

2023-2027
**Economic Development
Strategic Plan**

Prepared by Oosterbaan Strategy
For the Township of Oro-Medonte



ORO-MEDONTE.CA/BUSINESS





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Introduction and Overview

The Township of Oro-Medonte last undertook an economic development strategic planning exercise in 2017. Since then, the Township has made significant progress, including supporting large business investments, obtaining commitments from third-party providers for infrastructure development, in particular high-speed internet, and completing several enabling strategies such as the Employment Land Strategy and Tourism Destination Action Plan. The significant progress was also accompanied by challenges, such as the biggest economic shock in recent history caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, whose effects on supply chains and labour were far-reaching. While many of the goals, objectives, and actions from the 2017 plan remain relevant, given the significant change experienced since that plan was developed, it was critical to revisit the strategy to ensure its content remains focused on the evolving needs of the municipality.

In order to effectively update the strategic plan and identify current issues, a community survey, and industry focus groups were conducted. Census data and a review of existing relevant documents and strategies were also considered in the development of this updated economic development strategy. These include the Employment Land Strategy and Tourism Destination Action Plan, whose actions have been incorporated in the updated economic development strategy. The following report summarizes key findings from the data, and highlights the updated goals, objectives, and actions proposed for 2023-2027.

Goals for the 2023-2027 Economic Development Strategic Plan include:



Strategic Goal 1

Champion improved access to key infrastructure such as internet and natural gas.



Strategic Goal 2

Develop and promote Oro-Medonte as a premier four-season tourism destination.



Strategic Goal 3

Provide a supportive environment for business owners to start, maintain, and grow a business.



Strategic Goal 4

Address existing barriers to responsible and sustainable residential, commercial, and industrial development, while maintaining Oro-Medonte's rural character.



Understanding the Oro-Medonte Economy

Benefits of Operating a Business in Oro-Medonte

Oro-Medonte is home to a number of strategic assets that will enable on-going interest in economic development opportunities. The following section identifies key benefits to operating a business in Oro-Medonte based on current and previous research.

- A convenient and strategic location within an hour of the Greater Toronto Area.
- Easy and direct access to Highways 400, 11, 12, and 93.
- Access to the Lake Simcoe Regional Airport.
- A highly educated labour market, with more than half of the local workforce having a post-secondary diploma and/or degree.
- Minutes from state-of-the-art medical care at Orillia Soldiers Memorial Hospital and Barrie's Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre.
- Access to post-secondary education and training opportunities at Lakehead University in Orillia and Georgian College campuses in Barrie, Midland, and Orillia.
- An excellent network of organizations dedicated to business development in the region.
- A strong quality of life that combines rural living and fantastic recreational assets with close access to urban amenities.
- A strong commitment to supporting business.



Understanding the Oro-Medonte Economy

Demographic Overview

Using Census data from 2022 and 2017, a brief overview of Township demographics is provided below.

- Oro-Medonte's population grew 9.4% between 2016 and 2021, for a total population of 23,017. By comparison, Simcoe County grew by 11.2%, while Ontario grew at 5.8% and Canada by 5.2%.
- The Township is home to a range of industries, including significant and unique tourism assets, manufacturing operations, and agriculture/agri-tourism opportunities.
- Average household income in 2020 was \$139,400 compared to \$110,900 in Simcoe County, \$116,000 in Ontario and \$106,300 in Canada.
- As of 2017, 3,705 residents held university degrees, 600 held college diplomas, and another 1,550 completed apprenticeships.
- The most popular field of study was engineering and related technology.





Understanding the Oro-Medonte Economy



Insights from the Community

Residents and businesses reaffirmed that the four goals from the 2017-2022 Economic Development Strategy were still top economic development priorities, with Internet and Gas Improvements ranking as the top priority, followed by Tourism Promotion, Supporting Businesses, and Addressing Barriers to Development. Residents also voiced the importance of economic development activities aligning with the needs of the community, noting the importance of retaining Oro-Medonte's rural character. Communications infrastructure, other service infrastructure, and a high quality of life were identified as key attributes that are critical to economic and business development success in the Township.



