



# BUILDING THE FUTURE OF THE TOWN OF HUNTSVILLE



**2022** ECONOMIC  
— TO — DEVELOPMENT  
**2026** STRATEGY



#### A MESSAGE FROM **MAYOR KARIN TERZIANO**

**On behalf of Town Council, I am excited to share the Town's Economic Development Strategy. The Strategy provides a competitive and focused plan that will guide Huntsville's economic development over the next 5 years to best diversify our economy.**

The strategy is a road map to ensuring the prosperity of our region and represents the ideas of many people, businesses and organizations across Huntsville who have shared their priorities with us during the consultation phase.

The Strategy speaks to how the Town can leverage creative partnerships with the private sector and other key stakeholders who are fundamental partners on this journey of fostering prosperity in our Town and the region.

With actionable items, our economic performance will continue to be strengthened – today and in the years ahead.

Both Town Council and Staff look forward to strengthening our relationship with community partners as we undertake the implementation of the strategy over the coming months and years.

Sincerely,



**Karin Terziano, Mayor**  
Town of Huntsville

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1.0** Executive Summary
- 2.0** Economic Strategy Development Process
  - 2.1 Project Steering Committee & Key Stakeholders*
  - 2.2 Situational Analysis*
  - 2.3 Summary of Key Findings*
- 3.0** Trends and Best Practices in Rural Economic Development
- 4.0** Stakeholder Consultation & Engagement
- 5.0** Goals, Objectives and Actions
- 6.0** Strengthening Economic Development Capacity
  - 6.1 Additional Thoughts on Building Capacity*
- 7.0** Glossary of Terms



## 1.0 Executive Summary



The Town of Huntsville is pleased to present the town's 2022 to 2026 Huntsville Economic Development Strategy. The combination of Muskoka's scenic beauty, rugged landscape, extensive waterfront within proximity to the world-famous Algonquin Park has made Huntsville a popular retreat for tourists and seasonal residents alike. From May to October the Town receives a significant influx of visitors increasing the permanent resident population from 20,000 to an estimated seasonal population of 30,000. The Town's economy as a result is primarily based on tourism, recreation, and the service sector with a strong construction industry. While tourism is welcomed by all businesses there is a desire to diversify and thereby reduce the impact that the resulting seasonality has on the local economy.

The creation of an Economic Development Strategy is seen as the Town's next step towards economic diversification. The recently implemented Municipal Accommodation Tax Program, will create a new revenue source for the municipality and the Economic Development Department. The strategy is expected to identify actionable goals and objectives that will maximize the impact of these dollars as it guides the municipality over the next 5 years helping it embrace an economy that will change rapidly.



Through this Economic Development Strategy, we acknowledge the land that has been inhabited by Indigenous Peoples from the beginning. As settlers, we are grateful for the opportunity to use these lands for recreational activities and we thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land – for thousands of years.

In particular, we acknowledge the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, especially the Ojibway, the Chippewa and the Algonquin peoples. This territory is covered by the Williams Treaty of 1923 and the J. Collins land purchase of 1785.

We recognize and deeply appreciate their historic connection to this place. We also recognize the contributions First Nations, Metis, Inuit and other Indigenous Peoples have made, both in shaping and strengthening this community in particular, and our province and country as a whole.

As settlers, this recognition of the contributions and historic importance of Indigenous People must also be clearly and overtly connected to our collective commitment to make the promise and challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our communities.



## 1.0 Executive Summary

### Town of Huntsville's Economic Development Strategy's Mission:

To build a strong local economy, which is sustainable, diverse, and inclusive. The mission is focused on support mechanisms for year-round economic prosperity and drives interconnected initiatives between key stakeholder organizations to enable sustainable growth.

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### Town of Huntsville's Economic Development Strategy's Vision:

A strong, diverse, and resilient economy that provides residents and visitors a community to grow multigenerational families and embrace healthy activities in beautiful and safe settings. The Town of Huntsville, together with community partners, will engage and work together to create a hub for successful entrepreneurs and businesses offering rewarding jobs. The Town will shape an economically prosperous environment which will provide businesses and investors with information, resources and the support needed to succeed.

## 2.0 Economic Strategy Development Process

The process for developing the economic development strategy combined four phases of analysis of qualitative and quantitative research:



## 2.1 Project Steering Committee & Key Leaders

The steering committee has played a vital role offering guidance and acting as an advisory body. The committee consisted of senior stakeholders and experts that contributed through virtual and in-person consultations, provision of town research studies and plans, and connections to key community stakeholders.

### Key Leaders of the Economic Development Strategy

Town Council	Departmental Staff	Project Steering Committee
Mayor Karin Terziano Deputy Mayor Nancy Alcock Councillor Brian Thompson Councillor Tim Withey Councillor Bob Stone Councillor Jason FitzGerald Councillor Dione Schumacher Councillor Jonathan Wiebe Councillor Dan Armour	Kirstin Maxwell, Director of Development Services  Lauren MacDermid, Economic Development Officer	Kenneth Donald, Kenneth Donald & Associates  Kirstin Maxwell, Director of Development Services  Lauren MacDermid, Economic Development Officer  Bob Stone, Huntsville Ward Councillor

## 2.1 Project Steering Committee & Key Leaders (cont'd)

### Huntsville Key Economic Themes

Huntsville's Official Plan lays out a vision that reflects the Town's aspirations for the future. Some of the themes reflected in the Official Plan (OP) include:

- *Vibrant, caring, and welcoming community.*
- *Stewards of the natural environment and the arts and culture heritage.*
- *Valuing a strong and resilient economy; and*
- *Accepting sustainable growth balanced with respect to the public interest and quality of life.*



Photo Credit: <https://www.downtownhuntsvilleadventures.ca/>

Leveraging quality-of-life and place-making to attract innovative and creative knowledge-based companies to the community by recognizing the Town's location in Muskoka and its proximity to Algonquin Park by leveraging the power of place through policies that:

- *Protect environmental features and the Town's character.*
- *Reinforce the function of the historic downtown being the cultural heart and soul of the community.*
- *Promote a healthy and active community through design guidelines; and*
- *Encourage active transportation*

## 2.1 Project Steering Committee & Key Leaders (cont'd)

Huntsville's Official Plan recognizes the importance of policies that facilitate responsible growth that contributes to the Town's economic resiliency.

### Key Themes:

- *Retaining existing employment uses and protecting them from incompatible uses.*
- *Enabling expansion opportunities as well as setting aside sufficient lands for new employment uses.*
- *Encouraging more affordable housing and an efficient transportation system.*
- *Protecting Huntsville's natural legacy and promoting its environmental resiliency.*
- *Creating opportunities for active living and the development of smart-value housing; and developing a hierarchy of settlements and related land use designations to foster economic growth and resiliency.*



Photo credit; <https://www.buzzbuzzhome.com/ca/crescent-bay-condos>

## 2.2 Situation Analysis

Huntsville's current population is 21,147 and has grown by 6.7% since 2016. The community accounts for just under 32% of the population within Muskoka. In 2016 it accounted for just over 32% of Muskoka's population.

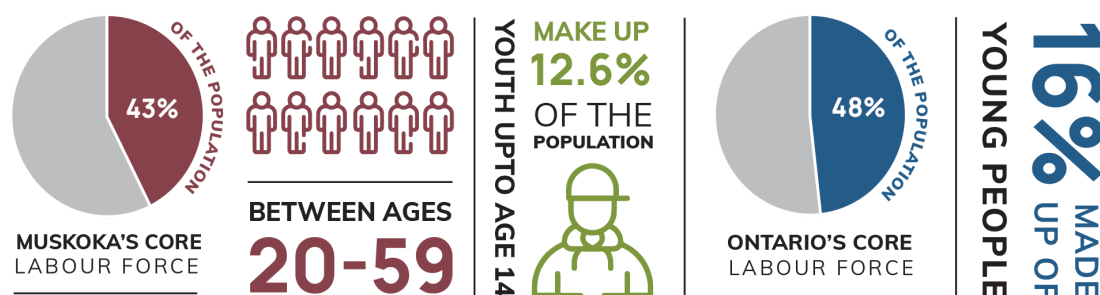
**Table 1: Distribution of Population within the District of Muskoka**

Community	Population 2016	Population 2021	% Change
District of Muskoka	60,614	66,674	10.0
Town of Huntsville	19,816	21,147	6.7
Town of Gravenhurst	13,157	12,311	6.9
Town of Bracebridge	16,010	17,305	8.1
Township of Muskoka Lakes	6,588	7,652	16.2
Township of Lake of Bays	3,167	3,759	18.7
Township of Georgian Bay	2,514	3,441	36.9

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population

Between 2016 and 2021, Muskoka's population increased by 10%. Collectively the town-based population grew by 3.6%, while the townships experienced a collective increase of 21%.

Muskoka's core labour force (people between the ages of 20-59) accounts for 43% of the population. Provincially the core labour force accounts for 48% of the population. Young people up to the age of 14 make-up 12.6% of the population compared to Ontario at 16.4%.



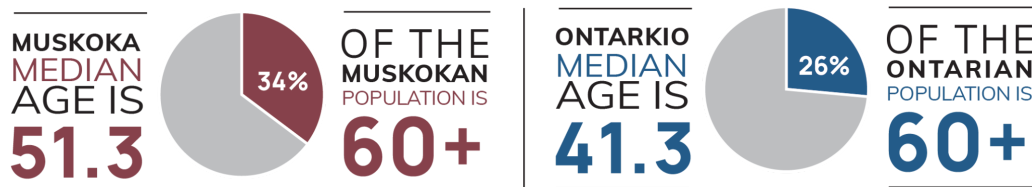
## 2.2 Situation Analysis (cont'd)

**Table 2: Distribution of Population by Age**

	District of Muskoka Population		Ontario Population	
Age Cohort	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
0-19	10,680	17.6	3,019,640	22.5
20-39	11,755	19.4	3,475,990	25.8
40-59	17,310	28.6	3,855,065	28.7
60-79	16,855	27.8	2,505,540	18.6
80+	4000	6.6	592,260	4.4
	60,600	100	13,448,495	100

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population

The median age in Muskoka is 51.3 well-above the provincial median age of 41.3. The population aged 60 plus makes up 34% of the population in Muskoka while provincially this age group makes up only 23% of the population.



In 2016 total employment in Muskoka reached 30,130. Five sectors including retail trade, accommodation and food services, health care and social assistance, construction and manufacturing accounted for over 50% of this employment. Based on Emsi Analyst 2019 data obtained from the Muskoka Economic Recovery Task Force the district experienced a loss of nearly 1,200 jobs between 2016 and 2019. Most of the loss occurred in construction and manufacturing. Employment in retail trade and health care and social assistance remained relatively stable while accommodation and food services experienced an up-tick.

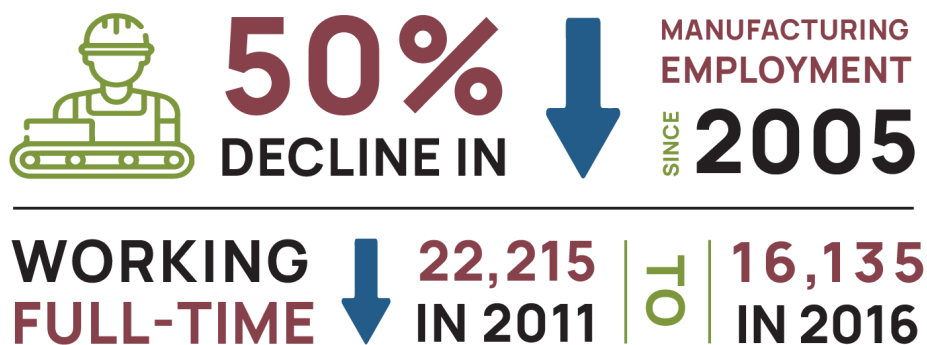
## 2.2 Situation Analysis (cont'd)

**Table 3: Muskoka, Top 5 Industry Sectors by Employment, 2019**

Industry Sector	Job 2016	% of Total Jobs 2016	Jobs 2019	% of Total Jobs 2019
Retail Trade	4,525	15.0	4,555	16.9
Accommodation & Food Services	2,820	9.4	3,671	14.6
Health Care & Social Assistance	3,270	10.9	3,252	12.9
Construction	4,510	15.0	2,592	10.3
Manufacturing	1,720	5.7	1,584	6.3
	16,845		15,654	

Source: Emsi Analyst 2019; Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population

Muskoka has been experiencing a significant decline (50%) in manufacturing employment since 2005. A large percentage of Muskoka's employment is either seasonal, part-time, or contract, typically classified as "precarious" or non-standard employment. Those working full-time dropped from 22,215 in 2011 to 16,135 in 2016 creating a large pool of underemployed workers.



Unemployment, especially amongst males, typically the "breadwinners" of the household has increased significantly since 2005 and by 2016 accounted for 60 percent of those unemployed in Muskoka. Since the unemployment rate does not record those workers who have dropped out of the labour market it is expected that the rate underestimates the real unemployment rate amongst males.

## 2.2 Situation Analysis (cont'd)



Photo Credit: <https://www.downtownhuntsvilleadventures.ca/>

**Table 4: Muskoka, Labour Force, 2001-2016**

Year	Participation Rate	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate
2015	60.1	55.8	7.1
2010	61.1	56.5	7.4
2005	64.1	61.1	4.6
2000	62.1	59.6	4.0

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2001-2016

## 2.2 Situation **Analysis** (cont'd)



The top five occupations as described in Table 5 below reflect the Muskoka's reliance on tourism and tourism related activities and the servicing of its substantial second-home population.

**Table 5: Muskoka, Top 5 Occupations in Muskoka, 2019**

Occupation	Total No. of Jobs
<b>Retail Salespersons</b>	1065
<b>Food Counter Attendants, Kitchen Helpers, &amp; Related Support Occupations</b>	707
<b>Light Duty Cleaners</b>	662
<b>Cashiers</b>	617
<b>Carpenters</b>	554

Source: EMSI Analyst 2019

The median hourly wage for all these occupations' is at or below Ontario's minimum wage and significantly below the living wage for Muskoka as calculated by Ontario's Living Wage Network.

## 2.2 Situation Analysis (cont'd)



According to Table 6 below, four of the top five occupations in Huntsville were at or just above minimum wage.

**Table 6: Top 5 Occupations and Median Hourly Wage in Huntsville**

Occupation	2010 Jobs	2015 Jobs	2019 Jobs	Median Hourly Wage
Retail Salesperson	381	498	452	13.94
Cashiers	259	306	238	13.62
Food Counter Attendants	277	275	264	14.29
Light Duty Cleaners	288	226	245	15.74
Registered Nurses	151	190	171	34.72

Source: EMSI Analyst 2019

The labour force participation<sup>1</sup> rate in Muskoka has been trending downwards since 2005. In 2019, the participation rate for Ontario was 64.9%. The lowest recorded participation rate for the Province was experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic (63.6%). Muskoka's participation rate is about 60.0% which is 3.5 percentage points below Ontario's lowest recorded participation rate.

<sup>1</sup>The labour force participation rates is calculated as the labour force divided by the total working-age population. The working age population refers to people aged 15 to 64.

## 2.2 Situation Analysis (cont'd)



Interestingly, from 2006 to 2016 Muskoka's labour force as described by Table 7 below has become more educated with over 50% having post-secondary education. It is expected that this trend towards an increasingly well-educated labour force will continue.

**Table 7: Muskoka, Education Levels, 2006-2016**

Year	2006	2011	2016
None	11,845	9,640	9,075
High School Diploma	12,845	13,810	15,495
Apprenticeship or Trade Certificate/Diploma	5,555	5,175	4,700
College	9,425	10,690	11,895
University	7,835	7,190	8,645
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47,505</b>	<b>46,505</b>	<b>49,810</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006-2016 Census of Population

## 2.2 Situation Analysis (cont'd)



**Table 8: Industry Employment by Region, Muskoka, 2016**

Region	Construction	Manufacturing	Retail Trade	Accommodation & Food Services	Health Care & Social Assistance	Total
Huntsville	1290	675	1575	1130	1345	6,015
Bracebridge	1275	340	1210	690	960	4,475
Gravenhurst	765	345	925	460	560	3,055
Muskoka Lakes	710	190	400	245	215	1,760
Lake of Bays	235	95	210	160	95	795
Georgian Bay	235	60	200	135	75	705
<b>Total</b>	<b>4510</b>	<b>1705</b>	<b>4520</b>	<b>2820</b>	<b>3250</b>	<b>16,805</b>
<b>% of Total</b>	<b>26.8</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population

However, there are some differences, for example, Huntsville makes a greater contribution to manufacturing, health care and social assistance employment while construction provides a greater proportion of employment in Muskoka Lakes (almost 21%) than any other community.

