

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

January 9th 2012



Economic Development Strategy for the Town of Halton Hills
Strategic Action Plan Recommendations

Prepared by:



Halton Hills Strategic Action Plan

Introduction

This report is the third in a series of documents prepared as part of an Economic Development Strategy for the Town of Halton Hills. The other reports are the “Economic Development Situation Analysis” released October 1st and “Report on the Consultations” released with this report. The first covered the background research and economic analysis undertaken as part of the strategic planning process and the second reported on the results of more than 30 face to face interviews and an on-line survey which received 161 responses from Halton Hills businesses. This final report provides an Action Plan for 2013-2023 based on the research and stakeholder input.

Sectors/Opportunities Targeted by Halton Hills Economic Development Committee

In the RFP for this project, the consultants were specifically asked to examine a number of sectors/opportunities identified by the Town’s Economic Development Committee including:

- **BR&E** Activities
- The challenges facing the **Manufacturing** Sector
- **Value-added Agriculture** as a potential growth opportunity
- **Cultural Industries** contribution to the local economy
- **Distribution & Logistics** opportunities along the 401/407 corridor
- **Energy** industries as a potential target
- **Food Cluster** – part of value-added agriculture
- **Knowledge Based & Creative Class** Sector (already a powerful force in the region)



- **Live/Work**
- **Quarries** and the impact of the aggregate industry in Halton Hills
- **Commercial** sector including both retail and office
- **Services** which can be included with the above
- **Tourism** opportunities in Halton Hills

Each of these was identified by the Committee for fairly obvious reasons, however it was determined that while each plays an important role in the community, in several instances, the growth potential and the return on investment was limited or that the sectors could be better addressed under other the Strategic Objectives.

Tourism bears closer examination. Halton Hills is attractive for hikers (geocaching and the Bruce Trail), cyclists, equestrians and day trippers from the GTA, however there are very few commercial services catering to visitors. As a result it is under-developed as an economic generator. For example there is only one “flagged” hotel/motel providing a total of 64 guest rooms in the Town. Several observers remarked on the potential for hotel development adjacent to the Toronto Premium Outlet Mall which is under construction at Trafalgar and Steeles in the 401 Corridor. The Mall is expected to attract as many as 2 million shopping trips per year and that level of activity, combined with the number of commercial travelers expected to be calling on the businesses and industries in the 401 corridor, could represent a sufficient volume to warrant an investment in a new hotel facility in the vicinity. Another challenge identified is devising a way to link the Mall to downtown Georgetown and Acton and draw shoppers north to the urban areas to sample the rest of the community.

A brief description of sectors not specifically addressed in the Action Plan is included at the end of this report, on Page 29.



Halton Hills Economic Development Strategic Plan

The Town of Halton Hills under the direction of the Economic Development Officer and a Steering Committee made up of community volunteers from various business sectors, undertook a review of the current economic climate. With the assistance of consultants a comprehensive review was conducted of many relevant reports, regional and provincial statistics culminating in a Situational Analysis. The Consultation step involved a series of 35 one on one interviews, an online survey which received 161 respondents and a forum in which 40 invited business owners, developers and other stakeholders discussed the consultants' findings and voted on key priorities for the Halton Hills Economic Development Strategy.

Based on the results of these reports an Action Plan was developed that will guide the Town for the next 10 years to achieve long term prosperity, create and maintain our employment base and lead to a more balanced tax assessment ratio of residential and commercial.

Discussion about Perceptions of the Development Approval Process

The focus of most economic development programs is on businesses, individual investors and developers in the non-residential sector. This includes companies in the manufacturing, commercial and institutional sectors because they generate employment and tax assessment for the community. Other than during initial construction phase, residential development does not create long term economic growth in the community. Halton Hills is a very desirable location and residential growth does not need an action plan to stimulate its' growth. A growing residential population means greater consumer spending on goods and services which makes residential growth important to an overall economic development strategy. Nonetheless the consultations and the on line survey were directed at key stakeholders in the Town's economic development and did not include either residents (although many of those consulted do reside in Halton Hills, they responded as business owners or employees) or those companies involved in residential development projects.

As such the conclusions related to the development approvals process tended to be critical of the complexity of the process. We have found the same results in other communities in which we have worked. The resident or business owner has little



understanding of the development approvals process and when exposed finds it overly complex. The work of planners and building officials at the local level and the processes they administer is largely dictated by provincial policy (Planning Act, the Ontario Building Code and other provincial policies) and they are required for example to circulate development plans to a wide range of commenting agencies over which they have no control. Developers with experience in multiple jurisdictions are generally accustomed to this process but owners or managers of end-user companies may only go through an expansion or construction project once or twice in a career and often find the procedures baffling unless they have retained professionals to advise them.

In 2005 the Town launched a “Process Review of Development Systems” (PRODS) the purpose of which was to streamline the development process and provide greater clarity to applicants as they move through the steps in the process. Great strides have been made however the perception remains with some members of the community who participated in the interviews, on-line surveys and the public forum is that the processes employed by the Town are cumbersome and bureaucratic. . In fact it was the single most important priority identified by the participants in the Forum, even though many of the concerns raised are beyond the control of the Town.

