

Economic Development Strategy 2025-2029
Working Sessions

Kawartha Lakes Economic Development

Kawartha Lakes
Jump In

Economic Development Strategy Working Sessions

Overview

The consultation process for developing the Economic Development Strategy was thorough and engaging, involving active participation from key community partners, local businesses, Kawartha Lakes staff, elected officials, and external economic development organizations.

A total of 149 participants contributed through three methods:

- 28 one-on-one phone interviews
- 39 participants engaged in six (6) focus groups (agriculture; industry and trades; support organizations; services; arts and culture; and retail and hospitality).
- 82 online survey responses were gathered

After the consultation, a working session was held with 29 participants to review findings and begin drafting realistic and actionable steps. Participants included representatives from agriculture, community, business, local organizations, and municipal staff. Through this session, four (4) key themes were identified to address the current and future needs of Kawartha Lakes:

1. **Being Investment Ready**: Having the reputation of being a "business friendly community" that supports business investment.

2. **Being Connected**: Building partnerships and working collaboratively to support economic development initiatives across Kawartha Lakes.

3. **Community Building Through Placemaking**: Creating vibrant downtowns and supportive communities to help to build the economy.

4. **Diversifying the Economy**: Increasing the number of businesses through the attraction, retention and growth of business investment

Below are the comments received through the four (4) working sessions that highlight the community's vision for economic growth.

Theme 1: Being Investment Ready

- Data analysis is needed on what is happening now.
- Data driven processes.
- Understanding how CKL compares to other comparable communities/cities.
- Simplifying permit processes – it is time consuming + difficult (events, building permits).
- Communication with staff – lacking partnership + focuses on why things can't happen rather than how to help make it happen.
- Some issues being discussed now were brought up and discussed in 2016 during focus groups. If Ec Dev + staff is focusing.
- Businesses are not being serviced properly by Ec Dev staff.
- Time required to get permissions, permits + approvals from the City to do the expansions and projects is leading to issues.
- Markets create the timelines for the businesses not the city + city process/staff timelines.
- Ec Dev officer dedicated to onboarding businesses that has a glass half full attitude that helps the business through the process – like concierge but better.
- In past developers didn't come here because CKL is business friendly – they came because of land/greenbelt.
- Focus on existing businesses (10 employees + less) as well as focusing on attracting new.
- Helping existing business to expand – networking – referrals.
- Investing in our small businesses.
- Defining our businesses as anyone creating an income (farms, industry, small businesses, etc.).
- Infrastructure is a requirement – daycares – need a streamlined process to support at home daycares because the large facilities are full. Ec Dev to have list of available daycares.
- Housing – diversity in housing options to attract investment + employment.
- Roads + street + mindful of agriculture + farm equipment that needs to get around. Signage is challenging, roundabout challenging.
- Public transport to cities outside of CKL to Durham, GTA, etc. GO bus, etc. Which will support workforce.
- Equally important is public transport within CKL between our communities.
- Downtown parking which will continue to grow as an issue.
- Parking limited due to private land. 2018 parking study has sat with nothing having been done yet. Need solutions not more studies.
- Cash in lead policies need to be updated. Lack of transportation investment.
- To attract investment support companies in expansion like Brooklyn Concrete, Armada, etc. That are larger industries and have money. Working with them closely + supporting their needs.
- Create a hub of research facilities for Agriculture. Like other cities have. Leverage Fleming + Trent.
- Focus on a niche expertise rather than being everything (ex. Food).
- Knowing what industries, we want to attract.

