

2024

Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Update



GEORGINA

Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan (2024-2028)

Goal 1: Grow the economy through investment attraction

Action	Status	Key Performance Indicators and progress details
Host targeted specific workshops and round tables to identify opportunities and challenges for business growth and investment.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timing to be determined. In light of tariffs, workshops/engagement may occur sooner in partnership with York Region.
Create a pitch deck for investors referencing the Town’s community profile and up-to-date statistics.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pitch deck created to showcase Georgina’s value proposition to be used at trade shows and provided to more than 40 potential investors. Pitch deck can be modified to address a variety of audiences.*
Initiate an exercise to develop key messaging around Georgina’s brand and develop a communications strategy to solidify recognition of the Town as a whole and create an identity of how Georgina wants to be recognized in consultation with the Communications Division.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial meetings with Communications Division to begin in 2025. Scope of project to be determined and is dependant on resources.
Formalize a site-selection process and identify significant investment opportunities.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a standardized process for dealing with investment inquiries to begin in 2025.
Working with the Planning Division, maintain an up-to-date list of major projects and assets currently underway and in various stages of the development approvals process.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bi-weekly meetings have been implemented with major developers and relevant Town departments to support expedited approvals. To date, these efforts have focused on employment generating land uses and those developments that create non-residential tax base. 186,000 sq feet of new ICI space leased.
Build on the existing “Choose Georgina” campaign by sharing success stories of new and expanding businesses and of residents describing their positive experiences with the Town.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 15 business spotlights published. Talent attraction video created and campaign launched which garnered 87K views. Investment attraction ad campaigns received more than 233K impressions.
Continue to enhance and update choosegeorgina.ca with current and applicable information relevant to investors’ requirements.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21,586 views, averaging 1,798/month (increase of 35 per cent over 2023). 34 per cent coming from outside of Canada (US, Poland and Mexico top three foreign countries). Top pages: Business Park, Small Business Support and Live Here. Website enhancements: lifestyle data module added, new attraction video embedded and 10 blogs published.

*Deliverable was part of York Region’s FDI Partnership Fund that supported investment attraction initiatives in the amount of \$15,000.

Status legend

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Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan

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Action	Status	Key Performance Indicators and progress details
Maintain and annually update the Town’s community profile that provides a comprehensive outline of Georgina.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community profile created and published digitally and in print.*
Work with Development Services to help streamline the non-residential development process and create and provide education on the development approval process and timelines.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced Business Concierge Program by implementing bi-weekly meetings with major developers and Town staff to support expedited approvals. Strategic Initiatives in collaboration with Development Services is currently working on the development of a tracking system.
Collaborate with York Region and/or partner with a company that provides investment-attraction services to provide qualified investment leads.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked with a lead generation company to receive education on best practices and acquire a list of 150 companies to conduct outreach. Staff note that 30 of these companies remain in a pipeline for further follow up by Town Staff.* Partnered with York Region to attend three trade shows and build connections with Toronto Global (regional investment-attraction agency).
Undertake a detailed labour force and sector analysis to better understand the need to target certain sectors once additional lands are readily serviced and available for development.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to budget and staffing capacity. Timing to be determined.
Identify opportunities for regular touchpoints with ICI realtors and developers.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Met with three local ICI realtors and major investment brokers to discuss business park infrastructure, development, and ICI trends. Ran an investment campaign with the Society of Industrial and Office Realtors, which received 51,505 impressions and an above-average industry average click-through rate.* Attended an industry event with business park developers to build connections.
Continue to work with developers to market their properties and attract tenants.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked with Keswick Business Park and Life Sciences developers to promote opportunities at trade shows and industry events (MedTech, SIOR Industry Event, Collision, Site Selectors Guild). Continued to run targeted investment attraction campaigns through Google and SIOR.

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Continue to update and promote available properties: industrial commercial land and building inventory; available serviced, shovel-ready lands.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Properties updated weekly on choosegeorgina.ca and promoted through various communication channels. Site selection page visited 1,116 times. Business park page visited 2,997 times. Business park investment opportunities added to InvestON (provincial investment-attraction agency) portal.
Continue to work with York Region to increase water/wastewater infrastructure and capacity to support business development in Georgina.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions are ongoing with York Region, respecting their commitment to bring the Woodbine Avenue forcemain online by late 2026/early 2027.
Continue to work with York Region (York Net) and local service providers to ensure 100 per cent internet and cell coverage throughout Georgina.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadband expansion in progress in collaboration with YorkNet and Internet Service Providers. YorkNet and Bell presented updates to Council in October 2024. To date, Bell has completed fibre installation to approximately 16,000 homes. Bell is planning to construct next generation fibre network connection option to roughly 18,000 homes and businesses in Georgina. In spring of 2025, Bell will be constructing fibre to service Fox and Snake Islands. To date, York Net constructed 220+ km of fibre conduit across Georgina, 70+ km of fibre to be built in 2025, 65+ homes connected to YorkNet fibre through a partnership with Galaxy Fibre (by March 21, 2025).
Continue to work with the Province of Ontario, in collaboration with York Region, to extend the 404 into and through the business park lands.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy ongoing with Region and Province.
Research opportunities with upper tiers of government for funding for business park developments regarding opportunities that are of a regional and provincial significance.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular scans of opportunities to share with developers. Connection made between Life Science and Technology Park and InvestON and Toronto Global.