Therefore, it is important to the Economic Development Strategy that the Town address this perception through a communications program designed to make sure the “lay” applicant in particular has a better understanding of the process and that they receive assistance along the way to help guide their applications.

Goal 1 in the Action Plan focuses on establishing a competitive development environment in Halton Hills. The Action Plan recommendations are really an extension of the continuing PRODS process. It also allows the Economic Development Department to provide support to other Town department’s in processing applications. The Town is committed at all levels to providing superior customer service and the EDS Action Plan is but one more example of continuous improvement.



Results of the Economic Development Forum

On October 30th, 2012, the Economic Development Strategy Steering Committee hosted a Forum for key stakeholders in the Town's economic development. It was an opportunity for the people to meet, discuss and establish the Key Priorities for Halton Hills' economic development program. The Forum was facilitated by the Queen's Executive Decision Centre using a proprietary software program to record and prioritize participant's thoughts and opinions on the community's economic development.

A total of forty (40) participants attended the morning's presentations and discussions. Two major themes were discussed:

- How to Define Success in Halton Hills' economic development and
- Key Priorities on which to focus Halton Hills' economic development program.

Participants in the forum reviewed the results of the background research and the consultations with stakeholders (see the other related reports) including the results of an online survey of local businesses. The results of both the interviews and the online survey were very consistent. There was broad support for continued development in the Hwy 401 corridor provided that the agricultural lands buffering development from the southern boundary of Georgetown's urban area were preserved.

The rural landscape around Acton and Georgetown is considered one of the factors that contribute to Halton Hills' "quality of place" and is highly prized. Related to this is the continued concern for the economic viability of the agricultural operations in Halton Hills which are under increasing pressure on a number of fronts including; rising input costs, unstable commodity prices and an increase in the underlying value of the land being farmed.

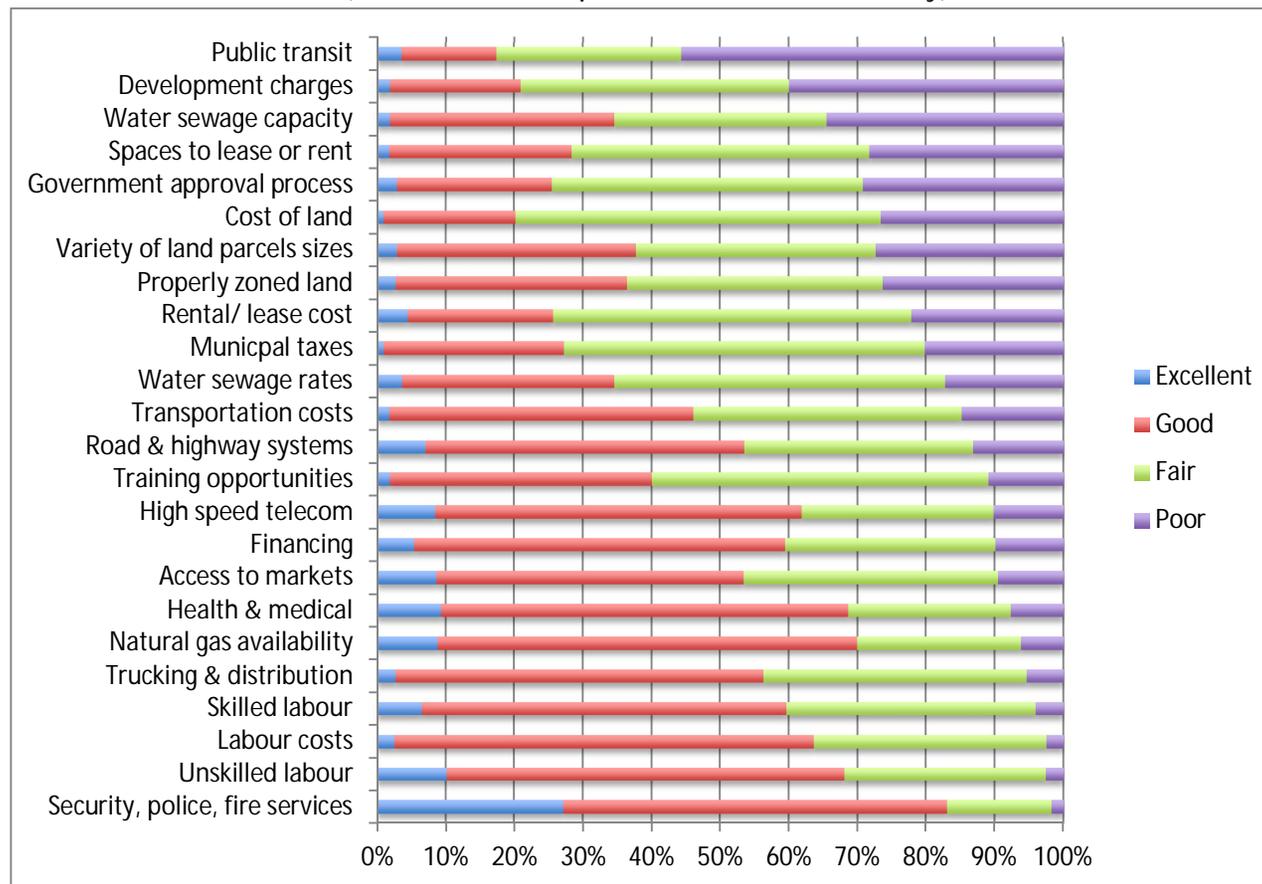
Respondents were asked to comment on the factors they perceived important to the economic development of the Halton Hills. As mentioned above, high among those were concerns about the perceived complexity of the development approvals process, the cost of approvals (development charges) and adequacy of the sewer and water infrastructure in the Georgetown and Acton urban areas.



