



Request for Decision (RFD)

Meeting: Council in Committee
Meeting Date: February 12, 2025
Originated by: Peter Wong, Director of Corporate Services
Title: Economic Development Plan

BACKGROUND:

Through Local Government Reform, the function of Economic Development became one of the mandates of the Capital Regional Service Commission (CRSC). The CRSC has partnered with Ignite to drive economic development initiatives within the region. During 2024, the Town engaged Ignite to guide the development of the Town's Economic Development Plan.

DISCUSSION:

Representative from Ignite worked with the Town Team, consisting of Dallas Gillis, John Thomson, Jackie Dunn, Cindy Goguen, Peter Wong and John Jackson, in creating the five strategic areas and action items as presented in the final Oromocto Economic Development Strategy document. The aim is to guide the Town's efforts towards improving its economic well-being and reach its long-term economic goals. This document will allow staff to make decisions that align with the areas outlined in this strategy. It should also help provide clarity to Council in the direction and future growth of the Town.

COSTS/SOURCE OF FUNDING:

This project was delivered as part of the annual fees provided to the CRSC by the Town.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

I am seeking a Council resolution to adopt the Economic Development Strategy at Regular Session on 20 February 2025.

Initials show support –

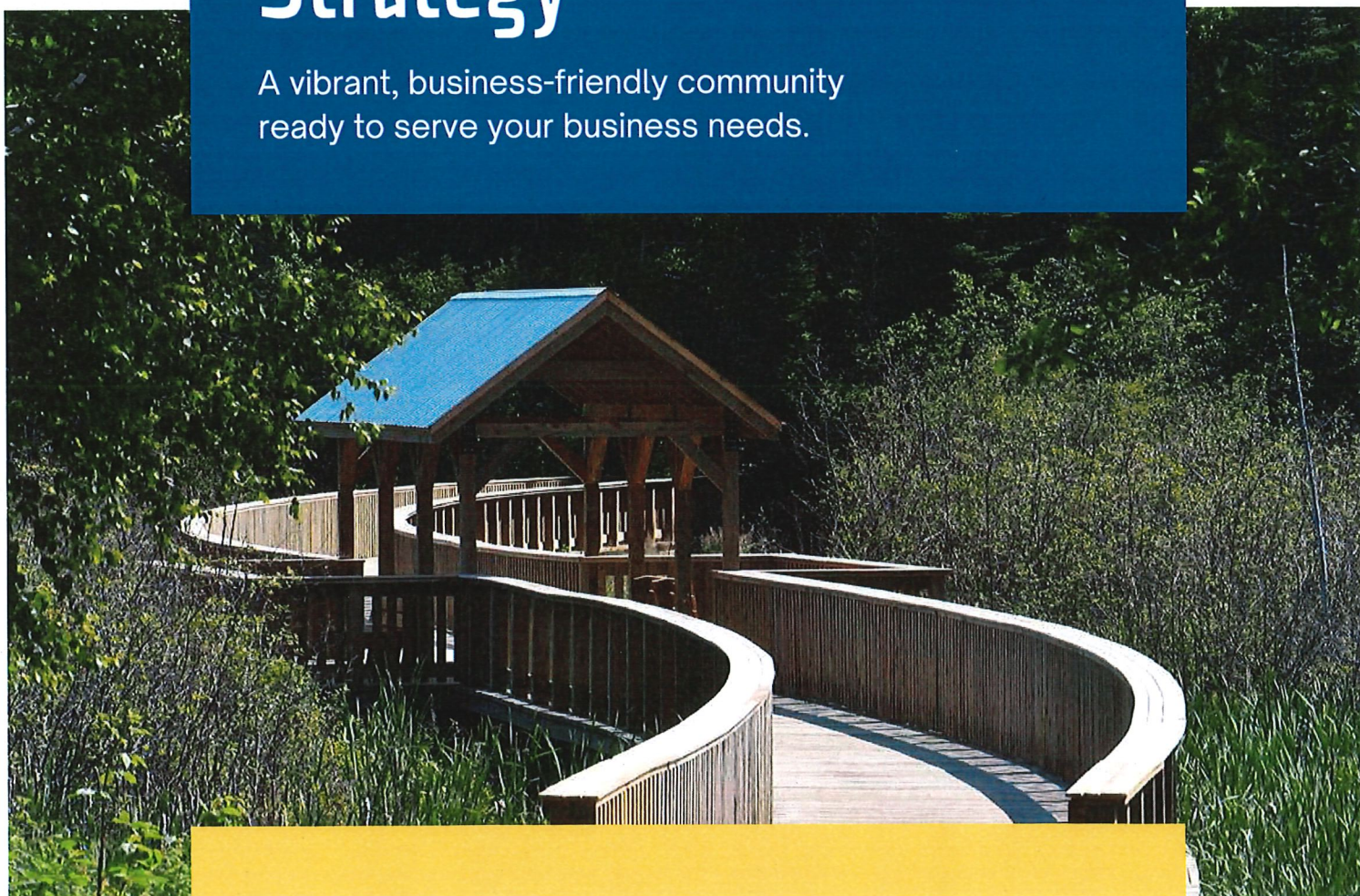
Reviewed By: J Jackson

CAO: 



Oromocto Economic Development Strategy

A vibrant, business-friendly community
ready to serve your business needs.



The following is a proposed Economic Development Strategy for the community to the Town of Oromocto Council.

Last Modified: February 7, 2025

Report prepared for
The Town of Oromocto

Report prepared by
Ignite



Table of Contents

Terminology	4
Introduction	5
A Town of Strengths	6
Strong Regional Economy	7
Strategic Asset Inventory	8
Partnerships	10
Community Feedback	11
Vision and Strategic Areas	12
Strategic Land Development	13
Business Development	15
Workforce Development	17
Availability of Housing	19
Community Promotion and Engagement	21
Thank You	23
One Page Overview	

Terminology

The following terminology is used throughout the strategy:

- *Action Items*: Specific activities or tasks to further local economic development goals. These items are based on strategic focus areas and are intended to guide efforts toward achieving the set objectives.
- *Asset Inventory*: A practical tool that assists in developing long-term municipal economic, social, and political plans. It coordinates and stores information, enabling municipal leaders to make informed decisions about their infrastructure assets.
- *Availability of Housing*: Refers to any unoccupied residential property or other space for occupancy, including seasonal or temporary housing, which is crucial for attracting economic development opportunities.
- *Business Development*: The strategic process of planning and implementing initiatives to drive future growth and success within a business.
- *Economic Development*: A collective effort that involves creating the conditions for economic growth and improved quality of life. It expands the capacity of individuals, businesses, and communities to maximize the use of their talents and skills to support innovation, job creation, and private investment.
- *Regional Economy*: The economic activities and interactions within a specific geographic area. It encompasses the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services, employment, income levels, and investment within that area. Local industries, resources, infrastructure, and the socio-economic characteristics of the population shape the regional economy.
- *Strategic Areas*: Key economic development categories targeted to achieve a community's overarching vision. These areas are defined to focus efforts and guide the setting of specific goals.
- *Workforce Development*: The initiatives or projects that focus on workforce education and skills training are directly aligned with the hiring and skill requirements of the business community and lead to the creation of quality jobs.

Introduction

With its rich tapestry of community spirit, natural beauty, and strategic locations, Oromocto is poised to become a hub of economic vitality and innovation. A forward-thinking economic development strategy is imperative as Oromocto promotes sustainable growth and prosperity. The following document provides an overview of the town's proposed plan, which will provide a framework to guide direction and activities to gain an advantage and move beyond the status quo.

Oromocto's economic development strategy is to be a guiding compass, steering the town towards inclusive growth, job creation, and enhanced quality of life for all residents. The plan aims to harness Oromocto's diverse strengths, addressing the challenges while embracing the opportunities that lie ahead. Through collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to sustainable practices, we envision a town that survives and thrives in the ever-evolving economic landscape.

A Town with Strengths

As noted previously, unlocking Oromocto's potential is essential to achieving its long-term economic development goals. This can be done by leveraging the town's existing strengths.

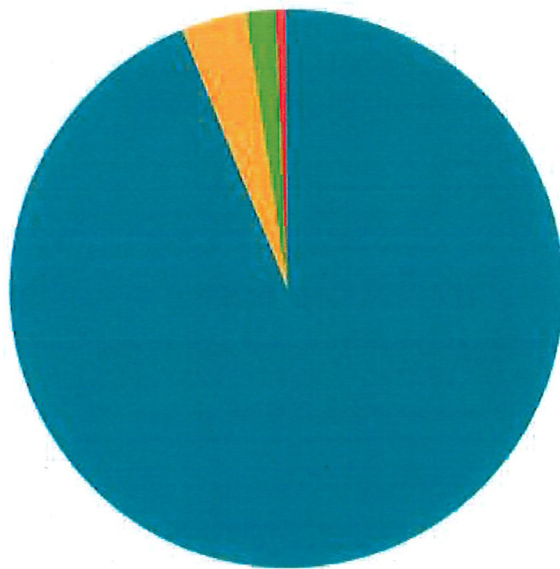
The Town of Oromocto, incorporated in 1956, is a diverse and vibrant community. With approximately 12,148 residents as of 2024 and an estimated tax base of \$1,455,310,543, the town is a promising investment destination. Lincoln officially joined the Town of Oromocto as part of New Brunswick's local governance reform, which aimed to improve service delivery and sustainability across the province. The merger brought about changes in local governance and service coordination, providing a more unified approach to community planning and management for its residents.

As a result, Oromocto is now home to a variety of businesses, with 522 operating within its borders. The town also boasts over 25 parks and green spaces, 5 healthcare locations, and 2 dental care locations. It offers a range of education and childcare options, with over 27 childcare centres and 10 K-12 schools. Oromocto is also home to the 5th Canadian Division Support Base- Gaagetown (5CDSB), one of the largest military training centres in the Commonwealth.

Business Based on Ownership Structures

*Grand Total of 522 Business as of January 2024

- PRIVATE (490)
- PUBLIC SECTOR (20)
- NONPROFIT (9)
- PARTNERSHIPS (3)

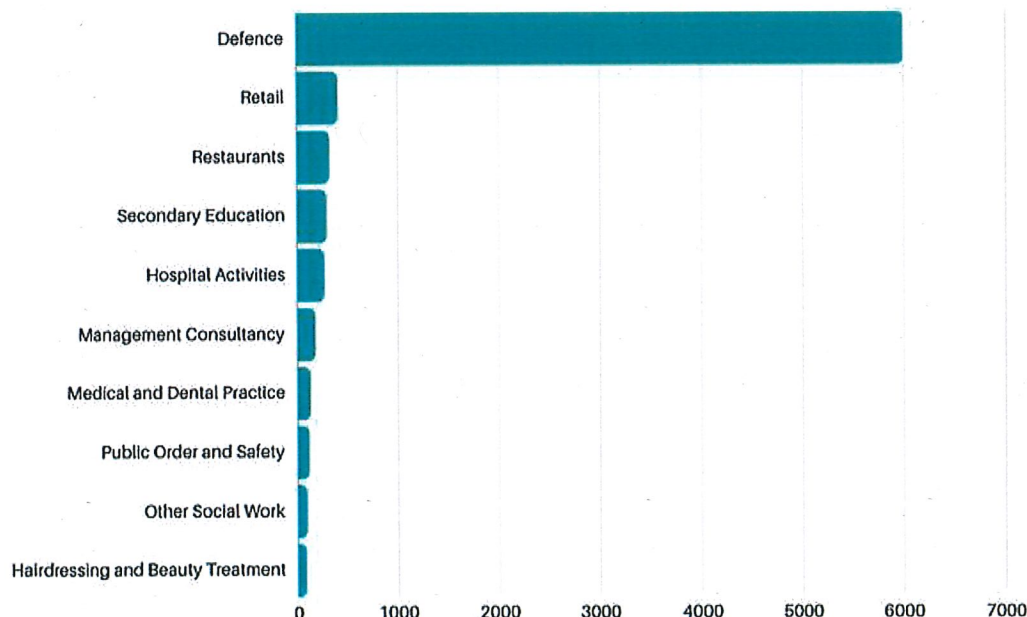


Strong Regional Economy

In 2023, a Business Retention and Expansion survey was conducted for Oromocto by Deloitte on behalf of Ignite. The Business Retention and Expansion results show an overall increasing trend in Oromocto's business performance. Key findings from the businesses surveyed included:

- 88% of businesses are locally owned and operated.
- 65% of businesses have operated for over 10 years.
- Over the past 12 months, 18% of businesses increased the total number of employees.
- In the next 12 months, 33% of businesses expect the total number of their employees to increase.
- 43% of businesses experienced revenue growth compared to the previous year.
- 46% of businesses would recommend Oromocto to another business looking to expand or relocate.
- 93% of businesses in Oromocto are satisfied or very satisfied with their ownership and operation.

