

**GREY  
HIGHLANDS.**

# **Economic Development Strategic Framework**

Prepared by the Municipality of Grey Highlands'  
Economic Development Advisory Group

Approved – August 3, 2022 (resolution #2022-486)

(Updated April 2024 with evaluation matrix)

# Economic Development Strategic Framework

The Grey Highlands Economic Development Strategic Framework is intended to provide a framework for economic development priorities and undertakings in the Municipality of Grey Highlands.

The principles outlined in this document are foundational, and the economic development credo is a philosophical guide to inform decision making.

It is recognized that there are numerous macro economic factors outside the control of this Framework that may impact the community and the priorities for the Municipality. As such, this Framework is considered an organic and evolving undertaking.

Each year, staff will present annual workplans to the Council-appointed economic development advisory committee, and will report on outcomes and milestones. The committee will provide market insights, industry expertise and feedback on community sentiment to ensure the annual work plans align with the Economic Development Strategic Framework.

## Who was involved in preparing this Strategic Framework?

The Municipality of Grey Highlands established an Economic Development Advisory Group to report through staff to Council. The role of EDAG is to provide strategic advice to facilitate and promote a holistic, sustainable, and long-term approach to economic and business development that will benefit Grey Highlands and its residents.

The Economic Development Advisory Group (EDAG) includes:

- A Council appointed group of citizen volunteers with experience and interest in economic development;
- Two members of Council;
- Experienced senior staff from the Municipality of Grey Highlands and Grey County.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, a number of EDAG members resigned their positions before the end of term. As such, since the committee no longer had quorum but the substantial work of the committee to create a strategic framework had been completed, the final stages of public engagement were undertaken by Municipal staff and the remaining committee members.

# Grey Highlands Economic & Community Development Department

The Municipality's Economic & Community Development Department has focused on the following vision and mission when undertaking their work for the past three years.

## **VISION | Economic & Community Development**

To deliver holistic, innovative and forward-thinking approaches to community building that are respectful of the intrinsic values of our Municipality and that will position Grey Highlands as one of Canada's foremost rural communities.

## **MISSION | Economic & Community Development**

To support the development of a strong, resilient and sustainable economy.  
To connect and facilitate partnerships with internal and external stakeholders by creating and implementing business, cultural and recreational programming, maintaining and leveraging our built and natural spaces, and honouring our commitment to the multitude of businesses, community groups and organizations who contribute to the well-being of Grey Highlands.

## 6-step process for preparing this Strategic Framework

1. Understand the current economic and social situation/projects/initiatives in Grey Highlands and the region.

2. Review the nature and concepts of economic development, including best practices, and policy parameters.

3. Assess economic development priorities from both a pursuit and protection perspective.

4. Conduct a workshop with Municipal Council to solicit input and test some of the assumptions being considered.

5. Develop a draft plan and solicit public input on overall direction and assumptions being considered. .

6. Develop a Grey Highlands Economic Development Strategic Framework for Council consideration.

## Grey Highlands economic development credo

- Economic development in the Municipality of Grey Highlands will be built upon its strengths and encourage economic activity in priority sectors.
- Economic development will pursue improved quality of life for its citizens while respecting ecological, social and sustainability principles, and will advance the environment for prosperity for its residents, businesses and organizations.
- Economic development will advance, as the first priority, the commitments developed between the Municipality and its citizens, businesses and organizations, as expressed in plans and official documents.
- Economic development will encourage proposals that respect the special rural, economic and ecologically balanced approach that this credo asserts for the Municipality of Grey Highlands.

## Major themes

- Growth alone is not the objective.
- Need to balance pursuit versus protection when considering economic development.
- Development involves quality of life and respect for ecological limits.
- Development in Grey Highlands is multi-faceted, involving many sectors.
- Economic development should bring new value and prosperity for citizens, businesses and organizations.
- Development can be new, can be from within, can be from transformation of current uses.
- Headwinds exist in terms of demographics, capacities, policies, and evaluating conventional approaches to development.
- A focus on priorities is essential.
- It will be essential to link strategic framework to tactics and workplans.

