



# The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

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To: Planning and Economic Development Committee  
From: Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development  
Report: #2022-EDT-15  
Date: December 6, 2022

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**Subject:**

Ready Set Future: Five Year Economic Development and Tourism Strategy and Action Plan

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**Recommendation:**

That the Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends to Regional Council:

- A) That the new Economic Development and Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, '2023-2027 Ready Set Future: A PLACE Blueprint for Durham', be endorsed.
  - B) That a copy of "Ready Set Future" be sent to Durham's Area Municipalities, all members of the Steering Committee, all members of the Durham Economic Development Partnership, Durham's post-secondary institutions, Durham Chambers of Commerce and the Boards of Trade, Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, Durham Workforce Authority, Business Advisory Centre Durham, Spark Centre, 1855 Accelerator, OPEN.Innovate, and Central Counties Tourism.
  - C) That Durham Region Council extend its thanks to the many contributors and collaborators throughout the Region and the members of the Steering Committee for their time, dedication, and support to this important project.
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**Report:****1. Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- a. Provide Committee and Council with Durham Region's new five-year Economic Development and Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, '2023-2027 Ready Set Future: A PLACE Blueprint for Durham'; and
- b. Notify Committee that this report will be accompanied by a presentation by Simon Gill, Director of Economic Development and Tourism at the inaugural meeting of the Planning and Economic Development Committee on December 6, 2022.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Region's prior Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan that was endorsed by Council in 2017 has reach the end of its five-year timeframe. It is outdated and in the past five years, much has changed. The global pandemic has permanently changed the nature of work, the pace of innovation globally is accelerating, and Durham's demographics and economy are evolving rapidly. Good news stories consistently emerge of the incredible advancements occurring throughout Durham's economy. A new bold, transformative, and forward-looking strategy is needed to set the course of regional economic development for the coming five years.
- 2.2 A comprehensive analysis was commissioned to review and consider economic and demographic data, local economic reports, and research, and to explore the most impactful global drivers of change for the next ten years. This research and analysis was used to identify high-value opportunities to grow the regional economy.
- 2.3 A Steering Committee was assembled, comprised of a strong and diverse group of leaders from throughout Durham, including the post-secondary institutions, Durham's largest businesses, the Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, the Arts / Cultural / Creative industry, and technology startups from the innovation community. The names of the Steering Committee members and other key contributors are listed on page 70 of the Strategy, and staff are grateful for their dedicated participation and guidance.
- 2.4 The data analysis and global drivers of change were used to frame the challenge: "What does economic success look like in the near term (5 years) and in the long

term (30 years)?”. Collaborative sessions were held to identify and develop shared economic aspirations. These sessions included over 80 of the Region’s economic partners including economic development staff from Durham’s area municipalities, post-secondary institutions, major employers, entrepreneurs, the Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, Durham Workforce Authority, the Mississaugas of Scugog Island, BACD, the Arts, Cultural and Creative Industries, BIAs, the Innovation Community (including Spark Centre, 1855 Accelerator and OPEN.Innovate), Central Counties Tourism, and other internal Regional Departments.

- 2.5 In collaboration with these partners, four long-term aspirations for Durham’s economic future were formed, and measures of success were identified. The new strategy places Durham residents at its centre, with activities aligned behind the overall goal of improving long-term economic prosperity of the residents of Durham.
- 2.6 The Steering Committee met throughout the strategy development process and created goals for each long-term aspiration. For each goal area, action items were generated to be undertaken by the Economic Development and Tourism Division over the coming five years. These actions would send the Region confidently down the path toward achieving its economic development aspirations.

### **Previous Reports and Decisions**

- 2.7 [#2022-EDT-1](#) Economic Development and Tourism Strategy and Action Plan: Update
- 2.8 #2017-COW-116 The prior five-year strategy: [2017-2021 Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan “Durham Region: The Right Choice for a Bright Future”](#)

### **3. Vision and Aspirations**

- 3.1 “Ready Set Future” endeavours to support the creation of economic opportunities for people of diverse backgrounds, identities, abilities, lifestyles and life stages; and aims to create an inclusive prosperous future for everyone. The strategy places Durham’s residents at its centre.
- 3.2 Strategic Vision: “Durham’s distinct cultural identity, and its vibrant and diverse downtowns will be magnets for talent and investment, and the region’s innovation community will be known for solving global challenges.”
- 3.3 The ‘PLACE’ based economic aspirations for Durham 30 years in the future are that:

- a. PEOPLE: Durham will be a leader in Ontario for workforce skill and education attainment
- b. LOCATION: Durham will capitalize on potential for strong intensification and renewal in urban cores, and grow vibrancy and diversity in the downtowns
- c. ACCELERATION: Durham's innovative businesses will continue to solve global challenges
- d. CREATIVITY: Durham will have a distinct creative and cultural identity for its vibrant base of creative businesses, cultural institutions, galleries, entertainment venues, and homegrown talent
- e. ENABLERS: Collaboration, resourcing and metrics will enable success.

#### **4. Relationship to Strategic Plan**

4.1 Ready Set Future is the primary Regional strategy and action plan to deliver on 'Goal 3: Economic Prosperity' of the [Durham Region Strategic Plan 2020-2024](#), which is "To build a strong and resilient economy that maximizes opportunities for business and employment growth, innovation and partnership". Specifically, the priorities of Goal 3 are:

- a. 3.1 Position Durham Region as the location of choice for business
- b. 3.2 Leverage Durham's prime geography, social infrastructure, and strong partnerships to foster economic growth
- c. 3.3 Enhance communication and transportation networks to better connect people and move goods more effectively
- d. 3.4 Capitalize on Durham's strengths in key economic sectors to attract high quality jobs
- e. 3.5 Provide a supportive environment for agriculture and agri-food industries

#### **5. Related Action Plans**

5.1 Ready Set Future will be supported by other more detailed action plans. Some have already been completed, and others are planned or in development. The following strategies and plans provide greater functional detail on how certain goals within the strategy will be executed.

- a. [Local Food BR&E Project Plan \(#2019-EDT-11\)](#)
- b. Growing Agri-Food Durham ([#2022-EDT-10](#))
- c. Vibrant North Durham Plan (Draft Complete)
- d. Invest Durham Marketing Action Plan (Draft Complete)
- e. Durham Tourism Action Plan (In Development)
- f. Investment Attraction Plan (In Development)



- g. Other Priority Cluster Strategies: Future Energy; Next Generation Mobility; Arts, Culture & Creative Industries; Applied Digital Technology. (To Be Developed)

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The attached “Ready Set Future” strategy sets out bold, long-term economic aspirations for Durham. Through an extensive and collaborative process, the Region worked with a diverse group of partners to co-develop a five-year Action Plan consisting of 71 action items organized within 15 goal areas.
- 6.2 The strategy was developed in collaboration with the Region’s many economic partners, including Durham’s area municipalities, post-secondary institutions, major employers, entrepreneurs, the Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, Durham Workforce Authority, the Mississaugas of Scugog Island, BACD, the Arts, Culture and Creative Industries, BIAs, the Innovation Community (including Spark Centre, 1855 Accelerator and OPEN.Innovate), Central Counties Tourism, and other internal Regional Departments.
- 6.3 The PLACE-based economic aspirations for Durham 30 years in the future set out an economic vision based on People, Location, Acceleration, and Creativity, and supported by a set of Enablers.
- 6.4 The Action Plan for the next five years will send the Region confidently down the path toward realising these economic development aspirations.

## **7. Attachments**

Attachment #1: 2023-2027 Ready Set Future: A PLACE Blueprint for Durham

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP  
Commissioner of Planning and  
Economic Development

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

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Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair  
Chief Administrative Officer

2023-2027

# READY SET FUTURE

## A PLACE Blueprint for Durham



Economic Development and Tourism Strategy and Action Plan



An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are green fields, a road, and some buildings. In the middle ground, there are more fields and a line of trees. In the background, there is a large body of water, possibly a lake or a wide river, under a clear blue sky.

# Acknowledgement

Durham Region is located on the traditional lands of the Mississauga Peoples. While the Region has started its journey to develop meaningful relationships and work toward reconciliation with local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, we recognize and acknowledge that a more comprehensive approach to reconciliation is needed to address systemic inequities and racism; and to better support, celebrate and deliver services to Indigenous Peoples in the region. We give this acknowledgement to show respect to the First Peoples who inhabited this land and to remind ourselves of the importance of strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities and of our continuing commitment to do better.

This strategy endeavours to support the creation of economic opportunities for people of diverse backgrounds, identities, abilities, lifestyles and life stages; and aims to create an inclusive prosperous future for everyone.



# Introduction

Ready Set Future delivers on the third pillar of Durham Regional Council’s Strategic Plan: **“To build a strong and resilient economy that maximizes opportunities for business and employment growth, innovation and partnership.”** It was developed collaboratively with partners from the academic, business, and public sectors, and with partners from the area municipalities, innovation community, and the arts and creative sectors. With the guidance of a steering committee (credited at the end of this strategy), economic data and global drivers of change were analyzed, and aspirations were developed to frame a long-term vision for the future.



“Our collaborative process to develop this strategy led back to one fundamental objective: the work of Invest Durham is ultimately to improve the success, fulfillment, and prosperity of the region’s residents. For that reason, this strategy puts the region’s people at its centre.”

— John Henry, Regional Chair and CEO



“Ready Set Future is Durham Region’s bold and transformational economic action plan. It was built to support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and targeted investment. This plan is ambitious, aspirational, and tenacious— just like our community.”

