But also, for each individual community, as being unique and distinct but still part of Kawartha Lakes.
- Improve transportation options: through public and active transportation alternatives to make Kawartha Lakes less car dependent.

Aspirations

Kawartha Lakes will...

- Have the reputation of being business friendly, with a streamlined, transparent development process in place and a customer service culture that treats investors as important clients.
- Support a diversified economy with businesses that provide good paying jobs that support residents.
- Continue to build on partnerships and collaboration to support business success.
- Have vibrant urban centres each with their unique character.
- Have a strong brand identity that distinctly brings to mind the image of Kawartha Lakes.
- Have protected its heritage by preserving buildings, telling the story of Kawartha Lakes and celebrating its history.

- Investment-ready community by addressing land development and infrastructure servicing, supporting the development of industrial and commercial businesses.
- Aim to become an authentic destination of choice by repatriation of youth who left for school or opportunities, and, attracting newcomers, families, and youth interested in living and working in a rural community, which in turn supports the local workforce.

Results

The Economic Development Division, through the Strategy Refresh, will focus on fostering full community investment in Kawartha Lakes. Looking at investment through a more comprehensive lens means that investment is defined as not only people investing money into the community but is also about people becoming invested in their community through sharing their time, passions, expertise and desire to make Kawartha Lakes a vibrant place to live, work and grow.



Appendix 4: Situational and Community Analyses

The Kawartha Lakes Community Analysis and Situational Analysis were completed as part of the Strategy Refresh. These reports provide a significant amount of data regarding socio-demographics, quality of life, location and community assets, labour force profiles, industry and occupation breakdowns, and a regional economic snapshot. Data presented within these reports do not prescribe a certain solution; instead, they present a statistical perspective within the local context. The data presented does not tell the entire story of the municipality – local context and realities matter – but do provide a comprehensive look at the statistical makeup of Kawartha Lakes.

Jump In

Located just 90 minutes northeast of Toronto, Kawartha Lakes has a variety of beautiful communities, each with their own unique charm. You can enjoy a day on our trails, an evening at the theatre and the best locally grown food you've ever tasted. If that weren't enough, our 250 lakes and rivers offer endless opportunities for exploration. Kawartha Lakes is the perfect destination for experiencing nature, culture, arts and recreation.



Schools and Libraries

The City of Kawartha Lakes is serviced by the Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB) and the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board (PVNCCSB). Local post-secondary education through Fleming College at Lindsay's Frost Campus also provides access to the Centre for Advancement of Water and Wastewater Technologies (CAWT) and the Centre for Innovative Aquaculture Production (CIAP).



Recreation

Kawartha Lakes is home to:

- Over 20 Community Centres and Halls.
- Four splash pads and seven arenas. The Lindsay Recreation Complex pools and the Forbairt Memorial Pool in Bobcaygeon offer a variety of aquatic programs to suit all ages and interests.
- Over 600 km of trails spread across Kawartha Lakes.
- Over 250 lakes and rivers, connected by the Trans Canada Trail.
- Four Provincial Parks (Balsam Lake, Emily, Queen's Point) and several local parks.
- Five expansive conservation and natural areas including Reid, Durham East Cross Forest, Fleetwood Cross and Pigeon River Headwaters.

For a broader listing of recreational activities available, please visit the [Kawartha Lakes website](#).



Trillium Lakelands District School Board

Elementary Schools: Queen Victoria Public School

Transportation

Highways provide quick access to the rest of the province.

Access to municipal and one-way streets for cargo, off-street parking, and more.

Kawartha Lakes is served by the Hamilton and North York Transit Corporation.



Business Resources

- The **Kawartha Lakes Ecosystem Network (KLEN)** is a vast network of organizations who collaborate and share information to nurture economic development, lead change, foster innovation, and promote growth.
- The **Kawartha Lakes Small Business Centre** offers entrepreneurs and business owners guidance, information and tools required to start and grow small businesses.



Emergency Services

Kawartha Lakes is serviced by:

- Kawartha Lakes Police Services
- Ontario Provincial Police - Lindsay and Ops Townships

Kawartha Lakes is serviced by 22 Fire Stations throughout the region.

The Haliburton, Kawartha, Peterborough and Lindsay Health Unit provides a variety of health care services. The Ross Memorial Hospital in Lindsay is a full-service hospital. Kawartha Lakes is also home to a fleet of 14 ambulances. Reporting station locations are available on the [Kawartha Lakes website](#).



Spotlight on Agriculture

Agriculture is of critical importance to Kawartha Lakes; every dollar worth of agricultural products sold adds \$2.20 to the local economy. Kawartha Lakes cultivates a surplus of 20% of its crop products and 43% of its animal products, beyond local needs, allowing for significant export opportunities to support the local economy. Kawartha Lakes is home to world-class production facilities (DLF Canada Inc), commodity farms, food processors (Kawartha Dairy & Meriposa Dairy) and businesses along the agri-food system supply chain. Kawartha Lakes' agricultural sector in 2021 was responsible for:

- Total Farm Cash Receipts of \$170 million.
- 65,000 acres of pastureland.
- 1,265 farms.
- Over 275,000 acres of farmland.
- 162,000 acres of land in crop.
- Gross Domestic Production of \$1.2 billion.



