



MOVING FORWARD:  
IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE  
FOR NORFOLK WORKERS  
2024  
STUDY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

developed by



# Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	i
Introduction.....	1
Background.....	1
Methodology.....	2
Research Highlights .....	4
Research Findings.....	5
The Big Picture .....	5
Perceptions on life satisfaction in Norfolk County .....	5
Perceptions on sense of meaning/purpose.....	5
Biggest Barriers to Good Quality of Life .....	7
Spotlight on Prosperity .....	8
Spotlight on Health.....	12
Spotlight on Society .....	15
Spotlight on Environment.....	18
Spotlight on Good Governance.....	21
Looking Ahead.....	24
Implementation Plan.....	25
Priority # 1: Connect the County .....	26
Priority #2: Raise Business Standards .....	30
Priority # 3: Strategically Plan for Managed Growth.....	35
Priority # 4: Inclusive Marketing.....	40
Norfolk County Economic Development 2025-2026 Priorities.....	44
Concluding Remarks .....	50
Appendix A: Literature Reviewed .....	51
Appendix B: Demographic Profile of Stakeholders Engaged.....	53
Appendix C: Research Design .....	58

# Executive Summary

Happy, healthy workers are the foundation upon which successful communities are built. Norfolk County’s 2024-2027 Economic Development strategy demonstrates strong recognition of this, highlighting workforce development, enhanced connectivity and inclusive and sustainable business growth as key priorities. However, there is limited local level data to guide decision makers in enhancing quality of life, both within the workplace and beyond. Acknowledging this, in May 2024, Norfolk County’s Economic Development team, in partnership with Workforce Synergy, set out to better understand its community’s quality of life needs.

Based on Statistics Canada’s Quality of Life Framework, this report outlines findings identified from our literature review, workforce survey and stakeholder forum on gaps and opportunities to support quality of life in Norfolk County. Demographic differences in perceptions of quality of life are highlighted, pointing to the need to focus on efforts that promote inclusivity and sustainability.

An Implementation Plan is then presented (pages 25-48), outlining the 4 key priorities identified, as well as recommendations, actionable steps, timelines, key partners and resources required to execute each priority, as well as key performance indicators to measure the effectiveness thereof.

A summary of priorities and recommendations is outlined below.

Priority # 1: Connect the County	Priority # 2: Raise Business Standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1. Increase the availability and affordability of public transportation options</li> <li>1.2. Scale up the availability and affordability of Internet and cellular service to all homes across the county.</li> <li>1.3. Establish a local ride-share platform serving Norfolk County with an emphasis on serving the needs of the workforce and employers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1. Educate employers on the value of skills training to current and prospective workers. Offer support with the resources needed.</li> <li>2.2. Strengthen the capacity of local businesses to meet employees' needs by broadening knowledge of recruitment and retention resources</li> <li>2.3. Train workplaces on diversity, equity and inclusion</li> </ul>

<b>Priority # 3: Strategically Plan for Managed Growth</b>	<b>Priority # 4: Inclusive Marketing</b>
3.1. Design spaces for recreation 3.2. Bring essential services closer to residents 3.3. Revise land development policies to meet workforce needs. 3.4. Attract more health-care practitioners to Norfolk County	4.1. Create a diverse and representative committee to tackle quality of life issues 4.2. Market community building spaces, services and events 4.3. Promote awareness of local agribusinesses

Additionally, metrics on life satisfaction and sense of belonging are compared to national and provincial data, to provide stakeholders with a marker on where Norfolk County stands as of mid-2024. Norfolk County’s Economic Development team aims to reassess the same set of factors in 15 months – January 2026 - to observe the effectiveness of actions undertaken.

Foundational to this study is the knowledge that quality of life factors are interconnected – enhancing quality of life relies on simultaneously balancing and addressing multiple priorities, including transit, healthcare, recreation, and equity, diversity and inclusion. Bearing this in mind, Norfolk County’s Economic Development team cast a wide net to scope out quality of life gaps and opportunities as perceived by local residents, opting to consider factors that both directly and indirectly influence economic development across the region. As such, the needs identified through this research are complex and multi-faceted. The priorities and recommendations outlined within this report call for a unified effort from local economic development as well as other Norfolk County departments (including recreation, social services, building, planning, and heritage and culture), the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie, Norfolk Chamber of Commerce groups, Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), industry associations, educational institutions, Employment Ontario services, literacy and basic skills, and other business support organizations. Coordination and collaboration between these stakeholders is fundamental to fostering life satisfaction and a strong sense of purpose – key features of a happy, healthy workforce.

# Introduction

## Background

By many metrics, Norfolk County is well-regarded as a place to live and work. The proximity to local trails, beaches and gardens, the vibrancy of community and of course, the rich diversity of foods grown in local farms, were all highlighted as sources of joy and pride by Norfolk residents.

The diversity of the local population is growing as an increasing number of individuals from across Ontario and outside Canada - including refugees, economic migrants<sup>1</sup> and their families, students and temporary workers - call Norfolk home<sup>2</sup>. It is thus important to consider the kinds of supports required to facilitate settlement, integration and connectivity amongst existing and new residents.

This report is built on the recognition that good quality of life is fundamental to economic development. Research suggests that traditional economic development strategies – such as business and talent attraction and retention – are most effective when paired with a focus on strengthening quality of life. Through investing in public services and recreational and cultural spaces, Norfolk’s economic development team can play a significant role in building and bridging social capital, allowing residents to feel safer, prouder, happier, and more invested in contributing positively to their community<sup>3</sup>. This endeavour is also critical to positioning Norfolk County as a key player in Ontario’s economic landscape. Strengthening quality of life better equips Norfolk with the talent required to develop industrial clusters, such as the agri-food chain, and the emerging electric vehicle battery and assembly facilities in development.

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<sup>1</sup> Immigrants who have been selected for their ability to contribute to Canada's economy through their ability to meet labour market needs, to own and manage or to build a business, to make a substantial investment, to create their own employment or to meet specific provincial or territorial labour market needs

<sup>2</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2020003-eng.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/improving-quality-of-life-not-just-business-is-the-best-path-to-midwestern-rejuvenation/>

This Implementation Plan presents opportunities to support improved quality of life based on the perspectives of stakeholders across the County. Following the Quality of Life Framework for Canada<sup>4</sup>, this document summarizes local perceptions on overall life satisfaction and sense of meaning and purpose, as well as five key dimensions of quality of life:

1. Prosperity
2. Health
3. Society
4. Environment
5. Good Governance

It is important to note that while the five dimensions of quality of life were assessed separately, they are intertwined in many ways. This report presents the linkages between various factors, illustrating the need for community stakeholders to work in unison towards tackling the quality of life gaps identified. By developing this plan in consultation with local stakeholders, and engaging them in a conversation about the goals, steps, roles, responsibilities and resources outlined within the report, we aim to encourage shared ownership in Norfolk County's endeavor to make the region a place where workers and residents thrive.

## Methodology

The objective of this study was to identify ways in which quality of life can be enhanced for local workers. Our research methodology, summarized below, was developed based on the following questions:

- What are the biggest gaps and obstacles to good quality of life for Norfolk County workers? How does this vary by demographics?
- What can community stakeholders do to support quality of life across various demographics?

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www160.statcan.gc.ca/infosheet-infofiche-eng.htm>

## Literature Review

To begin, a review of existing quality of life literature was conducted (Appendix A). Several frameworks were examined and assessed, one of which – Statistics Canada’s Quality of Life Framework – was used as a foundation upon which this study’s research design was built. The five domains and two central indicators that constitute this framework were considered, and filtered through to identify ones that would be most beneficial to unpack from an economic development lens. Using this, as well as other strategic documents that guide local workforce planning efforts, a community survey and stakeholder forum were designed.

Each of the factors examined are assessed from a fairness and inclusion lens, as well as a sustainability and reliance lens, to ensure that strategies employed support equitable, long-term advancements in quality of life for local workers.

## Community Survey

Between June and August 2024, a community survey was conducted, with 457 Norfolk County residents and workers - targeted via social media, through partners and at community events – sharing feedback on their quality of life.

Data was collected on 30 metrics, allowing the research team to hone in on priorities across the board, as well as demographic specific priorities and needs.

## Stakeholder Forum

On July 11th, 2024, a hybrid stakeholder forum was hosted in Norfolk County, inviting 12 representatives from government, community service organizations, business, industry and labour support groups and post-secondary institutions to:

- (a) Identify systemic gaps and barriers to good quality of life; and
- (b) Strategize programs, policies, practices and partnerships that can be fostered by Norfolk County’s Economic Development team to improve living and working conditions for residents and workers.

A demographic summary of survey respondents and a list of organizations engaged through the stakeholder forum are presented in Appendix B. The survey and forum questions are included in Appendix C.

# Research Highlights

Key strategies suggested by local stakeholders are listed below in the order of priorities presented in the Implementation Plan. The second column indicates how each corresponds with the 5 quality of life dimensions examined.

Recommendations	Dimension
<b>Connect the County</b>	
Increasing the availability and affordability of public transportation options designed to fit the travel needs of respondents.	Environment
Scaling up the availability and affordability of Internet and cellular service to all homes across the county.	Prosperity
Establishing a local ride-share platform with an emphasis on serving the needs of the workforce and employers	Environment
<b>Raise Business Standards</b>	
Educating employers on the value of, and supporting them with the resources required to offer training to current and prospective workers.	Prosperity
Strengthening the capacity of local businesses to meet employees' needs by broadening knowledge of recruitment and retention resources	Prosperity
Training workplaces on diversity, equity and inclusion	Good Governance
<b>Strategically Plan for Managed Growth</b>	
Designing spaces for recreation, especially in Indigenous and rural communities	Health
Bringing essential services closer to residents	Society
Revising land development policies to meet workforce needs.	Environment
Attracting more health-care practitioners to Norfolk County	Health
<b>Inclusive Marketing</b>	
Creating a diverse and representative committee to tackle quality of life issues	Good Governance
Marketing community building spaces, services and events	Society
Promoting awareness of local agribusiness	Environment



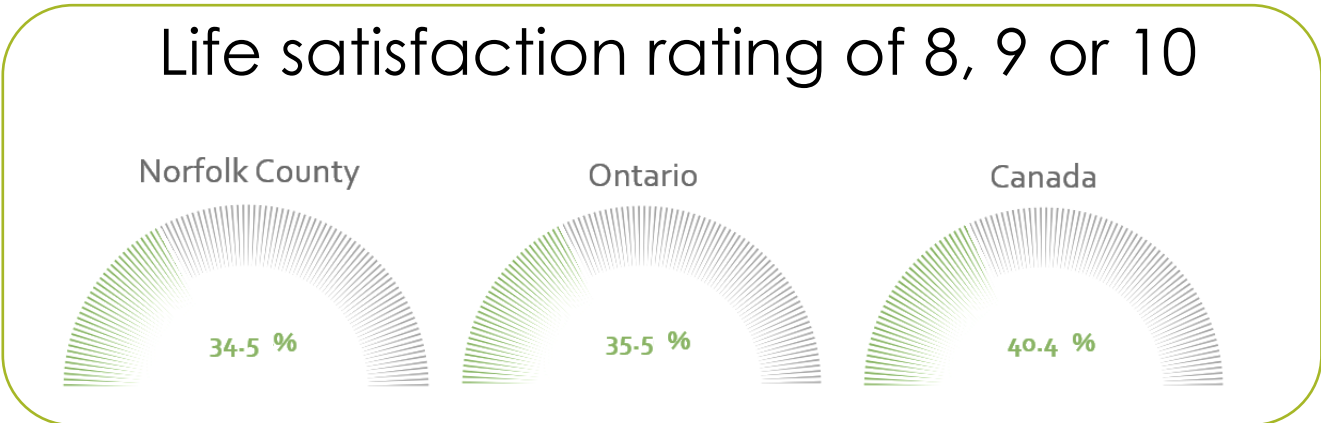
# Research Findings

## The Big Picture

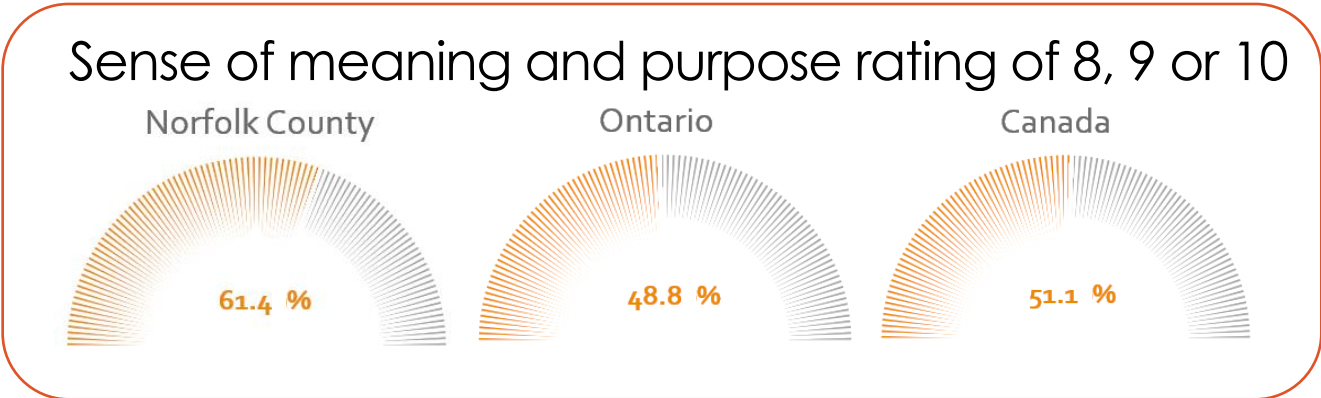
Based on Q2 2024 data collected by Statistics Canada, Norfolk County residents have similar levels of life satisfaction when compared to individuals across the province, but stand slightly lower than the Canadian average. Norfolk County also followed Ontario’s trends in terms of satisfaction by age - youth and seniors indicated greater satisfaction with their life in Norfolk County.

Survey respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction and sense of purpose on a scale of 1-10, allowing the research team to compare local perceptions to comparable provincial and national-level data published by Statistics Canada.

## Perceptions on life satisfaction in Norfolk County



## Perceptions on sense of meaning/purpose



While almost 35% of survey respondents rated their life satisfaction at an 8 or higher, the average rating sat at 6.3.



Migrant and tourism sector workers shared significantly higher life satisfaction ratings, while individuals with a cognitive disability responded lower on average to this question, likely because of limited opportunities that match their skills and higher rates of discrimination – noted by 96% and 52% of respondents from this demographic respectively.

Local residents did have a significantly higher sense of meaning and purpose - about 62% of local survey respondents rated this factor 8 or higher, compared to 49% across the province.



Norfolk residents boasted a higher sense of meaning and purpose compared to provincial and national Statistics Canada data.

Tourism sector workers also boasted the highest sense of purpose, followed by students and seniors. Persons with disabilities, youth and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community rated this factor lower.

These differences were further reflected in the detailed quality of life assessment, which examined several metrics across the five dimensions outlined in Statistics Canada Quality of Life Framework.

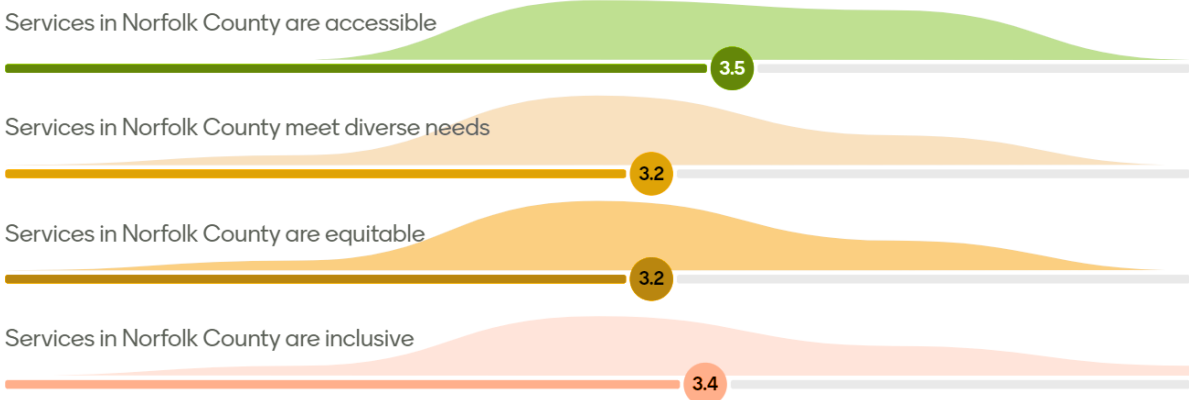
## Biggest Barriers to Good Quality of Life

Community stakeholders were asked about the biggest barriers to good quality of life in Norfolk County. Below is a summary of responses, expressed in a word cloud (with the largest phases denoting most frequently raised concerns).



A key theme that emerged through this discussion and carried forward into each of the 5 quality of life dimensions identified was the need to connect the county through increasing access to affordable public transportation. Affordability was also raised repeatedly, suggesting a key focus on raising business standards to ensure that quality of work offerings – like income and benefit packages, skills training and development opportunities and social environments that promote diversity and inclusion – are equitable, comprehensive and attractive when compared to surrounding communities. Given Norfolk’s large size, access to services - recreational, commercial, social and healthcare – was also noted as a barrier. Balancing the ‘small town-feel’ while planning for future growth is thus a critical priority according to stakeholders. In addition, attendees highlighted the importance of larger scale marketing initiatives to broaden awareness of the local agri-food industry and community spaces and services, and proposed a committee designed to address discrimination issues and eliminate biases in programming offered.

# On Accessibility, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion



Forum attendees noted that some of the region’s services could use improvements in meeting equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility needs. Specifically, accessibility of transportation options was highlighted as a significant barrier for seniors, newcomers and youth. Other opportunities suggested involve creating more diverse job opportunities that match local skills and interests, offering language classes at convenient times and spaces, broadening Internet and cellular access, and improving the marketing of services to those who are most likely to benefit from them.

The following sections summarize local findings based on the five dimensions of Statistics Canada’s Quality of Life framework.

## Spotlight on Prosperity

Residents shared a relatively optimistic view of the future, with almost 70% indicating they were hopeful, although most were only ‘somewhat’ hopeful.

This hopefulness is directly linked to prosperity in the labour market, which can be better assessed by examining factors like income and growth, employment and job quality, skills and opportunity and economic security and deprivation.

The Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie’s (WPBGE) 2023 study on Quality of Work, focusing on Norfolk, Haldimand and Brant Counties, Six Nations of the Grand River, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and the City of Brantford, presents unique insights into some of these factors.

The research revealed that local businesses largely excelled at creating positive social environments and ensuring favourable working intensity and working conditions. However, income and benefits packages, as well as career prospects, were not perceived as favourably. This study found that 1 in 3 Norfolk County residents did not earn enough to sustain their family's basic needs. This is further exemplified by 2022 tax filer data, according to which, Norfolk County residents made \$35,990<sup>5</sup> on average. This is more than \$6,000 lower than the 2023 living wage rate for the Brant, Haldimand, Norfolk and Niagara region (\$42,328)<sup>6</sup>. Increasing income is, of course, a key target, but alone was noted to be insufficient by study participants. Sustainably fostering prosperity involves building up capacity and skills of local workers, so they feel empowered to pursue career paths that allow them to climb the career ladder.

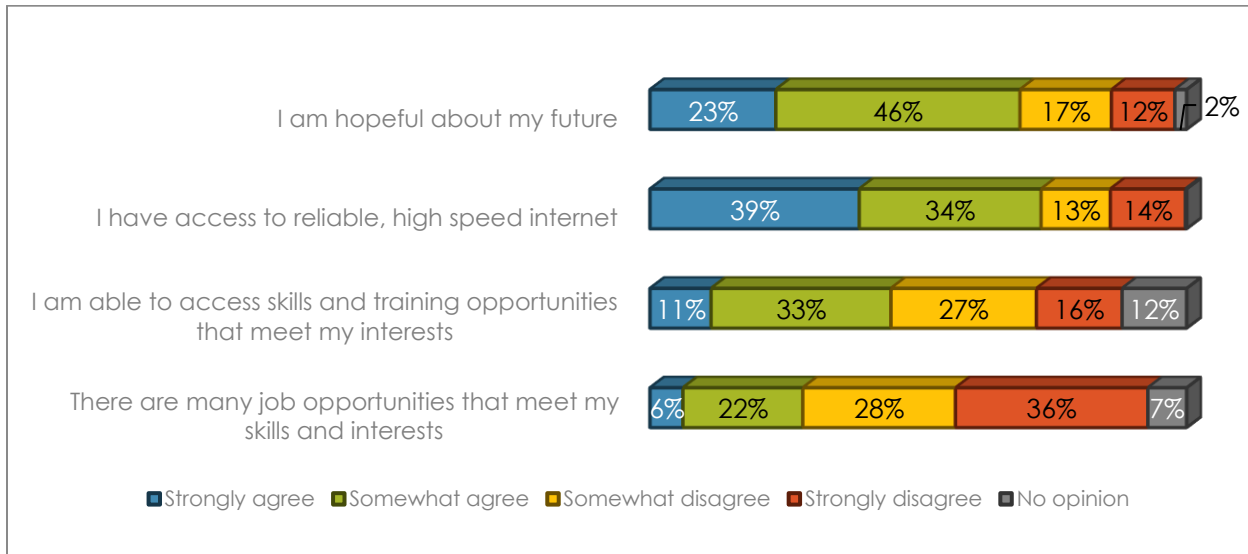
Further, based on our survey results, locals expressed limited optimism about their ability to improve their employment prospects. Only 1 in 10 felt they could easily access skills and training opportunities that met their interests, and a larger group strongly disagreed with this statement. Respondents across various demographics also noted the lack of relevant job opportunities, but this was particularly true for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and those with a cognitive disability. Under 1 in 10 individuals from these groups felt they had any opportunities that suited their skills and interests. Women were more likely to indicate having access to training opportunities, but had fewer job opportunities compared to men.

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<sup>5</sup> Custom tax-filer data

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ontariolivingwage.ca/>

**Graph 1: Perception on Prosperity**



Community stakeholders offered a diverse range of suggestions on how Norfolk County could improve prosperity for local workers. Some suggestions included:

- **Scaling up the availability and affordability of Internet and cellular service to all homes across the county.**

Although majority of residents had access to reliable, high speed Internet, 14% did not. This inhibits residents’ ability to access to community connections and training and job opportunities. In turn, this hinders both integration within community and career development prospects, and can subsequently reduce one’s sense of pride and belonging within the community.

*“High speed Internet can be very inconsistent, which makes it challenging to access online services or find meaningful work.”*

- Educating employers on the value of, and supporting them with the resources required to offer training to current and prospective workers.

Investments in skill development is a relatively common feature in some sectors, like healthcare, but is not considered as frequently by employers who hire lower skilled workers - such as agriculture and accommodation and food service businesses. Further, language barriers can prove to be a significant challenge in supporting certain populations - such as Low-German speaking Mennonites, newcomers and refugees - so investments in translation services that can be accessed by training institutions and employers alike is a critical part of tackling training gaps. Organizations like the Norfolk Community Help Centre, Haldimand Norfolk Literacy Council, Literacy Link South Central and Fanshawe College can and do currently play an important role in advancing this priority, but lack the resources to be able to offer existing and additional in-demand services/training programs at times and in spaces that are accessible to working individuals.

- Strengthening the capacity of local businesses to meet employees' needs by broadening knowledge of recruitment and retention resources

A key finding from WPBGE's quality of work survey was that employees value jobs that offer a diverse mix of benefits and supports. Livable wages were repeatedly highlighted as a need by stakeholders, and this is reflected in Statistics Canada's Census 2021 data, which indicates a higher proportion of low-income earners compared to surrounding counties like Haldimand and Oxford<sup>7</sup>.

“We need wages that align with the cost of living, as well as reasonable expectations/awareness of the amount of time it takes to complete a job/task, and respect for personal time.”

A well-rounded or customizable non-monetary benefits package – with greater mental health supports, housing near/on farms, and alternate work models like hybrid work or the 4-day work week - were also noted as critical to improving overall prosperity. Stakeholders emphasized the

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<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada's 2021 *Census Profile*: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

importance of economic development initiatives focused on increasing the number of large employers and industries, and of supporting existing businesses with scaling up in ways that allow them to offer improved income and benefits to their workers. Some have observed that certain businesses may hire newcomers and migrant workers at lower wages, which can impact their living standards. It’s important to support these businesses with enhancing their HR practices to help ensure that all workers receive fair, living wages.

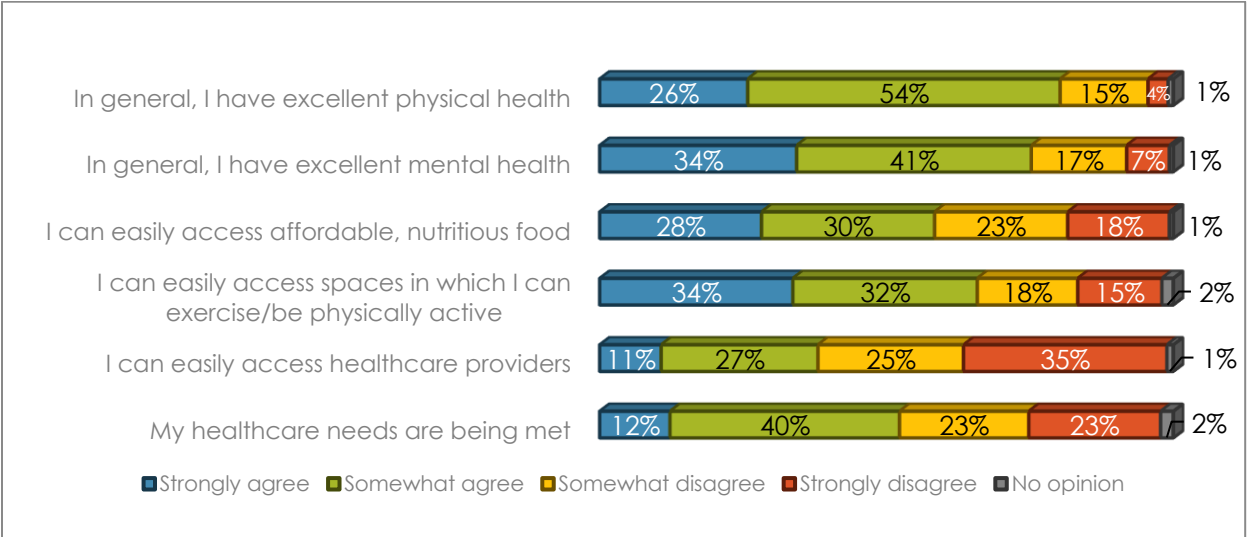
### Spotlight on Health

The health dimension of Statistics Canada’s Quality of Life Framework outlines factors that ensure physically and mentally healthy people, as well as health-care systems that are sufficiently equipped to care for the communities they serve.

In general, locals indicated having good physical and mental health, with individuals 45+ noting higher mental health satisfaction than younger age groups. Individuals with physical or cognitive disabilities had significantly lower health ratings, as did some Indigenous individuals.