According to our interviews with experienced planning consultants and developers working around the GTA, the system in Halton Hills is about the same (complexity) as found in most other neighbouring jurisdictions. Most of the negative comments appear to be coming from business owners and managers who are relatively inexperienced in the development world. They find the approvals process, much of which is driven by provincial regulation, to be bewildering in its complexity.

Ranking of Factors for New/Expanding Business in Halton Hills

(Based on 126 Responses to the Online Survey)



This is reflected in the results of the online survey above in which these factors (development charges, water & sewer infrastructure and development approvals) rank as three of the top five negative factors for economic development in Halton Hills.

Participants in the Forum discussed both the metrics and the priorities for an economic development program in Halton Hills and these discussions were captured and prioritized by the decision making software system. A summary of the two discussions is captured below.

Definition of Success in Economic Development:

Most Important Metrics

- **A forward thinking town that encourages and facilitates development**, acts with a sense of urgency, is a willing to partner with local businesses and who are ready and willing to act on ideas (28 votes)
- **Stable business environment**: we have attracted and retained diversified and sustainable high-value businesses (23 votes)
- Build out the **401 corridor** (20 votes)
- **Balanced assessment base** in terms of Industrial, Commercial and Residential (18 votes)

Next in Importance

- **Balanced community**: We have realized a diverse, live-work community with a range of economic opportunities (12 votes)
- **Work where you live**: people can get to jobs even if they don't have cars (10 votes)

Other Metrics

- **Quality of life** (9 votes)
- **Water and sewer capacity** will meet demand (9 votes)



Key Priorities in the Next Five Years

Top Priorities

- **Streamline business and development process**--better than our adjoining cities (26 votes)
- Have the **office of Economic Development (continue) to play a leading role** within the HH Town process and departments and agencies. Perhaps, create a development advocate (not just a person assigned) to work directly with new development opportunities to help navigate the system (23 votes)

Medium Priorities

- Continued and **expanded BR&E**: develop a multi-prong approach to more actively support the growth of small businesses e.g. Business hub with supports, mentoring links etc. (15 votes)
- Completion and **implementation of existing projects**. E.g. the Economic Development Strategy, the ICSS, Branding Strategy, the Cultural Master Plan and the Halton Region Rural Agricultural Strategy (15 votes)
- **Identify and communicate which segments** are going to be actively supported (industrial, agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing). Facilitate interaction with the identified groups. (14 votes)
- **Georgetown infrastructure** to support existing business - stable hydro, water supply, wastewater discharge capacity, road capacity (trucks). (13 votes)

Lower Priority

- Work towards **improving public transit and accessibility** in Halton Hills. (8 votes)



Goals for the Economic Development Strategy

Seven Goals have been developed based on the metrics and key priorities determined by the Forum participants. They are supported by **55 Recommended Actions** – too many for the Economic Development Office with its limited resources to take on at the same time. A number of these Actions reach across Goals (i.e. supporting the creation of entrepreneurial businesses in the urban areas and as value-added farm operations).

We have provided some guidance on recommended time frames and the priority of each action, however the Economic Development Committee will need to review the recommendations each year at budget time to determine which actions should be pursued in the current year. Conditions change over time and factors affecting the outcome of certain objectives cannot always be predicted in advance.

The overall goal of the economic development program is to help produce a healthy, vibrant community in Halton Hills. This will be accomplished by pursuing a number of individual initiatives each contributing to a complete community.



Economic Development Strategic Action Plan



Goal 1: Establish a competitive development environment in Halton Hills

Future Vision:

Halton Hills is sought out as an attractive location for new investment. Existing businesses are able to find assistance to support their expansion plans. The Town offers customer friendly, straight forward processes and staff convene meetings with the appropriate regulatory bodies to facilitate development approvals.

Existing businesses and new developers have a clear understanding of the regulatory process including the time lines required for the various approvals.

Planning officials consult regularly with business leaders to identify and address barriers to new investment.

