



Economic Development Strategy

2024-2027

Norfolk
COUNTY

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Strategy Goals

This document and the objectives within build on a strong history of economic growth and evolution, rooted in our entrepreneurial spirit.

Goal 1



Support

Build a culture of support through collaborative action



Retain

Collaborate with stakeholders to retain our businesses and existing amenities.

Goal 2



Attract

Work with local partners and business to attract people, investment, labour, amenities, and housing.

Goal 3



Grow

Successful local economy and labour force.

Goal 4



Connect

Facilitate connections within the community to transit, business clusters, and business incubators through improved communication.

Executive Summary

Nestled along the picturesque coastline of Lake Erie, Norfolk County stands as one of Ontario's geographically vast regions, spanning 1,607 kilometers squared. Beyond its scenic beauty, Norfolk is a nexus of cultural vibrancy and business potential, positioning it as a prime locale for living, working, visiting, and doing business. Recognizing the intrinsic value of its diverse populace, the County is unwavering in its commitment to inclusivity, ensuring every voice, regardless of race, background, or belief, resonates in our community's growth.

In our pursuit of continuous development, we've embarked on a comprehensive competitive background assessment. Comparing Norfolk to similar-sized municipalities such as Haldimand, Oxford, Middlesex, and others, we've distilled insights across six key metrics: People and Diversity, Talent, Economic Vitality, Innovation, Equity, and Quality of Place. These findings, derived from over 40 distinct data points, anchor our strategy, pointing towards areas of strength and avenues of improvement.

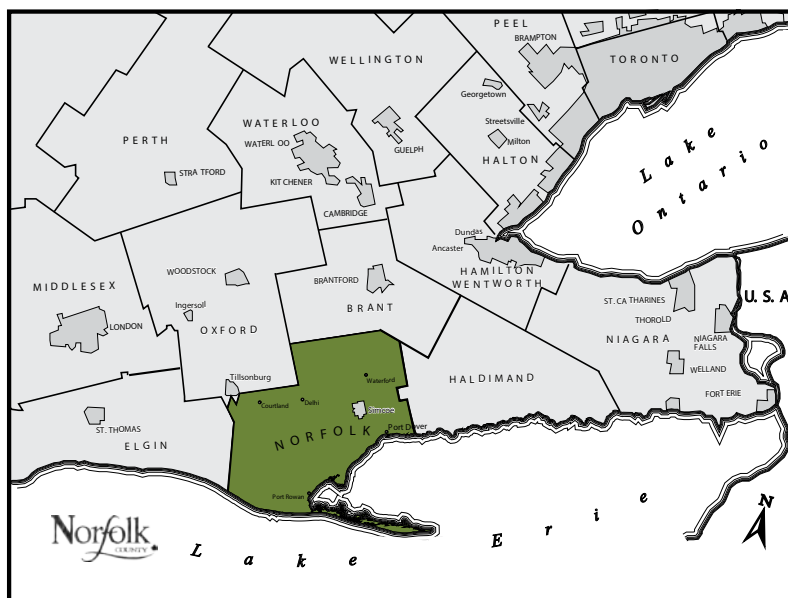
Revisiting our previous strategic plan, we've incorporated the changing dynamics of the modern economy and synced it with the evolving vision of Norfolk's corporate objectives. Embracing adaptability, this strategy will evolve as our community's needs change.

Among our identified strengths, Norfolk's prime location is paramount. Our residents relish the tranquility of rural life while benefitting from proximity to major urban hubs. Add to this an affordable cost of living, high-quality public services, and a workforce recognized for its dedication - and Norfolk's allure is evident.

Our agricultural prowess coupled with a burgeoning manufacturing sector, plus vibrant business and tourism industries, paints a promising picture for the County's economic future. Building upon these assets, our refreshed strategy outlines four primary goals, targeting:

- Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E)
- New Business Investment & Job Creation
- Talent Attraction and Workforce Development
- Enhanced Branding, Communications, and Marketing Initiatives

Together, with the unity of purpose and clarity of vision, we venture into an era of unprecedented growth and prosperity for Norfolk County.



A Note from the Mayor

On behalf of the Council and myself, I wish to extend a profound thank you to every stakeholder – from local business leaders to community agency representatives, and our county staff – who poured their expertise, experience, and passion into shaping our new Economic Development Strategy. Your dedication to the vibrant future of Norfolk shines brightly in our collective vision.