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Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan

Goal 2: Grow the economy through the retention and expansion of the existing business community

Action	Status	Key Performance Indicators and progress details
Formalize a business visitation program consisting of candid frontline meetings with employers to gain a better understanding of the trends and issues for individual businesses and facilitate the connection to resources for retention and expansion.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70 visits were documented, providing valuable insights into the needs and perspectives of businesses across various sizes and sectors. Challenges identified include the need for a strategy to enhance downtown infrastructure, the availability of ICI space (small-scale) for expansion, and access to talent.
Continue to support the YSpace Entrepreneurship Hub by developing an information package that provides entrepreneurs with all of the local and regional business support available to them and who to contact, as well as resources available to help grow and promote their businesses.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New business welcome package created with letter from Mayor, information on YSpace programming, a list of local and regional business support, community profile, tourism guide and grant information. Packages were handed out at new business grand opening celebrations.
Continue to work with York University to assess the possibility of expanding their presence in Georgina within and beyond YSpace (for example, accredited post-secondary and skills training programs offered locally) and to develop a longer-term sustainability/business plan.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership commitment and grant extended until March 2026. Work on sustainability plan started, which included surveying current and past participants and meeting with current and potential partners. The partnership assisted 872 participants through skills-training programs and networking events and provided 262 hours of mentorship, which directly supported 151 Georgina business ventures.



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Goal 2: Grow the economy through the retention and expansion of the existing business community

Action	Status	Key Performance Indicators and progress details
Collaborate with community organizations that provide workforce training and small business support to increase awareness and streamline and avoid duplication of services.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involved in Economic Stability Working Group meetings through the Community Action Table. Monthly meetings with GTTI and Georgina Chamber (boards). Continued partnership with Georgina Chamber to support activities that have an impact on the community. A total budget of \$67,460 was provided to deliver services on behalf of the Town. Continued collaboration with local and regional organizations on Small Business Week events. Established a new partnership with South Lake Community Futures to provide mentorship to entrepreneurs and included the Georgina Library and Skills Training Centre in YSpace events/initiatives.
Continue to leverage York Link’s economic development programs and staff resources to ensure access to program opportunities, including funding and relevant activities that can impact Georgina.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitated one-on-one meetings between York Small Business Enterprise Centre (YSBEC) and YSpace participants and other entrepreneurs. Toured VentureLab and began planning for a collaborative event. Worked with York Link team to participate in three tradeshow.
Support the work of the Health Care Task Force to expand healthcare services with a focus on the economic impact these services have on a community.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Town, Southlake Health (Southlake) and Northern York South Simcoe Ontario Health Team (NYSS OHT) to advance healthcare in Georgina, including opportunities for a new brick-and-mortar facility.



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Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan

Goal 3: Grow the economy tourism, arts and culture with a focus on leveraging these assets to create economic impact

Action	Status	Key Performance Indicators and progress details
Create a dedicated digital presence that is easily accessible through digital platform(s) to promote tourism, arts and culture.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work started on the creation of a dedicated tourism website. Implementation plan and project timeline confirmed. Business case prepared to launch tourism social channels and dedicated URL simultaneously.
Review and update the inventory of location assets on Ontario Creates and other marketing channels and liaise with York Region and other local municipalities to determine the best permitting approach in order to launch a formalized filming in Georgina program.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Account created with Ontario Creates. Initial research compiled, which included meetings with Community Services, other municipalities and stakeholders. Development of a formal program to be determined as it will require dedicated resources.
Enhance partnerships with private and public sector tourism stakeholders on marketing initiatives that extend visitor stays/overnight stays (ex: packages)	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attended three-day Outdoor Adventure Show with tourism stakeholders. Nurtured relationships with Georgina’s two major resorts. Provided lunch and learns with frontline staff and linked them with potential collaborators (ex. Georgina Marathon). Grand reopening of Jackson’s Point Resort and Conference Centre and opening of Shore Vista Lodge. More than 100 direct partnerships were established this year with tourism stakeholders. These partnerships include cross-promtion, inkind and financial support. Published two seasonal guides and distributed to 20+ local locations and to tourism kiosks throughout the province through the Georgina Chamber of Commerce.
Enhance collaborations with tourism agencies and destination marketing organizations to promote Georgina as a destination, targeting audiences from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and beyond. (External publicity).	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoted overnight stays through event postings, blogs, newspaper and social media influencers with Central Counties Tourism (CCT), Festival Events Ontario (FEO) and Destination Ontario. Attended FEO Conference and CCT Symposium to represent Georgina and build connections. Co-hosted a Tourism Networking event with CCT.
Collaborate with Community Services to create and promote public art initiatives that support place-making, including those that celebrate Indigenous culture.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established quarterly meetings with Community Services to explore partnership opportunities. Enhanced park spaces through the installation of marquees and beautification amenities.