- GAP analysis for knowing where we need investment and what to attract.
- Tourism is seasonal.
- Communication to share what the city is doing to attract business. Success stories shared.
- Infrastructure is needed. Broadband will be important.
- Property that is zoned to allow to attract investment in a timeline + don't have the funds + time to get what they need here. Needs to be set up.
- Looking for 1. Does the city know what they want over time what composition is envisioned? 2. Do you have the infrastructure in place to make it happen. 3. Do you have the staff + team to do it – is there confidence in staff ability to do it.
- Communication – lots out there for people to search for + access but it is self driven. What is the engagement.
- Everyone is required to do the same studies (ex. Traffic studies, environment, readiness) but could there not be one provided for an entire area rather than having + requiring one by each applicant which is expensive and time consuming and can result in not getting the approvals.
- Essentially have to buy land without having approval.
- If the city identifies what they want + the land required they can attract the required investment easily.
- Having the "can do" attitude and support from all staff in making it happen.
- Having ready to go investment leads.
- Aging businesses with property sitting + ready. Have a portfolio where there is a focus on approaching these opportunities – succession planning + those exiting.
- City bought Ag land + got it rezoned + setup and owned it and easily available.
- Streamline approval process is in several city plans – the bills that came out caused the city to halt and not move forward whereas the City of Ptbo created a task force.
- Industrial Park in Omemee – but barriers to making happen.
- In order for things to not fall between the cracks there needs to be an overview of Ec Dev staff to determine if we have what is needed by $ + education etc.
- Ec Dev team leaders from Ec Dev strategy.
- Ec Dev shouldn't be buried under Planning.
- Local manufacturing mentors.
- Development process + turning business attraction to being focused on making it happen + being actively engaged + making it happen. It is an attitude change + a fundamental shift that everyone has to think this way.
- Culture throughout CKL – everyone has to.
- Remove Ec Dev from under Dev services and have Ec Dev standing out + driving the action.
- Age demographics are changing + unserved for this because focus has been on older demographics but need infrastructure + businesses to support new demographic.
- Investment land piece is huge – concierge program needs support + ability to make decisions.
- Need an Ec Dev dept. that thinks like an entrepreneur like Markham, Mississauga, etc. Need to think about the people + what they need. Doctors, daycare, etc.
- Infrastructure + investment to support community year-round (ex. Casino Rama) + roads etc. to support it.

- Having special economic zones (like in other countries) that get the city 'out of the way' and its ready to go + the only barriers are the builds not the city + everyone having to have a say.
- Need to have what the other communities have in place (designated, serviced, development lands). Have the City build the shell of the building + do the upfront work.
- City needs to address vacancy of 2nd floors, brown lands taxing + dealing with these vacancies. Leverage mechanisms the City has.
- 60 acres of property – old rundown property in Lindsay – over leveraged, privately owned, need to get owners to pay up + clean up or the City take it over.
- More customer forward City staff + having specific points of contact specialized in their areas + with training + educational required.
- Open offices – Ec Dev needs to be open to the public + accessible to the public (Planning as well). No barriers.
- Knowing what businesses, you want to attract (ex. Food processes) be very forward planning in what we want.
- Need a conference centre with breakout rooms there isn't a regional one + we could have it.
- What is the root of the issue – do we need more staff, etc. Look at the core services review which wasn't communicated well with results + actions.
- One step website – to support business + what they need.
- Need to create more areas for small businesses in the areas that need it (Lindsay) and the opposite for those that do have vacancies (Coby).
- Commitment to digital advancements – what can be done digitally vs. by a staff person. To be investment ready look at best practices that exist.
- Need to have what young people who we want to attract want in their communities (big bar, etc.)
- Grant nickel.
- Rural properties that need more Capital + have tourism driving potential.

Theme 2: Being Connected

- Chamber of Commerce – Info Sharing, B2B.
- KLEN – comprehensive.
- Need: networking – priorities, what's happening (sector specific + broader B2B)
- Example: TeamPTBO – solution based, action oriented.
- KLEN – increase participation, more in person, move around CKL.
- Raising awareness of Kawartha Lakes, and what is CKL.
- City newsletter (Jump in) really helpful.
- Knowing what all support orgs are and what they do (raise awareness).
- "Who do you call" directory.
- Helpful: direct connect chambers with programs for them.
- How to get from point A (Chamber/Ec Dev) to point B (Planning, Eng.). Department to department connectivity.

- Streamlined "decision tree" for business expansion/growth.
- Streamlined decision making – ex. 17 copies of applications – shorter decision making.
- Website list – I want to open… = checklist of steps + AI timeline + list of costs (PTBO example).
- Auto-approve after timeline missed.
- Track baseline timeframes and modify inputs annually (staffing, timelines, enforcement).
- Appoint project manager/concierge for every project.
- Seek public – private partnership on public land (ex. Wasaga Beach, beach develop).
- Proactive relationship building @ start up to ensure supports are available.
- BIA/Chambers/Property owners connecting new businesses with Ec Dev.
- New business registry.
- Ec Dev advisor to support businesses @start up – welcoming committee.
- Brock Township – example – Welcome wagon.
- Permits – need to allow business to grow, not just start up support.
- 2023 Farmfest proactive updates to directory with summer students.
- Business benefit finder – municipality targeted smaller scale. Need an incentive to have them complete.
- In person visits with businesses from chambers, Ec Dev.
- Communication is a challenge – flyers, signs, creative – "Did You Know" campaign was great – business version.
- Targeted emails and not bombarded – tailored.
- FDC + launch KL – open to inviting people in and using space.
- Monthly meetings in sectors (ex. Health care, aging population) or complimentary sectors.
- Hiring in external collaborators – let them know what is in CKL + subject matter experts.
- Acknowledging the connectivity of ACH industry across CKL and passive contribution.
- Plans should not be shelved so that they can be achieved in the time frame.
- Expand capacity of activities (ex. Milk run) that have momentum to maximize # of people coming to CKL.
- CRDC/Invest – start up funding, develop business strategy, promo videos.
- Increase staffing to support the growth + demand. Staff do not have time to invest in partnerships +events.
- Ec Dev is buried under Planning.
- CKL depts. Work in silos, when Ec Dev is not a priority.
- Ec Dev lacks teeth.
- City needs to invest in Ec Dev.
- Capacity to implement develop plans, but not implement.
- Ec Dev staff are silos, no team, need to work with community groups.
- Grass roots enthusiasm.
- Being accountable + strategic.

- Build a plan for communities – we are community of communities, what is the plan for each of the communities.
- Downtown Revitalization in Fenelon: grassroots – find the leaders in the community – long-term capacity.
- Learn from Fenelon: find the people + find the money.
- Have an achievable plan.
- Physically in person gatherings to connect, dream, plan.
- 25th anniversary of amalgamation: opportunity to celebrate each community and collaboration. Need to stop fighting each other (organization/roads/money/etc.)
- Finally, be united and move past amalgamation.
- Proud of CKL. Identify the brand.
- Sector – specific collaboration (need mtg room space) with Ec Dev or chamber support.
- Connect developers with orgs.
- Stronger non-profit funding.
- Opportunity: KLEN, build in developers, sub committee with investors, businesses: business can come in and be supported with a plan to move forward.
- Fractured business support ecosystem.
- Need industry support groups (ex. Tech)
- More community led leadership.
- Event: KLEN members service providers and introduce services to broader community.

Theme 3 – Community Building Through Placemaking

- Downtown core important for people coming into urban centres.
- Creation of vibrant downtowns: colours, interesting spaces, photo-op spaces, destinations for people to come into town.
- Opening hours that align with when people are coming into town (i.e. tourists, commuters, snowmobilers).
- Completion and execution of parking plans: next time we do downtown revitalization, include health transit options in the plan (bikes, pedestrian safety).
- Temporary public art: needs a strong background infrastructure of arts and culture in the community, having arts and culture integrated into the Ec Dev strategy, need a cultural centre, support from the City for arts and culture.
- We are having more newcomers who have language barriers: need translation wayfinding stations in public spaces to help be more welcoming, invest in newcomers.
- Business are receiving a lot inquiries about parking and petty crime in the downtown
- Need attractive things in downtowns to draw people in.
- Is there enough parking when every space is being utilized and working at capacity? Are we planning for growth in parking strategy? Are we considering parking for workers versus parking for visitors/shoppers/customers.

- Second floor unit vacancy: making redevelopment more attractive so there are more people living downtown which will make for a more attractive downtown.
- Need for gathering spaces in the downtowns that are fully utilized "town squares", space for people to go that is programmed for community events and also for more spontaneous use.
- Having more people living downtown.
- Getting heavy truck traffic out of downtown (esp. in Fenelon Falls) will improve feeling of people in a downtown.
- Simplifying signage and making it better for people to see what businesses are there: simplifying process, re-writing the sign by-law and make it easier to get sign permits; have guidelines for signage (looking at places like Banff and Whistler).
- Consistent opening hours so that the downtowns look inviting and like there are lots of businesses open.
- Weird boundaries for the Lindsay BIA: expand BIA boundary to include more businesses.
- Public WIFI in the downtown.
- Increased mental health and addiction.
- Address issues around safety, homelessness, petty crime in Lindsay.
- Need a centre for new Canadians to support newcomers and provide resources.
- Breaking down silos within the City to address some of these issues: larger role for Ec Dev on departmental projects.
- Encourage businesses and employers to have their employees coming into the downtown to shop and eat.
- CIP plans with more grants available especially around second flood redevelopment, accessibility and fire code compliance.
- Need better transportation to serve downtowns outside of Lindsay to connect them together as a City; operate more vehicles for transit in rural centers; encourage ride sharing; municipally funded transit or ride sharing service.
- Need for community gathering spaces in all of our communities and awareness about these spaces and doing events in spaces that already exist.
- Digital community boards to promote events.
- Needs welcoming spaces in communities so they look better.
- Entryway signs into downtown with themes and integrated design elements to enhance placemaking.
- Nighttime lighting assessment to help enhance safety in the downtowns at night.
- Safe crossways in downtowns, stop signs (especially in Coboconk), bumpouts; communities need help dealing with other levels of government to achieve traffic safety goals.
- Investing in smaller/rural downtowns both for safety and to encourage people to stop and buy stuff.
- Electronic mapping kiosk for people to find different stores and events like at a mall.
- Supporting and promoting other communities outside of the main urban centres.

- Encouraging people to go to downtown in KL as opposed to Orillia, Oshawa, Peterborough; need draws.
- Expanding what you are able to do in second floors downtown i.e. businesses/offices on second floors.
- Bring in property owners and developers with City staff to brainstorm about second floor solutions and what we need for upcoming growth.
- Having different levels of government work together to support downtown growth.
- Need architectural design guidelines to encourage consistency.
- Focus on placemaking, encouraging people to come in, sit down.
- Public amenities to support visitors such as parking and public washrooms.
- Utilizing patios to expand space: having more patio space and places to expansion to encourage a better ambiance; blocking off areas for patios and events to encourage nicer ambiance, expanding into the road.
- Wayfinding signage for downtowns done by the City of Kawartha Lakes and directing people within downtowns to improve ease of access.
- Improve perceived safety of downtowns.
- Increasing dementia friendly and accessible space and getting businesses on board.
- Using upper storeys for offices to increase vibrancy.
- Should be incentives for downtown building owners to revitalize upper storeys in downtown buildings.
- Downtowns need to be communities by increasingly liveability.
- City needs to act on various studies and reports it pays for: need tangible action items to follow plan recommendations and to speed up implementation.
- Need more budget lines to support arts and culture and dedicated funding to help CKL become an arts and culture destination: more municipal support for this sector.
- There are limited supports for seniors: need to create additional supports for large senior population.
- Better transportation to and from destinations including trails, bike lanes, boat friendly areas: bikes need to be part of the wayfinding strategy and Council needs to support this
- Supporting businesses in smaller downtowns: making these downtowns vibrant and supporting them in the off season.
- Making downtowns accessible including second floors: encouraging accessible layouts, entrances and increased grants for accessibility.
- Need to have restaurants and businesses have consistent opening hours during the week for visitors, businesses and employees.
- Supporting communities by having services such as youth wellness hub so young people have somewhere to go, activities, counselling, services.
- "welcome wagon" for realtors to encourage people to come into the communities.
- Opportunities for businesses outside of the downtown to help people get from them to the downtowns.

- Export tourism dollars throughout the city by getting tourists to the urban areas.
- Work with Parks Canada to have better signage on the waterways: can we put information on municipal lands?
- Standards around beautification in communities including signage.
- Need tight requirements around beautification to help make communities cohesive and appealing.
- Have things open on Mondays and Tuesdays especially restaurants: work with the Chambers to have better opening hours for tourists and locals.
- Encourage tourists/cottagers to buy things locally.
- Coordinated food/music festivals and similar events and promote them locally and to tourists.
- Signature events to happen in all communities like a waterfront festival to link all of the downtowns.
- Help everyone have access to permits to help get events going such as road closure permits.
- Pedestrianize areas of the downtowns.
- Permitting is really difficult and the permitting process needs to be easier for community organization and events.
- Coaching for community groups in terms of how to apply for permits.
- Funding processes need to be easier for organizations to access to support events.
- Expand BIA boundary.

Theme 4: Diversifying the Economy

- Investment the municipality is prepared to spend – new funding opportunities.
- Downtown revitalization “poor Fenelon” – grass roots group. Strat Docs to get the community together. Grove Theatre coming from the plan. Don’t have land for development. More medical spaces. Industrial land but needs support for it to be ready.
- Access to capital. (Digital Main St.) helpful for growth.
- During COVID the population changed.
- Based on the population – services to support.
- GMS – housing and employment “employment drives population”.
- Population growth – half population employed – need to add the jobs.
- Industrial we should be focused on.
- No land.
- Young population in Fenelon – need services to support.
- Serviced land – but for what? What industries are we trying to attract? Select industries we want to attract.
- Ag food – attracting skilled talent. Automation – struggle to attract.
- Hard to retain in communities when downtowns close early. Has no night life.
- Access to capital.

- Significant investment wanting to come in. Showcase the community businesses.
- Tourism – seasonal folks and tapping into them.
- Who are the industries we want to be attracting based on the properties we have?
- The challenges that local businesses have – tricky to add in additional employees.
- Retaining employees – housing.
- Proximity to the GTA same day delivery
- Securing equipment – 407.
- Location within the CKL. Strategic employment land vs businesses north of Lindsay.
- Other levels of Gov't – getting their support.
- 5 Sectors of strength. Varies across the community. Fenelon is different for each community.
- 3-4 different economies in CKL – Communication across all communities is very different - Sectors vary.
- Multi purposed Ec Dev affect.
- Ag – Tech is huge in those area.
- Skilled labour to support tech – non existent.
- Challenge – protect Ag lands.
- Missed opportunities in brownfields (CIP) – Capital.
- Arts/Tourism – not aware of the execution of the plans. Aspirational plans.
- Innovation – Key sectors / tech centres
- Execution.
- Concierge needs teeth. Have the leverage. Ec Dev needs a director! Ability to make decisions.
- More businesses that need support not just the concierge.
- KLEN
- Need to collect more, boots on the ground. A group to put people in the room. How we can support investment. Framework to create jobs – bring business. Addition to the concierge – CKL/extend agencies.
- Tricky getting business/folks in the room – when virtual is an option.
- Fenelon meetings as a community.
- Micro level in each community. Groups to support local communities.
- Macro with the entire community.
- CKL can support these groups similar to Fenelon. Support so there isn't a wild-wild west.
- Want more immersed community. Want the experiential moments. "TikTok' shots, Instagram back drops.
- Come together as a community.
- "It is so boring here", no night life.
- Space – rest. Pop – up space.
- All year long farmer's markets.
- Winter festivals or events – functions.
- Conference centre.
- More options.
- Job generation. Good paying jobs.
- More parking in the growth that is coming.

- Transportation – infrastructure.
- Increasing the airport for larger planes.
- Need better jobs in CKL – but tricky with no where to go.
- Have lost a lot of industry over the years.
- Limited based on lack of servicing – dry industrial great for a certain sector.
- Increase infrastructure.
- Diversify the housing supply.
- Get the properties – we are not ready for development.
- Unsightly buildings – identify areas where downtown can expand to support.
- Funding to support. Incentives (CIP).
- Approval process needs to be quicker.
- Ec Dev locked to the community – should be open to the community. City (not just Ec Dev)
- Residential development impacts will have on development.
- Events committee, start paying for themselves, not dependent on the chamber and BIA (Previous years).
- How this is not affecting people, no real support. No way in making you a success. Waiting for your department. Points to run put.
- Development process and its length, not hold-up expansions. Businesses went out of business before getting approval.
- Ag support existing within the community. People come to CKL because we have what they are looking for.
- Delays in development – costs to build have gone up. Whereas initially it was a lower cost.
- Support local business then more.
- Expand the development concierge process – not just 5 businesses a dedicated position.
- Properly help support business needs for development.
- Retain the businesses that we do have. Free enterprises. If there is a need for a business in a community.
- Diversify the housing options-location/size.
- Less rules, incentives.
- CIP – “turn on” pieces that haven’t been.
- Big reduction of co-ops of all sectors.
- Business going in on a bulk buy.
- We all want to cooperate.