

Norfolk County Economic Development Strategy



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The Background

Context

Norfolk County, a rural municipality of approximately 68,000 residents in Southwestern Ontario, has long been home to a flourishing agricultural base. Historically, the County's strength was in tobacco due to the mild climate and long growing season; however, due to the diminishing demand for tobacco products, Norfolk County has encountered a need to diversify not only its agricultural industry, but also its economy.

Located along on the shores of Lake Erie, Norfolk County is comprised of several small communities spread across a large geographical area. Some of the communities within the County are Simcoe, Delhi, Port Dover, Waterford, Port Rowan, Langton and Courtland.

Norfolk County is *Ontario's Garden* - the County is home to some of the most fertile land in Ontario and the agricultural industry continues to be a driving force behind the County's economy, producing a wide range of crops, including 54% of Ontario's asparagus, and 58% and 51% of the province's tobacco and ginseng, respectively. As a result of the County's agriculture sector's transformation away from tobacco, farmers have begun growing alternative crops such as lavender, wolfberries, hazelnuts and ginseng. In addition, wineries and distilleries are beginning to appear. Much emphasis has been placed on developing the agricultural profile of the County, including the development of the 'Direct from Norfolk County' brand, an agricultural marketing campaign entitled "Know Where Your Food Comes From", and an official map and local food guide. In addition, the concept of an Agri-Food Innovation Centre has been initiated and a business case is being developed, and a Norfolk County Agricultural Advisory Board has been established.

Tourism has also received significant attention from the County. The County has implemented a Tourism and Economic Development Advisory Board, the Ontario's South Coast brand is in place, and motorcycle tourism is well-developed. Due to its proximity to Lake Erie, Norfolk County is popular amongst cottagers, boaters and day-trip tourists during the summer. Nature-based experiential tourism is also up and coming, supported by Norfolk County's extensive and relatively untouched natural setting.

What This Strategy is About

Norfolk County's Tourism & Economic Development Division has undertaken this strategic planning process to help better define the Norfolk County business community, identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the local economy, create partnerships, identify new initiatives in Norfolk County's target industries, and update the municipality's economic goals and objectives.

The implementation of this Strategy will require that the entire community (Norfolk County's Council, Municipal Administration, and local community stakeholders) take ownership of the Strategy. This means becoming engaged and responsible for developing and executing a work plan aimed at diversifying and sustaining Norfolk County's local economy.

What the Numbers Say

A Brief Statistical Overview of Norfolk County

The population of Norfolk County is growing slowly. The population of Norfolk County increased from 60,534 in 1996 to 68,391 in 2010.

The population in Norfolk County is older. Overall, Norfolk County has an older population than the provincial average. The 50-54 age segment is the largest of all age segments in Norfolk County (compared to the 45-50 age segment in Ontario) and the percentage of Norfolk County's population aged 25-44 years is significantly lower than that of the Ontario average.

Education. The percentage of Norfolk County residents who have a college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma is higher than the Provincial average in 2011 (24.6% vs. 22.1%). However, the percentage of Norfolk County residents who only have attained a high school certificate or equivalent or lower is significantly higher than that of Ontario (49.3% vs. 38.2%), and the percentage of Norfolk County residents who have a university certificate or diploma is also significantly lower than that of Ontario in 2011 (13.2% vs. 31.1%).

Norfolk County is primarily English. Over 90% of residents only speak English, and only 3.4% of residents are bilingual (English and French), which is significantly lower than the provincial level (11.3%).

Income levels in Norfolk County are increasing, but are lower than average. The average and median incomes in Norfolk County increased between 2000 and 2010 (from \$27,202 to \$36,870 and from \$20,429 to \$27,831 respectively), yet were lower than those of the province. Also, 13.1% of Norfolk County's population makes over \$60,000 a year compared to 17.1% in Ontario.

Housing prices in Norfolk County are increasing, yet are still affordable compared to the GTA. The average value of dwellings increased from \$145,075 in 2001 to \$264,141 in 2011, however this is still significantly lower than the 2011 GTA average of \$518,914.

Norfolk County does have some issues with regards to the labour force. The participation and employment rates in Norfolk County (63.9% and 57.9% respectively) are lower than the Provincial rates (67.1% and 61.5% respectively). In addition, the unemployment rate (9.3% in 2011) has been increasing since 2001 and is higher than the provincial rate (8.4% in 2011).

Norfolk County is a net exporter of employees. There are fewer jobs in Norfolk County (20,890) than resident employed labour force (30,895). As such, approximately 40% of Norfolk residents commute to work outside of Norfolk County.