This Economic Development Strategy builds on the strong foundation provided by the corporate strategic plan - “Our Future Norfolk.” It not only champions our core strengths through existing business and industry, but also focuses keenly on attracting new businesses and investments. Our aim is clear: to create an environment where existing businesses can thrive and new enterprises see Norfolk as the prime location to plant their roots.

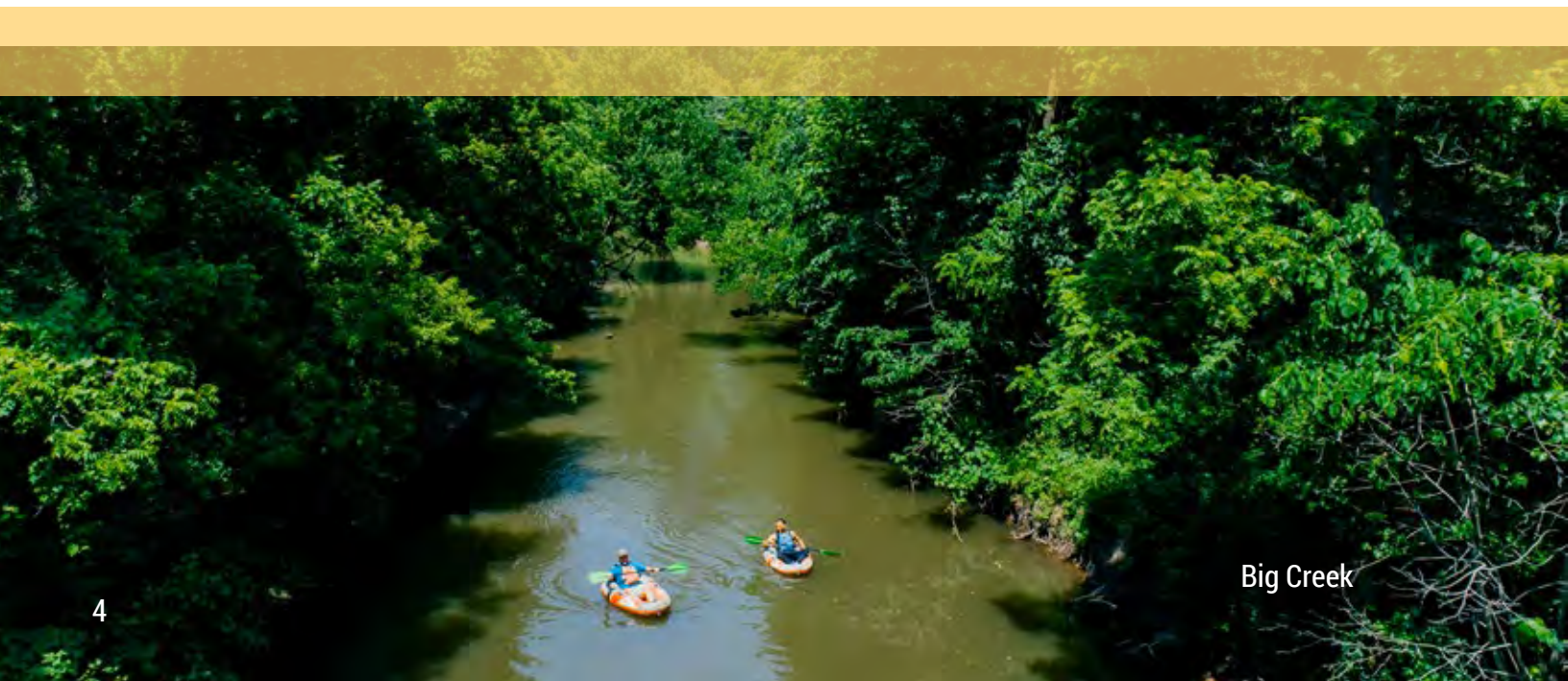
The strategic goals we’ve outlined in this plan, supported by well-thought-out initiatives, will guide Council and our dedicated staff in the coming years. They will direct our efforts to respond to current economic challenges, while proactively setting the stage for growth and opportunity.

We promise regular updates on our progress, and we encourage your continued feedback, ensuring that our strategy evolves with the needs and aspirations of our community.

With renewed vigor and clear goals in sight, Council and I are eager to continue championing a Norfolk County that is both welcoming to new business prospects and supportive of our existing gems.



Amy Martin, Mayor



Big Creek

A Note from the Director

As the Director of Strategic Innovation and Economic Development, it's my distinct honor to introduce Norfolk County's revitalized Economic Development Strategy. Behind the scenes, countless hours of dialogue, research, and collaboration have taken place. From Council to local business leaders to our very own residents and staff, your voices have been integral in shaping this vision.