The Township has established strong networks and relationships with various business service organizations, enabling the municipality to capitalize on funding and supports that benefit Oro-Medonte businesses. Examples of these organizations include County of Simcoe, RTO7 (Bruce-GreySimcoe), City of Orillia, City of Barrie, Orillia & Lake Country Tourism, Oro-Medonte Chamber of Commerce & Tourism, Orillia Chamber, Orillia & Area CDC, Lakehead University, Georgian College, OMAFRA, Small Business Centre Barrie etc.





The State of Oro-Medonte’s Key Sectors

Oro-Medonte has a number of key sectors they are focused on developing based on their strength in the region and the opportunities presented. Agriculture, manufacturing, service-based sectors, and tourism were all identified as key sectors of importance for the purposes of this strategy. The table on the next page details the number of jobs and location quotient for each 2-digit NAICS code. The location quotient calculates the ratio of employment in the identified sector within Oro-Medonte, versus employment in the identified sector in Ontario. Location quotients above 1 are considered to indicate a strength in the sector.





Oro-Medonte Jobs and Location Quotient by Industry

NAICS	Description	2022 Jobs	2022 Location Quotient
11	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	87	1.35
21	Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	19	0.30
22	Utilities	39	0.98
23	Construction	541	1.59
31-33	Manufacturing	1,112	2.29
41	Wholesale trade	609	2.40
44-45	Retail trade	511	0.82
48-49	Transportation and warehousing	200	0.81
51	Information and cultural industries	22	0.19
52	Finance and insurance	28	0.11
53	Real estate and rental and leasing	59	0.71
54	Professional, scientific and technical services	250	0.74
55	Management of companies and enterprises	0	0.00
56	Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	224	0.87
61	Educational services	175	0.41
62	Health care and social assistance	199	0.29
71	Arts, entertainment and recreation	131	1.81
72	Accommodation and food services	266	0.80
81	Other services (except public administration)	239	1.23
91	Public administration	621	1.53
X0	Unclassified	89	0.95

Consultation was undertaken on the opportunities and challenges facing Oro-Medonte's key sectors, agriculture, manufacturing, service, and tourism to assist in the development of this updated strategy.



Agriculture

Emerging opportunities for the agriculture sector include ongoing population growth as well as an increase in consumers purchasing locally and tourists experiencing local agriculture (on-farm diversified uses (experiences and products)).

Challenges noted by the agricultural sector included issues finding labour, specifically finding people willing to work, generally rising costs stemming from supply chain issues, and the health of bees. The agriculture sector also noted that protecting farmland should be considered as part of this updated strategy and thought should be given to avoid breaking up parcels of agricultural land to ensure minimal disruption to the industry (less time driving from point to point with slow moving vehicles, etc.). Further consideration should be given to how to enable young farmers to enter the sector given the high cost of farmland.

Manufacturing

Manufacturers have experienced an increase in local purchasing, driven by supply chain challenges that pushed businesses to look locally for goods and services. Similarly, as travel was limited during COVID-19 it pushed many in the sector to explore more business development opportunities closer to home and across new sectors. This sector noted a significant opportunity to increase their use of technology as they found their productivity and competitiveness was lagging compared to their US counterparts.

Challenges noted by the manufacturing sector included the cost and availability of labour, supply chain issues and rising costs, generally, and specifically from interest rates and energy costs, as well as high development charges.





Tourism

The tourism sector noted several key areas of opportunity for the Township, including investment opportunities (accommodators, restaurants, retailers), placemaking, and the opportunity to capitalize on the Township's natural assets through the enhancement of outdoor area access points and the activation of parks.

Challenges noted by the tourism sector included the availability of labour, limited visitor awareness of Oro-Medonte as a destination, and limited infrastructure to support visitation, such as, a lack of public transportation services, wayfinding signage, and accommodation options for visitors to stay in Oro-Medonte.



Service

The service sector identified opportunities to leverage the increasing interest in outdoor recreation and tourism in Oro-Medonte, which they felt led to positive impacts for ancillary businesses.

Challenges noted by the service sector included availability of labour, the potential for overtourism and a need for sustainable practices, and changes in consumer engagement behaviours.



2023-2027

Township of Oro-Medonte Economic Development Strategy

Vision

The Township of Oro-Medonte will use a balanced approach to economic development, focused on growing and attracting business, tourism development, and residential growth while being responsive to the needs of the community.



Strategic Goal 1 Infrastructure

Champion improved access to key infrastructure such as internet and natural gas.

 **Objective: Explore mechanisms and best practices of how to facilitate third party infrastructure development, where required and a business case exists.**

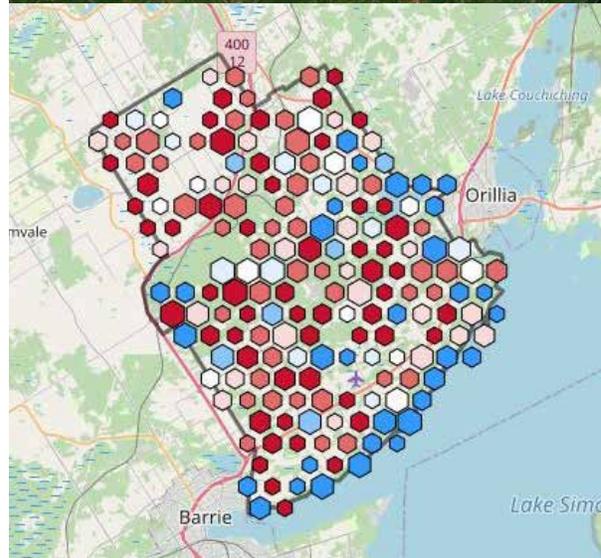
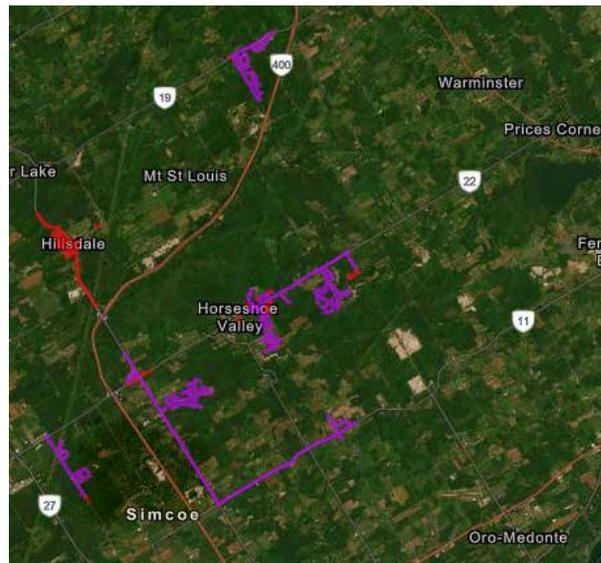
PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Identify and assess current to 10-year prediction of infrastructure needs for future development.
- Conduct a thorough environmental scan and evaluation of best practices in infrastructure development for relevant utilities identified in the above action, including current trends, financing, partnerships, the role of government, and the role of the private sector. Once completed a report with recommendations should be prepared for Council.
- Identify and continue to engage potential partners to monitor, advocate for, and support expansion of infrastructure where required.
- Maintain a map of existing natural gas coverage and identify areas of priority for expansion of services.
- Remain current on funding opportunities related to infrastructure expansion in priority areas.
- Apply for funding opportunities for infrastructure development where possible and relevant.
- Provide support for infrastructure development applications that benefit the Township.
- Evaluate need and required resources for Township to invest in service expansion where relevant and feasible.
- Continue to monitor the provision of high-speed internet in the Township to ensure coverage commitments are realized and resident and business concerns are addressed.
- Continue to engage potential partners such as the South Western Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) and the County of Simcoe to encourage expansion of high-speed internet services.

 **Objective: Advocate to other levels of government and the private sector for enhanced provision of required infrastructure from 10-year vision.**

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Conduct a thorough environmental scan and evaluation of best practices in municipal advocacy tactics related to strategic infrastructure needs.
- Select the best practice with the highest chance of implementation success and report to Council.
- Identify and continue to engage a range of partners to collaboratively advocate for the expansion of needed infrastructure services.



Strategic Goal 2

Tourism Development

Develop and promote Oro-Medonte as a premier four-season tourism destination.

 *Objective: Build the case for tourism growth and management in Oro-Medonte.*

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Formalize working relationship with key tourism organizations.
- Establish a Tourism Working Group/ Subcommittee of Economic Development (Team Oro-Medonte) Roundtable to advise implementation of the Tourism Destination Action Plan and inform future tourism work.
- Design, develop, and deliver a tourism awareness and ambassador program that targets both industry and residents.
- Facilitate identification and sharing of good news stories about tourism assets & benefits.

 *Objective: Increase knowledge and understanding about tourism in Oro-Medonte.*

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Collect, analyze, and share data about visitors to Oro-Medonte through industry and partner support.
- Enhance communications with other Township departments to identify and share tourism information.
- Perform bi-annual industry temperature check.
- Work with partners and Team Oro-Medonte to evolve, finalize and distribute an organizational role & responsibilities information sheet.
- Create infographics about tourism in Oro-Medonte.
- Conduct research to identify viable tourism transportation solutions for Oro-Medonte.
- Work with partners to support industry networking and learning opportunities.

 *Objective: Support and positively influence the development of new and existing four-season tourism products in the Township.*

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Create a prospectus for potential investors in Oro-Medonte as a tourism destination, based on existing tourism needs/gaps.
- Support community-based opportunities to activate arts, cultural and heritage assets.
- Maintain and expand partnerships related to tourism marketing and product development at the local and regional levels.
- Work with partners to provide packaging support for local and regional tourism operators, where feasible and relevant, to increase overnight tourism visits.
- Work with partners to implement the tourism communications plan when completed to promote the Township's tourism assets outside of the municipality.
- Develop responsible visitation guidelines and related communications.

 *Objective: Maintain and enhance tourism/recreational infrastructure in the Township to ensure long-term sustainability of assets.*

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Work collaboratively with internal partners to ensure on-going consultation with the community and key stakeholders regarding recreational and tourism asset management to ensure on-going sustainability of the sector and assets.
- Assess and support alignments between the Tourism Gap Analysis and Parks and Recreation Master Plan to maintain and/or expand tourism/recreational assets.
- Work collaboratively to implement the Wayfinding Strategy.
- Explore and implement ways to connect natural tourism/recreational assets to spending opportunities in the Township.



 *Objective: Support the development and enhancement of communications to visitors in Oro-Medonte.*

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Ensure that Oro-Medonte and its tourism assets are adequately represented in partners' visitor-facing resources (e.g., visitor-facing websites).
- Identify and clearly communicate appropriate lake access, including beaches, and supporting infrastructure.
- Develop responsible visitation guidelines for destination marketing activities to facilitate more respectful tourism visitation.

Strategic Goal 3 Supportive Business Environment

Provide a supportive environment for business owners to start, maintain, and grow a business.

 *Objective: Provide Township-based businesses with support and connections to regional resources to start, maintain, and grow their business.*

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Update and maintain economic development pages on the Township website to provide key information to incoming and existing businesses and workforce.
- Implement communication strategy to share information and opportunities with the business community.
- Maintain and enhance the Township's partnership with local and regional business development organizations.
- Participate with partners to develop and deliver resources to the business community, including supporting the attraction and retention of workforce.
- Create a resource for businesses to support tourism and its growth in Oro-Medonte.

 *Objective: Work with partners to alleviate workforce shortages now and into the future.*

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Advocate for regulations at all levels that support the development of affordable and attainable housing in Oro-Medonte.
- Advocate for employee-centric transportation solutions when public and private partners are expanding transit options.
- Work with partners to promote local career opportunities to local students.

 *Objective: Support the long-term sustainability of the agricultural sector.*

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Establish a committee to support the development of planning policy and advocacy related to the protection of agricultural land.
- Support advocacy efforts and implementation, if relevant, related to the committee's work.
- Explore mechanisms to better facilitate on-farm diversification and value-added activities for the agricultural sector.
- Continue to recognize and facilitate opportunities for agricultural-related industrial and commercial uses permitted in agricultural areas subject to O.P. policies and, where applicable, the Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas.



Strategic Goal 4

Address Barriers to Sustainable Development

Address existing barriers to responsible and sustainable residential, commercial, and industrial development, while maintaining Oro-Medonte's rural character.

 **Objective: Engage with other levels of government to advocate for policies and support that will enable and encourage private investment.**

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Consult with key stakeholders and leverage existing research to understand and monitor the full scope of potential barriers to investing in Oro-Medonte, including local, regional, provincial, and national issues of concern.
- Identify potential partners to align with in both the public and private sectors to develop solutions to identified barriers and implement, where possible.
- Advocate for policy changes that address identified barriers where relevant.
- Continue to work with internal departments to ensure Township employment lands and the needs of businesses are accommodated in updated municipal plans (Official Plans, Zoning By-Laws, Master Plans) in accordance with Provincial and or County policies.

 **Objective: Facilitate the development of industrial, private recreation and commercial zoned lands and buildings.**

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Support the update of the zoning by-law to align with O.P. mapping and policies. Specifically, the lands zoned for employment should align with those lands designated for employment in the Township's O.P.
- Support the implementation of the Public Realm and Urban Design recommendations from the Craighurst Secondary Plan. Explore the development of a related placemaking strategy, if feasible.

- Work with the County to examine the current and long-term future use of the L.S.R.A. airport lands, including surrounding lands and consider the overall economic benefit of the L.S.R.A. to the County and the Township, and the role of the airport as a significant asset to enhance regional economic development potential.
- Continue to work closely with the County and Province to coordinate plans for development of the new employment lands, as identified in the Employment Lands Strategy.
- Maintain a complete map of industrial and commercial zoned plots of land and monitor the status of available land on an on-going basis. Accuracy should be reviewed on an annual basis
- Engage in scheduled check-ins (e.g. annually) with landowners of current large parcels (e.g. over 5 ha) within and surrounding existing Employment Areas, as identified in the Employment Land Strategy, to assess interest in developing the lands and assessing feasibility of development or redevelopment. Within the check-in program, explore public-private partnerships to encourage intensification and infill development opportunities within employment lands.
- Support the development of a master servicing plan for Oro Centre.
- Support strategic commercial development in identified growth areas that seek to preserve and enhance Oro-Medonte's rural character, including exploring the development of Community Improvement Plan(s), where relevant.
- Support to expansion plans of existing Oro-Medonte businesses.
- Consider improving the marketability and feasibility of developing vacant employment lands by undertaking necessary pre-screening studies and assessments at the expense of the Township. These may include but are not limited to: servicing strategies, environmental studies, water protection requirements, or archaeological assessment studies. The Township may make use of provincial programs such as the Investment Ready Certified Site Designation for achieving this.