The labour force in Norfolk County is concentrated in four main industries. These are:

- Manufacturing (21%, increased since 2001)
- Agriculture (12%, decreased since 2001)
- Retail trade (10%, relatively stable since 2001)
- Health care and social assistance (10%, increased since 2001)

The largest number of employers was in crop production. In December 2010, the crop production sub-sector had a significantly higher percentage of employers in Norfolk County (19.9%) than in Ontario (1.2%).

SWOT Summary: Community Consultation

The information below summarizes the findings of the SWOT analysis which was compiled from input obtained during the public consultation process. Please note that the responses are based on perception and were provided by the community when asked specific questions. These are not listed in any specific order.

What are Norfolk County's greatest economic strengths?

- Agricultural industry
- High quality and diversity of agricultural products ("Ontario's Garden")
- Richly fertile and productive soils
- Natural gas and electrical infrastructure capacity throughout the County
- Proximity to major urban centres (GTA and surrounding communities)
- Arts, Cultural & Heritage assets
- Lake Erie, its shore line and waterfront communities and cultures
- Unique and diverse natural environment
- Community's entrepreneurial spirit
- Local work ethic
- Proximity to major employers
- Research Centres
- Existing employers such as Unilever (Breyers), Toyotetsu, Superior Essex, Titan Trailers Inc., Lower Lakes Towing, etc.
- Norfolk's many tourism assets, events, attractions and potential for growth
- Great vacation destination
- The County is working well with regional economic development partners (i.e. RTO, Ontario's South Coast Tourism Alliance, SCOR, Ontario's Green Energy Hub, etc.)
- Strength and diversity of cultures and ethnicities
- Various communities and vibrant main streets/downtowns
- Norfolk is spreading the word that it is "Open for Business"
- Green energy generation
- Manufacturing sector
- Local skilled and unskilled workforce

What are Norfolk County's greatest economic weaknesses?

- Out-migration of youth
- Lack of community cohesion – no community Vision – lack of overall identity
- Lack of Cohesive Norfolk County (community) plan/strategy
- Lack of collaboration and cooperation between industries and individual communities
- Limited collaboration between industrial sectors (i.e. Agriculture, Tourism, Art, Culture and Heritage)
- Norfolk's entrepreneurship potential and capacity is not fully appreciated or embraced by some County officials and others (need to be more open to accepting new ideas)
- Lack of coordination, recognition and appreciation of the local arts, culture & heritage community

- Appears to be lack of integration/inter-action/cooperation between departments within Norfolk County administration
- Lack of understanding for value-added processing and new agricultural industries
- Lack of local youth employment opportunities or professional employment
- No entrepreneurship centre – no youth entrepreneurship programs
- Limited local post-secondary opportunities
- Tourism potential not being fully capitalized on – limited product development
- Limited and unfocused Economic Development resources
- Lack of 100% high speed broadband coverage
- Under-developed opportunities in local foods production and processing
- Conflicts between local entrepreneurs and Norfolk County's approval process
- Appearance of limited innovative thinking (not thinking outside of the box) from Norfolk County staff
- Lack of an educated workforce
- Perception that natural environment must be protected at all costs versus natural environment working in harmony with other interests
- Lack of diverse housing

What are the economic opportunities you think Norfolk County should take advantage of?

- Increased product development – niche agriculture, value-added agriculture, tourism, arts, culture & heritage, culinary tourism, wine tourism and marine tourism
- Buy and support local
- Local food processing
- Retention and re-attraction of local youth
- Increase capacity for local entrepreneurship – especially youth entrepreneurship
- Develop a community vision for Norfolk County and its individual communities
- Build better cohesion and stronger relationships between:
 - Norfolk County staff (both internally among County Departments and externally among Economic Development stakeholders)
 - Business Community (including all economic sectors)
- The community, and the Norfolk County need to recognize the community and economic value of the arts, culture & heritage community
- Norfolk County to develop a “think outside of the box” mentality
- Support for new emerging sectors such as eco-tourism, arts, culture & heritage, local foods and agri-tourism
- Build strong relationships with existing companies and local industries to assist with investment retention and expansion opportunities
- Strengthen relationships and collaboration between business groups and organizations (i.e. Chambers of Commerce, BIA's, Agricultural groups and associations) to help further develop new opportunities
- Increase local post-secondary programs and education opportunities
- Expanded entrepreneurship centre and development of incubator
- Expanded research in agriculture
- Better coordination and ‘cross-selling’ between the numerous things to do in Norfolk County (fairs, festivals, special events, culinary events, artist tours, sporting events (including cycling), etc.)

- Increased waterfront activities

Describe the type of industries you envision Norfolk County to have in 5 to 10 years.