The essence of our strategy is grounded in this background work, as well as the August 2023 report prepared by KPMG on "Priority Setting for the New Economic Strategy." Most importantly, however, it is aligned with the mission, vision, and values set out in our corporate strategic plan, "Our Future Norfolk".

Norfolk, blessed with a vibrant agricultural legacy and a growing tourism sector, is at a pivotal juncture. With this new strategy, we have charted a course that honours these pillars while opening doors to innovative businesses and fostering an environment conducive to investment and growth.

Administration, at its core, is about ensuring that our strategies translate into tangible benefits for our community. This requires not only vision but also effective implementation. The Norfolk team, supported by Council and in collaboration with various stakeholders, is equipped and eager to bring this strategy to life, ensuring that its ripple effects are felt in every corner.

We look forward to this journey towards growth, innovation, and prosperity for all of Norfolk. Our best days lie ahead.



John Regan
Director, Strategic Innovation
& Economic Development



Toyotetsu

Introduction

Norfolk County is a vibrant and growing community located along the coastline of Lake Erie. One of Ontario's geographically largest counties at 1,607 km², with access to vibrant natural and cultural amenities, Norfolk is widely regarded as a desirable place to live, work, visit do business.

Norfolk is dedicated to advancing efforts to build our community that celebrates and values the contributions of visitors, residents, employers and employees. We are committed to building a sustainable community and responsible government in which all members are equitably represented regardless of race, background, and beliefs. Through a sustained commitment to addressing issues of diversity in all forms, we aspire to create a more inclusive, safe, and welcoming community which celebrates the unique gifts, talents and contributions of all.

This competitive background assessment provides a snapshot of community and economic conditions in Norfolk compared to other similarly sized municipalities. This analysis compares Norfolk to other communities in Ontario, whose size, demographics, and economics are similar to Norfolk and offer policies and best practices that the community can look to: Haldimand, Oxford, Middlesex, Elgin, Brant, North Bay and Kawartha Lakes.



