



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Tony Boutassis, Director of Economic Development

DATE: April 2, 2026

MEMO NO.: CSE-2026-003

SUBJECT: Invest Halton Hills 2025 Annual Report

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide Council with an overview of the 2025 Invest Halton Hills Annual Report – please see the appended report. The Annual Report highlights key initiatives and activities implemented by the Economic Development division (Invest Halton Hills) in 2025 to advance Council’s Strategic Plan priority of a Thriving Economy.

Regular updates provided throughout 2025 through reports and memorandums, media releases, Council announcements, social media, websites, the Invest Halton Hills e-newsletter, and community and stakeholder events – supplement the content of the 2025 Invest Halton Hills report. A preview of the Invest Halton Hills report was also presented to the Growth and Infrastructure Committee at its February 2026 meeting.

BACKGROUND:

A Thriving Economy is a key priority in Council’s Strategic Plan. Supporting and retaining existing businesses, while attracting new non-residential investment, is essential to creating a diverse and resilient local economy. These efforts contribute to job creation, long-term economic sustainability, and the growth of the municipal tax base - which supports the delivery of services that residents and businesses rely on. Non-residential investments also raise local quality of life, foster economic growth, strengthen the community, and position Halton Hills as the best place to live, work, play, create and invest.

To deliver on its mandate, Invest Halton Hills delivers a coordinated suite of strategic services, including:

- Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) programming

- Business Concierge Program
- Domestic and International Investment Attraction, Expansion and Relocation
- Community Improvement Plan (CIP) targeted incentives
- Tourism programming, partnerships and marketing
- Site selection assistance
- Market research
- Industry engagement
- Workforce development

The Invest Halton Hills workplan is guided by Council's Strategic Plan, the [Economic Development and Tourism Strategy](#), and the [Foreign Direct Investment \(FDI\) Attraction Strategy](#). As the two Invest Halton Hills strategies approach the end of their lifecycle, they will be consolidated into a single Economic Development Strategy, to be developed through 2026 and 2027.

The Town's economic development services are intentionally structured to complement and amplify – not duplicate – the efforts of local, regional, provincial and federal partners - ensuring that Invest Halton Hills addresses critical service gaps, strengthens coordination, and enhances the effectiveness of the broader Economic Development Ecosystem (see Appendix A).

COMMENTS:

Throughout 2025, recognizing available resources and where possible, Invest Halton Hills continued to strengthen existing initiatives and introduced targeted business programs to support local economic growth. Key highlights included:

- Expansion of local business support programming, including the launch of the [Halton Hills Data Centre](#), enhancements to Small Business Centre supports (via MOU with Halton Region), and delivery of the *Our Town. Our Story* campaign.
- Launch of the Discovery Pass Program, attracting 2,800 active users and resulting in a 65% increase in direct program participation while strengthening engagement with local businesses.
- Continued growth in tourism and destination marketing, with a 57% increase in Visit Halton Hills Instagram followers and a 129% increase in website traffic, reflecting increased destination awareness.
- Strong demand for targeted and strategic Community Improvement Plan (CIP) incentives, with 30 inbound inquiries, 4 approved projects (2026), 2 completed projects representing over \$19,000 in grant funding, and 13 site visits conducted.
- Ongoing support for the local agri-business sector through the Halton Hills Agricultural Roundtable, which has progressed from launch to action and implementation.

- Advancement of a targeted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) program and international marketing, generating 116 investment leads and 42 inbound inquiries - while executing strategic trade missions and in-market initiatives to advance high-quality prospects, and strengthen Halton Hills' global investment pipeline and profile as a prime investment destination.
- Enabled major non-residential investment through the Business Concierge program, advancing 9 active and 3 upcoming projects representing approximately \$2 billion in potential investments, about 5,000 jobs and significant long-term municipal revenue growth.

1. Local Business Supports and Initiatives

Supporting local businesses through partnerships and targeted initiatives remained a core priority for Invest Halton Hills in 2025. Key achievements included expanded business programming, strengthened sector engagement, and improved access to market intelligence.

Through the Town's Memorandum of Understanding with the Halton Region Small Business Centre, entrepreneurs and small businesses benefited from enhanced advisory services and programming tailored to all stages of business development. Local business promotion was advanced through Small Business Week initiatives, including the *Our Town. Our Story* influencer campaign, which generated more than 450 video views and 15 hours of watch time, supporting increased awareness and community pride in shopping local.

The Agricultural Roundtable, which launched in late 2024, continued to provide valuable insights into the agri-food sector. To further strengthen support for this sector and assist the Agricultural Roundtable, Council approved a new staff position as part of the 2026 Budget.

The year concluded with the launch of the [Halton Hills Data Centre](#), an online platform providing streamlined access to economic, demographic, and market data to support local business growth and investment attraction.