— Elaine Baxter-Trahair, Chief Administrative Officer

This strategy sets out an economic development vision for the region three decades into the future – aspirations for a talented workforce, vibrant downtowns, a reputation for business innovation, and a distinct creative identity. A Five-Year Action Plan, found in the second half of this strategy, is the roadmap for the next five years. These actions will guide Durham Region confidently down the path to begin realizing these aspirations.

**Durham’s distinct cultural identity—and its vibrant and diverse downtowns—will be magnets for talent and investment, and the region’s innovation community will be known for solving global challenges.**



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Five-Year  
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**Situated within the most in-demand province in what is widely considered the best country in the world, Durham Region is part of the strongest economic metropolitan area in Canada.**

The global economy is changing rapidly, and the region is in a time of booming growth. Durham Region needs a bold and transformative strategy to unlock economic potential, and it must build on and use its incredible strengths and assets to drive job growth through innovation.



Large investments into **Pickering's** Seaton lands by international companies are examples of this booming growth. The transformation of Pickering City Centre, with dense housing and office buildings connecting to mass transit makes it an emerging alternative to downtown Toronto. Pickering has long been a home to the nuclear industry, and in recent years, the Canadian Centre for Nuclear Sustainability was established with a vision for global influence in the future of clean energy.

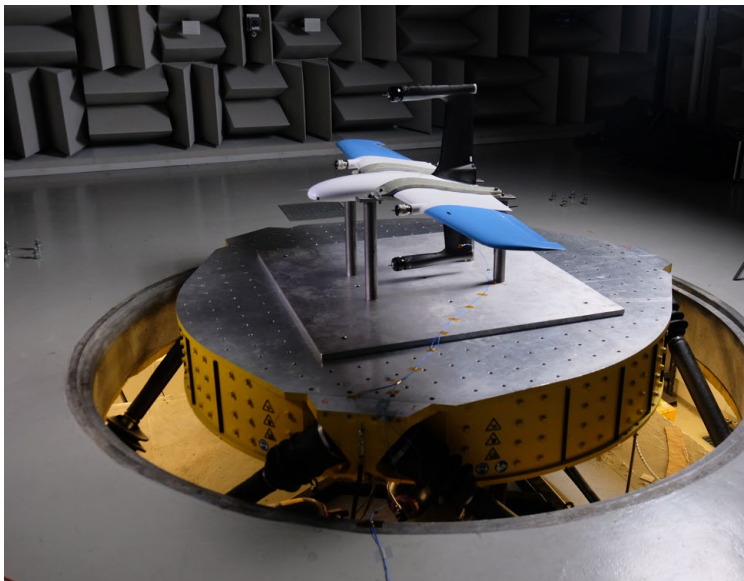


The **Ajax** lakeshore community has a long history of industrial innovation. Now a diverse urban community with a passion for cycling and lakefront trails, the natural assets complement cutting-edge aerospace and advanced mobility innovators.



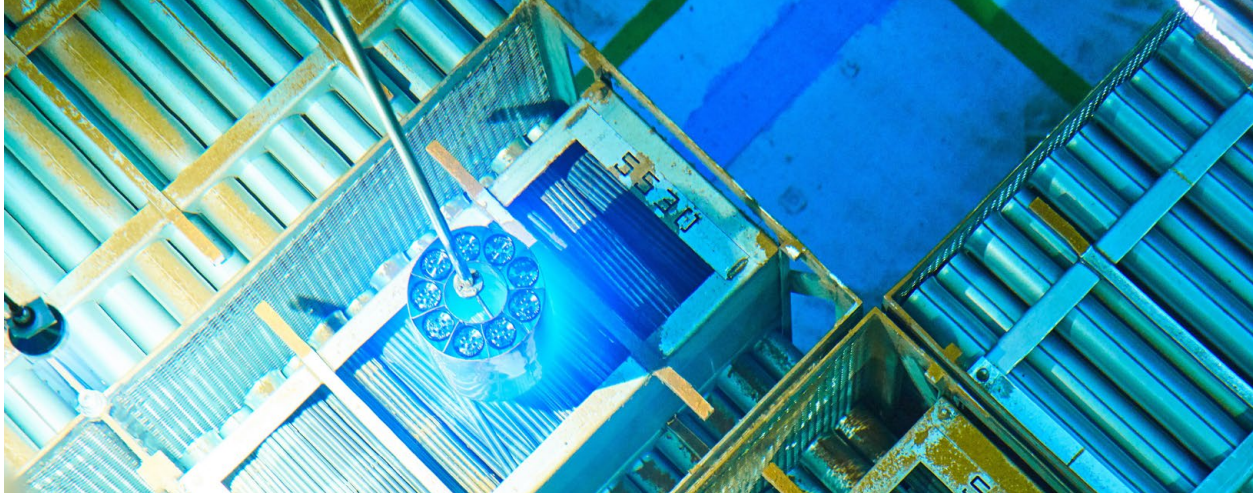


In **Whitby**, Merck is producing leading-edge pharmaceuticals at Thermo Fisher Scientific. Nearby, Ontario Shores for Mental Health Sciences is beginning work on Canada's first Mental Health Innovation Accelerator. Durham College's Centre for Food is innovating sustainable food systems. Home grown technology companies are accelerated into global leaders at 1855 Accelerator.



**Oshawa** is an innovation centre. With three top-ranked post-secondary institutions, it is a cultural crossing place that leads Ontario in workforce development. ACE, one of the world's most advanced climatic testing facilities, is one of many advanced and industry-responsive research and development labs on campus. With a downtown under transformation, Oshawa's core contains collections of national significance, including fine art, vintage automobiles, and Parkwood National Historic Site—one of Canada's top 10 film and television industry locations.





Together with Pickering, **Clarington** positions Durham as the Clean Energy Capital of Canada. With the headquarters of Ontario Power Generation (OPG) on the way, lifesaving medical isotopes under production, and the site of the first grid-tied Small Modular Reactor (SMR), Durham's enormous competitive advantage globally in the future energy cluster will attract investment and jobs for decades. Innovation continues in the rural areas.

Algoma Orchards is Canada's largest apple grower, using cutting edge technology to meet ambitious sustainability goals. Tesla batteries and industrial-scale water reclamation at their facility propels sustainability and solves global challenges in agri-food production.



These connections demonstrate how Durham balances urban excitement with country charm. This is apparent in **Uxbridge**, where farm meets table. Farmers markets, bistros, and a strong artistic community complement rolling, colourful trails. Animated by historic architecture, innovators and entrepreneurs work remotely in Uxbridge and Port Perry—areas boasting high growth rates and densities of tech talent.





**Brock** offers lakefront beauty and recreation, as well as rolling agricultural countryside dotted with three historic main street communities. Brock is home to several cutting-edge businesses ranging from agri-food and agri-tech enterprises, to businesses specializing in advanced 3D printing and additive manufacturing.

**Scugog** is a creative community. Here you'll find a recognized music industry technology giant, and innovative indoor farming, situated alongside some of the best and most scenic agri-tourism attractions in Ontario.



The **Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation** is proud Anishinabek community, located on Lake Scugog in the heart of the Durham Region. The community is home to the Great Blue Heron Casino, Tim Hortons, an expanding commercial center, and hosts an annual Powwow celebrating 25 years in 2023. The community has recently invested in clean drinking water infrastructure to the community, lifting a 20-year boil advisory. The First Nation has established an economic development partnership, Noozhoo Nokiyon Limited Partnership ("NNLP"). NNLP operates and manages several businesses and commercial properties for the First Nation and continues to build a broad investment portfolio aimed at generating sovereign wealth for the community.

# It is with good reason that Durham is in-demand.

Over the last five years, Durham Region has collaborated with our area municipal partners to prioritize the servicing of desirable employment lands and have made major advances in connecting our underserved communities to high-speed broadband. We have showcased our innovation community and attracted new investment.

We have been ambitious, and now it is time to be **bold and transformational**. Our strategy, developed with partners from across the region, sets out four aspirations for long-term prosperity.














To reach these bold economic aspirations for 30 years from now, we will harness the region's many strengths, and support the leaders and innovators in our community.

We've plotted strong and action-oriented activities for the next five years that will confidently move the Region along the path to realizing this vision.



2023-2027

# STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Long-Term Aspirations	Five-Year Goals	Economic Growth Principles	Priority Clusters
<b>PEOPLE</b> Durham is a leader in Ontario for workforce skill and education attainment	1.1 Identify Future Talent Requirements 1.2 Unlock Potential of Women in STEM 1.3 Connect Businesses to Talent 1.4 Attract and Retain Talent	 Collaboration   Talent	 Future Energy
<b>LOCATION</b> Intensification and renewal in Durham's urban cores, and vibrant and diverse downtowns	2.1 Urbanize Urban Growth Centres 2.2 Facilitate Rural Resilience 2.3 Create Magnetic Downtowns	 Distinct Cultural Identity	 Next Gen Mobility
<b>ACCELERATION</b> Durham's innovators are solving global challenges	3.1 Strengthen Innovation Community 3.2 Grow Local Businesses 3.3 Build a Reputation 3.4 Attract Investment	 Vibrant, Financially Attainable Downtowns   Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	 Arts, Culture and Creative
<b>CREATIVITY</b> Durham has a distinct identity for arts, cultural and creative industries	4.1 Build the Tourism Brand 4.2 Strengthen Quality of Place 4.3 Champion Inclusive Tourism 4.4 Drive Prosperity through Local Love	 Climate Emergency Response   Innovation	 Applied Digital Tech
<b>ENABLERS</b> Collaboration, a resourcing plan, and performance metrics will unlock the potential of this strategy	1. Delineation of Economic Development Roles across the Region 2. Resourcing Plan 3. Metrics and KPIs	 Infrastructure and Investment Readiness	 Agri-Food



# Aspirations: A 30-Year Vision

# REALISE

## People

Durham is a leader in Ontario for workforce skill and education attainment.

