
Subject: Economic Development Strategy: 2019 – 2024

Report to: Planning and Economic Development Committee

Report date: Wednesday, March 20, 2019

Recommendations

That Report ED 2-2019 **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to provide the PEDC with an overview of the Economic Development Strategy: 2019-2024.
- The development of the Niagara Economic Development Strategy: 2019-2024 was based on extensive statistical research and stakeholder engagement including: roundtables, one-on-one interviews, and an online survey.
- The Economic Development Strategy includes an action plan with specific activities, leads, partners, and key performance measures.

Financial Considerations

Funding for the activities described in this report has been incorporated into the council approved 2019 Operating Budget.

Analysis

This report introduces one presentation by Niagara Economic Development (NED). The focus is to inform PEDC on the Niagara Economic Development Strategy: 2019-2024, provide an overview on the strategy's development, stakeholder engagement, and strategic action plan that will guide NED activities for the next five years.

Economic Development Strategy Overview

At the beginning of 2018, a partnership was formed between Niagara Region, Brock University, and Niagara College to develop a Long Term Economic Development Master Plan, which looked forward 20 years. The objective of this Master Plan was to align the long-term goals of all three institutions to ensure economic growth and prosperity for the Niagara region. A consultancy company, Global Investment Attraction Group (GIAG), was awarded the contract in May 2018, following a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process. GIAG completed the research and analysis phase of the project and extensive stakeholder consultations by the end of September. At that time,

following a major change of direction, NED continued to develop a shorter-term strategy internally, building on the work completed by GIAG and additional sector consultations.

The shorter five year Economic Development Strategy provides a review of the methodology to develop the strategy, a brief synopsis of Niagara region's economy; a strategic assessment based on a Strengths, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threats analysis; and a Strategic Action Plan that is broken down into seven key areas with specific economic development-related activities.

Niagara Economic Development

NED operates in a two-tier structure where the six local economic development offices focus primarily on business retention and expansion activities and NED focuses on economic development for the region as a whole, including investment attraction, lead generation, and research. This structure is supported by Team Niagara, which includes representation from all 13 municipalities.

To maximize NED's effectiveness the department works in collaboration with stakeholders across Niagara including, but not limited to, Niagara Development Corridor Partnership, Brock University, Niagara College, Niagara Industrial Association, and local Chambers of Commerce.

Economic Development Strategy and Methodology

The economic development strategy is intended to inform and provide guidance to strategic decision making at Niagara Region. It has been developed in consultation with the Shape Niagara report which will inform Regional Councillors in the development of their strategic action plan. The development and adoption of a longer-term strategy will be explored during the five years, if it receives consensus from stakeholders, will be developed and timed to start in 2024.

The methodology for the development of the economic development strategy included:

- Economic Analysis and Forecasting
- A Review of External Influences and Trends
- Extensive Stakeholder Consultations
- Strategy and Action Plan Development

Economic Analysis and Forecasting

The Niagara region's economy has experienced unprecedented growth over the past four years and this growth is forecast to continue through to 2022. Niagara has recently experienced a record level of industrial and commercial investment. Between 2015 and 2017 in industrial building construction grew by 362.6% while investment in commercial building construction grew by 19.1%. Investment figures and building permits available for up to Q3 2018 indicate that investment activity may outpace 2017.

From 2011 to 2016, Niagara's population grew by 3.8%, which was slightly lower than Ontario's growth at 4.6% and Canada at 5.0%. From 2018 to 2026, Niagara's population is forecast to grow by 6.9%, compared to 7.1% of Ontario, and 7.5% for Canada. Niagara continues to show potential for continued economic growth on pace with Ontario and Canada.

Niagara Region's Economic Strategic Assessment



Niagara's Economic Strategic Action Plan

The development NED strategic action plan was based on the extensive stakeholder engagement that was conducted both by GIAG and NED staff. The strategic action plan, prior to being finalized, was circulated for feedback and revisions to all stakeholders that were involved in the strategy's development.

Once all feedback had been received, reviewed, and incorporated into the strategic action plan it was then examined by GIAG as part of a third-party audit process. The result was the identification of seven key areas that will guide NED's activities for the next five years:

- Economic Development: Supporting Business Growth and Diversification across Niagara Region

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- Employment Land Strategy: Identifying and Creating a Provincially Significant Employment Zone
 - Marketing Niagara Region: Raising the Profile of Niagara as a Place to Live and Do Business
 - Streamline Planning Processes: Expediting Approvals Process
 - Increase Niagara's Competitiveness: Addressing Unnecessary Regulatory Burdens on Businesses
 - Workforce: Meeting Current and Future Talent, Professional, Skilled Trades and Labour Needs
 - Advocacy: Improving Transportation Infrastructure Ensuring Niagara Remains Competitive in Global Economy

Contained within each of the areas are specific economic development activities that will be completed over the course of the next five years. All activities in the strategic action plan have an identified lead, partner, specific NED staff member who will be supporting the activity, and key performance measures.

Alternatives Reviewed

None applicable.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Economic development activities described in this report directly support three of Council Strategic Priorities:

- Fostering innovation, investment and entrepreneurship
- Building a labour-ready workforce
- Positioning Niagara globally

Other Pertinent Reports

None.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Niagara Economic Development Strategy: 2019-2024