



# The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

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To: Township of Brock Council  
From: Lori Talling, Acting Manager, Agriculture & Rural Economic Development  
Date: March 10, 2025

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**Subject:**

Growing North Durham Plan Annual Activity Report – Township of Brock

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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an annual report on the implementation of the [Growing North Durham: Rural Economic Development Action Plan](#).
- 1.2 The report will be accompanied by a staff presentation from Lori Talling, Acting Manager of Agriculture and Rural Economic Development.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Growing North Durham Plan was endorsed by Regional Council and the Township of Brock in early 2023. It sets out goals and actions to support economic growth across north Durham to 2027.
- 2.2 The first annual Growing North Durham Annual Report was received by the Township of Brock Mayor and Members of Council on January 29, 2024.

**3. Implementation Update**

- 3.1 The delivery of economic development programming in the Township of Brock relies on collaboration between Durham Region (Economic Development and Tourism staff), the Township of Brock, as well as business support organizations such as the Brock Board of Trade and South Lake Community Future Development Corporation.

- 3.2 Regional Economic Development staff meet quarterly with relevant Township staff and members of Council to discuss and advance matters relating to economic development and tourism in the Township of Brock. This collaborative approach has been integral in the implementation of the Growing North Durham Plan to date.
- 3.3 The Growing North Durham Plan (the Plan) is structured under three pillars: People, Places and Prosperity. Each pillar contains goal areas and actions that support a community-driven approach to economic development. Identified below are some of the key activities that are either underway or were completed within each pillar over the past year:
- a. **People:** This pillar recognizes the strong correlation between human capital and economic growth.
- Hosted the North Durham Building Business Forum on October 22, 2024. Sessions on Artificial Intelligence for small and medium-sized businesses and leading with inclusion in the workplace aligned with goal areas and actions in the Plan.
  - A North Durham Labour Force Study to examine and highlight key factors contributing to labour market dynamics was completed. An action plan to support labour force development and address workforce needs is being developed. Actions to address some of the factors impacting the labour market are already underway such as exploration of solutions to workforce transportation challenges in collaboration with partners. Staff continue to engage with Durham College Community Employment Services and Durham Workforce Authority on actions to support this goal area.
  - In mid-2024, Agriculture and Rural Economic Development e-newsletter and social media channels shifted to agri-food focused content. Rural economic development content is now shared through the Invest Durham e-newsletter and social media channels, and Durham Tourism channels when relevant. Invest Durham and Durham Tourism continue to grow their online presence which benefits entrepreneurs and small business owners in North Durham. Throughout 2024, staff continued to share relevant information with north Durham entrepreneurs and small business owners through these platforms, as well as one-on-one communications.
  - North Durham innovation success stories were featured through Invest Durham social channels and other marketing.
  - The Agri-Food Gateway Pilot Program, which also supports the Growing Agri-Food Durham Plan, was developed and delivered to provide small to medium sized technology companies with agricultural training to help them

adapt their technologies to fill needs and gaps in the agri-tech and agri-food industry. This program was a partnership between National Research Council of Canada Industrial Research Assistance Program (NRC IRAP), Durham College and the Economic Development and Tourism Agriculture and Rural program. Five companies completed the training, and three of those companies are actively pursuing an agri-tech product offering. Continuation of the program in 2025 is being explored.

- b. **Places:** This pillar highlights and strengthens north Durham’s unique qualities of place that stimulate meaningful connections with the community.
- Staff partnered with the Durham College photography program to capture images of north Durham businesses for use in future marketing campaigns and materials. Nine businesses participated in the initiative, including two in the Township of Brock.
  - Several initiatives and campaigns led by the Division’s Marketing, Tourism and Rural Tourism staff have been delivered over the last year with strong north Durham content or focus, including Gather at the Farm, Out of Office, Durham Region Signature Sites, and #ShopinDurham Week. More than 40 blog posts published across the Invest Durham and Durham Tourism channels, and on the Downtowns of Durham website, have focused on or included north Durham content. A Brock example is [Brock Township Is Full Of Natural Beauty And Small Town Charm](#).
  - One-on-one support was provided to more than 30 current or prospective north Durham businesses in 2024. This support included activities such as providing letters of support, identifying funding opportunities, assisting with site selection, facilitating connections to industry partners, and sharing relevant information and data.
  - Staff contributed to the update of Brock’s Downtown Community Improvement Plan (CIP) by participating in engagement sessions and providing multiple rounds of feedback on both CIP programs, policies, and the associated promotional campaign. Additionally, Invest Durham staff serve on the CIP Application Review Panel, which has reviewed two applications since the refreshed CIP was endorsed.
- c. **Prosperity:** The prosperity pillar is about business retention and making informed decisions to encourage and enable economic growth.
- In coordination with Development Services staff, Regional Economic Development and Tourism staff respond to investment inquiries on an