- Agriculture (traditional and niche products)
 - Agri-tourism
 - Local foods
 - Food-processing
 - Value-added processing of local agricultural products
 - Support industries (innovative equipment, shipping and logistics)
- Diversified industries
 - Many small industries (small manufacturers)
 - Technology and knowledge based
- Tourism
 - Eco-tourism
 - Hospitality
 - Waterfront
 - Arts, culture & heritage
 - Fairs, festivals and special events
 - Accommodations
- Expanded existing companies such as Unilever (Breyers), Toyotetsu, Titan Trailers Inc., etc.
- Expanded post-secondary education facilities
- Research Centres (Agriculture and/or Environmental Sciences)
- Green energy producers
- More entrepreneurship/self employed
- Service sector industries servicing the needs of two very different clientele:
 - an aging residential population
 - affluent tourists
- Expanded health care and social services (due to increase in aging population)

What could prevent Norfolk County from attracting the industries you envision?

- Lack of vision
- Continued out-migration of youth
- Addiction to growing tobacco (the old way of doing things and not willing to change)
- Decline of skilled and unskilled workforce
- A Council, bureaucracy and community who are unwilling to think strategically, collaboratively and “outside of the box”
- Not being open to new ideas
- Limited infrastructure
- Setting up road blocks for new, innovative opportunities instead of finding solutions
- Perception that there are no real opportunities in Norfolk County
- Lack of community cohesion
- Lack of financial resources
- Unwillingness to make long term commitments
- Complacency
- Lack of community and government support

- Limited cooperation amongst stakeholders
- Fear of change
- Increased competition in target sectors

Are there any other high priority economic development issues you feel should be addressed by Norfolk County when developing a new Economic Strategy?

- Community vision and the tools to attain this vision
- Human capital attraction and retention
- Reverse out-migration of youth
- Environmental excellence and how to grow in harmony with the environment
- For the entire community of Norfolk County to take ownership of this strategy
- Development of a cooperative and collaborative spirit in Norfolk County
- Maintain existing high quality of life
- Need to build off of existing traditional strengths in Agriculture and Tourism while fostering growth in new sectors
- Arts, culture & heritage
- Build the political and community will to move forward with new innovative ideas

What People Value in Norfolk County

Based on an extensive community consultation, the following values were identified by those living and working in Norfolk County:

Deep Roots in Agriculture

Norfolk County is an area that is rich with an abundance of Ontario's highest quality, highest yield agricultural land. Built on agriculture as a main economic and community driver, Norfolk County will see future economic success through the transition of this industry from primarily tobacco to other high-profit, high-yield crops, as well as value-add processing.

Lake Erie and Norfolk County's Unique Natural Environment

Situated along the shores of one of the Great Lakes, Norfolk County boasts unique and important natural environmental features such as its kilometers of white sandy beaches, Backus Woods (an example of a Carolinian Forest), and the Long Point National Wildlife Area (part of the UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve). By moving forward in harmony with its natural assets, Norfolk County can benefit both economically and environmentally.

Location

Located in Southern Ontario within an hour's drive of major urban centres such as the GTA, Niagara Falls, London, and Kitchener-Waterloo, Norfolk County has direct access to one of Canada's most diverse, largest and wealthiest populations. Focusing directly on this captive market will create opportunities for Norfolk County, resulting in the expansion of local industries and emerging sectors.

Diversity in People, Cultures and Communities

It's the people of Norfolk County that make it a truly unique place. Cultivating stronger positive relationships, while bringing Norfolk's residents, cultures and communities together, will build a more cohesive and richer Norfolk County.

Guiding Economic Development Principles (Future Directions)

Norfolk County will be regarded as a truly unique agricultural community where innovation, technology, entrepreneurship and collaboration drive the local economy. The County will be known for:

- Its ability to share information and work collaboratively to capitalize on new opportunities.
- Being a model community that developed a community vision and implemented a set of strategic goals in order to achieve this vision.
- Being leaders in producing top quality agricultural products.
- Being at the leading edge of innovation and commercialization with respect to new crops, crop handling equipment, processing methods and techniques and creating value added agricultural products.
- Being a unique and sought after tourism destination known for providing sustainable and innovative tourism products and experiences.
- Developing a local economy that is sensitive to, and in harmony with, the natural environment.
- Building a strong future based on community strengths.
- Being open for business and embracing entrepreneurial and investment opportunities.
- Working as a partner with community and regional economic stakeholders.
- Being focused on supporting and growing its local industries.
- Providing opportunities for youth to remain and to be a strong part of their community.
- Developing and attracting a skilled and talented labour force.

