



Committee of the Whole Report

Report Number: ED2024-041

Meeting Date: November 5, 2024

Title: Economic Development Strategy 2025-2029

Description: The Economic Development Strategy 2025-2029 and strategy development process.

Author and Title: Rebecca Mustard, Manager of Economic Development

Recommendations:

That Report ED2024-041, **Economic Development Strategy 2025-2029**, be received;

That the Economic Development Strategy 2025-2029 as outlined in Appendix B to Report ED2024-041 be approved; and

That this recommendation be brought forward to Council for consideration at the next Regular Council Meeting.

Department Head: _____

Financial/Legal/HR/Other: _____

Chief Administrative Officer: _____

Background:

In 2017, Council adopted a five-year Economic Development Strategy (2017 Strategy). The Strategy provided a refined and focused approach to conducting economic development activities. It focused on supporting existing assets and strengths from which to invest in a vibrant and growing economy. The 2017 Strategy identified five (5) goals to pursue:

1. Adopt a City-wide focus
2. Grow specific business sectors
3. Encourage a positive community business culture
4. Align and inspire City resources
5. Attract and retain a new generation of great entrepreneurs and workforce

The 2017 Strategy also identified five (5) key economic clusters to focus economic development efforts. A cluster is a geographic concentration of businesses and associated institutions that strengthen each other because they are located in close proximity. The five clusters included three (3) established clusters: Agriculture and Food, Specialized Manufacturing, and Tourism; and two (2) emerging clusters: Culture, and Engineered Products and Related Services (Innovation).

Since that time, the 2017 Strategy has guided the work of the Economic Development Division. Originally intended as a five-year strategy, due to factors such as the pandemic, changes to provincial policy, and scheduling of strategic municipal projects to inform an update, the 2017 Strategy has continued to guide the Division for the past seven years. Highlights of the actions and activities undertaken during that time can be found in Appendix A to this report.

This report presents Council with an updated, refreshed Economic Development Strategy 2025-2029 (Strategy) and builds on the momentum of the 2017 Strategy. It provides a background on the Strategy development process and steps for implementation.

Rationale:

The Economic Development Strategy 2025-2029 is a strategic, thorough, and thoughtful document that will lead the work of the Economic Development Division for the next five (5) years.

The Process

In early 2024, the economic development consulting firm McSweeney & Associates was hired to work with Staff and develop a refreshed Economic Development Strategy. McSweeney and Associates brought a comprehensive approach to the process that included four (4) steps:

Step 1: Discover

This step included background research of key municipal documents, an informal investment readiness review, a community overview, and a situational economic analysis.

Step 2: Define

This step focused on seeking input by engaging with the community and staff. Three methods of input were implemented: one-on-one interviews, an online survey, and focus groups. A total of 149 people participated. Consultations with Staff was also part of this step.

Step 3: Develop

This step led to the development of the plan through a SCOAR (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) analysis, further consultation to ground truth the work, development of strategic priorities and actions, and creation of the strategy.

Step 4: Deliver

The project is currently at this final Step 4, presenting the strategy to Council and the community.

The Strategy Refresh

The Strategy builds on the 2017 Economic Development Strategy, incorporating the growth and development of the Economic Development Program, and positioning the municipality to welcome significant residential and employment growth.

The underpinning theme of this work is igniting 'investment'. In the Strategy, investment is defined as fostering full community investment in Kawartha Lakes. It looks at investment through a comprehensive lens defining the term 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.

The Strategy has five (5) strategic priorities:

Strategic Priority 1: Stimulate investment in business, visitors and cultural sectors

Strategic Priority 2: Invest to support vibrant emerging and established businesses and cultural organizations

Strategic Priority 3: Invest to foster a skilled, sustainable workforce

Strategic Priority 4: Invest in places of economic and cultural activity

Strategic Priority 5: Invest in resources to support an exceptional economic development program

The Strategy notes three (3) related yet distinct functions of the comprehensive and progressive Economic Development program. These are identified in the Strategy to create space for each function to thrive:

- Sector and Community Economic Development
- Culture
- Destination Management

While these strategic priorities are relevant to all three Division functions, how they are manifest will be dependent on the function. Similarly, the expertise and efforts of the Economic Development Division Staff team contribute to all focus areas.

The Strategy retains the five (5) key economic clusters of the 2017 Strategy with a few refinements to better define the groupings:

- Agriculture and Food
- Creative and Cultural Industries (previously Culture)
- Innovation (previously Engineered Products and Related Services)
- Manufacturing
- Tourism

Implementing the Strategy Refresh

The Strategy will be the foundational document on which the Economic Development Division priorities, sector strategies and work plan will be developed. Included in the Strategy is a list of starting actions for each strategic priority. Following adoption by Council, Staff will work with McSweeney & Associates to develop an implementation work plan beginning with these starting actions. Each year, annual work plans will be developed to advance the strategic priorities of the Strategy. The delivery of regular reports on activities and outcomes of the program is noted as an objective.

Other Alternatives Considered:

The Economic Development Strategy presents Council with a strategic focus to advance the priority of A Vibrant and Growing Economy. The Strategy is the product of an extensive and thorough process including economic analysis and community engagement. No other alternatives are proposed.

Alignment to Strategic Priorities:

The Economic Development Strategy advances all four priorities in the 2024-2027 Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan:

1. A Vibrant and Growing Economy
2. An Exceptional Quality of Life
3. Healthy Environment
4. Good Government

While advancing all four priorities, the focus of the Strategy is A Vibrant and Growing Economy.

Financial/Operation Impacts:

The Economic Development Strategy project was funded through the Special Projects budget. As the Strategy Refresh will guide the work of the Economic Development Division, many activities undertaken will be captured in the Economic Development operating budget. Projects requiring additional funding will be presented through the

annual budget process. External funding and partnerships will continue to be an important delivery model for this work.

Consultations:

The consultation process used to develop the Economic Development Strategy was meaningful and intensive. The consultations included:

- 28 one-on-one phone interviews with key partners
- 39 participants engaging in six (6) cluster focus groups (agriculture; industry and trades; support organizations; services; arts and culture; and retail and hospitality)
- 82 survey responses from the broader community using the Jump In platform

The Economic Development Division Team contributed substantially to the work. Numerous Staff from across the municipality also contributed to the project. An internal technical team provided input throughout the project and included:

Director, Development Services
Manager, Engineering and Corporate Assets
Manager, Planning
Supervisor, Policy Planning
Manager, Revenue and Tax
Economic Development Officer, Business

Attachments:

Appendix A – 2017 Economic Development Strategy Activities Update



Appendix A

Appendix B – Economic Development Strategy 2025-2029



Appendix B

Department Head email: lbarrie@kawarthalakes.ca

Department Head: Leah Barrie, Director, Development Services