





INTRODUCTION

The 10 Year Economic Development Strategy is being written at a unique time for Niagara, as we emerge from the economic effects of the worldwide pandemic. In the last two years COVID-19 has accelerated many opportunities and reinforced numerous issues that existed pre-pandemic. Niagara is experiencing exceptional growth in terms of investment, development and forecasting dramatic population increases. Trends such as digitization, e-commerce, artificial intelligence and new work practices are emerging from the pandemic. Conversely, the region is facing many issues that are not unique to Niagara, but exist across Ontario, including low labour force participation, the effect of the pandemic on service based industries, availability of affordable housing, lack of comprehensive broadband coverage across the region and supply chain disruptions.

In this document, Niagara Economic Development (NED) outlines strategic directions, goals, and actions that will guide its work as it collaborates with its partners and to build a strong and sustainable economy together. In this time of opportunity, uncertainty and change, decisions made now will shape Niagara's future for years to come. The Strategy is a dynamic document, which will be iterated and updated as required, throughout its term. From a data perspective, the 2021 census data is to be released over the next few months and economic statistics from a full post-pandemic year are not yet available, all of which may influence the strategic directions. Consequently, the Strategy will be reviewed within the next two years to update the information presented and review the strategic directions and actions.

VISION STATEMENT

The Strategy's Vision Statement was created with input from over 500 participants from the private, not-for-profit, and government sectors and is an aspirational guide for its implementation over the next 10 years.

Niagara is where innovative businesses grow and community-minded individuals stay—coming together to build a more prosperous future.

NIAGARA REGION PROFILE

- Two-tier municipal structure
- 12 local area municipalities blending urban and rural
- Strategically located between the US and GTA with five border crossings
- 800 kilometres (500 miles) of 130 million people
- Foreign Trade Zone
- Multimodal transportation – road, rail, marine and air with the Welland Canal connecting Lake Ontario and Lake Erie



491,120
TOTAL POPULATION

Total Labour Force



217,000

Total Employer Businesses

13,641



Total Employment



204,300

Total Real GDP

\$15.8B



TRADE



Export
\$4.7B



Import
\$3.2B

\$6.0B



Total Retail Sales

TOTAL
CONSTRUCTION
INVESTMENT



\$1.8B TOTAL

\$1.3B Residential

\$333M Commercial

\$102.4M Industrial

\$46.2M Institutional

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The strategic directions of the Economic Development Strategy were established by combining input from the research conducted through the background review, the economic and industrial base analysis and the community and business engagement. The Strategy builds on the strengths of the region, addresses weaknesses and identifies potential opportunities. The objective is to achieve a confident and positive business environment that is necessary to grow a strong and sustainable economy.

GOAL



To foster resilient diversity in our economy through the development of emerging sectors and value-added opportunities while continuing to grow and support our strong industry clusters, uniquely established by our strategic location, natural assets and competitiveness.



GOAL

Consistently incorporate the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion throughout our goals to attract and sustain an inclusive society where everyone has the necessary tools to succeed and thrive.

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The Strategy builds on the strengths of the region, addresses weaknesses and identifies potential opportunities. ”



GOAL

Work with businesses, employment organizations and post-secondary institutions to ensure a robust workforce.



GOAL

To ensure that municipal economic development offices have support, as appropriate, from Niagara Economic Development (NED) to encourage their businesses to stay and grow. Recognize the differentiation between communities which are urban and rural and the opportunities and challenges they both face. Encourage collaboration between the two tiers of local government in support of BRE.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS



GOAL

Niagara will look to not only preserve but leverage the unique natural features to build a sustainable environment through innovative thinking and adopting new technologies. There will be an alignment with climate change policies with all levels of government to achieve smart environmentally sustainable development.



GOAL

The transportation infrastructure network will support the efficient movement of goods, provide adequate connections to support the tourism industry, and provide high-quality access to employment for all residents. Achieve a higher and better use of infrastructure to support economic growth in Niagara.

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NIAGARA ECONOMIC STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Implementation of the 10 Year Economic Development Strategy through the Action Plan will focus on the role of NED and its current mandate as defined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Most of the actions go beyond the key functions of Regional economic development and will be developed in collaboration and partnership with members of Team Niagara and the broader community and business groups in the region.

The actions in the Strategic Action Plan directly support the Strategic Directions in the Economic Development Strategy. Each action is given a specific time frame according to its priority level. The time frames are: Ongoing (continuous); Immediate (1-3 years); Medium (3-6 years) and Long-Term (6-10 years).