Norfolk County's Economic Development Strategy

Based on what we heard from the Norfolk County community, the following themes have been highlighted as pillars of Norfolk County's Economic Development Strategy. The rationale behind selecting these themes is to provide directions and actions aimed at building on Norfolk County's fundamental economic and community strengths, while also looking at new approaches to grow and foster emerging industries and opportunities.

1. Unify the County with a strong vision and direction for future community growth and identity development.
 - Community Strategy
 - Youth Engagement & Entrepreneurship
2. Make economic development a County priority.
3. Strengthen Norfolk County's networking capacity, increase collaboration, and grow partnerships.
4. Provide support for Norfolk County's traditional industries:
 - Agriculture
 - Manufacturing
5. Nurture and grow Norfolk County's emerging industries to strengthen and help diversify the County's local economy:
 - Tourism
 - Arts, Culture & Heritage
 - Green Energy
 - Entrepreneurship

1. Unify the County with a strong vision and direction for future community growth and identity development.

Strategy: Develop a common vision and strategy to help set the direction for Norfolk County's future community growth and development.

Why this is important: Norfolk County's economy plays a very important role in the overall well-being of the community; however, it is only one of several vital pillars for a successful community. Since the creation of an amalgamated Norfolk County, individual communities and residents have not had the opportunity to become engaged in a community building exercise to develop a larger community vision and overall community goals and priorities. It is critical that County stakeholders determine what type of community they wish to be in the future. This will help to unify the communities within Norfolk County while at the same time embracing their individual identities and uniqueness.

What we are trying to achieve:

- Unify Norfolk County through the creation of a common vision and a set of goals to help it become the community it wishes to be.
- Create or reinforce a common identity and brand for Norfolk County.
- Build a community that will strive to retain and re-attract its youth.
- Define community priorities and important community aspects/pillars.
- Enhance and expand on Norfolk's high quality of life.

Key Actions:

1.1 Led by the Mayor and the County Manager, **undertake a holistic Community Strategy.**

The Strategy should be based on community ideals valued by Norfolk County residents and should set a true community vision with priority actions for achieving the vision.

Promoted as a community building exercise, the Community Strategy should encompass all aspects of the community that are considered important by Norfolk residents (i.e. Community sustainability, social, cultural, environmental, economic, etc.).

Requiring extensive community consultation, the Strategy should build on previous community-wide initiatives and other previous strategic plans (i.e. Official Plan, Economic Development Strategy, Recreation Master Plan, Corporate Strategic Plan, etc.).

At a minimum, the Strategy should identify:

- Actions aimed at moving Norfolk County towards achieving a common community vision;
- Existing community assets contributing to Norfolk County’s high quality of life;
- All the initiatives and strategies currently being undertaken by Norfolk County, how they are inter-connected and how they can be more effectively linked together;
- Unique attributes and qualities;
- The best and most effective methods to communicate with local residents and businesses, including social media techniques and tools; and
- Effective methods of resolving concurrent community conflicts and differing community priorities (i.e. environment vs. economy).

1.2 Develop a **long-range financial plan** to implement the priority actions identified in the Community Strategy (above) and to fund municipal infrastructure priorities.

1.3 Engage Norfolk’s Youth:

- 1.3.1 Develop a **Norfolk County Youth Committee** to work with the County on initiatives such as the development of a youth retention and re-attraction strategy, support for youth entrepreneurship, and the best means to communicate/connect with local youth. Need to ensure the committee is made up of not only Norfolk County Youth, but also community leaders who are capable of ensuring the committee is taken seriously and that committee initiatives are implemented.
- 1.3.2 Led by the Youth Committee and in conjunction with Norfolk County’s youth (primary, secondary and post-secondary school-aged), develop a youth specific Norfolk County brand aimed at **re-enforcing the positive attributes of the County that appeal to local youth**. Continually use this new brand to present the County as an attractive community of choice for young people.
- 1.3.3 Engage partners such as local schools, the Norfolk District Business Development Corporation, support agencies focusing on youth issues and local business leaders to develop and promote a **youth entrepreneurship program** (could be modeled after the Summer Company entrepreneurship program). Link with Entrepreneurship Actions identified in Section 5 - Nurture and grow Norfolk County’s emerging industries to strengthen and help diversify the County’s local economy.

- 1.3.4 In an attempt to increase the number of Norfolk’s population aged 25-44, and in conjunction with the Norfolk County Youth Committee, **develop a Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy** (include branding as noted above). After completion of a Norfolk Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy, work with South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation and other regional partners to examine opportunities related to youth retention and attraction at a regional level.
- 1.4 To raise the education level of the County, collaborate with local school boards to **create and implement a youth educational awareness program** outlining the benefits, opportunities, and the need to not only stay in school, but to achieve the highest level of education possible.
- 1.5 Partner with local and regional post-secondary institutions (Fanshawe College, University of Guelph, McMaster University, Mohawk College, University of Western Ontario, etc.) to capitalize on opportunities aimed at **developing satellite campuses or promoting more local post-secondary programs** and research capacity.
- 1.6 Support the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie in their efforts to **address educational achievement and local workforce development issues**.