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Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan

Goal 3: Grow the economy tourism, arts and culture with a focus on leveraging these assets to create economic impact

Action	Status	Key Performance Indicators and progress details
Continue to work with the agriculture sector to build on agri-tourism opportunities and investigate the current agri-related and on-farm diversified use policies to ensure they support these opportunities. (Regional ag rep).		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged with York Region agriculture groups and stakeholders to support sector growth. Secured funding for agri-tourism initiatives, including art and live music partnerships at the Field to Table event. Successfully hosted the 7th Field to Table event, attracting up to 500 visitors per location and generating more than \$17,000+ in revenue. Collaborated with OMAFRA and York Region Ag Stakeholders to provide input on the new York Region agricultural strategy. Supported environmental initiatives, including planting 100 trees and enhancing ClearWater Farm with signage, parking, and tree planting. Supported the development of a mini-documentary to promote local agriculture and educate the community. It was featured at the Toronto Short Film Festival.
Support the implementation of the Waterfront Parks Master Plan and leverage recommendations that increase an economic impact for the local businesses and community as a whole.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked with Community Services to launch a Vendors at the Beach Pilot Program. Supported the implementation of the one-way Lake Drive project.
Continue to implement wayfinding signage to enhance the overall tourism experience, encourage visitation to the business areas and tourism assets, and increase repeat tourism (ex: routes from beaches and provincial park to shopping areas).		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Tourism Wayfinding Strategy approved by Council. Seven marquee signs and two minor wayfinding signs installed.
Review Georgina’s tourism and cultural assets to best understand the motivations for attracting visitors and opportunities to enhance these assets and attract investment to the sector (ex: accommodation sector).		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchased Environics data on visitor information that will be used to highlight the impact tourism has on the economy. Pitch deck to be customized for accommodation sector attraction. Outreach opportunities to accommodation sector to be reviewed.
Collaborate with tourism stakeholders to establish an annual tourism event, consisting of private and public business and organizations that deliver tourism products, to foster collaboration and the creation of future tourism products and experiences.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established an annual tourism networking event with East Gwillimbury and Central Counties Tourism.

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Goal 3: Grow the economy tourism, arts and culture with a focus on leveraging these assets to create economic impact

Action	Status	Key Performance Indicators and progress details
Continue to administer, support and promote the Economic, Culture and Community Betterment Program and its recipients. Review the application and review process and update accordingly to ensure that events and programs being funded provide the highest economic impact possible. (Event and culture grant).	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 23 recipients were supported in the amount of \$45,000, collectively. An example of the impact these events have is the Georgina Marathon, which drew more than 1,000 visitors, 66 per cent of whom were from outside Georgina. Out-of-town attendees stayed overnight in local accommodations, further driving economic activity. Grant process updated to require an initial meeting with Town staff prior to submission.
Explore opportunities to attract established festival and event organizers from outside of the community that create a significant economic impact. (Event acquisition outreach).	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic, Culture and Community Betterment grant promotion through various communication channels. Formal process to attract new opportunities TBD.
Continue to create and enhance the official Town of Georgina tourism publication and marketing collateral, and coordinate distribution to educate visitors about the Town's tourism assets and increase economic spending.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11,000 tourism guides distributed locally and to tourism kiosks throughout Ontario via the Georgina Chamber of Commerce. New marquee signs added in tourism locations which house the guides and new tourism signage and provide listing of current events.



Georgina Marathon event at De La Salle Park

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Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan

Goal 4: Create lively downtowns and public gathering spaces

Action	Status	Key Performance Indicators and progress details
Continue to promote to the BIAs the opportunities related to the Town’s Community Improvement Plan (CIP) grants.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlined CIP applications and increased participation over last year. Conducted more than 30 meetings with BIA businesses to gather insights to make revisions to CIP and other strategic decisions regarding downtown revitalization.
Continue to source grants that fund infrastructure improvements within the downtowns.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation of Rural Economic Development Grant (RED) grant received to help support the High Street Construction project through to 2026.
Encourage BIA boards to enhance their annual budget in order to enhance marketing initiatives, events and other programs that have the greatest economic impact on their business communities.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sutton BIA increased budget by \$5,000.
Leverage Town and Regional infrastructure projects to support streetscape enhancements.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New banners and arms were installed throughout Town. Assisted with grant to support High Street Reconstruction Project. Gathered research and provided input and support to the High Street Reconstruction Project Team as it relates to stakeholder engagement, marketing supports for businesses during construction and streetscape enhancements.
Continue to provide a liaison role between the BIA and Town departments and create a work plan for the responsibilities of the role.	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial steps taken to establish an MOU between the Town and BIA boards. Supported the execution of a series of musical performances. Supported the Keswick BIA through its dormancy by organizing Music in the Parkette on their behalf. Supported Pefferlaw and Sutton with road closures for three events.



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