## Location

Intensification and renewal in Durham's urban cores, and vibrant and diverse downtowns.

## Acceleration

Durham's innovators are solving global challenges.

## Creativity

Durham has a distinct identity for arts, cultural and creative industries.

## Enablers

Collaboration, a resourcing plan, and performance metrics will unlock the potential of this strategy.



# PLACE Aspirations

Placing people at the centre of this strategy is a modern and progressive approach to sustainable economic development. To track success of the strategy, we will monitor aggregate and median household income growth as an indicator of resident prosperity. This central focus gives rise to four long-term and interrelated aspirations that frame a bold vision for Durham 30 years in the future.

We have considered the critical ingredients that will lead to resident prosperity. Our diverse residents must have the skills and education needed to be responsive to an evolving global environment and economy. Our urban cores should be places to gather, offering affordable living options and cultural experiences that attract a variety of skilled talent. And we must focus on creating vibrant, distinct cultural identities. In doing so, we will accelerate innovation, investment, and high-quality job growth.

The Region's aspirations to be a PLACE of economic prosperity were based on the principle that skilled and talented **People** will act as a magnet to attract investment. Attracting skilled and talented people requires diverse and vibrant **Locations**, and this magnet will **Accelerate** investment and prosperity throughout the economy. Success in all three aspirations is driven by regional **Creativity** and made possible with key **Enablers**.

## People

The region welcomes vast numbers of new residents every year, resulting in above-average population growth. This growth presents an opportunity. The region can retain and develop a talent profile to match the skill requirements of key priority clusters. The region is already home to many office-based knowledge-sector workers who, prior to the pandemic, commuted out of the area for work. There is an opportunity to connect this talent with local opportunities. Skill requirements for growing clusters are evolving rapidly, as these clusters experience rapid technological innovation, which makes education and skills training critical for both individuals and organizations to remain competitive. It is important to retain, empower, diversify, and continually adapt labour force skills to meet the current and future demands of the economy.

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## Location

Durham saw significant population changes during the pandemic, as hybrid and remote workers moved to the region with their families. This trend of high population turnover preceded the pandemic and is expected to continue. The region is forecasted to grow to 1.3 million people and 460,000 jobs by 2051.

To match economic growth to residential growth, and to meaningfully increase the ratio of jobs to residents, Durham Region must support its area municipalities in pursuit of a bold and transformational vision for the Urban Growth Centres of downtown Pickering and Oshawa. Intensification and renewal in Urban Growth Centres can attract office-based employers, leading to meaningful long-term job growth. Urban renewal and intensification can also bring financially attainable housing options, helping with retention of new graduates and supporting inward migration of new working-age Canadian residents and international students.

The Region must also collaborate with area municipalities on enabling exciting placemaking initiatives in its 14 downtowns of Ajax, Beaverton, Bowmanville, Brooklin, Cannington, Newcastle, Orono, Oshawa, Pickering Nautical Village, Pickering Village, Port Perry, Sunderland, Uxbridge and Whitby. Diverse and vibrant downtowns with a strong Quality of Place are magnets for talent, and for employment-generating investment.

## Acceleration

Global, national, and regional economies are changing at speeds not seen for generations. The digital shift has been enabled by a revolution in processing power and cloud storage, automation and quantum processing. New jobs and economic value will emerge in clusters yet to be defined, and the impacts of hybrid and remote work are creating ripple effects for communities like Durham. There is a growing movement in the global economy to prioritize Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) sustainability targets, as all levels of government actively work to decarbonize and advance the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. These changes and trends create opportunities for individuals and businesses in the region. As the region's innovators solve global challenges, our local businesses become more globally competitive, and new roles and positions emerge that didn't exist before. Our broad reputation for innovation will grow. The Region must provide the necessary support to strengthen the innovation community, and strategically attract investments that solve local, national and global challenges. This support will create high value jobs and economic prosperity for the region's residents.

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## Creativity

Quality of Place elements make a community distinctive in ways that are desirable, attractive, and in turn, make it competitive for investment. In fact, it can significantly impact whether highly trained or educated workers choose to move to the region, or to stay after completion of their post-secondary schooling. We will collaborate to influence major advances to the region's Quality of Place through bold and transformative tourism and placemaking initiatives. Growth in the arts, cultural, and creative industries contribute to the magnetism of a community. There are numerous opportunities to support rural and urban economies by enabling agri-tourism, promoting recreational cycling, and creating new frameworks that foster our music industry. Our teams can help to build momentum around local food and culinary experiences, and support and grow diverse cultural festivals. In helping to build and lift-up our homegrown talent, our distinct cultural identity will be strengthened. In this way, we will lay the foundation for a magnetic, sociable and prosperous community and economy.



## Enablers

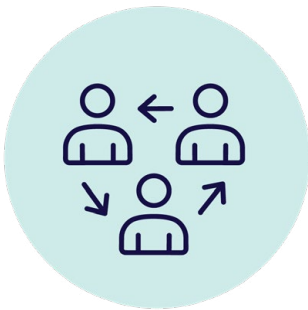
Successful economic development outcomes are enabled by a collaboration, resourcing aligned with aspirations, and documented priorities. Bringing together Regional economic development and tourism staff to collaborate with area municipal staff, post-secondary institutions, business organizations, innovation community support organizations, advisory councils, advocacy groups, and others, will create a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Working together, our collective aspirations for economic success in Durham Region will be achieved more efficiently. Further, the Regional strategy has outlined bold aspirations which will require resourcing and organizational planning to ensure they are achievable. The success of the five-year action plan will be measured through specific key performance indicators.

# Eight Economic Growth Principles



## PRINCIPLE 1

### Collaboration



The Region will achieve bold and transformational objectives by collaborating with area municipal economic development teams, the business and academic communities, the innovation community, and other agencies and levels of government.







## PRINCIPLE 2

### Talent



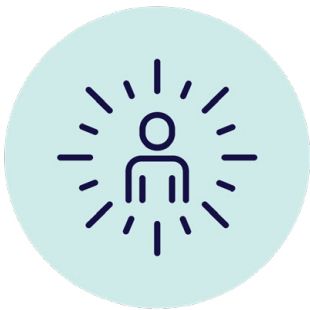
Supporting the growth of the region's skilled and educated workforce is an investment in the region's economic future. The world's most successful and innovative companies will locate new offices and investments in places that can reliably deliver a skilled and innovative workforce.





### PRINCIPLE 3

## Distinct Identity Through Culture



Durham Region should support and enable desirable amenities and experiences to attract a diverse range of residents, visitors, and investors. Rural experiences such as recreational cycling and agri-tourism will draw in families. The arts, cultural, and creative industries will create a distinctiveness that is desirable.







#### PRINCIPLE 4

### Vibrant, Financially Attainable Downtowns



A diverse mix of housing and business premises should be financially attainable to people and entrepreneurs at each stage of their life and career. A combination of urban intensification and renewal, good urban design, cultural and creative industry investment, and supporting the right place-making elements, will help unlock the ability to attract new graduates and a skilled workforce.

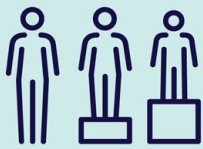






## PRINCIPLE 5

# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



Durham Region should support the creation of economic opportunities for people of diverse backgrounds, identities, abilities, lifestyles and life-stages. The Region should ensure it welcomes new residents and establishes strong links with Indigenous communities to ensure there are appropriate opportunities to address past injustices and ensure an inclusive and equitable future for everyone.





## PRINCIPLE 6

### **Climate Emergency Response**



Durham Region's actions should clearly contribute to the commitment to reach net-zero emissions and should work to reduce the harmful impact on the global environment by the community. Clean infrastructure, clean future energy, transit, electrified mobility, urban intensification, and innovation will all contribute Durham's ability to reduce environmental impacts, build resilience to the impacts of climate change, and capitalize on the global opportunity of being a climate leader.







## PRINCIPLE 7 **Innovation**



The region's businesses, institutions, students, and residents should be primed to use insights and research to drive the commitment to adaptation and improved competitiveness in all facets of the economy. The rapid pace of global change is creating new challenges and opportunities that are still being defined. Competing will require the brightest minds backed by ambitious investment and underpinned with supporting infrastructure.







## PRINCIPLE 8

### Infrastructure and Investment Readiness



Supportive infrastructure such as transit, the Port of Oshawa, the GO East Extension and associated opportunities for transit-oriented development, along with the servicing of employment lands, all contribute to the region's competitiveness for attracting new investment. This includes the continuing collaboration among the Region and area municipalities to deliver exceptional and seamless concierge services throughout the investment attraction process and includes maintaining and marketing a steady supply of market-ready employment lands for new industrial development.