Despite living and working in Ontario’s garden, 41% of respondents said it was not easy for them to access affordable, nutritious food. Both nutritious food and spaces to exercise were rated lower by Indigenous individuals, members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, persons with a cognitive disability and students.

**Graph 2: Perception on Health**





The Grand River Community Health Centre’s mobile medical clinic vehicle was cited by many as an invaluable bridge to bringing healthcare to workers in rural communities. However, while migrant workers and seniors have good access to health-care providers, many of the other equity-seeking groups surveyed scored this factor lower. For many - including users of the mobile clinic - accessing healthcare means taking time off work, sometimes unpaid. In the case of people with a language barrier, it may also mean additional wait times to ensure a translator is also available. A representative of the Low German-speaking population noted that some bigger services do not allow clients to bring in private interpreters (including ones hired by Norfolk Community Help Centre), but do not have in-house translation services for this language.

While inequality prevails across all dimensions of quality of life, healthcare is an area in which it is particularly pronounced. Healthy individuals are more likely and able to participate in both the labour market and community, and inversely, people with poor physical and mental health often find themselves alienated by the same systems.

When asked about opportunities to improve local health, stakeholders agreed on the single most effective point of intervention: attracting more healthcare practitioners to the County

- **Attracting more health-care practitioners to Norfolk County**

According to individuals consulted, both family doctors and mental health supports are unavailable to some residents. The solution: incentivize housing, relocation stipends, subsidize transportation and work with the industry to offer well-rounded income and benefits packages to attract and retain health-care workers. Considering that many communities across Ontario face a similar challenge, it is important for the County to carefully consider and highlight the unique benefits of this region as they work towards this goal.

*“Because of our location, referrals to medical services out of the area take forever and we wait for months/years, where people in large communities wait weeks. We also do not have enough qualified doctors for our community and it is very hard to get in to a family practice. Hospital are understaffed. Staff are overworked and underappreciated, so many leave after trying a few shifts, which only makes the problem worse.”*

An expansion of Norfolk General Hospital to hold more specialist and mental health practitioners was suggested, as was converting unused commercial spaces across the region into medical centres that include a family practice, walk-in, dental clinic, pharmacy, etc. These serve a similar function - to foster an integrated health-care system, one that emphasizes prevention and well-being, and one that is able to quickly connect individuals to other practitioners as their needs change. This would be particularly valuable to Norfolk’s aging population, and can also serve as a tool - a community anchor - to attract and retain families.

*“Prioritize health-care facilities as community anchors.”*

The recent shift to virtual healthcare does create opportunities for rural residents to access services they previously would have had to travel to the city for, but this requires reliable access to the internet/cellular service, digital literacy skills, and practitioners that speak their language.

- **Designing spaces for recreation**

Norfolk is currently making significant strides in supporting leisure and social connections, a key social determinant of both physical and mental health - through the development of its 2025 Master Recreation Plan – Recreation Without Borders<sup>8</sup>. Findings from the quality of life research highlight the many ways in which such an initiative can support inclusivity and sustainable growth.

For some equity-seeking groups, access to spaces where they can exercise is limited. Subsidizing and increasing the accessibility of existing programs for lower-income earners are important steps in removing this barrier.

There is also a growing movement to design parks and green spaces in ways that promote physical wellness; some ways in which this can be achieved are by installing outdoor fitness stations, building safe bike paths/curb lanes, and even increasing the number of colours in a park.

Forum attendees highlighted current strengths – like multi-cultural halls, service clubs and community events - that do currently play a big role in bringing people together. That said, there is space for the creation of programs that don’t currently cater to certain ages and interests.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/news/norfolk-asking-community-for-input-on-master-recreation-plan/>

Parent-child programs and hands-on learning activities like gardening were suggested, but additional research may be required to identify other relevant opportunities.

*“We need more support and innovation for arts, music and culture in Norfolk, and more social outlets for young to middle aged adults. Currently, everything is geared to families and seniors.”*

To address concerns about accessibility, recommendations were made to partner with and offer these programs at Norfolk County’s five library branches, and to schedule them during evenings and weekends.

## **Spotlight on Society**

Under the societal dimension, culture and identity, social cohesion and connections and time use were studied.

A majority of Norfolk residents and workers take pride in, and many feel a strong sense of belonging to, their community. These statements were rated less favourably by Indigenous individuals, people with physical disabilities and students. Indigenous individuals and migrant workers were also less likely to have people they could lean on.

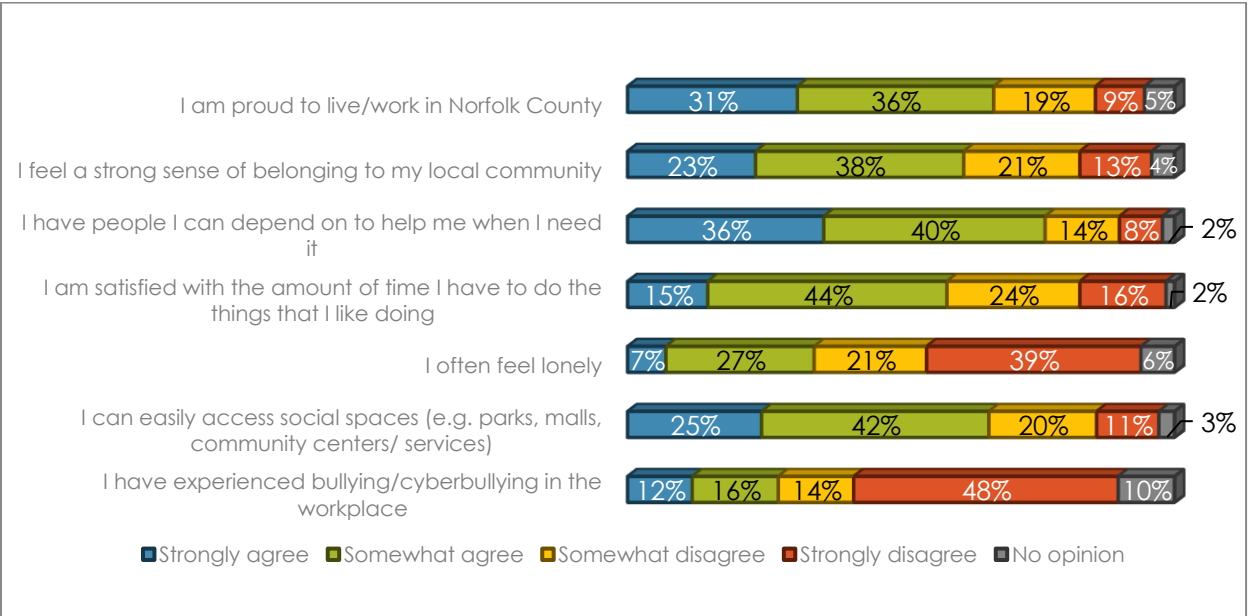
Loneliness, while prevalent, was significantly lower in Norfolk County when compared to the provincial average – 16% of Ontarians reported always or often feeling lonely, compared to 7% in Norfolk County. However, while most residents enjoy the small-town feel that the region offers, some - like newcomers, the Mennonite population and low-income earners - are isolated by language and socio-economic barriers that limit their ability to form meaningful connections with members of their community.

Amongst societal factors examined, respondents were least satisfied with time use. Several noted feeling like their jobs consumed their days, with little time left for responsibilities, and even less for relaxation and socialization. This work-life imbalance can leave workers feeling burnout, which WPBGE’s 2023 research found has a direct impact on productivity according to local employers.

Creating social spaces is a key step to avoiding this, and while many residents did feel positively about their access to social spaces, migrant workers, newcomers, and youth did not, likely because of transportation barriers.

About 1 in 3 individuals noted having experienced bullying/cyberbullying, indicating the need for greater emphasis on harassment training and fostering company culture wherein people feel comfortable to speak up about issues they may be experiencing. Representatives of equity-seeking groups reported ways in which harmful stereotypes perpetuate feelings of alienation. Cultural awareness training was acknowledged as a valuable resource in bridging the gap, but requires more widespread adoption amongst various businesses and other institutions before public perception shifts.

**Graph 3: Perception on Society**



Inclusivity is at the forefront of this dimension. Some of the ways in which stakeholders suggested improving quality of life across the social sphere include:

- **Bringing essential services closer to residents**

To build social cohesion, some residents need better access to services. Newcomers have to travel to Brantford/Woodstock to access certain services – like settlement support services and multi-cultural centres - which can be particularly time-consuming and costly without a personal vehicle.

*“More reliable and affordable public transportation would be a huge help.”*

Investment in public transportation, of course, is an important solution here, but residents would also benefit from having access to essential services closer to where they live, and accessible after their work hours and on weekends. Models like mobile clinics and modular medical units are some strategies that stakeholders suggested with this goal in mind. Improving the accessibility of public services enhances community engagement, which in turn can strengthen local economies. The Rural Ontario Institute has developed several resources to guide community and workforce integration of newcomers.

Improved coordination of recreational programming was also suggested in an effort to broaden community engagement. Community groups may find benefits in partnering to market their programs, as well as to consider scheduling and travel to ensure residents are able to make the most of their recreational time.

- **Marketing community building spaces, services and events**

Some stakeholders noted that Norfolk County does already have many of the services that an individual may need, but these spaces, services, programs and events need to be marketed more strategically to increase reach. Social media is being used – and has proven effective - in connecting with a wide range of community members, but many residents either don’t use social media or have limited Internet access, so there is a need to advertise more broadly.

*“The community needs to do a better job of communicating to the citizens. There are a lot of things happening that people just don't know is available to them.”*

Community boards, placed strategically in areas like a local grocery store or community centre, were suggested as a means to promote available programs in spaces that everyone has easy access to.

These boards were also proposed as a means to address another major gap in the community – interest in volunteerism. Most agencies and community groups that rely on volunteers lack funding to focus on marketing efforts, so representatives often work long hours with limited

support. Volunteering has been proven to strengthen ties between individuals and their community, so investments in this may have lasting impacts on social cohesion.

Marketing efforts should consider ways in which community members are able to see themselves represented in the services they seek.

## Spotlight on Environment

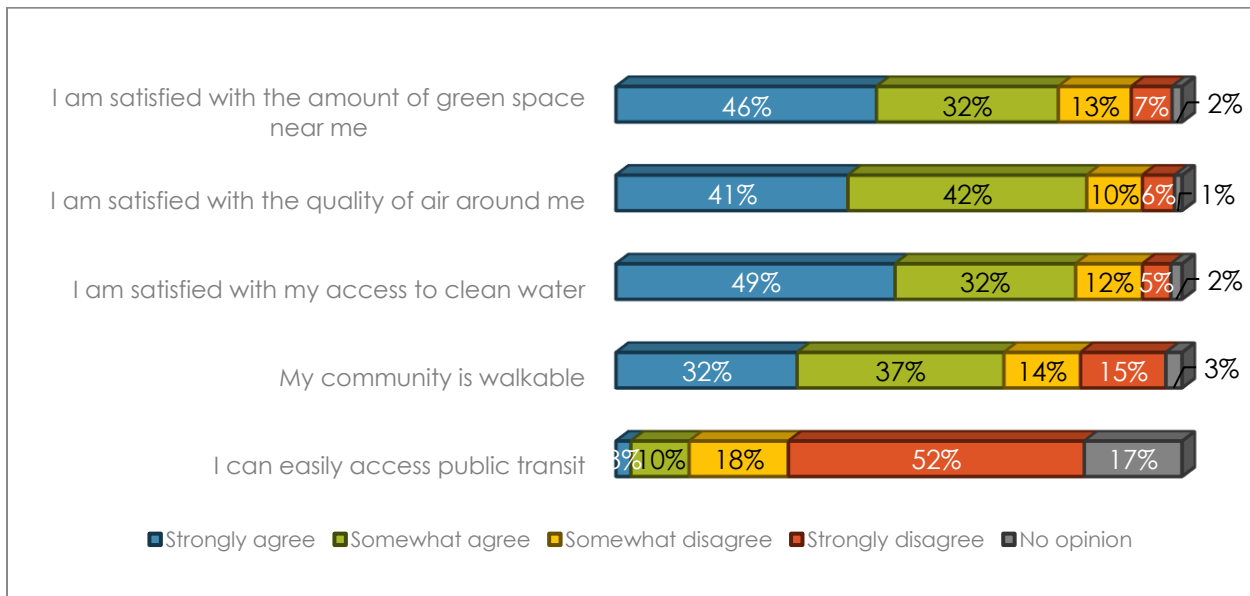
Factors outlined under the environment dimension of Statistics Canada's Quality of Life Framework include air quality, water quality, walkability, access to transit, waste management and conservation systems.

*"My mental health relies on the quiet farm town feel. Plan and develop strategically, so the quaintness is not compromised."*

Amongst quality of life factors assessed within this study, environmental metrics such as access to green space, clean air, clean water and walkable communities were most favourably rated. However, rural residents in rental housing were less likely to have clean drinking water through their taps; due to housing shortages, many in this position do not feel comfortable speaking up out of fear that they may get evicted.

The exception to the positive ratings was access to public transit: this statement received the most overwhelming negative response, with only 13% strongly or somewhat agreeing that transit was accessible.

**Graph 4: Perception on Environment**



Stakeholders and survey respondents alike agreed that improving connectivity would have a direct and immediate impact on quality of life.

- **Increasing the availability and affordability of public transportation/local ride-sharing options designed to fit the travel needs of respondents**

Rural accessibility is a critical barrier to employment and community services. Stakeholders commended the efforts of Ride Norfolk and the Southwest Community Transit project in addressing this gap, but indicated that much work is needed to continue making the service more frequent and convenient for rural residents. For these individuals - particularly those with a limited, fixed income - strategic planning is a necessary skill to ensure they are able to make the most of their weekly trip to the city. There is little room for error here; missed appointments or a forgotten prescription pick-up results in residents having to wait weeks to access essential services, which can take a significant toll, both physically and mentally, on quality of life.