Performance metrics are provided for the actions and are essential to measure the progress of the implementation within the Economic Development Strategy. The metrics can also be used to improve economic development programming and performance as well as inform policy development and decision making.

Within the profession of economic development, performance measures are recognized as important as well as being recognized as difficult to quantify. The metrics provided in this Strategy are measures of activities, for example leads generated, as well as outcomes, for example increased level of investment and jobs in the region. Outcomes are particularly difficult to measure because they generally relate to the region-wide economy and so it is challenging to attribute them specifically to Regional economic development or to any other organization.



PARTNERSHIPS

- Team Niagara • Innovation Eco-System • Business/Downtown Improvement Associations
- Employment Organizations • Post-Secondary Institutions • Tourism Organizations
- Chambers Of Commerce • Provincial Government Ministries • Industry Associations
- Niagara Workforce Planning Board • Small Business Enterprise Centres
- St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation • Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority • Venture Niagara

STRATEGY 1 INVESTMENT ATTRACTION



To grow and diversify the economy through targeted business attraction in sectors where Niagara has a competitive advantage, as well as in emerging sectors, where Niagara can demonstrate a strong business case for investment.

ACTIONS

ONGOING

- Conduct lead generation focused on sectors or subsectors where Niagara has an advantage as identified through research
- Build the investment pitch based on Niagara's advantages and unique assets (e.g. strategic location)
- Pro-actively engage in regular communication with local economic development offices to keep current on opportunities, successes and new assets to be promoted within the FDI pitch
- Responsible for developing the agenda, itinerary and content of inward missions and familiarization (FAM) tours to promote Niagara
- Development and planning of external trade and investment missions, events and trade shows to promote Niagara to potential investors
- Raise Niagara's profile to intermediary contacts, including the Consider Canada City Alliance (CCCA), Canadian Trade Commissioners, Ontario representatives abroad, foreign consuls, overseas Chambers of Commerce, Export Development Canada, etc.
- Promote the Niagara Foreign Trade Zone programs through marketing activities to local businesses to support the export diversification of Niagara's manufacturing companies into new foreign markets
- Continue to collaborate with the World Trade Centre Toronto to promote and facilitate the Trade Access Program (TAP)

IMMEDIATE

- Promote Niagara as a new destination for film and television production, identify resources and streamline the permit process
- Develop a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that is customized to the needs of NED and explore the opportunity to develop an integrated system with municipalities

IMMEDIATE/MEDIUM

- Understanding gaps in the supply chain and identifying value-added industries that could be investment targets

MEDIUM/LONG-TERM

- Identify opportunities in emerging and green technology sectors (e.g. alternative fuels, artificial intelligence, electrification of the automotive industry), where Niagara can demonstrate strengths and/or unique assets

LONG-TERM

- Partner with Foreign Trade Zone Points across Canada to advocate to the federal government for new resources and programs to increase Niagara's international competitiveness
- Leverage the Niagara Foreign Trade Zone Point designation as part of a business case for Niagara region to be designated a federal Economic Trade Corridor

PERFORMANCE METRICS

- Activity measures: Number of leads generated, meetings and events and number of prospects
- Increased level of investment and jobs in the region
- Identification of targets within emerging sectors to inform investment attraction programming
- Increased uptake in federal exporting programs
- Niagara FTZ increased value through new programming and services
- CRM used to develop reports track relationships with prospects and define sales funnel

STRATEGY 2 EXTERNAL MARKETING



Position and market Niagara region as a choice destination for businesses to locate and transform Niagara into a globally renowned community. Promote Niagara as a location for business and resident investment in key markets and sectors through marketing activities.

ACTIONS

ONGOING

- Leverage Niagara's membership of the CCCA to promote Niagara's brand and value proposition alongside other membership municipalities to an international audience
- Develop and maintain an asset inventory of marketing collateral across all 12 municipalities in partnership with local economic development offices to be used in internal and external marketing initiatives
- Work with the Local Immigration Partnership to promote www.welcomeniagaracanada.com as the primary online source for information to newcomers

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Position and market Niagara region as a choice destination for businesses to locate and transform Niagara into a globally renowned community.