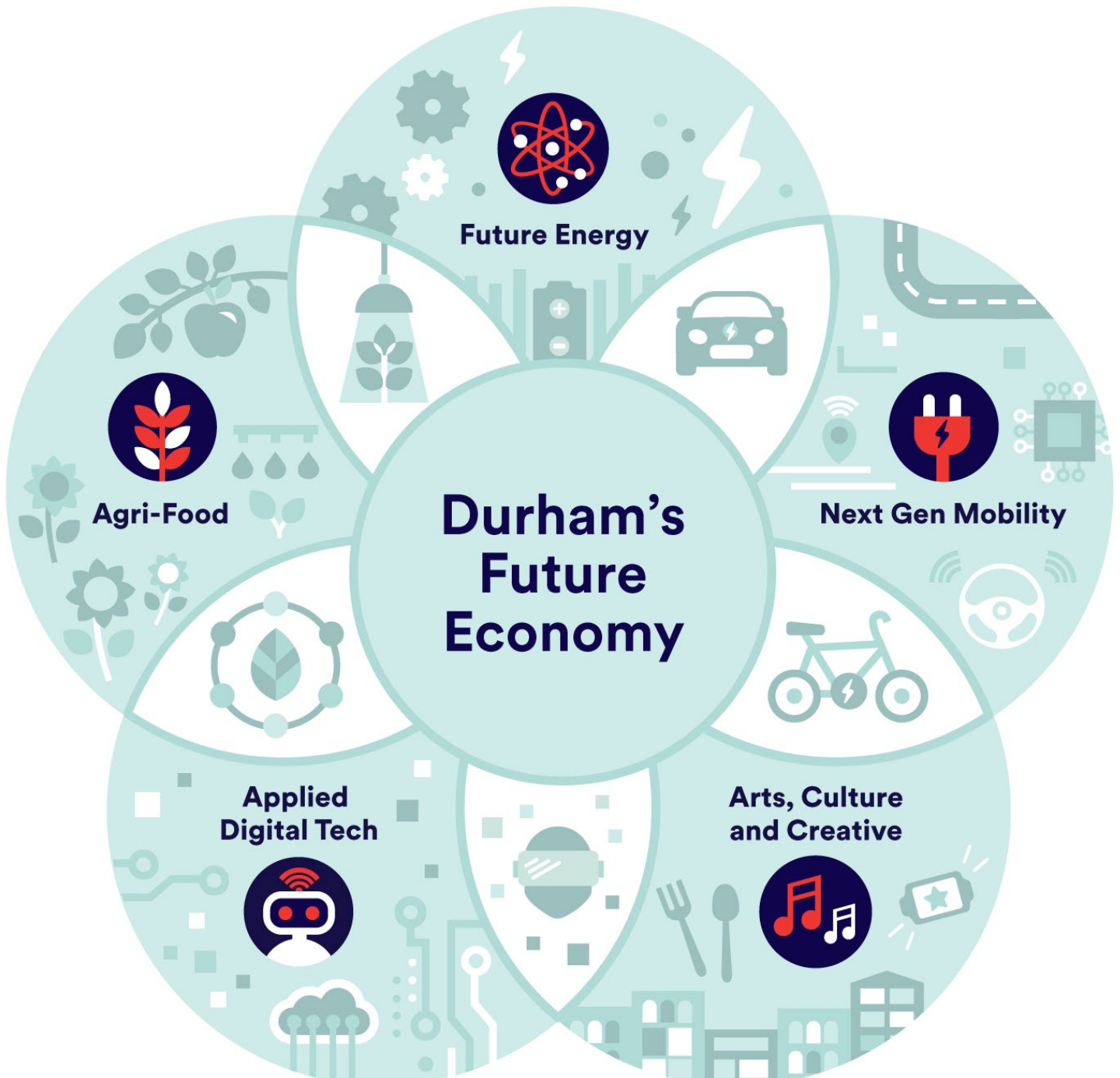
# Priority CLUSTERS

Our team will focus actions and investment toward a new set of five key priority clusters by enabling infrastructure, sites, skills, and resources needed for them to grow. We will strengthen the priority clusters by attracting new investments, filling value chain gaps.

An industry cluster is a concentration of interconnected businesses, supply chain linkages and associated ecosystem supports that can be measured and compared to other geographic areas. Clusters, when taken together, generate overall economic strength and output that is greater than the sum of their individual parts, compounding economic returns and job growth.

## **Priority clusters were selected based on their:**

- Strength to act as a platform consisting of resources, supply chain assets, and post-secondary curriculum to launch new related opportunities
- Global growth prospects
- Ability to create high-value jobs
- Capacity for innovation
- Ability to improve the regional reputation







## Future Energy

The clean energy cluster is set to undergo a dramatic transition to address the climate emergency. It is increasingly interconnected and plays a critical role driving growth in other sectors. Durham is positioned to power southern Ontario's economy, as it has a dominance in nuclear that can be leveraged to create high-quality jobs and stimulate investment in supply chains for renewable and new-nuclear solutions. The region's advantages include its labour force, strong cluster of existing businesses, and being home to Ontario Power Generation (OPG). OPG has continued its decade-long collaboration with Durham College and Ontario Tech University to build an enviable talent pool. Durham's post-secondary institutions also offer degree programs and curriculum that drive innovation. Facilities, such as Ontario Tech University's Clean Energy Research Laboratory (CERL) and ACE Climatic Wind Tunnel, are key in the progression of the Region's clean technology objectives.

### **The areas where Durham will drive growth opportunities are:**

- Professional services for energy generation and distribution
- Nuclear energy and supply chain
- Medical isotopes
- Clean renewable energy
- Battery storage
- Energy efficiency retrofit technologies



## Next Generation Mobility

The global drivers of change point to a major shift toward electric and autonomous vehicle systems. The Canadian government has mandated that all new vehicles sold by 2035 must be zero-emission. With a long-established automotive industry, Durham Region continues to foster innovation as the mobility industry evolves. Central components of the next generation of mobility economy are knowledge intensive. Durham has the base of businesses and post-secondary programs on which to build the required talent pipeline. The region's location, available land, cost-competitiveness, and established manufacturing supply chain mean that Durham is positioned to attract globally significant investments.

Both Durham College and Ontario Tech University have extensive research and development initiatives in place to accelerate the next generation of mobility. Durham is a Regional Technology Development Site (RTDS) and part of the Autonomous Vehicle Applied Research (AVAR) initiative. It is also a partner in the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN), with Ontario Tech University and Spark Centre.

**The ACE facility at Ontario Tech is an asset, which positions the following areas for growth:**

- EV technologies and charging infrastructure
- Autonomous/connected vehicle technologies
- Software development and testing
- Additive manufacturing and 3D printing
- Vehicle testing/prototyping





## Applied Digital Technology

Digital technology is now embedded broadly and deeply in all aspects of our lives. The acceleration of technology creates growth prospects, especially for places and businesses that can secure the skills that will drive development and application of new digital technologies. The region is situated within the Toronto Region – Waterloo Innovation Corridor, a global hot spot for technology growth. Durham has a base of digital tech and media businesses and will aim to secure cluster concentrations in areas of this cluster whereby businesses best fuel economic potential. The Region will aim to harness the cross-pollination of ideas among innovators, work to attract skilled labour, harness the leadership of larger employers and work to ensure availability of collaborative co-working facilities for startups. The talent pool emerging from the region's three post-secondary institutions and the potential of our larger employers to help strengthen local suppliers will spinout new business models and drive wealth creation.

**Durham Region will initially explore the case for the following areas of digital technology to be the drivers of growth in the cluster:**

- Data analytics
- Immersive technology
- Cyber security
- Applied artificial intelligence
- Next-gen automation
- Medical technology



## Arts, Culture and Creative

The arts, cultural, and creative industries cluster spans a wide range of business types. The region has well-established creative businesses; a growing film industry, a notable music scene, and 14 vibrant downtown areas that host a growing base of creative businesses. The creative businesses in our downtowns—such as music venues, culinary destinations and micro-manufacturers—provide social value to residents, while helping to attract tourism and new residents. These businesses are vital to the region’s Quality of Place, while also playing a critical role in creating jobs and prosperity in our local economies. Film and television is exhibiting strong annual growth, and there is explosive growth of electronic sports (e-sports), both which are creative industries that rely on digital technology and demand a highly skilled workforce; a workforce that is largely attracted to creative communities.

**Work will be undertaken to identify which of the following areas hold the greatest prospects for local growth in the region:**

- Music
- Film and television
- Digital media
- E-gaming and e-sports
- Cuisine and culinary





## Agri-Food

More than 80 per cent of Durham lies within the provincially designated Greenbelt, which supports a thriving agri-food industry through job creation and stewardship of the region's natural assets. With a competitive edge over other Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) municipalities, the ongoing growth of the agri-food cluster is critical to the overall economic success of the region, allowing us to leverage opportunities for growth across the entire value chain. There is a vital role to play in attracting visitors through enabling new agri-tourism offerings, local food and on-farm diversification initiatives, that support enhanced Quality of Place and access to local products and experiences. Our farmers are cutting-edge, creating an environment that provides access to the right tools and resources to invest in and adopt leading agri-tech and modern agricultural applications.

**Supporting this cluster will be imperative to sustainably feed our growing population. Areas of focus include:**

- Agri-technology
- On-farm diversified uses
- Agri-tourism
- Local food supply and value chain
- Vertical/indoor agriculture





# Five-Year ACTION PLAN

To advance Durham toward our 30-year aspirations, goals and action items for the next five years have been established. These will propel the Region down the path to achieving this vision.





# DEED

Durham is a leader in Ontario for workforce skill and education attainment.





**The talent-driven economy requires an increasingly skilled and educated workforce. Economic growth regionally is dependent on successfully attracting, retaining, developing, and deploying people in a way that maximizes their potential in the regional economy.**

Over the next 30 years, the region's workforce will lead Ontario in technical skills and trades training, and in average university-level education attainment. The region will also have inclusive and equitable talent development pathways for residents that focus on matching skills and knowledge to market demand, and on improving diversity and gender equity in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, and Trades/Technical) educations and careers.