Top 10 Industries with the Highest Employment Rates
*As of January 2024

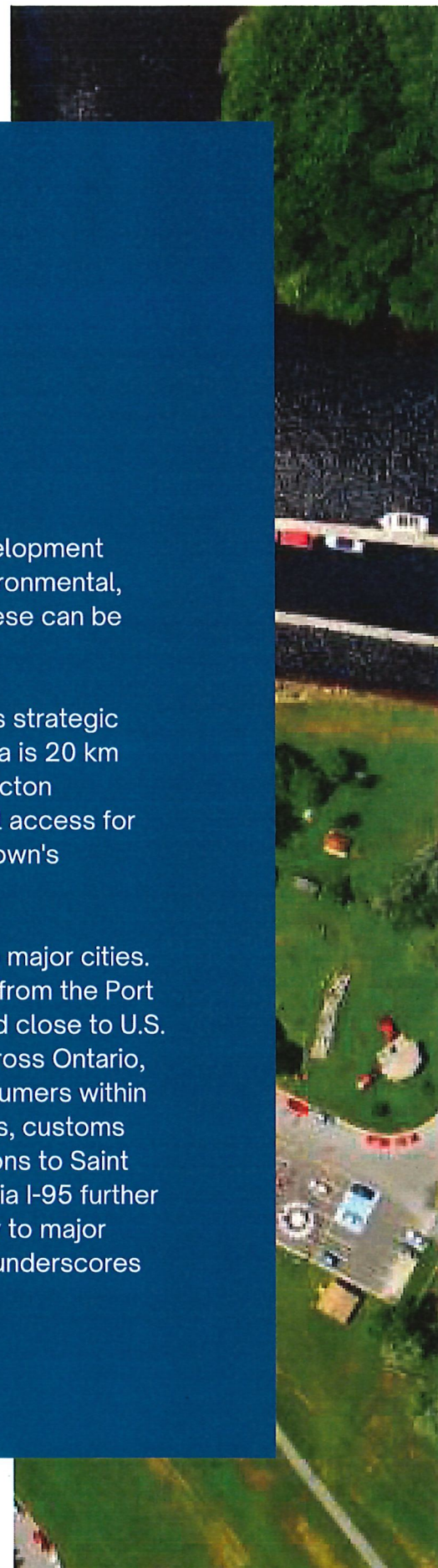


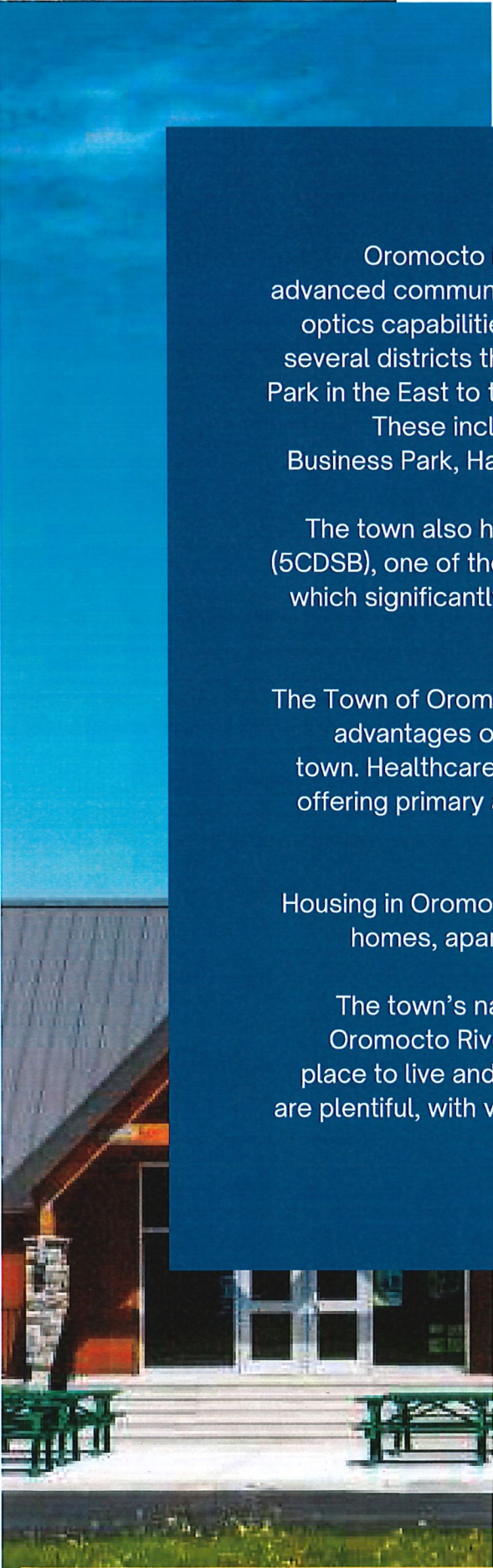
Strategic Asset Inventory

The Town of Oromocto is taking an asset-based economic development focus for its strategy, emphasizing the community's natural environmental, sociocultural, and economic advantages and identifying how these can be leveraged into sustained economic growth and productivity.

Oromocto offers significant transportation advantages due to its strategic location and proximity to major hubs. Oromocto's Gateway Plaza is 20 km from uptown Fredericton, NB, and 8km from the Greater Fredericton International Airport. This close proximity ensures swift air travel access for both passengers and freight, providing reassurance about the town's connectivity and accessibility.