## 2.2 Situation Analysis (cont'd)



Table 9 shows that over 50% of construction businesses are in Huntsville and Muskoka Lakes, while health care organizations are concentrated in Huntsville and Bracebridge. Proportionately, retail trade businesses are spread evenly across Muskoka as are businesses involved with accommodation and food services.

**Table 9: Business (with employees) Counts by Industry Sector, Muskoka and Regions, 2019**

Industry Sector	District of Muskoka	Gravenhurst	Bracebridge	Lake of Bays	Huntsville	Muskoka Lakes	Georgian Bay
Construction	727	107	146	42	204	200	28
Manufacturing	94	16	25	5	26	21	1
Retail Trade	379	62	90	19	142	57	9
Real Estate	140	19	39	5	41	29	7
Professional	191	25	52	12	70	30	2
Admin & Support	173	21	31	15	48	52	6
Health Care	197	24	69	2	93	9	0
Accommodation & Food Service	207	43	41	18	62	29	14
Other Services	221	34	76	12	60	35	4

Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Business Counts, 2020

## 2.2 Situation Analysis (cont'd)



Since 2006 there has been little or no job growth in Muskoka nor any realistic increase in real wages according to the statistics described in Table 10 below.

**Table 10: Muskoka Labour Market, 2006-2016**

Category	2006	2011	2016
Number in Occupations	30,195	28,970	30,130
Employment Income as a % of Total Income	68.8	64.1	60.5
Employment Participation Rate	61.1	56.6	55.8

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 – 2016 Census for Population

## 2.3 Summary of Key Findings



The Town of Huntsville is located within the District of Muskoka which has a labour force that is shrinking and aging. This could pose a significant barrier to regional economic growth and diversification. The relatively low number of young people combined with low immigration into the area suggests the area will face challenges to grow its labour force and economy.

While the post-Covid 19 economic recovery and job growth has begun, not all of the jobs that were lost since March 2020 have been recovered and some analysts believe that the Tourism sector will not recover pre-pandemic levels until mid-2024 or 2025. This no doubt will have a significant impact on the economic recovery for Huntsville as well as the rest of Muskoka.

Huntsville, however, is facing an interesting paradox – both the community and the district have a substantial labour force that is relatively well-educated but appears to be under-employed and therefore underutilized. The labour participation rate is more than three percentage points lower than the provincial rate at its lowest point and male unemployment seems to be exceedingly high.

It may be that Huntsville is not suffering from a lack of available labour but rather from a lack of the type of investment that creates full-time well-paying jobs. Such investment could also enhance its diversity and lead to a strong resilient economy. As a result, the full-time jobs that the community appears to be losing are not being replaced.

### 3.0 Trends and Best Practices in Rural Economic Development



*Photo credit: <https://realestate.mitula.ca/farms-huntsville-ontario>*

When considering an approach to developing an effective rural community economic development strategy, it's important to envision the process as bringing together different pieces of a puzzle. It is both a whole entity and a number of smaller components, which work well when they are brought together.

In a report released by the Government of Canada, Rural Opportunity, National Prosperity - An Economic Development Strategy for Rural Canada (2019), economically, rural communities have, and continue to play a major role in Canada's prosperity, contributing nearly 30 percent of the country's total gross domestic product (GDP). For the purposes of this review, we have adopted the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) definition of rural, namely, those communities in Ontario excluding the nine urban areas: City of Hamilton, City of Ottawa, City of London, City of Windsor, The Greater Toronto Area, The Region of Niagara, The Region of Waterloo, The City of Thunder Bay, and the City of Greater Sudbury. Also, rural includes those municipalities with a population of less than 100,000.



### 3.0 Trends and Best Practices in Rural Economic Development (cont'd)

Rural communities that have been successful in establishing a vision for their economic development strategy, that being, executing specific actions and activities that help achieve their goals, have consistently had strong leadership as the foundation. The leadership is led both by the municipal government and the community. The impact of individual champions can be key to successfully implementing economic development strategies, and to address local challenges; and without it, economic development simply will not happen.

Rural and urban communities are distinctly different each having their unique challenges, and it's these challenges and unique characteristics that in many ways are the driving force behind how the communities interpret and implement their respective local economic development strategies. The uniqueness in the rural communities can be found in their size, dynamics, and specializations, including, but not limited to economic diversity, or lack of, the age demographics, access to a diverse skilled workforce and availability of serviced industrial and commercial lands that are investment ready.

Citing the Rural Opportunity, National Prosperity - An Economic Development Strategy for Rural Canada report, found that rural communities across Canada identified common themes and challenges they faced:

- *The need for reliable and affordable high-speed internet and mobile connectivity.*
- *A desire to maintain vibrant local economies.*
- *The need to attract and retain talent.*
- *The need for affordable and attainable housing.*
- *The need for new or improved infrastructure; and*
- *A need for community capacity to plan and implement improvements and change.*



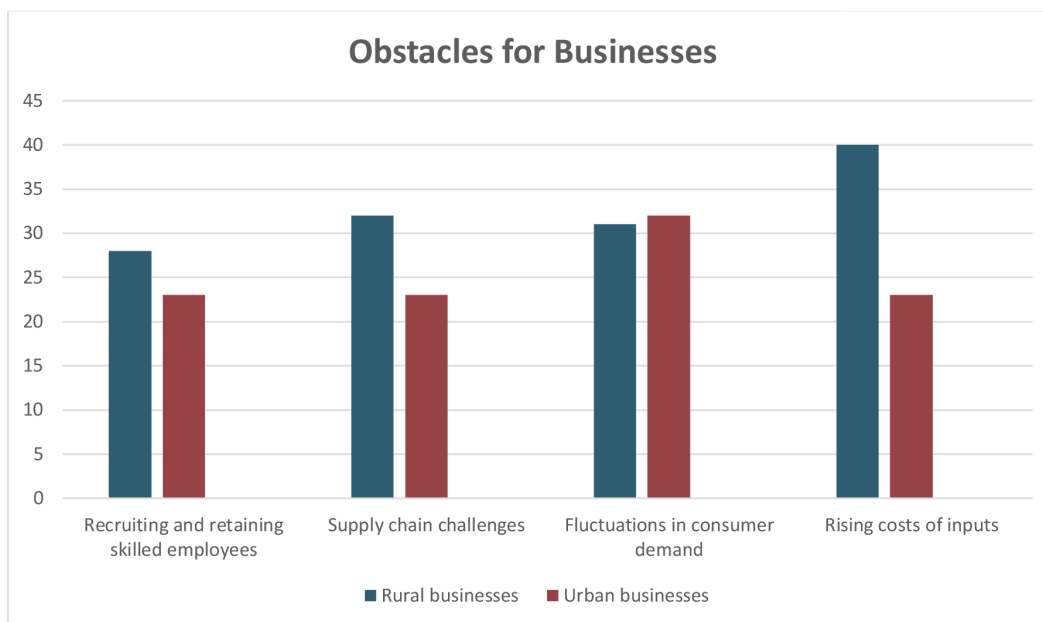
While the focus of economic development in larger urban centres may centre on economic growth, the picture is slightly different in rural communities. One of the major challenges facing rural communities is how to create jobs and improve economic conditions while retaining rural character and lifestyle. Moreover, those communities with a strong cultural heritage face the challenge of retaining their culture while developing their economies.

### **Economic Impact of COVID on Rural Communities**

The pandemic has forced businesses in rural communities to adjust to the realities of carrying on daily operations. Overall, economic activity in the first quarter of 2021 was 3% less than in February's pre-pandemic. **Source:** Statistics Canada (2021). Gross domestic product by industry, January 2021.

### 3.0 Trends and Best Practices in Rural Economic Development (cont'd)

Over 220,000 businesses in rural areas across Canada, employ approximately 1.9 million people. The results of a Canadian Survey on Business Conditions survey in Q1 of 2021, sought feedback on the challenges rural businesses were experiencing, and expected to experience over the next quarter. The survey went on to find that the cost of inputs, supply chain concerns, fluctuations in consumer demand and being able to find and retain skilled employees top the list. One-fifth of both rural and urban businesses confirmed that they expected to face layoffs over the balance of 2021, and into Q1 2022. 7.4% of rural businesses have indicated they have plans to sell, close or transfer ownership over the next 12-month. The economic challenges presented by the urban migration and shift to remote working and increased online shopping, seems to be less of a factor in rural communities than in urban settings. Despite challenges, rural businesses fared better than those in urban areas both in terms of remaining operational during the pandemic and year-to-year revenue declines.