2. Community Improvement Plan (CIP)

The CIP continued to demonstrate strong uptake in 2025, supporting local businesses through targeted and strategic incentives aligned with Town priorities, including downtown revitalization, heritage preservation, agri-business support, and brownfield redevelopment. The program continues to leverage significant private investment, generating up to \$6 for every \$1 of municipal funding.

In 2025, the program recorded 30 inquiries, 13 site visits, and 2 completed projects, resulting in \$19,353 of grant funding. An additional 4 projects were approved and are scheduled for completion in 2026, reflecting a strong pipeline of ongoing program interest. Demand for Façade Improvement Grants remained high, supporting

enhancements to downtown commercial properties and contributing to a more vibrant, attractive and energy-efficient streetscape.

3. Tourism Initiatives

Visit Halton Hills advanced its tourism brand and expanded destination awareness in 2025 through enhanced marketing, partnerships and programming. The Discovery Pass Program connected residents and visitors with 42 local businesses over 14 weeks, attracting 2,800 participants and generating an estimated \$170,000 in economic impact. Notably, 78% of users visited a new business, while 18% travelled more than 45 km, demonstrating a strong regional draw.

Additional marketing initiatives were supported through \$8,635 in matched funding, enabling expanded advertising and influencer campaigns. These efforts generated 262,000 social media views, reached 42,000 accounts, and contributed to a 57% increase in followers. Website traffic increased to 78,000 users (+129%), while in-person outreach included participation in six festivals and distribution of more than 5,000 brochures. Strategic off-peak advertising generated over 8 million impressions, further strengthening Halton Hills' profile as a vibrant day-trip destination.

4. International Investment Attraction

In 2025, Invest Halton Hills continued to advance a more mature and targeted International Investment Attraction program, strengthening the Town's presence in key international markets and expanding the Town's global investment pipeline. The Town's efforts in 2025 increasingly focused on higher-quality, relationship-driven lead generation.

Supported by CanExport Community Investments (CECI) funding, the Town undertook two strategic trade missions to Germany, resulting in more than 65 in-market meetings and contributing to 116 new investment leads. Staff also responded to 42 inbound investment inquiries throughout the year. Through enhanced in-market representation and participation in partner-led initiatives (e.g. Ontario Manufacturing Communities Alliance/OMCA), additional leads were generated, with approximately 25 high-potential prospects actively being advanced.

Complementary activities in 2025 included expanded international marketing efforts through the Site Selectors Guild and Great Lakes Economic Development Council, strengthened partnerships with Invest Ontario, Invest in Canada and Trade Commissioners, and ongoing aftercare and servicing of investment inquiries. These efforts continue to position the Town as a competitive, investment-ready community and informing the pending new Economic Development Strategy.

5. Business Concierge Program

The Business Concierge Program remained a cornerstone of the Town's investment attraction and development support framework in 2025, providing a valuable,

coordinated and proactive service to businesses navigating the development process. Since its inception in 2021, the program has continued to distinguish Halton Hills' economic development efforts, played a critical role in advancing major non-residential projects, and has strengthened the Town's economic competitiveness.

During the year, the program supported 9 active projects and 3 upcoming projects, representing approximately \$2 billion in potential investment, about 5,000 direct jobs, and approximately 9 million square feet of new industrial and commercial space. These projects are anticipated to generate significant financial benefits for the Town, including one-time revenues and annual property taxes.

The Business Concierge program continues to deliver value by coordinating cross-departmental efforts, supporting site selection and development inquiries, and advancing strategic projects in the Premier Gateway Employment Area – including major developments of Prologis, Conestoga Cold Storage and the Toronto Premium Outlets expansion.

Overall, the Business Concierge Program remains a key driver of investment attraction, enabling the Town to respond effectively to strong investor interest while facilitating long-term economic growth and infrastructure development.

NEXT STEPS:

As the Economic Development and Tourism and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) strategies near the end of their respective terms, the Economic Development division is initiating a project to develop a new integrated Economic Development Strategy. Funding for this project was approved through the 2026 Capital Budget, with additional funding secured through a successful grant. Council also approved funding for a new Economic Development and Agricultural Officer position through the 2026 Operating Budget, and recruitment for this role is currently underway. Among other priorities, this position will support the Agricultural Roundtable and advance key economic development initiatives, including the new Economic Development Strategy. Staff anticipate kicking off the latter project in June 2026, beginning with a report to Council outlining the proposed approach and workplan.

CONCLUSION:

Recognizing and in response to the challenging and continually changing global economic conditions and international trade considerations, Halton Hills continues to make significant progress in advancing Council's Thriving Economy Strategic Plan priority.

Leveraging available resources, and alignment with provincial and federal economic development priorities, progress has been achieved through a strong focus on supporting and retaining existing businesses while attracting new investment.

The 2025 accomplishments highlighted in the Annual Invest Halton Hills Report provide a solid foundation for continued economic development into 2026 and beyond. Economic Development's 2026 Business Plan will continue to advance Council's Thriving Economy priority. Developing and implementing any new and/or expanded economic development initiatives, would require additional resources for 2027 and/or beyond. The existing Economic Development workplan is at full capacity.

Continued focus on economic prosperity will be key to ensuring that Halton Hills is positioned as a competitive and attractive community in which to live, work, play, create and invest.

Reviewed and approved by,

Damian Szybalski, Commissioner of Community Services

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer

APPENDIX A: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ECOSYSTEM

1. Core Local Municipal Economic Development Function (Halton Hills)

Function	Primary Focus	Halton Hills Economic Development Role	How This Differs/Complements Others
Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E)	Existing business growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive outreach • Local company visits • Issue escalation • Expansion support • Workforce navigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chambers of Commerce advocate broadly for business interests • Halton Region SBC supports startups • The Town proactively manages existing business growth and assists in resolving site-specific issues
International Investment Attraction and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)	Attracting new firms, investments and jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site selection support • Local value proposition • Coordination with planning, utilities, Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest Ontario and Invest in Canada attract at provincial/national scale • Toronto Global markets the GTA 00 • The Town provides hyper-local site intelligence, servicing data, and has jurisdiction over development approvals
Business Concierge	Investment facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-window coordination across Planning, Engineering, Building, Conservation, Fire, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No other partner has a Business Concierge function specific to the Town's municipal role • Realtors and developers facilitate transactions
Tourism Development	Visitor economy growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destination marketing support • Product development • Partnership coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIAs animate commercial districts • Conservation Halton manages natural assets • The Town aligns tourism with economic strategy and investment readiness
Community Improvement Plan (CIP)	Incentives & redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted and strategic financial incentives (façade, agri-business, intensification, brownfield, heritage, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique and focused municipal financial tool • The Town administers Council-approved programs to stimulate private investments
Strategic Sector Development	Targeted growth sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying priority sectors • Cluster development • Marketing alignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial/federal agencies market broadly • The Town targets sectors are aligned with Halton Hills' land base and competitive advantages

2. Local & Regional Business Support Ecosystem

Organization	Primary Focus	Role in Ecosystem	Differentiation/Complementarity
Halton Hills Economic Development (Town of Halton Hills)	Municipal economic growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment attraction • Business expansion • Municipal coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead land-use authority • Strategic incentive tools • Council Strategic Plan direction
Halton Region Small Business Centre	Entrepreneurship support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Startup advisory • Business planning • Youth entrepreneurship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on early-stage firms • The Town focuses on scale-ups and employer retention
Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce	Business advocacy & networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member services • Policy advocacy • Networking events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy-based organization
Downtown Georgetown & Acton BIAs	Main street vitality and commercial district supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautification, events, local promotion • Local business promotion, streetscape programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place-based marketing and animation • The Town supports infrastructure redevelopment and investments • The Town implements the Town-BIA Memorandum of Understanding • The Town provides a broader economic strategy and CIP funding alignment

3. Investment Attraction & FDI Partners

Organization	Geographic Scope	Focus	Differentiation/Complementarity
Invest in Canada	National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National FDI promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes Canada internationally The Town provides municipal-level intelligence, land availability, local site selection, and development navigation
Invest Ontario	Provincial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracts large-scale investment to Ontario 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets Ontario globally and brings leads to municipalities. Provides funding through IVO Fund The Town converts leads into local projects through site servicing, and development review process
Toronto Global	Greater Toronto Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International investment attraction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screens and qualifies prospects for the GTA The Town positions Halton Hills within the GTA value proposition and executes local landing support
Ontario Manufacturing Communities Alliance (OMCA)	Provincial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced manufacturing collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sector-focused alliance of manufacturing communities; OMCA markets Ontario manufacturing capacity collectively The Town showcases Halton Hills' specific advanced manufacturing assets, sites, and expansion opportunities
Ontario Food Cluster (OFC)	Provincial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food & beverage processing investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets Ontario's food processing strengths globally; OFC elevates sector visibility The Town converts agri-food leads into site-specific projects aligned with Halton Hills' food processing cluster
Realtors (Commercial Brokers)	Local / GTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site transactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate property deals The Town does not broker land, but leads the development review process and offers Business Concierge services
Developers	Local / Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land assembly & construction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver physical product The Town aligns policy, incentives and offers Business Concierge services
Site Selectors	International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisory to global firms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise global firms on location decisions The Town supplies municipal-level responsiveness, local competitive intelligence and offers Business Concierge services