



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Erin Kaiser, Manager of Economic Development & Innovation
Tony Boutassis, Manager of Investment Attraction

DATE: March 5, 2025

MEMO NO.: CSE-2025-003

SUBJECT: Invest Halton Hills 2024 Annual Report

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide Council with the 2024 Invest Halton Hills Annual Report, as appended. The Annual Report provides an overview of key initiatives and activities implemented by the Economic Development division.

Regular updates provided through media releases, Council announcements, reports and memorandums, social media, websites, Invest Halton Hills e-newsletter, and community and stakeholder events - supplement the content of the 2024 Invest Halton Hills report.

Although the focus is on 2024, it is important to acknowledge the current economic conditions. At the time of writing this report, the full impacts of US tariffs placed on Canada remain uncertain.

The Invest Halton Hills team is proactively supporting local businesses by offering a hub of resources to assist the business community in navigating these challenges. This includes a dedicated webpage and outreach to provide businesses with updated information. Additionally, ongoing communication through social media, newsletters, meetings and collaboration with key stakeholders (e.g. Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Areas, etc.) reinforces the Town's commitment to supporting a thriving economy.

BACKGROUND:

A Thriving Economy is a key Council Strategic Plan priority. Supporting and retaining existing businesses and attracting new non-residential investments is key to creating a diverse, resilient and thriving economy and generating municipal revenues that the Town can reinvest into the services that residents and businesses rely on every day. Non-residential investments also raise local quality of life, fostering economic growth strengthens the community, positioning Halton Hills the best place to live, work and invest.

To accomplish this and recognizing available resources, Invest Halton Hills delivers a strategic suite of services, including:

- Targeted financial incentives via the Community Improvement Plan (CIP)
- Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) programming
- Business Concierge Program
- Domestic and international investment attraction, expansion and relocation
- Site selection assistance
- Market research
- Industry engagement
- Workforce development
- Amplifying tourism's economic benefits

The Invest Halton Hills workplan is guided by several key strategies, including Council's Strategic Plan, [Economic Development and Tourism Strategy](#), and [Foreign Direct Investment \(FDI\) Attraction Strategy](#).

COMMENTS:

Throughout 2024, Invest Halton Hills expanded existing initiatives and launched targeted new business programs and supports. Result highlights include:

- 108% increase in the number of Community Improvement Plan (CIP) inquiries; and a record number of applications as businesses (supported by targeted Town incentives) invest in the local community - resulting in over \$154,000 in CIP grants;
- Over 400 businesses served and more than \$265,000 in grants secured to support local business through the highly-successful Digital Main Street program;
- Launch of the Visit Halton Hills tourism 'Sticker Map Campaign' and enhanced tourism initiatives to amplify community and economic benefits resulting from the approximate 350,000 visitors and \$4.5 million in visitor spending;
- Nearly 80% increase in followers of the Visit Halton Hills Instagram account;
- Elevated profile of Halton Hills being a prime investment destination through trade missions, familiarization tours, site selection promotion, marketing and the

pending investment attraction tour with the Ontario Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade;

- 35% increase in non-residential investment inquiries through the Business Concierge Program and the foreign direct investment workplan;
- Business Concierge investment pipeline with the potential to capture about \$1 billion in non-residential investments, six million square feet of development, create up to about 3000 local jobs, and generate significant revenues for the Town.
- Launch of the Agricultural Roundtable to support the long-term economic viability of the local agri-business sector.
- Executed Memorandums of Understanding with the Downtown Acton Business Improvement Area and the Downtown Georgetown Business Improvement Area.
- Secured over \$60,000 in external grants for economic development initiatives.
- Won the national Marketing Award from the Economic Development Association of Canada for the Invest Halton Hills [Community Profile](#).
- 95% completion of the recommendations of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.

1. Local Business Supports and Initiatives

In 2024, Halton Hills continued to support local businesses through tailored initiatives built around local business needs. Small Business Week (SBW), new and enhanced events, stakeholder and external partnership connections, as well as the launch of the Halton Hills Agricultural Roundtable are a few of the accomplishments.

The Town also completed the final round of the Digital Main Street and Digital Transformation Grant programs. These programs provided essential support for small businesses, helping them adopt digital tools and technologies to increase resilience. Since 2020, over 400 businesses have been supported, and more than \$265,000 in grants distributed to help businesses improve their online presence and digital capabilities.

2. Community Improvement Plan (CIP)

The CIP had its most successful year since its launch in 2014. The program provides targeted and strategic incentives to advance Town priorities and maximize community benefits – including downtown vibrancy, heritage preservation, agri-business supports and brownfield redevelopment. Underlying the program's importance, Invest Halton Hills has received a record number of inquiries and applications - with 25 viable program inquiries, 6 completed projects and many additional projects currently in the queue. The Facade Improvement, Building Renovation and Environmental Assessment Grants remain the most active. This year, over \$155,000 was granted through the CIP.

3. Tourism Initiatives

Visit Halton Hills made significant progress in 2024 by enhancing its tourism brand, and expanding awareness and reach. The Sticker Map Program promoted local tourism businesses and attracted visitors - resulting in the distribution of 1,700 maps and 250,000 views on social media. The Town also participated in 15 local festivals and events - engaging over 1,500 visitors and conducting surveys to understand visitor spending trends.

Through campaigns such as “Tourism Tuesday” and “Fall Bucket List,” Visit Halton Hills encouraged visitors to explore the Town’s offerings while supporting small businesses. A Sports Tourism Package launched to connect sports organizers and visitors with local businesses – magnifying the economic benefits.

4. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Invest Halton Hills has made significant progress in strengthening the Town’s FDI program and attracting interest from investors by showcasing the Town’s unique value proposition to targeted international markets. In 2024, Halton Hills concentrated on servicing quality investment leads and executing focused trade missions that aligned with the Town’s target markets. Three trade missions were successfully executed in 2024 resulting in nearly 70 high-quality pre-qualified investment meetings. These translated into eight qualified leads. These missions have significantly contributed to expanding and showcasing Halton Hills as a prime investment destination on the international stage, and offer opportunities to strengthen and diversify the economy.

FDI activities in 2024 also included hosting site visits for international companies, promoting local development sites, and collaborating with partners such as Invest Ontario and Invest in Canada.

2024 also marked the creation of the "On the Road to Success" Community Profile, which won the Economic Development Association of Canada (EDAC) Marketing Award.

5. Business Concierge Program

Since its inception in 2021, the Business Concierge Program has been instrumental in Halton Hills maintaining an “open for business” approach. The program continues to be a major incentive tool for new investments.

The Business Concierge Program creates value by providing ‘white-glove’ and tailored service - which assists companies in navigating the Town’s development processes, streamlining investment decisions, responding to inquiries, and ensuring businesses receive the support they require throughout all stages of investment decisions (e.g. site selection), and ultimately the development and opening process.

In 2024, Business Concierge assisted seven active projects representing a total potential investment in Halton Hills of over \$1 billion. When these projects are

completed, they are estimated to create about 3,000 direct jobs and approximately 6 million square feet of new leasable industrial and commercial space. They will also generate major revenue for the Town through annual property taxes, development charges and application/development fees (e.g. building permits, cash-in-lieu of parkland). These revenues are key to funding Town services and capital infrastructure that residents and businesses rely on as well as the construction of capital infrastructure.

As highlighted in the appended 2024 Invest Halton Hills report, examples of notable projects include Conestoga Cold Storage, ProLogis, Bentall GreenOak and QuadReal.

CONCLUSION:

Halton Hills has made significant progress in advancing Council's Thriving Economy Strategic Plan priority. Recognizing limited existing resources, this has been accomplished through a focus on retaining and supporting the growth of existing businesses, while successfully attracting new major investments. These accomplishments provide a solid foundation to build on into 2025, while recognizing the global economic climate. Continued focus on the economic prosperity of Halton Hills will be key to ensuring that Halton Hills is positioned as a prime investment destination, with a high quality of life and as being the best place to live, work, play, create and invest.

Reviewed and approved by,

Damian Szybalski, Commissioner of Community Services

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer