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MIDDLESEX COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN
2014-2019
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The Middlesex County Economic Development Strategy is the result of a comprehensive research and analysis process, informed by extensive research and analysis together with input from the County’s elected officials, business and stakeholder community and residents. This document is a summary of the resulting vision, goals, priorities and recommended actions to build and support a strong local economy.

The complete Economic Development Strategic Plan is available at www.investinmiddlesex.ca/EcDev_StrategicPlan

VISION

• Middlesex will leverage its strategic location in the attraction of new business, investment and skilled workers while protecting and retaining its countryside image and community spirit.

• Middlesex will leverage the lifestyle choices, economic vitality and natural environment that makes the County an attractive place to live, work and do business.

• Middlesex will foster economic diversification efforts that enhance the strengths of the regional economy and build on the County’s history of entrepreneurship to provide resilient employment and investment in the region.

PRIORITIES

• Invest in the County’s infrastructure
• Enhance communication and networking opportunities
• Broaden business retention & expansion programming effort
• Leverage proximity to London
• Pursue targeted investment attraction opportunities
• Develop community based tourism
• Support sustainability of small business
• Focus on workforce attraction
• Expand understanding of the County’s agricultural sector
GOAL 1: A Supportive Environment for Business and Investment

OBJECTIVE:
Enhance the County’s competitive advantage for attracting and retaining business and investment in its traditional and emerging sectors.

1. Explore efficient and cost effective options to expand the County’s broadband infrastructure as a means for attracting and retaining business investment.
   1.1. Determine the broadband capacity of the region’s business parks and the feasibility of increasing capacity.
   1.2. Incorporate broadband expansion into road construction projects where appropriate.

2. Ensure the County Official Plan provides clear and progressive policies to direct and manage growth in the County and support the attraction of business investment supporting the County’s target sectors, small business operators, entrepreneurs and home based businesses.

3. Explore the opportunities to create a County level Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to make use of grants and tax incentives that will jump start business development and investment.
   3.1. Explore opportunities to create County-wide standards for local CIPs as a way to support downtown revitalization.
   3.2. Explore opportunities to create County-wide standards for local CIPs geared to the agricultural sector.

4. Promote and actively expand the resources for small business and start-ups, including training, business counselling and financial assistance to small business operators and entrepreneurs in Middlesex County.
   4.1. Work with Middlesex CFDC to create and promote a business internet toolkit for managing a business’ online presence.
   4.2. Promote the County’s online directory of business services and support available to local business and entrepreneurs.

5. Promote the Middlesex CFDC’s Business Help Centre and its efforts to provide guidance and support to start-ups and existing small businesses.
   5.1. Host recurring events and networking opportunities in Middlesex County. Engage the local chamber of commerce and Middlesex CFDC as partners.
   5.2. Identify mentors willing to provide business assistance and coaching to small business operators and entrepreneurs.

6. Create an entrepreneurial spirit among students and youth (18-30 years) in Middlesex County.
   6.1. Catalogue and promote existing programs and opportunities that currently support youth entrepreneurship in the London and Middlesex region, including efforts being undertaken the Workforce Planning and Development Board.
   6.2. Develop a youth entrepreneurship committee to support youth starting a small business.
GOAL 2: A Proactive and Targeted Approach to Business Attraction

OBJECTIVE:
Implement an investment attraction program that is focused on sector opportunities with a history of competitiveness and export orientation or demonstrates potential for growth.

7. Promote the County’s lead generation protocol for the management of investment attraction opportunities.

8. Maintain an inventory of available commercial and industrial land and buildings on the County’s website (investinmiddlesex.ca).
   8.1. Monitor the availability of serviced employment land against longer term demand.

9. Continue to upgrade the County’s website (investinmiddlesex.ca) to include greater functionality and GIS capabilities.
   9.1. Promote the elements and characteristics of the County (and local municipalities) and the larger region that would attract new residents to community.
   9.2. Profile business success stories that illustrate the range of business investment and sector opportunities in the County’s target sectors. Engage community stakeholders (Local Municipalities, Chamber of Commerce, CFDC etc.) in the identification of local success stories.

10. Focus marketing of serviced industrial lands on advanced manufacturing, agri-business, construction, professional and business services, and transportation and warehousing sectors.
   10.1. Consider marketing efforts targeting larger footprint retail and commercial operations.

11. Support industrial land marketing with a comprehensive package of employment and development-related data, which can be used for inquiries and incoming requests for information (RFIs) from other levels of government and site selectors.
   11.1. Target short-term marketing of shovel ready and fully-serviced areas with the closest proximity to London and the 400 series corridors.
   11.2. Participate in EDCO’s Certified Site Program.

12. Pursue opportunities to cooperate with the London Economic Development Corporation (LEDC), including greater collaboration around immigration opportunities, agri-business investment attraction and the hosting of federal and provincial international investment representatives.
GOAL 2: A Proactive and Targeted Approach to Business Attraction

OBJECTIVE:
Implement an investment attraction program that is focused on sector opportunities with a history of competitiveness and export orientation or demonstrates potential for growth.

13. Tailor international marketing efforts on advanced manufacturing and agriculture/agri-business opportunities.

14. Cultivate relationships with federal and provincial foreign investment intermediaries.
   14.1. Implement the recommendations of the County’s FDI Strategy leveraging regional and sector partnerships.
   14.2. Actively participate in the investment attraction efforts of the Ontario Food Cluster, including at least one trade mission a year.

15. Develop an Agriculture/Agribusiness sector strategy that provides clear direction on matters related to the growth and sustainability of the agricultural economy. The strategy should:
   15.1. Assess the impact of the agriculture/agribusiness sector in Middlesex County.
   15.2. Identify and prioritize opportunities related to local food, value-added agriculture and supply chain development.
   15.3. Identify opportunities to leverage the research capabilities of Western University and Fanshawe College.
   15.4. Support the “Engage Western” initiative as an opportunity for projects to connect students and departments with local business and the community.
   15.5. Build awareness of business and investment opportunities in specialized crops, value added food products and local food.
   15.6. Identify opportunities for workshops/seminars for producers and agri-food suppliers to enhance their business capabilities.
   15.7. Address issues of succession planning and workforce development.
   15.8. Support the active marketing and promotion of investment opportunities in this sector.
GOAL 3: A Commitment to Community Sustainability and Growth

OBJECTIVE:
Build community capacity for economic growth and development through effective leadership and communication.

16. Create a Middlesex Economic Development Partnership Forum that meets quarterly to explore and discuss issues and opportunities for economic development in the County.

16.1. Include representatives from local municipalities, business associations, support agencies and local economic development stakeholders.

16.2. Provide opportunities to inform participants on local and regional economic development efforts, enable the sharing of information, investment opportunities, seek solutions to problems and connect people to available resources.

16.3. Support the CFDC’s development of a Centre for Non-Profit Collaboration.

16.4. Engage in the implementation of the 2013 “Middlesex County Impact of Socio- Economic Needs on Human Needs Report”.

17. Implement a Business Retention + Expansion (BR+E) program.

17.1. Work with local municipalities to develop/complete a visitation program in each of the County’s target sectors (starting with manufacturing);

17.2. Identify the top 25 companies in the County that should be visited jointly (County and Municipality) annually or biannually.

18. Take an active role in the labour force planning efforts of the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Training and Development Board.

18.1. Leverage the Employer One survey tool, Vicinity Jobs reporting, and sectoral reports to gather intelligence of the issues and challenges confronting local businesses.

18.2. Support the effective implementation of the local labour market plan.

19. Cooperate with the Middlesex CFDC to implement a Main Street Program, as a means to attract business investment, create attractive public spaces, and support residential growth.
GOAL 3: A Commitment to Community Sustainability and Growth

OBJECTIVE:
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20. Form a County Agriculture Advisory Committee to facilitate a shared knowledge exchange on the issues and opportunities for investment in the region’s agricultural sector.

20.1. Explore partnership opportunities between the County’s agriculture sector and the region’s post-secondary institutions.

20.2. Assist with the implementation of the County’s Agricultural Sector Strategy.

20.3. Pursue opportunities to collaborate with the London Chamber of Commerce Agribusiness Committee.

21. Form a County Tourism Advisory Committee and facilitate a shared knowledge exchange of the opportunities for investment and growth of the region’s tourism sector.

21.1. Support the creation of a regional tourism strategy that focuses on agri-tourism and community based tourism opportunities.


21.3. Create an online, searchable tourism business directory on the Tourism Middlesex website.

21.4. Expedite the implementation of the County’s Signage strategy, integrating agri-tourism signs into the strategy.

21.5. Bundle local tourism efforts to create a more unique/attractive product for consumers/visitors. Leverage the marketing and promotional efforts of the City of London, SWOTC and Tourism Middlesex.
A SPECIAL THANKS TO THE
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