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IMMEDIATE

- Develop, implement and monitor digital marketing campaigns to showcase Niagara as a location of choice for investment both nationally and internationally
- Develop, implement and monitor a resident attraction marketing campaign to grow and strengthen the local labour force
- Collaborate with Niagara Region's Strategic Communications and Public Affairs Division to develop a communications plan to promote Niagara business and investment successes

LONG-TERM

- Through strategic marketing, position Niagara as a premier location for investment in North America



Grow and diversify the economy through targeted business attraction in sectors where Niagara has a competitive advantage.



PERFORMANCE METRICS

- Annual marketing plan is updated on an on-going basis and key metrics are reported
- Increased website and campaign analytics for www.niagaracanada.com and www.welcomeniagaracanada.com
- New web content is developed as needed to support new sectors and economic development initiatives, reported in website analytics
- Maintain an updated investment pitch package that showcases assets in all the Niagara municipalities

STRATEGY 3 BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS



To interpret Niagara's economy through regional economic and business research and analysis and inform policy development and economic development initiatives.

ACTIONS

ONGOING

- Continue to monitor and provide analysis to ensure Strategy is relevant
- Support the work of Regional economic development and other partners across the region by providing the latest economic and business information
- Continually investigate new sources of data and tools to provide business and economic research and analysis to support NED projects
- Provide research and analysis to support projects in the local economic development offices
- Support internal departments, including the Chair's Office, by providing economic and business data

IMMEDIATE/ONGOING

- Support the Niagara Employment Inventory project led by the Planning and Development Services Department

IMMEDIATE

- Update the Economic Base Analysis once post-COVID data is available
- Update sector profiles once the 2021 census data has been released
- Use an evidence-based analysis to review and assess the success of the Strategy to ensure it remains aligned with economic development priorities

MEDIUM

- Monitor new labour force practices in Niagara including remote working
- Benchmark Niagara against other municipalities, locally, provincially, nationally and internationally

PERFORMANCE METRICS

- Economic and business data current on website, profiles and reports
- Analysis incorporated into NED initiatives
- Identification of opportunities and issues from the economic data
- Inform Council and partners on latest economic and business data and analysis
- Report on support to LAMs economic development offices, tracked through the CRM



STRATEGY 4

EXPEDITED SERVICES AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



Collaborate with departments and municipalities to enable and support new industrial and residential investment to grow communities across Niagara.

ACTIONS

ONGOING

- Work with the LAMs to prioritize developments that include affordable and attainable housing through the development and planning process
- Planning and Application Expediting – Support companies investing in Niagara through the planning approvals process to ensure projects meet realistic timelines
- Continuous engagement with the industrial and commercial realtors and brokers to understand Niagara's real estate market
- Respond to inbound site selection requests and coordinate with local municipalities to provide complete responses
- Explore opportunities to fast track servicing and funding for employment lands and areas across Niagara
- Continue to be the local referral partner for the Global Skills Attraction program to fast-track foreign nationals with specific skills to jobs in Niagara

IMMEDIATE

- Collaborate and support both local and Regional planning departments in the development of secondary plans in both urban and employment areas to ensure economic development objectives are considered
- Introduce a new suite of incentives that will be administered by economic development to support business growth and new investment in the region
- Market and promote Niagara's employment-related incentive programs outside of Niagara region
- Affordable and Attainable Housing Incentives – Advocate and adopt new programs and policy to support affordable and attainable housing and new residential development and subdivisions to alleviate overall housing pressures
- Develop an online inventory of land to promote our investment attraction activities

MEDIUM

- Work with LAMs to standardize planning application intake, review, commenting, and approval to achieve shorter processing times
- Harmonize planning and development policies at the Regional and local municipal levels and zoning at the municipal level for employment lands and areas

LONG-TERM

- Ensure brownfield incentive programs remain relevant and competitive to attract redevelopment and investment in Niagara

PERFORMANCE METRICS

- Report on site selection requests received, report generated from the CRM and included in quarterly updates to Niagara Region Planning and Economic Development Committee (PEDC)
- Report on employment-related grants and incentives
- Meet with industrial and commercial real estate brokers and agents, report on number of meetings
- Introduce and maintain newly created incentive policies
- Harmonize planning and development policies for employment land uses
- New and existing employment areas are serviced
- Support existing and new business growth with foreign talent acquisition

STRATEGY 5 SECTOR AND LOCAL AREA MUNICIPALITY SUPPORT



Strengthen and support the key sectors of Niagara's economy. Build capacity within LAMs that do not have economic development resources.