Source: Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, 2021

A post-pandemic environment has created an opportunity to refocus on smaller communities - looking beyond the traditional government policies - to new approaches that will reshape and advance new economic and community development in rural communities. Digital infrastructure, opportunities for distributed work, new connective infrastructure, the opportunities for digital delivery of services, and the cost of housing are all impacting the future of rural communities and need to be integrated into economic program decisions.



### 3.0 Trends and Best Practices in Rural Economic Development (cont'd)

In many ways, rural communities are synonymous with a lifestyle that blends the natural environment with economic prosperity. Small rural towns and cities understand community economic development means much more than simple economic growth. From an economic development strategy and planning perspective, this is critical, as any forward-looking strategy will need to pass the filter on how a future investment, business attraction or proposed development decision will contribute to the quality of life for people in their communities.

Another key factor for rural communities that plays into shaping their respective economic development strategies is the importance of sustainable development. Again, more so than urban centres, the sustainability passing criteria has been at the forefront of many rural communities in evaluating proposed developments. The implications at the local level, is that exploring any future development and investment options will need to meet the criteria of sustainability, namely:

- *Is it economically feasible?*
- *Does the proposed development reduce or prevent environmental degradation?*
- *Does it promote equality and fairness?*

From an investment attraction point of view, understanding, articulating, and communicating what 'sustainable development' means for your respective community is vital, as communities go out and solicit and pitch their unique value propositions to companies and investors.

The Town of Huntsville and its Council have shown strong leadership in adopting an aggressive strategy and action plan to ensure its future sustainability. Embedded in the Unity Plan is its vision for the future:

**"Huntsville is a vibrant, welcoming and healthy place in which to live and play as we foster innovation, celebrate arts, culture, heritage, and recreation, develop a strong and resilient economy and follow an ethic of social caring and environmental stewardship."**

The Unity Plan speaks to Huntsville sustainability goals and objectives. It was designed to be a long-range plan to address environmental, social/cultural and economic issues in Huntsville, put action plans in place and monitor the effect of these actions over time. The Unity Plan is a living document, providing guidance and the overall vision for the Town's official plans. The underscoring theme of the Unity Plan is one of commitment to the stewardship of the environment and long-term sustainability of the Town for current and future generations.

### 3.0 Trends and Best Practices in Rural Economic Development (cont'd)

Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E), that is, the economic development strategy of proactively connecting with existing businesses to understand and respond to local business needs, has been in many cases overrepresented in many rural communities' economic development plans. Rural programming needs to adapt to the changing investment landscape and enhance beyond the traditional Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) programs and localized investment promotion and investment attraction. This requires rural communities to consider non-traditional opportunities, for example, innovative technologies in the agricultural sector, developing clearly defined investment business profiles for both a national and international targeted investor audience. Rural communities understand and appreciate that all foreign direct investment is ultimately local investment.

While national and provincial governments play an important role in marketing and encouraging foreign direct investment, those investments will inevitably be made in specific places under local jurisdictions. It's critical that as economic development practitioners, that you review your investment environment and business policies which will inevitably shape and influence a potential investor's decision. Limited resources and technical expertise at times restrict the ability of a rural municipality to work on new initiatives. Address these challenges with creative partnerships with both federal agencies and private sector interests that will offer a mix of financial and capacity-building support to achieve our investment attraction goals.

Since the onset of the pandemic, rural communities have become a lightning rod for increasing urban migration and have witnessed an increasing demand on local resources and their capacities to accommodate growth. More commonly referred to as 'commercial counter urbanization', this movement has, and is having a profound impact on local rural economies. Mobility and connectivity are driving the establishment of new businesses in rural communities, and from an economic development practitioner's perspective, communities will need to be positioned to respond, positioning their distinctive opportunities and assets to support the new entrepreneurs. Attracting and supporting rural entrepreneurship will require adequate infrastructure and support, including investing in high quality intermediaries that will enhance internal and external linkages and create business opportunities. While the new onset of businesses can be seen as an opportunity, as a community, you will need to develop a practical and accountable policy framework that will address and support the emerging issues facing rural communities because of commercial counter urbanization.



### 3.1 Best Practices for Rural Community Economic Development

A review of the literature focusing on the challenges rural municipalities face with respect to their economies, as well as best of practices, suggests that while there is no one right way to organize a local economic development program, there are some key principles that have shown to be effective in advancing the economic interests of rural communities. These generally encompass the following:

#### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Include all local groups involved in the economic development process.
- Successful communities have key stakeholders actively engaged in the dialogue and in the decision-making process. Consider partnerships with educational institutions, as well as regional and cross-border collaborations.
- Building relationships and consensus that will foster consultation, information sharing and give key stakeholders a level of 'ownership' in the economic development process.

#### PLANNING AND VISION

- As a follow-up to the community engagement, successful economic development planning and the development of a community vision, ensures the implementation of a rigorous process that captures community values, aspirations, and direction.
- The 'vision' will ultimately create a path that will engage new people, new ideas and foster a sense of community, and provide the much sought-after community leaders that will contribute to your decision-making and working toward your target goals.

#### FINANCIAL CAPITAL

- Launching and sustaining new economic initiatives requires resources, which may not be as readily available in rural communities as they might be in larger urban centers.
- Financial partnership opportunities and leveraging local capital with provincial and federal funding become crucial in advancing projects. Communities have and continue to develop constructive and effective public-private partnerships as instruments for both funding and delivering key initiatives.

#### LEADERSHIP

- Rural leadership development is a challenge that many rural communities are facing, that prohibit some communities from moving forward on initiatives. Communities compensate by relying on a volunteer leadership base.
- Effective leadership training must result in true capacity building for small communities, that will allow for productive partnerships in seeing the community's vision to fruition.
- Communities that have been successful in fostering community leaders, have done so by creating opportunities for participation, developing an environment of inclusiveness, trust, confidence, and, most importantly motivating potential leaders by setting clearly defined goals, ownership of tasks and recognition.



### ADAPTION TO CHANGE

- While the COVID-19 pandemic has, and continues to wreak havoc on all economies, it has also shown that the introduction of transformative new technologies is creating enormous opportunities for rural communities.
- The urban migration is a reality, and the ability to pivot and adapt to a changing business and investment attraction environment has been a defining characteristic of communities with successful community economic development approaches.
- Rural communities that are quick to respond to change and appeal to rising new niche markets by using creative local solutions, position themselves well to compete with external pressures.

### LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

- Understanding what works, and what doesn't, is paramount to ensuring that as a small community, you continue to adhere and promote best practices in economic development.
- Accountability, transparency, and performance measurements must play a critical role in evaluating how effective your community economic development policies and programs have been.
- Communities who have been successful in developing strong leaders, engaging their communities, effectively responding to change, and implementing their planned vision, have all put in place clear performance measures to ensure they maintain their course and achieve their goals in a concrete and visible way.
- Rural communities that are quick to respond to change and appeal to rising new niche markets by using creative local solutions, position themselves well to compete with external pressures.

### PARTNERSHIP

- Sharing of resources, ideas and seeking collaborative opportunities are fundamental tactics in economic recovering in a post-pandemic environment.
- Innovation continues to drive business growth and economic prosperity, and a large source of this innovation stems from mutually beneficial partnerships between the private sector, universities, communities, and government.
- The nature of rural economic development may at times require collaborative, multilateral efforts that bring additional resources, expertise and knowledge that will produce the desired outcomes.

### THE GIG ECONOMY

- The gig economic or freedom of self-employment, continues to grow. Gig workers include freelancers, independent contractors, project-based workers and, are generally strongly aligned and driven by digital technology. These gig workers now represent more than one in 10 Canadian adults (13 per cent), and more than one in three Canadian businesses (37 per cent) employ gig workers. Not surprisingly, this increase is being fueled by current economic impact of the pandemic. Those who can make it in the gig economy will be able to take advantage of geographic flexibility, and a potential migration to rural communities to enjoy the quality of life it offers.
- For rural community planners, the migration will necessitate a review and enhancement of 'long tail services', referring to internet services, cloud-based applications, and supply chain for distribution of product and services. These applications include technology services, business services such as accounting, marketing, distance education, telemedicine, and all-things enabled by video conferencing.