Meuse Brewery and Market



Port Dover Lighthouse

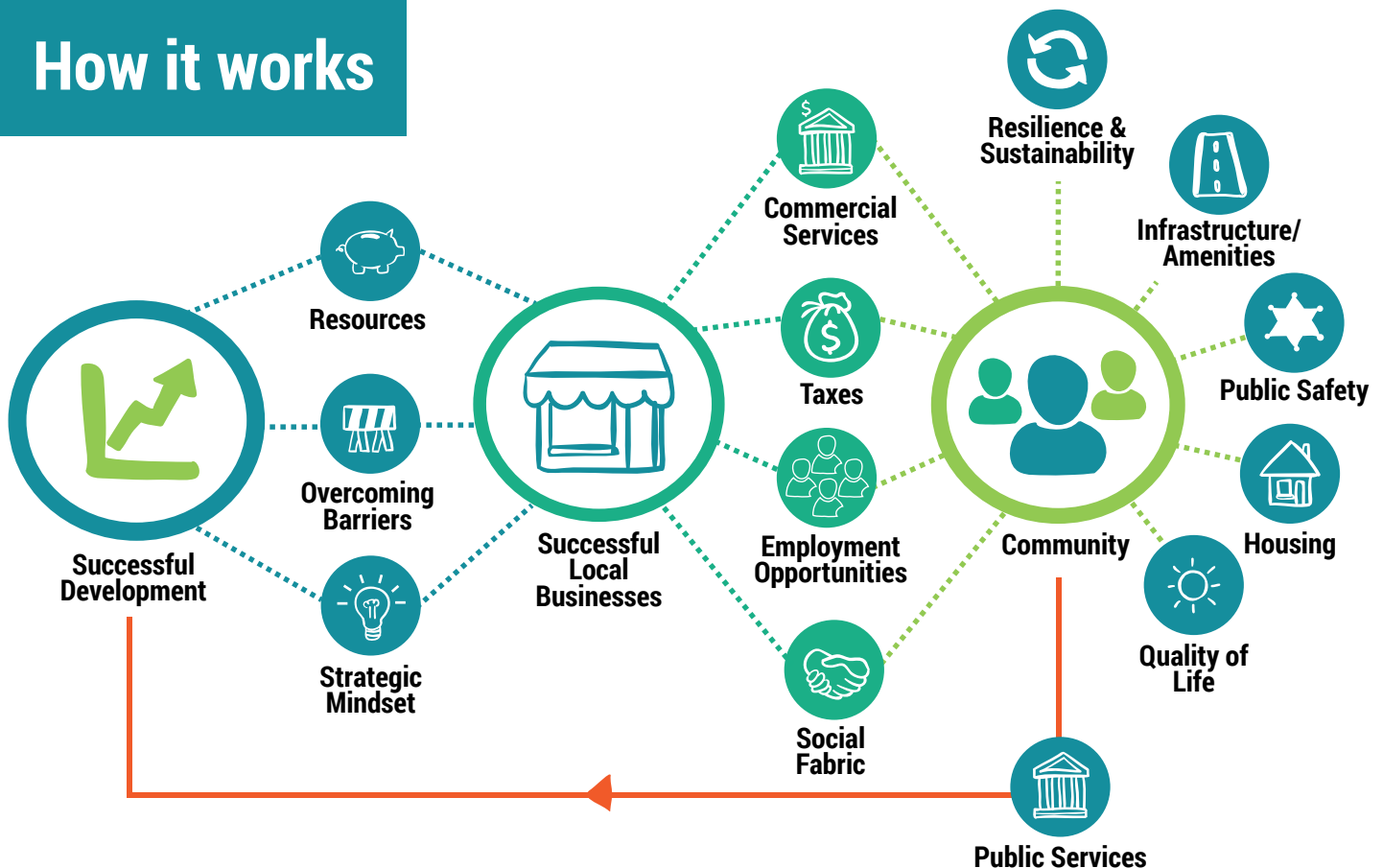
Economic Development

Economic development is about attracting and growing businesses, creating and retaining jobs, and making our communities better places to live.

Attracting and growing businesses strengthens our economy providing locally-produced goods and services. Strong businesses pay taxes that go for vital services such as schools, roads, fire, and police. Businesses also provide good jobs that put money in people's pockets and allow for a higher quality of life.

Economic development has a lasting impact on a community. Job providers purchase goods and services they need to operate, and their workers purchase goods and services they need to live. Money changes hands many times as it flows through the local economy and creates overall prosperity enjoyed by all citizens.

How it works



Adapted from the California Association of Local Economic Development

This strategy picks up from the previous strategic plan and takes into consideration the new economy, current and future Norfolk corporate plans and strategies. This document will be refreshed as required to adjust course to meet the needs of the community that we serve.

Methodology

Over 40 metrics were collected for Norfolk and the benchmarking (comparator) communities. The metrics fall into the following six categories: People and Diversity, Talent, Economic Vitality, Innovation, Equity, and Quality of Place.

The data points used in this assessment will serve as a point of reference to gauge performance, outline comparative and competitive advantages or weaknesses, and give the premise to the approaches and recommendations in the economic development strategy.

Statistics Canada

This tool provided information on demographics, immigration, housing, labour, and income. Data was found in both the 2016 and 2021 Census of Population; the Census of Agriculture; the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation; and the Canadian Housing Statistics Program.

Lightcast/Analyst

Lightcast/Analyst was used to gather information on metrics such as employment concentration, major industries, education, occupations, and wages, local job postings, and input-output models, which form an even stronger picture of the community. This tool enabled staff to compare all regions against each other, and also included Ontario and Canada; this was helpful when comparing location indexes (formerly location quotients). Business counts were used to determine the number of establishments in each industry sector.

