

# Town of Georgina Socioeconomic Mission and Strategic Plan



South Lake Community Futures  
Development Corporation



Town of Georgina  
[www.georgina.ca](http://www.georgina.ca)

In partnership with  
En partenariat avec  
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Canada  
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*Supporting Documents are available separately.*



## A Executive Summary

### Purpose of the initiative

The Town of Georgina has created an ongoing **Socioeconomic Development Mission** to achieve economic prosperity within the Community. The word ‘socio’ is a reminder that the economy is not an end in itself but a *means to an end*: the well-being of the Community, now and into the future. Economic Development is a crucial tool in the development of a prosperous local economy, and in the expansion of a diverse tax base for the municipality. Global, national, and local economic changes are occurring at a rapid pace and Georgina must act now in order to be in the best possible position for the future. This means taking advantage of the opportunities of the future as well as weathering the challenges of the present.

### The Process used in the Initiative

This initiative is based upon an analysis of the current economic advantages and disadvantages of Georgina. This was derived from sources such as Statistics Canada, the Area Development magazine’s annual list of jurisdictional competitive factors and the relative economic and the position of other jurisdictions in Ontario. The assessment took into account the geographic location relative to marketplaces, transportation links, raw materials, physical and legislated restrictions, and the workforce. To these were added the outcomes of the Community Consultation process that was used to define the core Values of the Community and which then translate into the boundaries for acceptable economic development activities. The Mission Statement for Socioeconomic Development in Georgina was then formed, under which various Strategies were developed in order to meet the Mission goals.

*Please see Supporting Documents Section IV for further explanation.*

### Community Values and the Socioeconomic Development Mission Statement

The development of the economy of Georgina should reflect the Values of the Community. That is, it should increase the overall prosperity, but not at the cost of destroying those aspects of the Community that are held most dear. These Values were interpreted through a thorough review of past ‘Vision and Values’ documents created for Georgina in recent years by the Town and the Alliance for a Better Georgina. Supplementing these were ten public Open Houses held in July and August of 2008 and correspondence with various groups within the Community.

From the Community Consultation in this initiative, as well as previous similar values and visioning sessions held over recent years, the **Values of the Community of Georgina** are summarized as:

- Future generations are also the responsibility of the present generation.
- Respect for the environment: the air, the land, in the Watershed and on the Lake.
- Respect for the existing ambiance and pleasant surrounds of the Community as well as the individual character of the local communities throughout Georgina. Collectively, their distinctive natures make a stronger whole.
- An insistence that development be appropriate to the location within the Community. While many industries are welcomed, they should not be located to harm, for example, the existing Tourism Sector or to materially interfere with the pleasant living spaces.



- A desire to increase local employment opportunities that are sustainable and that will encourage young families to locate and remain in Georgina.

The Community Consultation process generated many ideas. The current pressures of the regional and global economies were also noted and the Current Strategies were designed with these in mind. As the economy evolves, these thrusts can be amended or replaced with new strategies to fit best the opportunities and pressures of future economic conditions. In this manner, the integrity of the Mission is maintained, yet new approaches can be taken; such flexibility is the underpinning of strategic success.

#### **Georgina Socioeconomic Development Mission Statement**

***To create an economy that is sustainable and diverse, respecting Georgina's unique environment and values."***

#### **Strategic Directions**

Strategies for current consideration and action to be led by the Economic Development Office focus on the following areas:

- **Retention and Expansion of Existing Businesses**
- **Industrial Attraction Strategy for Business Park**
- **Expanding the Tourism Sector**
- **Entrepreneur Attraction**

The following 'partnered strategies' are also included in which other organizations will play a major and sometimes, lead role. This is not an exhaustive list, simply those that have come forward to date with considerable apparent merit.

- **Education and Skills Development** – *with Georgina Trades Training Inc.*
- **Events Development to support Tourism Sector Expansion** - *with the Georgina Chamber of Commerce*
- **The Environment as an Economic Engine** – *with the Ladies of the Lake and the Alliance for a Better Georgina*

Specific implementation activities will take the form of an **Economic Investment Action Case** (please see page 22 of this document and Supporting Documents Section VIII for further explanation). Where taxpayer's dollars must be invested in economic development, all ventures must be accompanied with strong rationales in order to justify the investment and describe the risks associated with the projected return on that investment. Finally, mechanisms to encourage ongoing Community input and participation have been identified; the Town alone cannot create the economy and the Community itself must be a driving force.

**More Strategies have failed in their execution than have ever faltered in their development; the imperative is to convert inertia into momentum.**



## **B Introduction and Purpose of this Report**

The Georgina Economic Development Committee (GEDC) is a Committee of the Town of Georgina Council that acts in the interest of the Community in matters of economic development and tourism. The Town of Georgina retained WCM Consulting Inc. to work with the GEDC to develop a socioeconomic development mission and an initial set of strategies to achieve the goal of increasing the prosperity of the Community.

In many respects, this document builds upon the economic development efforts that have already been undertaken in Georgina. The forthcoming development of the Business Park in the south end of Keswick and the extension of Highway 404 have been facilitated through the extensive efforts of the Council over the past few years. The Alliance for a Better Georgina has completed, with funding and staff assistance from the Town, an award-winning series of community maps, displaying the history and beauty of Georgina. Apart from the intrinsic value of this work, these maps also serve as a tool to attract both tourists and, potentially, permanent residents. People are the most vital asset in a Community and the Georgina Trades Training Inc. (GTTI) has been a stellar success in helping to upgrade the skills of their graduates. The GTTI is now expanding its role to broaden the scope of the education and training that can be delivered.

Based upon Statistics Canada 2006 Census, the Town of Georgina is estimated to have a ratio of jobs-to-residents of approximately one in seven, or 14%. This ratio is the 'Activity Rate' and corresponds to the level of local economic activity. Empirically, the 'balanced' percentage is roughly 40% or approximately two local jobs for every five residents. At 40%, a jurisdiction is 'balanced' in that the number of people leaving the area daily for work is approximately equal to the number entering the area to work. Some examples of jurisdictional Activity Rates are shown below:

➤ Milton	64%
➤ Waterloo	62%
➤ Newmarket	50%
➤ York Region	49%
➤ King	32%

An Activity Rate of greater than 40% indicates that the jurisdiction is acting as a draw on the surrounding areas with the consequent advantages of a larger business tax base that funds the local municipality to a greater extent than for those with a lower Activity Rate.

At an Activity Rate of 14%, Georgina ranks second lowest in the Province of Ontario for similarly sized jurisdictions. As a result, many residents are leaving the area daily to work and the consequences are not negligible. With a low business tax base, virtually the entire burden of the municipal budget, for all purposes, is thrown upon the shoulders of residents. This results in a combination of lower levels of service and/or higher levels of residential property taxation. Further, there is increased air pollution due to travelling times to and from work, often exceeding one hour in each direction.



In 2001 this same ratio was 17%; the decline has come about through the influx of new residents taking advantage of more affordable housing opportunities in Georgina but who must still work in the southern tiers of York Region and in the City of Toronto. Simply stated, *more residents without sufficient local jobs.*

Land use restrictions elsewhere in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), the Highway 404 extension and the migration of new residents from the GTA will spur residential growth. Projections from York Region suggest that the population will increase by over 50% to approximately 70,000 residents by the year 2031. *It is much more certain that population increase will take place without the development of jobs, unless steps are taken now to remedy this.* Without such employment remedies, a strikingly low Activity Rate will simply continue to worsen.

Growth opportunities are highly regulated in Georgina due to legislation such as the Lake Simcoe Act and the Ontario Greenbelt legislation. These restrictions limit not only *where* but *what* types of industry will be conducive to Georgina.

The foundation for the future prosperity of Georgina will be the creation of local, well-paying jobs. Some of the benefits will be:

- Georgina residents will have the opportunity to work locally, increasing their time at home with families and in the Community.
- Youth will have these same employment opportunities and fewer will leave the Community permanently, thus maintaining the balanced population base required for long-term sustainability.
- The industrial and commercial property tax base will be increased, helping to ensure that the services that are enjoyed today can continue into tomorrow.

These are important goals for the Community and they will have far-reaching effects. The development of an economy is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. In this case, the goal is the improvement of the socioeconomic well-being of the Community of Georgina. In order to ensure that broad Community Values are respected in the process, socioeconomic development should be driven by these local Values.

Economic development also requires the investment of time and resources and, for the most part, it is not a process with immediate results. Georgina must invest to create economic momentum before the positive impacts will be felt, but these results will come, in different ways, some sooner, and some later.

***Georgina must start down this path now.***

## C Community Values and the Socioeconomic Development Mission

The creation of a Community Vision and an expression of Community Values had been undertaken several times, from different perspectives, in the years preceding this report. These contributed greatly as a foundation for this current initiative and two significant undertakings were:

### Town of Georgina

In 2007, the Town of Georgina held economic development strategy discussions resulting in a series of actions to be undertaken to develop the local economy. *Please see 'Ref' A below.*

### Alliance for a Better Georgina (ABG)

The Alliance for a Better Georgina conducted a comprehensive visioning process involving many community groups, each with particular interests. The focus here was not specifically on economic development but they do provide essential input as to the Values of the Community and guidance for the Socioeconomic Development Mission. *See 'Ref' B, C and D below.*

### Locally generated referenced documents

The following documents were referenced and incorporated into the process of determining Georgina Community Values and were also the source of some ideas considered for this initiative.

Ref	Document file/name	Contents
A	Georgina EcDev March 23 2007	Town of Georgina Economic Development Strategy highlights, in 25 pages, from 2007, facilitated by Erik Lockhart of Queen's University
B	__Georgina Vision & ActPlan,11.21.05v3	A one page Draft Vision Statement – prepared as a result of the ABG initiatives in 2005
C	_Georgina Phase 4 Report 6.29 (1)	A 12 page report on Visioning activities by J.M. Johnson & Associates sponsored by the ABG, the Town of Georgina, South Lake Community Futures Development Corporation and the – 2006/2007
D	Georgina FGps March '07	A PowerPoint presentation regarding Ref B above
E	South Lake Strat Plan 08-10 draft 3	A six-page document describing the 2008 through 2010 strategy for the South Lake Community Futures Development Corporation
F	TheNakedTruthWEB	An 88-page report published in 2006 by the Ladies of the Lake and partners such as the Windfall Ecology Centre, detailing the state and problems of pollution in Lake Simcoe
G	TNTCAP	A 29-page report published in 2006 by the Ladies of the Lake et al, detailing actions to remedy the issues of Lake Simcoe



## **Public Open House Consultations held in this initiative**

During the current project, community consultations were held to confirm the findings from the previous initiatives described above and to structure the Values in a form most suitable to guide the Socioeconomic Development Mission.

Ten consultations were held in the following Georgina locations in late July and early August of 2008, in order to ensure that ‘summer residents’ also had the opportunity to participate.

- Keswick – two sessions
- Virginia
- Willow Beach
- Udora
- Sutton
- Roches Point
- Baldwin
- Jackson’s Point
- Pepperlaw/Port Bolster

Communities are rarely asked to consider these issues. To encourage participation as several mechanisms were deployed beyond the public sessions. The E-Mail identify <[MyGeorgina@georgina.ca](mailto:MyGeorgina@georgina.ca)> was established for those preferring to use E-Mail. Fax and telephone numbers were also made known to the public for the purpose of providing input, both of which were employed by the Community when sharing their thoughts.

## **Results of the Public Consultations**

Respondents were appreciative that the Town was asking for input and participation. They were also pragmatic in their views. The residents who participated in the public consultations were eager to provide input and most recognized the limitation of economic development within the current economic context, Georgina’s location, and available resources. In addition, there was an understanding that the environment must be sustainable but, with due care; can be used to promote prosperity. *The apparent uniformity of these views will make the implementation of future strategies easier and more efficient.*

Such consultation generally results in two types of input, and all points were recorded.

- An expression of the Values of the Community, which are described below
- Ideas on what to do – there are many and these are contained in the separate ‘Supporting Documents, Section II.’





## Youth forums

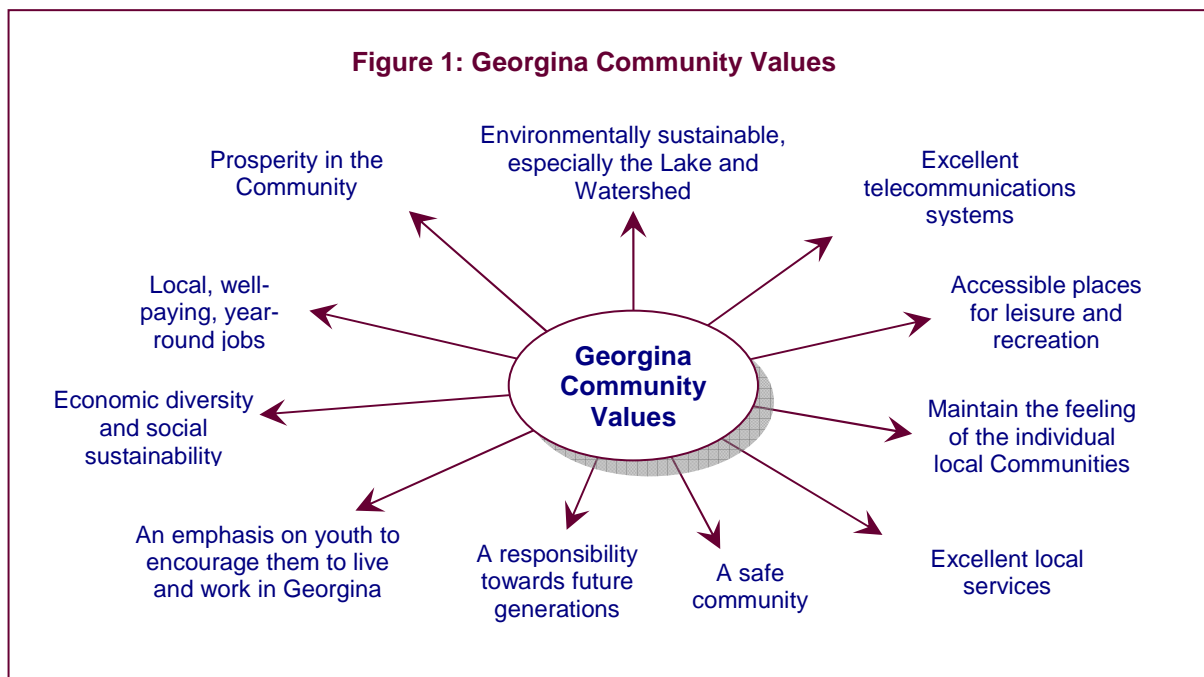
Two youth forums were held to engage Community youth, many of whom will be the future wardens of the efforts proposed under this socioeconomic development mission. Held in May 2008, youth from local schools participated at the Ice Palace while Jericho Youth Services organized a session at the Sutton Youth Centre.

The full list of their concerns and ideas are included in the *Supporting Documents, Section III*, and these are summarized below.

- Of paramount concern is the environment, of which they will become stewards in a generation or less.
- Many see that local jobs are needed beyond those providing seasonal or minimum wages but do not wish to sacrifice the environment or the character of the smaller communities in which they live.
- Concern over the expected increases in population, where new residents will live, and that impact on their existing local communities.
- A desire for youth oriented activities and a means to get there (local transportation).

## Community Values

Extracted from the entire set of consultation comments, prior consultation initiatives in recent years and other comments, Georgina Community Values can be encapsulated as shown in Figure 2:





### **The Socioeconomic Development Mission for Georgina**

From the Values described above, a Socioeconomic Development Mission can be defined and this is shown in the inset box. Note the affirmative first elements regarding prosperity, together with the attending boundaries of acceptability set by the Community Values.

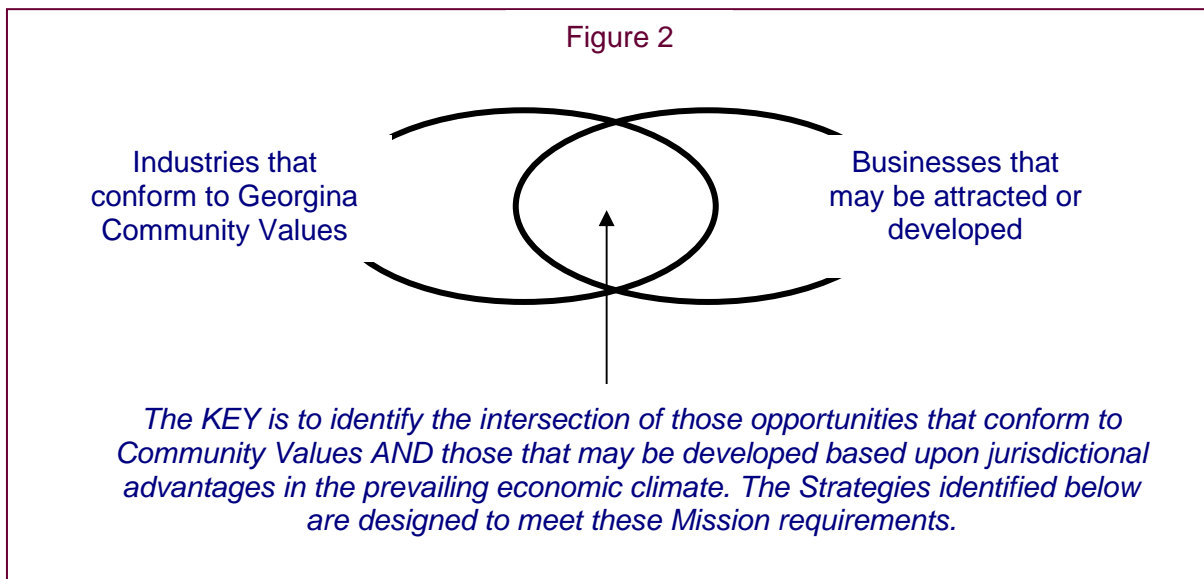
#### **Georgina Socioeconomic Development Mission Statement**

***To create an economy that is sustainable and diverse,  
respecting Georgina's unique environment and values."***



## **D Recommended Current Strategies for the Georgina Socioeconomic Development Mission**

Based upon the Mission description, the next step is to create Strategies to achieve the Mission Objectives. These strategies should be the most appropriate for the present economic circumstances but not 'cast in concrete'. As economic circumstances change, the Town should revisit the strategies to determine if adjustments are needed. Adjustments to the Mission are much less likely unless the nature of the community and residents changes to a large degree.



### **1 Strategies led primarily by the Town of Georgina Economic Development Office**

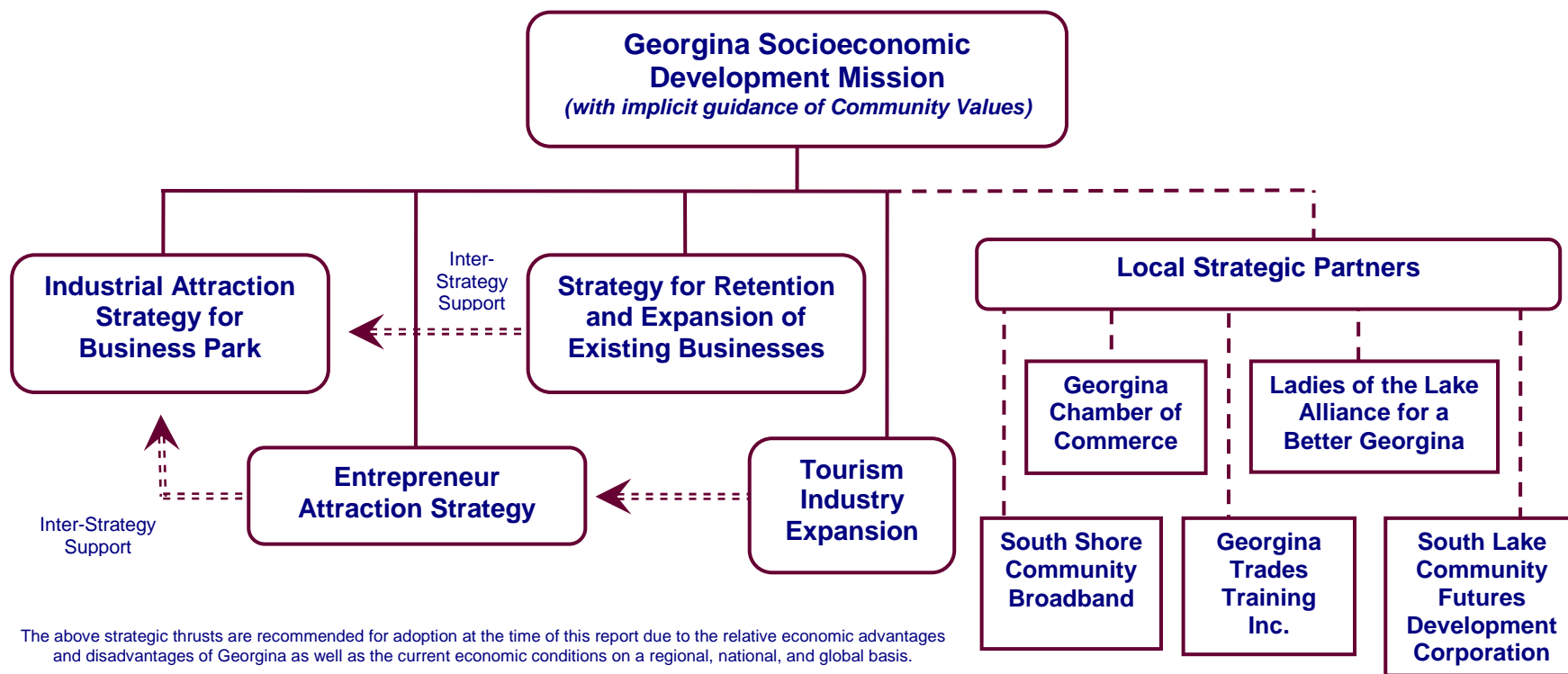
Due the nature of the strategies, the Town should lead many of the thrusts but these will also benefit from the active support and participation of other groups within and outside of the Community.

#### **Strategy: Retention and Expansion of Existing Businesses**

A 'Business Retention and Expansion' program (BR&E) is a funded economic development tool, developed by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) to aid rural communities in improving the local economy and local job creation. This would be an excellent starting point from which to gain an understanding of the challenges facing local industry and how the Town, and others, can assist in removing barriers, encouraging retention and business growth.



**Figure 3 - Overview of Recommended Current Strategies for the Georgina Socioeconomic Mission**



The above strategic thrusts are recommended for adoption at the time of this report due to the relative economic advantages and disadvantages of Georgina as well as the current economic conditions on a regional, national, and global basis.

As the economic factors change and under the guidance of the Economic Development Office of the Town, elements of these strategies may be amplified or accelerated or new strategies developed over time. This process in no manner affects the integrity of the Mission and the implicit Values of the Community.

These collaborations are already established or are being established at this time. More may be added if opportunities come forward that meet the Mission criteria for socioeconomic development.





The program structure involves the development of a task force and volunteers that visit companies to gather data. The data is then analyzed and the information used to assist in developing and achieving goals that will help build on existing opportunities as well as help make business connections with other businesses and new opportunities. In addition, such visitation programs are an excellent method by which to learn how well the Town puts forward an 'open for business' atmosphere. This vital impression is difficult to judge from *within* most Town organizations and the feedback, taken in context, can help to correct activities and postures that, inadvertently, have an unwelcoming effect.

The Georgina Chamber of Commerce and the South Lake Community Futures Development Corporation would be appropriate local partners in this activity.

'Business Retention and Expansion' is not a 'once in five years' activity. ***It must be carried out continuously through frequent contact with businesses and related organizations across Georgina.*** A visitation schedule should be developed to ensure that this discipline is maintained on a consistent basis.

### **Strategy: Industrial Attraction Strategy for Business Park**

Typically, the best investment attraction opportunities come from:

- When the advantages of the jurisdiction can be matched to the needs of the industry
- Growing industries
- Firms that grow their businesses through physical plant expansion in local areas, rather than concentrating in one or two major locations
- Often from medium size companies looking to expand
- In rare cases from multinational corporations that see a major local advantage such as jurisdictional and labour costs, raw material availability or, occasionally, market proximity.

#### *Realistic target sectors*

It is vital to be realistic about what can be achieved in the present economic environment and act accordingly. Attracting any industry directly that does not already have a foothold, or a fundamental reason to be in a community, is always a challenge. In the present economic environment regionally (and beyond) this would be even more difficult to accomplish.

Further, there are certain restrictions that narrow the types of industry that can be attracted to the Community. Some of the major regulations are contained within:

- The Lake Simcoe Protection Act
- Ontario Greenbelt Act, 2005
- Ontario 'Places to Grow' initiative and similar documents that limit growth in various locations

Most food processing operations require large volumes of water and return this to the Town in a state that requires treatment before being emptied to the environment. The Town or



Georgina is at or near capacity to handle such outgoing water loads but this situation will improve in the future.

While the Highway 404 extension will put Georgina in the game to attract manufacturing and similar industries, it gives no advantages over the existing communities straddling that highway to the south. The other communities up and down Highway 404 will be competing for much of the same investment. This does not mean that such attraction efforts will be unsuccessful but the proportion of success to effort will be less than if clear advantages were demonstrable to the target industries. However, much can be accomplished through effort and persistence since this can differentiate Georgina from competing jurisdictions attempting to achieve these same goals.

Until the manufacturing economy does rebound, the highway extension may only serve as a faster commute for those traveling to work on a daily basis. When that rebound does occur, the positioning of Georgina at the end of the highway extension will limit backhauling opportunities for firms (that is, the transportation will probably return empty to Georgina), thus discouraging firms with a high sensitivity to transportation costs in their products.

The geographic location of Georgina in relation to external markets adds a challenge to the development of the manufacturing sector. Given this, when manufacturing is pursued in Georgina, efforts should focus on industries producing 'high value to weight ratio' products.

Georgina is not sufficiently central within the GTA to become a major retail hub in the short term and the zone from Aurora to the southern end of East Gwillimbury has become a magnet for retail stores.