ACTIONS

ONGOING

- Facilitate collaboration between local business, economic development and local tourism organizations to support region-wide tourism initiatives that draw visitors throughout the region
- Support to rural municipalities in facilitating enablers to development (i.e. transportation, servicing and broadband connectivity)
- Identify, pursue and report on sector specific sources of funding from other levels of government to support Niagara's priority sectors
- Funding local economic development initiatives/projects/applications and buy-local initiatives to support business retention and expansion within LAMs

IMMEDIATE

- Work closely with collaborative partners across the region to identify and advance the opportunities post-Canada Summer Games to leverage new infrastructure, existing natural assets in the active/sports economy

IMMEDIATE/MEDIUM

- Work with municipal and partner organizations to create and support policy that enables value-added agriculture and agri-tourism opportunities and intensification

MEDIUM/LONG-TERM

- Support agriculture sector related investment and diversification opportunities for value-add processing, co-location, and higher and better use of agriculture lands
- Showcase the agri-business and agri-food sector in its diversity. It has a unique ecosystem of innovation that is inherent to Niagara including emerging opportunities in vertical farming, support for local food and farm to table culinary.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

- Collaborate with partners to support an Active/Sports Economy Strategy to address potential opportunities and event bid administration
- “Grown in Niagara” website identifying assets across the value chain in the cluster, promoting local food to external and internal audiences, encouraging Niagara-sourcing by local governments and businesses, reported through website analytics
- Attend and support agri-business and tourism sector association events and meeting to leverage the opportunities and address the challenges for the continued growth of the cluster, number of meetings reported in quarterly update to PEDC
- Continue to build capacity at municipalities without economic development offices resulting in the creation of either economic development or a tourism-related position
- Attend technical funding briefings for federal and provincial programs and promote and support to local business sector organizations, reported though number attended in quarterly update to PEDC
- Reporting on matching funding allocated to partnering local municipalities on their defined initiatives, including buy local campaigns, and metrics as identified within their project scopes, reported to PEDC

STRATEGY 6 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND ADVOCACY



Achieve the Vision of the Strategy by focusing on projects of regional significance that are aligned with these goals that foster economic and business growth and retention.

ACTIONS

ONGOING

- Management of Niagara's 10 Year Economic Development Strategy including its implementation, revisions and reporting to PEDC and Team Niagara. Ensure the Strategy remains current and has continued alignment with municipal economic development strategies and Regional strategic plans
- Liaison with Regional departments/divisions to support the business case for major Regional projects with economic impact and funding applications e.g. National Trade Corridors Fund
- Develop regional and strategic initiatives that will strengthen the economy. These initiatives could include projects to: investigate opportunities in emerging sectors; build local supply chains; develop sector policy and planning; determine the economic impact of Niagara District Airport; and, research the feasibility of a ferry service between Toronto and Niagara
- Provide an Annual Review on the success of the Economic Development Strategy

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Develop regional and strategic initiatives that will strengthen the economy. ”

IMMEDIATE

- Liaise with Regional departments/municipal economic development offices to support the business case for affordable and available childcare, affordable housing, comprehensive broadband coverage in the region to support equal employment opportunities and a strong labour force
- Provide business/employer input, particularly from rural communities, as decisions are made about integrated Regional transit to ensure it supports a growing labour force
- Support collaborative projects to increase inclusive participation in the labour force, re-skilling and up-skilling and the development of a talent attraction and retention strategy

MEDIUM

- Work with post-secondary institutions and employment organizations to support labour force development and participation, by understanding the labour force
- Explore the concept of a Regional forum for employment conversations
- Following the completion of the Niagara 2022 Canada Summer Games, explore the role for the Region in tourism/sports tourism that complements the existing ecosystem

LONG-TERM

- Advocacy to upper levels of government for infrastructure servicing to employment areas
- Build relationships with bi-national organizations to explore collaborative partnerships and projects

PERFORMANCE METRICS

- Implement and monitor the Economic Development Strategy which provides direction for policy and initiatives, report outcomes to PEDC
- Successful funding applications to upper levels of government for infrastructure projects, reported in number of applications and dollar amounts
- Successfully advocate for labour force supports including affordable childcare, Regional transit, broadband coverage, etc.
- Create a business case to identify the opportunities in tourism/sports tourism and the best approach to securing events



NIAGARA'S 10 YEAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2022-2032

IN COLLABORATION WITH

Fort Erie • Grimsby • Lincoln • Niagara Falls • Niagara-on-the-Lake • Pelham • Port Colborne • St. Catharines
Thorold • Wainfleet • Welland • West Lincoln

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