Properties in the employment zones at Hwy 401, Georgetown & Acton have adequate infrastructure and utilities to support the anticipated requirements, in advance of investment decisions. Roadway infrastructure is optimized to address manufacturing and logistics companies' transportation needs.



Goal 1:	Establish a competitive development environment in Halton Hills.				
Strategic Objectives:	Streamline the development approvals process. Provide the infrastructure required by businesses.				
Performance Measures	Measurement		Data Source		
	1. Developer satisfaction rating		Post development survey conducted by Economic Development Staff		
	2. Average length of approval process		Internal Records		
	3. Infrastructure investment schedule & budget		Internal Records		
Recommended Actions		Lead & Support Agencies	Time Frame	Budget	Priority
1.1 Conduct a review of Zoning By Laws for Employment Lands to ensure they are responsive to business needs and changing market demands. (See Action 3.5 and 5.3)		Town Planning & Ec. Dev. staff with Council support	On-going	N/A	High
1.2 Organize a Workshop for select ICI Realtors and Developers to brief Halton Hills staff and elected officials on market trends for logistics industries and other large-scale economic development projects.		Halton Hill Ec. Dev. Committee & Private Sector Partners	Mid 2013 conduct bi-annually	N/A	Medium
1.3 Continue to monitor Site Plan and Building Permit fees to ensure the fees are competitive with surrounding municipalities.		Halton Hills Ec. Dev. Committee and Council	2013/ Ongoing	Revenue Impact TBD	Low
1.4 Conduct a review of the Town's site plan control by-law and explore opportunities to increase the exemption threshold for industrial/commercial expansions. Current exemptions Commercial 75 m2, Industrial 185 m2		Planning and Development Department	2013	Minor Revenue Impact	Medium



1.5 Review the a developers guide for industrial/ commercial development on the development approvals process for ease of use by the occasional developer	Ec. Dev. / Planning & Development	On-going	N/A	Medium
1.6 Expand the staff complement of the Economic Development Department to allow for more active engagement with the business and development community (Same as Action 2.1)	CAO and Council		Expand role of current Executive Assistant	High
1.7 The EDO will continue to assist with development applications as required, attend Development Review Committee meetings for non-residential development projects and to act as a liaison as required between applicants and the Town and Regional staff.	Ec. Dev. Planning & Development, Other departments as required	On-going	N/A	High
1.8 Encourage Halton Region to provide Development Charge exemption in excess of 50% of Gross Floor Area for Industrial expansions to align with Halton Hills policies	Ec. Dev. Council and Halton Region	Work within 2013 legislative agenda	N/A	Medium
1.9 Support Halton Region policies respecting the Region's Front End Financing of infrastructure to have shovel ready employment lands available	CAO / Ec. Dev. / Engineering / Private	On-going	N/A	Medium



Goal 2: Build upon the strong base of existing businesses in Halton Hills.

Future Vision:

Business leaders in Halton Hills are actively engaged in a range of activities designed to support existing business operations and encourage future growth.

Existing businesses have regular input to Town Hall on the issues they are facing through corporate aftercare visits, annual surveys and networking events.

Economic Development plays an active role in trouble shooting for businesses. They also provide reports on business trends and issues to Town Council. Council receives annual updates on the issues facing existing businesses and is able to identify ways to manage issues within the Town's control.

The Economic Development staff members proactively reach out to businesses and provide a source of information on funding programs and other government services available to business. Local businesses are aware of the businesses that surround them and actively work to support one another through business networking.

Local businesses work with nearby post-secondary institutions to facilitate labour force development, co-operative education and graduate recruitment. The post-secondary institutions are actively engaged in research and development projects with Halton Hills businesses.



Goal 2:	Build upon the strong base of existing businesses in Halton Hills				
Strategic Objectives:	Deliver a comprehensive business retention and expansion program to identify barriers, resolve issues and support local business' plans for growth.				
Performance Measures	Measurement		Data Source		
	1. # of HH Businesses contacted through a proactive corporate calling program.		Internal Reports		
	2. # of project files opened as a result of corporate calls (active development files).		Internal Reports		
	3. # of jobs created/maintained, \$s of estimated additional investment		Annual Survey of Companies		
Recommended Actions		Agencies	Time Frame	Budget	Priority
2.1 Expand staff complement to allow for more active engagement with the local business community (Same as Action 1.6).		CAO, Council	Immediate	Expand role of current Executive Assistant	High
2.2 Conduct corporate calls on local industrial, large commercial and agri-businesses (<i>target 50 per year – Halton Hills has ~200 businesses with >20 employees</i>). Use the meetings to troubleshoot, collect basic information, probe opportunities and threats to growth and provide info on government programs.		Ec. Dev.	On-going	N/A	High



2.3 Coordinate with Halton Region in conducting an annual survey of businesses to create an on-line Business Directory. Use data to monitor business trends.	Ec. Dev. & Halton Region	2014	Part of core function	Low
2.4 Use a customer management database system to track corporate aftercare visits, client follow-up, and identify common issues and opportunities.	Ec. Dev.	On-going	Program in place minor training expenses.	Medium
2.5 Actively network with key investment influencers (realtors, developers, bankers, professionals, other Ec. Dev. orgs and business associations) (see Action 4.5)	Ec. Dev.	On-going	N/A	High



Goal 3: Establish an entrepreneurial climate in Halton Hills

Future Vision:

Halton Hills is recognized as a community where innovative small businesses thrive and are celebrated by the entire community. The community provides comprehensive programs of support to new small businesses and entrepreneurs.

