



The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

To: Planning and Economic Development Committee
From: Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development
Report: #2024-EDT-4
Date: February 6, 2024

Subject:

Growing North Durham Plan Annual Activity Report

Recommendation:

That the Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends:

That this report be received for information.

Report:

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an annual report on the implementation of the [Growing North Durham: Rural Economic Development Action Plan](#).
- 1.2 The report will be accompanied by a staff presentation from Stacey Jibb, Manager of Agriculture and Rural Economic Development and Glen Macfarlane, Economic Development Specialist.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Growing North Durham Plan was endorsed by Regional Council as well as the Councils in the Townships of Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock in early 2023. It sets out goals and actions to support economic growth across north Durham to 2027.

- 2.2 The Growing North Durham Plan is a collaborative north Durham-wide approach to economic development, where resources are shared across the three Townships to advance common interests for economic development and tourism.

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 3.1 The 2023-2027 Growing North Durham: Rural Economic Development Action Plan was received by Planning and Economic Development Committee on February 7, 2023 ([Report 2023-EDT-2](#)).

4. Implementation Update

- 4.1 The delivery of economic development programming in north Durham relies on collaboration between Durham Region, the Townships of Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock, and various business support organizations such as the Brock Board of Trade, Scugog Chamber of Commerce, Uxbridge Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Associations (BIAs), and more.
- 4.2 This collaborative approach encourages communities to take part in identifying opportunities and solutions to economic challenges and has been integral in the implementation of the Growth North Durham Plan so far.
- 4.3 The Growing North Durham Plan is structured under three pillars: People, Places and Prosperity. Each pillar contains goal areas and actions that support a community-driven approach to economic development. Identified below are some of the key activities that are either underway or were completed within each pillar over the course of the past year:
- a. **People:** This pillar recognizes the strong correlation between human capital and economic growth.
- Hosted the North Durham Building Business Forum on November 14, 2023.
 - Plans are underway to complete a workforce planning study to help identify gaps in workforce data and skills in north Durham.
 - Throughout 2023, continued to share relevant information with entrepreneurs and small business owners through a bi-monthly e-newsletter, Invest Durham social channels, and one-on-one meetings.
 - North Durham innovation success stories are featured through Invest Durham social channels and other marketing.

- In partnership with the Business Advisory Centre Durham (BACD), supported the delivery of Digital Mainstreet programming which aims to enhance digital literacy skills. A particular focus was placed on the Township of Brock given they do not have a BIA.
 - Plans are underway to partner with Durham College and the National Research Council/Industrial Research Assistance Program to connect information and communications technology companies with agri-food operators in north Durham to support innovation in the agri-food sector.
- b. **Places:** This pillar highlights and strengthens north Durham's unique qualities of place that stimulate meaningful connections with the community.
- Several initiatives and campaigns have been delivered over the last year with strong north Durham content or focus. These include:
 - (i) Collision Conference 2023 (Region Economic Development staff attended on behalf of north Durham).
 - (ii) Shop Where You Live
 - (iii) Gather at the Farm
 - Ongoing support for municipal efforts to undertake Red Welcome Wagon visits, a Scugog Economic Development Advisory Committee-led initiative. Regional Economic Development staff also attend and support business openings, when possible, in Uxbridge and Brock.
 - North Durham sites were featured as part of Invest Durham's signature sites project and led to a significant investment opportunity with the [Tessera Group in the Port Perry Employment Area](#).
 - Working closely with Township staff, Rural Economic Development (RED) grants were secured in 2023 for Uxbridge and Brock for downtown revitalization and updating Community Improvement Plans.
 - Ongoing support and representation on the Uxbridge Downtown Revitalization Advisory Committee.
- c. **Prosperity:** The prosperity pillar is about business retention and making informed decisions to encourage and enable economic growth.
- Regional staff continue to work closely with the Township of Scugog to implement the Scugog Business Program; this work is expected to continue into Fall of 2024 and was the result of a successful RED grant application.

- Using the Scugog Business Program as a model, Regional staff will begin development of a more standardized approach to business visitations across north Durham to effectively deliver business retention programming.
- Regional Economic Development staff, in coordination with Development Services staff from across north Durham, respond to investment inquiries on an ongoing basis. Investment inquiries are generated through the Region of Durham's Business Development and Investment Team who undertake investment attraction work on behalf of all Durham municipalities.
- Online business toolkits were developed and launched in [Scugog](#), [Uxbridge](#) and [Brock](#) throughout 2023. The toolkits provide a one-stop-shop of information and resources for new and existing businesses as well as those looking to grow their business in north Durham.
- Led by Durham Region Economic Development Staff, the Townships of Scugog and Uxbridge supported an application from South Lake Community Futures Development Corporation (SLCFDC) requesting approval from FedDev Ontario to expand the SLCFDC catchment area. If approved, this expansion would allow businesses across north Durham to access new streams of Federal funding and resources. Businesses and organization located in the Township of Brock are already eligible for funding and support through SLCFDC.

5. Relationship to Strategic Plan

5.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham region Strategic Plan:

- a. Economic Prosperity: To build a strong and resilient economy that maximizes opportunities for business and employment growth, innovation and partnership.
 - 3.1 Position Durham Region as the location of choice for business
 - 3.2 Leverage Durham's prime geography, social infrastructure, and strong partnerships to foster economic growth

6. Conclusion

6.1 The Growing North Durham Plan represents an ongoing commitment for a collaborative north Durham-wide approach to the delivery of economic development programming in the Townships of Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock. Updates have been

scheduled and/or delivered to each Council in north Durham to update the Townships on progress implementing the Growing North Durham Plan, and scheduled activities for 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer