



Visit Halton Hills



Town of Halton Hills

Economic Development and Tourism Strategy (2021-2026)



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Town of Halton Hills Economic Development and Tourism Strategy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Halton Hills – Global. Innovative. Distinct.

The Town of Halton Hills is a vibrant and growing community with a unique geography made up of both urban and rural features. With its strategic location in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), cost-competitive business environment, and proximity to major transportation networks and shipping hubs, Halton Hills is a prime investment destination.

Halton Hills is located directly along Canada's Innovation Corridor, halfway between Toronto and Waterloo. Businesses in Halton Hills are within a 30-minute drive of Canada's largest international airport, within 1.5 hours to the U.S. border and enjoy a strategic connection to North America's major markets through an extensive highway, water and rail network.

With a population of 63,000 residents, Halton Hills strikes the perfect balance between urban and rural living, and maintains a "small-town feel", despite its central location and close proximity to Toronto – Canada's largest city. The Town is known for its superior quality of life that attracts employers, families and a high-quality workforce. An exceptional network of trails for hiking and cycling, along with a rich arts and culture sector, have helped Halton Hills rank in the Top 10 Places to Live in Canada.

Halton Hills is progressive, ambitious and known for its leadership in climate change action. The community is committed to becoming Net-Zero by 2030 and has a variety of projects underway to help achieve this goal, including a Low-Carbon Transition Strategy and Green Development Standards.

Halton Hills enjoys a growing, diverse and multi-sector economy. Businesses have access to a comprehensive suite of economic development supports and a competitive business environment. As part of the Town's open for business and "can-do" approach, Halton Hills' Business Concierge program provides an elevated customer service experience and helps fast-track the review of major and strategic non-residential developments and investment opportunities. Halton Hills offers incentives and programs through a robust Community Improvement Plan (CIP) and Manufacturing Expansion Fund (MEF).

The Town's Economic Development, Innovation and Culture division provides a full suite of high-quality supports to the business community that in turn fosters a prosperous economy and enhances quality of life. The division is focused on business retention and expansion (BR&E); elevating Halton Hills' competitiveness in the global marketplace; delivering a comprehensive Business Concierge program; site selection assistance; market research; industry engagement; implementation of the Community Improvement Plan and the Manufacturing



Expansion Fund; amplifying tourism's economic benefits, and leveraging the arts and culture to raise quality of life.

A broad range of public and private sector partners in the local economic development ecosystem contribute to Halton Hills' economic prosperity, including the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Georgetown Business Improvement Area, Downtown Acton Business Improvement Area, Halton Region Small Business Centre/Global Business Centre, Halton Region Economic Development, Haltech Regional Innovation Centre, Angel One Network, Peel-Halton Local Employment Planning Council, economic development staff from Halton Region's other local area municipalities, as well as representatives at the provincial and federal levels of government. Halton Hills' 5-year Economic Development and Tourism Strategy will be advanced by further leveraging these ecosystem partnerships.

1.2 An Actionable Strategy

The Economic Development and Tourism Strategy is focused on enhancing Halton Hills' economic prosperity through a diversified and resilient economy, with the overarching goal to support existing businesses, attract new investment and expand local job opportunities.

This Economic Development and Tourism Strategy:

- Builds on and leverages extensive cross-departmental and external stakeholder successes, as outlined in the earlier Initial Findings report;
- Includes actions tailored for Halton Hills to address remaining gaps;
- Provides an actionable roadmap for strategic decision-making on economic development matters;
- Maintains and enhances the Town's economic competitiveness;
- Strengthens an "open for business" approach;
- Supports local job growth and economic diversification;
- Maximizes the economic benefits from the tourism sector;
- Will lead to increased local investment, non-residential assessment, and an improved non-residential to residential assessment ratio;
- Will raise job quality (i.e. more professional/technical jobs offering competitive compensation); and
- Confirms key sectors of focus.



The Strategy is actionable, comprehensive and builds on and leverages the many successes achieved to date, as well as actions that are ongoing. It provides the framework for the Town of Halton Hills for the next 5 years and positions the Town as a prime destination for investment and job growth. It is comprised of 26 Goals and 137 recommended Actions. It is a flexible and living document so that the Town can better respond to changing market conditions in the wake of COVID-19 and any other major economic disruptions.

By implementing this Strategy, the Town will continue to purposefully shift its economic development efforts to be more strategic, coordinated and impactful. There will be an active focus on pursuing investments that generate the greatest community benefits, including a higher number of jobs per development.

1.3 A Time of Unprecedented Change

Since the Town's existing Economic Development Strategy was approved in 2012 and Tourism Strategy was approved in 2014, many demographic, technological and economic changes have taken place. Development of an updated and consolidated 5-year Economic Development and Tourism Strategy was undertaken to help ensure Halton Hills' long-term economic prosperity, support strategic decision-making, and grow local investment, jobs and non-residential assessment. The Town initiated the strategic planning process for the new

Strategy in mid-2019, concurrent with the development of a Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Strategy. Since assuming management of the tourism portfolio in 2018, the Tourism Strategy also required a comprehensive update to amplify tourism's economic benefits.

Halton Hills has continued to attract significant commercial and residential growth. Today, there are about 5 million square feet of non-residential development in the Premier Gateway employment area – the Town's largest employment area located along Highway 401 and 407.

Due to COVID-19, this Strategy was developed in a time of unprecedented change. In March 2020, the world changed with the onset of the pandemic. Overnight, past business practices, customer relationships, global trade patterns, supply chains, access to information and municipal protocols changed drastically. COVID-19's impact has been profound, but impacts have also varied significantly by sector – with some sectors impacted much more negatively than others.

Given the significant economic changes caused by the pandemic, the original scope of work for Halton Hills' Economic Development and Tourism Strategy was amended to include 3 components:

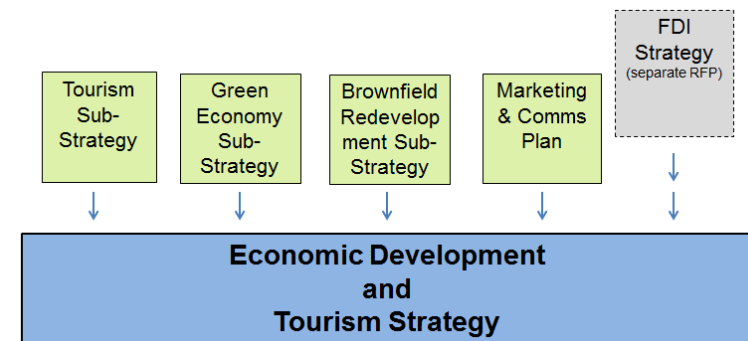


Strategy Development: Research, analysis and the recommended Strategy – including goals, objectives and actions based on economic development and tourism fundamentals that remain relevant regardless of the challenges and socio-economic changes caused by COVID-19. Through a subsequent Implementation Plan, Town staff will prioritize Strategy recommendations, and develop tactics, key performance indicators (KPIs) and budget for implementation;

Supporting Sub-Strategy Recommendations: The overall Economic Development and Tourism Strategy consists of 4 closely linked sub-strategies: Tourism, Green Economy, Brownfield Development, and Marketing and Communications (shown in Figure 1); and

Economic Recovery and Resilience: A supplementary document, detailing best practices for economic recovery planning, will provide a roadmap for Halton Hills to respond to the economic effects caused by COVID-19.

Figure 1: Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Components

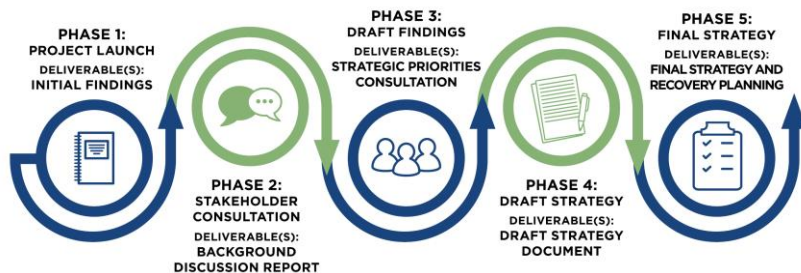




2 The Strategy Preparation Process

This Strategy is the culmination of over 18 months of research and analysis, stakeholder engagement, priority setting and strategy development (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Strategy Preparation Process



The Executive Summary of Initial Findings (March 2020) provided an in-depth analysis of:

- Economic development, land use planning, tourism, demographic and marketing trends;
- Halton Hills' business profile;
- Economic development target sectors;
- Benchmarks of the Town's investment in the economic development; and
- Halton Hills' investment readiness.

The Background Discussion Report (August 2020) detailed the results of comprehensive stakeholder consultation, performed an in-depth SWOT analysis, and identified key themes and strategic priorities for consideration. It, along with the Executive Summary of Initial Findings (March 2020), provided the foundation for the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy. The bulk of the research, analysis and stakeholder engagement was conducted prior to the arrival of COVID-19.

The strategic priorities were drafted during the pandemic. The community was subsequently consulted to provide their insight and feedback on the strategic priorities as the economy was beginning to reopen.

The goals, objectives and actions included reflect the feedback on the strategic priorities and are based on economic development and tourism fundamentals that remain relevant regardless of ensuing issues resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.



3 Council's Strategic Plan

The Economic Development and Tourism Strategy aligns with, relates to and supports the Vision, Mission and Values of Council's Strategic Plan. It also specifically advances the strategic directions of:

- Shaping growth;
- Transportation;
- Climate change and the environment;
- Fiscal and corporate management; and
- Ensure a vibrant agricultural community.

Council's Strategic Plan: Mission

To plan for a vibrant urban and rural community, the Town of Halton Hills will deliver a broad range of public services while providing leadership on issues of concern in line with our stated values:

- Foster a Healthy Community
- Preserve, Protect and Enhance our Environment
- Protect and Enhance our Agriculture
- Foster a Prosperous Economy
- Preserve, Protect and Promote our Distinctive History
- Preserve, Protect and Enhance our Countryside
- Achieve Sustainable Growth
- Provide Responsive, Effective Municipal Government

Council's Strategic Plan: Vision

Small town living at its best is:

- Characterized by spectacular countryside, natural heritage, cultural heritage and small town feel;
- Enriched by a unique blend of urban and rural interconnected communities and neighbourhoods; and
- Supported by prosperous employment areas



4 Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Priorities

Strategic priorities are those factors that will have the most impact on achieving Halton Hills' vision and supporting its mission. The strategic priorities were developed through the economic and demographic analysis, comprehensive public consultation the SWOT analysis conducted in Phases 1 and 2 of the Strategy Preparation Process and the consultants' assessment based on extensive work and experience.

The draft strategic priorities were reviewed and refined by the Senior Management Team and Steering Committee. The strategic priorities were then shared with the public and 81 participants provided additional feedback. The resulting strategic priorities provide the basis for the goals and objectives outlined in the Strategy.

4.1 Economic Development Priorities

- Investment readiness – ensuring Halton Hills has all remaining key foundational economic development elements.
- Engagement with local business community.
- Sector specific initiatives in advanced manufacturing, agri-business, clean technology, and food and beverage processing.
- Ensuring adequate supply of land/buildings.
- Addressing development process and perceptions.
- Development of downtowns.

4.2 Green Economy Priorities

- Establishing the region (Halton and neighbouring jurisdictions) as a Green Economy hub.
- Establishing a definition of the Green Economy in Halton Hills.
- Building on Green Economy leadership role and the Town's commitment to climate change action.
- Supporting green development.

4.3 Brownfield Development Priorities

- Inventory the size and scope of Brownfield properties.
- Providing greater financial support for the Halton Hills and Halton Region Brownfield redevelopment programs.

4.4 Tourism Priorities

- Product development and market readiness (experiences and assets, bundling, itinerary-building).
- Target markets that are aligned with existing experiences and assets – families, outdoor recreation, New Canadian residents, and successful local events (Culture Days, Leathertown Festival, Highland Games etc.); and international visitors with day-use experiences (i.e. shopping at Toronto Premium Outlets).



- Partnerships to pool human and financial resources, and encourage cross-promotion.
- Promote Halton Hills as a single tourism destination; improve wayfinding and signage, develop common messaging for local communities.
- Encourage visitor friendliness and best practice sharing between operators.
- Align the new Tourism Sub-Strategy with Tourism Advisory Committee discussions.
- Consider an Accommodation Needs Study for Halton Hills.
- Define key performance indicators, key target markets and associated messaging.
- Grow local awareness in tourism.

4.5 Marketing Priorities

- Branding – ensuring a cohesive relationship between the Town brand and economic development and tourism brands.
- Awareness – tactics to build awareness of economic development and tourism brands.
- Positioning – establishing economic development and tourism positioning statements and value propositions.
- Targets – identifying target sectors and related values and motivators.
- Tools – evaluating appropriate tools and budget to reach targets.

4.6 Strategic Priorities Consultation

As part of the comprehensive stakeholder engagement process, residents and community stakeholders were asked to review the strategic priorities and provide their feedback via an online survey. There were 81 responses to the online survey. The majority of respondents supported the strategic priorities as provided. Some respondents had questions and comments on the timing and ranking of some of the priorities as a result of the pandemic. This input has been incorporated into the actions outlined in this Strategy.



5 Goals, Objectives and Strategic Actions

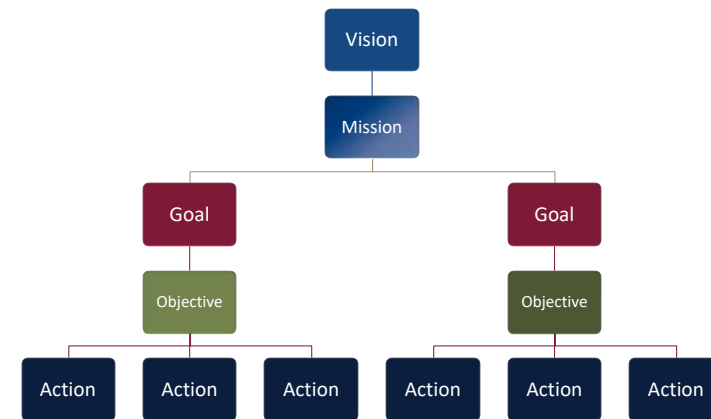
The following section provides an outline of the goals and objectives that will be the basis of Halton Hills' actions over the next 5 years. For the purposes of this Strategy:

- **Goals** are the desired broad end state.
- **Objectives** are the desired outcome.
- **Strategic actions** are the specific steps required to achieve the goal and objective.

The following goals, objectives and strategic actions are based on the strategic priorities that were established in the Background Discussion Report.

An actionable and practical Implementation Plan will be developed with outcome measurements and associated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) corresponding to each of the goals, objectives and strategic actions. An associated budget and timelines will also be developed.

Figure 3: Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Structure





5.1 Enhancing Economic Development Fundamentals

Investment Readiness

Investment Readiness refers to the Town's ability to address the needs of business as decision makers consider expanding or growing (for existing businesses) or locating (for new businesses) in Halton Hills. Easy access to information ensures that Halton Hills is considered, and in many cases not eliminated, from a long list of potential investment locations. In many cases the short list of location candidates is made prior to any direct contact with the municipality. Halton Hills' online presence and data is a crucial factor in the early stages of the investment decision process.

The Business Network

The Economic Development, Innovation and Culture division should strive to serve as the nucleus of a dense, interconnected network of businesses, economic development partners and local and regional stakeholders supporting the free flow of information, ideas and opportunities.

The establishment of an "entrepreneurial ecosystem" starts with identifying the members of the network including the local business community and stakeholders, regional government and/organizations, industry associations and other groups with complementary economic development and tourism mandates. Halton Hills should consider establishing an advisory committee

of economic development and tourism organizations, and other interested parties, to support the implementation of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, and identify areas for collaboration.

Business Retention and Expansion

Closely aligned with the entrepreneurial ecosystem, a business retention and expansion (BR&E) program is a program that focuses on building and maintaining relationships with existing businesses.

A BR&E program provides important information on the growth potential and risks for each business and the business community in aggregate. It provides Council and staff with the foundation for evidence-based decisions and policies that support the existing business community while ensuring an environment that is attractive to prospective new investors. Regularly scheduled business visits assist staff with proactively identifying emerging business opportunities and troubleshooting barriers to business growth and expansion.



Customer Relationship Management Systems

Efforts such as the entrepreneurial ecosystem and BR&E programs require an effective data management system. Many economic development organizations support client and stakeholder interactions with Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems. These CRM systems track the intricacies of the business network. They are typically integrated with the overall communications and networking activities, including email, social media, one-on-one meetings, trade events, forums, workshops and other marketing activities.

Investment Attraction and Business Growth

The Foreign Direct Investment Strategy, approved by Halton Hills Council in March 2020, provides a strong rationale and workplan to target investment in the advanced manufacturing, agri-business, clean technology and food processing sectors. The Town can bolster its case for investment in these sectors by aligning the BR&E efforts and creating detailed value propositions for each sector.

Land and Building Supply

Without an adequate supply of land and/or buildings, businesses cannot grow or locate in Halton Hills. The current supply of land and buildings in Halton Hills is limited. Low vacancy rates make it all the more important to make it easy to find information on available properties.

There will be additional designated, zoned and serviced land available for development in the Premier Gateway Employment Area in the medium to long-term. The Premier Gateway Employment Area will account for 89 percent of Halton Hills' forecast employment growth between 2019 and 2041. Until the additional land is available, the Economic Development Innovation and Culture division can compile information on these lands and profile them to help raise awareness and attract future investments. This information should include realistic reports on the expected zoning and servicing changes and timing.

This time can also be used to assess Halton Hills' target sectors' building and land requirements (i.e. service capacity and lot sizes). Doing so will help to ensure that the developers' offerings are aligned with the target sectors' business needs.

Available designated, zoned and serviced land is in short supply throughout the GTA, especially along the Highway 401 corridor, and Halton Hills should provide regular updates to key influencers and prospective investors on the status of the land that will be available for development in Halton Hills.



Development-Friendly Processes

A predictable, consistent and streamlined development approval process is a key consideration for investors. The time, effort, and costs of the approval process all create risks and contribute to the expense of a project. Jurisdictions that can minimize these factors will have a strategic advantage. Pre-application consultation, dedicated business concierge services, approval process flow charts and time guidelines all help businesses to assess and manage their risks more effectively. Using performance measures will allow Halton Hills to regularly assess its current approval process and further refine it as needed while providing evidence of effective processes for future investors and demonstrating progress on its commitment to continuous improvement.

Vibrant Downtowns


Vibrant downtowns are the hallmark of thriving local economies. They create a concentration of commercial, cultural and civic activities that facilitate business, learning and cultural exchange in public spaces that make residents and visitors feel welcome. Vibrant and healthy downtowns also have a positive economic impact on the broader community and businesses that are located outside of the downtown cores.

The recommended actions focus on re-animating Halton Hills' two downtowns with new residents, businesses and activities. There are also recommendations to increase entrepreneurial activity and provide businesses with the skills and resources to support greater tourism activity. Developing live-work zoning for the downtowns will also assist in further diversifying the economy, provide for more adaptive re-use of existing buildings and provide new business opportunities in the downtowns.




5.1.1 Economic Development Goals and Objectives

There are 55 specific actions related to the 6 goals and objectives in the Economic Development section of the Strategy. Goals 1 and 2 address continuing to create an environment that welcomes and supports investment and encourages collaboration between economic development partners and local businesses. Goals 3, 4 and 5 focus on the relationships that support foreign direct investment, the land and buildings necessary for business expansion and new investment, and facilitating development. Goal 6 addresses the policies and programs that support downtown businesses, bring additional activity to the downtowns and assist downtown businesses to become tourism-ready.


	Goal	Objective
1	Ready for investment	Provide the information and resources businesses and prospective investors need to invest and grow in Halton Hills.
2	Strong business network	Establish a supportive ecosystem with economic development policies and services that address business needs.
3	Sector-specific initiatives for investment attraction and business growth	Support and further develop the advanced manufacturing, agri-business, clean technology and food processing sectors.
4	Land and building supply	Advance, advocate and proactively plan for an adequate supply of shovel-ready land and move-in ready buildings, that address business and sector needs.
5	Development-friendly processes	Continue to offer and refine consistent, predictable, timely and cost-effective development review processes.
6	Vibrant downtowns	Increase the economic and tourism activity in Halton Hills' downtowns as the central entertainment, commercial and social cores of the community.



	Goal 1: Ready for investment
Objective	Provide the information and resources businesses and prospective investors need to invest and grow in Halton Hills.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Establish the Invest Halton Hills website as the primary source of all economic development data, information and resources.2. Compile an inventory of available industrial land and buildings including zoning, permitted uses and servicing information.3. Assemble the critical economic development data based on International Economic Development Council guidelines.¹4. Complete a detailed community profile.5. Continuously monitor Halton Hills' competitive position and update annually.6. Provide an online directory of funding programs by sector.7. Create value propositions for all target sectors (advanced manufacturing, agri-business, food processing, clean technology) as well as for the Green Economy and Brownfields.8. Ensure contact information for Economic Development, Innovation and Culture division staff is easily accessible on all division web pages.9. Continue to service investment leads, facilitate site selection and act as the first point of contact for location inquiries.

¹ The International Economic Development Council publication: “A New Standard: Achieving Data Excellence in Economic Development 2016,” outlines the critical data for supporting investment attraction, retention and expansion activities based on a comprehensive survey of professional location consultants and current economic development organizations.



	Goal 2: Strong business network
Objective	Establish a supportive ecosystem with economic development policies and services that address business needs.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Host an Economic Development and Tourism Town Hall to engage both residents and businesses, and share the Strategy findings and recommended actions.2. Implement a Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) program with monthly business engagement targets (in-person, via phone and virtual meetings).3. Continue to provide regular updates to Council on the issues and opportunities facing local businesses, as identified through the BR&E program.4. As part of business outreach efforts, identify high-growth local businesses (in target sectors) that can be used as examples or ambassadors for Halton Hills' locational value proposition.5. Facilitate match-making connections between local companies when synergies and opportunities for collaboration have been identified.6. Continue to develop the Business Concierge program to further streamline the attraction and delivery of major non-residential investments.7. Expand the local entrepreneurial ecosystem to foster current and future entrepreneurs in Halton Hills by providing and coordinating additional training opportunities, programs and workshops (i.e. in cooperation with Haltec, Halton Small Business Centre etc.).8. Compile and share information on programs, resources and funding for businesses via the Invest Halton Hills website and BR&E programming.9. Host annual Business Forums to help grow and rebuild the local economy, where participants can exchange ideas and receive information on government support programs, and staff can identify businesses' evolving needs.10. Use Halton Region's annual Employment Survey as the basis to build a Town database of business contact information.




Goal 2: Strong business network


11. Continue to develop a CRM database to track interactions and outcomes with local businesses, as well as identify and analyze trends and opportunities.
12. Continue to provide regular updates and outreach to Halton Hills businesses (via the Economic Development E-Newsletter, a LinkedIn group and a Corporate Calling program.).
13. Participate in the workforce attraction and development activities of the Peel-Halton Local Employment Planning Council in order to support local businesses' talent attraction efforts. Explore opportunities to establish a Talent Attraction Program in partnership with the Planning Council and local businesses.
14. Support connections between local businesses and regional post-secondary institutions through co-operative education employment, research and case studies.
15. Support local networks by continuing to participate in the Chamber of Commerce and BIAs meetings and programs.
16. Continue to participate in and leverage regional economic development and tourism programs and initiatives with organizations such as Halton Region, Haltech, GTA Economic Development Alliance, Toronto Global and Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Association (RTO3).
17. Transition the Project's Steering Committee into an Advisory Committee to collaborate and coordinate members' economic development and tourism initiatives and contribute to Strategy implementation.
18. Conduct regular assessments of Halton Hills' entrepreneurial ecosystem to identify gaps in services (e.g. finance, business supports, policy, markets, human capital, infrastructure, research and development and culture).




	Goal 3: Targeted investment attraction and business growth
Objective	Support and further develop the advanced manufacturing, agri-business, clean technology and food processing sectors.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Make Halton Hills companies in the advanced manufacturing, agri-business, clean technology and food processing sectors and internationally-owned companies the top priorities for BR&E visits.2. Develop contact lists of key influencers by sector, including local businesses, industry associations, Halton Region, Toronto Global, Ontario Ministry of Economic Development Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT) and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), and Industrial/Commercial/Institutional (ICI) realtors.3. Build strong value-added relationships by engaging and educating key stakeholders/influencers about Halton Hills' vision for growth and economic development.4. Establish a schedule for regular contact with key influencers.5. Compile local and regional sector-specific data for Halton Hills' key sectors.6. Provide the human and financial resources to implement the Town's Foreign Direct Investment Strategy.7. Participate in local and regional trade associations relevant to Halton Hills' target sectors.8. Continue to provide briefings to Council and senior staff on local industry activity and industry trends in Halton Hills' target sectors.




	Goal 4: Adequate land and building supply
Objective	Advance, advocate and proactively plan for an adequate supply of shovel-ready land and move-in ready buildings, that address business and sector needs.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identify and meet with local land and building owners and real estate stakeholders to assemble property data, assess their development plans, and provide input and support.2. Provide a searchable online database of available land and buildings.3. Provide regular updates on available land and buildings to key influencers, including Halton Region, Toronto Global, MEDJCT, OMAFRA and ICI realtors.4. Monitor and share trends in target sectors' land and building needs. Communicate relevant business infrastructure, servicing and technology needs.5. Support the development of affordable and rental housing in Halton Hills to ensure an adequate supply of housing for current and future employees.


	Goal 5: Development-friendly processes
Objective	Continue to offer and refine consistent, predictable, timely and cost-effective development processes.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Host annual meetings with land and building owners to review development processes and opportunities for investment with key staff from Economic Development, Innovation and Culture, Planning, Climate Change and Asset Management, Halton Region and other regulatory bodies.2. Track and regularly report on development project status and timing trends.3. Continue to provide Business Concierge services to streamline and expedite the development approvals process.



	Goal 5: Development-friendly processes
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Survey all businesses who have completed the development process on their experience and their recommendations for continuous improvement. Provide regular status reports to Council, senior management and regulatory bodies. 5. Provide development approval flow charts and typical timing guidelines online.

	Goal 6: Vibrant downtowns
Objective	Increase the economic and tourism activity in Halton Hills' downtowns as the central entertainment, commercial and social cores of the community.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider a temporary increase in funding and/or create new streams of the CIP program to kick-start commercial development in the downtowns post COVID-19. 2. Support arts and cultural events and activities to re-animate the downtowns. 3. Amend existing downtown zoning as appropriate to maximize live/work opportunities. 4. Establish a pop-up program to fill vacant commercial spaces and pilot new business ideas (i.e. short-term lease, shared spaces, temporary display and 'Win This Space' initiatives). 5. Host local business meetings and workshops in the downtowns to bring additional activity and profile to the downtowns. 6. Consider locating any additional municipal facilities, services and programs in the downtowns. 7. Conduct a feasibility study for establishing co-working space in the downtowns. 8. Explore the feasibility of establishing an economic development or innovation hub in one, or both of the Business Improvement Areas. 9. Provide tourism friendliness materials and training for downtown businesses.



	Goal 6: Vibrant downtowns
	10. Explore and, where feasible, implement short and long-term solutions to expand outdoor dining opportunities in downtown cores.

5.2 Leveraging Green Economy Opportunities

Halton Hills has made significant strides to support the development of a Green Economy, transition towards a low-carbon economy and address climate change. However, the technological, political, community and business contexts within which Halton Hills' low-carbon economy will evolve are ever-changing. An on-going effort will be required to keep abreast of new senior-level government policies and legislation, growth trends in the different sub-sectors of the Green Economy and technological innovation. This is necessary if the Town is to maximize opportunities for growing Halton Hills' Green Economy and transition to a low-carbon economy.

One of the key learnings from examining Green Economy best practices across Canada is that the most successful communities have developed extensive collaborative partnerships with other like-minded stakeholders. These partnerships have tended to come in two forms. First, many municipalities have partnered with Green businesses, residents, interest groups and non-governmental organizations to form Green Economy Hubs. These hubs serve to share ideas, complete Green Economy projects, and gain broad recognition by promoting and celebrating their collective Green Economy achievements.

The second form is partnerships with researchers from universities with strong sustainable development, climate change, planning and business programs. Halton Hills has the benefit of being located close to several such universities and could explore partnerships with one or more of McMaster University, Ryerson University, University of Toronto, University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University and York University.

Another key learning is that the ability to develop, maintain and grow these partnerships and successfully market Green Economy achievements requires a municipality and partners to consistently use an agreed-upon definition of the Green



Economy. A widely-accepted and understood definition of will facilitate the development and enhancement of policies, programs and collaborative partnerships and effective marketing of local business achievements and opportunities. Use of such a definition is also important for a municipality to be able to accurately monitor, evaluate and report on its municipal Green Economy initiatives. Several other Ontario jurisdictions provide models for consideration². Since Halton Hills is inextricably linked with the Greater Toronto Area economy, it should consider adopting a regional approach to defining the Green Economy or “Green Sector” to provide consistent policy direction, monitoring, evaluation and marketing.

The Green Economy can broadly be defined as a low-carbon economy comprised of 6 major sectors: Clean Energy; Clean Buildings; Resource Management and Environmental Protection; Sustainable Transportation; Green Professional Services; and the Bio-Economy.³


² See www.greeneconomy.ca/green-economy-hubs/) for examples of other models.

³ Businesses in each sector are detailed in the Appendices of the City of Toronto’s 2019 report “Challenges and Opportunities Summary Report of the On-Line Consultations with Toronto’s Green Industries”, www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/8f24-edc-Consultations-with-Torontos-Green-Industries-Summary-Report-2019_Accessible.pdf





5.2.1 Green Economy Goals and Objectives

The Green Economy pillar includes 5 goal areas and 15 recommended actions. This section includes recommendations to establish a regional network and a consistent definition of the green economy. It builds upon Halton Hills' profile and past success in the green economy efforts. It includes recommendations to position the Town as a leader in climate change action, green economy research development and economic activity. It also builds on current momentum and encourages local businesses to go green.


	Goal	Objective
1	Green Economy Hub	Leverage potential economic development opportunities through the creation of a Green Economy Hub.
2	Green Economy Definition	Develop, monitor and promote Halton Hills' existing and future Green Economy initiatives through the consistent use of a widely recognized definition of the Green Economy.
3	Build on Green Economy and Climate Change Leadership	Continue to leverage Halton Hills' existing strengths as a leader in the Green Economy and Climate Change initiatives to retain, grow and attract "Green" and low-carbon investment.
4	University Partnerships	Leverage the climate change, sustainability planning and business expertise of nearby universities to support future development of Halton Hills' Green Economy.
5	Support Green Development	Continue to ensure that the Town's strategic policies, plans, development review processes and regulations remain current with evolving best practices and legislative requirements in land development and redevelopment.



 Goal 1: Green Economy Hub	
Objective	Leverage potential growth opportunities by collaborating with partner municipalities and businesses to create a Green Economy Hub.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Connect with nearby municipalities and businesses to identify partners for the formation of a Green Economy Hub.2. Establish Terms of Reference for the Green Economy Hub focused on creating an environment to support the growth and attraction of green businesses, the adoption of green practices, and the transition to a low-carbon economy.


 Goal 2: Green Economy Definition	
Objective	Develop, monitor and promote Halton Hills' existing and future Green Economy initiatives through the consistent use of a widely recognized definition of the Green Economy.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review and establish a consistent definition of the Green Economy in Halton Hills.2. Develop and use a definition of the Green Economy that closely aligns with the current definition that is widely used by municipalities and business sectors in Ontario.3. Identify those Halton Hills businesses that would be included in Halton Hills' definition of the Green Economy for business development and investment attraction efforts.4. Incorporate the established Green Economy definition in future policy, promotion and investment incentives.



	Goal 3: Green Economy and Climate Change Leadership
Objective	Leverage Halton Hills' existing strengths as a leader in Green Economy and Climate Change initiatives to retain, grow and attract "Green" and low-carbon investment.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to implement, refine, build on and promote the Town's existing successes such as the Climate Change Adaptation Plan, Community Sustainability Strategy, Mayor's Community Energy Plan/Low-carbon Transition Strategy and Green Development Standards. 2. Profile local Green Economy businesses in economic development marketing materials. 3. Encourage local businesses to adopt Green practices, educating them on the business case, incentives and other programs to support activities such as environmental audits, procurement, waste management, packaging and LEED certification.

	Goal 4: University Partnerships
Objective	Leverage the climate change, sustainability planning and business expertise of nearby universities to support future development of Halton Hills' Green Economy.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jointly host an Annual Green Economy Symposium. 2. Establish formal agreements with post-secondary institutions to support collaboration, innovation, and incentives for sustainable/green improvements, and the transition to a low-carbon economy. 3. Provide sustainability audit services to existing businesses. 4. Develop Investment Business Cases to demonstrate the Town's Green Economy value proposition to existing and potential new businesses and investors. 5. Provide research to support the use of sustainable/green development, transportation and climate change best practices in all future phases of the Premier Gateway Employment Area.



	Goal 5: Support Green Development
Objective	Ensure that the Town's strategic policies, plans, development review processes and regulations continue to be updated to remain current with evolving best practices and legislative requirements in land development and redevelopment.
Actions	1. Continue to monitor key Provincial documents such as the Planning Act, Provincial Policy Statement, Places to Grow Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the Ontario Building Code for amendments that will support revised or new green and low-carbon development initiatives.

5.3 Redeveloping Halton Hills' Brownfields

Halton Hills has a number of known and suspected Brownfield sites but some of the data are out-of-date or incomplete. Notwithstanding that there are always some data limitations when trying to confirm information about contaminated sites, accurate data is key to being able to manage Brownfield redevelopment programs effectively.

Effective Brownfield redevelopment programs include regular reports to Council and the community about the successes of the programs (e.g. status of site clean-up, development approvals, applicable financial incentives and building activity). Accordingly, developing and maintaining an up-to-date inventory of known and suspected Brownfield sites is a critical component of the Town's Brownfield initiatives.

Through its CIP Program, the Town has an existing suite of Brownfield redevelopment incentive programs (i.e. Environmental Site Assessment Grants, Brownfields Tax Assistance, Brownfield Parkland Dedication Reductions and Brownfields Development Charge Reductions) that can support potential Brownfield redevelopment projects. The Town should explore options available for refining its suite of programs, particularly given the range of known and suspected Brownfield sites in Halton Hills.

The first opportunity stems from Bill 108, the More Homes, More Choices Act, that received Royal Assent in June 2019. Among other things, the Act replaces Development Charges as the key financial tool for supporting new development with a new tool called Community Benefits Charges. Municipalities across Ontario are working to fully understand the



implications of the new legislation and regulations. Halton Hills' review needs to consider whether the Brownfields Development Charge Reductions program needs to be re-named, amended or eliminated in its entirety.

The second opportunity is combining Tax Increment Grants (TIGs) with Development Charge Reductions. This approach is used successfully in other jurisdictions to provide the financial support needed to make the clean-up of large and/or heavily contaminated sites financially viable. Expanding the size and availability of TIGs may therefore be a key incentive tool to support the redevelopment of sites such as the Georgetown GO Station Sub-Area and the South Acton lands.


The third opportunity would be to give the Town's Brownfield redevelopment incentive programs more prominence in the Town's Community Improvement Plan materials and make the application process more accessible to landowners.


In two-tier governance structures such as Halton Hills, full participation from the upper-tier municipality is required to ensure the Development Charge Reduction and TIG Programs are economically meaningful to investors and competitive with similar programs offered by single-tier municipalities; particularly projects on large and/or heavily contaminated sites. The joint participation is required because upper-tier municipalities typically account for 60 to 70 percent of the taxes incorporated into these programs. Addressing this disparity will help to make Halton Hills competitive with local municipalities in the Niagara and Waterloo regions, as well as single-tier municipalities such as Guelph, Hamilton and Barrie. These considerations should be evaluated through the review of the Town's existing CIP Program.




5.3.1 Brownfield Development Goals and Objectives


The Brownfield Development section includes 7 recommended actions in 3 goal areas: compiling current data on the current inventory of Brownfield sites, addressing the financial viability of Brownfield projects and accessing additional funding to support Brownfield Development.

	Goal	Objective
1	Brownfield Inventory	Support timely, evidence-based decisions with an up-to-date inventory of known and suspected Brownfield sites.
2	Refine the Community Improvement Plan	Expand the available financial incentives for the redevelopment of Brownfield sites and provide adequate funding for marketing and implementing existing initiatives.
3	Joint Brownfield Redevelopment Program	Engage Halton Region to create a fully integrated and financially robust approach to supporting Brownfield redevelopment.

	Goal 1: Brownfield Inventory
Objective	Support timely, evidence-based decisions with an up-to-date inventory of known and suspected Brownfield sites.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Work with local landowners, Halton Region and the Province to create and monitor a detailed inventory of all known and suspected Brownfield sites in Halton Hills for internal use.2. Provide regular updates to Council and regional stakeholders on the status of all Brownfield sites that have received (or are proposed to receive) financial incentives from the Town, as well as the status of brownfield developments.



	Goal 2: Refine the Existing Community Improvement Plan
Objective	Expand the available financial incentives for the redevelopment of Brownfield sites and provide adequate funding for marketing and implementing existing initiatives.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Rename the Brownfield Redevelopment Grant Program as the Brownfield Tax Increment Grant Program to make it clear that the Town has a TIG program.2. Review, revise or eliminate the Brownfields Parkland Dedication Reductions program to reflect the introduction of Community Benefits Charges through Bill 108.3. Revise the Community Improvement Plan to make it explicit that the Brownfield financial incentives program, including Tax Increment Grants (TIGs), applies to the Downtown Georgetown, Downtown Acton and Guelph Street Sub-Areas⁴.4. Develop and post information guides about each of the Town's Brownfield redevelopment programs with the corresponding application form in the Community Improvement Plan section of the Invest Halton Hills website.

	Goal 3: A Joint Brownfield Redevelopment Program with Halton Region
Objective	Engage Halton Region to create a fully integrated and financially robust approach to supporting Brownfield redevelopment projects.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Advocate for a Joint Brownfield Redevelopment Program with Halton Region that includes greater financial participation from, and integration with, Halton Region.

⁴ Subject to creating an Up-to-Date Brownfield Inventory.



5.4 Amplifying Tourism's Economic Benefits

The goals and objectives related to Halton Hills' Green Economy and Brownfield Development largely pertain to investment readiness and investment attraction. Tourism, on the other hand, is an established sector in Halton Hills that not only draws people to the area, but provides assets and experiences that both visitors and residents enjoy. The following section details the specific goals, objectives and strategic actions related to amplifying tourism's economic benefits in Halton Hills.

Defining Tourism

According to Statistics Canada, tourism is defined as: "the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited."⁵ It includes travel for business, leisure and other personal reasons, such as visiting friends and relatives, religious purposes, or medical treatment. The term "usual environment" is defined as the place where an individual lives and works, or studies, and includes any other places frequented. Canada has defined the concept of "outside the usual environment" as greater than 80 kilometres one way from home. Crossing an international or provincial border, is considered tourism no matter the distance travelled.

What is a Visitor?

In Canada, the term "tourist" is used to denote all visitors, whether they are same-day or overnight visitors. As such, the two are used interchangeably in this Strategy. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that residents can also benefit from tourism offerings, with some Halton Hills operators actively promoting local experiences (i.e. "staycations").

Community vs. Tourism Events

The term "event" is used to describe a wide range of activities. Events vary from local community-based events (e.g. Folk Festivals) to major events (e.g. The Olympics). Events help to capture attention and promote attractions and infrastructure in smaller communities. Community events and festivals can attract tourists and visitors at regional, provincial, national and international levels, but need to be promoted beyond the community in order to do so. A "tourism" event is an event that brings people from outside their usual environment to a place.

⁵ Statistics Canada, Canadian Tourism Satellite Account – Appendix A: Concepts and Definitions



What is Visitor Friendliness?

Being “visitor friendly” is about creating favourable, long-lasting impressions of a business or community for visitors. It involves overall attractiveness, the ease with which visitors find their way around, and how well they are treated. Visitor friendliness influences the way visitors view, remember and talk about a business or place.

Typical categories of visitor friendliness include:

- Overall ambience/visual appeal
- Wayfinding and signage
- Quality of service and professionalism
- Public services and visitor amenities
- Visitor information
- Pedestrian friendliness and universal accessibility

Halton Hills Tourism Overview

Halton Hills has identified Tourism as one of its target sectors. Since 2018, the Town has been tasked with setting the strategic direction and leveraging tourism for local economic development.

In order to ensure that the Tourism Sub-Strategy is accepted by the industry, it is essential that all operators support the goals of creating a unified business community and improving their collective practices to ensure visitors have favourable impressions and stay longer. A toolkit to develop cross-promotion practices is also essential to grow Halton Hills as a unified destination.

As identified through the Strategy preparation process, the majority of visitors to Halton Hills are from Ontario and more specifically the GTA. Visitors to Halton Hills are typically same-day visitors; visitors who stay overnight typically stay in private homes. The most common reasons for travel to Halton Region are to visit friends and family, followed by outdoor/sports activity and shopping.



Key Product and Experience Categories:

- Nature and outdoors
- Historic downtowns/rural communities
- Festivals and events
- Retail/shopping
- Arts and culture
- Agri-tourism
- Sports and recreation
- Culinary tourism

Key Visitor Markets:

- Visiting friends and relatives (VFR)
- Young families (engaging in agri-tourism and visiting rural communities)
- Short-term stays from the GTA
- Cyclists
- Eco-tourists (including hiking, naturalists etc.)
- Sport tourists (including hockey, soccer and baseball)
- International tourists (particularly for Toronto Premium Outlets)
- Artist community

Identifying products and experiences, creating inventories, and filling existing gaps are essential elements of product development that need to be completed before any further marketing efforts are undertaken. One of the primary gaps identified through the Strategy preparation process was the limited level of local accommodation options to keep visitors in the area longer. Undertaking an Accommodation Needs Study would be an excellent way for the Town to identify what type of accommodations would best fit the market and where, in consideration of market demand, and would provide a document that the Town can use to attract accommodation investment.