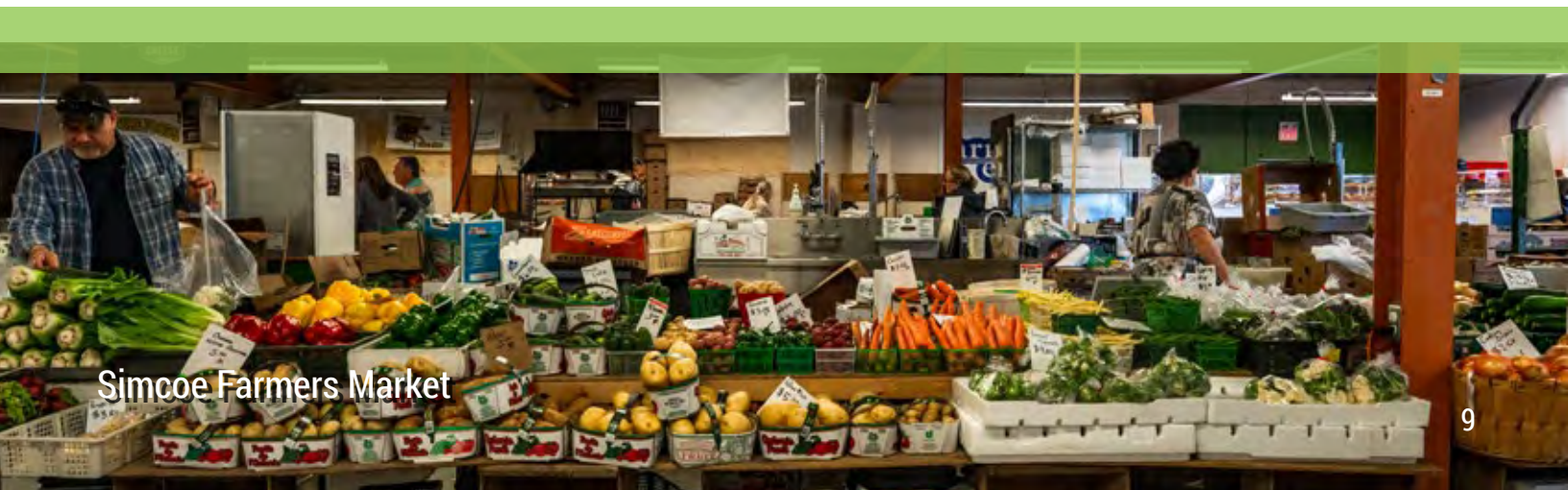
Environics Analytics

Environics Analytics was useful for sourcing qualitative data pertaining to demographics. This helped create a stronger picture of the residents in Norfolk County, including their social values, tendencies, and preferences. Products used from Environics included DemoStats, Opticks, SocialValues, and PRIZM® Bases.

Connect ON

This tool was used to identify agriculture and manufacturing assets in Norfolk utilizing the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).

Please note: Unless otherwise specified, this analysis is based primarily on data estimated from internal staff Intelligence.