# Challenges & opportunities

## Challenges:

- Global/macro economic concerns
  - Inflation
  - Supply chain
  - Energy/fuel pressures
- Shifting demographics (aging population)
- Infrastructure
- Non-compatible development pressures
- Rapid population growth
- Commuter culture
- Increased car & truck traffic
- High speed internet
- Unclear policy direction

## Opportunities:

- Influx of new residents
- Development from within
- Transformative development
- Strengthening relations and roles with regional organizations
- Multi-sector economy
- Community commitment to climate mitigation and environmental sustainability
- Social enterprise approach
- Outdoors spaces, trails and corridors
- Rural landscape
- Cultural fabric
- Deep agricultural roots
- C4 growth
- Policy reviews



## Identified priority economic sectors

- Agriculture
- Downtown revitalization in primary settlement areas (C1)
- Tourism
- Health and wellness
- Manufacturing

## Key elements for success

- Being adaptable and nimble, especially in these turbulent economic times.
- Identifying a Grey Highlands value proposition as an underpinning for future initiatives.
- Building on the successful **[re]IMAGINE Grey Highlands** initiative, continue to focus on community engagement to garner public sentiment and input.
- Ensuring the principles outlined in the Economic Development Strategic Framework are considered in Municipal policy development.
- Building strategic partnerships to complement and enhance Municipal undertakings.
- Developing a meaningful evaluation matrix that tracks impacts and outcomes related to quality of life in Grey Highlands.

# Evaluation matrix for EDAG committee discussions

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Council approved the inclusion of an evaluation matrix (resolution #2024-139) as part of the Economic Development Strategic Framework, **for use by the committee members when considering items for committee discussion.**

## Evaluation Considerations:

1. Diversification: encourage diversification of industries to reduce reliance on a single sector, thus making the economy more resilient to economic shocks;
2. Support Local Business: implement programs to support local entrepreneurs, startups and small businesses through access to funding, mentorship and training programs;
3. Infrastructure Investment: advocate for infrastructure development projects that enhance connectivity, such as improved transportation networks, affordable broadband access and utilities, to attract businesses and stimulate growth;
4. Sustainability Initiatives: promote stability practices, such as energy efficiency, waste reduction and renewable energy adoption, to foster long-term environmental and economic benefits;
5. Workforce Development: partner with educational institutions and industry stakeholders to develop workforce training programs aligned with the needs of local businesses, ensuring a skilled workforce for future economic growth;
6. Quality of Life Enhancements: invest in amenities and community development projects that improve quality of life, such as parks, cultural facilities, and affordable housing, to attract and retain residents and businesses;
7. Promotion and Marketing: develop a comprehensive strategy to showcase the Municipality's strengths, attract investment, and encourage tourism, ultimately boosting economic activity;
8. Collaboration & Partnerships: foster collaboration among government agencies, businesses, non-profit organizations, and community groups to leverage resources and expertise in pursuit of shared economic development goals;
9. Innovation & Technology: support innovation ecosystems and technology clusters by providing research, infrastructure and incentives to foster the growth of high-tech industries and startups.
10. Policy Advocacy: advocate for policies at the local, regional and national levels that support economic development priorities, such as tax incentives, regulatory reforms, and trade facilities required.

# Economic Development Advisory Group

**Paul McQueen** | Mayor, Municipality of Grey Highlands

**Cathy Little** | Councillor, Municipality of Grey Highlands

**Tracey Nurmi** | Community Representative

**Steve Furness** | Manager of Economic Development, Grey County

**Michele Harris** | Director of Economic & Community Development, Grey Highlands

## **Past committee members:**

Jim Harrold | Community Representative

Barbara Watson | Community Representative

Michael Warner | Community Representative

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