2. Make economic development a County priority.

Strategy: To help diversify, strengthen, and sustain Norfolk County’s local and regional economy, the County needs to make a strong commitment to its overall economic development efforts.

Why this is important: Norfolk County’s local economy is strong in areas such as agriculture, manufacturing, construction and retail trade, and there is also growth in tourism-related industries, real estate, and transportation warehousing. In order to help strengthen and expand existing industries, while continuing to grow new and emerging sectors, Norfolk County needs to ensure that a holistic approach is taken to economic development.

It is critical that Norfolk County commit to taking a cooperative and collaborative approach when working with these groups to ensure that ideas and opportunities are shared. To be effective, this will require that the County’s political and bureaucratic leaders, as well as local and regional economic development partners, maintain open and honest lines of communication - and that there are no overlaps or duplication of efforts or initiatives.

What we are trying to achieve:

- Provide a balanced approach to supporting Norfolk County’s economic generators.
- Ensure that Norfolk County creates a diversified economy based on its existing industrial strengths, as well as emerging economic opportunities.
- Achieving greater clarity in leadership from Norfolk County’s Mayor, Council and Senior Staff in making Economic Development a priority.

Key Actions:

- 2.1 Identify and partner with a group of **community leaders to act as Champions** with their main role to implement Norfolk’s Economic Strategy and monitor the performance of the Strategy. Community leaders could include Mayor and Members of Council, Norfolk’s County Manager and Staff, local business and industry leaders, Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, BIA’s, local and regional economic development agencies and partners concerned with Norfolk’s economic well-being.
- 2.2 Diversify the County’s economic development services to include **balanced support** for all of the County’s existing and emerging industrial sectors.
- 2.3 Develop a **training and development program for all Norfolk County staff** that:
 - Highlights the importance of economic development for the County’s overall future well-being;
 - Promotes best-in-class customer service;

- Gives staff the tools to ensure that investors and entrepreneurs (who are looking to work with the County in order to achieve the desired overall community vision) are given the best opportunity to succeed;
- Allows for County staff to begin building positive internal working relationships that are based on a mutual understanding of the different roles and responsibilities involved in delivering the County's economic development services, as well as trust and respect; and
- Provides County staff the opportunity to work together in order to provide viable solutions to issues surrounding economic development opportunities.

2.4 Identify areas within Norfolk County's administration that contribute to the County's overall economic development function, and **establish a cross-departmental team** to solve any growth and development-related red flag issues that arise. Some of the team members should include:

- The Mayor, County Manager, Tourism and Economic Development Division, Community Planning Division, Building and Bylaw Division, Public Works and Environmental Services, Corporate Services, Health & Social Services

2.5 Develop a **dedicated Norfolk County Economic Development website** to specifically provide information about local investment opportunities.

2.6 To assist in community revitalization efforts continue to **support and implement economic tools such as policies and incentives** found in Norfolk County's Community Improvement Plan (CIP).

2.7 During Norfolk County's next Official Plan update, review and if needed, **revise the CIP** to ensure policies and programs such as the Environmental Assessment Grant, Rehabilitation Tax Increment Based Grant, Façade Improvement Policies, Development Charge Exemptions and/or Building Fee Caps and Adjustments are up to date with any changes in Provincial policy or advances in municipal best practices. Where necessary seek external expertise to assist in determining, or establishing, municipal best practices and their relevance to Norfolk County.

2.8 In order to advance those regional initiatives that may have the biggest impact on Norfolk County's local economy (i.e. Agriculture, Tourism, Niche Agriculture, Agri-tourism, Arts, Culture & Heritage, Green Energy, etc.), Norfolk County should continue to **collaborate with local and regional economic development partners** such as:

- South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation, Southwest Ontario Tourism Corp, Ontario's Green Energy Hub, other regionally focused Economic Development organizations, local BIAs, Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade and organizations focused on strengthening Norfolk County's local economy, Norfolk District Business Development Corporation, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, other government agencies and partners, Grand Erie Immigration Partnership

3. Strengthen Norfolk County’s networking capacity, increase collaboration, and grow partnerships.

Strategy: To build strong positive relationships within Norfolk County, as well as with regional partners in economic development.