Considering the massive investments in electric vehicle production across South Western Ontario, the mass adoption of these vehicles is likely to rise. Supporting this shift requires strategic planning to install more EV chargers across the region.

- **Revising land development policies to meet workforce needs.**

*“We need better land development policies - walkable community with mixed use zoning (residential and commercial and greenspace), trees planted by developers on site, ‘downtown style’ (commercial with residential on top) development, and elimination of municipally mandated parking requirements for new developments.”*

Diverse perspectives on land use policies were offered by many stakeholders, all with the goal of better serving the community’s needs. While some advocated for preservation of farmland and natural spaces, many others noted benefits to adjusting zoning in ways that allow for multiple, simultaneous uses of the land.

As the population grows and diversifies in Norfolk County and technology becomes more dominant in everyday life, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles should be at the forefront of all future development application proposals, design guidelines and committee decisions.

Others suggested a focus on encouraging the use of space to allow users to understand the environment better. This can be achieved through distributing maps of local trail systems, and creating informational signage on trails about the region’s diverse ecosystems.

- **Promoting awareness of local agribusiness**

Another area of focus for local stakeholders was preserving and educating community about the rich diversity across the region’s farms. By broadening community knowledge of the many ways in which Norfolk County feeds Ontario, stakeholders hypothesized that more individuals may become interested in contributing to this industry - an essential solution to maintaining diversity and reducing the degree to which farms are consolidating as farmers retire. There is a need to cultivate desire amongst locals to choose farming as a career, but to do this successfully, better quality of life supports may be required for farmers. Forum attendees suggested that job opportunities on farms should also be advertised more widely, particularly to youth – both to support youth employment and to connect today’s farmers to tomorrow’s workforce.



## Spotlight on Good Governance

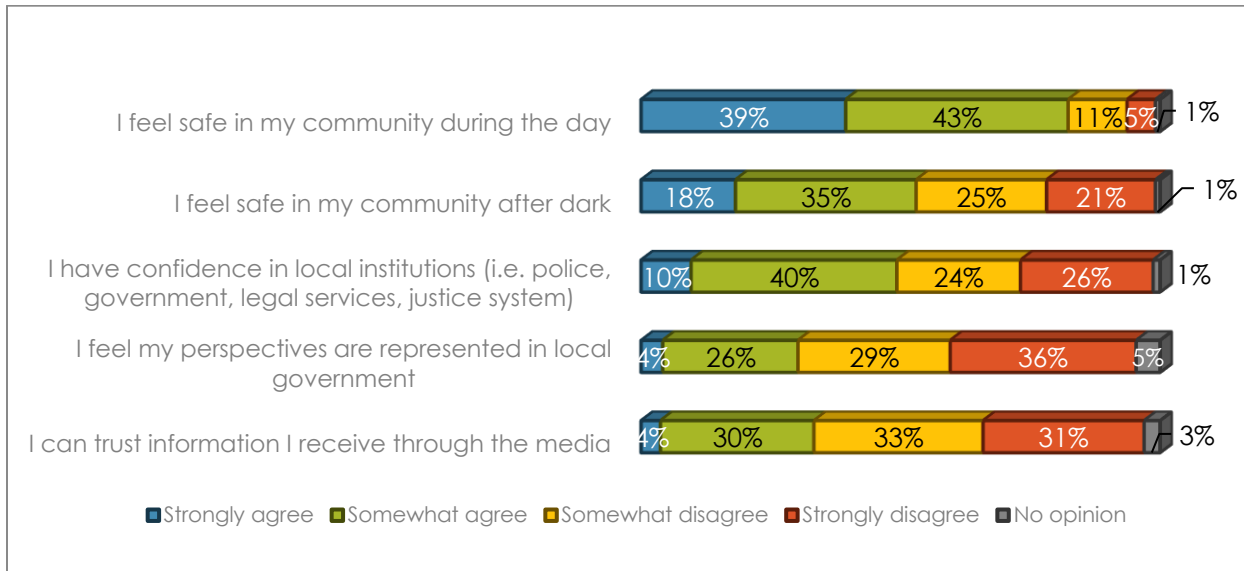
Finally, governance systems were examined. Personal safety, perceptions of the neighbourhood, democracy and institutions, justice and human rights were studied within this section. Although economic development is limited in its ability to directly change most governance systems, they have a vested interest in supporting the effort to do so; after all, safety and security are critical indicators of how interested and able individuals are in contributing to their communities.

While most residents felt safe in their community during the day, less than 1 in 5 could confidently say the same about their individual/business safety after dark. This has direct impacts on economic development, as concerns about safety can play a large role in choices about what jobs people are willing to do. Working with the local Ontario Provincial Police Detachment in Norfolk County will improve the overall sense of security for business owners and Norfolk County residents. Programs like Neighbourhood Watch, Citizen's Police Academy, Auxiliary Police, and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) could be offered/expanded/marketed to local residents and business owners.

Further, there were concerns raised about a recent spike in vehicular/roadway accidents that could be prevented by installing more signage with flashing lights to increase visibility.

Other elements of good governance were rated even less favourably. Most equity-seeking groups were largely dissatisfied with representation in government and the credibility of information received through media, with factory workers and persons with disabilities reporting the lowest satisfaction. These groups also had less confidence in local institutions, and lacked a sense of how to start improving their home and their health. Facilitating improved relationships between law enforcement and equity-seeking groups is a key step in increasing sense of security for locals.

**Graph 5: Perception on Governance**



These perceptions were further spotlighted by stakeholders that shared that some residents and businesses didn't feel like they were being treated equitably. Because of the deeply institutionalized nature of public trust, these concerns can be particularly challenging to address. By examining this factor from an economic development lens, Norfolk County's Economic Development team illustrates keen interest and an investment in wholistically understanding and supporting the community they serve.

- **Creating a diverse and representative committee to tackle quality of life issues**

Stakeholders agreed that biases play an important role in widening the gap between services and users. Considering that most government and community organization representatives are not in the same socio-economic position as the people they serve, service providers may unknowingly project biases in decisions about how programs are run. Diversity, equity and inclusion training can bridge this divide, but consultations directly with the public are more effective at generating solutions that work. Surveys, forums and interviews can all be effective ways to achieve this, particularly within communities like Norfolk that do feel a responsibility to share their perspectives. That said, these means of broadening representation are also susceptible to biases held by researchers and the organizations that fund them.

*“Foster community involvement, and strengthen public engagement and transparency.”*

Many had growing concerns about safety in the community, particularly after dark and on the roads. Stakeholder forum attendees discussed another strategy with the goals of shared ownership and a culture of continuous improvement in mind - to establish a Norfolk-wide multi-disciplinary committee, led by emergency services, including police, fire and health-care representatives, as well as representatives from equity-seeking groups, to address key issues/gaps in public services and form sustainable and inclusive solutions. Diverse representation is key here; stakeholders noted that residents deserve to be advocated for by individuals that reflect their needs. To attract an array of community representatives, the design of such a committee would need to be considered carefully. Meetings would have to be run at times and in spaces that are accessible to all, and by leadership that has a vested interest in making sure all voices are heard.

- **Train workplaces on diversity, equity, and inclusion**

Discrimination and harassment often stem from a lack of knowledge, and across Norfolk County, residents and workers indicated experiencing negative or unfair treatment within the workplace on the basis of several different factors, including their familial place of origin, physical appearance, age and sex. The experiences were significantly common amongst youth, members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and persons with disabilities. Beyond impacting perceptions of self-esteem and worth, these behaviours have a tendency to make people feel like they don't have a place in the workforce and their community, which directly affects their productivity and capacity to actively participate in the labour force.

*“I would like my employer to actively enforce the harassment and bullying policy and remind staff to treat their coworkers with dignity and respect.”*

Economic development teams can play an active role here in working with businesses to provide all staff with training to collectively make workplaces safer for all.

## Looking Ahead

*“My vision for Norfolk County is a community that fosters a sense of ownership, & encourages volunteerism & community partnerships.”*

There are examples to be learnt from businesses and community agencies that have displayed excellence in championing equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility through innovative policies and programs. Economic development representatives, alongside community organizations, can play a leadership role in identifying community leaders, and nurturing networks that prioritize co-learning and collaboration to broaden the use of effective practices amongst organizations with similar goals. This is particularly important giving the growing diversity in Norfolk’s workforce; supporting the current and future workforce involves developing resources – like best practice guides for employers and the Norfolk Online Newcomers Resource Guide (in development) - that address workforce needs comprehensively.

Entrepreneurial training and supports are also critical to this effort; by providing the right resources to those interested in developing businesses in the region, the County can play an active role in inspiring the creation of new jobs and opportunities that raise overall quality of life – both for the owners and their employees. Residents continue to seek both opportunity and necessity based entrepreneurship, and while the economic impacts and potential for scaling-up of each differ, they both play an important role in fostering a strong sense of independence, personal drive and the development of unique skills and experiences amongst locals. Across each priority below, there is opportunity to foster this goal, and risk-tolerant communities have found success in collaborating with financial institutions to offer private risk funding, formal financing venture capital, public financing and formal bank funding to develop the local entrepreneurial landscape.

# Implementation Plan

Norfolk County has long recognized and invested in addressing the demand for civil and social infrastructure by strengthening transportation options – through involvement in the Southwest Community Transit (SCT) program; affordable housing – through the development of alliances like the Addiction Supportive Housing (ASH) program; and accessible services – through events like Norfolk Community Days. The region has, for many years, been championed for its growing cultural diversity<sup>9</sup>, and maintains an unwavering commitment to building a strong community by embracing this growth and engaging its residents in development and planning efforts. Norfolk’s investment in studying and identifying opportunities to support quality of life for the local workforce (amongst many other initiatives – including roundtable discussions, feedback forums and advisory boards<sup>10 11 12 13 14</sup>) illustrates this well. This report calls on regional stakeholders to build on these efforts, and to consider innovative new opportunities that may arise from collaborations and partnerships.

Accomplishing these objectives requires balancing supports for the existing workforce with continued efforts to attract new businesses and talent – an approach reflected in Norfolk County’s 2024-2027 Economic Development Strategy. A proactive approach begins with the acknowledgement of continuous change – Norfolk’s population, it’s business landscape and the ways in which it is connected to the rest of the province continue to grow and evolve. The priorities outlined below emphasize adapting to these shifts while maintaining an unwavering focus on sustainability and inclusion. To support this approach, each priority detailed below is

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.simcoereformer.ca/news/local-news/multicultural-norfolk-celebrated>  
<sup>10</sup> <https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/news/provide-feedback-by-participating-in-norfolks-customer-service-survey/>  
<sup>11</sup> <https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/news/mayors-affordability-roundtable-launching-this-month/>  
<sup>12</sup> <https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/news/norfolk-invites-feedback-on-review-of-potential-surplus-land/>  
<sup>13</sup> <https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/news/norfolk-county-seeking-advisory-board-members/>  
<sup>14</sup> <https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/news/norfolk-county-is-growing-have-your-say-about-how-2/>

accompanied with a list of recommendations, and includes the Norfolk County department best fit to lead each goal, key partners, resources required, a timeline for execution and indicators to assess progress and performance. The KPIs below were developed based on needs identified through the survey and stakeholder forum, and are designed to be flexible and adaptable if deemed necessary by the Priority Lead.

## **Priority # 1: Connect the County**

Transportation was identified - by a wide margin – as the number one barrier to good quality of life, according to local community leaders. This, along with improved access to Internet – and digital literacy training – are necessary steps in addressing the accessibility gap created by Norfolk’s large geographical area.

It is worth highlighting that Norfolk County has already made significant investments in this realm. Transportation continues to be a priority for economic development, and efforts to broaden services are being pioneered by research - such as the 2024 Transit Survey designed to inform a Transit Master Plan and improve Ride Norfolk services based on residents’ needs. This survey observed demand for more weekend and holiday services, as well as increased services on a set schedule to and from Simcoe and Delhi, Port Dover, Jarvis, Hagersville, Waterford, Brantford, Hamilton, and Woodstock. The 2025 Transit Master Plan will present Norfolk County with guidelines on addressing the service gaps identified through this survey, as well as other research being conducted by the Ride Norfolk team. The recommendations below are designed to support the findings of this Transit Master Plan, offering Ride Norfolk an opportunity to find synergies that address the largest gaps. Internet access, too, has been broadened significantly – to about 900 homes in Long Point and Port Rowan last year alone - through the County’s participation in the Southwestern Integrated Fiber Technology (SWIFT) program. The recommendations below encourage Norfolk County to build on these initiatives, focusing efforts on gaps in accessibility.

### **Priority # 1 Recommendations:**

#### **1.1. Support the findings of the Transit Master Plan to increase the availability and affordability of public transportation options**

- Consult medium and large businesses and workers to identify in-depth commuting patterns, including departure and arrival times and locations as well as demand
- Assess the potential for a limited number of fixed routes that meet workforce demands

- Develop a case for business investments in transit for staff, and connect with large businesses to fund new routes that meet their labour needs. Highlight successful strategies used by local businesses – like Toyotetsu’s ride sharing bulletin board – to support their workforce’s commuting needs.