Industries that would contravene the above factors cannot be attracted successfully and should not be pursued. Most other sectors can be attracted but will only achieve significant success if the Town has advantages.

While business attraction is a primary responsibility of the Town, the private sector should be seconded as needed to assist as Ambassadors and to provide references.

### **Strategy: Expanding the Tourism Sector**

Tourism serves two main purposes:

- The economic benefit to those involved directly in the industry.
- As the main mechanism to highlight and display the area to new would-be residents who, in turn, may be the future business leaders and entrepreneurs needed in the Town of Georgina. This is the subject of the 'Entrepreneur Attraction Strategy' based described next.

Georgina may be too close to the core of the GTA to encourage short overnight stays for the average tourist family. Further, a major single attraction is missing and the relative lack of access to Lake Simcoe reduces the direct value of the lake shoreline as such an attractor.



This does not mean that the Tourism Industry cannot be expanded. Rather than a permanent and possibly unsightly attraction, multiple local events can be developed that, once finished, are packed away for the year, leaving little impact on the local landscape. This 'Day-Tourism' also meets the need to highlight Georgina and those impressed with the Community will return for future day events, as well as consider the possibility of taking up permanent residency.

Georgina has features and characteristics that are attractive to many tourists and potential residents: the Lake, Sibbald Point Provincial Park., attractive local communities throughout the area and scenic views of the countryside. These reflect the fundamentals of living in Georgina and are inherent to the Community, rather than an overlay. At present these characteristics and features are promoted in varying degrees or not at all and largely individually. ***Essentially, there is no cohesive strategy.*** The whole can be greater than the sum of these parts if packaged properly. The coordination of special events would be valuable and the promotion should be cast widely.

#### ***Marketing of the Town for 'Entrepreneur Attraction' and Tourism Industry Expansion***

- The fundamental marketing can be developed and provided by the Town, and some senior government assistance may be available.
- The Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Areas, as well as individual businesses should form part of the marketing development team in order to promote a consistent theme to be adopted by all.
- Coordination of permanent attractions and special events would be valuable and the promotion should be cast widely.
- The existing cultural industries can also play a major role and benefit from participation at the same time, through increased 'traffic'.
- A webpage or, better still, a website dedicated to 'people attraction' would be valuable.

#### ***Downtown revitalization and facade improvements in tourist areas***

This can have an immediate 'wow' impact on first-time visitors and combines well with the street café and cultural industries concepts. Historical Site designations also help to stir interest. The Provincial 'Community Improvement Program' may be helpful here, which is run under the auspices of the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as well as the South Lake Community Futures Development Corporation 'Access to Capital' program.

#### ***Partnering between businesses***

Partnering between businesses (cross-promotions and similar mutual events) can bring mutual benefits.



### ***Farmers Markets***

Apart from providing an outlet for local farmers, these can serve as one of the ‘things to be visited’. Local residents will also use this facility.

### ***Cultural Industries***

The development of Cultural Industries can serve as an attractor for the ‘target tourist’ and this can encourage tourists to consider taking up residence.

### ***Eco-tourism***

There may be much potential and consideration should be given to this as a major thrust. One of the Partnered Strategies described below may serve as an excellent anchor or such a thrust.

The development of an effective **Tourism Marketing Plan** and associated materials is an important element in this strategy.

### **Strategy: Entrepreneur Attraction**

Tourism is also the ‘Advanced Guard’ in attracting Entrepreneurial Residents. By no means are entrepreneurs confined to the cohort of the ‘Baby Boomer’. However, Statistics Canada and other commentators have documented the demographics of the Baby Boomers and how this has had a profound effect on the out-migration from cities to rural locations, especially in Central Canada.

- In Canada, those in the 50-65 age group control 50% of the wealth in Canada, their residential property is valued at over \$230 billion and they have a combined net worth estimated to be over \$550 billion.
- Members of this demographic group are usually at the peak of their income earning cycle, have low fixed expenses and, as a rule, no mortgage. They have often moved out of the ‘family’ home and prefer either condominium/ townhouse living or living in rural settings.
- They may have retired officially but want to continue to take an active part in their investments and may start up a new business. They are often entrepreneurs of some form.

These demographics describe a large cohort that is mobile and which may wish to spend more time in rural settings. These same people may also want to stay in touch with the larger urban centres from a cultural and entertainment point of view. Lifestyle is a major attractor for those owners that appreciate this characteristic. Such owners will consider this as a benefit for not only themselves but for their employees. In particular, firms employing highly skilled and well-paid employees are always concerned that they may be attracted away by other similar firms that are located in more ideal surroundings or who can offer a very desirable life-style. By locating in such a pleasant environment, with the amenities and culture desired, such employee retention becomes a reality.





Georgina offers locales where this may be achieved. The end goal of attracting residents to live in Georgina and, potentially, start businesses, requires an enhanced Tourism Sector in order to highlight the Town. It is necessary to create an ambience where people come to live because of the beauty, vibrancy, and amenities of the community.

Those industries identified as targets in this strategic thrust are also likely to be viable in a mid- to long-term range since many are forecasted to grow over the next 20 years. That is, the 'Baby Boomer' need for health and wellness as well as societies need for environmental technologies.

There are a number of retired or semi-retired residents in Georgina who have run businesses in the past or who may still be actively involved today. These residents may be able to provide valuable insights into what it will take to put Georgina high on the list of those seeking to relocate or start new businesses, in particular for those sectors with which they are most familiar.

## **2 Partnered Strategies**

The Town of Georgina Economic Development Department does not act alone in socioeconomic development. Apart from receiving support from the functional departments of the Town, other groups, both private and public, may also form part of the ongoing thrusts in economic development. Some of these are shown in the 'Overview' diagram in the section. This is especially true when the formal responsibility for aspects such as education and training fall outside of the responsibility of the Town. The Town can collaborate with these groups, sometimes with moral support and, at other times, where a clear return to the taxpayer is foreseen, the provision of funds or in-kind contributions.

Partnerships are 'force multipliers' in municipal economic development since, effectively, they leverage limited municipal funds with the energy, and often funds, of the private sector and senior levels of government. Such partnerships are also demonstrable mutual trust between the local Formal and Informal Leaders of the Community. The private sector and 'not-for-profit' organizations are a strength that all Communities can bring to bear with considerable advantage.

The potential 'Partnered Strategies' described below are an initial set of possibilities; the key is to develop these, create excellent working relationships, have success and move on to the next mutual opportunity. In so doing, other groups will be encouraged to become involved and to bring forward other possibilities. Where local taxpayer funds are to be invested then it is paramount to show that the taxpayers of the Town receive an appropriate return for these funds invested in the process of supporting such initiatives.