 **Objective: Enhance the Township's readiness to attract and retain new investment.**

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Update and maintain the Community Profile with relevant information for new and existing businesses.
- Consider a range of promotional tools to inform prospective industries about Oro-Medonte and its communities. These could include social media campaigns or direct marketing campaigns to speak with existing and interested businesses, and real estate network connections.
- Work with landowners and developers to understand status of their land and if they want investment attraction assistance from Oro-Medonte. Identify specific community needs, target markets, and sectors in preparation for when land or buildings become available. This may include a retail/service-gap analysis, if relevant.
- Work with regional partners to develop and implement an investment attraction strategy for existing land and building opportunities.
- Review municipal By-laws and zoning to facilitate home-based businesses.
- Market home-based business opportunities.

 **Objective: Become a resource hub to guide businesses through Township processes.**

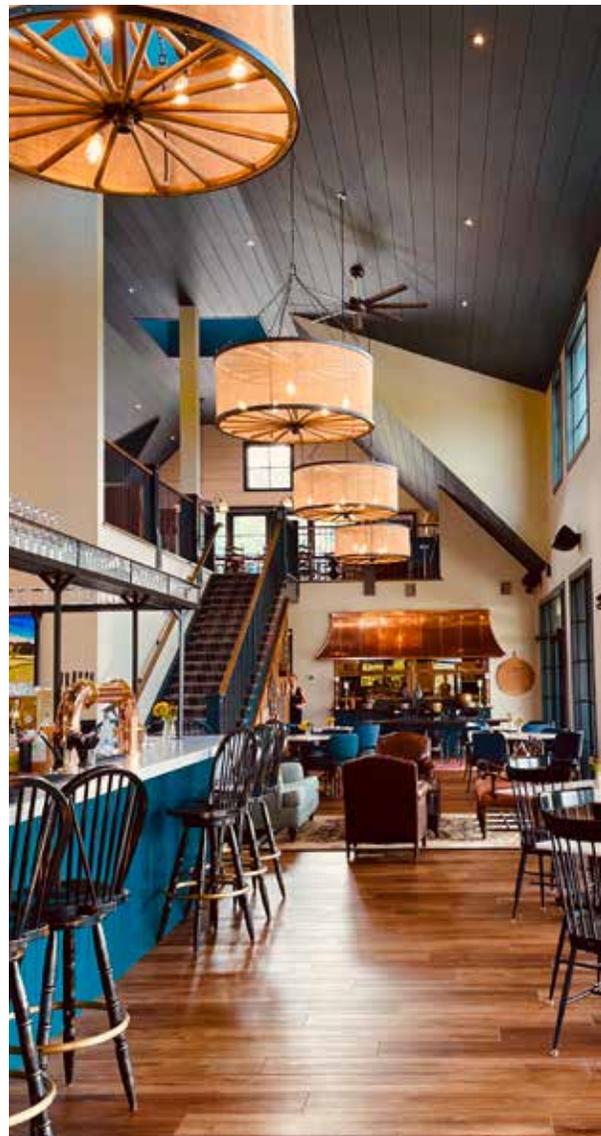
PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Support the development and implementation of an on-going feedback mechanism for businesses to assess municipal processes.
- Continue to enhance relationship between internal departments economic development by formalizing interaction/communication process between departments.
- Work with Planning and Building staff to create a guide to planning and development processes.
- Understand the challenges businesses have with municipal processes.
- Research best practices on developing a 'concierge service' to guide businesses through internal processes.
- Collaborate with internal departments to develop the concierge service that will assist businesses and streamline processes.
- Communicate the concierge service to the business community.

 **Objective: As per the Employment Land Strategy, undertake a program that supports increased intensification in underutilized employment lands.**

PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Explore opportunities for infill and redevelopment in mature industrial areas.
- Following check in calls with landowners, respond to interested developers or employers to discuss any suitable fits for identified opportunities.
- Explore opportunities to establish incubator facilities to promote and encourage the development of start-up industries, particularly related to knowledge-based sectors and other export-based emerging industry clusters.



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