



COMMUNITIES
with OPPORTUNITIES

HASTINGS COUNTY

Economic Development Action Plan 2014-2018



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Introduction:

In 2007, Hastings County Council approved an Economic Development Strategy for the development of an economic development office within the Planning & Development Department, and suggested the hiring of staff and included a One Year Action Plan. Following the approval by County Council of a budget for economic development, the County hired an Economic Development Manager in August, 2007.

This original Strategy recommended Hastings County take on a core responsibility in a few areas meaning the County become proactive in identifying challenges and opportunities, developing projects that lead to growth/diversification, finding partners needed to make it successful and implementing the ideas. The Strategy also recommended that the County prioritize a variety of actions to guide the activities of Hastings County in economic development over the years that followed.

In 2009, Hastings County Council approved an *Economic Development Action Plan, 2009-2012*. It outlined key priority actions for the County, economic development staff and community partners to follow. The Plan was accompanied by the *Hastings County Economic Development Situation Analysis* providing a 56-page comprehensive statistical analysis of the economic situation in the County. Using the most recent data available, it highlighted the competitive strengths and outlined the core proactive sectors for attraction, retention and expansion efforts.

For the development of the 2009-2012 Action Plan, more than 130 stakeholders were consulted including people representing the manufacturing, agriculture, forestry, tourism, retail, municipal government, education and health care sectors. Youth also participated. This opportunity for input was provided through personal interviews, focus groups and a Stakeholder Summit held on September 22, 2008 at the Madoc Township Municipal Office building in Eldorado. As well, the County's Economic Development Advisory Committee helped to shape the Plan by reviewing and fine tuning the input from stakeholders.

The competitive strengths of Hastings County and the Key Theme Areas that emerged included:

- AgriVentures
- Natural Resources
- Creative Industries
- Tourism
- Manufacturing
- Commerce

In addition to serving as a guide for the County, the Action Plan was intended to enable all those promoting the County's economic development to coordinate their efforts and focus their resources on the same priorities. The Plan also received an Award of Merit from the Economic Developers Council of Ontario.

Key Accomplishments:

A number of actions have been, or are in the process of being, implemented or completed as a result of the Action Plan. There are also several outcomes to report. They include:

- Introduced a Small Business Coaching program, known as Enterprise Facilitation, which has helped create or expand more than 100 businesses and more than 100 new jobs since 2010;
- The 14 member municipalities enjoyed a 14% increase in the number of businesses between 2009 and 2012 and a 6% growth in jobs between 2006 and 2011 census years;
- More than \$1.5 million in funding from external sources and senior levels of government was obtained to support a number of strategic economic development initiatives;
- Staff assisted with the foundation of the Harvest Hastings initiative which expanded awareness of local products and farm gate opportunities – close to 200 producers are featured;
- Helped expand promotions of value-added forestry initiatives in partnership with the Bancroft & Area Forest Industry Association (BAFIA) – this included support for the proposed combined heat and power plant in Bancroft;
- Completed a Tourism Development Master Plan resulting in the identification of recreational geology, wellness opportunities, outdoor recreation, arts & culture and agri-tourism as key assets;
- Created the Hastings Opportunities in Tourism (HOT) Initiative to support tourism development – this included the annual “HOTie” Tourism Business Awards and the promotion of “HOT Spots” (businesses and attractions across the County);
- Established annual Visitor Information Centre staff training to help ensure seasonal employees are ready to respond to inquiries;
- With the Small Business Centre and other partners, coordinated numerous workshops and seminars of interest to entrepreneurs;

- Developed an investment marketing strategy and brand, “Communities with Opportunities”, which won the Ontario Lieutenant Governor’s Award for Marketing Excellence, the highest economic development award in Ontario;
- Became the first municipality in Canada to develop an iPhone app with a focus on economic development services;
- Created a 10-year Cultural Plan in partnership with the Cities of Belleville & Quinte West – considered the first regional cultural plan in Ontario;
- Established the Arts Route to promote creative artisans and their galleries across the County;
- Coordinated several networking events known as “Creative Hastings” to help promote Hastings County as being home to creative entrepreneurs;
- Founded an artisan food and beverage (FAB Region) investment marketing initiative in partnership with neighbouring counties promoting investment in value added agri-ventures (i.e. craft brewing); and
- Became actively involved in the investment marketing initiatives of the Ontario East Economic Development Commission (OEEDC).