New business owners benefit from mentoring, education and networking programs to help them succeed. Downtown businesses in Acton and Georgetown and the area malls have embraced the entrepreneurial spirit and provide a variety of “3rd places” for small business meetings including free WiFi services in cafés and restaurants, community centres and libraries.



The Halton Region Small Business Centre provides a full suite of services in Halton Hills to assist the local community achieve their goals for business development. Businesses needing additional supports can access consultation, mentoring and angel investor funding through referrals from the Small Business Centre operations to networks in the Region and the GTA.

Halton Hills is a leader in policy development for planning live/work spaces that support the community's goals of a sustainable economy in a small town, rural environment.

Local business organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and the BIAs have established networking and advocacy programs to support the burgeoning solo entrepreneurial community in the Town.



Goal 3:	Establish an entrepreneurial climate in Halton Hills				
Strategic Objectives:	Provide direct support to small businesses & entrepreneurs				
Performance Measures	Measurement		Data Source		
	1. Net Change in Total # of Small Businesses in Halton Hills		Annual Business Patterns Database from Statistics Canada		
	2. # of Businesses Created in Halton Hills with Assistance from the Halton SBC		Halton SBC Internal Reports		
	3. Attendance at business planning workshops held in Halton Hills		Halton SBC Internal Records		
	4. Investment \$ leveraged through CIP incentives		Planning & Development Records		
Recommended Actions		Lead & Support Agencies	Time Frame	Budget	Priority
3.1 Work with Halton Region's Small Business Centre to expand services to Georgetown and Acton. Provide dedicated office space for the SBC to schedule regular consultations in Georgetown and Acton.		Halton Hills Ec. Dev., Halton SBC	2014	\$10,000 to supplement SBC Budget	High
3.2 Encourage the development of "3 rd places" for entrepreneurs to meet and conduct business with free WiFi in libraries, recreation centres, cafes and restaurants (Same as Action 6.3)		Halton Hill Ec. Dev. & Private Sector Partners	2013	N/A	High
3.3 SBC and Chamber continue to host small business workshops and seminars on business planning and related topics in Acton and Georgetown (See also Action 5.1)		Halton SBC & Chamber of Commerce	Ongoing	N/A	Medium
3.4 Recruit a team of successful business leaders to create a program of structured mentorship and support for entrepreneurs.		Ec. Dev., SBC, Chamber and Other Stakeholders	2014	N/A	Medium
3.5 Ensure that entrepreneurs are fully aware of the zoning requirements for home occupations as detailed in the CZBL		Planning & Development	On-going	N/A	High



3.6 Implement the CIP programs to encourage live /work and small business operations in Halton Hills	Ec. Dev. And Planning & Development	Initial start 2013	\$25,000.00 in 2012 \$75,000.00/ year 2014-2017 (in capital forecast budget)	High
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Goal 4: Establish Halton Hills as a competitive location for new business investment.

Future Vision

Halton Hills is an attractive, competitive investment location in the GTA. The Town's employment areas in the 401 Corridor are fully serviced and "shovel ready" to meet investor's needs. The Town works closely with landowners, developers and the ICI real estate community to encourage connections between stakeholders involved in development in the 401 corridor.

The economic development program leverages the marketing programs of Halton Region and the Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance to ensure that Halton Hills is an active participant in the economic development of the GTA.

Underpinning the Town's economic development marketing activities is an attractive and highly functional website with easily accessible information on available properties, support programs for business, the development process, contact information and a business directory. Marketing activities reach out to prospective investors with news and information on new developments, feature properties and local success stories.

The Economic Development Office proactively identifies specific investment opportunities (i.e. a hotel project in the 401 Corridor) and undertakes the research required to assess the project potential with prospective investors.



Goal 4:	Establish Halton Hills as a competitive location for new business investment.				
Strategic Objectives:	Create awareness and generate prospects for greenfield investment in Halton Hills.				
Performance Measures	Measurement		Data Source		
	1. # of Project Files		Internal Records		
	2. # of website visits		Internal Records		
	3. Amount of New Investment (# and total Sq. Ft.)		Internal Records		
Recommended Actions		Lead & Support Agencies	Time Frame	Budget	Priority
4.1 Meet regularly with Realtors, Developers and Property Owners in the 401 Corridor to monitor and support their development plans. Schedule a corridor stakeholder meeting.		CAO and Ec. Dev. with Council support	2013	\$2,500.00	High
4.2 Encourage collaboration among property owners and developers to consolidate individually owned parcels and bring additional development sites to the market through partnerships and joint ventures.		Ec. Dev., Mayor and private stakeholders	On-going	N/A	High
4.3 Advance the Halton Peel Boundary Area Transportation Study (HPBATS) Corridor Protection exercise to determine the area of employment lands that will be impacted by the GTA West Corridor/ Halton Peel Transportation Corridor and possible interchange alternatives to the existing 401/407 Interchange		Planning & Development & Infrastructure Services, Ec. Dev	2013/2014	N/A	High
4.4 Review development phasing to ensure that additional serviced employment lands are available in the marketplace in a timely fashion		Ec. Dev. & Planning and Development, Halton Region Ec. Dev.	2013/2014	N/A	High



4.5 Encourage Halton Region for infrastructure improvements in the 401 Corridor (road, water & wastewater)	Mayor and Regional Councillors	Steeles Ave. to be complete by 2016	N/A	High
4.6 Develop a marketing program in cooperation with property owners and developers to showcase properties and projects in the 401 Corridor to SIOR (Society of Industrial and Office Realtors) and other Toronto-based ICI Realtors.	Ec. Dev. Manager	2014	\$10,000 plus partners	Medium
4.7 Meet regularly with the regional economic development agencies including Halton Region, Halton Economic Development Partners, GTMA and Ontario Food Cluster. Ensure regional economic development agencies have complete information on the inventory of available properties and the new developments in Halton Hills. (see also Action 2.5)	EDO	On-going	Special projects should be considered on a case by case basis	Medium
4.8 Study the feasibility for the development of a Hotel Conference/Entertainment complex at the Hwy 401 Corridor. (see also Action 7.2)	EDO, Halton Region & Private Sector	2013	N/A	High
4.9 Create an economic development web-site aimed at key influencers and prospective investors including info on available properties, property owners and their agents, potential suppliers, developers' guidelines, economic development contacts and updates on development and infrastructure projects.	EDO	2013	N/A web site update to be done by web master	Medium
4.10 Establish a 'Brand" for the corridor based on a name that reinforces the connection to Halton Hills and greater alignment with current corridor signage (TCE, Premium Outlet Mall)	EDO	Based on final report of the Branding Project	\$4,000.00	Medium
4.11 Develop a comprehensive plan to deal specifically with opportunities for development of available lands in Acton	EDO, Planning & Development, Halton Region	2014	N/A	Medium



Goal 5: Create a vital agri-business community in Halton Hills

Future Vision

Halton Hills residents and businesses recognize the contribution the agri-business sector makes to the local economy and quality of life in Halton Hills. Local farmers are supported in their efforts to generate additional revenue from existing operations through expansion into value-added operations, farm-gate marketing efforts and participation in farmers' markets. The Halton Region Small Business Centre also provides specific programs and supports for the agri-entrepreneur in Halton Hills.

A business retention & expansion program targeting the specific needs of the agri-business sector is an integral part of the economic development program. The Economic Development Office is able to leverage the agri-business programs offered through the Greater Toronto Agriculture Association and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. As the principal location for agri-business in Halton Region, the Regional Agriculture Advisory Committee puts particular emphasis on programs and committee representation in Halton Hills.

Policy makers meet with the agri-business community to address barriers to additional investment and business growth in the rural areas. Economic Development staff work with the various regulatory bodies encouraging flexible regulations that support a sustainable agri-business economy.



Goal 5:	Create a vital agri-business community in Halton Hills				
Strategic Objectives:	Create opportunities to expand revenue sources for agriculture & related businesses				
Performance Measures	Measurement		Data Source		
	1. # of agri-businesses served by the Halton SBC		Halton SBC internal records		
	2. # of attendees for agri-business workshops		Halton SBC internal records		
	3. # of value-added farming operations in HH		Annual survey by Ec. Dev.		
Recommended Actions		Lead & Support Agencies	Time Frame	Budget	Priority
5.1 Focus business advisory services on rural entrepreneurial projects and other farm related activities. Small Business Centre and Chamber of Commerce to work with OMAFRA to develop workshops and seminars specifically geared to the needs of the rural entrepreneur. <i>(Refer to Goal 3)</i>		Halton SBC and Chamber	2014	N/A	Medium
5.2 Expand staff complement to allow for corporate calls on value-added agricultural operations. <i>(Related to Actions 1.7 and 2.1)</i>		CAO and Council	2013	Expand role of current Executive Assistant	High
5.3 Waive Development Charges on construction of buildings required for value-added agricultural production such as retail or farm gate sales, value added processing and for on-farm labourer's housing.		EDC, Council and Region	2014	Modest Impact on Revenue	Medium



5.4 Encourage the relocation of Halton Region's Agricultural Liaison Office to be closer to their agricultural base in Halton Hills	Mayor and Regional Councillors, CAO	2013-14	N/A	Medium
5.5 Work with Halton Region in developing an Agri-tourism Strategy that will enhance opportunities for local farmers.	EDO, Council, HFA, Halton Region	2013	N/A	Medium
5.6 Ensure that Halton Hills and Halton Regional policies recognize and encourage new and innovative farm practices such as value added farm sales, ancillary on-farm processing and energy conservation processes.	Council and Halton Region	2013-14	N/A	Medium
5.7 Participate where appropriate with the Halton Region Agricultural Advisory Committee, GTMA's and Halton Region's membership in the Ontario Food Cluster and the GTA Agricultural Action Committee.	EDO, Halton Region Ec. Dev. & GTMA	Ongoing	N/A	High



Goal 6: Create a healthy, vibrant, connected community

Future Vision

Halton Hills offers businesses and residents a “quality of place” that enhances the vitality of both their business and personal lives.

The communities’ two downtowns are celebrated for their authentic small town experiences. BIA members work to provide an attractive alternative to the big box experience. The downtown cores and the Georgetown Marketplace are the intersections between life and business, with WiFi available throughout the downtown and in cafés, restaurants and libraries providing “3rd places” for small businesses to work and conduct meetings.

Agri-businesses also come to the downtown to participate in the farmer’s market and supply unique artisan products to local retailers, adding to the rural downtown vibe.

Independent retailers thrive as day-trippers from the GTA come to enjoy the small town environment. Hiking and cycling infrastructure throughout the region further enhances the appeal of the rural setting.



Goal 6:	Create a healthy, vibrant, connected community				
Strategic Objective:	Invest in programs and infrastructure that enhance the quality of place for businesses and residents.				
Performance Measures	Measurement		Data Source		
	1. \$ leveraged through the CIP		Planning Internal Records		
	2. # of WiFi hot spots		Survey BIA Members		
	3. # of independent businesses & services in the downtown		BIA Memberships		
Recommended Actions		Lead & Support Agencies	Time Frame	Budget	Priority
6.1 Assist the Acton BIA to apply for funding for a Downtown Improvement Project similar to Georgetown (Rural Economic Development RED Program)		Ec. Dev. Manager and BIA Manager	2014	\$10,000.00	High
6.2 Provide free WiFi services in public meeting spaces (Civic Centre, Library and Recreations Centres). Encourage owners of cafes and restaurants to offer free WiFi and create "3 rd place" for people to meet and conduct business. (same as Action 3.2)		Ec. Dev. Manager, Chamber, BIAs	2013	N/A	High
6.3 Work with Calloway REIT & Simon Properties (developer of Toronto Premium Outlet Mall) to link the Mall with Halton Hills area attractions and businesses.		BIAs and Economic Development Officer	2012-2013	N/A	High
6.5 Continue the development of walking and cycling infrastructure in Halton Hills.		Parks and Recreation Department and User Groups, Chamber	On-going	N/A	Medium
6.6 Monitor the public need and costs of providing public transit especially for employment areas - to improve access for employees to their workplaces in Halton Hills.		Council, CAO and Infrastructure Services	On-going	N/A	Low
6.7 Engage OMAFRA and the BIAs to conduct a retail gap analysis & identify opportunities for independent retail operations and		BIAs, OMAFRA, SBC, Ec. Dev.	2014	N/A	Low



services in Acton & Georgetown.				
6.8 Continue the development of the natural/cultural features and related commercial opportunities in the Glen Williams area.	PDS, Ec. Dev. & private investors	On-going	N/A	Medium
6.9 Implement and promote the CIP to encourage further commercial/retail development in downtown Georgetown, Guelph Street and Acton	EDO, PDS	2012-2017	In Capital Budget	High



Goal 7: Develop the tourism infrastructure in Halton Hills

Future Vision

Halton Hills is a favourite location for day trippers, hikers, cyclists, geocachers and equestrians attracted to the natural features and rolling hills of the Niagara Escarpment, the Credit River Valley, Conservation Areas and the rural countryside.

The Town's arenas, ball fields and recreation centre attract tournaments and league play building a base for "sports tourism".

There is a wide range of entrepreneurial businesses including gift shops, antique stores, cafes, and restaurants, B&Bs, equipment rentals and other services catering to residents and visitors alike.

A variety of comfortable accommodations are available to serve the needs of tourists and commercial travelers.

The communities' two downtowns are celebrated for their authentic small town experiences. BIA members work to provide an attractive alternative to the big box experience. The downtown farmers markets in Georgetown and Acton are a source of fresh produce and unique artisan products appealing to visitors and residents alike.