The Town also needs to leverage resources (e.g. RTO3) that have already done work in Halton Region to better define their own key visitor markets and match them to the local product/experience categories that have been identified. For example, RTO3 works with communities throughout Hamilton, Halton and Brant on experience development, and has developed tool kits specific to assets featured in Halton Hills, such as cycling trails and agri-tourism experiences. The Town would then be in a better position to develop and market visitor itineraries, using common and unified messaging to attract visitors. Once itineraries have been formed, it will be essential to regularly adapt tourism offerings to changing demographics.


From an organizational standpoint, the Town has begun to adapt best practices by hiring additional staff in 2019. Nevertheless, Halton Hills' tourism budget is lower than established industry best practices of \$1.15 per capita in Ontario.



Additional resources will be required to successfully implement the Tourism Sub-Strategy. Creating partnership structures with other organizations will help reduce duplication and ensure efficient use of limited resources.


5.4.1 Tourism Goals and Objectives

Goals 1 to 4 focus on the tourism business community and growing existing tourism assets in the short-term, as well as developing new and enhanced products and experiences for the longer term. These goals also provide a framework to unify tourism operators and strengthen the business community. They are primarily internal to the Halton Hills tourism industry and community operators. Goals 5 to 7 focus on promoting Halton Hills as a unified destination to out-of-town visitors, equipping residents to be ambassadors for Halton Hills and working with regional partners to increase the reach of tourism messaging.

	Goal	Objective
1	Strong tourism business community	Create a visitor-friendly tourism business environment.
2	Increased tourism product and experience offerings	Ensure Halton Hills businesses have support for product and experience building.
3	Enhanced accommodation product in Halton Hills	Determine market and investment potential for accommodation development in Halton Hills.
4	Products/experiences and visitor markets are aligned	Develop visitor profiles that match product/experience groups.
5	Halton Hills is promoted as a unified tourism destination	Create unique Halton Hills Tourism identifiers with common messaging for all of Halton Hills' communities.
6	Residents act as ambassadors for Halton Hills' tourism industry	Equip residents with tools to market and promote Halton Hills as a tourism destination.
7	Strong regional partnerships with pooled resources (human, financial etc.)	Undertake human resources (HR)/financial resource gap analysis to ensure that the Tourism Sub-Strategy goals can be achieved effectively.




	Goal 1: Strong tourism business community
Objective	Create a visitor-friendly tourism business environment.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Consolidate a list of tourism business practices needing improvement, as identified in the Executive Summary of the Initial Findings Report (i.e. businesses closing on evenings and weekends).2. Create a Visitor Friendliness Action Plan with clear roles and responsibilities to address needed improvements.3. Create a Visitor Friendliness Digital Toolkit to educate new and existing business operators on the importance of visitor friendliness and sharing best practices, and to provide resources available from the Halton Hills Economic Development, Innovation and Culture division.4. Host a bi-annual Tourism Business Forum to review implementation progress for the Tourism Sub-Strategy and Visitor Friendliness Action Plan, and to focus on celebrating successes, keeping operators up-to-date, sharing best practices, building industry capacity and encouraging a unified industry.

	Goal 2: Increased tourism product and experience offerings
Objective	Ensure Halton Hills businesses have support for product and experience building.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Assess the inventory of tourism products and experiences by category based on results of the Strategy preparation process and update annually.2. Review the tourism gap analysis and determine what products/experiences can be enhanced or developed by existing businesses/operators, and where the Town needs to actively attract new investment.3. Identify existing operators looking to enhance their offerings and assist where possible.4. Develop a Product and Experience Digital Toolkit for businesses to enhance or develop new products and experiences, and provide ideas for partnership opportunities.




	Goal 2: Increased tourism product and experience offerings
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Assist incoming tourism operators in starting new businesses in Halton Hills.6. Ensure local operators continually build product development related skills (i.e. hire a third party to offer workshops on packaging, and identify a local inventory of marketing and technology companies that can support tourism businesses).7. Continually monitor changes in the marketplace and integrate new tourism product and experience trends and best practices. Adapt tools and resources to support operators and grow visitation and tourism revenue in the community.8. Invest in regular website upgrades for surveying, demographics tracking and product/experience development.


	Goal 3: Enhanced accommodation product in Halton Hills
Objective	Determine market and investment potential for accommodation development in Halton Hills.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identify potential sites available for accommodation development and preparation of an investment attraction strategy, with a focus on suitable sites close to Highway 401, e.g. in the Premier Gateway.2. Develop an RFP to undertake an Accommodation Needs Study⁶.3. Create an Investment Attraction Profile document containing relevant visitor statistics, supply and demand factors, performance metrics and other data that would be relevant to a potential hotel developer.

⁶ An Accommodation Needs Study provides an assessment of accommodation needs from a market, financial and investment attraction perspective, and results in a report that can be provided to a potential developer to complement their own due diligence. Recommendations typically include the ideal location for proposed accommodations; type, size and amenities that should be developed; and top-line projections.




	Goal 4: Products/experiences and visitor markets are aligned
Objective	Develop visitor profiles that match product/experience groups.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Invest in data collection and analysis to identify target markets through such resources as Destination Ontario, Environics Analytics and RTO3. Continuously track and record changing demographics of existing and emerging visitor segments.2. Match product/experience groups that have been identified with key target markets.3. Develop visitor profiles for each product/experience and target segment in conjunction with the Halton Hills' Marketing Strategy (see Section 5.5).4. Develop Digital Itineraries using Halton Hills' products and experiences for key target markets that extend length of stay and increase visitor spending.5. Focus initial itineraries on existing product/experience that have previously met with success (i.e. cycling, agri-tourism and festivals & events), in order to draw higher levels of visitation and spending.6. Communicate Digital Itineraries with local operators to encourage cross-promotion.7. Expand itineraries to include other activities that best meet the identified target markets for Halton Hills, and continue to monitor the success of these itineraries based on operator and visitor feedback.



	Goal 5: Halton Hills is promoted as a unified tourism destination
Objective	Create unique Halton Hills Tourism identifiers with common messaging for all Halton Hills communities.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop a Marketing Strategy and implementation plan aligned with the value proposition for Halton Hills' tourism industry.2. Create specific marketing materials that align with the overall economic development brand.3. Encourage Halton Hills' tourism operators to use Digital Toolkits for visitor friendliness and product/experience development. Encourage consistency and cross-promotion in the industry.4. Solicit feedback from key tourism stakeholders on marketing and messaging, and adjust materials and toolkit as necessary.5. Undertake a Wayfinding and Signage Strategy to further promote Halton Hills as a unified tourism destination.

	Goal 6: Residents act as ambassadors for Halton Hills' tourism industry
Objective	Equip residents with tools to market Halton Hills as a tourism destination.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Organize, host and promote a Town Hall event to share the Tourism Sub-Strategy and encourage key tourism stakeholders to share their achievements in Strategy implementation.2. Create opportunities for residents to take advantage of visitor itineraries and act as "local" tourists, testing quality and relevance of the Digital Toolkits (i.e. Visitor Friendliness and Product and Experience Development).3. Solicit feedback from residents on their level of interest and participation in the products and experience offered. For example, do they engage in itineraries promoting cycling and agri-tourism? What other products and experiences might they want to include in the itineraries?4. Solicit feedback from residents and assess input on how best to promote Halton Hills to visiting friends and relatives.



	Goal 6: Residents act as ambassadors for Halton Hills' tourism industry
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Determine whether improvements are required to tourism business practices and adjust education offerings where necessary.6. Connect residents with Halton Hills' tourism resources (by creating marketing materials that are digital and shareable) in order to help promote Halton Hills.

	Goal 7: Strong regional partnerships with pooled resources
Objective	Undertake human resources (HR)/financial resource gap analysis to ensure Tourism Sub-Strategy goals can be achieved effectively.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review study findings relative to the Halton Hills Economic Development, Innovation and Culture division's organizational structure, staffing and available financial resources.2. Identify the roles and responsibilities required to achieve Tourism Sub-Strategy goals and objectives, and associated budgets (i.e. determine which roles can be filled internally and which need to leverage external resources).3. Create an Action Plan to allocate roles, responsibilities and budgets, aligned with short-term and long-term economic development priorities.4. In the short-term, focus on established product/experience groupings that have already seen success, particularly for regional and same-day visitors (i.e. cycling and agri-tourism).5. In the longer-term, focus on growing overnight visitation through packages and itineraries that promote a variety of experiences over multiple days.6. Review Halton Hills' partnerships and potential opportunities to leverage resources specific to identified product/experience categories and target markets (i.e. RTO3 Farms & Agriculture campaign, Experience Halton by Bike).7. Once marketing materials, digital itineraries and messaging are complete, share materials with regional partners.8. Continue to foster strong relationships with regional, provincial and national partners in order to promote Halton Hills and make use of external resources available.



5.5 Marketing: Making the Case for Halton Hills

Halton Hills has two distinct brands for economic development and tourism; Invest Halton Hills and Visit Halton Hills. Each has its own website that is evolving and becoming more focused over time. The objective of the Marketing Strategy is to continue both, but provide more targeted marketing messaging showing existing and potential investors and visitors the various opportunities in Halton Hills.

Marketing Vision Statement

A vision statement is an inspirational statement of an idealistic emotional future. It is **Aspirational + Inspirational + Motivational**. Halton Hills' vision for the future is at its core a forward-looking interpretation and manifestation of their founding motto of "Heritage, Integrity, Truth."

Halton Hills' Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2021-2026 vision statement is:

Halton Hills is a recognized leader in innovation, economic opportunity and climate change action. With a rich and distinct history as its foundation, Halton Hills will continue to build a diverse community and vibrant economy while providing an outstanding quality of life.

Marketing Mission Statement

A mission statement is a focused road map for an organization that communicates internally and externally; what the organization does, who it provides value for, its purpose and how it fulfills that purpose.

Halton Hills' Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Marketing Mission Statement is:

The Town of Halton Hills Economic Development, Innovation and Culture division is focused on the implementation of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, supporting the economic interests and needs of existing and future residents, businesses and organizations located in Halton Hills. Economic development staff are focused on engaging, informing and inspiring existing and prospective businesses in key sectors. The Town's tourism activities focus on the development and promotion of its unique experiences and destinations.



Figure 4: Halton Hills Coat of Arms Est. 1975



The Economic Development and Tourism Strategy provides the Economic Development office with a clearly defined list of priorities for Economic Development, the Green Economy, Brownfield Development, and Tourism and Marketing.

Each sub-strategy has individual value propositions (included in the Appendix of this document), from which marketing messaging can be developed to convey the unique reasons that differentiate Halton Hills from its neighbours and communicate why Halton Hills is the ideal place to invest, build a business, visit, play and live.

Marketing Brand Positioning Statement

The brand positioning statement outlines what the brand does, what differentiates it, who it targets and the benefits of the brand. The Strategy addresses existing and potential residents, business owners, investors, tourism operators and visitors. These groups all want and need access to specific information, in order to take advantage of business investment opportunities, experience cultural events or enjoy Halton Hills' historic and natural destinations.

The brand positioning statement is:

Halton Hills is an economic development leader actively attracting and supporting local and international business opportunities aligned with its vision of growth that embodies social, economic, fiscal and environmental sustainability. Halton Hills offers existing and potential businesses a strategic platform for



success, proximity to world-class markets, a distinct community with an ideal balance between urban and rural living, and an outstanding quality of life.

Re-evaluating the Current Visit Halton Hills Brand

A visually strong and memorable brand is vital in today's competitive marketing arena. The existing Visit Halton Hills logo consists of a wordmark comprised of two different fonts. There is no graphical representation to reflect the tourism offering in Halton Hills.

The logo's horizontal configuration is also problematic for application in digital applications such as social media where it would be unreadable. As an interim measure, the Town could stack the two words so that the length of the two words will be shorter and the graphic can appear larger when used in social media. This will help to improve the appearance for digital use, before a complete re-design is completed.

A brand must project a unique personality, have a distinct look and convey core beliefs. Halton Hills should undertake a branding exercise to develop an authentic tourism brand that clearly communicates: its reason for being, what it aspires to be, who it needs to speak to and why.

The Visit Halton Hills logo would be stronger with a supporting tagline. The tagline is a concise statement that provides additional clarification for audiences who do not necessarily know what an organization does just by the brand name or graphical logo. A tagline of 3 to 5 descriptive or aspirational words is considered optimal.

The Value Proposition for each sub-strategy is included in the Appendix.


Creative Concept

The appendix includes a creative concept for each of the sub-strategies to help envision a future marketing campaign. A creative concept is the big idea that drives the creative campaign. It is the core of the campaign message, setting the tone that is recommended to be used in all campaign messages, calls to action, communications channels and target audiences.





5.5.1 Marketing Goals and Objectives

The marketing section includes 5 goal areas and 19 recommended actions all focused on establishing a strong memorable Halton Hills brand, providing direction for marketing efforts by target market and identifying the key marketing tools.

	Goal	Objective
1	A powerful cohesive Halton Hills brand	Establish a consistent and cohesive look, feel and messaging to educate and excite existing and potential investors.
2	Brand awareness	Develop memorable campaigns that define the Halton Hills brand by engaging, educating and communicating the many exciting opportunities Halton Hills offers to its target markets.
3	Strategic Positioning	Establish Halton Hills' value proposition for each identified target sector.
4	Targeting messaging	Align the strengths, features and benefits Halton Hills offers for key sectors.
5	Effective strategic tools	Reach and convert target markets utilizing the appropriate messages, forums and tools.



	Goal 1: A powerful cohesive Halton Hills brand
Objective	Establish a consistent and cohesive look, feel and messaging to educate and excite existing and potential investors.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop a brand vision and mission statement to be used as the cornerstone for the brand positioning statement.2. Develop a brand positioning statement including target audience and brand promise.3. Incorporate the brand positioning statement throughout the marketing materials.4. Refresh/update the Visit Halton Hills Tourism brand.
	Goal 2: Brand Awareness
Objective	Develop memorable campaigns that redefine the Halton Hills brand by engaging, educating and communicating the many exciting opportunities Halton Hills offers to its target markets.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Create an overarching marketing campaign that engages, informs, persuades and inspires interest in the business possibilities Halton Hills has to offer.2. Create a marketing campaign for each sub-sector based upon the overarching campaign, with specific messaging that speaks directly to business decision makers in these sectors.3. Develop a memorable campaign tagline and call to action.4. Invest in professional still photography and video footage for use in Invest Halton Hills and Visit Halton Hills marketing materials including feature businesses, tourism events and destinations.5. Invest in traditional and digital advertising to market these campaigns.6. Include consistent brand messaging on all Halton Hills websites and social media channels.



	Goal 3: Strategic Positioning
Objective	Establish Halton Hills' value proposition for each identified target sector.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create detailed target sector profiles, identifying the products or services that Halton Hills offers by target sector (e.g. access to markets, highly-skilled workforce, strong supply chains, transportation routes or expedited approval processes), addressing each targets' key motivations, needs and specific values. 2. Develop value propositions for each of the identified key sectors.

	Goal 4: Targeting Messaging
Objective	Establish campaigns that feature the strengths, features and benefits Halton Hills offers for key sectors.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create an engaging overarching theme (a campaign) that delivers the overarching key message (general awareness). 2. Extend the general awareness theme to each individual sub-brand/key sector. 3. Incorporate specific information for each sub-brand to appeal to key sector decision makers. 4. Communicate Halton Hills' key messages, value proposition and future vision for growth to potential business investors.

	Goal 5: Effective strategic tools
Objective	Reach and convert target markets utilizing the appropriate messages, forums and tools.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop marketing tools based on target sector behaviour, providing the information they want, when and where they need it: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Website: Establish the economic development and tourism websites as the centre of all marketing activity, incorporating calls to action and visitor contact information collection. b. Content: Expand the content and sub-brand messaging. Include all critical economic data on the website.








Goal 5: Effective strategic tools

- c. Search Engine Optimization and/organic reach: Incorporate keyword rankings, backlinking and meta tags to elevate the website search profile.
 - d. Video: Establish a general brand campaign video to connect all websites and social media channels. Develop 15-second, 30-second and 1-minute spots per target sector deployed via a digital marketing campaign.
 - e. Blog: Create and schedule a blog highlighting new development, sector-specific activity and value propositions by sector.
 - f. Digital: Invest in paid advertising and email campaigns utilizing CRM lists to support brand and sector campaigns.
 - g. Social media marketing: develop social campaigns with scheduled posts and target specific content including photo imagery, video posts and text-based posts.
2. Use a CRM tool to manage the customer relationship through the selling cycle and connect to digital campaign tools.
 3. Establish benchmarks and targets for websites and trackable platforms.



6 Appendix

6.1 Icons used in the Strategy

Strategy	Icon
Economic Development	
Tourism	
Green Economy	
Brownfield	
Marketing	



6.2 Value Propositions

Target	Overall Awareness – Local and prospective businesses
Product or service	Economic Development division Support and Guidance
What clients are really buying	Expertise: A dedicated Business Concierge Service to help investors with processes and procedure for development reviews, as well as knowledge of the area and its opportunities.
Because they believe in	Opportunity: To be able to fulfill their business plan. Available workforce, access to GTA, access to Pearson International Airport.
Fundamental need	Success: To see their business ideas become a reality.

Target	Brownfield Redevelopment – Investors prepared to rehabilitate and redevelop Brownfield sites
Product or service	Economic Development Support and Guidance.
What clients are really buying	Expertise: Halton Hills already has processes and procedures in place such as its CIP, that includes Brownfield incentive programs. The Town may be able to partner with Halton Region for additional financial support.
Because they believe in	Opportunity: Currently available and future properties that are financially viable.
Fundamental need	Financial Success: A good return on investment.



Target	Green Economy
Product or service	Economic Development Support and Guidance
What clients are really buying	Expertise: A dedicated business concierge service to help investors with processes and procedures for approvals and the knowledge of the area and opportunities.
Because they believe in	Unique offerings: Halton Hills is a recognized leader in sustainability policy and programming among smaller Canadian communities. It is committed to become a Net-Zero community by 2030 and has \$1.3 million in 2020 budget for climate change initiatives.
Fundamental need	Being a leader: Staying ahead of their competitors and creating an outstanding return on their investment.

Target	Tourism Development, Investors/Operators
Product or service	Economic Development Support and Guidance
What clients are really buying	Expertise: Halton Hills has a growing Tourism sector. The Town has a wide range of both destinations and experiences for visitors, which in turn, offer many options and opportunities for investors.
Because they believe in	Unique offerings: Halton Hills has history, natural beauty and no shortage of green spaces for visitors to explore. It is easily accessible for visitors from the GTA to enjoy agri-tourism and culinary tourism adventures. Downtown Georgetown offers specialty stores and restaurants, and the Toronto Premium Outlets provide an extraordinary shopping experience.
Fundamental need	ROI: Investors want a good return on their investment.



Target	Tourism/Visitors
Product or service	Tourism experience
What clients are really buying	Unique experiences: Halton Hills has many unique experiences to offer: natural beauty and green spaces for visitors to explore; easy access from the GTA for visitors to enjoy agri-tourism and culinary tourism adventures; Downtown Georgetown and Acton as well as quaint villages with specialty stores and restaurants; and the Toronto Premium Outlets provide a unique shopping experience.
Because they believe in	Fun with family and friends: An experience to share with friends and family.
Fundamental need	Authentic experiences: Visitors are looking for something different, but want it to be an authentic experience.



6.3 Creative Concept: Explore the Opportunities

The creative concept is the compelling big idea that brings the marketing campaign to life. A strong creative concept is key to developing memorable campaigns that engage, educate and communicate the many exciting opportunities Halton Hills offers to its target markets.

The creative concept shows how the marriage of images and messaging will work together to create a strong and memorable campaign. It provides a guideline for all marketing and promotional items that are needed.

What your brand does, who you target, and the benefits of your brand

The Marketing Sub-Strategy targets existing and potential visitors and business investors who want and need specific information to take advantage of current and future business investment opportunities. Halton Hills is an economic development leader actively attracting and supporting local and international business opportunities aligned with its vision of growth that embodies social, economic, fiscal and environmental sustainability. Halton Hills offers existing and potential business partners a strategic platform for success, proximity to world class markets, a distinct community with an ideal balance between urban and rural living and an outstanding quality of life.

Proposed Creative Concept: Explore the Opportunities

The overarching creative campaign message and call to action for this concept is “Explore the Opportunities in Halton Hills.”

The visual images are interesting professional photographs (currently stock photography) that attract attention to the specific sub-strategy area (a bullseye to indicate marketing objectives, a painted Victorian brick wall with a vibrant plant growth for Brownfield development, sunshine illuminating spring leaves on a tree for the Green Economy, a rural road with a sunny horizon for tourism investors, a boutique shop with an open sign for tourism visitors, an image of a Halton Hills trail for tourism visitors). The colours used at the bottom of each ad reinforce the existing Invest Halton Hills and Visit Halton Hills brand colours.



The copy is designed to resonate with the particular target audiences based upon the 5 value propositions promoting overall awareness of investment opportunities in Halton Hills, Brownfield Redevelopment, the Green Economy, Tourism investment and Tourism visitor destination attraction in Halton Hills.

The individual headlines are supported by short sub-headlines that encourage the viewer to discover more details of specific features and the benefits of investing in, or visiting, Halton Hills.

The call to action of “Explore the Opportunities in Halton Hills.” ties the concept, headline and call to action together and drives prospects to a splash page that re-enforces the design and messaging sensibility of the campaign and encourages prospects to engage with economic development staff.

Table 1: Explore the Opportunities Creative Concept

Target Audience	Concept	Image	Headline	Sub-head introducing features and benefits
Prospective investors and partners, existing business community, residents	Overall awareness: An image of multiple ladders leaning against a wall of possibilities. One ladder is highlighted with a bullseye to indicate Halton Hills’ targeted opportunities.	A simple professional photo of multiple ladders (all of which represent opportunities) with one that is highlighted and has a bullseye target. This target could represent any one of the opportunities identified under the headline.	Opportunities in	Building futures together
Prospective partners and investors in Brownfield Developments	Re-enforcing the positive aspects of reclaiming and revitalizing Brownfield properties while referencing the heritage buildings that differentiate Halton Hills.	A simple professional photo of a reclaimed Victorian brick wall with a vibrant plant growing on it.	Reclaiming our Future	Revitalizing the past



Target Audience	Concept	Image	Headline	Sub-head introducing features and benefits
Prospective partners and investors and exiting businesses in Green Economy	Combining sunshine and fresh green leaves indicates renewal and solar energy to provide a visual prompt for the Green Economy.	A simple professional photograph of sunshine seen through spring leaves on a tree provide an uplifting and hopeful image.	Thinking Ahead	A Greener Future
Tourism development/ investors/operators	Addresses the potential opportunities and advantages for tourism investors, highlighting the GTA market.	A simple, professional photo of a rural road going into a sunny natural horizon.	Adventures and Advantages	Tourism Investment for the GTA Market
Tourism visitors #1	Halton Hills has unique shopping experiences as well as interesting heritage sites to visit.	A simple professional photo of a boutique shop door with a sign stating "Welcome we are open".	Stop. Shop. Enjoy.	A Dynamic Destination
Tourism visitors #2	Showcasing the unique nature trails and green spaces so close to the GTA.	A photo of Halton Hills' nature trails.	Drop in	Where the GTA comes to play



Figure 5: Creative Concept Spec Sheet

Logo:
The Halton Hills Logo, prominent and consistent in size and location throughout the campaign.

Image:
The professional photo to visually co-ordinate with and strengthen the headline text.

Headline:
Short and to the point but resonates with the target sector. Works with the photography image.

Subhead:
Needs to relate to the headline and encourage the reader to read the body copy below the subhead.

Body Copy:
Short description of the features and benefits specific to the individual target sector considering investing in Halton Hills.

Call to Action:
In this case also the campaign theme, a consistent, simple and memorable statement that encourages the target audience to contact Halton Hills economic development office either through the website or by phone.



Figure 6: Explore the Opportunities – Overall Awareness

The graphic features a light blue background with a large red target in the upper right. A white ladder is positioned in front of the target, extending from the bottom. Below the target, there are several smaller, identical ladders arranged in a row. The bottom section of the graphic has a green background with white and blue text.

OPPORTUNITIES IN



- ✓ Advanced manufacturing
- ✓ Agri-business
- ✓ Clean tech
- ✓ Food and beverage processing
- ✓ Tourism

BUILDING FUTURES TOGETHER

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EXPLORE THE OPPORTUNITIES IN HALTON HILLS

investhaltonhills.com 905.873.2600 x 2289





Figure 7: Green Economy



Figure 8: Brownfield Development



Figure 9: Tourism Investment





Figure 10: Tourist Attraction- Adventure



Figure 11: Tourist Attraction - Shopping