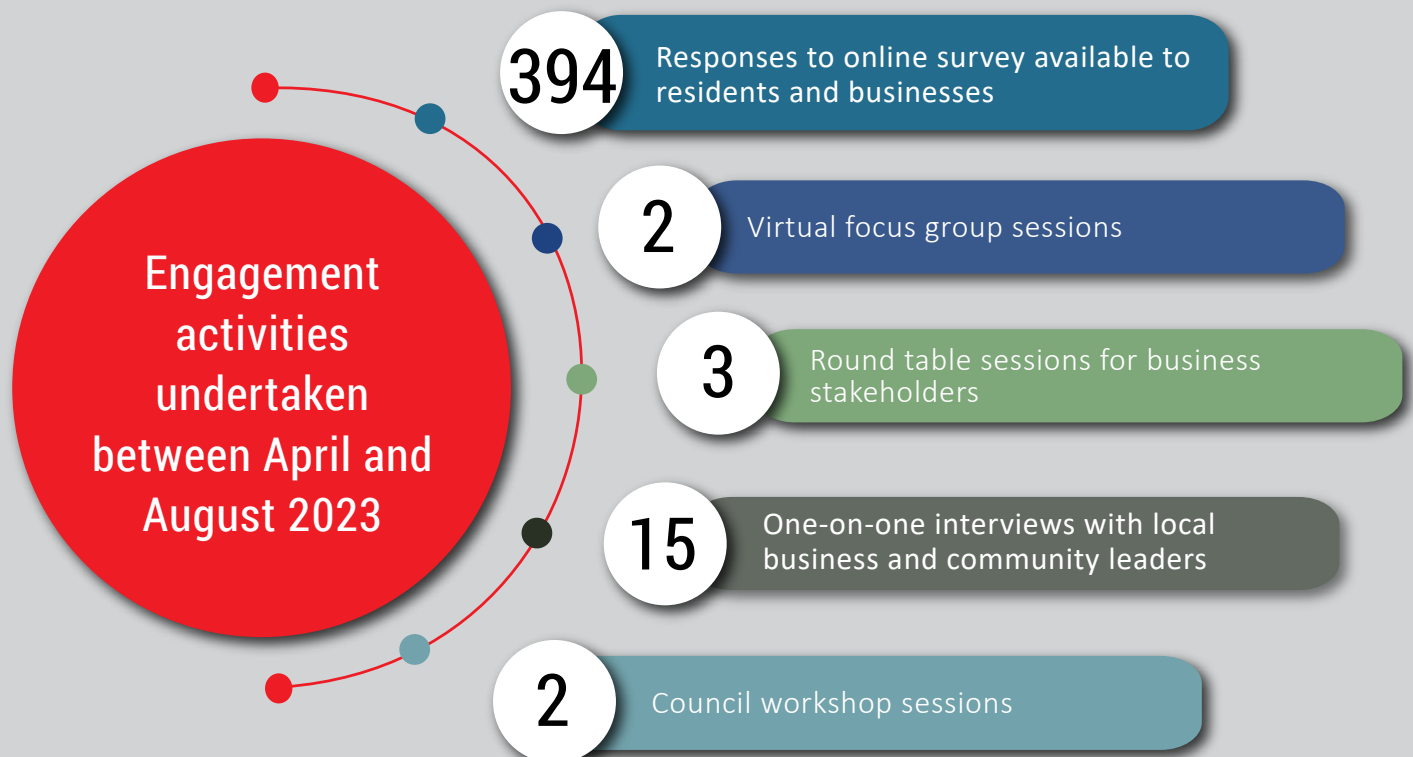
Simcoe Farmers Market

Engagement

Initial engagement work was completed by KPMG consultants and Norfolk County Economic Development Staff.

Engagement was sought from community and business stakeholders, business support agencies and Council advisory committees. Discussions were specific to Norfolk's economic priorities, the business community's challenges, aspirations and opportunities. Stakeholders shared their input regarding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) related to economic growth, suitable comparators, and Norfolk's reputation and relationships. The discussions were aggregated into key themes for the

purpose of this report. An online survey was facilitated through KPMG with residents and businesses on developing the new priorities and goals for Norfolk's new Economic Development Strategy. There was a total of 389 contributors and 394 responses were received.



Survey highlights

15%

of survey respondents expressed a desire for greater community investment and a need for more forward-looking approaches

25%

of survey respondents described tourism and Norfolk's natural beauty as key strengths

92%

of survey respondents agreed that attracting new Business Investment should be a priority for Norfolk

95%

of survey respondents agreed that keeping businesses and helping them expand/grow should be important to Norfolk



Our Foundation

Norfolk County has a variety of strengths, and these were highlighted in background research. These strengths support our strategy and goals moving forward.

Norfolk's location offers the best of both worlds – one can live in a peaceful, rural area while still being nearby to major urban centres and connected by major highways such as the 401 and 403. This unique value proposition is leveraged in the strategy. Some areas in the County are also considered to have a more affordable cost of living when compared to other nearby regions. These characteristics, plus others, make Norfolk an attractive place to live. A high standard of living is obtained through Norfolk's small-town lifestyle, proximity to Lake Erie, and public services such as hospitals and schools.

Workers in the County are known to be highly knowledgeable and possess a strong work ethic. They are dedicated and loyal – this is one of the key reasons to retain our workforce. Attracting more talent to the community would only add more value.

Norfolk's agricultural sector is highly important. The County takes full advantage of unique soil in the region and grows a wide variety of crops. Residents and tourists alike enjoy access to fresh local produce, and this industry has a long history within Norfolk.

The manufacturing industry in Norfolk is also instrumental to economic growth. In the coming years, there is an opportunity to develop the manufacturing supply chain in Norfolk. The goal would be to take advantage of recent large-scale investments and broaden the economic base.



EZ Grow





Titan Trailers

Fresh Thinking and Innovation

One of the major benefits of innovation is its contribution to economic growth. This can be demonstrated by metrics that are closely linked to tourism, and agriculture, and manufacturing. These sectors drive productivity forward in the County. The strength of the ecosystem to produce new ideas and companies in Norfolk County is presented in the analysis below.

Accelerators and Incubators

Regional innovation centers close by to Norfolk include Innovation Guelph, Innovation Factory in Hamilton, and Communitel in Kitchener, the Brant Resource Enterprise Centre and Venture Norfolk.

Norfolk is also home to several spaces that promote innovation. Groundswell Coworking, located in Simcoe, has office desks for rent and offers a space for community and collaboration. Venture Norfolk, formerly known as Norfolk District Business Development Corporation, supports the local economy by offering services to entrepreneurs, such as help with business start-ups, or current business improvements. Riversyde 83 is a new community space in Simcoe Ontario, which is fully equipped with meeting rooms, work areas, and an industrial kitchen – as they grow, they plan to host workshops and allow young, local entrepreneurs to work in their space.

Local Highlights

There are 1,210 establishments in the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Farming sector (19% of all establishments); Norfolk County is the top of the list amongst its comparator communities.

Norfolk's retail trade is growing along with its tourism industry. There are 462 establishments in the Retail Trade sector, accounting for 7.21% of all establishments.