Source: *Is there a best practice? A better understanding of local economic development in rural Ontario* Andrew Redden, Ec.D. (F)

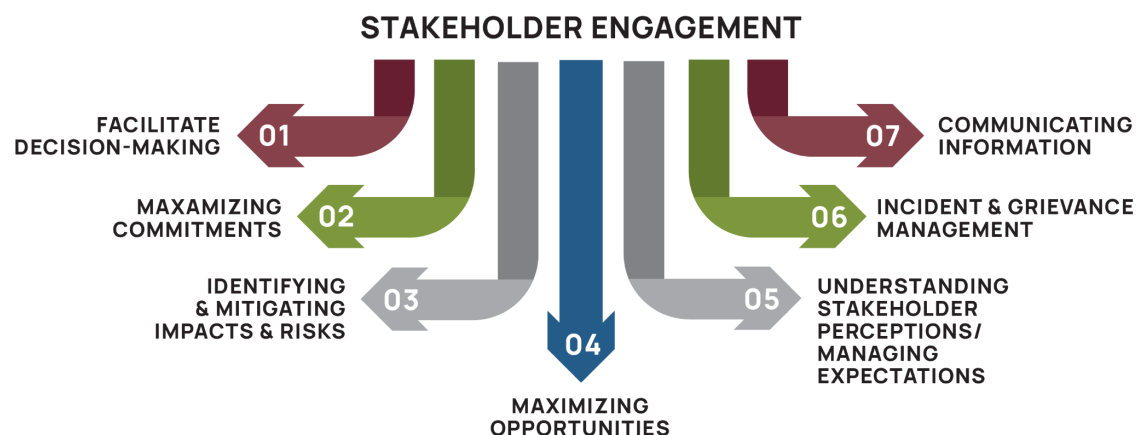
## 4.0 Stakeholder Consultations & Engagement

Stakeholder interviews were conducted with both public and private sector stakeholders, including 9 industry representatives and 14 public sector members in the Town of Huntsville, including the Mayor, Councillors, and economic development staff. Each interview, lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes-1 hour, consisted of reviewing an interview guide prepared by thinkCOMPASS with questions covering sustainable economic development, business development in supply and services, workforce training and development, and support for business attraction, retention, and expansion.

### Key Stakeholders Defined

Meeting the challenges, and, as well the opportunities confronting Huntsville and its region will require action by all levels of government and by people in their own community. It's imperative that we understand community member's perspective on how they see the current and future key challenges facing the area. The people of Huntsville, and all its encompassing stakeholder constituents will be asked to play a more direct leadership role in maintaining and enhancing the future prosperity of the Town and region to do so effectively, there must be a shared vision which reflects community values and aspirations and establishes goals for the community members of Huntsville and the political leaders.

Engaging key stakeholders in the community for feedback is vital to the strategy, and to developing the vision, which in our view must be specific enough to enable tough decisions to be made and yet general enough to permit adaptations due to changing conditions. It must be stated clearly and tested with everyone whose lives and livelihoods will be affected.



Interview participants that participated in the one-on-one stakeholder interviews were as follows:

Category	Organization Name	No. of Members Interviewed
<b>Public Sector</b>	Town of Huntsville - Development Services Division - Department of Planning - Marketing & Communications - Chief Administrative Office	8
<b>Public Sector</b>	Huntsville Council & Former Council	5
<b>Private Sector</b>	Muskoka Millwrighting & Machining	1
<b>Public Sector</b>	District of Muskoka	1
<b>Association</b>	Huntsville/Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce	1
<b>Private Sector</b>	Sandhill Nursery	1
<b>Private Sector</b>	Brooklin Concrete Products	1
<b>Private Sector</b>	Algonquin Outfitters	1
<b>Private Sector</b>	Kenneth Donald & Associates	1
<b>Private Sector</b>	Lakeland Networks	1
<b>Private Sector</b>	Grey Stone Construction	1
<b>Private Sector</b>	BIA	1
<b>Private Sector</b>	MBRP Performance Exhaust	1



## Stakeholder Interview Feedback Themes

The feedback and common themes heard from stakeholder interviews participants are summarized below for each major category covered in the strategy.

### WHAT WE HEARD: KEY EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY STAKEHOLDERS

- Lack of local talent for existing and new businesses
- Lack of high paying jobs
- Lack of year-round positions
- Lack of jobs for spouses entering Huntsville
- Due to shortages in employment businesses have reduced working capacity to 80% by closing one to two days a week which has resulted in lower annual revenue
- 20% of businesses in Muskoka are self-employed making \$15-\$20K/ year and not hiring. This is lower than the Provincial statistic of 14%

### WHAT WE HEARD: KEY AFFORDABLE HOUSING AVAILABILITY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY STAKEHOLDERS

- The lack of affordable housing makes it difficult for young families, professional talent and small businesses to flourish in the area
- The consensus amongst those interviewed is that most blue-collar workers that are being recruited for jobs in existing establishments are unable to find affordable housing within the town which is either driving these potential hires to other communities or requires them to drive a distance to maintain a job. Even employees with \$100K salaried positions find it hard to secure affordable housing
- The demand is higher than supply; the town is limited in rental and lower income housing as well

### WHAT WE HEARD: THOUGHTS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, BUSINESS ATTRACTION & RETENTION

- A source of the problem is that Huntsville is event and product driven (i.e., tourism assets) therefore driving seasonal business rather than long term and year-round business
- Lack of focus on marketing business attraction and retention therefore the community is reactive not proactive to new businesses
- A plan and key messaging should be developed around the awareness of business attraction and retention to better serve the business community; this awareness needs to be established at council level trickling down to community citizens

### WHAT WE HEARD: BUSINESS & RESIDENTIAL AFFINITY TO HUNTSVILLE

- Town and Economic Development Office
  - Open and conducting great work but require more resources to support more of the community
- Lifestyle
  - Small town and nature centric
  - Well-engaged community members
  - Safe neighbourhood
  - Trusted relationships: everyone in the community personally knows or is aware of each other
- Largest sector opportunities within manufacturing for tech jobs and it sector with an agriculture focus



#### WHAT WE HEARD: THOUGHTS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, BUSINESS ATTRACTION & RETENTION

- Town Fibre and Internet
  - Internet is now an essential component to running a successful business; due to lack of infrastructure businesses struggle to work efficiently under these circumstances
- Grants and Funding Resources
  - Many local businesses have been successful in attaining grants but would like this information to come from the town as a supportive gesture to the business community
- Pay equity
  - Businesses in the community are flourishing however many have lowered their wages
  - Tourism is one of the lowest paying sectors but is the key driving force for Huntsville economic prosperity
- Lack of Skilled Trades
  - Not close to any training colleges
  - Skilled trade workers can't afford housing in the area
- Shortage of childcare facilities in the area
  - The lack of childcare within the area deems it difficult for a small business or young family to move into Huntsville

#### WHAT WE HEARD: SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Provide education about economic development and tourism in the community workforce retention program and local training programs
- Focus on data centres and Internet infrastructure
- Marketing for business attraction and retention
  - Services to assist existing businesses such as employment support, and grant information
  - Identifying key growth opportunities, packaging it for potential incoming businesses, and marketing it to attract businesses from sectors outside of tourism
- Improve the communication between the business community and the Town to strengthen the relationship
  - The town has an open attitude to support the business community but don't have the resources
  - Both private and public sector members have identified that a true collaboration between local business organizations and the town should be established. all parties are pursuing the same vision but need to do this collectively



## 5.0 Goals, Objectives and Actions

The Economic Development Strategy has been formed with four goals that will act as pillars to drive focus, progression, and success of the local economy. The goals will create jobs, and drive local economic growth specifically within Huntsville's priority sectors: **Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Construction, Business Services, and Tourism.**

### The Four Goals are Identified as Follows:

#### GOAL ONE: Strengthen Economic Development Capacity and Become Investment Ready

The initial goal to ensure a prosperous local economy is to build a strong foundation and focus inward to deliver effective economic development service for the community. The development of this foundation will focus on providing key tools and processes about investing in people, processes, and relationships. This section looks at the town's preparedness to attract and secure investment. To make existing and new businesses feel secure in expanding, starting, or relocating a business to the Town of Huntsville.

- *Establish new processes, improve existing processes, and streamline economic development processes to ensure effective delivery of services to the community.*
- *Develop programs that meet the needs of the business community and evolve as industry trends and demographic needs change.*
- *Build stronger relationships and an interconnected network within the community; allowing the public and private partners to collaborate effectively.*
- *Build a foundation that has sufficient resources to complete the action plans.*
- *Conduct an investment readiness assessment and create a plan that encompasses key partners.*
- *Develop a strategy to bring more shovel-ready employment lands and buildings, both industrial and commercial, to the town.*
- *Develop and publicize economic indicators by strengthening communication channels.*

## GOAL TWO: Encourage Community Economic Development



Community Economic Development (CED) metrics include supporting a diverse and inclusive economy, capacity building in equity deserving communities, building a sustainable economy, and ensuring that profits generated stay within Huntsville. Affordable housing is an important factor in creating healthy, diverse, and prosperous neighbourhoods. Strong and diverse communities enhance the quality of life for both owners and renters and improve liveability, which is strongly linked to a town's prosperity. Focus should also be placed on the housing continuum, an assortment of housing options for a diverse demographic population to support different people at different times.

