

**THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF GEORGINA**

**REPORT NO. SI-2025-0003**

**FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF  
COUNCIL**

April 16, 2025

**SUBJECT: 2024 Update – Economic Development and Tourism Strategy**

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**1. RECOMMENDATION:**

1. That Council receive Report No. SI-2025-0003 prepared by the Economic Development and Tourism Division, Strategic Initiatives Department, dated April 16, 2025, respecting the “2024 Update – Economic Development and Tourism Strategy”.

**2. PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a summary of the progress made and actions undertaken by staff in 2024, as they relate to the 2024-2028 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy. The reporting period for this update is January 1 – December 31, 2024.

**3. BACKGROUND:**

On Feb 28, 2024, Council approved the Town’s 2024-2028 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy. The development of this strategy was a key deliverable within the Town’s 2023-2027 Corporate Strategic Plan.

Each of the plan’s four goals within the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy as noted below, are aligned with the Corporate Strategic Plan’s goal to “Diversify Our Local Economy”.

- **Grow the economy through investment attraction**
- **Grow the economy through the retention and expansion of the existing business community**
- **Grow the economy through tourism, arts and culture with a focus on leveraging these assets to create economic impact**
- **Create lively downtowns and public gathering spaces**

The Economic Development and Tourism Division is pleased to advise that with the support and efforts of all Town Departments, 35 of the 42 action items included in the Strategy are complete or in progress. As a result of these collaborative efforts, there have been significant accomplishments on each of the identified areas of focus in the first year of the strategy as detailed in the “Progress Update” (Attachment 1). A summary of the accomplishments and highlights from 2024 are provided in the “2024

Year in Review” (Attachment 2) and will be available as a print document and utilized as a marketing tool.

#### 4. **ANALYSIS:**

In 2024, considerable progress was made toward achieving the goals of the 2024-2028 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy. It is important to note that due to the challenging and evolving economic climate, staff will need to continually review the Strategy and modify activities and/or implement new initiatives to address and respond to the specific needs of the business community and the direction of investment attraction efforts.

##### **Strategy Progress:**

1. Grow the economy through investment attraction
  - 14 of 18 actions completed or in progress
2. Grow the economy through the retention and expansion of the existing business community
  - 6 of 6 actions completed or in progress
3. Grow tourism, arts and culture with a focus on leveraging these assets to create an economic impact
  - 10 of 13 actions completed or in progress
4. Create lively downtowns and public gathering spaces
  - 5 of 5 actions completed or in progress

##### **Measurement:**

Progress on these activities is measured in a manner that is aligned with the key performance indicators (KPIs) utilized in the 2023-2027 Corporate Strategic Plan and relate to the goal: “Diversify Our Local Economy”.

##### **Key Performance Indicators:**

Support investment attraction, job creation, business retention and expansion:

- **Number of new businesses:** increase of 93 since 2023 (1,094 to 1,187 establishments with employees & min. 30K revenue). Source: Statistics Canada - Business Register.
- **Increase in ICI floor area:** 157,471 sq. ft. of ICI floor space in 2024.
- **Employment growth rate:** Data requires further review and updates. Source: York Region Employment Survey 2024.
- **Number of partnerships with private sector tourism stakeholders:** 103 direct partners/stakeholders (participation in grants, events, programs, in-kind collaborations etc.).

Continue to support Georgina's tourism sector as an economic driver:

- **Number and size of events that attract visitors from outside of Georgina:** 30 events (includes town-led tourism events).
- **Number of improvements to infrastructure that enhance the visitor experience:** 15 improvements made (seven marquee signs, two minor wayfinding signs, Dalton Road banner arms updated to ensure size of future banners is consistent with downtown infrastructure, annual maintenance completed on signs where necessary, commenced with Jackson's Point parkette enhancements).

### **Key 2024 Accomplishment Highlights**

The items below are just a few of the highlights from 2024. Additional highlights and details of the activities undertaken to date are available in the attached 2024 Progress Report (Attachment 1) and 2024 Year in Review publication (Attachment 2).

1. To expedite development applications that significantly impact job creation and support the non-residential tax base, bi-weekly meetings were established with developers and Town staff. These efforts supported three tenants moving into the first building in the Keswick Business Park, resulting in more than half of the 370,000 sq. ft. building being occupied and will bring more than 80 jobs to Georgina.
2. Town staff expedited the zoning approval for the Canadian Life Science and Technology Park. Discussions are ongoing with York Region, respecting their commitment to bring the Woodbine Avenue forcemain online by late 2026/early 2027 in order to provide servicing to future development in the business park.
3. With the assistance of \$15K in funding provided by York Region, Staff were able to enhance investment attraction efforts, including attending industry trade shows, developing a pitch deck, publishing a new community profile, launching targeted campaigns and outreach, and updating the [choosegeorgina.ca](https://choosegeorgina.ca) website, which garnered 21,586 views (34 per cent from outside Canada).
4. Launched a lead generation pilot project that conducted cold-call outreach with 150 companies to introduce Georgina and create an awareness of its opportunities. Staff note that 30 of these companies remain in a pipeline for further follow up by Town Staff.
5. Launched a formalized Business Visitation Program, which included more than 70 formal visits to businesses from a variety of industry sectors and from across Georgina. Access to talent and space for expansion emerged as common themes.
6. Created a new 'Welcome to Georgina' package handed out to new businesses with the Town's community profile, a letter from the Mayor and information on business support available to Georgina businesses through various organizations, including York University YSpace and the Chamber of Commerce.

7. Continued and enhanced entrepreneurship programming through York University's YSpace Georgina, supporting more than 150 Georgina business ventures.
8. Strengthened collaboration with the tourism community, forming more than 100 direct partnerships with local stakeholders.
9. Supported a grant application and received funding for streetscape enhancements for the High Street Construction project.
10. Commenced work on a dedicated tourism brand and website to be launched in 2025.
11. Supported the development of a mini-documentary to promote local agriculture.

## **5. RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:**

### **Diversify Our Local Economy**

- Supporting investment attraction, job creation, business retention and expansion, including within our agricultural sector.
- Continue to support Georgina's tourism sector as an economic driver.

## **6. FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY IMPACT:**

Costs associated with the delivery of the 2024 activities were funded through the 2024 Council approved budget. Grant funding from York Region, Central Counties Tourism and The Ontario Ministry of Food and Rural Affairs was secured and utilized to support specific initiatives.

## **7. PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND NOTICE REQUIREMENTS:**

There are no public consultations or notice requirements associated with this report. After Council approval, staff will post the 2024 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Annual Report on the Town's website and distribute the document through standard communication channels.

## **8. CONCLUSION:**

Report SI-2025-003 marks the first update in the 2024-2028 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy reporting cycle. Significant progress was made in year one, with 35 of 42 actions completed or in progress, demonstrating the Town's commitment to economic growth, business retention, tourism development and downtown

revitalization. Key performance indicators show positive trends in business growth, job creation, and tourism impact, reinforcing the Town's strategic direction. This progress reflects the Town's dedication to achieving its goals while remaining adaptable to evolving economic climate and community needs.

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**Attachments:**

*Attachment 1 – 2024 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Progress Report*  
*Attachment 2 – 2024 Year in Review*