## **1.2 Scale up the availability and affordability of internet and cellular service to all homes across the county.**

- Work with representatives from each town to identify connectivity dead-zones across the region, as well as proportion of population that is disconnected
- In collaboration with SWIFT, coordinate the establishment of additional Internet/cellular towers as required
- Develop subsidies for individuals experiencing a cost barrier to Internet connectivity
- Work with libraries and literacy and basic skills organizations to offer more digital literacy training, specifically at locations/times that work for residents that need these supports
- Consult small, medium and large businesses to determine their interest in providing work from home and hybrid working options, identified by WPBGE’s 2022 Remote Work Study as being of interest to local residents<sup>15</sup>.
- Establish co-working spaces with computers and public wi-fi to support areas/populations that experience barriers to Internet connectivity

## **1.3 Establish a local ride-share platform serving Norfolk County with an emphasis on serving the needs of the workforce and employers.**

- Work with the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie to develop a local ride-share platform that will serve members of the workforce in Norfolk County and the greater Grand Erie area with a focus on getting people to and from work.
- Create a platform using existing resources like Grand Erie Jobs and the Workforce Gateway to allow businesses and participants to register. The registry will match carpoolers by location and destination.
- Work with partners to establish the best user experience design based on existing resources
- Work with Norfolk County Economic Development staff to attract businesses to register and create a profile
- Work with Norfolk County Economic Development staff to market the tool on their website and social feeds.
- Work with other partners, such as Norfolk County library and service providers, to market the tool and encourage clients to use it.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://workforceplanningboard.org/remote-work-study/>

**Priority # 1: Connect the County**

Recommendations	Norfolk County Lead	Key Partners	Resources Required	Time-line	KPIs
<b>1.1. Support the findings of the Transit Master Plan to increase the availability and affordability of public transportation options</b>	Ride Norfolk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Norfolk County Economic Development</li> <li>- SCOR EDC</li> <li>- Medium and Large Businesses</li> <li>- Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie (WPBGE)</li> <li>- Town leaders (advocacy)</li> <li>- Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>- Venture Norfolk</li> <li>- Brantford-Brant Business Resource Centre</li> <li>- Financial Institutions (i.e. credit unions) that can offer funding to businesses to assist with transit subsidies to residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data on commuting patterns</li> <li>- <a href="#">WPBGE's Transportation Study Results</a></li> <li>- County Funding for new routes/driver</li> <li>- Investment funding</li> <li>- Grant funding</li> <li>- Marketing resources</li> </ul>	Jan. 2026 – 2029+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish 3 fixed transit routes<sup>16</sup></li> <li>- Increase Ride Norfolk ridership by 20%<sup>17</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>16</sup> Recommendations for 3 fixed transit routes: (1) to/from Simcoe and Brantford (VIA Station), (2) to/from Simcoe and Woodstock (looping through Dehi and Waterford), and (3) (2) to/from Simcoe and Hamilton Mountain/Aldershot VIA (stopping at Port Dover, Jarvis, Hagersville and Caledonia).

<sup>17</sup> About 36% of survey respondents indicated that better public transportation options would enhance their quality of life in Norfolk County. Additionally, about 30% of transit survey respondents disagreed that transit goes to all or most of the places they want to go. Based on this & with reasonable buffer between desired (28) and actual usage, we estimated that 20% would be a good goal to work towards



<p><b>1.2 Scale up the availability and affordability of internet and cellular service to all homes across the county.</b></p>	<p>Information Technology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Town leaders (advocacy)</li> <li>- SWIFT program</li> <li>- Internet/cellular service providers</li> <li>- Economic Development Planning</li> <li>- Libraries</li> <li>- Literacy and basic skills organizations</li> <li>- Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie (WPBGE)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data on current digital gaps</li> <li>- Data on current digital literacy efforts/challenges</li> <li>- Training spaces</li> <li>- Funding for internet subsidies and additional training programs</li> <li>- Marketing resources</li> <li>- <a href="#">WPBGE's Remote Work Study</a></li> </ul>	<p>Jan. 2025-2028</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase internet connectivity by 5% across the county<sup>18</sup></li> <li>- Establish co-working spaces where reliable internet and efficient working spaces can be provided</li> </ul>
<p><b>1.3 Establish a local ride-share platform serving Norfolk County with an emphasis on serving the needs of the workforce and employers</b></p>	<p>Economic Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie (WPBGE)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wilfrid Laurier University User Experience Design program</li> <li>- WPBGE Grand Erie Job (GEJ) Data Tools</li> <li>- WPBGE Workforce Gateway</li> </ul>	<p>April 2026 – 2029 +</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Launch platform on Economic Development website and WPBGE website etc.</li> <li>- 100 new GEJ account users</li> </ul>

<sup>18</sup> About 14% of survey respondents disagreed they have access to reliable, high speed internet. Many stakeholders who serve clients also highlighted this as a barrier to good quality of life; based on this, 5% of homes across the County was estimated to be an appropriate target.

## Priority #2: Raise Business Standards

Overwhelmingly, stakeholders and survey respondents noted that many Norfolk County workers do not earn livable wages, and that employers in the region are limited in their quality of work offerings. As a result, residents turn to employment opportunities outside the county.

While some employers may not be able (or willing) to increase wages, there are other things they can do to improve quality of work for their employees so that they stay to work in Norfolk. By broadening business standards both through educating and supporting existing businesses in offering better quality of work, and attracting new ones that prioritize comprehensive income and benefit packages, skill development opportunities and positive working conditions, the region's economic development team can play a critical role in retaining local talent. Adapting training programs to be more diverse and inclusive is also an important element in advancing this priority.

### Priority # 2 Recommendations:

#### 2.1. Educate employers on the value of, and support them with the resources required to offer skills training to current and prospective workers.

- Share WPBGE's sector-specific Quality of Work<sup>19</sup> research findings with employers to demonstrate best practices used by similar businesses
- Use data from WPBGE's EmployerOne and other sources to determine local skills needs<sup>20</sup>
- Identify businesses with labour shortages through examining job demand data (available through WPBGE's Labour Market Insights reports) and strategize opportunities for work-sharing between small businesses<sup>21</sup>
- Develop a model that allows for training providers, employers and economic development to share the cost of training. Consider programs like WPBGE's Skills2Advance that build soft and essential skills locally in a cost-effective way.
- Connect businesses and training providers to set-up customized training programs to meet specific needs
- Identify opportunities to subsidize the cost of these programs for small businesses/those that hire a large portion of equity-seeking individuals. Work with industry associations and Chambers to support EDI in training initiatives amongst their membership.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://workforceplanningboard.org/quality-of-work/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://workforceplanningboard.org/employerone-survey/>

<sup>21</sup> [https://workforceplanningboard.org/labour-market-insights-report/?e8\\_page=snapshot&date=2023-03&region-type=regions](https://workforceplanningboard.org/labour-market-insights-report/?e8_page=snapshot&date=2023-03&region-type=regions)

- Identify opportunities that businesses can get involved with to help educate the public about local businesses and the employment opportunities that exist and instill local community pride in the future Norfolk County workforce. (i.e. Epic Jobs, Think Ag Career Competition, Skills Ontario Competitions, OYAP, SHSM, the Cadet Program, etc.)

## **2.2 Strengthen the capacity of local businesses to meet employees' needs by broadening knowledge of recruitment and retention resources**

- Examine sector-specific best practices identified by WPBGE's quality of work research
- Develop a customizable employee satisfaction survey that businesses can use to identify benefits that their staff require
- Offer businesses support with identifying key priorities in their workforce
- Create networking opportunities for businesses with specific gaps to connect with and learn from businesses that do have stronger income and benefits packages
- Focus business attraction efforts on employers that offer comprehensive and/or flexible benefits packages
- Consider piloting Ride Norfolk transportation routes in partnership/sponsorship with local businesses to provide more direct routes at shift change times to improve accessibility and mobility for employees.

## **2.3 Train workplaces on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)**

- Educate employers on the value of EDI training
- Identify EDI successes and gaps through consulting with local equity-seeking groups
- Work with service providers to develop/enhance existing training curriculum to address these gaps
- Coordinate training sessions with leadership teams at local businesses, focusing on EDI practices for specific demographics as requested by employers
- Follow-up to assess impact/changes to policies across these businesses
- Work with cultural clubs to broaden joint community Indigenous/cultural/educational events that are open to the public
- Provide more coordinated social events for Temporary Foreign Workers

**Priority # 2: Raise Business Standards**

Recommendations	Norfolk County Lead	Key Partners	Resources Required	Time -line	KPIs
<p><b>2.1 Educate employers on the value of skills training to current and prospective workers. Offer support with the resources needed.</b></p>	<p>Economic Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local employers</li> <li>- Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie(WPBGE)</li> <li>- Norfolk Community Help Centre</li> <li>- Haldimand Norfolk Literacy Council</li> <li>- Literacy Link South Central</li> <li>- Fanshawe College</li> <li>- Fanshawe Community Career and Employment Services</li> <li>- Private training institutions</li> <li>- Chamber of Commerce groups</li> <li>- Business Improvement Area (BIA)</li> <li>- Industry associations</li> <li>- Business support groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">WPBGE's Quality of Work sector profiles</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">WPBGE's Employe rOne results</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">WPBGE's Labour Market Insights Report</a></li> <li>- Government funding</li> </ul>	<p>April 2025 - 2028</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish a Norfolk County HR Network or connect with the <a href="#">Brant Human Resource Network</a> (BHRN) and discuss the expansion of this network into Norfolk County.</li> <li>- Work with community partners to design and deliver/ implement a training resource</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grand Erie District School Board</li> <li>- Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board</li> </ul>			
<p><b>2.2 Strengthen the capacity of local businesses to meet employees' needs by broadening knowledge of recruitment and retention resources</b></p>	Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie (WPBGE)</li> <li>- BIAS</li> <li>- Venture Norfolk</li> <li>- Brantford-Brant Business Resource Centre</li> <li>- Norfolk County Economic Development</li> <li>- Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA)</li> <li>- OMAFRA Rural Economic Development (RED) funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data on best practices amongst local employers</li> </ul>	Jan. 2025 - Dec. 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HR Tool Kit Establish a toolkit that will bridge the gap by providing valuable resources, insights, templates and best practices tailored to meet the unique needs of small businesses and entrepreneurs.</li> </ul>

<p><b>2.3 Train workplaces on equity, diversity and inclusion</b></p>	<p>Economic Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie (WPBGE)</li> <li>- Service providers</li> <li>- Training institutions</li> <li>- Norfolk Community Help Centre</li> <li>- Local employers</li> <li>- Representatives from diverse groups</li> <li>- Cultural Clubs</li> <li>- Multicultural &amp; Heritage Association of Norfolk</li> <li>- OMAFRA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data on EDI gaps</li> </ul>	<p>April 2025 – Sept. 2028</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Host networking sessions to promote learning of best practices</li> <li>- Meet with leadership teams at 30 businesses to discuss quality of work offerings and present opportunities for improvement</li> <li>- Work with a service provider to develop EDI training and train 500 workers across 25 businesses on EDI strategies/best practices</li> </ul>
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## Priority # 3: Strategically Plan for Managed Growth

Norfolk County's workforce is changing, and supporting this requires flexibility in where and how growth is allowed to occur. This priority is fundamental to enhancing diversity in residents and businesses across the region.

Resources such as those published by the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, Rural Ontario Institute and Strong Towns outline numerous case studies and success of connectivity fostered by strategic planning, design and development of spaces<sup>22 23 24</sup>.

Section 2.2.4.1 of Norfolk County's Official Plan<sup>25</sup> speaks to maintaining a high quality of life by reinforcing Norfolk's strong sense of community through the provision of public services, the development of safe and attractive communities, and the celebration of Norfolk's unique cultural and natural heritage. The plan also involves residents in making decisions on planning matters and promotes a healthy community through active lifestyles.

To manage future growth in Norfolk County, the County's Official Plan and the County's roots must be equally considered and respected. Norfolk County's small-town charm is a big draw for many people. Its picturesque landscapes, tight-knit communities, and rural pace of life offer a refreshing contrast to the hustle and bustle of city living. The area is known for its friendly atmosphere, local events, and beautiful natural surroundings, making it an appealing choice for those looking to enjoy a more relaxed lifestyle.

Balancing these elements will ensure a growth strategy that respects the county's heritage while addressing contemporary needs and future aspirations. This integrated approach supports sustainable community and workforce development and maintains the community's identity as it evolves.

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<sup>22</sup>[https://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/uploads/userfiles/files/White%20Paper\\_Newcomer%20Integration%20in%20Rural%20Ontario.pdf](https://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/uploads/userfiles/files/White%20Paper_Newcomer%20Integration%20in%20Rural%20Ontario.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> <https://ontarioplanners.ca/OPPIAssets/Journal/Issues/33-6-Journal-FINAL-interactive-V2.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2020/11/25/a-plan-for-building-strong-rural-communities>

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Norfolk-County-Official-Plan-January-2021\\_Final-2.pdf](https://www.norfolkcounty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Norfolk-County-Official-Plan-January-2021_Final-2.pdf)

## **Priority # 3 Recommendations:**

### **3.1 Design spaces for recreation, especially in Indigenous and rural communities**

- Subsidize existing recreation programs for low-income earners
- Collaborate with County Staff (Parks and Recreation staff/Landscape Architects/Transportation Staff) to plan/install outdoor fitness stations, build safer bike lanes, and brainstorm other opportunities for parks to support physical wellness needs
- Expand recreational programs to evenings and weekends to ensure young working families/youth are able to access these programs
- Ensure recreational programming inspires the pride of Norfolk County (Agriculture, environmental stewardship, hard work, respect for the land and neighbours, encourages volunteerism and giving back to the community).