Why this is important: One of the most important aspects of economic development is building positive relationships. As such, it is paramount that Norfolk County expand their networking, collaboration and partnership capabilities throughout the County, as well as beyond their municipal and regional borders. Equally critical is the continued open lines of communication between Norfolk County’s Mayor and Council, staff, and industry leaders. To be successful moving forward with this strategy, stakeholders will need to work closely together and not within individual ‘silos’.

What we are trying to achieve:

- Building trust amongst the various business associations, support agencies, and Norfolk County.
- Ensure that stakeholders in Norfolk County’s economic development efforts are connected, sharing information, aware of investment opportunities, able to solve problems quickly by connecting with the right people and resources, and consistently growing their networks and circles of influence.

Key Actions:

3.1 Identify and target a minimum of three (3) **industry events/conferences a year to attend** in order to promote Norfolk County and to build a network of industrial contacts outside of the County.

3.2 Conduct an **annual Business Retention & Expansion visitation program** customized to the County’s industrial and business sectors. The aim of this visitation program is to get Economic Development staff engaged in a continuous conversation with the local business community in order to understand individual industry needs and opportunities, as well as overarching sectorial issues. Annually target a minimum of five (5) employers in at least six (6) different industrial sectors, including:

- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Arts, culture & heritage
- Manufacturing
- Trucking and warehousing
- Professional services (i.e. medical, legal, financial, etc.)
- Other emerging sectors.

- 3.3 Norfolk County to continue developing partnerships and positive relationships with business organizations and support agencies to conduct an **annual business symposium** (Revitalize Norfolk Symposium). The main focus of the symposium is to allow for education, training and networking opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises and business development organizations in Norfolk County.
- 3.4 Establish an **annual economic development/entrepreneurship forum** where industry leaders, business organizations, individual businesses, and Norfolk County staff as well as political leaders can informally discuss issues concerning the sustainability and well-being of Norfolk County's local economy. This should be a forum where topics are discussed openly in a facilitated environment with the aim of raising issues affecting economic development, and exploring new ideas and opportunities to grow and strengthen the County's local economy. It is also an opportunity for Norfolk County to report on their Economic Development efforts and results achieved.

4. Provide support for Norfolk County’s traditional industries.

Strategy: Work collaboratively with industry leaders and stakeholders from Norfolk County’s traditional industrial sectors to ensure they have the adequate support, positive environment, and development opportunities needed to remain viable industries in Norfolk County.

Why this is important: Norfolk County has a long history of strong traditional economic sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing. It is critical that these industries remain an integral and sustainable part of Norfolk County’s economy as they are not only pillars of the County’s economy, but also help give Norfolk County its identity.

What we are trying to achieve:

- Ensure that Norfolk County’s traditional industries remain strong foundations of the County’s local economy.
- Explore new opportunities to grow, expand and sustain those traditional economic sectors that play a role in Norfolk County’s future well-being.

Key Actions:

4.1. Agriculture

Being “Ontario’s Garden”, agriculture is key to Norfolk County’s future economic success. It is imperative that the County continue, or initiate actions such as:

- 4.1.1 Identifying and **working with a champion that can give agriculture a strong voice** while helping to implement the agricultural actions of the Economic Strategy;
- 4.1.2 Coordinating and providing **support to the County’s Agriculture Advisory Board** (AAB);
- 4.1.3 In conjunction with the AAB, conducting an **annual Norfolk County Agriculture Summit** to discuss issues affecting agriculture as well as emerging opportunities and the role the County can play in resolving issues and capitalizing on opportunities;
- 4.1.4 Partnering with the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association as well as other industry leaders such as the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre and the University of Guelph Simcoe Research Station to identify, **promote and undertake research on new and emerging local markets** (keep building on initiatives focusing on local foods, but also begin to focus on emerging immigration trends in the GTA and associated food product and culinary opportunities);