Goal 7:	Develop the tourism infrastructure in Halton Hills				
Strategic Objective:	Invest in programs/infrastructure to attract visitors and support entrepreneurial ventures to capture tourism expenditures.				
Performance Measures	Measurement		Data Source		
	1. # Visitors to Conservation Areas & public parks & attendance at select events and festivals		Park Visitor Logs & Rec/Parks Surveys		
	2. Progress on Hotel Feasibility Study		Internal Reports		
	3. # of new businesses established in "Accommodation & Food" and "Arts, Entertainments and Recreation" sectors		Annual review of Business Patterns Data		
Recommended Actions		Lead & Support Agencies	Time Frame	Budget	Priority
7.1 Form a Steering Committee to conduct an overall review of tourism promotion in Halton Hills and the current Tourism Agreement with the Chamber.		EDO, EDC, Halton Region Tourism Coordinator	2013	N/A	High
7.2 Undertake a feasibility study for the development of a Hotel at the Hwy 401 Corridor. (same as Action 4.8)		EDO, Halton Region, Potential Private Partners	2013	N/A	High
7.3 Work with the Halton Region Tourism Coordinator to promote Halton Hills for culinary tourism, Agri-tourism, cycling and other initiatives		Ec. Dev., Halton Region Tourism and Chamber	Ongoing	N/A	Medium
7.4 Incorporate new brand, logo, tag lines or community messaging that will be developed by the Branding Project in tourism promotional material		EDO, Chamber, Tourism Committee	On-Going	N/A	Medium
7.5 Provide the Halton Hills Tourism Committee a working budget for event and location promotion		Council	2014	\$5,000.00 annually	Low
7.6 Provide a business perspective to the discussion regarding a Halton Hills Cultural Master Plan		EDO, Chamber, BIAs	2012-2013	N/A	Low



7.7 Expand the sports tourism initiative that is working with Recreation and Parks to connect with event organizers.	Rec/Parks, Chamber, Tourism Committee	2013	N/A	Medium
7.8 Explore “co-op media” promotional opportunities with private sector operators and the Chamber	Chamber, Tourism Committee	2013	N/A	Medium



Sectors/Opportunities without Specific Action Items

As mentioned in opening section of this report, a number of sectors/opportunities were identified by the Economic Development Committee as targets for the consultants to study and make recommendations on. In several instances we found that the sector/opportunity was either substantially developed already and there would be little potential for additional growth or the sector naturally fit within one of the seven goals that have been established.

The **Energy** sector is one example. Trans Canada Energy has built a \$700 million natural gas fired electrical generating station capable of producing 623 megawatts of electricity on demand in a 20 year contract for Ontario Power Authority. The plant fronting on Hwy 401 became operational in October 2010. Initially it was thought that this major investment could serve as a catalyst for an energy cluster in the Corridor with potential for spin-off developments. At the time, there was also a general interest in solar and wind energy projects prompting inclusion of this sector in the target list for Halton Hills. However due to uncertainties about the future of the Ontario's Green Energy Program, this sector does not warrant a separate Action Plan as the Strategic Objectives stated in Goals 2, 3 and 4 can be used to attract a wide variety of businesses and investment. The Town is becoming a leader in Sustainability introducing programs to make new developments more energy efficient and this may attract companies to locate here due to a pro-active energy sustainability model.

Another targeted industry which we have elected not to pursue is **Quarries**. The aggregate industry already has a major presence in Halton Hills, particularly in Acton, where Dufferin Quarries has a large operation employing more than 200 people. Aggregate operations locate where the aggregate is found. It is not an industry that can be "attracted" to the community. The Niagara Escarpment happens to be a rich source of raw material. It is also a very mature operation in Halton Hills (the Acton quarry is over 100 years old) and there is very little potential spinoff to be found in targeting services related to quarry operations. The current Acton quarry is subject to a development application which would extend the life of this operation for 25+ years. The Action Items contained in Goal 2 for an expanded BR & E program can be used in this sector.



The **Food Cluster**, which is really a subset of the Manufacturing sector, is important to Halton Hills. Two of the community's largest private sector employers are Nielson Dairies owned by Saputo and BFG Canada, formerly known as PL Foods. Note that neither of these companies processes local agricultural products and hence do not serve to support the local agricultural industry. Owing to Halton Hills' strategic location in the GTA, food processing is a good target for economic development but the growth of this sector in Georgetown and Acton is constrained by limitations on sewer and water capacity in the urban areas. This factor will impact expansion plans by existing industries. Water intensive operations however could potentially be accommodated in the Hwy 401 Corridor which is serviced by trunk connections from Milton. Action Items as stated in Goals 2, 3 and 4 will be used to attract and retain businesses in this sector.

The **Culture** industry is not a feature in Halton Hills' economy in the same sense of as it is in Toronto, Stratford or Niagara on the Lake. There are an estimated 39 businesses in the "*Arts, Entertainment & Recreation*" sector (source: Statistics Canada Business Pattern Database – Dec. 2011) in Halton Hills but most of those are golf courses, fitness centres and recreational facilities. However local artists and crafts-persons are very important to the quality of life in the community. In the hamlet of Glen Williams, an arts and crafts studio and gallery has been created which has the potential to draw tourists to the area. **The Halton Hills Cultural Roundtable in partnership with the Town is in the process of developing a Cultural Master Plan. Results of this study may be incorporated into a further Action Items related to economic development.**