Oromocto's strategic location is underscored by its proximity to major cities. It's just one hour from the Port of Saint John, NB, and four hours from the Port of Halifax, NS. Positioned on the Trans-Canada Highway (#2) and close to U.S. Interstate 95, Oromocto efficiently connects to key markets across Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic Canada, and the U.S., reaching 60 million consumers within a day's drive. The town also benefits from nearby truck terminals, customs services in Fredericton, and bonded warehouses. Rail connections to Saint John and Moncton, NB, and a one-hour drive to the U.S. border via I-95 further enhance its role as a critical logistics hub. Oromocto's proximity to major cities, including Saint John, Moncton, Halifax, and Quebec City, underscores its importance as a transportation and business centre.





Oromocto is also connected to the global marketplace through its advanced communications infrastructure, which includes outstanding fiber optics capabilities. Well-equipped for development, Oromocto features several districts that offer available land and buildings, from the Industrial Park in the East to the Central Oromocto Development district in the West.

These include Black Watch Avenue, East Industrial Park, Gateway Business Park, Hazen Park District, and Restigouche Road Business Park.

The town also hosts the 5th Canadian Division Support Base-Gagetwon (5CDSB), one of the largest military training centers in the Commonwealth, which significantly contributes to the local economy and provides a wide range of employment opportunities.

The Town of Oromocto provides an excellent quality of life, combining the advantages of a well-serviced urban centre with the charm of a small town. Healthcare services are robust, with the Oromocto Public Hospital offering primary and secondary care, including emergency services, day surgery, breast screening, and observation units.

Housing in Oromocto is diverse and affordable, with a mix of single-family homes, apartments, military housing, and senior citizen residences.

The town's natural amenities, such as the Saint John/Wolastoq River, Oromocto River, Deer Park Trails, and others, enhance its appeal as a place to live and work. Recreation and community services in Oromocto are plentiful, with various facilities, including sports complexes, parks, and cultural amenities.

Partnerships

Partnerships in economic development are crucial for fostering growth and innovation within communities. The collaboration between the Town of Oromocto and Ignite exemplifies how local and regional entities can work together to enhance economic opportunities and support business growth. With its strategic focus on community and economic development, Oromocto provides a conducive environment for businesses to thrive. The partnership with Ignite enables local businesses to benefit from Ignite's comprehensive training, mentorship, and networking opportunities.

Engaging with additional partners and stakeholders will be increasingly essential as Oromocto advances its economic development strategy. Local educational institutions can provide access to cutting-edge research, internships, and skilled talent, while financial institutions and investors offer necessary funding and resources for business growth. Integrating feedback from community members and local leaders ensures that the strategies meet the population's needs. By incorporating diverse perspectives and expertise, the strategy can remain adaptable to emerging trends and opportunities, ultimately fostering a resilient and dynamic economic environment. Effective partnerships enhance business resources and promote a collaborative spirit that drives innovation and success within the community.

Community Feedback

The Town of Oromocto actively engaged community members through a comprehensive feedback process to gather insights and perspectives on the economic development strategy planning. This critical stage ensured that the strategy reflected the needs and aspirations of residents, fostering a sense of inclusivity and collaboration. Community members highlighted key priorities, including the urgent need for more housing options, enhanced infrastructure, and stronger support for local businesses and workforce development. Participants also emphasized the importance of recreational facilities, cultural opportunities, and rebranding efforts to establish Oromocto as a vibrant, independent community. This feedback opportunity was instrumental in shaping a strategy that aligns with community values while addressing economic challenges and growth opportunities, ensuring the plan's relevance and success in driving sustainable development.

Vision

The Town of Oromocto will become a regionally recognized community known for its resident-friendly atmosphere, where business and industry foster innovation and community engagement.

Strategic Areas

The economic development strategy for Oromocto addresses the town's economic challenges by focusing on initiatives and action items centered around 5 key strategic areas to strengthen the town's economy.

The strategic areas are Strategic Land Development, Business Development, Workforce Development, Housing Availability, and Community Promotion and Engagement. These strategic areas aim to enhance the town's infrastructure, support business growth, attract and retain a skilled workforce, ensure adequate affordable housing, and actively promote community involvement and visibility.

Over the coming years, the town will embark on several initiatives to reinforce these strategic areas. These initiatives will:

- Enhance the business environment;
- Create new development and business opportunities in key locations;
- Foster an improved business environment that provides employment opportunities for residents;
- Capitalize on the region's employment strengths and growth areas;
- Strengthen community engagement and
- Promote these attributes to a broader audience.