- 4.1.5 Working with the County's AAB and Planning and Economic Development Department to examine emerging agricultural sustainability opportunities such as on-site value-added activities and consider incorporating the reflected **Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw revisions and amendments to enhance value added opportunities** where possible. Where necessary seek external expertise to assist in determining, or establishing, municipal best practices and their relevance to Norfolk County;
- 4.1.6 Undertaking a review of the County's policies to **identify issues surrounding future agricultural opportunities**. Work closely with the County's AAB and various departments to resolve any potential issues;
- 4.1.7 Coordinating the County's efforts focusing on **product development in culinary tourism, local foods, and agri-tourism**;
- 4.1.8 Partner with South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation and other various economic development and agricultural stakeholders to **ensure the local University of Guelph Simcoe Research Station and the Agriculture and Agri-food Canada Research Station (Delhi) remain valued and integral components of Norfolk County's agricultural sector**. Examine and pursue opportunities to enhance or expand the research capacity of each research station;
- 4.1.9 Partnering with SCOR, industry leaders and other levels of government to **establish the Agri-Food Innovation Centre**;
- 4.1.10 Collaborating with post-secondary institutions (i.e. University of Guelph, Fanshawe College, Liaison Culinary College South Coast, etc.) to **develop local post-secondary programs focused on agriculture** or the use of local agricultural products;
- 4.1.11 Partnering with South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, and other regional organizations to **develop a marketing and outreach strategy aimed at promoting value-added and food processing opportunities** in Norfolk County. This strategy could look at promoting specific industry sectors and be targeted at provincial, national and/or international audiences;
- 4.1.12 Promoting agricultural economic renewal and re-growth of unusable farm land in Norfolk by **supporting Alternative Land Use Services**;
- 4.1.13 Keeping all **databases pertaining to agriculture** up to date; and
- 4.1.14 Supporting Norfolk County's primary economic generator by providing a **dedicated economic development resource** focused solely on proactively growing the County's **agricultural and related value-added and food processing industries**.

4.2. Manufacturing

- 4.1.1 Work with local land owners and the real estate industry to develop an **online industrial land inventory** (to be posted on the County’s website, as well as InvestinOntario). This land inventory should be updated quarterly and set up so that individual land owners or brokerages can add, amend or delete their properties accordingly.
- 4.1.2 Ensure the County has an adequate supply of shovel ready industrial land by undertaking an **industrial land demand analysis** and, if necessary, investing in infrastructure to service priority industrial areas.
- 4.1.3 Continue to work on strengthening Norfolk **County’s internal and external transportation linkages**.
- 4.1.4 Encourage investment opportunities (expansions or new investments) and **develop a Norfolk County manufacturers database** including:
- Name, type and size of all manufacturers in the County;
 - Products being manufactured;
 - Required infrastructure and current infrastructure gaps;
 - Number of employees, and the types of skilled workers required; and
 - Gaps and surpluses in the local and regional labour force skills.
- 4.1.5 Implement an annual business **visitation program targeting a variety of manufacturing businesses** (large and small manufacturers, variety of products, old and new companies). Maintain an on-going target of two (2) visits per month (minimum) with a focus of understanding any relevant issues and opportunities, as well as providing solutions where possible.
- 4.1.6 Create a “Best-In Class” **template to respond to investment inquiries** to ensure that all relevant data and information required to satisfy investment inquiries is instantly available and packaged in a professional and easy- to-read format.

5. Nurture and grow Norfolk County’s emerging industries to strengthen and help diversify the County’s local economy.

Strategy: To diversify Norfolk County’s local economy by focusing existing community and economic strengths in order to grow new industrial sectors.

Why this is important: Although Norfolk County has deep roots in several traditional industrial sectors, it is important to add more diversity in the types of industries and businesses operating in the County. By having a more diversified economy, a downturn in one business sector will be offset or balanced by growth and stability in other business sectors.

What we are trying to achieve:

- Provide for economic opportunities in new and emerging business sectors.
- Add diversity to Norfolk County’s local economy.

Key Actions:

5.1. Tourism

- 5.1.1 The County has already embraced marketing as a part of the Tourism and Economic Development portfolio. Greater effort needs to be spent on **product development, support for new ventures and tourism infrastructure** (i.e. waterfront development, eco-tourism, overnight accommodations, public washrooms, parking areas, etc.).
- 5.1.2 Continue to coordinate and provide **support to the Tourism and Economic Development Advisory Board** (TEDAB).
- 5.1.3 **Develop and implement a long-range, comprehensive Tourism Strategy** focusing on regional and local tourism opportunities. The strategy should be focused on five specific areas:
 - i. Industry drivers and emerging opportunities (eco-tourism, culinary tourism, arts, culture & heritage, viticulture, etc.)
 - ii. Target markets
 - iii. Networks and partnership development opportunities
 - iv. Product development
 - v. Branding and marketing opportunities.
- 5.1.4 **Ensure any existing agricultural initiatives are aligned** with those new or emerging opportunities identified in the Tourism Strategy.