- *Increase access to employment for equity deserving communities*
- *Support community driven pilots that support local problems*
- *Strengthen partnership with post-secondary institutions and not for profits*
- *Create a hub for professionals and entrepreneurs for newcomers*
- *Drive business recruitment and resident attraction strategies*
- *Development of a comprehensive affordable housing strategy*

### GOAL THREE: Support Workforce Development and Growth



Workforce development and growth is a significant goal to address the labour shortage within the community. Skilled trades talent is a category of employment that is affecting all target sectors highlighted for the town: manufacturing, tourism, construction, business services, and retail trade.

- *Development of institutional partnership to link educational institutions students to skilled trades training*
- *Generate opportunities to highlight employers within the community to local and external job seekers*
- *Generate opportunities to educate job seekers about local job opportunities and highlight incentives for growth*
- *Provide opportunities for employers, individually or in groups, to invest in their workforce, with help from the government*

## GOAL FOUR: Foster Innovation and Market the Town Initiatives



The Town of Huntsville will support and partner with organizations in the innovation ecosystem to begin developing a foundation for innovative companies to enter the town. This goal will require a longer growth period therefore efforts would need to begin in the present. As the town begins to focus on fostering innovative organizations, the town will market town initiatives to build communication channels and promotional networks to ensure the town is fully equipped to market innovation initiatives.

- *Develop public/private pilot project program to test and support novel business ideas.*
- *Develop a comprehensive marketing and communications plan to attract interest in the program*
- *Encourage local entrepreneurs to develop businesses that leverage Huntsville's proximity to the natural environment and contribute to sustainable economic development.*



## The Action Plan Overview

The Action Plan has been designed within the scope of local economic development, which envisions the participation of various people, stakeholders, and community organizations in its execution. The Economic Development Strategy has been developed within a realistic appraisal of the opportunities, resources and constraints and the development of coherent coordinated action plan to achieve realizable objectives consistent with the community and Council's needs and goals.

The Action Plan is premised on the commitment of Council to ensure that the Town of Huntsville is adequately resourced to effectively implement the action items detailed in the Action Plan. Equally important, is Council's commitment that the development effort and future roll-out of the Action Plan is inclusive and that the involvement of key stakeholders and will occur in the setting of goals and objectives, input into the selection of the strategies for development and in the utilization of local initiatives and resources to support the implementation process.

The implementation success of the Action Plan, and the marketing effort that goes into executing it is predicated on communicating to the community its benefits, keeping them informed and increasing their readiness to be involved as partners in the implementation process.

The proposed Action Plan for the Town of Huntsville has been presented in chart format with the themes defined with item number, action, description, investment type and cost, output, deadline, and partners.

- **Item Number:** Each action has been numbered for organizational purposes.
- **Action:** The name of the Action Plan initiative to be completed.
- **Description:** Brief explanation of the Action Plan initiative to be completed.
- **Investment Type and Cost:** The action has been categorized as either an Operational Cost or Capital Cost.



- **Dollar signs;** correspond with the total anticipated costs. The value of the signs has been categorized as follows:

(\$)

Anticipated to fit in operationally

(\$\$)

\$10,000 to \$50,000

(\$\$\$)

\$50,001 to \$100,000

(\$\$\$\$)

\$100,001+

- **Output/Outcome:** Each action item has been assigned an output and outcome. The output reflects short-term and easily measurable results. The outcome reflects long-term and anticipated results.
- **Deadline:** The anticipated deadline for completion for each action
- **Partners:** Internal and external stakeholders who could support each action.

## 6.0 Strengthening Economic Development Capacity

<b>GOAL ONE</b> Strengthening Economic Development Capacity and Becoming Investment Ready						
Item Number	Action	Description	Investment Type & Cost	Output and Outcome	Deadline	Partners
1.1	Service inbound investment inquiries	<p>Economic Development Staff will continue to service investment inquiries.</p> <p>1.1.1 Develop customer service protocols and templates for response.</p> <p>1.1.2 Set KPIs and annual reviews.</p> <p>1.1.3 Develop tracking mechanism to keep record of leads and response times.</p>	Operating (\$)	<p>Output: Establish servicing protocols and processes with response KPIs.</p> <p>Outcome: Strengthen economic development process to better serve the business community.</p>	2024- Q2 Planning & Execution	Development Services Department
1.2	Develop and launch a business concierge service and network	<p>Design a program to meet the needs of the town's business community. Also, a key to the success of this action is to develop a framework to support the concierge service.</p> <p>1.2.1 Conduct a needs assessment with the business community to understand services required. For example, would providing information on Provincial grants available to businesses be helpful.</p> <p>1.2.2 Journey mapping for business service consultations and potential investment leads.</p> <p>1.2.3 Development of eligibility requirements for the program.</p> <p>1.2.4 Define the role of the concierge service in detail and network partners required to support.</p> <p>1.2.5 Train economic development officer on appropriate servicing for business community.</p>	Operating (\$)	<p>Output: Completion of framework and plan.</p> <p>Outcome: Strengthen economic development process to better serve the business community.</p>	2024- Q3 Planning  2025- Q2 Execution	Planning and Development  Local Industry Associations  Local Business Associations  District of Muskoka  Development Services Department



1.3	Support export development and resource programs	<p>Create programs and resources for funding to support export development opportunities.</p> <p>1.3.1 Connect with Federal, Provincial and Regional organizations to understand programs available that align with Town's needs.</p> <p>1.3.2 Develop a streamlined communications to allow for easy exchange and flow of information between supportive partners and the town.</p> <p>1.3.3 Develop a regular communication platform to local business community to update them on export programs and funding resources.</p>	Operating (S)	<p>Output: Growth of export development in the community.</p> <p>Outcome: Strengthen the Town's relationship with the business community.</p> <p>Facilitates the attraction of investment into the Town</p>	2024- Q3	<p>Federal Government</p> <p>Province of Ontario</p> <p>District of Muskoka</p> <p>Marketing and Communications</p>
1.4	Development of a Business Retention and Expansion program	<p>Build a database of local companies and target relationship building efforts on companies in the key industry sectors.</p> <p>1.4.1 Establish a formalized corporate calling program.</p> <p>1.4.2 Expand offerings to assist local businesses with the expansion of current sites and facilities, including assistance with regulations and permits related to planning, zoning, and building.</p> <p>1.4.3 Periodically, survey existing businesses to better understand current and projected needs.</p> <p>1.4.4 Design and provide Business Concierge Services to provide support, advice, community information, industry partnerships, and market analysis – from site selection, through to the development review process, and future business expansion.</p> <p>1.4.5 Develop a visitation program to engage directly with local companies and identify those at-risk companies, or those that are considering closing or relocating.</p>	Operating (S)	<p>Output: Track number of interviews, number of investments, and concerns and resolutions of the business community.</p> <p>Outcome: Strengthen the Town's relationship with the business community.</p>	2024- Q3	Development Services Department

		<p>1.4.6 Provide direction on where to source information and advice in such areas as starting a business, creating a business plan, financing, occupational licenses or building permits.</p> <p>1.4.7 Provide opportunities for Networking receptions and Mayor/Council member breakfasts to provide additional opportunities for business networking and FDI-specific discussions.</p>				
1.5	Assume an advocacy role for serviced industrial lands	The town will continue to champion the need for employment lands to support the creation of jobs and ensure new development proposals and employment areas are consistent with the economic development strategy.	Operating (S)	<p>Output: Track the amount of available employment land</p> <p>Outcome: Strengthen economic development process to better serve the business community.</p>	2024- Q4	<p>Planning and Development</p> <p>District of Muskoka</p> <p>Province of Ontario</p>
1.6	Establish 18-month Economic Development Strategy review	Establishing an 18-month strategy review schedule. At the conclusion of every 3 six-month project periods, Will provide an update to Council at the same time. These reviews could adjust, add or remove action items to ensure the strategy will continue to meet the needs of the community and Council.	Operating (S)	<p>Output: Number of projects completed, number of new projects, number of projects removed/ altered.</p> <p>Outcome: Strengthening economic development tools and processes to better serve our clients.</p>	2025- Q1	Development Services Department
1.7	Develop investment packages	Huntsville and its Council, through its economic development department should establish a streamline site selection process that would facilitate zoning and planning approvals. In effect, the town would have a comprehensive information package on all available pre-qualified development lands, be it industrial, residential, or commercial. These lands would be fully serviced or readily serviceable, clear of any major development constraints, have completed a certain level of due diligence, for example environmental and have other critical pieces in place, such as ownership details, property survey and zoned permitted uses.	Operating (S)	<p>Output: A UVP, 5 sector profiles and at least 5 IRBCs.</p> <p>Outcome: Strengthen economic development process to better serve the business community.</p> <p>Focus efforts on attracting SMEs</p>	2025- Q2	<p>Development Services</p> <p>Marketing and Communications</p>