## **Strategy: Education and Skills Development**

The education and skills level of people is regarded as being the best indicator of future prosperity of a community. People are the most vital asset of a community and investment in their capabilities is a mission-critical objective. Every effort should be made to ensure that the overall level of educational attainment and skills development is raised throughout Georgina. It is hard to imagine a course that will place Georgina in a better position to address the challenges of the future.

"Since 2005, the far-sightedness and support of the Mayor and Council of the Town of Georgina has been pivotal in the initial and ongoing success of Georgina Trades Training Inc.

While education and training are the mandates of the Provincial Government, our local municipality has provided both tangible and moral support over the past three years.

A well-educated and well trained workforce is considered to be the best indicator of the future prosperity of a Community and we look forward to working even more closely with the Mayor, Council, and Town Staff in ensuring that our Community is recognized for the quality of our workforce."

**Gerry Brouwer – Chairperson, GTTI**  
**Michael Claener – Vice-Chair, GTTI**  
October 27, 2008

Although education and training are primarily a Provincial responsibility, the Town has already shown great foresight in supporting the Georgina Trades Training Inc initiative. The two School Boards within Georgina are also collaborating in this initiative.

It is beyond the scope of this report to derive a detailed strategy in this regard but the GTTI and its Board provide a convenient focal point with which the Town may liaise in order to promote and assist in the upgrading of the educational attainment of the local workforce, as well as imparting additional skills development.

Further, with vocal support and, perhaps appropriate funding or similar in-kind contributions, the Town may assist the GTTI, or others, in leveraging additional funding from provincial organizations, such as the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) and Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC)

Additional partnering opportunities may emerge in the areas of expanded broadband telecommunications to include, at present, under-serviced areas of Georgina, such as Keswick. Distance Learning is being funded by the MTCU at the GTTI and the Town may find ways to assist in the rollout of this capability.

The thrust of the GTTI in the future is one of multi-skilling and the creation of adaptability in the workforce. This is perfectly in line with expected future skills requirements and the Town should seek ways to help develop such forward-thinking educational and skills development strategies.



### **Strategy: Events Development to support Tourism Industry Expansion**

The Georgina Chamber of Commerce is considering the expansion of the present Georgina Highland Games. Although held in many communities through Ontario and the United States, some communities have been able to develop their local events into large tourist attractor. This is an excellent example of potential mutual gain; local retailers, many of whom are Members of the Chamber, will benefit from increased patron traffic, with temporary jobs being created to service the needs of the festival while Georgina is highlighted and exposed to a broad set of prospective return visitors and, potentially, permanent residents.

There are many opportunities in Georgina to combine various events and to cross-promote these for mutual benefit. An adjustment to attitudes may be required regarding these events in order to see them as opportunities for collaboration, rather than detracting competition. The Chamber can also encourage cross-promotion between member businesses

### **Strategy: The Environment as an Economic Engine**

The key here is to leverage upon the value of the natural environment, leaving it unaffected or enhanced, and to not exploit it to the detriment of future generations. The former is very consistent with the Values of the Community whereas the latter conflicts directly.

One such opportunity may be the development of a 'Water Centre for Innovation' and preliminary work has been carried out by the 'Ladies of the Lake', the latter having already demonstrated a strong capacity to marshal resources and execute in defence of Lake Simcoe and the Watershed. Further, the South Lake Community Futures Development Corporation is also interested in helping to make this a reality. Although yet in the formative stage, the intent would be to create a multi-million dollar 'Water Research and Innovation Institute', to be located appropriately in Georgina. The Institute would conduct research on and develop solutions for all manner of water pollution remedies and prevention that would be applicable locally and globally. Funding for such an initiative will run into millions of dollars and much must come from the senior levels of government. The Town of Georgina can play a strong advocacy role in concert with other proponents and there may be opportunities to provide in-kind contributions to demonstrate tangible support.

This is another excellent example of a partnership with mutual benefits. The Ladies of the Lake would move forward their keen interest in protecting and remediating Lake Simcoe and Watershed while the local tourist sector would benefit from visitors who would be interested in tours and so on, especially if family-interest attractions could be stated in the facility, similar to the Ontario Science museum and Science North in Sudbury. Further, the presence of such a facility would be a clear statement of the positive regard that the Community has for the environment that would attract related industries. Given that the Lake is shared with many other communities, there is a great opportunity to collaborate with these communities to enhance the project and, potentially, facilitate the leveraging of funding from senior levels of government.



## **E The Economic Investment Action Case**

Taking action and being seen to take action are imperatives in any public setting. Yet taking action without a full understanding of the implications and likelihood of success may well achieve the opposite result to that desired. While ‘thoroughness’ may sometimes may be mistaken as ‘delaying’ the taking of action, it pays off many fold through the avoidance of ineffective initiatives and the more thorough understanding and execution of worthwhile projects. Over time, the Town must review and decide upon support for various economic development initiatives brought forward internally and by the private sector. Selecting which ones with which to proceed will be an ongoing requirement.

Selecting economic development initiatives based upon...

- Opinion...rather than fact
- Lobbying...rather than reasoned advocacy
- Superficial...rather than thorough analyses of feasibility, collateral implications, true costs and true benefits

...then widespread acceptance and support are much harder to achieve and the initiative is vulnerable to critique and attack which will be hard to offset unless all of the ‘homework’ has been accomplished.

The key requirement is to be able to differentiate between the various opportunities that are conceived and to assess the most beneficial to the community. In the private sector, comparisons between most investments are based upon an optimum rate of return since the focus is almost always on direct dollar generation. In a community, while dollar generation is a major element, there are also socioeconomic factors to be considered.

### **An ‘Economic Investment Action Case’ template**

Assumptions made  
Nature of the direct financial benefits  
Nature of the socioeconomic  
Feasibility and barriers  
Costs  
Resources required  
Timelines for investment and ‘returns’  
Risks and mitigation  
Recommended lead organization  
Recommended partner organizations  
Actions with milestones  
Measurements of success