### **3.2 Bring essential services closer to residents**

- Identify a comprehensive list of service gaps within each town
- Assess the feasibility of expanded mobile units offering essential services, or modular buildings that can be rotated across towns
- Establish a plan for increased connectivity to essential services
- Strengthen communication and collaboration between community groups to improve the coordination of services and recreational programming in ways that make them more accessible
- Identify funding opportunities to expand services. Work with community partners to apply for funding and implement said services/programming.
- Work with cellular tower installers/landowners, town Planners and essential service providers (Police, Fire, and ambulance) to identify prime locations for new cellular tower installations. This will ensure that people can communicate effectively and access services and that essential service workers can respond in a timely manner.
- Work with community partners to expand job shadowing, co-op, OYAP, SHSM, and experiential learning opportunities like cadets, police ride-along, citizens police academy, and auxiliary police programs to youth and local Norfolk residents. Expanding/enhancing these opportunities will ensure a healthy succession of the workforce, expand the understanding of what makes the community tick, and enhance the functionality and safety of the community.

### **3.3 Revise land development policies to meet workforce needs.**

- Revise Zoning Bylaws to allow for more flexible multi-use developments
- Develop Urban Design Guidelines, inclusive of Crime Prevention Through Environment Design (CPTED) principles, to promote human scale, walkable developments



- Attract new investment to encourage adaptive reuse of older buildings/areas
- Consider prioritizing areas to be considered for Community Improvement Plans.

**3.4. Attract more health-care practitioners to Norfolk County:**

- Utilizing funds available through the Safe Restart Funding, work with Norfolk County Primary Physician Recruitment Committee to develop incentives for housing, as well as relocation stipends and transportation subsidies to attract health-care practitioners to Norfolk County<sup>26</sup>
- Examine opportunities to enhance income and benefits packages offered by health-care providers
- Identify and promote virtual health-care services to individuals with transportation barriers
- Work with the local health unit to develop more experiential learning and training opportunities for Norfolk County youth and people seeking a career change to practice and seek career advancement opportunities in local health-care facilities.
- Set up a partnership between communications and the local health unit to develop a marketing strategy to promote available health-care positions in Norfolk County.
- Consider inviting representatives from the Economic Development and Communications Departments to the Norfolk County Primary Physician Recruitment Committee meetings to provide progress updates from the Quality of Life for Workers project, and to help inform recruitment marketing campaigns.

Priority # 3: Strategically Plan for Managed Growth					
Recommendations	Norfolk County Lead	Key Partners	Resources Required	Time-line	KPIs
<b>3.1 Support the findings of the Master Recreation Plan to design spaces for recreation</b>	Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Norfolk County Planning Department</li> <li>- Land developers</li> <li>- Parks and Recreation Staff</li> <li>- Landscape Architects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grant funding</li> <li>- Local investment (<a href="#">sponsorships</a>)</li> <li>- Fund-raising Advisory committee direction</li> </ul>	<p>Jan. 2026</p> <p>- 2029</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prioritize areas/open spaces for development</li> <li>- Review cash-in-lieu of Parkland Bylaw (S. 42 of the <i>Planning Act</i>) and strategically</li> </ul>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.simcoereformer.ca/news/local-news/norfolk-earmarks-250000-for-doctor-recruitment>

					<p>y update if applicable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct community engagement to determine what new elements to introduce.</li> <li>- Apply for grant funding (i.e. <a href="#">Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund (CSRIF)</a>)</li> </ul>
<b>3.2 Bring essential services closer to residents</b>	Planning/ Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Norfolk County essential service providers</li> <li>- Ride Norfolk</li> <li>- Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie (WPBGE)</li> <li>- Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rural Ontario Institute publications</li> <li>- Mobile units</li> <li>- Temporary rental units</li> <li>- Government funding</li> <li>- <a href="#">Ontario Caregiver Organization</a></li> </ul>	Jan. 2025 – 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strike an essential service advisory sub-committee</li> <li>- Identify priority areas of concern</li> <li>- Develop a funding and action plan</li> </ul>
<b>3.3 Revise land development policies to meet workforce needs.</b>	Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Norfolk County Economic Development</li> <li>- Land developers</li> <li>- Norfolk County Multi-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP)</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Canadian Mortgage and Housing</a></li> </ul>	Jan. 2026 – 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Direct staff to work with a Planning consultant to undertake a Zoning Bylaw review</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>disciplinary/department development review committee including Ontario Provincial Police (OPP)</li> <li>- Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie (WPBGE)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">Corporation (CMHC)</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Training</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI)</a></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Survey Norfolk County Multi-disciplinary review committee and community stakeholders to establish priorities</li> <li>- Conduct community engagements</li> </ul>
<b>3.4. In line with Norfolk County Primary Physician Recruitment Committee's mandate, attract more healthcare practitioners to Norfolk County</b>	Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit/Communi-cations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ontario Medical Association</li> <li>- Ontario College of Family Physicians</li> <li>- Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit</li> <li>- Norfolk General Hospital</li> <li>- Medical clinics</li> <li>- Grand River Community Health Centre</li> <li>- Canadian Mental Health Association, Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">Canadian Medical Association Physician Wellness Hub</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Health Force Ontario Transition into Practice Service (TiPS) Toolkit</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Health Force Ontario Recruitment Essentials</a></li> </ul>	Jan. 2025 - 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attract and support 10 healthcare practitioners (i.e. nurses and doctors) with settling into Norfolk</li> <li>- Create Integrated Ambulatory Centres for less complicated outpatient surgeries and procedures to ease the burden on hospital and reduce wait times<sup>27</sup>.</li> </ul>

- <sup>27</sup> The Ontario Medical Association is ready to work with the government now

		Branch (CMHA) - Fanshawe College - McMaster University - Norfolk County Economic Development - - Chambers of Commerce - Business Improvement Area (BIA) - ABEL Enterprises - Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie (WPBGE)			- Create more hospice beds and palliative care services to improve the patient experience, support caregivers and reduce pressures on emergency departments
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### Priority # 4: Inclusive Marketing

To advance quality of life for all, a cohesive marketing strategy must be employed, allowing the economic development department to work with local stakeholders on eliminating biases in programming and broadening knowledge of services offered.

**Priority # 4 Recommendations:**

**4.1. Assess the feasibility of a diverse and representative committee to tackle quality of life issues**

- Identify implicit bias training programs, and create opportunities for government and community agencies to participate in this training annually
- Work with municipal stakeholders – like police, fire and health-care representatives as well as Chambers and BIAs – to pioneer a DEI committee, and identify community champions that represent diverse groups and interests, to participate. Establish the committee for a 1-year

term, allowing for opportunity to assess interest in a longer commitment at the end of the term.

- Publish details about the DEI committee on Norfolk County’s website

#### 4.2 Market community building spaces, services and events

- Identify key areas of foot traffic in local towns
- Install community boards at key locations across Norfolk County
- Establish a set of guidelines for community organizations to use in creating marketing material
- Inform service providers about these boards
- Establish a system to vet new material, and ensure that all content posted is relevant, timely and reflective of the County’s values
- Appoint community leaders to monitor and update boards monthly
- Host strategic community events at community centres/spaces highlighting the capabilities of the spaces, services and programs.

#### 4.3 Promote awareness of local agribusinesses

- Expand on Norfolk Federation of Agriculture’s efforts to connect with schools and community centers to advertise farm job opportunities more widely, particularly to local youth
- Bring agricultural education to community centres for youth and family programming.
- Work with the Agricultural Advisory Committee and Norfolk Farms publication to develop a social media marketing campaign focused on increasing community awareness about crops grown in Norfolk County
- Establish a transit route to and from local farmers’ markets to make locally grown food more accessible both to local residents and visitors
- Work with local farms, industry associations and Venture Norfolk to strategize new business collaboration opportunities that support agri-food production at all stages. The Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre in Northumberland County presents an excellent model for supporting entrepreneurship in the agribusiness industry<sup>28</sup>.
- Invest in technology and farm management training offered by Fanshawe College

Priority # 4: Inclusive Marketing					
Recommendations	Norfolk County Lead	Key Partners	Resources Required	Timeline	KPIs
<b>4.1 Create a diverse and representative advisory</b>	Haldimand-Norfolk Social Services and Housing	- Emergency Service Representative	- Norfolk General Hospital - Clinics	Jan. 2025	- Establish a committee of 10-15 representatives

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.northumberland.ca/en/ontario-agri-food-venture-centre/oafvc.aspx>

<p><b>committee to tackle quality of life issues</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- s (Police, Fire, Ambulance)</li> <li>- Healthcare reps.</li> <li>- Community champions/leaders</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grand River Community Health Centre</li> <li>- Norfolk County Planning Department</li> <li>- Norfolk County Economic Development</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ives and a DEI sub-committee of 4-5 representatives</li> <li>- Engage 30 stakeholders in bias training</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.2 Market community building spaces, services and events</b></p>	<p>Economic Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community spaces (e.g. grocery stores, places of worship)</li> <li>- Norfolk County Communications Department</li> <li>- Norfolk County Parks and Recreation Department</li> <li>- Norfolk County Agricultural Society</li> <li>- Norfolk Recreation Program guide</li> <li>- Norfolk radio stations (i.e. my FM, oldies)</li> <li>- Local News Outlets (i.e. Simcoe Reformer, Norfolk Today, On the Farm magazine)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community boards</li> <li>- Guidelines for posters</li> </ul>	<p>Jan. 2026-2029</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and share community board guidelines document</li> <li>- Work with local Chambers of Commerce and BIA to support marketing efforts and apply for funding for marketing and promotion</li> </ul>

<p><b>4.3 Promote awareness of local agribusinesses</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economic Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Norfolk Federation of Agriculture</li> <li>- Norfolk County Agricultural Society</li> <li>- Ontario Federation of Agriculture</li> <li>- Local educational institutions (<a href="#">Fanshawe College</a>, <a href="#">University of Guelph</a> <a href="#">Ridgetown</a>)</li> <li>- Youth programs i.e. (<a href="#">4-H</a>, <a href="#">AgScape</a>, <a href="#">Norfolk Agricultural Society Grade 4 Ag Awareness program</a>)</li> <li>- Local farm businesses</li> <li>- Venture Norfolk,</li> <li>- Brantford-Brant Business Resource Centre</li> <li>- Ride Norfolk</li> <li>- OMAFRA</li> <li>- Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie (WPBGE)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social media</li> <li>- On the Farm Magazine</li> <li>- Norfolk County Fair</li> </ul>	<p>Jan. 2025 – 2028</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase participation of local youth on Norfolk County farms by 5%</li> <li>- Collaborate with agribusiness associations to offer management and technology training to 30 individuals.</li> <li>- Seek funding for marketing, promotion and education and awareness programs i.e. <a href="#">RED</a></li> </ul>
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## Norfolk County Economic Development 2025-2026 Priorities

The priorities outlined above can be accomplished over time and with the support of a broad range of Norfolk County departments and local and provincial resources. The Norfolk County Economic Development Department can play an immediate role in addressing some of the recommendations to advance phase 2 of this project and inspire and ignite positive changes for workers in Norfolk County.

Happy, healthy workers are the foundation upon which successful communities are built. The research identifies transportation, affordability, and mental health as some of the main concerns affecting Norfolk County workers today. Affordability and value for money are at the heart of many decisions made today. Workforce Synergy, a division of the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie (WPBGE), understands this message loud and clear. Celebrating 25 years in the Grand Erie Community this year, the WPBGE is a local non-profit that must think strategically and creatively about projects, their partners and their respective budgets on a daily basis. Together with our partners, the WPBGE has accomplished a lot of great work and created tools to support the workforce and employers over the years.

In analyzing the Quality of Life for Workers research results, Workforce Synergy has identified three key recommendations from the list above that can be accomplished within the next year at a cost of Norfolk County Economic Development staff time, passion and motivation. Together, with the help of Norfolk County Economic Development and Council, we can get tools in front of employers and the Norfolk County workforce more broadly. We will do the work if you agree to advise and provide feedback during the research and development phase of the projects and share the final products with the Norfolk County community.

The Help Us, Help You Campaign: With the help and support of the Norfolk County Economic Development Department and Council, Workforce Synergy is in a position to tackle the following projects in the immediate term, which relate directly to Priority 2, specifically recommendations 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 during the 2025-2026 project year (April 1 – March 31).



## **Norfolk County Economic Development Priorities: Helps us, Help you Campaign**

### **Raise Business Standards: UpSkill Advisors: Employer Engagement Marketing campaign project to educate businesses about local training programs, service provider resources and the importance of partnering and advising.**

Recommendation 2.1: UpSkilling employees allows businesses to be nimble in the face of disruption. Equipping the workforce with new skills makes them more productive and engaged in their work and improves employee-employer loyalty and trust. We also know that with an upskilling framework in place, businesses can provide the added benefit of progress and advancement at work leading to an increase in the living wage and improved quality of life.

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) has completed extensive research which demonstrates the specific benefits of employment for people with mental illness. With education and employment, individuals often experience reductions in their symptoms and reliance on medical resources, as well as improved quality of life.

Local post-secondary institutions (Fanshawe) and organizations like the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie and Fanshawe Community Career and Employment Services regularly develop and run training programs that meet the needs of employers as reported by local employers. These programs are typically funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario. Through this funding, subsidized training programs are offered to the local workforce, and incentives are offered to participating employers. Programs are typically well subscribed from a workforce perspective. The gap exists when it comes to employer engagement and involvement in the programs being offered.

Norfolk County Economic Development is invited to partner with the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie who will identify training opportunities, educators and service providers that businesses can get involved with to help upskill their current and future employees. A marketing strategy will be developed that will educate and attract businesses to get involved in local training programs and advise on new program curriculum.

### **Raise Business Standards: Small Business HR Tool Kit serving Norfolk County**

Recommendation 2.2: It is critical that we support existing and budding small businesses so that they can capitalize on opportunities rather than be negatively impacted by further labour force loss. Many small businesses in rural Ontario do not have the finances, time or expertise to develop solid HR practices. The creation of an HR toolkit will strengthen recruitment, retention and skill development which leads to stronger businesses and contributes to the overall economic vitality of rural communities in Ontario, fostering job creation, innovation and long-term prosperity.