		<p>1.7.1 Development of strong material that showcases key assets of the community in a Unique Value Proposition (UVP), highlight key sector profiles with supportive Investment Ready Business Cases (IRBC) for each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MicroManufacturing</li> <li>- Retail Trade</li> <li>- Construction</li> <li>- Business Services</li> <li>- Tourism</li> </ul> <p>1.7.2 Ensuring available development and industrial lands that speak to and respond to investor needs.</p>				
1.8	Hire a second Economic Development Officer	To ensure the effective implementation of the strategy the second Economic Development Officer will specifically be responsible for the development of both the concierge service, and the business retention and expansion program.	Operating (SSS)	<p>Output: Completion of the Business Concierge Service and the Business Retention and Expansion Program</p> <p>Outcome: Strengthen the Town's relationship with the business community.</p>	2025- Q3	Development Services Department
1.9	Develop a "Soft-Landing" program	<p>Develop a "Soft-Landing" program and an investment response team to help potential investors with their due diligence.</p> <p>1.9.1 Develop an Engagement Protocol that enhances program delivery and supports Huntsville's investment attraction efforts.</p> <p>1.9.2 Develop a team/ network of senior advisors that can meet with potential investors and help them to better understand how to do business in Canada/ Huntsville.</p>	Operating (S)	<p>Output: Completion of a "Soft Landing" Program</p> <p>Outcome: Strengthening economic development tools and processes to better serve our clients.</p>	2026- Q1	Development Services
1.10	Implement a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system	Establish a CRM system that could track potential investment leads, business community members, partnership network contacts, asset inventory, and marketing and sponsorship efforts.	Operating (S)	<p>Output: Design and development of CRM.</p> <p>Outcome: Strengthen economic development process to better serve the business community.</p>	2026- Q3	Development Services

<b>GOAL TWO</b> Encourage Community Economic Development						
Item Number	Action	Description	Investment Type & Cost	Output and Outcome	Deadline	Partners
2.1	Work with provincial ministries and federal departments to improve Huntsville's recognition as an investment destination	<p>To make provincial and federal governments aware of Huntsville and its advantages as a premier investment destination and place to do business.</p> <p>2.1.1 Implement a communication outreach program with key in-market provincial and federal representatives.</p> <p>2.1.2 Develop appropriate electronic investment collateral pieces for distribution to in-market representatives.</p> <p>2.1.3 Enhance relationships by meeting regularly with key FDI attraction program managers and influencers at the federal and provincial government levels in Huntsville's key sectors and target markets.</p> <p>2.1.4 Working with District of Muskoka explore opportunities to leverage as it relates to the Town being more directly involved in investment lead handling.</p> <p>2.1.5 Communicate regularly with the Canadian Posts in key priority markets keeping them apprised of new investments/developments &amp; revised UVPs.</p>	Operating (S)	<p>Output: Network of supportive intermediaries for investment attraction.</p> <p>Outcome: Strengthen global network for foreign direct investment.</p>	2023- Q1	Federal Trade Commission Posts  Province of Ontario  District of Muskoka
2.2	Develop a resident attraction strategy	<p>Development of the strategy will focus on attracting new Canadians and young families to Huntsville. This should include a comprehensive marketing plan. The following goals should be considered to have an effective strategy:</p> <p>2.2.1 Maintain the necessary services for an aging population, that Huntsville currently has.</p>	Capital (SSS)	<p>Output: Complete a Resident Attraction Strategy</p> <p>Outcome: Creating new opportunities for equity deserving groups.</p>	2023- Q4	Diversity and Inclusion  Development Services Department  District of Muskoka

		<p>2.2.2 Attract young families and new development to enhance the town's quality of life and economy.</p> <p>2.2.3 Increase the number of skilled workers and professionals in the town to support new and existing businesses, services, and operators.</p> <p>2.2.4 Support a mix of housing forms to satisfy various demographics of the community</p>				
2.3	Create a hub for Huntsville's newcomer professionals and entrepreneurs	In collaboration with key partner organizations such as the Business Improvement Area, Chamber of Commerce, and others, to provide a local connection point for the business concierge service and connect them into local resources and networks.	Operating (\$)	<p>Output: Number of businesses serviced within the community.</p> <p>Outcome: Creating new opportunities for equity deserving groups.</p>	2025- Q2	<p>Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Business Improvement Area (BIA)</p> <p>Post-Secondary Clubs</p>
2.4	Collaborate with Pan-Regional Agencies	<p>Join pan-regional agencies with a mandate to attract FDI in Huntsville's key industry sectors like Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO).</p> <p>Leverage existing organizations that focus on FDI attraction.</p> <p>Coordinate a familiarization tour with the newly created Invest Ontario (IvO), to begin to build that relationship.</p>	Operating (\$)	<p>Output: Network of supportive intermediaries for investment attraction.</p> <p>Outcome: Strengthen global network for foreign direct investment.</p>	2025- Q4	<p>FDI Mandated Partner Organizations</p> <p>Development Services Department</p> <p>Invest Ontario</p> <p>Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO)</p>
2.5	<p>FDI Mandated Partner Organizations</p> <p>Development Services Department</p> <p>Invest Ontario</p> <p>Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO)</p>	<p>The Affordable Housing Strategy should consider the following strategic themes:</p> <p>2.5.1 Creating Housing Opportunities in All Neighbourhoods</p> <p>2.5.2 Create New Affordable Rental Homes</p> <p>2.5.3 Help People to Buy and Stay in Their Homes</p> <p>2.5.4 Help Homeless and Vulnerable People</p>	Operating (\$\$)	<p>Output: Completion of Affordable Housing Strategy</p> <p>Outcome: Strengthen economic development process to better serve the business community.</p>	2026- Q2	<p>Planning and Development</p> <p>District of Muskoka</p> <p>Development Services Department</p>

<b>GOAL THREE</b> Support Workforce Growth and Development						
Item Number	Action	Description	Investment Type & Cost	Output and Outcome	Deadline	Partners
3.1	Institutional partnership for skilled trades	<p><b>Develop a comprehensive strategy to develop a partnership with academic institutions.</b></p> <p>3.1.1 Leverage existing partnership between Georgian College and Bracebridge through their Muskoka Campus which is home to state-of-the-art skilled trades facilities.</p> <p>3.1.2 Recruit an Advisory Board encompassing both public and private sector members. Private sector members to be considered are top employers within the community for skilled trades positions.</p> <p>3.1.3 Outline best suited curriculum for training, best practices for admission, and an integrated communications plan to promote the program through the school board.</p> <p>3.1.4 Develop an understanding with the Board of Education for high schools. The partnership should focus on education and recruitment for prospects looking for a career in the skilled trades.</p> <p>3.1.5 Monitor growth, Aftercare of graduate skills and implementation, and opportunities for innovation to expand programs.</p>	Operating (SSS)	<p><b>Output:</b> Number of employers present, number of community groups engaged, and number of attendees.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Fulfilling labour shortages and vacancies within the town.</p>	2023- Q4	Secondary School Board of Education  Development Services Department  Ministry of Education  Georgian College, Muskoka Campus  District of Muskoka  Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
3.2	Host community job fairs	<p><b>Host job fairs to highlight employers within the community, fulfill labour shortages and provide job opportunities for job seekers within and outside the community.</b></p> <p>3.2.1 Identify partners that will help showcase job opportunities, promote to their networks, and drive traffic to</p>	Operating (S)	<p><b>Output:</b> Number of employers present, number of community groups engaged, and number of attendees.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Fulfilling labour shortages and vacancies within the town.</p>	2024- Q2	District of Muskoka  Development Services Department  Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development