Fanshawe College's Simcoe campus offers that are within the scope of these top fields, including Personal Support Worker, Social Service Worker, and Welding Techniques.

Part-time studies include Woodworking, Welding, Small Engine Repair, and Automotive Basics.

The campus's two graduate programs correlate directly to Norfolk's agriculture and manufacturing industries: Agri-Business Management, and Supply Chain Management.





Sand Hill Park

Goals and Priorities for the EcDev Strategy

As we venture into this next phase of Norfolk County's economic journey, it's important to have a clear and concise road map to guide our endeavors. The following section delineates our four core strategic goals. These will be the compass points that will steer Norfolk towards a prosperous and inclusive future.

Goal 1



Support & Retain

Retention and
expansion for
existing
businesses

Goal 2



Attract

New business
investment/ job
creation

Goal 3



Grow

Talent
attraction and
workforce
development

Goal 4



Connect

Branding,
communications
and marketing
and tools



Norfolk Lumber



DeCloet Greenhouses

Goal 1: Support and Retain

Retention and expansion for existing businesses



Remaining steadfast in our commitment to fortifying the backbone of Norfolk County's economy, our strategy emphasizes the importance of ongoing support to existing business. Recognizing that these established businesses are integral pillars of our community's prosperity, Norfolk will continue to collaborate closely with all partners and stakeholders. We'll be working to proactively minimize growth barriers, and to maintain a culture of unwavering business support through regular, dedicated contact and open communication practices with our existing business community.

Priority 1.1

Develop and implement a BR&E Action Plan to provide ongoing support and service to existing businesses

Actions

- Develop business survey, analysis and visitation program by sector, to gather business data and help identify opportunities and trends to grow and support
- Create industry cluster working groups to define cluster assets, performance, growth opportunities, and challenges
- Strengthen relationship and communication with home building organizations, associations, developers to stay up to date on opportunities and challenges within the local building (and planning) industry
- Formalize agreements with local business accelerators & enterprise centres to increase local support
- Create a bi-monthly e-newsletter and distribute to local businesses with business-related updates from other partners, etc.

Priority 1.2

Pursue advocacy and funding opportunities with all levels of government

Actions

- Strategically pursue non-tax sources of funding which align with the priorities set in this strategy
- Advocate for Federal/Provincial broadband initiatives, and monitor for program/funding announcements
- Create a map of Farm Gate Retail in Norfolk; promote to tourists, but also educate locals

Priority 1.3

Work with partners to attract more visitors for Tourism, Recreation and Culture

Actions

- Investigate DMO opportunities as a supporting agency
- Engage with accommodation providers on potential introduction of Municipal Accommodation Study
- Collaborate with and support local Chambers and BIAs in tourism efforts while gathering information from local tourism entities on needs assessments
- Build out presence of Tourism on Norfolk website

Goal 2: Attract

Facilitate new business investment and job creation



One of the main goals of the plan is to foster new business investment and job creation in the region, while ensuring that sustainability and innovation are guiding principles. To achieve this goal, the plan outlines four objectives that will help to enhance both the economic competitiveness and environmental stewardship of the area.

Priority 2.1

Support and expand creative industries to benefit local economy

Actions

- a. Support existing community agencies
- b. Consider opportunities for film and creative industry office

Priority 2.2

Promote and support awareness of sustainable practices such as, precision agriculture, regenerative farming, etc.

Actions

- a. Create working group / table to address innovation through University of Guelph and Fanshawe College with a focus on Agri-Business
- b. Identify and support clusters for “agri-sustainability”
- c. Research and develop opportunities for advanced manufacturing sector and agricultural technology

Priority 2.3

Explore partnership with neighbouring municipalities to develop a strategy for an innovative food hub/seasonal food terminal and attracting value added food processing

Actions

- a. Formulate inter-municipal round-table with area municipalities to promote partnerships and collaboration
- b. Work with Ontario Food Cluster on FDI and trade missions

Priority 2.4

Explore Industrial Lands for Investment

Actions

- a. Undertake business case analysis for creating municipally owned Business park and/or possible joint ventures
- b. Establish and promote a live inventory of available industrial land for retail, commercial and industrial use
- c. Create needs study by sector including advanced manufacturing, health sciences, and other emerging sectors and industries

Goal 3: Grow

Talent attraction and workforce development



A thriving community is built on the strength of its people. As we look towards the future of Norfolk County, our strategy prioritizes the attraction of dynamic talent and the continued development of our local workforce. Recognizing that people seek more than just employment opportunities, Norfolk boasts an unmatched quality of life, striking a harmonious balance between affordability and the unparalleled beauty of our natural surroundings. Here, residents can immerse themselves in the serenity of nature, enjoy a vibrant community spirit, and benefit from a cost of living that allows dreams to be realized. Our commitment is to not only provide meaningful career avenues but also to nurture an environment where every individual can lead a fulfilling life, both personally and professionally.