Strategic Land Development

Oromocto aims to enhance strategic land development and disposition, focusing on commercial and light industrial sectors, particularly the defense industry. The town seeks to foster sustainable growth and long-term economic resilience by optimizing land resources in targeted areas. A phased land development plan, created in collaboration with key partners and stakeholders, will address the needs of these sectors.

A comprehensive Land Use Assessment will identify opportunities within existing key sectors, focusing on specific geographic zones to drive growth. Building on this, a Strategic Land Development Plan will prioritize high-potential areas, with infrastructure enhancements to support commercial and light industrial development. In addition, the land development plans will align with Oromocto's housing strategies, with a focus on creating mixed-use zones that integrate residential, commercial, and recreational spaces for cohesive community growth.

Engagement with stakeholders will establish communication channels with industry representatives, local businesses, and potential investors, guiding development initiatives and fostering strong partnerships. To strengthen economic development, Oromocto and its partners will compile data to showcase value propositions for key sectors, develop sector profiles, and create industry-specific marketing strategies. The town will leverage its unique strengths, particularly highlighting its strategic location along the Trans-Canada Highway and proximity to Port Saint John—both of which offer significant growth potential.

In parallel, employment information on key sector employers will be continuously updated and available to share with site selectors. This commitment to providing current, competitive, and business support information is a crucial part of the strategy to maintain Oromocto's investment readiness and attractiveness to businesses. Additionally, the town will streamline permitting and regulatory processes to reduce delays, enhance transparency, and promote development opportunities.

Strategic Land Development Action Items

- Conduct a comprehensive Land Use Assessment to review town landholdings and assess for opportunities to foster growth within existing key sectors, with a targeted focus on geographic zones.
- Develop a Strategic Land Development Plan prioritizing areas with high growth potential.
- Compile data to highlight value propositions for significant sectors and develop sector profiles and industry or function-specific information marketing strategies for target sectors.
- Enhance infrastructure in target areas to support land development, focusing on the specific needs of commercial and light industrial businesses.
- Identify opportunities in emerging and value-added sectors where the town can demonstrate strengths and unique advantages, emphasizing the strategic location of the Trans-Canada Highway and Port Saint John.
- Engage with key stakeholders and partners to establish regular communication channels with target industry representatives, local businesses, and potential investors to guide development initiatives, gather input, and foster collaboration.
- Maintain current employment information on employers in key sectors to share with site selectors and continuously gather and update data on competitive and business support information.
- Streamline permitting and regulatory processes to reduce delays and increase transparency.
- Actively promote development opportunities to ensure Oromocto is investment-ready and attractive to businesses.

Business Development

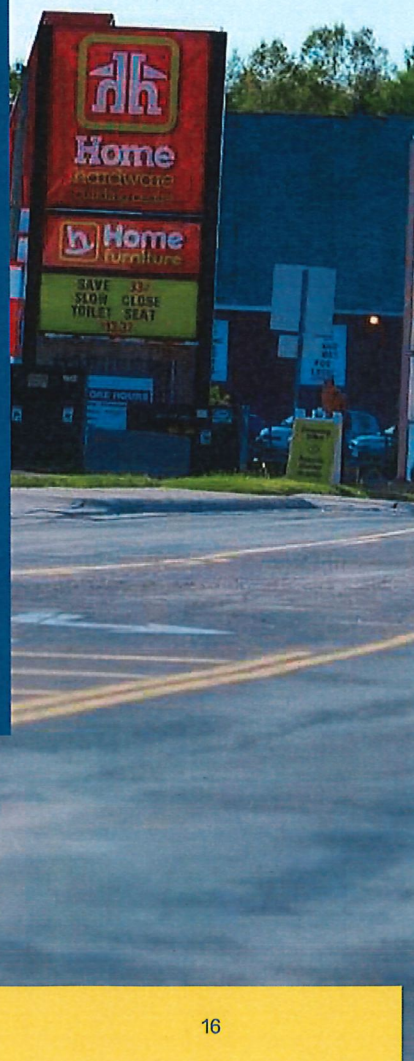
Oromocto will support business development opportunities for entrepreneurs and businesses through targeted initiatives that foster business growth, development, retention, and expansion. In collaboration with its partners, the town will actively support business operations and address growth challenges by connecting businesses with essential resources, providing one-on-one consultations, and offering customized programming opportunities.

The town will foster networking, facilitate information sharing, and encourage collaborative efforts by organizing events that bring together businesses, development partners, and government entities. Proactively promoting local businesses will enhance their visibility and elevate the town's regional profile. Implementing Business Retention and Expansion strategies will be a key priority in supporting local businesses. This will be complemented by developing a framework to monitor and measure business performance and economic development initiatives.