**Evidence:**

- The region's aging population and labour force will place downward pressure on long-term labour force growth potential, emphasizing the need to plan for steady migration, particularly geared to a talented working age population.
- Anticipated economic growth in the region and decarbonization of the building sector through energy retrofits, will continue to generate a steady need for local skilled trades over the coming decades. This will require ongoing efforts to retain, attract, and accommodate new residents to avoid labour shortages.

- The region's resident population outperforms its peers in terms of college diploma attainment, but there is an opportunity to increase average university attainment to surpass the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) average.
- Farmers in the region are getting older, with more than 60 per cent aged 55 years and older. While the region has a slightly higher proportion of women farm operators than the provincial average, it is still very low.
- As the province with the highest child care costs, Ontario also has the lowest rate of women's workforce participation at 80.6%. Ultimately, early learning and child care supports parental labour force participation. While child care service is strong in Durham, improving access and reducing barriers to child care is a focus of the Region's Childcare Services Early Learning and Child Care Plan. One focus of the Plan is to ensure more people enter the child care profession in Durham, which will help unlock the ability for women to enter or re-enter the workforce.
- There is strong gender disparity in major fields of study relating to STEM in the region. Only nine per cent of women with post-secondary degrees in the region graduated from STEM fields against 50 per cent for men, and that ratio drops to under three per cent to 40 per cent for engineering.

Diverse, experienced, and educated talent is of critical importance to growing the economy and attracting investment. Talent must meet the changing needs of the economy, and the resident labour force needs to be well matched to current and future demands. The region must have a supportive and responsive environment where both individuals and businesses can build the knowledge, capacity, skills, and capabilities needed to prepare for and capitalize on economic evolution.

The region's strong legacy in advanced manufacturing gives it a competitive advantage over its peers in skilled trades and college-educated workforce, but the average age of this workforce is increasing, as is demand.



Over the next five years, Durham Region must focus on attracting, retaining, and building STEM education and skills that will allow the region's economy to grow, innovate, transform, and adapt, creating high-value jobs and attracting businesses. A skilled and highly educated population will also act as a magnet, attracting the world's fastest growing and most innovative businesses. Increasing skills and education will also place upward pressure on resident wages, driving up household income.





## **Goal 1.1 Identify future talent requirements of Durham businesses and skills gaps in key priority sectors.**

Through engagement with businesses on skills requirements, Invest Durham can support existing businesses to expand and grow while simultaneously tracking the evolution of new skills that will be required in the future. Collaboration with partners will enable new and existing businesses to come together to co-create skill-development strategies and initiatives that promote business growth, maintain consistent engagement, and track progress.

Action	Timeline
<b>1.1.1</b> Form a major Employers Roundtable to identify future talent requirements and skills that would help unlock rapid growth in key priority sectors.	2026
<b>1.1.2</b> In collaboration with others, perform talent development research into anticipated future demands for skills and knowledge, and co-develop strategies that address identified needs.	2026
<b>1.1.3</b> Conduct a future-facing skills gap analysis specific to north Durham businesses and partner with Durham Workforce Authority to identify future needs, and design programs specific to rural economies.	2025
<b>1.1.4</b> Working with partners, develop an approach to evaluate the economic contribution and local wealth creation of residents that live in the region and work remotely, to improve resident connection to the local economy.	2026

**Potential Partners:** Durham Workforce Authority, Post-Secondary Institutions, Local Area Municipalities, Major Employers, Social Services



## **Goal 1.2: Unlock the potential of women in STEM, and foster workforce diversity. Encourage inclusive talent development to enable underrepresented groups to invest in skills and education.**

A diverse talent pool is important for long-term economic growth, innovation and competitiveness. Globally, there is growing demand for STEM skills in the workforce and the region's post-secondary institutions have unique, competitive strengths to meet these needs. Despite these demands, women and other racialized populations continue to be under-represented in STEM fields. A focus on improving workforce diversity and supporting gender equity is an economic imperative for Invest Durham.

Action	Timeline
<b>1.2.1</b> Develop a program that includes dedicated outreach efforts to increase the number of women in STEM education and careers.	2026
<b>1.2.2</b> Investigate the potential to work with partners to develop an incentive program to encourage under-represented groups to enter STEM education, including micro-credentials.	2026
<b>1.2.3</b> Explore partnership opportunities to address sexism and gender-based violence in skilled trades. Support awareness and education programming for those industries that promote inclusive and safe spaces for all genders, and which work to address gender bias in the recruitment and selection process.	2026
<b>1.2.4</b> Sponsor and promote diversity and gender equity initiatives in STEM and innovation ecosystems, including Hackathons, Women in Cyber, Women in STEM, Women in Nuclear, Women in Trades, and Women in Automotive. Contribute to delivering racialized and women-owned business initiatives.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>1.2.5</b> To address challenges in skilled trades, work with regional partners to develop culturally responsive outreach and recruitment efforts geared toward the needs of racialized and marginalized communities.	2026

**Potential Partners:** Post-Secondary Institutions, Durham Region DEI Division, Durham Business Community, Trade Unions. Social Services





### **Goal 1.3: Support Durham businesses to target skilled workers through promotion, outreach, and post-secondary programs.**

Durham-based businesses face stiff competition in securing talent, and some lack capacity to upskill and recruit. Many priority clusters in the region need candidates with very specific skills and are experiencing skilled labour shortages.

Through initiatives to connect talent to career opportunities and identifying opportunities for organizations to tap into new and diverse talent streams, Invest Durham can provide support to the region's businesses that addresses their talent challenges, enabling them to expand and grow more quickly.

Action	Timeline
<b>1.3.1</b> Promote the region's career opportunities in innovation-led companies and priority clusters across the wider GTHA.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>1.3.2</b> Address the ongoing labour shortages in the agri-food sector. Measures include succession planning workshops for farmers, mentorship for young farmers, skills training programs, and Invest Durham agri-food career video promotion.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>1.3.3</b> Develop a systematic approach to match GTHA-based students and graduates with placements in the region's businesses and connect businesses to research and development and applied research opportunities.	2026
<b>1.3.4</b> Highlight opportunities to businesses that employ many of the region's out-commuters, to relocate jobs or divisions into the region by establishing satellite offices or creating hybrid work nodes in the region's urban centres.	2026
<b>1.3.5</b> Partner on the promotion and delivery of targeted training or micro-credentials to employers on culture, leadership, immigration and diversity, well-being, workforce planning and skilled workforce attraction, to support business expansion and growth.	2025

**Potential Partners:** Post-Secondary Institutions, Durham Region DEI Division, BACD, Area Municipalities, Agricultural Associations, Social Services



## **Goal 1.4: Attract and retain talent: Develop programs to attract skilled workers into Durham.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the fundamentals of where people work. It is estimated that 25 per cent of the office-based workforce will work remotely with another 25 per cent given the option to do so. Alongside this workforce shift, the rate of job change has reached historic heights as people adjust their circumstances.

The shift to remote work provides a window of opportunity for Durham Region to attract skilled workers who seek a change in lifestyle or more residential space. While the region has no difficulty in attracting new residents generally, it is imperative that we target specific potential new residents that have the desirable skills and talent needed to spur on the growth of Invest Durham's priority clusters.

Action	Timeline
<b>1.4.1</b> Create a promotion program to attract skilled and educated workers to the region, including a dedicated website that showcases the region's vibrant urban centres and amenities.	2025
<b>1.4.2</b> Drawing upon the rural assets of north Durham, highlight north Durham success stories and target attracting talent that is seeking a more balanced quality of life.	2025
<b>1.4.3</b> Work with post-secondary institutions on a Magnetic Region program to retain graduates and implement a marketing campaign to attract new graduates from elsewhere into the region.	2024

**Potential Partners:** Area Municipalities, Post-Secondary Institutions





# LOCATION

**Durham has strong intensification and renewal potential in the Urban Growth Centres, and vibrant and diverse downtowns.**





**Over the next 30 years, to attract the desirable talent necessary to draw in business investment, the region's urban cores must be safe, financially attainable, attractive, and livable, and Durham's 14 downtowns must be diverse, lively and vibrant.**

Support for the intensification and urban renewal of the region's commercial districts and urban growth centres will introduce diverse and financially attainable housing and business real estate types.

Similarly, investing in the region's downtown Quality of Place is essential for its long-term economic prosperity. Places with an enviable Quality of Place are at a competitive advantage for attracting talent, and a connection to place is fundamental to the concept of livability and a high quality of life. The region is already home to thriving urban areas and vibrant rural downtowns. This strategy will place a focus on collaborating to support, enable, and promote these areas and projects to improve Quality of Place.

- Similarly to other areas in the GTA, the region has a high population turnover rate (departure of residents and new inbound residents) which can be associated to a lack of personal investment into communities both economically and socially, presenting an opportunity to better connect residents to their economy and community.



- The largest demographic of new regional residents is the 25 to 44 age group, driven by inter-provincial and inter-GTA migration into the region.
- New STEM graduates from Ontario's universities and colleges have a strong potential to drive innovation and economic growth. Attracting and retaining these graduates requires a desirable urban lifestyle offering and financially attainable housing supply.
- The largest potential for office-based job growth is in vibrant, diverse, urban downtowns, and the region's downtowns are in competition with peers in the GTHA for attracting new office-based employers.
- Each year, the region welcomes thousands of international post-secondary students from more than 70 different countries around the world, many bringing desirable skills and educations. Urban attractions and experiences that are desirable to this demographic can help students form attachment to the community, retaining them post-graduation.
- Vibrant rural downtowns are often indicative of strong rural economies; they represent a hub of community services, mixed housing options, historical and cultural assets and employment opportunities that enhance overall quality of life in rural areas.