ongoing basis. Most investment inquiries are generated through the Region's Business Development and Investment Team who undertake investment attraction work on behalf of all Durham municipalities. In other cases, investment leads are received directly by Regional Economic Development Staff or Township staff. Regional Economic Development and Township Development Services staff collaborate to identify potential sites to submit for consideration. Of the 33 investment inquiries circulated to the Durham Economic Development Partnership (DEDP) in 2024, at least one north Durham site was submitted on 19 occasions. Given the nature of investment inquiries that were circulated, a Brock site was only submitted on one occasion.

- Building, Business and Parcel inventories were developed for downtown Beaverton, Cannington and Sunderland as well as Brock's employment lands. These are valuable for responding to investment inquiries, tracking potential opportunities for investment/new business, targeting businesses for selected promotional activities, and providing data for grant applications and/or reporting.
- The [Brock Business Toolkit](#) was updated and promoted.
- The [Brock Community Profile](#) was updated and expanded, including a full content refresh, the addition of interactive data tools, and improved linkages between township websites and the Invest Durham website, where these pages are hosted.
- Staff researched and consulted with Township staff to provide Township-specific updates to the [Invest Durham Signature Sites](#) document and represented north Durham at the DEDP Commercial & Industrial Realtor/Developer Social event in May 2024.
- Staff continued to develop relationships with owners or representatives of developable employment and commercial land parcels across the Township of Brock, share servicing information, provide appropriate connections and discuss development opportunities with potential investors and partners.
- Discussions with Durham OneNet and Vianet related to business broadband connectivity challenges and opportunities are ongoing.
- Staff collaborated with regional and provincial departments and ministries to minimize business impacts resulting from the Beaver River Bridge closure, including advocating for additional detour signage and the expedited construction of a temporary bridge.
- In addition to collaborating on economic development initiatives in the Township of Brock, the Region of Durham's Economic Development and

Tourism Division, through the Durham Tourism team, supports various tourism-related initiatives across the Township. While tourism is not the primary focus of the Growing North Durham Plan, it plays a critical role in advancing Brock's overall economic prosperity.

- One of the goal areas in the Growing Agri-Food Durham Plan is to enable agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses. A collaborative project between the Region of Durham's Community Growth and Economic Development Department and the Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge to support and enable north Durham agriculture-related and on-farm diversified uses is currently underway. The objective is to provide an economic environment in north Durham that supports the ongoing viability of the agri-food industry and strengthens rural economies through updated land-use policies and development approval processes, while balancing farmland protection. A planning consultant, WSP Canada, was engaged in April 2024 to undertake a study and provide policy and process recommendations. Phase 4 (Consultation) is presently underway and scheduled to be complete by March 2025. Phase 5 (Final Recommendations Report), which will include presentations to the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee and to northern area municipal committees of Council, will take place in spring 2025.
- Staff are currently developing options for a standardized approach to ongoing business visitations across north Durham to effectively deliver business retention programming.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 The Growing North Durham Plan represents an ongoing commitment for a collaborative north Durham-wide approach to the delivery of economic development programming in the Townships of Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock. Regional Economic Development staff look forward to continuing to work together with Township staff and business support organizations to attract and retain businesses in Brock.
- 4.2 Plans are underway to support, advance, or launch several key initiatives that will continue to advance goals of the Plan. Areas of focus include North Durham Labour Force Action Plan development and implementation of selected actions, development of a standardized business visitation program, targeted CIP promotion and targeted downtown business attraction.

Respectfully submitted,

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Economic Development  
Invest Durham, Region of Durham