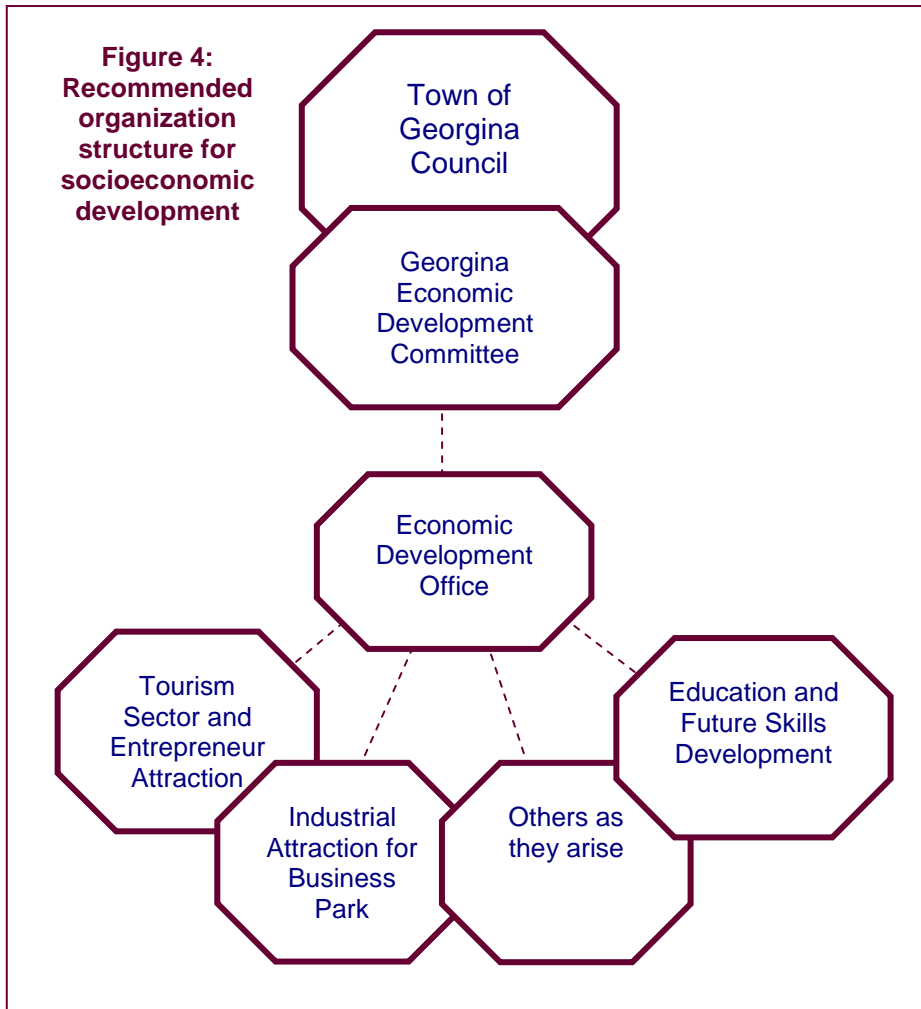
This approach enables the jurisdiction to be, at once, hard taskmasters demanding proof of the likely success of the venture and, when that proof is established, confident, and committed advocates of the effort, monitoring progress on a regular basis. This emulates private sector investor behaviour.





## F Other Recommendations

### Bringing forward opportunities on an ongoing basis



Coordinated by the Economic Development Office, the concept is to have the private sector Task Forces identify opportunities.

The EDO then works with the GEDC to develop the best opportunities and to make recommendations to the Town to move forward on these initiatives, based upon a well-prepared **Economic Investment Action Case (EIAC)**.

All existing and future funding to organizations made by the Town based on economic development benefits should be reviewed using the discipline of the EIAC to ensure that the

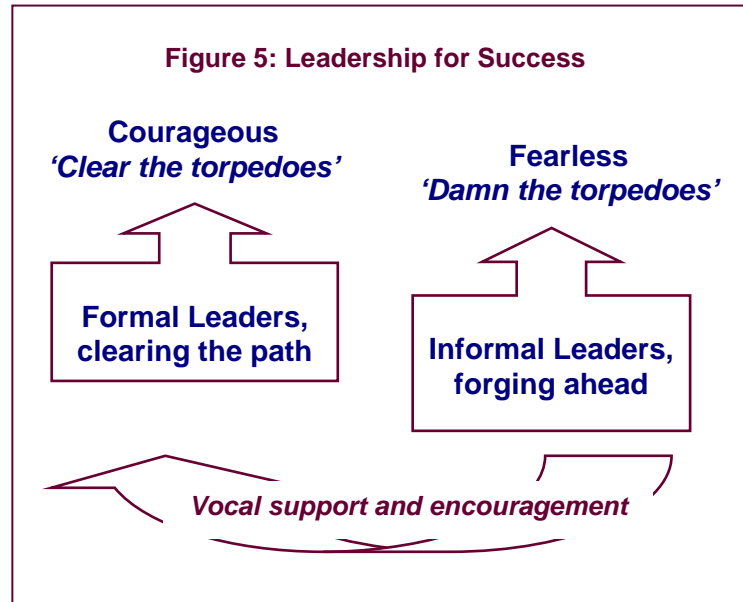
taxpayer is receiving good value for money in return for their investment.



## Leadership for Success

Two broad types of community leadership are being recognized in many social and economic development efforts. These two forces parallel the public and private sectors to a large degree. The 'Formal Leaders' are those elected, or appointed by those elected, to formally lead efforts towards achieving the goals of the Community. Such people or organizations have both the authority and responsibility to act and are usually held accountable for results.

In parallel, there are the 'Informal Leaders', who, while neither formally elected nor appointed, have, through their influence and energy, a very positive role to play in these same efforts. Informal Leaders achieve their 'status', often unsought, through past achievements and successes in their particular fields and through pro bono activities for the good of the Community.



When the interests and activities both Formal and Informal Leaders resonate, a 'force multiplier' effect can be achieved that greatly enhances the overall outcomes of the efforts.

*Above all when, despite best efforts, initiatives fail or when the results are not as desired, the role of the Informal Leaders must be to support the Formal Leaders in order that both can move forward to the subsequent challenges together, with mutual trust intact.*

Georgina appears to be well provided with active volunteers, prepared to move forward on agreed goals. Making use of their energy and talents will aid in the socioeconomic development process.

## Business-friendly is not just important, it is vital

During the consultations, several business owners or their representatives made remarks concerning the less-than-friendly attitude of the Town and Staff towards local business requests. Specific were not forthcoming to a large extent and there was a sense that some related to instances in the past, rather than reflecting on the present.

The recommended Business Retention and Expansion program is an excellent opportunity for the Town Economic Development Office to probe this issue directly and confidentially with Georgina businesses and to report back on the findings.



## **Expedited Approvals Process**

Businesses would like to see an expedited approvals process created within the Town to reduce the time between 'idea' and 'execution'. This process should not omit important steps; rather, the waiting time between active process steps should be reduced. Extended waiting times can also give a sense that the Town is less business-friendly than local businesses would like to see.

## **Broadband Telecommunications Expansion**

*For this discussion, the term 'broadband' describes a high-speed telecommunications system, capable of handling multiple channels of information, to and from many users at the same time. Ideally, the system permits data to be 'uploaded' and 'downloaded' at the same high rate of transfer.*

This has already been touched upon with respect to expanding the mechanisms to promote and impart education and training on an ongoing basis within Georgina.

