
Subject: ED 17-2021 Economic Development Strategy Update and Economic Base Analysis

Report to: Planning and Economic Development Committee

Report date: Wednesday, September 15, 2021

Recommendations

1. That Report ED 17-2021 **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to update PEDC on the progress of the new 10 Year Economic Development Strategy and the Economic Base Analysis.
- The Economic Recovery Plan is for the most part implemented, with many actions ongoing to support business.
- The remaining activities in the Economic Recovery Plan are longer term actions and will be considered in the new strategy development process.
- At Council's direction, the Economic Development Strategy is being developed collaboratively with the economic development professionals across the region.

Financial Considerations

The activities described in this report are within the Council approved 2021 Economic Development operating budget.

Analysis

In May 2020 Council recommended that the process of developing a Long Term Economic Development Strategy be deferred until after the Economic Recovery Plan was implemented.

As reported in ED 15-2021 Economic Development Quarterly Update, the Economic Recovery Plan is for the most part completed with many of the actions ongoing to support local businesses. The actions that have not been completed are longer term and will be considered in the new 10 Year Economic Development Strategy.

A Strategy Advisory Council has been formed and met for the second time on September 7th, 2021. The Strategy Advisory Council membership consists of the

Director/Manager of all eight local area municipal economic development offices as well as the Regional Economic Development Officer responsible for providing support to the remaining four municipalities and the Regional Director and Associate Director, Economic Development. Letters of commitment to collaborate in the Strategy development process have been received from all eight municipalities. A Chair and Vice Chair were appointed at the first meeting on July 6th 2021. They are the Economic Development Manager, City of Thorold and the Director, Economic Development and Communications, Town of Lincoln respectively.

At the request of the group, there is representation from the Planning and Development Department on the Strategy Advisory Council, either the Director, Community and Long Range Planning or the Commissioner, to ensure that the Strategy takes into consideration the new Regional Official Plan. The Associate Director is the project manager for the development of the 10 Year Strategy.

Where appropriate, the Strategy is being developed through the lens of Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+). This is an analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The “plus” in GBA+ acknowledges that GBA+ goes beyond biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences and also considers many other identity factors, such as race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability.

Initial research to inform the strategy development process has included a review of all municipal economic development strategies to understand the common focus and issues. A review of long range Regional reports is currently ongoing as well as other pertinent reports and research, to ensure alignment.

Niagara Economic Development’s Manager Research and Analysis has developed an Economic Base Analysis to inform the strategy development. It is included here in Appendix 1. There will be a presentation of the Economic Base Analysis, preceding this report at PEDC. It was also presented to the Strategy Advisory Council on September 7th for comment.

The research and the Economic Base Analysis will be used not only to inform the Strategy but also to shape the topics for discussion during the stakeholder engagement.

A major component of the Strategy development will be the stakeholder engagement. As this process is resource intensive and more effective with a third party facilitator, a specialist company has been contracted to conduct all aspects of the engagement, with

direction from the Strategy Advisory Council. Intelligent Futures, was the successful proponent in a competitive RFP process. They held an initial four hour workshop to launch their project, with the Strategy Advisory Council, at the meeting on September 7th. Over the past months, Intelligent Futures have developed new innovative ways of engaging virtually with stakeholders. The stakeholder engagement will take place during the fall 2021, so it is expected to be virtual. Regional Council will be engaged by them for their input and perspectives.

A core group of stakeholders will be the 90+ members of the broad Economic Rapid Response Team (ERRT) which includes Chambers, Business Improvement Associations, Industry Associations, Destination Marketing Organizations, Small Business Enterprise Centres, Post- Secondary Institutions, Employment Help Centres etc. In addition, there will be engagement with specific groups representing women, youth, LGBTQ+ community, Indigenous people etc. Stakeholder sessions will include participants from different interest groups so that there is a range of opinions and perspectives in the discussion. As the Strategy timeframe is 10 years, stakeholders will be asked to consider what Niagara aspires to be by 2032.

Finally, Intelligent Futures will develop a report highlighting the engagement process, key themes that emerge and recommendations for the development of the Long Term Economic Development Strategy. The Strategy will consider disruptive influences such as climate change, automation, artificial intelligence where appropriate as well as building in resilience by addressing issues that have been accelerated by the pandemic, for example affordable childcare to enable women to return to the workforce and strengthening the local supply chain.

The intention is to present the final draft Strategy to PEDC in the spring 2022. It is intended that the Strategy is a 'living' document which will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant to the current economic situation. This is especially important in our current situation with the pandemic. There will be a major review after 5 years.

Alternatives Reviewed

None applicable.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Economic development activities described in this report directly support three of Council's 2019-2022 Strategic Priorities:

- Supporting Businesses and Economic Growth
- Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning
- Sustainable and Engaging Government

Other Pertinent Reports

ED 1-2020 Q4 Economic Development Quarterly Update and Annual Strategic Action Plan Report Card

ED 5-2020 Economic Development Offices Collaboration

ED 15-2021 Economic Development Quarterly Update

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Economic Base Analysis