

Vibrant

NORTH DURHAM
an economic development plan 2013-2018
ideas and actions

Executive Summary

Vibrant North Durham: An Economic Development Plan 2013-2018 (the ***Plan***) is a cohesive five year plan to implement economic development thinking, processes and projects in north Durham.

The ***Plan*** was developed in partnership with Durham Region, and the Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge, and represents a coordinated approach to economic development. The northern communities of Durham Region all have similar economic challenges and opportunities, making it prudent to coordinate resources, eliminate duplication and work efficiently to build a dynamic and resilient local economy.

This coordinated ***Plan*** also fulfils an action item of the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan 2010.

In developing the ***Plan***, staff of the Region of Durham Economic Development Division researched a number of existing strategies and plans including the:

- Durham Region Community Strategic Plan (2009-2014);
- Township of Brock Official Plan 2007;
- Township of Uxbridge: Uxplan 2020; and
- Township of Scugog: Corporate Plan 2010- 2014.

Staff also conducted an economic analysis of the communities to understand the current economic development trends and a series of consultation sessions were held for input.

A leadership team, entitled the 3D Network, was formed to help steer the process of creating the ***Plan***, engaging dreamers, designers and doers from each Township to help guide the development process.



The **Plan** identifies four strategies as the foundation of a strong economic development initiative to build a dynamic and resilient local economy;

1. Be open for business
2. Inspire and support entrepreneurship
3. Create a vibrant future for young adults
4. Build a stronger rural and small town identity

To implement the four strategies, **Action Plans** have been developed for each municipality. The **Action Plans** identify the Region, Township and local economic development advisory committees, as having lead roles in implementation, with many economic development stakeholders in the community suggested as partners to move each strategy forward.



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Purpose

The local economy in north Durham is influenced by many factors from the global economy to government policy. The northern municipalities of Durham Region (Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge) have identified similar challenges to economic growth. An intentional approach to economic development will help address these challenges and maximise opportunities to build a strong and resilient local economy through leveraging existing assets, natural heritage, the built environment and local business successes.

This *Plan* is the result of a unique coordinated partnership by the Region and the north Durham Townships to establish a foundation for economic development. It is deliberate in identifying the similar rural challenges and opportunities and then to proactively work towards building a dynamic and resilient local economy.



Background

North Durham Region

Durham Region is comprised of eight municipalities. The three northern communities: the Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge, are characterized by their rural and agricultural landscapes. The five southern municipalities: Town of Ajax, Municipality of Clarington, City of Pickering, City of Oshawa, and the Town of Whitby.

The northern communities of Durham are distinct with unique economic structures and resident populations. The Township of Brock, population 11,341 (2011 Census), promotes its slogan, *Humanitatis Societas* “A Community with a Heart”. It is the most northern township in Durham and has three urban areas; Beaverton, Cannington and Sunderland.

The Township of Uxbridge, with a population of 20,623 (2011 Census) is nestled in the Oak Ridges Moraine. Promoted as the Trail Capital of Canada, the Township boasts an impressive network of over 220kms of trails throughout the community. The Township is home to a number of tourism attractions including the Lucy Maud Montgomery Manse and has a strong arts and cultural community. Uxbridge is the urban area of the Township.

The Township of Scugog, population 21,569 (2011 Census) has several small settlements, with the largest urban area, Port Perry, situated along the shores of Lake Scugog. The Township has recently invested in redeveloping the waterfront adjacent to the historical downtown area resulting in parkland and the public library. The township has a strong sense of heritage and boasts a strong arts and cultural community.

Economic development in north Durham

Local communities across Ontario, including North Durham, are increasingly feeling the effects of globalization through international trade, fluctuations in the value of the



Canadian dollar and movement of goods and companies across borders. In concert with globalization, the restructuring of the Ontario economy from an industrial base to a knowledge based economy, where wealth is generated by creativity and innovation, further impacts the economic viability of local businesses. Businesses must respond to these changes to remain competitive, and communities at the local level play an important role in facilitating a healthy local business environment.

In addition to global forces, economic development in the townships is influenced by Provincial policy and land use planning legislation that intend to preserve rural areas, including land in north Durham. By 2031, the Townships' population will have decreased from 8.5% in 2011 to 1.5% of the overall Durham Region population. Planning and land use policies such as the Provincial Policy Statement, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, Greenbelt Plan, Growth Plan and Official Plans sometimes impact economic development opportunities such as industry attraction to Greenfield employment lands by limiting servicing capacity, urban boundary expansion and restrictions on land use in the rural landscape of Durham Region.

The vitality of the local economy is important to the financial viability of municipalities as they rely heavily on their tax base for revenue to fund municipal expenditures. As such, local economic development initiatives are an essential part of a healthy community.

Township economic development efforts

The Townships have already started to lay solid foundations for economic development by establishing economic development advisory committees (EDACs) and completing several background projects and studies. The EDACs are made up of volunteers in the community and advise and assist Township Councils regarding economic development matters. The mandate of these committees is to advise on business attraction, retention and expansion initiatives that will stimulate and grow the local economy. Membership on the local EDACs represents a cross section of local business sectors. The Committees work with Council, Township, Regional and Provincial staff on economic development initiatives such as Business Retention and Expansion programs, First Impressions



Community Exchange projects, and investment readiness publications. In Scugog, the Committee has a strong focus on the agricultural economy.

In addition to the EDACs there are other stakeholders that are important partners in the development of local economies in north Durham. These local stakeholders include local Chambers of Commerce, Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), community industry associations and networking groups. In addition, organizations external to north Durham contribute to local initiatives through providing services, training and education, intelligence and funding. These organizations include the Business Advisory Centre Durham (BACD), Spark Centre, UOIT, Durham College, Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ministry of Rural Affairs.

Durham Region Economic Development Department

Similarly, the Region encourages and facilitates economic development activities which create job opportunities, increase the tax base and spur private sector investment. Economic Development staff work with local, provincial, federal and foreign governments and industries to promote Durham's strengths. Business attraction, retention and expansion remain the highest priority. Regional Staff work with the lower tier municipalities and community groups on rural and agricultural initiatives to foster positive activity across the region.

Policy Framework

Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP)

In 2010 the townships, in partnership with Durham Region, with assistance from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), created a collaborative plan to address common needs for economic, cultural, social and environmental sustainability. This plan, known as the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP,) was developed with significant consultation from the north Durham community and led to the creation of 13



implementation plans across 6 sustainability initiatives; ecology, economy, education, carbon footprint, sense of community and water systems.

Economic initiative E.4.1. of the ICSP, was the creation of a streamlined economic development strategy process, with the intent of the creation of an overall economic development strategy. This ***Vibrant North Durham Economic Development Plan*** and Township ***Action Plans*** fulfill the ICSP economic initiative.

Durham Region Strategic Plan 2009- 2014

The Durham Region Strategic Plan includes five strategic goals the first of which speaks directly to economic development;

Promote and strengthen a vibrant economy that will support prosperity for Durham residents, businesses and organizations.

Regional and Municipal Official Plans

The Durham Region Official Plan, Office Consolidation 2008, provides a framework for planning and development into the long term, throughout the Region, while the local Municipal Official Plans provide further detail to encourage and promote economic growth in their communities.

There are significant challenges to economic development in north Durham. These challenges limit residential and non residential growth, infrastructure development, and shift the traditional economic base of communities. At the same time they present an opportunity to think differently about how to strengthen the local business environment. The ***Plan*** is the beginning of a coordinated long term focus on economic development in north Durham. It takes into account current resources, policies, challenges and opportunities that influence the local economy. It covers a 5 year timeframe, an intentional time period, that allows this plan to focus on foundational elements that are necessary today to build capacity for future initiatives.



Designing the Plan

Development of the *Plan* and the individual *Action Plans* for each of the townships has been a collaborative project among the Townships, Durham Region, local businesses, organizations and economic development stakeholders.

The *Plan* and *Action Plans* were coordinated and led by the Durham Region Planning and Economic Development Department staff. Staff worked in collaboration with Township staff, local economic development advisory committees and other appropriate stakeholders with intent to collaboratively develop a comprehensive plan unique to each municipality. Implementation of the *Action Plans* will be very much based on the collaborative efforts and cooperative working partnerships of these parties.

3D Network

The project design and development process was facilitated by a team of local residents and businesses that display the characteristics needed to build a vibrant and resilient local economy; dreamers, designers and doers. This team is known as the 3D Network was created with the idea;

If we *dream* where we want to be and *design* how to get there, we then need to *do* it.

Each township was represented on the 3D Network by three volunteer members of their community that are known in their own right as dreamers, designers and doers, and represented a range of demographics, geography and industry sectors. The Township of Uxbridge was represented by four volunteer members including two high school students. Established in Spring 2012 for the duration of the project, the 3D Network was responsible for;



Dreaming: Together, providing input guiding the strategic direction of the project and the impact we can have on our economic future.

Designing: Helping identify business stakeholders and designing a framework for engaging the rural community.

Doing: Facilitating consultations, reviewing *Plan* milestones, championing the project locally, encouraging participation and support of the project.

The work of the 3D Network is reflected in the structure, design and stakeholder engagement.

Plan Development Process

The *Plan* and *Action Plans* were developed using three economic development guiding principles:

- Community engagement is vital for a healthy local economy;
- Economic analysis is needed to ground truth what we assume intuitively about the local economy;
- Existing township, regional and provincial documents are fundamental to building on work done in the past and for setting future directions.

1. Community engagement

- Several key stakeholder consultation meetings were held during the creation of the *Plan* with Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge economic development stakeholders (*attachment 1*);
- At the Tri-Council meeting on May 22, 2012, an initial presentation of *Plan* project and direction was presented to the Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge Councils.
- June 14, 2012, a north Durham economic development stakeholder community consultation using asset based economic development approach. Approximately 60 people participated in the event that identified key assets of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge municipalities and high level action items to leverage current assets.



- Ongoing discussion of project process with Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge Economic Development Advisory Committees created space for further input from this key stakeholder group.
- September 19, 2012, Tri –EDAC meeting of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge committees included a project update presentation and brainstorming session to draft possible action items.
- March 2013 the Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge received drafts of the **Plan** and respective **Action Plans**, to confirm the direction of the documents and endorsed staff to proceed with a final consultation with the local EDACs to ensure key messages for their communities were being reflected.
- May 2013 –Facilitated consultation sessions with each EDAC to finalize the **Action Plans**. The meeting outcomes confirmed many of the action items listed, refined and prioritized the actions for each Township.
- May 2013 –Regional Economic Development staff presented an overview of the **Plan** at the Building Business Forum event in Uxbridge (joint initiative between Townships of Uxbridge, Brock and Scugog), inviting the business community to provide feedback about economic development opportunities in their communities.
- Regional Economic Development staff attended meetings of all the BIA’s and Chamber of Commerce and other economic development organizations in each of the Townships to seek their support and possible partnerships when the implementation phase of the **Action Plans** occur.

Ideas and dreams shared through the community engagement were used to ground-truth the economic analysis, shape the strategies and help build the **Action Plans**.

2. Economic analysis

Economic analysis was completed with the help of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Ministry of Rural Affairs staff, utilizing the Ministry’s economic analysis tools. The analysis included data sets of employment and industry sectors, commuter flows and population and labour demographics. The data was then compiled in a report titled **North Durham By The Numbers (attachment 2)** and used to develop the direction and strategies of the **Plan** and Township **Action Plans**.



3. Existing documents

Finally, existing documents that provide policy direction or insight into economic development issues were reviewed and pertinent sections that impacted the direction of the **Plan** were identified. These documents include;

- Regional Municipality of Durham Official Plan
- Region of Durham Community Strategic Plan
- Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, 2010
- GTA Countryside Mayor's Alliance Economic Analysis, 2010
- Township of Brock Official Plan
- Beaverton Downtown Improvement Plan, 1997
- Brock Business Retention + Expansion Final Report, 2008
- Township of Brock Economic Development Advisory Committee 2012 Priorities
- Township of Scugog Official Plan
- Township of Scugog Corporate Strategic Plan, 2011- 2014
- Township of Scugog Downtown Development Strategy
- Township of Scugog First Impressions Project
- Uxplan 2020, A Community Strategic Plan, 1997
- Township of Uxbridge Official Plan, 2007
- Investing in Uxbridge: Business Retention + Expansion Report, 2007
- Uxbridge Township Economic Development Advisory Committee Presentation to Council, June 25, 2012

Findings from the existing document review formed part of the direction of the **Plan** and strategies, the development of the Township **Action Plans**.



Structure of the *Plan*

The Plan recognizes shared vision, partnership and collaboration between the Townships.

The *Plan* ties shared visions and goals of the townships to help build vibrant, resilient rural communities. It identifies common issues and opportunities that the townships can work in partnership to achieve a greater impact together rather than individually.

The *Plan* provides overall vision, goals and opportunities for the townships. More specific actions and approaches for economic development are described in the attached individual *Action Plans* developed for each township. Several of the *Action Plan* initiatives are shared across all three townships, while many others are unique recognising different economic development opportunities in each township influenced by many factors including demographics, structure of industry sectors, resources and community capacity.



The Four Strategies

An asset based community economic development approach

The *Plan* provides a working framework for the townships to move forward with an economic development program to strengthen the local economies, create jobs and enhance the quality of life of local communities. Throughout stakeholder consultations and the review of existing documents and policy, a clear direction for economic development activities was apparent; an asset based economic development approach. An asset based approach seeks to develop the resources, skills and opportunities that exist within the local community. This approach does not replace traditional economic development approaches of investment attraction; rather it balances a focus of welcoming new business to the community with celebrating and investing in existing businesses. The majority of new investment in a community comes from existing businesses.

The assets of north Durham can be leveraged to take advantage of global, national and provincial trends to foster economic development. In particular, the Townships are strategically positioned to enjoy;

- The Canadian economy is changing and growth is increasingly driven by small and medium sized businesses. With a strong small business base and high quality of living, the townships are able to build upon their small business sector.
- Geographically, the townships are positioned well in the Greater Toronto Area to benefit from the economic activity of the GTA including; logistics, access to suppliers and markets, business resources, population, labour force, and tourism.
- The rural fabric is a prized possession of residents, visitors and potential investors (local and foreign) and should be leveraged to build a strong local economy, in particular natural and built heritage, resident labour force,



committed local volunteer core, local events, engaged businesses, and the diverse economic base.

- The Townships are experiencing a growth in several industries including agriculture, manufacturing, arts and culture and professional businesses that should be fostered to help grow and diversify the local economic base and employment opportunities.
- The Townships have access to excellent resources to help strengthen the local business sector, and should continue to foster relationships with those organizations to develop specific programs and partnerships for rural economic development. Organizations include; SPARK, Business Advisory Centre Durham, Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ministry of Rural Affairs. Durham Workforce Authority, Durham College and UOIT.

The Four Strategies

The **Plan** has been created to provide an intentional coordinated approach to strengthening a dynamic and resilient local economy. Following the extensive background research from economic analysis, existing document and community consultation, four strategies have been developed to achieve the purpose of the **Plan**;

- Strategy 1: Be Open for Business
- Strategy 2: Inspire and Support Entrepreneurship
- Strategy 3: Build a Vibrant Future for Young Adults
- Strategy 4: Strong Rural and Small Town Identity



1 Be Open For Business

This is about retaining and growing existing businesses, facilitating local business expansion, encouraging local business start-ups and welcoming new businesses to the community.

This strategy focuses on the community being open for business through retaining and growing existing business, facilitating local business expansion and welcoming new business to the community. This requires a culture supporting business development through available space, infrastructure, marketing, policies and procedures.

Community investment readiness is vital for the townships to be open for business. In 2008 the Economic Development Council of Ontario (EDCO) initiated a *Local Economies in Transition* Project to understand the level of investment readiness of communities across Ontario. The Report identified low levels across the province and outlined opportunities for communities to increase their readiness for investment including website presence, up to date investment information, creation of economic development strategies and ongoing business retention & expansion programs. The north Durham Townships must be investment ready to attract new businesses to their respective communities and actively facilitate the retention and expansion of existing businesses.

In particular, the availability, appropriate zoning and servicing of employment lands is also an important component of being investment ready. The Townships were partners of the Greater Toronto Countryside Mayor's Alliance Economic Analysis (2008) project that highlighted several challenges to financial stability for GTA Countryside municipalities. In that analysis, 'small employment land deficit' to accommodate employment growth forecasts to 2031 were identified for the Township of Uxbridge (81ha) and the Township of Brock (14ha). Factors such as geography and limits of Greenbelt Plan may have a role in these challenges. The Township of Scugog was not found to have an employment land deficit for the project study period. In addition to a



supply, the Townships and the Region must work towards appropriate zoning and servicing of employment lands.



To ensure investment readiness, the action items include;

- *Invest in an ongoing business retention and expansion program*, often called corporate visitation program, to develop relationships with business owners and managers across the townships to identify and provide resources, where appropriate, for business expansion opportunities and retention.
- Develop a comprehensive *communications and marketing program* to promote north Durham townships as a location for new business investment and expansion opportunities.
- *Build relationships with local business organizations* in north Durham such as Chambers of Commerce to build community capacity for economic development
- *Foster relationships with economic development stakeholders* that provide support services for business investment and expansion in north Durham including; Business Advisory Centre Durham, SPARK Centre, Durham Region Local Training Board, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and Ontario Ministry Economic Development and Innovation, Durham College and UOIT.



2 Inspire & Support Entrepreneurship

This is a step beyond being open for business. It is about facilitating new ideas and new opportunities. This includes resources for business start up, expansion, labour force development, innovation and supporting new market opportunities for business.

The strategy is to leverage existing resources with a specific focus on rural businesses and entrepreneurs using an economic gardening approach. Economic gardening is a term used to describe the economic development approach of Littleton, Colorado that began in the 1980's when economic development direction shifted from industry attraction to fostering the development of high growth local business on the belief that entrepreneurship drives the local economy. The Littleton economic gardening approach has three core dimensions; providing strategic information to companies, building infrastructure that is both physical, improves quality of life and intellectual (education), and finally, making connections between and within the business community, organizations and educational institutions.

In Durham Region, excellent programs currently exist to support new venture creation and entrepreneurship and several of these resources have specific rural programming such as BACD's workshops and seminars hosted in Uxbridge and Scugog. There is a great opportunity to build on this foundation and foster the growth of local entrepreneurs.

To foster an entrepreneurial business community, the action items include;

- *Establish a rural business centre* that provides physical space for client-centred partnerships between federal, provincial, regional and municipal governments that are focused on business and economic development services to stimulate jobs and growth in north Durham.



- Increase financial and business resources available to north Durham businesses and organizations through the *expansion of Community Futures Development Corporation* programs to the Township of Scugog and the Township of Uxbridge.
- *Build on the success of the inaugural North Durham Building Business Forum 2012* and provide ongoing exceptional educational and networking opportunities for local entrepreneurs.
- With the support of established local entrepreneurs, *establish a mentorship program* to foster the development of high growth local businesses.
- In 2011, over 90% of businesses in north Durham had less than 10 employees suggesting that small business drives the north Durham economy. Within the small business community are a significant number of home based businesses. *Develop a home based business growth program* to assist the expansion of home based businesses beyond the home to commercial locations.



3 Create a Vibrant Future for Young Adults

This is about the engagement and retention of our youth and young adults (under 40) and welcoming them back into the community when they are ready to return.

We need to build a community for our youth to remain in north Durham Region, or return to when they are ready to come back home. Communities full of opportunities and entrepreneurs to shape the future. Youth need to be engaged in these solutions to create those opportunities.