Priority 3.1

Collaborate with partners to attract entrepreneurs, students, newcomers, and temporary workers, promoting opportunities for skilled labour and agricultural careers

Actions

- Introduce a “Newcomer Squad” and assist with integration for newcomers through local immigration partnerships. Facilitate mentorship for newcomers with entrepreneurial spirit
- Collaborate with partners to develop workshops that promote Diversity, Equity and Inclusion within the local economy
- Perform a case study on the quality of life for workers in Norfolk

Priority 3.2

Investigate collaborative and innovative strategies for housing and transportation

Actions

- Through the development process, support downtown revitalization by working with BIAs and local chambers while continuing to encourage mixed use development
- Evaluate findings of Transit Master Plan to improve connections with employment and labour force
- Explore permissions to allow for innovative housing to support farms, Seasonal agriculture, and Tourism workers in the urban areas

Priority 3.3

Encourage the development of training and educational programs that meet the needs of the local economy

Actions

- Leverage new and existing partnerships with government, institutional, business and community groups to offer skills training and educational programs - including agricultural leadership, expertise, and innovation
- Identify cluster areas and new future technology opportunities to position Norfolk as an innovative rural education centre

Goal 4: Connect

Branding, communications, marketing and tools



Norfolk County is a place where people and businesses thrive. It is a place where the rich agricultural land, the affordable living, the quality of life and the natural beauty create a unique and attractive brand. The new strategy will reinforce the many facets of the Norfolk brand in a way that reflects the values, the aspirations and the achievements of our community. It's a brand story that we want to share with the world.

Priority 4.1

Build the Economic Development community brand to maintain a brand ownership position for both internal and external audiences

Actions

- a. Explore branding opportunities for:
 - i. Ontario's Garden
 - ii. Find your Folk
 - iii. Visit Norfolk
 - iv. Invest in Norfolk
 - v. Made in Norfolk
- b. Work with partners and senior government to explore and promote opportunities at business events, conferences, trade shows and meetings
- c. Explore options for using online influencers to promote and grow from the outside

Priority 4.2

Promote unique value proposition and/or comparative advantage of Norfolk

Actions

- a. Prepare community profile on the advantages of living and doing business in Norfolk along with real time statistics
- b. Utilize a range of mediums to advertise the Norfolk advantage
- c. Create informational profile videos/testimonials on existing local manufacturing industries and businesses
- d. Create investment packages targeted at various sectors

Priority 4.3

Develop the capacity and tools to deliver Norfolk's economic development programs and services

Actions

- a. Determine Economic Development Department service delivery levels for capacity to meet the needs of existing and prospective businesses, and to carry out the priorities set out in the strategy
- b. Revitalize and promote Norfolk's CIP Grant Program

Concluding Remarks

As we embark on this next leg of the journey Norfolk County, it's essential to revisit and reflect on the pillars that underscore our vision. Nestled within Ontario's vast expanses, Norfolk isn't just geographically significant; it's a testament to the harmonious blend of nature, culture, and economic potential.

The comprehensive assessment, contrasting Norfolk against similar-sized municipalities, reaffirmed our unique positioning. These findings, spanning from People and Diversity to Quality of Place, aren't just metrics; they're a beacon that will guide our community's trajectory.

Our previous strategic milestones have paved the way, but it's our current strategy, attuned to the modern economy's pulse and the aspirations of Norfolk's communities, that promises a future filled with growth and inclusivity.

The strengths identified in this process - from our unparalleled location to our agricultural role - aren't merely assets. They are the foundation upon which we build our future. With the outline of our four central goals - from business retention and investment to talent to enhanced branding initiatives - we have a clear roadmap to drive Norfolk's economic narrative forward.

In conclusion, Norfolk isn't just a region; it's a promise. A promise of inclusive growth, of a community that cherishes its roots while reaching for the stars, and of a future where every individual and business finds its place under the sun. Together, armed with this strategy, we chart our course towards a brighter, prosperous tomorrow for Norfolk.





Turkey Point Trail



Fairgrounds Festival



Economic Development

185 Robinson St. Simcoe N3Y 5L6

519-426-5870 | 226-NORFOLK | 1-800-699-9038

economic.development@norfolkcounty.ca