Norfolk County Economic Development is invited to partner with the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie who will establish a toolkit that will bridge the gap by providing valuable resources, insights, templates and best practices tailored to meet the unique needs of small businesses and entrepreneurs. The creation of the HR Toolkit (digital) will strengthen recruitment, retention, and skill development which leads to stronger businesses and contributes to the overall economic vitality of rural communities in Ontario, fostering job creation, innovation and long-term prosperity.

### **Raise Business Standards: Grand Erie Equity Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) Executive Network project serving Norfolk County**

Recommendation 2.3: Employees expect more from their employers today. During the 1950s and 60s, a sense of gratitude and subservience was culturally prevalent in the employer-employee relationship. People were pleased to have a job and were often there for life. During the 1980s, people remained grateful for their jobs and generally believed that if they worked hard, they would succeed. The people entering the workforce today understand that hard work is necessary to progress, but they also believe that their employer has to work hard to keep them. The new generation of workforce generally wants to work in a place that gives back to society, does the right thing in the right ways, and treats staff well. They generally expect more of workplace culture, and they do not tolerate unfairness or bias. They want employers that promote a healthy work-life balance and have solid mental health policies.

Norfolk County Economic Development is invited to partner with the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie who will establish an equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) speaker series that highlights best practices across the main sectors in Norfolk County and the greater Grand Erie area. The series is meant to be focused on mentorship and education in an engaging and social setting. It will include the importance of working with service providers to address gaps, and working with local organizations and cultural clubs to broaden the understanding of the need for Indigenous/cultural/Temporary Foreign Worker/educational events that are open to the public. Norfolk County Economic Development Department will work with the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie to invite Norfolk employers to the events to learn about the value of EDI in the workplace. The target audience will be management and Human Resource professionals.

In the interim, the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie would like to further explore funding for a feasibility study that would help support Recommendation 1.3: Connect the County. In the face of an affordability crisis, many people find themselves desperate for new opportunities that will offer a better quality of life. It may also mean that people cannot afford particular modes of transport to get them to work. Public Transportation is an expensive and intricate business and can take years to fund and properly plan. In the face of adversity, partnerships must form to help support growth and prosperity.

Norfolk County Economic Development is invited to partner with the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie, which will seek funding to undertake a feasibility study in the hopes of establishing a carpooling program for drivers and riders in Norfolk County and the greater Grand Erie area.

## Norfolk County Economic Development 2025–2026 Priorities

Recommendations	Norfolk County Lead	Key Partners	Resources Required	Timeline	KPIs
<p><b>Raise Business Standards, Recommendation 2.1. UpSkill Advisors: Employer Engagement Marketing Campaign to educate businesses about local training programs, and the importance of partnering and advising</b></p>	Economic Development	Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie (WPBGE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CRM platform</li> <li>- Business listing</li> </ul>	April 2025 – December 2026 +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build out the CRM platform with business listings and contact information</li> <li>- Update list of training providers and their specialties</li> <li>- Develop and implement marketing strategy in Norfolk County</li> </ul>
<p><b>Raise Business Standards, Recommendation 2.2. Small Business HR Tool Kit serving Norfolk County</b></p>	Economic Development	Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie (WPBGE) - OMAFRA RED Funding Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data on best practices amongst local employers</li> </ul>	January 2025 – December 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>HR Tool Kit:</b> Establish a toolkit that will bridge the gap by providing valuable resources, insights, templates and best practices tailored to meet the unique needs of small businesses and entrepreneurs</li> </ul>

<p><b>Raise Business Standards, Recommendation 2.3. Grand Erie Executive Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) Network Serving Norfolk County</b></p>	<p>Economic Development</p>	<p>Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie (WPBGE)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Business list</li> <li>- Update CRM platform</li> <li>- EDI training curricula</li> </ul>	<p>April 2025 – March 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build out the CRM platform with business listings and contact information</li> <li>- Build out EDI curriculum</li> <li>- Host training events in Norfolk County for Norfolk County businesses of all sizes</li> </ul>
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# Concluding Remarks

Efforts like Norfolk County’s April 2024 Innovation Frontier Forum and involvement in the development of local master plans on transit, recreation and facilities are some of the many ways in which Norfolk County’s economic development team already prioritizes improving quality of life. The priorities outlined within this Implementation Plan align well with these focuses, and to Norfolk County’s commitment to inclusive and sustainable growth. With this foundation, and the investment of the diverse community groups that make up Norfolk County, the recommendations detailed above will create unique and innovative opportunities to build and enhance quality of life by directly tackling the most significant gaps in services, as identified by members of Norfolk County. By focusing on foundational priorities – such as healthcare, recreation, EDI and transit – in the short-medium term, and simultaneously developing strategies to tackle medium and long-term goals – such as skill development, adjustments to land use policies and marketing initiatives, this report creates a roadmap to support the County on its mission to enhance local quality of life.

Tackling the priorities identified within this Implementation Plan requires a coordinated strategic effort between local economic development as well as other Norfolk County departments (including recreation, social services, building, planning, and heritage and culture), the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie, Norfolk Chamber of Commerce groups, Business Improvement Area’s (BIA), industry associations, educational institutions, Employment Ontario services, literacy and basic skills, and other business support organizations (to name a few). With a track record for pursuing solutions that build on past successes and fostering new funding partnerships and leadership roles, Norfolk Economic Development’s is well equipped to tackle the priorities identified through this study. While large in scope and scale, it is through fostering multi-faceted collaborations that quality of life in Norfolk County can be enhanced equitably and sustainably.

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# Appendix A: Literature Reviewed

- Akranavičiūtė, D., & Ruževičius, J. (2007). Quality of life and its components' measurement. *Engineering economics*, 52(2).
- Austin, J, Weinstein, A., Hicks, M. & Wornell (2022) Improving quality of life—not just business—is the best path to Midwestern rejuvenation. Brookings Institution.
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- Haile, R. & Funk, L. (2009) Improving Accessibility of Health and Social Services for Low German Speaking Mennonites: Cultivating a Respectful Approach to Client Engagement in Elgin, Oxford and Norfolk Counties. Southwestern Public Health.
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Ventegodt, S., Hilden, J., & Merrick, J. (2003). Measurement of quality of life I. A methodological framework. *The scientific world Journal*, 3(1), 950-961.

Vischer, J. C., & Wifi, M. (2017). The effect of workplace design on quality of life at work. *Handbook of environmental psychology and quality of life research*, 387-400.

World Health Organization. (1998). Programme on mental health: WHOQOL user manual (No. WHO/HIS/HSI Rev. 2012.03). World Health Organization.

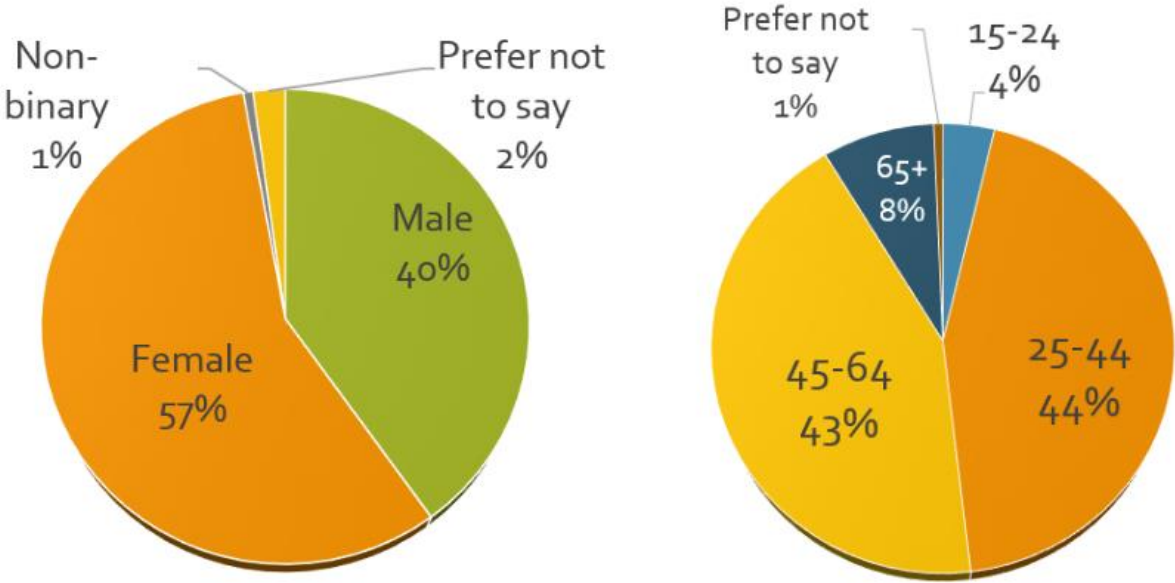


# Appendix B: Demographic Profile of Stakeholders Engaged

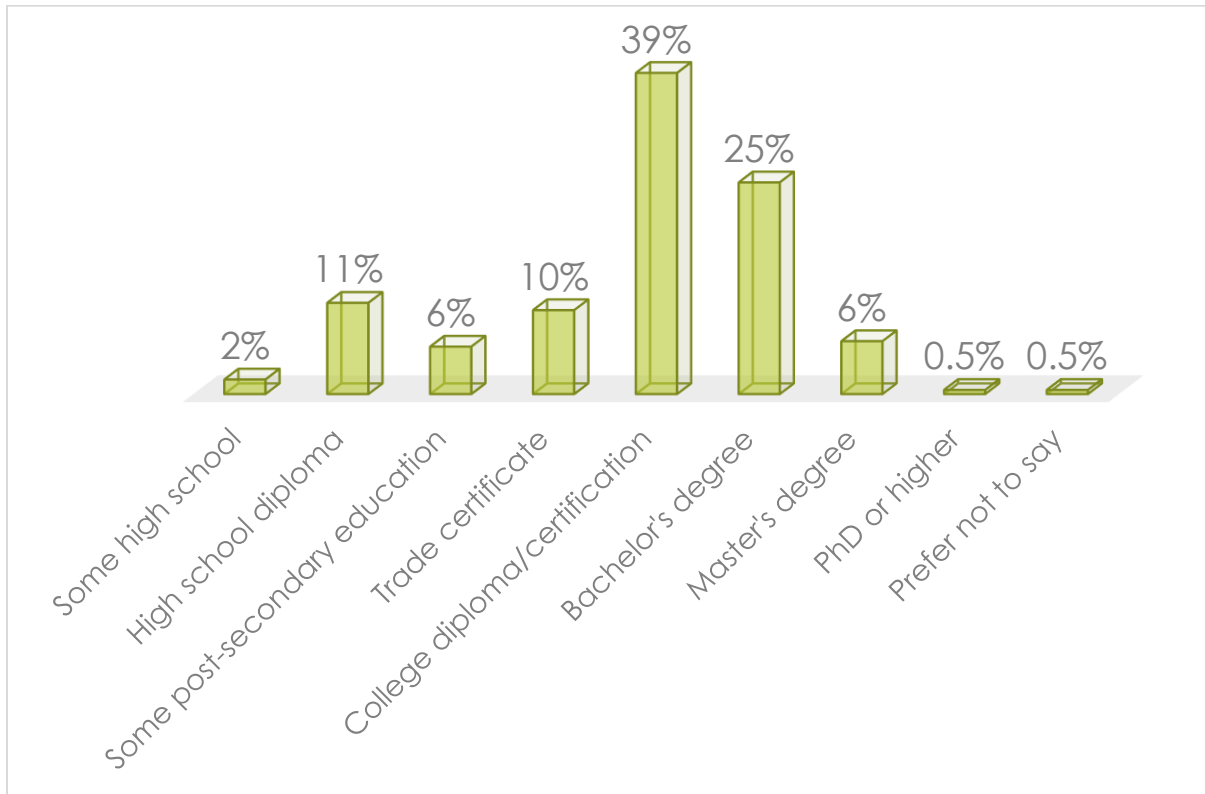
To examine quality of life, engagement activities – namely a community survey and stakeholder forum – were undertaken between June and August 2024. An overwhelming response was received, pointing to the significant interest amongst residents and workers in ensuring their voices are heard. Participants were diverse in their backgrounds, sectors of employment, and the perspectives they brought to this study; a summary of demographic data on participants is included below.