		<p>the job fairs.</p> <p>3.2.2 Develop KPIs to determine the definition of job fair success and Sponsorship/ funding needs.</p> <p>3.2.3 Set up a tracking and monitoring system to ensure KPIs are met.</p> <p>3.2.4 Conduct job fair assessment to understand areas of improvement for future job fairs.</p>				<p>Community Business Associations; BIA, Chamber of Commerce, and others</p> <p>Academic Institutions with Talent</p>
3.3	Partnerships for Workforce Training and Development Programs	<p>Work with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development to be able to provide information, resources, and servicing support to local businesses.</p> <p>Provide service support for local businesses to get government funding programs that provide direct financial support to individual employers or employer consortia who wish to purchase training for their employees.</p> <p>Develop a communication channel to disseminate the program information and track success cases through regional provincial representatives.</p>	Operating (S)	<p>Output: Numbers of funds for local employers, and number of trained employees for career development.</p> <p>Outcome: Fulfilling labour shortages and vacancies within the town.</p>	2024- Q4	Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development

<b>GOAL FOUR</b> Foster Innovation and Market the Town Initiatives						
Item Number	Action	Description	Investment Type & Cost	Output and Outcome	Deadline	Partners
4.1	Develop a marketing and communications plan	<p>The marketing and communication plan will summarize strategic priorities according to short-term, near-term, and long-term goals. The plan should include:</p> <p>4.1.1 Manage Huntsville's brand image and establish streamlined communication of the town's vision.</p> <p>4.1.2 Market segmentation to include SWOT analysis and market messaging by segment.</p> <p>4.1.3 Invest in tools that make an impact: online tools, media relations, and other channels.</p> <p>4.1.4 Brand and communication training for key stakeholders to ensure messaging is aligned.</p> <p>4.1.5 Develop marketing materials for promotion purposes for both local and international markets.</p> <p>4.1.6 Build market awareness and implement a communication plan.</p>	Operating (SSS)	Operating (\$)	2023- Q3	Marketing and Communications Department
4.2	Develop public and private pilot project program	<p>Develop a process to engage in pilot projects with established private organizations to test new proofs of concepts.</p> <p>4.2.1 Define the term innovation for the Town of Huntsville and how it may impact its target sectors.</p> <p>4.2.2 Research and analyze comparable pilot programs locally and internationally.</p> <p>4.2.3 Develop an Advisory Board and partnership network with aligned mandates to exchange best practices with.</p>	Operating (\$)	<p>Output: Public and Private Pilot Project Program</p> <p>Outcome: Foster innovation in the town</p>	2024- Q2	Ministry of Innovation Science and Economic Development  Development Services Department  International Associations  Academic Institutions (Local and International)



## 6.1 Additional Thoughts on Building Capacity

### Leveraging remote workers to attract investment

- Consider building connections and linkages with those Huntsville residents that work remotely
- Organize an event where those workers are invited to socialize amongst themselves as an opportunity for the Town to learn more about their activities and needs.
- This could be as simple as inviting remote workers in Huntsville to an informal meeting around coffee and donuts.
- Use the conversations to explore any new ideas for businesses, or the potential for relocating the companies that they work for into Huntsville.
- This could be a regular monthly event which would provide remote workers with an opportunity to socialize amongst their peers

### Establishing a business concierge service

- Reach out to local businesses and explore the idea of establishing a business ambassador program whose members would meet with companies interested in moving into the area to discuss doing business in Huntsville.
- Identify some local service providers in such areas as business legal, immigration, banking, real estate and labour to provide potential new companies with information and insights about doing business in Canada as well as within Muskoka.
- This group would be established as a resource to the community and would meet with potential new investors (companies), site selectors and investment influencers such as government representatives.

### Providing support services to existing businesses

- The government both provincial and federal released a number of programs focusing on post-pandemic economic recovery.
- The businesses in Huntsville would find it useful if the Town provided them with up-to-date information on these programs and maybe some tips on how to apply.
- This might also be a business opportunity for local service providers to offer assistance to businesses applying for these loans and grants.



- Some businesses may have a product or a service that they believe is ready to be exported and may be looking to the Town to provide some advice and direction with respect to government support.
- Both the federal government through the Trade Commissioners Service and the provincial government through the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Training (MEDJT) offer considerable support for companies interested in exporting.
- Economic development departments that engage with members of their business community to help them develop export markets can leverage this activity to develop a companion investment attraction program.
- Engaging in export development will introduce economic developers and businesses to government representatives that are key influencers with respect to not only export development but also to their investment attraction colleagues.
- Furthermore, both activities can be incorporated into the same program involving in-person meetings in targeted markets.

### **Leveraging programs aimed at economic development**

- A key program that a number of communities throughout Canada take advantage of on a regular basis is the Canada Export Community Initiative (CECI).
- This program is designed to help communities develop Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Strategies and investment attraction programs that include meeting either virtually or in-person with potential pre-qualified investors.
- The program allows communities to leverage their contribution with 50-cent dollars, it recognizes private sector investment and encourages participation from the business community and provides a platform for like-minded economic development departments to partner on FDI attraction initiatives.

### **Partnering to build capacity**

- Huntsville should if it has not already done so consider reaching out and building a relationship with Bracebridge and Gravenhurst to help further economic development aspirations.
- The communities should consider identifying markets and sectors of common interest, including the scale of investment (micro-manufacturing) and type of investment (sustainable with a business philosophy that places significant importance on the environment, climate change and quality of life), for example.



- Consider participating in already established economic development partnerships like the Ontario Food Cluster (OFC) for example if it aligns with the community's economic development aspirations or leverage an alliance like Venture Muskoka to become more proactive in attracting new investment into the community.
- They should consider reaching out to their key federal and provincial government contacts (bureaucrats) to introduce their partnership, Unique Value Proposition (UVP) and economic development aspirations.
- By working collectively, the communities can enhance their value proposition making them more attractive to potential investors and expand their scale making them more interesting to investment influencers such a federal and provincial government representatives engaged in investment attraction.
- The Southwestern Marketing Alliance - SOMA ([www.canadasindustrialheartland.com](http://www.canadasindustrialheartland.com)) is a good example of what communities can achieve when they decide to work together to attract investment and create sustainable community well-being.



## 7.0 Glossary of Terms

### Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E)

Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) is work that encourages existing local businesses to stay and grow in your community. A BR&E program helps create a healthy local business climate. It grows your business community so you can support local jobs and investment.

### Driving Force

The impetus, power, or energy behind something in motion. With respect to economic development, some key driving forces for growth including innovation, work force availability, and regional and national fiscal policies.

### Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability refers to practices that support long-term economic growth without negatively impacting social, environmental, and cultural aspects of the community.

### Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is a category of cross-border investment in which an investor resident in one economy establishes a lasting interest in and a significant degree of influence over an enterprise resident in another economy. The investment may involve green field development, a merger or acquisition, a joint venture into a new market, expanding a company's footprint, or developing a multinational presence.

### GIG Economy

A labor market characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs. Gig workers include freelancers, independent contractors, project-based workers and are generally strongly aligned and driven by digital technology.

### Labour Force Participation

The labour force participation rate is a measure of the proportion of a country's working-age population that engages actively in the labour market, either by working or looking for work; it provides an indication of the size of the supply of labour available to engage in the production of goods and services, relative to the population at working age.



## 7.0 Glossary of Terms (cont'd)

### Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT)

The Municipal Accommodation Tax is a new revenue tool that the provincial government has given Ontario municipalities to further promote tourism as an economic driver.

On May 17, 2017, the Province enacted Bill 127, Stronger, Healthier Ontario Act, 2017, providing municipalities the authority to levy a transient accommodation tax (hotel tax). The Transient Accommodation Regulation 435/17(External link) came into force on December 1, 2017, outlining provisions for municipalities across Ontario to implement a Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT).

The Regulation applies if a municipality imposes a tax in respect of the purchase of transient accommodation in the municipality under section Municipal Act 400.1 of the Act.

### Shovel-Ready Employment

At the stage where workers can be employed, and construction can begin. From a economic development perspective, the term aligns with projects that are at the advanced stages of readiness with approval and funding in place.

### Unique Value Proposition (UVP)

Refers to a community's business case for attracting new investment. A unique value proposition is a proposition that clearly tells your potential investors how they will benefit from what your community has to offer, how your community and its services will address their business growth needs whether it be launching, relocating for expanding their business. It is what makes your community different from the competition.

### Workforce Development

Workforce development enhances a region's economic stability and prosperity by focusing on people rather than businesses. It essentially develops a human-resources strategy. Work-force development has evolved from a problem-focused approach, addressing issues such as low-skilled workers or the need for more employees in a particular industry, to a holistic approach considering participants' many barriers and the overall needs of the region.