Over the next five years, Durham Region will take actions to support and enable renewal within Urban Growth Centres. In doing so, condominium and apartment housing supply should increase, offering more financially attainable housing options to new graduates and new residents in the early-working age demographic.

Urban renewal initiatives will also result in new shared office and arts, performance and gallery spaces. This will help to improve desirability by the creative industries, such as film and television, and video game design.

Invest Durham will also support, enable, and promote placemaking projects throughout the region's 14 downtown areas, to improve vibrancy and diversity, attracting talent.



## **Goal 2.1: Advance the creation of strong, urban, east-GTA downtowns as a long-term economic imperative.**

Durham Region will support and promote intensification projects, commercial office developments, and urban renewal in the urban cores of Pickering and Oshawa. Part of this ambition is to diversify the type of residential housing, offering more financially attainable urban units such as condominium and apartments, attracting younger working-age demographics and new university graduates.

Intensification of urban cores and transportation corridors will also begin to address the low availability of prime commercial real estate – both office and retail, by working with area municipalities, planners, and attracting development.

Action	Timeline
<b>2.1.1</b> Support, enable, and promote redevelopment, intensification, and urban renewal projects in the region's Urban Growth Centres in Pickering and Oshawa.	2024
<b>2.1.2</b> Quantify the economic benefits and workforce development opportunities available if financially attainable housing options were made available in urban cores for younger working-age STEM graduates.	2025
<b>2.1.3</b> Identify underutilized urban sites where appropriate urban renewal projects are possible and desirable, and generate interest by developers.	2025
<b>2.1.4</b> Explore the use of Community Improvement Plans to incentivize key commercial developments that lead to job creation in Urban Growth Centres.	2026

**Potential Partners:** Durham Region Rapid Transit and Transit-Oriented Development Division, Area Municipalities, Arts, Culture and Creative Industries, the Innovation Community





## **Goal 2.2: Rural Resilience: Facilitate the revitalization of rural downtowns to grow economic resilience.**

The vibrant downtowns of north Durham attract visitors from around the region and the wider GTHA. Through targeted support programming and retention activities, downtown businesses can continue to build economic resilience and ensure these areas thrive.

The downtowns of north Durham act as a hub of services, activities and cultural amenities that support the wider rural economy. Nurturing these areas by investing in their health and resiliency ensures they will continue to entice visitors, attract new businesses, and support a cohesive social and built environment that is reflective of community history and identity.

Action	Timeline
<b>2.2.1</b> Enhance the economic and social vibrancy of north Durham's downtowns and economies through the implementation of the Vibrant North Durham Plan.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>2.2.2</b> Support the implementation of downtown revitalization action plans (such as My Uxbridge Downtown) and review and update existing action plans (such as Shop Brock).	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>2.2.3</b> Actively promote Community Improvement Plans to building owners and tenants in rural downtowns to encourage further investment.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>2.2.4</b> Undertake north Durham downtown-focused business attraction promotion to attract and diversify the business base.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>2.2.5</b> Support and enable the growth of agri-tourism business initiatives and make connections between agri-tourism operators and downtown businesses.	Immediate & Ongoing

**Potential Partners:** Northern Area Municipalities, BIAs, Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade



## **Goal 2.3: Magnetic downtowns: Cultivate vibrant and diverse downtowns, to create magnets for talent and creative businesses.**

A crucial factor for vibrancy is the presence of diverse “third places”. These are locations that are not homes (first places) or places of employment (second places). Third places are bars, restaurants, retail areas, parks, social amenities - places where people go to gather and socialize. The density, quality, walkability, and transit-connectedness of these places builds Quality of Place. Though primarily within the control of area municipalities, the Region will seek collaborative opportunities to support and enable these initiatives.

Another dimension of vibrancy is the availability of co-working and shared creative spaces where people can come together and work on new businesses, research, and services. In recent years these have morphed into lifestyle spaces where work and social lives intertwine and are increasingly important as the trend of hybrid work continues.

Action	Timeline
<b>2.3.1</b> Attract, support, and enable new co-working commercial developments in urban centres, for freelancers, “Working Near Home” remote workers, and for the arts, cultural and creative industries, including flex exhibit and performance spaces.	2024
<b>2.3.2</b> Target investment from a wider range of hotels and accommodation (including boutique and mid-tier hotels) across the region.	2023
<b>2.3.3</b> Establish a Welcome to Durham protocol for new residents and businesses that introduces them to local services, businesses, and tourism sites within the region.	2024

**Potential Partners:** Area Municipalities, BACD, Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade







A man in a white lab coat is standing in a laboratory, pointing at a large monitor. The monitor displays various data visualizations, including a bar chart, a line graph, and a flowchart. The background shows laboratory equipment and a bright light source.

# ACCELERATION

Durham's innovators are solving global challenges.





## **Providing the necessary supports to enable the region's innovation community will result in an ecosystem that drives innovation into the local economy and improves the local and global competitiveness of businesses.**

Over the next 30 years, the region will become widely known for the strength of its innovation community. Durham's industries will have a reputation throughout the GTHA and Ontario of solving global challenges, including being leaders in clean energy technologies in response to the climate emergency, innovating new adaptive and inclusive technologies, and leading in advanced human mobility and transportation. The world's leading multi-national businesses that have a presence in the region will benefit from the distinct talent and post-secondary supports available, helping them innovate in competitive new ways that benefit humanity.

### **Evidence:**

- Durham is home to more than 12,600 businesses, with an average of 1,000 new businesses created each year. The majority serve the local or GTHA area, with only 3.6 per cent of business exporting products or services.
- Durham has a high concentration of electric power generation workforce and industry compared with the rest of the province, making it a uniquely strong sector for the region.

- There is a mismatch between the skills of regional residents and the types of jobs available in Durham. The region is already home to a vast number of knowledge workers that, prior to the pandemic, largely commuted out of the area for work. This resident workforce can propel growth in new knowledge-based businesses.
- Compared to other jurisdictions, the region's post-secondary institutions have fewer startups in proximity to their campuses. The region has foundational sector strengths that offer a platform from which to launch growth in associated priority clusters with high job growth potential.



In the next five years, Invest Durham must actively promote success stories broadly, building reputational strength and awareness outside the region. It must also actively attract globally significant investments into the region from leading international companies, to propel key priority clusters and fill gaps in local supply chains.

Tech start-ups, entrepreneurs, the academic sector and established business community must have physical space to co-locate and jointly pursue research and development objectives. Incubation and acceleration programming must provide the tools needed to new innovators to commercialize ideas and scale their business rapidly. This will result in new start-ups that innovate made-in-Durham solutions that solve global challenges.

Through our actions over the next five years, the region's reputation will continue to grow, acting to attract investment and draw in new talent, making the region a destination for global economic leaders and generating new, high-value jobs for residents.





### **Goal 3.1: Strengthen the innovation community: Support creation of flexible workspace and tailored programs to encourage start-ups tackling global challenges.**

Building and scaling an innovation focused ecosystem requires a comprehensive approach. Durham Region and its partners are committed to supporting and growing new networks that connect startups to investors and valuable programming. Ensuring the availability of flexible, physical, shared space for entrepreneurs, researchers, and innovators to come together and collaborate is critical for success. Equally important is ensuring that support services and programs are available to deliver outcomes and support the commercialization and acceleration of strong business plans. Our aim is not just to support a new generation of start-ups and ventures by students and new grads, but to ensure they stay in the region.

Action	Timeline
<b>3.1.1</b> Lead development of a business case to create a large physical innovation space that functions as a post-graduate tech incubator; shared office space; and collaboration area for larger businesses to connect with the innovation community, with opportunities for B2B mentorship.	2024
<b>3.1.2</b> Partner to seek federal funding for the creation and delivery of high-profile acceleration programming which is built on ESG priorities, to help the region's innovators solve global challenges.	2025
<b>3.1.3</b> Explore options to develop or enable a Research and Development Park, close to post-secondary institutions, that provides flexible lease types, as a landing pad for corporate spinoff from the academic community.	2026
<b>3.1.4</b> Undertake a comprehensive review of funds and grants available for start-ups, commercial ventures originating in post-secondary institutions, and acceleration programs. Explore the potential for a Regional Innovative Investment Fund.	2024
<b>3.1.5</b> Evaluate the effectiveness of regionally funded innovation centres and programming.	2023
<b>3.1.6</b> Support the Ontario Shores Living Lab business case development and the securing of grant funding and support the Abilities Centre in their creation of research and development space for technology supported accessibility, belonging, and inclusion.	Immediate and Ongoing

**Potential Partners:** Post-Secondary Institutions, 1855 Accelerator, Spark Centre, Province of Ontario, Area Municipalities, Ontario Shores



### **Goal 3.2: Grow key local businesses: Provide growth support services to Durham's local businesses in key priority sectors.**

With competitive strengths in the priority clusters of future energy, next-generation mobility, arts, culture and creative, applied digital technology and agri-food, our ambition is to accelerate the growth of these clusters, creating firm and permanent roots in Durham.

The region's existing businesses have the potential to create job growth through expansion and through the introduction of new business lines that respond to the global drivers of change.

Action	Timeline
<b>3.2.1</b> Develop cluster growth strategies for key priority clusters: future energy, next-generation mobility, arts and creative, applied digital technology, and agri-food.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>3.2.2</b> Establish expert tactical teams from Ontario Tech University, Trent University Durham GTA and Durham College, to support the region's existing businesses with technological adoption and industrial research.	2024
<b>3.2.3</b> Create a new network for the region's top 50 businesses that innovate to solve global challenges. Develop tailored support services including an expansion support program.	2024
<b>3.2.4</b> Act as the primary contact point for the Regional corporation with businesses, business associations, and post-secondary institutions, leading economic development policy, supportive advocacy, and acting as a concierge for business or academic partner access to Regional services.	2023
<b>3.2.5</b> Partner to promote available programs that support the integration of ESG priorities into the business models of local businesses.	2025

**Potential Partners:** Post-Secondary Institutions, Industry Associations, Business Community, Area Municipalities, Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, Innovation Community





### **Goal 3.3: Build Durham's reputation for innovation to solve global challenges.**

To stand out among our global competitors, we must promote our value proposition to attract talented residents, grow businesses and attract inbound investment. We must consistently communicate the region's strengths both nationally and internationally to innovative businesses, entrepreneurs, the realtor and developer community, and senior agencies in government. While reputational strength must be earned, the Region must also build momentum behind our reputation through consistent, effective, and authentic promotion of our successes.

Action	Timeline
<b>3.3.1</b> Host flagship GTHA-wide events annually to showcase the region's investment-ready businesses, technologies and research to investors, companies and entrepreneurs.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>3.3.2</b> Host a Future Energy event in the region and attract an international audience.	2025
<b>3.3.3</b> Develop and deliver creative promotional campaigns, including showcasing success stories, to domestic and international audiences that build the region's reputation for innovating to solve global challenges.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>3.3.4</b> Develop partnerships with senior investment agencies including pan-regional investment attraction groups, Invest Ontario, Invest In Canada, and the Canada Foreign Trade Commissioner Service, to ensure Durham is top-of-mind for investment projects and senior-level incentives for new investment.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>3.3.5</b> Develop and implement a government relations strategy to promote the interests of Durham's priority clusters to provincial and national governments.	2023

**Potential Partners:** Area Municipalities, Future Energy Business Community, Post-secondary institutions, Innovation Community



### **Goal 3.4: Attract domestic and international inward investment into Durham's priority sectors.**

The last decade has witnessed increased competition between places for investment, which has only accelerated with the ability for more of the workforce to work remotely. New locations have entered the competition and, at the same time, the global pool of investment capital is becoming more targeted at businesses and investments with strong ESG mandates.

Invest Durham has an opportunity to attract new investment that strengthens its key priority clusters. Critical to success will be formalizing a central inward investment office and delivering a focused investment attraction program.

Action	Timeline
<b>3.4.1</b> Develop and deliver an Investment Attraction Plan to target and attract domestic and international investment in key priority clusters.	2023
<b>3.4.2</b> Formalize and strengthen the single and centralized Inward Investment Office within Durham's Economic Development and Tourism Division to be the trusted voice for Durham to domestic and international investment audiences, coordinating seamless concierge services.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>3.4.3</b> Continuously assess and advance initiatives to improve investment readiness, including the continued prioritization of servicing to desirable employment lands.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>3.4.4</b> Establish a site portal that lists market-ready real-estate and development sites for developers and businesses seeking a regional presence.	2024
<b>3.4.5</b> Collaborate with key partners to develop the Regionally owned land in the Clarington Energy Park and attract future energy cluster organizations, adding to the research and development capacity of the region.	2023
<b>3.4.6</b> Explore bringing the BACD into the Regional Corporation.	2023

**Potential Partners:** Area Municipalities, Province of Ontario, Government of Canada





# CREATIVITY

Durham has a distinct identity for arts, cultural  
and creative industries.





## **In 30 years, Durham will have a distinct cultural identity for its vibrant base of creative businesses, cultural institutions, galleries, entertainment venues, and homegrown talent.**

Durham's Tourism activities will achieve broader goals beyond attracting visitor spending; our activities will also strengthen the region's overall Quality of Place, enhance the vibrancy of our urban and rural downtowns, and ensure that Durham is both magnetic and memorable.

### **Evidence:**

- Ontario's creative cluster is growing faster than the rest of the economy. The creative industries in Ontario generate \$12.2 billion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for Ontario's economy annually and are number one in Canada by GDP.
- The region's film industry is growing rapidly; from 2012 to 2019 film production value grew 220 per cent, to \$63 million.
- The music industry in the region has strong grassroots support through festivals and events such as the Oshawa Music Awards (OMAs) and Springtide Festival, has established production studios working on top-tier projects, and has recently produced international superstars such as Shawn Mendes, Daniel Caesar, Lennon Stella, Boi1da, and Meghan Patrick as well as nationally recognized artists such as Crown Lands, Dizzy, and Protest the Hero.



- The region has a strong cultural sector. It is home to Parkwood National Historic Site, which is a top 10 filming location in Canada. Other major assets and cultural attractions include The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Station Gallery and the Visual Arts Centre of Clarington; the Ontario Philharmonic, Canadian Automotive Museum, multiple local history museums, as well as an array of art associations, galleries, studios and tourism loops.
- The region is home to 14 downtown and main street areas which house more than 1,000 largely independent businesses, such as restaurants, boutiques, makers markets, and music venues. These downtowns also host annual festivals and cultural events.

Regions that are desirable destinations have diverse and memorable attractions, a high Quality of Place, and distinctive attributes that make them attractive to visit. Tourists seek creative and cultural experiences; memorable culinary destinations, live music, museums and galleries, attractive downtowns to explore, and boutiques to visit. The region offers these attractions, however there is an opportunity to both strengthen the offering as well as build the awareness of these offerings.

Beyond tourism, creative communities have additional social value for residents. A variety of activities and experiences outside of the workplace are key to quality of life, and these generally include a range of creative businesses, as well as natural assets such as trails and waterfronts. Creative business clusters complement and enhance natural amenities while also playing an important economic role. With the rise of remote work, the opportunity to live and work anywhere is attainable to a growing population. Within this transition there lies the opportunity to attract and retain a highly skilled and knowledge-based workforce. As we compete with other regions in the GTHA, establishing a more creative, more vibrant community with a reputation for high Quality of Place provides a strong workforce attraction tool.



Over the next five years, Invest Durham will broadcast our offering of urban excitement and country charm. We will help to facilitate infrastructure that supports creative businesses, to create jobs in creative and cultural industries. Through this, our creative industry exports will grow, awareness of the region's creative industries will increase, and a stronger ecosystem for creative entrepreneurship will emerge. The focus on place excellence will help deliver broader economic development objectives.



## **Goal 4.1: Urban excitement and country charm: Build the Durham Tourism brand by promoting attractions and experiences that align with brand principles.**

Invest Durham's value proposition for tourism is rooted in its landscape and location. The region offers both exciting urban communities and rolling countryside. As a key differentiator, this means that the region authentically offers farm-to-fork culinary experiences, exciting music events in excellent venues, and creative culture both urban and rural. Promoting these assets consistently through Durham Tourism will define the region as a weekend destination from the GTA.

Action	Timeline
<b>4.1.1</b> Promote the economic value of tourism through programs that improve tourism readiness and through tourism ambassador programs.	2023
<b>4.1.2</b> Redevelop the Durham Tourism website to effectively promote Durham's tourism value proposition and support the tourism industry to leisure and corporate visitors.	2024
<b>4.1.3</b> Promote the region as a weekend destination for visitors from the GTA through a targeted annual marketing plan built on the brand promise of urban excitement and country charm.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>4.1.4</b> Develop a modern and bold concept for the Durham Tourism Discovery Guide that uses striking photography to convey the region's scenic urban and rural destinations, visually immersing readers in the region's experiential offerings.	Immediate and Ongoing

**Potential Partners:** Central Counties Tourism, Area Municipalities, Tourism Industry Business Community





## **Goal 4.2: Strengthen Quality of Place: Undertake activities that improve Durham's Quality of Place metrics.**

Quality of Place is consistently a crucial factor in investment attraction, talent attraction, and talent retention. It is a key component of quality of life for residents, contributing to social well-being. As strong creative industries contribute significantly to Quality of Place, a regional approach to growing creative industries will enable our existing cultural and creative industries such as film, music, culinary, festivals and events to expand, thrive, and create additional jobs.

Action	Timeline
<b>4.2.1</b> Explore the creation of a fund that supports the region's diverse arts and cultural industries including creative and culinary businesses, events, festivals and placemaking.	2025
<b>4.2.2</b> Enable growth in the film industry through a refreshed region-wide film sector strategy.	2023
<b>4.2.3</b> Enable growth in the music industry through the development of a strategy to become a Music Region.	2023
<b>4.2.4</b> Establish a process to consider sponsorship opportunities for events that enhance the region's Quality of Place.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>4.2.5</b> Explore the potential for establishing a festival incubator.	2024
<b>4.2.6</b> Host sport events that engage, inspire and connect the community, creating sport and social legacies.	Ongoing

**Potential Partners:** Ontario Creates, Central Counties Tourism, Local Area Municipalities, Festivals and Events Ontario, Local Cultural Partners



### **Goal 4.3 Champion inclusive tourism: Pursue tourism initiatives which are diverse, accessible, and inclusive.**

Durham Region's commitment to the communities we represent requires that the region be a welcoming community to all visitors and residents. Inclusive approaches to tourism initiatives consider the needs of our audiences and reflect the voices of our residents.

Ensuring that the experiences that visitors and international students have with the region's tourism assets are inclusive and memorable will help to create deeper connections, leading to longer term improvements in talent retention and attraction.