Working with the South Lake Community Futures Development Corporation and South Shore Community Broadband, much has already been accomplished in providing reliable and effective high-speed telecommunications capabilities in the Community. Such 'connectivity' is becoming, increasingly, an essential and expected element of local infrastructure. More coverage would be a positive factor in the attraction of new business, which now relies heavily upon such capabilities. Further, residents (especially youth) value such Internet access, and local availability would be an added feature to attract people to and retain them in the Community.

## **Research into the 'new economy'**

The term 'new economy' is well worn, yet very applicable, most especially in uncertain economic times. While the nature of the future economy of Ontario, York Region, and Georgina may not yet be clear, it is certain that it will be different to some extent. Communities that are best prepared for the future with fundamental strengths will be able to adapt to the emerging economy better than those who wait until everything is clear.

The best approach is not to guess at the future but to develop strengths that will most likely be valuable regardless of the emerging economy. Research into 'eco' or 'green' industries is most likely a valuable preparation, especially given the attributes of Georgina.

Broadband, already a success story for many parts of Georgina, should be extended into those areas where business development is most likely to occur. A further valuable facility would be to ensure that all educational facilities have this access in order to promote a high level of proficiency in youth.



## **Communicating with youth**

Understanding the needs of youth, their perspectives and challenges and creating hope for a prosperous future, may develop positive attitudes towards furthering their education and, with the advent of future employment opportunities, encourage them to remain in Georgina.

## **Agriculture**

Agriculture had long been the mainstay of the economy in many parts of Ontario. Today, various global forces have created a situation where the small family farm is surviving, at best. The rise in large-scale agriculture in Third World countries, the limited direct access to local markets, and other factors have contributed to this situation. While the relative efficiency of the farm has risen more than in many industries, the pressures have mounted even more quickly. As a consequence, farm incomes and viability are both threatened.

Apart from the family owners and operators, many farm businesses use migrant workers. While there is some reflected benefit to the local economy as a result of their spending while seasonally employed, the majority of the earnings of these migrant workers are intended for families in their country of origin. As a result, the small Ontario farm is less a mechanism for local job creation and much more a case of survival and the future security of local food supplies.

## **Branding**

Creating a positive brand for Georgina will help in every form of economic development. The results will not be seen immediately. Georgina must first evolve an image that it can portray positively to the outside world. Then, through a combination of images and messages, broadcast this common message widely and consistently.

Getting the message out that Georgina is moving forward to develop the local economy, how it is going about that, and that it is preparing itself for the future, no matter what may emerge, will be seen as forward-thinking and reflect well on the Community.

## **Positive support is essential from all Town Departments**

Socioeconomic Development is a critical mission for the Town and, as such, everyone has a positive role to play. It requires the active support of all Town Departments and the protocols between these and the Economic Development Office must be established clearly.

Economic Development is a function that is **expected** to push the envelope of operations; at the same time, other Town Departments properly have a role to police such plans and ensure that all necessary considerations have been taken into account. It is essential that these other Departments approach perceived barriers in a positive light and to work with the Economic Development Office to find ways to overcome the encountered blockage.





It will be important that the Economic Development Office is not seen as the 'one-stop shop' for all issues and complaints from the businesses within the Town. Most Town Departments will have some interface with businesses in one form or another. If the situation develops wherein these other Departments are at odds with a business or businesses then the overall Management and Leadership of the Town must step in to resolve this and not permit the Economic Development Office to become the buffer and repository for such acrimony. Failing that, the Economic Development Office will spend most of the time and resources available listening sympathetically to complaints and acting as a mediator between those businesses and the rest of the Town Departments. This is an unnecessary waste of Taxpayer dollars when it can be averted simply by the courageous and assertive action of the Town leadership and the effective direction of Staff.

Many Town activities that fall outside of the sphere of economic development may have a great effect on that function. A comprehensive information system that can provide such information, to the greatest extent possible in electronic form, will aid greatly in the efficient functioning of the Economic Development Office.

### **Ongoing Community input**

The establishment of ongoing mechanisms to communicate with the Community of Georgina on socio economic development activities are strongly encouraged. This facilitates ongoing feedback as to Values and Ideas. It also provides credence to the concept that, while the socioeconomic development process is underway, new ideas are always welcome and agreed adjustments to the plans may be made with sufficient rationale and justification.

Such mechanisms may include:

- A Town webpage dedicated to economic development in Georgina with links to other relevant sites.

When sufficient materials have been prepared, these can be raised in profile through **a separate Town website dedicated to attracting investors**. The name selected for this website should reflect the purpose. Such a move is relatively low cost and demonstrates that the Town is very serious in its intent.

- Continuation of the <MyGeorgina@georgina.ca> E-Mail identity which is routed to the Economic Development Office
- Encouragement of fax and written input as well as face-to-face meetings

Evolving Community Values will ensure proper guidance of the Mission and new ideas and possible projects will also emerge from this Community feedback.

### **Economic data and research**

Knowing where you are, what assets you have and trends indicating the shape of the future are important tools in socioeconomic development. Recommended activities include:



- An accurate inventory of businesses with accompanying details. A basis for information is available from York Region and this should serve as a foundation from which to expand the detailed knowledge of many firms within Georgina.
- Knowing what is current in the greater economy in which Georgina must exist is vital in order to best position Georgina on a continuous basis to meet these changing conditions.
- Research into emerging industrial and business trends is important if meaningful conversations are to be had with target sector firms.

## **Community Capacity Building**

There are many definitions of ‘Community Capacity Building’. One is:

*“Activities, resources and support that strengthen the skills and abilities of people and community groups to take effective action and leading roles in the development of their communities.”*

In economic development, community capacity building focuses on enhancing the future abilities of the Community to prosper in a rapidly changing economic environment. Projecting educational and skills development requirements to meet future employment opportunities, identifying necessary infrastructure improvements to encourage appropriate economic growth as well as promoting collaboration and partnerships between organizations are some of the critical aspects. Communicating effectively with those charged with implementing these forward-looking investments is another key element of the role that the Economic Development Office can play in community capacity building.

## **Conclusion**

Georgina has both the need and the ability to develop its economy for the benefit of the Community. This benefit will be evident in the availability of more local jobs as well as a sustainable tax base, ensuring that local services are maintained and enhanced. Socioeconomic development is not an immediate process; both time and resources must be invested in order to realize these benefits. With multiple strategic thrusts, deployed to meet the economic realities of the time, and implemented vigorously, success is likely.

## **Acknowledgements**

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