Building on the foundation established:

The intention of this new *Economic Development Action Plan: 2014-2018* is that it will complement, and not disregard, the previously approved plan. A solid foundation for future economic development success has already been put in place and should be continued. In addition, Hastings County has a number of Council-approved strategic documents that provide clear direction regarding economic and tourism development both in the short and long term. This includes the Investment Marketing Strategy, the Tourism Master Plan and the Cultural Plan. Significant research and consultation was undertaken in the preparation of these strategic documents meaning this updated Action Plan serves to help continue their implementation.

How does an updated Plan differ from the 2009-2012 Economic Development Action Plan? The former Plan was based on 2006 Statistics and qualitative data collected in 2007 and 2008. The new updated Action Plan responds to the accompanying 49 page *Economic Development Situation Analysis, 2014* which is found in Appendix A. Utilizing the most recent data available, it provides an overview of the current competitive strengths of Hastings County and outlines industries that should be the focus of attention going forward. It also includes the results of a business survey, personal interviews and a review of related strategies already in place.

Based on the *Situation Analysis*, four key Goals have been identified.

Economic Development Action Plan Goals:

Goal 1 – Provide support to the agriculture and forestry sectors

Goal 2 – Utilize the award winning “Communities with Opportunities” brand and investment marketing strategy to attract new entrepreneurs and investment

Goal 3 – Support new entrepreneurs and existing businesses through the practice of Enterprise Facilitation

Goal 4 – Create a more attractive place to live, visit, work and invest through place based development initiatives

Overview of Major Goals & Examples of Associated Actions:

Goal 1 – Provide support to the agriculture and forestry sectors:

- Support the projects and activities of the Harvest Hastings initiative including promotions of who is growing locally, what products are available, and where to purchase;
- Support and promote renewable energy projects including the Marmora Pumped Storage Facility, the County Power District Heating Project and niche manufacturing ventures utilizing local agriculture and forestry products; and
- Support promotions of the local wood industry.

Goal 2 – Utilize the award winning “Communities with Opportunities” brand and investment marketing strategy to attract new entrepreneurs and investment:

- Continue to implement the Council approved investment marketing strategy to promote Hastings County as a place to grow and invest;
- Utilize social media and online advertising;
- Key targets to focus on include “Lone Eagles” (e.g. “work from home”, wellness, tourism), niche manufacturing (e.g. craft brewing, local wood products) and retail;
- Maintain access to an inventory of available commercial/industrial properties and businesses for sale; and

- With an aging population, attempt to balance this with the development of a marketing campaign targeting young families and new Canadians on the benefits of working and living in Hastings County.

Goal 3 – Support the addition of new entrepreneurs and growth of existing businesses through the practice of Enterprise Facilitation:

- Continue the proven approach of “business coaching” through one-on-one assistance with residents wanting to start a business and existing entrepreneurs seeking help with their venture.

Goal 4 – Create a more attractive place to live, visit, work and invest through place based development initiatives:

- Continue to help enhance identified underperforming and underdeveloped assets through the Hastings Opportunities in Tourism (HOT) initiative;
- Continue implementation of the 10-year Cultural Plan in partnership with the Cities of Belleville & Quinte West; and
- Help facilitate the development of an Earth Sciences Centre.

Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting:

This Economic Development Action Plan will be implemented primarily through the Planning & Development Department’s annual Economic Development Budget and initiatives leveraged by external funding when available. Economic Development staff will work collaboratively with partners around the County and beyond to implement this plan and related initiatives. The actions will be monitored through the annual “Year in Review” and in 2018 upon the Plan’s sunset.

How will we know that “we have arrived” and accomplished our Goals? The following identifies examples of some short-term, and long-term, performance metrics:

Short-term measurements	Long-term measurements
Number of entrepreneurs assisted through economic development policies and programs	Increased number of jobs between 2011 and 2016 Census years
Number of business networking events and workshops, and amount of participants	Number of businesses operating in Hastings County compared to five years prior, and number of small business start-ups
Quantity of leveraged funding obtained to implement programs and services	Development of the Earth Sciences Centre
Traffic to County related websites and number of followers (“Likes”) on social media sites	Number of tourists/visitors to the region
Number of agricultural and forestry related operations profiled and promoted	Sales of local agricultural and forestry products

**Appendix A – Economic Development Situation Analysis: A
Background Report to the County’s Economic Development Action
Plan:**

(attached)