Action	Timeline
<b>4.3.1</b> Promote the region's tourism offering to diverse local audiences including translation of promotional materials.	2025
<b>4.3.2</b> Ensure the region's diverse community voices are reflected in all Invest Durham content, including blog posts, social media and promotional materials to better represent our residents.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>4.3.3</b> Support the growth of inclusive and accessible sport opportunities, infrastructure, and participation, including the exploration of a sport event hosting grant program.	2024
<b>4.3.4</b> Promote the region's tourism attractions to international students studying at the region's post-secondary institutions through projects designed to deepen off-campus community connections.	Immediate and Ongoing

**Potential Partners:** Central Counties Tourism, Local Area Municipalities, Sport Tourism Canada, Post-secondary institutions





## **Goal 4.4: Drive prosperity through local love: Prioritize activities with high potential to drive spending to locally owned and operated businesses and increase overnight stays.**

Invest Durham can increase prosperity in local communities by promoting independent local businesses, encouraging overnight stays, and strengthening the creative industry businesses that make the offering memorable.

A large geographic region, the region also has the benefit of urban lakeshore municipalities that are an audience for North Durham communities, and vice versa. Ensuring more intra-regional tourism dollars are spent locally will strengthen and build our local business community, creating jobs and ensure the region becomes more magnetic to visitors.

Action	Timeline
<b>4.4.1</b> Promote tourism products that attract weekend visitors from the GTA, particularly those visitors with high spending potential.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>4.4.2</b> Promote the importance of tourism within our local community and encourage resident tourism spending locally.	Immediate and Ongoing
<b>4.4.3</b> Develop and promote regional tourism products that drive spillover spending opportunities and a propensity for overnight stays.	2023
<b>4.4.4</b> Explore developing a strategy to encourage a diverse range of options for rural overnight accommodations (i.e. luxury short-term rentals, bed and breakfasts).	2023
<b>4.4.5</b> Develop and deliver a Rural Cycle Tourism Program to map and sign beautiful recreational cycle loops.	2023
<b>4.4.6</b> Promote locally owned, micro-manufacturing, and creative industry startups.	2024

**Potential Partners:** Central Counties Tourism, Durham Hotels Association, Local Area Municipalities, Ontario By Bike, Local Tourism Industry Businesses Community



# ENABLER

Collaboration and resourcing that enables  
the PLACE blueprint.





# Co-ordination of Service Delivery

Invest Durham is a division of the Regional Municipality of Durham, which represents eight area municipalities. Invest Durham leads, facilitates, collaborates, and supports investment attraction and expansion initiatives to create and retain jobs.

Our ambitious plans cannot be achieved alone. We will work in collaboration with Durham's area municipal staff at the Cities of Pickering and Oshawa, Towns of Ajax and Whitby, the Municipality of Clarington, and the Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge.

Other initiatives are run by, or in collaboration with, Durham Region's chambers of commerce and boards of trade, the Business Advisory Centre of Durham, the Durham Workforce Authority, Central Counties Tourism, Durham's three post-secondary institutions, as well as Durham's tech hubs, incubators and accelerators, and other community partners.

Central to co-ordination is the creation of clear and distinct roles and functional mandates between regional and area municipal economic development organizations in the region, which will minimize duplication of effort and competition, and maximize effectiveness. A joint session of the Durham Economic Development Partnership will be organized with regional Mayors, CAOs, and Regional Chair to consider best practices for investment attraction and promotion and advance the collective Durham regional economic strategy for competitiveness, investment, and long-term prosperity.

Partnerships and a unified approach to investment attraction are essential to achieving the goals set out in this strategy. Together, we will strengthen Durham's economy, create jobs and enhance quality of place.

## Resourcing Plan

The completion of certain action items in this strategy relies on the creation and execution of a new resourcing plan, which would be executed in a phased approach over the coming five years. Broad feedback was strong and consistent in detailing the need for the **People** aspiration and its associated work plan; however, there is a need to increase the level of resourcing within the team to deliver this aspiration. Additionally, certain goal areas within the **Location** and **Acceleration** aspirations are also dependent on a new resourcing plan. Staff will complete a jurisdictional scan and explore best practices in peer geographies to develop a new resourcing plan for consideration by Durham Regional Council in 2023.

## Key Performance Indicators

This strategy delivers on the third pillar of Durham Regional Council's Strategic Plan: **"To build a strong and resilient economy that maximizes opportunities for business and employment growth, innovation and partnership."** The Durham Region Strategic Plan is measured through key performance indicators (KPIs).

To track success of **Ready Set Future**, we will monitor aggregate and median household income growth as an indicator of resident prosperity. Additional KPIs will be developed to track milestones and outcomes of specific projects that progress us towards our PLACE aspirations.

## Related Strategies and Plans

- The Regional Municipality of Durham Strategic Plan 2020-2024
- Envision Durham
- Early Learning and Child Care Plan 2023-2027
- Regional Cycling Plan Update
- Employment Strategy Technical Report
- Connecting Our Communities: Durham Broadband Strategy
- Region-wide Growth Analysis Technical report
- Proposed Policy Directions/Growth Opportunities and Challenges Report
- Durham Competitiveness Study
- The Durham Community Energy Plan
- Durham Community Climate Adaptation Plan
- Agri-food Action Plan
- North Durham Action Plan
- Durham Tourism Action Plan
- Invest Durham Marketing Action Plan



# Acknowledgments

## **Regional Senior Leadership Team:**

- John Henry, Regional Chair, Region of Durham
- Elaine Baxter-Trahair, Chief Administrative Officer
- Brian Bridgeman, Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development
- Simon Gill, Director of Economic Development and Tourism
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- Gary Muller, Director of Planning
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- Gary Williams, Director of Communications

## **Economic Development Strategy Steering Committee**

- Maryam Bayoumi, Executive Director, OPEN.Innovate Creative Arts Incubator
- Carla Carmichael, Vice President, Decommissioning, Ontario Power Generation
- Nicole Gibson, Executive Director, Ajax Pickering Board of Trade
- Ted Graham, Vice President, Innovation, General Motors
- Dr. Scott Henderson, Dean, Trent University Durham GTA
- Asif Khan, Founder – Canatrace, CTO, Vector Health Labs
- Don Lovisa, President, Durham College
- Andrew McBarnett, Founder, Neales Sweet ‘n Nice Ice Cream
- Dr. Steven Murphy, President, Ontario Tech University
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- Swapneet Ranike, Franchisee, Boston Pizza

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**Project Consultants:**

- Hatch

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CANNINGTON

# Photography

Photos listed left to right. Photos marked with \* by Shay Conroy.

Page 2: Aerial of Lake Scugog.\*

Page 5: Canadian Centre for Nuclear Sustainability, Pickering.  
Safran Landing Systems, Ajax. Lakefront Trail, Ajax.

Page 6: W. Galen Weston Centre for Food at Durham College (DC),  
Whitby. ACE Climatic Wind Tunnel, Ontario Tech University (Ontario  
Tech), Oshawa. Parkwood National Historic Site, Oshawa.

Page 7: Ontario Power Generation (OPG), Clarington. Downtown Uxbridge.

Page 8: Downtown Beaverton. Downtown Port Perry.  
Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation.

Page 12-13: Mural by Vizsla Bacon, Signs of Life Project, Oshawa.

Page 18: Collision Conference. Axcessiom Technologies at Spark Centre.  
Brilliant Catalyst at Ontario Tech. 1855 Accelerator, Whitby.

Page 19: Photo courtesy Trent University Durham GTA (Trent U Durham).  
OPG, Clarington. Photo courtesy DC. Photo courtesy Ontario Tech.

Page 20: Biltmore Theatre, Oshawa.\* Clarington Farmers' Market .  
Durham Region International Film Festival. Station Gallery, Whitby.\*

Page 21: Port Perry. Port Restaurant, Pickering. 8-Bit Beans, Whitby.\* Gateway mural  
by Jon Colwell and Jesse Watson, Signs of Life project, Pickering Village, Ajax.\*

Page 22: 360insights, Whitby. OPEN.Innovate Creative Arts Incubator,  
Ajax. Students at Trent U Durham. Little West Indies, Bowmanville.\*

Page 23: GO Transit, Pickering. Ganaraska Wind Farm.\* OPG,  
Clarington. EV Charging Stations, Oshawa.\*

Page 24: Smart Arm at Ontario Tech. W. Galen Weston Centre for  
Food at DC. Korechi Innovations, Oshawa. OPG, Clarington.

Page 25: Steel ceremony, Oshawa. Infrastructure Project. Oshawa Port. Highway 401.

Page 28: SMR rendering courtesy GE Hitachi.

Page 29: ACE Climatic Wind Tunnel at Ontario Tech, Oshawa.



Page 29: ACE Climatic Wind Tunnel at Ontario Tech, Oshawa.

Page 30: Mixed Reality Capture Studio, photo courtesy DC.

Page 31: Biltmore Theatre, Oshawa.\*

Page 32: The Veggie Shack, Clarington.\*

Page 34-35: Photo courtesy Ontario Tech.

Page 36: 360insights, Whitby.

Page 42-43: Downtown Oshawa.\*

Page 44: Starapples Restaurant, Bowmanville.\*

Page 49: Brew Wizards, Oshawa.\*

Page 50-51: ACE Climatic Wind Tunnel, Ontario Tech, Oshawa.

Page 52: Photo courtesy Ontario Tech.

Page 58-59: Station Gallery, Whitby.\*

Page 60: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.\*

Page 66-67: Downtown Bowmanville.\*

Page 72: Cannington Railway Station, Brock

Page 75: River Street Cafe, Sunderland





breadpiesmuffinsteacupcakessoupcoffeecakejams  
chocolatestartartscoffee  
River Street  
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