Community Analysis

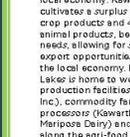
City of Kawartha Lakes



Kawartha Lakes Public Library

The library has a strong network of community branches, the Kawartha Lakes Public Library is to provide residents with access to a wide range of information resources, equipment and order to support multiple forms of learning and community, cultural, educational, recreational activities.

Lakes Public Library has made up of 14 branches: Bethany, Lindsay, Fenelon Falls, Kinmount, Kirkfield, Little Britain, Oakwood, and Woodville.



Community Analysis

City of Kawartha Lakes

The **Kawartha Lakes Business Count** is a collaborative project to support local economic development. The survey provides a snapshot of the Kawartha Lakes business community and employment properties. The findings help understand and strengthen the local economy, as well as inform policies and programs. The project provides a unique level of detail to:

- Provide improved regional employment and workforce data.
- Assist in making informed decisions related to job and economic growth.
- Enhance communication channels between businesses and the municipality.

A total of 672 businesses and employment properties were surveyed in the 2022 Kawartha Lakes Business Count. Highlights reported by these businesses surveyed:

- A total of 6,479 jobs.
- 3,061,606 sq. ft. floor space occupied.
- 64% are independent businesses.
- 43% of businesses identified as members of a Chamber of Commerce or the Lindsay DBIA.
- 64% of businesses plan to hire in the future.
- 12% of businesses plan to expand their floor space.

Full details can be found in the [Kawartha Lakes Business Count Insight Report 2023](#).



Kawartha Lakes Small Business Centre

The Small Business Centre provides financing options to help businesses develop, innovate, and scale their business.

Through its comprehensive support for business owners, from funding and business advisory, to business development, the Centre is focused on helping businesses grow and develop new innovative technologies and products.

Innovation and entrepreneurship centre, centrally located in Lindsay. This 5,000 square foot facility provides incubation workspaces for new entrepreneurs.

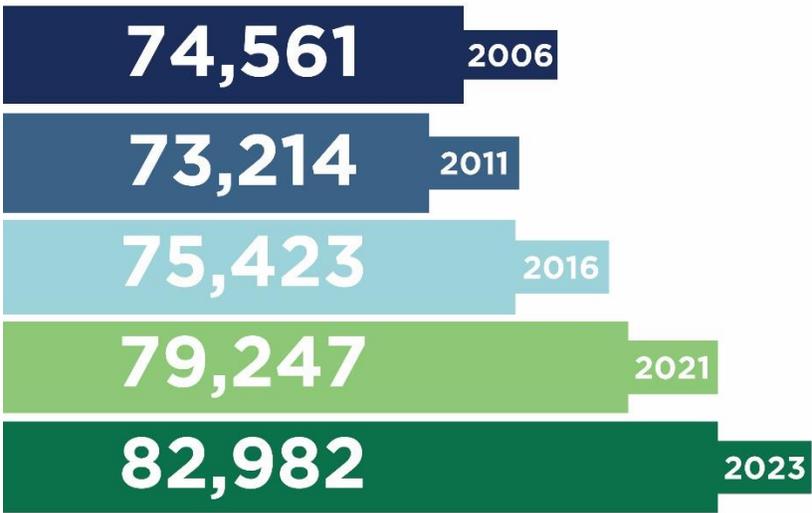


Community Analysis

City of Kawartha Lakes



City of Kawartha Lakes Demographic Snapshot



Population Profile

MEDIAN	AVERAGE
Region Age 49	Region Age 46
Ontario Age 41	Ontario Age 42



Highest Education

Population ages 25-64.

32% Secondary	57% Post-secondary
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Household & Earnings



19% of Kawartha Lakes' population spends 30% or more of total household income on shelter costs.

Ontario 28%



Average Dwelling Value **\$740,762**
Median Dwelling Value **\$682,839**



Total number of households
34,034

All data sourced from Manifold SuperDemographics 2023, unless otherwise specified.

City of Kawartha Lakes Demographic Snapshot

Labour Force & Local Economy

Median Employment Income	Average Employment Income
\$41,373	\$52,520

ONTARIO MEDIAN	ONTARIO AVERAGE
\$43,942	\$60,007



Top 5 Sectors by Industry**



Real Estate and
Rental & Leasing



Public
Administration



Finance and
Insurance



Utilities



Construction

Top 5 Sectors by Occupation**

** by labour force employment for people living in Kawartha Lakes.



Trades,
Transport
& Equipment
Operators



Sales & Service



Business, Finance
& Administration



Education,
Law & Social,
Community &
Government Services



Health
Occupations



Economic Development

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