## Community Survey

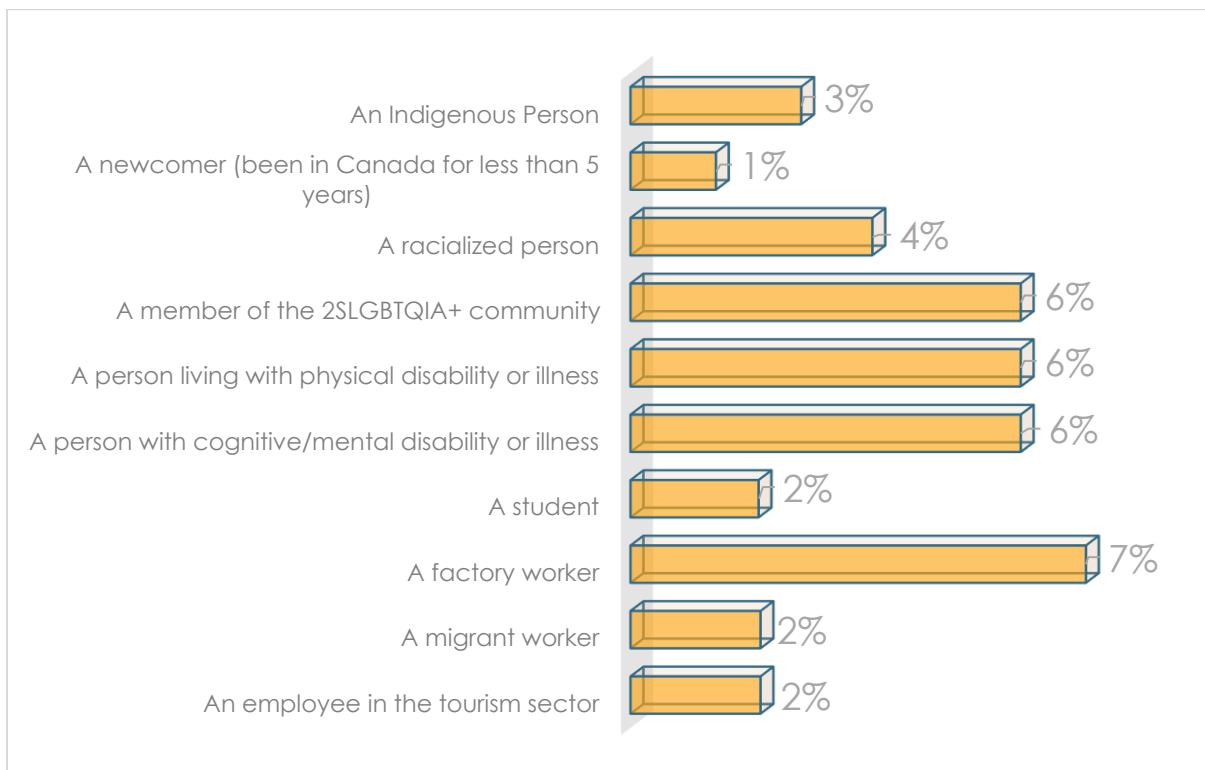
### Gender and Age



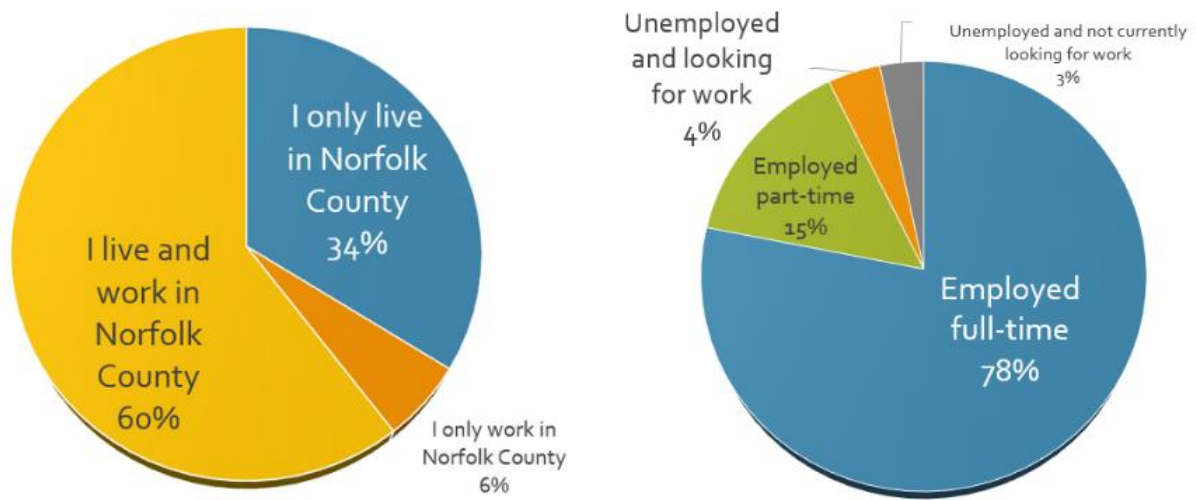
## Educational Attainment



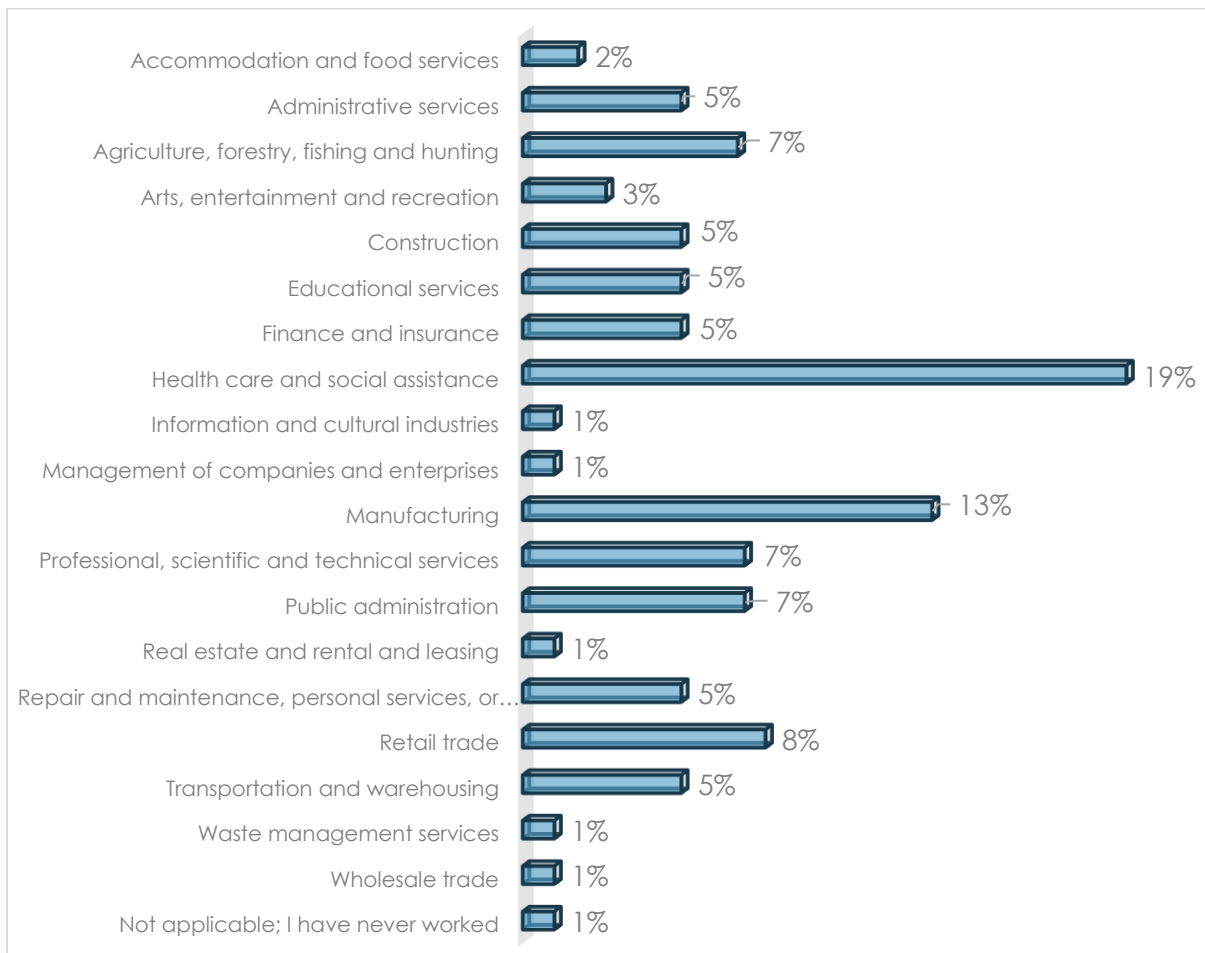
## Other demographics



## Place of Residence and Work & Employment Status



## Sector of Employment



The size of the boxes below illustrate the proportion of respondents that live and work in each of Norfolk's communities/wards.

**Respondents live in:**



**Respondents work in:**



## Stakeholder Forum

- South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation
- Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus
- Haldimand Norfolk London Learning Centres
- Norfolk Community Help Centre
- Grand River Employment and Training
- Grand River Community Health Centre
- Norfolk Federation of Agriculture
- Norfolk Agricultural Society
- Haldimand Norfolk Home Builders Association
- Skilled Trades Alliance
- Fanshawe College, Community Career and Employment Services

Norfolk County's Economic Development team attended and answered questions at this forum.

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# Appendix C: Research Design

## Community Survey

### 1. Which of the following apply to you?

- I live in Norfolk County
- I work in Norfolk County
- I do not live or work in Norfolk County [skip to end of survey]

### 2. What is your current employment status?

- Employed full-time
- Employed part-time
- Unemployed and looking for work
- Unemployed and not currently looking for work
- Retired [skip to end of survey]

### 3. Where do you live?

- Ward 1 (including Port Rowan, Long Point, Southwalsingham)
- Ward 2 (including Langton and Courtland)
- Ward 3 (including Delhi, Teeterville, and Windham Centre)
- Ward 4 (including Vittoria, Normandale, and Port Ryerse)
- Ward 5 (including Simcoe)
- Ward 6 (including Port Dover)
- Ward 7 (including Waterford)
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Where is your place of work located?

- Ward 1 (including Port Rowan, Long Point, Southwalsingham)
- Ward 2 (including Langton and Courtland)
- Ward 3 (including Delhi, Teeterville, and Windham Centre)
- Ward 4 (including Vittoria, Normandale, and Port Ryerse)
- Ward 5 (including Simcoe)
- Ward 6 (including Port Dover)
- Ward 7 (including Waterford)
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. Gender: How do you identify?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_

### 6. Please select your age group:

- 15-24
- 25—44
- 45-64
- 65+
- Prefer not to say

**7. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?**

- Some high school
- High school diploma
- Some post-secondary education
- College diploma/certification
- Trade certificate
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- PhD or higher
- Prefer not to say

**8. In which sector do you work?**

- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Wholesale trade
- Retail trade
- Transportation and warehousing
- Information and cultural industries
- Finance and insurance
- Real estate and rental and leasing
- Professional, scientific and technical services
- Management of companies and enterprises
- Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services
- Educational services
- Health care and social assistance
- Arts, entertainment and recreation
- Accommodation and food services
- Repair and maintenance, personal services, or religious/civic organizations
- Public administration
- Unsure. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Are you: (select all that apply) (OPTIONAL)**

- An Indigenous person
- A newcomer (been in Canada for less than 5 years)
- A racialized person (persons who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour)
- A member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community
- A person living with a physical disability or illness
- A person with a cognitive (mental) disability or illness
- A student
- A factory worker
- A migrant worker
- An employee in the tourism sector
- None of the above

**10. Using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means "Very dissatisfied" and 10 means "Very satisfied", how do you feel about your life in Norfolk County?**

Very Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very Satisfied

**11. Using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means "Not at all" and 10 means "Completely", to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile/have purpose?**

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Completely

**12. Considering your life in Norfolk County, please rate your agreement with the following statements.**

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No opinion
<b>Prosperity</b>					
I am hopeful about my future					
I have access to reliable, high speed internet					
I am able to access skills and training opportunities that meet my interests					
There are many job opportunities that meet my skills and interests					
<b>Health</b>					
In general, I have excellent physical health					
In general, I have excellent mental health					
I can easily access affordable, nutritious food					
I can easily access spaces in which I can exercise/be physically active					
I can easily access healthcare providers					
My healthcare needs are being met					
<b>Environment</b>					
I am satisfied with the amount of green space near me					
I am satisfied with the quality of air around me					
I am satisfied with my access to clean water					
My community is walkable					
I can easily access public transit					
<b>Society</b>					
I am proud to live in Norfolk County					
I feel a strong sense of belonging to my local community					
I have people I can depend on to help me when I need it					
I am satisfied with the amount of time I have to do the things that I like doing					
I often feel lonely					
I can easily access social spaces (e.g. parks, malls, community centers/ services)					



I have experienced bullying/cyberbullying in the workplace					
Good Governance					
I feel safe in my community during the day					
I feel safe in my community after dark					
I have confidence in local institutions (i.e. police, government, legal services, justice system)					
I feel my perspectives are represented in local government					
I can trust information I receive through the media					

**13. In the past 5 years, have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in your place of work because of any of the following?**

- Your Indigenous identity
- Your ethnicity or culture
- Your race or skin colour
- Your religion
- Your language
- Your accent
- Your physical appearance (Include discrimination on the basis of weight, height, hair style or colour, clothing, jewelry, tattoos and other physical characteristics. Exclude discrimination on the basis of skin colour.)
- Your sex (Sex refers to sex assigned at birth)
- Your sexual orientation (e.g., heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual)
- Your gender identity/expression (inc. gender diverse identities like two-spirit/nonbinary.)
- Your age
- A physical or mental disability
- Some other reason. Please specify (optional):  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Did not experience discrimination

**14. On an average day, how many hours do you spend doing unpaid work (e.g. caring for children/parent(s), volunteer work in the community)? \_\_\_\_\_ hours**

**15. On an average day, how many minutes how long does it take for you to travel between work and home (one way): \_\_\_\_\_ minutes**

**16. What type of social services/supports do you think would be most useful to improving your quality of life in Norfolk County? (Select all that apply)**

- Better access to affordable childcare
- Better public transportation options
- More affordable housing options
- More employment services

- More community spaces (e.g. parks, malls, community centers etc.)
- More recreational spaces (e.g. gyms, swimming pools, etc.)
- More social events
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**17. Please tell us what else you need from your employer and community to support good quality of life.**

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## Stakeholder Forum Questions

- What do you love most about living/working in Norfolk County?
- How accessible, diverse, equitable and inclusive are services in Norfolk County?
- What is the biggest barrier to good quality of life for Norfolk County workers?
- How can Norfolk County improve prosperity for local workers?
- How can Norfolk County improve the health of local workers?
- How can Norfolk County improve local social and community systems?
- How can Norfolk County improve the local environment?
- How can Norfolk County improve local governance?
- What are some demographic-specific challenges that your clients face?