There are a number of excellent youth programs operating across north Durham including high school leadership programs, youth drop in centres, and youth groups. Of particular note is the Ontario Summer company program offered through the Business Advisory Centre Durham. This program that supports the start up and operation of student owned companies over the summer months, has attracted a number of north Durham students over the past few years.

To engage and empower north Durham youth, the action items include;

- Foster a generation of entrepreneurs across north Durham. Expand the presence and number of north Durham students participating in the *Ontario Summer Company* program, or equivalent, offered through the Business Advisory Centre Durham.
- *Build the visibility and number of co-op placements* of secondary and post secondary students in north Durham businesses.



4 Build a stronger rural and small town identity

This is about building pride and great spaces in our local communities and sharing the stories of the people, business and places that make north Durham so desirable.

North Durham is home to a diverse landscape of historic downtowns, countryside areas, farmland, lakes and a plethora of activities that take place within its borders **Throughout the *Plan* consultations and existing documents review, the culture and community of north Durham was highlighted as one of the distinguishing features attracting people to live, work and play in the area.**

The cultural elements of north Durham are a central component of developing a strong rural identity. In particular, fostering vibrant downtown cultural and commercial centres;

*“Main Street is the glory of Canada. If a community has no heart, it has no soul; and its heart should beat faster at the core. For here is the glory of the past, the symbol of stability, the structures that our fathers and their fathers erected, the visual reminder of another time that gives every small town a sense of continuity.” - Pierre Berton, *Reviving MainStreet**

Creating a strong rural and small town identity across rural Durham Region that celebrates the distinctness of the rural community, the action items include;

- *Foster vibrant downtown commercial areas* using the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Downtown Revitalization program model, or similar, which focuses on leadership development, economic development, marketing and promotions and physical improvements.
- *Develop community marketing campaigns* to celebrate local successes and share the story of north Durham communities to a broader audience.



- The north Durham townships have completed a cultural mapping exercise. This should be updated regularly and continually reviewed to leverage opportunities to *foster cultural development*.



Moving Forward

The **Plan** is a roadmap for the direction the Townships are taking to build vibrant and resilient rural communities and is an invitation for other organizations and/or individuals to participate.

The **Plan** has been developed as a roadmap, to guide direction of economic development activities over the next five years for all three municipalities to align common vision and goals. As the Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge continue to strengthen their economic development programs, the **Action Plan** for each will provide actionable initiatives to improve local issues that are unique to the challenges faced by each community.

The **Plan** is an opportunity for the business communities across north Durham and other economic development stakeholders to participate in initiatives. Sharing the overall economic development direction and activities allows for stakeholders from across north Durham to work in partnership with the Townships to achieve greater impact for the economic future of north Durham.

Township Action Plans

The **Plan** will be implemented across north Durham as outlined in three action plans; one specific to each municipality. The **Action Plans** have been developed based on consultation and input received from discussions held with municipal stakeholders, including the local Economic Development Advisory Committees and Councils.

The **Action Plans** are structured around the four strategies of the **Plan** and identifies the lead organization for implementation of the actions. Measurables are also included in the **Action Plans** as a mechanism to track the progress of the initiatives. The projects identified have been listed in order of priority based on consultation and feedback, it is expected several projects can be undertaken concurrently based on the nature of the task and resources available.



Implementation of the **Action Plans** is tied to the appropriate lead stakeholder or organization, including recommended partners in implementation, and key measurables.

For each action plan item, a lead will be assigned to oversee implementation, whether it be the Region, one of the Townships or a community organization. Partners will also be named to assist with implementation if the action is complementary to their own work-plan.

Next Steps

Upon approval by each Township of the north **Plan** and **Action Plans**, Regional staff and the Townships will move forward with approaches to implementation of the actions. This will involve engaging the identified Lead agency to prepare a detailed plan, including the partners, for implementation of the action(s) assigned.

On an on-going basis, the **Action Plans** will be reviewed in terms of progress and contribution to the success of local economic development within the north Durham communities. Refinement of the **Action Plans**, and new or current actions, may be added as deemed necessary to address emerging opportunities and priorities.