- 5.1.5 **Update the Norfolk County accommodations study.**
- 5.1.6 Continue to grow the County's **online tourism presence** and website development.
- 5.1.7 Continue to promote and expand Norfolk County's award-winning **social media networking initiatives.**
- 5.1.8 Partner with local Chambers of Commerce, Board of Trade, BIA's, Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie, Norfolk District Business Development Corporation, and regional partners such as Southwest Ontario Tourism Corp to **develop and deliver hospitality and customer service training** to existing or emerging local tourism businesses and tourism destinations.
- 5.1.9 In addition to the events already being listed on the **online calendar of events** (i.e. fairs, festivals, special events, agricultural events, arts, culture & heritage), expand this valuable online tool by adding other local activities such as sporting events and tournaments, school and religious events, etc.
- 5.1.10 **Target and attend five (5) tourism industry events** (i.e. Toronto International Boat Show, Toronto Cottage Life Show, Hotel Association of Canada (HAC) Annual Conference, etc.) to promote opportunities in Norfolk County as a tourism destination.
- 5.1.11 Continue to **be a leading partner in Southwest Ontario Tourism Corp** and other regional tourism initiatives. Integrate Norfolk County tourism initiatives with other regional projects and priorities if they benefit Norfolk County's overall tourism development goals and objectives (to be identified in the Tourism Strategy).

5.2. Arts, Heritage & Culture

- 5.2.1 **Create and coordinate a Norfolk County Arts Council** to better align the efforts and initiatives of the arts, heritage & culture sector.
- 5.2.2 Collaborate with local arts, heritage and culture stakeholders to **undertake a Cultural and Community Asset mapping exercise** to understand the assets and strengths of Norfolk County's arts, heritage & culture community.
- 5.2.3 **Complete an Arts, Heritage & Culture Strategy and Implementation Plan.**

- 5.2.4 Coordinate the arts, heritage & culture activities with tourism and agriculture activities and initiatives to **ensure joint opportunities are maximized while overlap and duplication of efforts are minimized.**
- 5.2.5 During Norfolk County’s next Official Plan update, review, and if necessary update Norfolk’s Community Improvement Plan (CIP) policies to **ensure issues, opportunities and incentives that may apply to Norfolk’s creative economy are implemented.** Where necessary seek external expertise to assist in determining, or establishing, municipal best practices and their relevance to Norfolk County.

5.3. Green Energy

- 5.3.1 **Support those green energy opportunities that make use of Norfolk County’s existing strengths and infrastructure,** such as the comprehensive, community-wide natural gas and electrical distribution capacity, purposely grown and “non-food” agricultural crops, agricultural waste and by-products, etc.
- 5.3.2 **Support a regional focus on green energy partnerships and emerging opportunities.** Continue to work closely with South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation and the Green Energy Hub.
- 5.3.3 Work with regional partners to **implement the recommendations of the *Ontario’s Green Energy Hub: Green Economy Background Research and Grand Erie Competitiveness Study.***

5.4. Entrepreneurship

- 5.4.1 Partner with business development organizations and support agencies (i.e. Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT), Norfolk District Business Development Corporation, Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie, BIAs, Chambers of Commerce/Board of Trade, etc.) to **plan a Norfolk County Small Business Forum.** The rationale for the Forum is to identify and find solutions for difficulties being faced by local start-ups or by local businesses looking to expand. This should be an open forum where the local business community, together with Norfolk County staff and political leaders, create a more entrepreneurial-friendly environment. Topics could include Planning & Development approvals, County policy, infrastructure, etc. This is not a networking event (i.e. Revitalize Norfolk Symposium), but instead is focused on identifying and solving problems related to entrepreneurship.

- 5.4.2 During the next Official Plan update, review, and if necessary **update Norfolk’s Home-based Business policies** to ensure they are competitive in relation to other comparable municipalities while creating a friendly and welcoming business environment for home-based businesses.
- 5.4.3 Engage partners such as local schools, the Norfolk District Business Development Corporation, Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie, support agencies focusing on youth issues and local business leaders to **develop and promote a youth entrepreneurship program** (could be modeled after the Summer Company entrepreneurship program). Include a comprehensive educational component aimed at students of all ages and their parents to help nurture the idea of entrepreneurship by consistently reinforcing the advantages of, and opportunities for, entrepreneurship in Norfolk County.
- 5.4.4 Partner with regional and local support agencies (i.e. Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Norfolk District Business Development Corporation, Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie, BIAs, Chambers of Commerce/Board of Trade, etc.) to **develop, promote and operate a walk-in Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centre**. The Centre’s functions to include:
- i. Deliver “how-to” training seminars for small businesses and start-ups (including local youth entrepreneurship seminars);
 - ii. Provide the necessary tools and online infrastructure to support home-based businesses;
 - iii. Virtual tools and support; and
 - iv. A small business centre/hub offering affordable flex space and business support to small start-up companies.

The majority of these efforts are already being undertaken effectively by the Norfolk District Business Development Corporation. The concept is to bring these functions together into a facility that also accommodates an area for innovation, small start-up development, and collaboration on entrepreneurial opportunities.