The town will assist property owners and local businesses in enhancing the appearance and functionality of their establishments through initiatives such as the Beautification Award, contributing to the town's overall appeal. Engaging proactively with commercial real estate professionals and prospective businesses to promote available commercial properties will also play a crucial role in strengthening the local economy.

Business Development Action Items

- Connect businesses to organizations that can provide mentorship, one-on-one consultations, co-working spaces, access to funding, and tailored programming opportunities to support business operations and reduce barriers to business growth.
- Organize events for businesses, development partners, and government partners to promote networking, share information, and discuss collaborative efforts and opportunities.
- Actively promote local businesses to enhance their visibility and boost the town's regional profile.
- Develop and implement Business Retention and Expansion strategies to support local businesses.
- Develop and implement a framework to monitor and measure business performance and overall economic development efforts.
- Guide property owners and local businesses to improve the appearance and functionality of their properties and establishments (i.e., Beautification Award).
- Proactively contact commercial real estate professionals and prospective businesses to promote available commercial properties.



Workforce Development

Oromocto will grow and support the local labor force by attracting, integrating, and retaining workers to meet community and industry demands and strengthen the town's economy. Long-term economic success relies on the strength of businesses to attract, retain, and build a skilled workforce. By leveraging the community's strengths, particularly those not available in larger centers, Oromocto will define its value proposition to attract and retain the workforce needed to grow existing businesses and assist economic diversification.

To sustainably grow the regional workforce and address industry needs, it is crucial to systematically collect and analyze data on industry trends, labor demands, and hiring patterns. Engaging with municipal leaders, employees, partners, and stakeholders will yield valuable insights into the factors influencing the local workforce. It is vital to build direct connections with employers to understand their specific job demands and offer them targeted resources and support for workforce development. Comprehensive support for both employers and employees should include initiatives such as training and upskilling programs, job fairs, and the formation of strategic stakeholder partnerships.

Moreover, developing a well-defined workforce value proposition is not just a step, but a crucial strategy that will assist employers in refining their recruitment strategies, attracting businesses by ensuring the availability of a skilled labor pool, and ultimately supporting local economic growth. Raising awareness among local employers about employment pathways for Newcomers and Immigrants is also essential for promoting their successful integration and development within the community.

Workforce Development Action Items

- Collect and analyze data sources to assess industry needs, labour needs, and hiring trends and to grow regional workforce talent.
- Engage municipal leaders, employees, partners, and stakeholders to gather insights into trends impacting the municipal workforce.
- Foster relationships with local educational institutions and develop specific initiatives aimed at retaining talent, so businesses may hire locally trained graduates.
- Connect with employers regarding job demands directly and provide them with resources and support to develop their workforce.
- To enhance workforce development, offer comprehensive support to employers and employees. This includes providing training and upskilling opportunities, hosting job fairs, and creating stakeholder partnerships.
- Develop a workforce value proposition to equip employers with the strategy for recruitment. A specific workforce development value proposition is crucial for attracting businesses by ensuring a skilled labor pool, supporting local businesses with needed talent, and fostering overall economic growth.
- Raise awareness with local employers about pathways to employment for Newcomers and Immigrants and how to foster their development in the community.

Availability of Housing

The Town of Oromocto will increase housing availability by facilitating the construction or renovation of multi-unit housing units to support its population in significant residential growth locations. Investment in additional housing is necessary for current and future residents to create an environment for community economic development. The goal considers the town's current housing needs, available land, and potential partnerships with developers or housing organizations.

A comprehensive review of current zoning regulations will be conducted as part of the town's ongoing efforts to foster economic development. This review identifies and eliminates barriers to developing multi-unit and mixed-use properties in strategically important areas. Additionally, a thorough examination of external approval processes will be conducted to reduce delays and streamline the permitting process for multi-unit and mixed-use developments. Collaboration with developers will be key in this endeavour. The town intends to work closely with them to identify suitable sites for multi-unit and mixed-use developments while prioritizing infrastructure projects directly supporting these targeted areas.

To further support new housing developments, allocating resources for infrastructure improvements is crucial. This includes upgrading roads, enhancing active transportation, pursuing public transportation opportunities, and expanding utilities in areas designated for development. Outreach programs will be essential to educate residents about the benefits of multi-unit and mixed-use developments. These programs will address community concerns regarding density, traffic, and neighbourhood character, helping to build public support for these projects.

Availability of Housing Action Items

- Conduct a comprehensive review of zoning regulations to identify barriers to developing multi-unit and mixed-use properties and amend zoning codes to allow for developments in strategic areas.
- Review external approval processes to reduce delays and streamline the permitting process for multi-unit and mixed-use developments.
- Collaborate with developers to identify suitable sites for multi-unit and mixed-use developments and prioritize infrastructure projects that serve targeted areas.
- Allocate funds for infrastructure improvements, such as road upgrades, active transportation enhancements, pursuement of public transportation opportunities, and utility expansion, to support new housing developments.
- Conduct outreach programs to educate residents about the benefits of multi-unit and mixed-use developments, addressing concerns about density, traffic, and neighbourhood character.



Community Promotion and Engagement

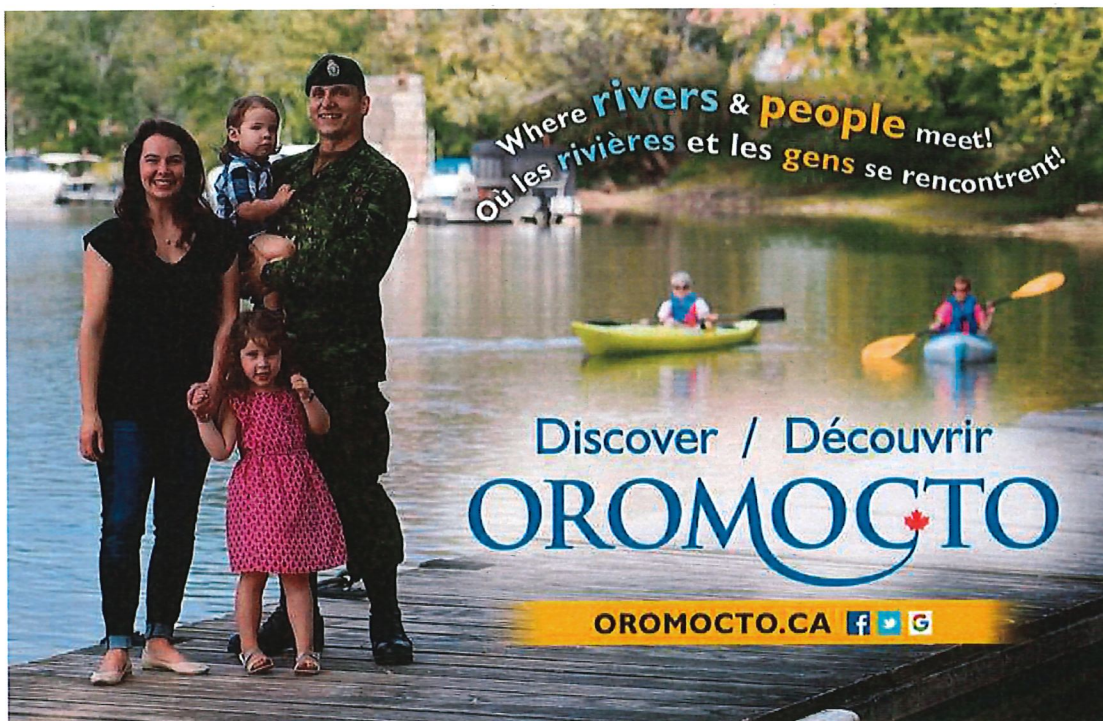
A significant element of economic development is community promotion: telling a story about the unique offerings of the town, which creates an attractive brand identity for current/prospective residents. Oromocto will be highlighted as a place to live, work, or build a business. The town will promote its quality of place and recreational and natural assets to drive economic growth by capitalizing on local strengths and fostering strong social connections. Oromocto must define its value proposition for resident engagement and involve the necessary community partners to promote the diverse offerings of the town to residents/visitors, fostering a sense of community and belonging.

The town will develop and launch a comprehensive marketing campaign to strengthen relationships with residents and engage external stakeholders. This campaign will target residents, visitors, and community partners, utilizing various channels such as social media platforms, email newsletters, and targeted online advertisements to raise awareness about economic development initiatives and events. Community surveys should be conducted to gather feedback and identify areas for improvement, ensuring more meaningful engagement with community members. Additionally, partnerships with local media can be forged to share community stories and promote upcoming events. Investing in public projects and streetscape improvements will further enhance the community's aesthetic appeal, boost local pride, and create a strong sense of place.

Community Promotion and Engagement

Action Items

- Develop a comprehensive marketing campaign targeting residents and external stakeholders (e.g., visitors and community partners). Use marketing to engage the community and strengthen relationships with residents.
- Build on Oromocto's unique identity by incorporating its military history, proximity to natural attractions, and community spirit into all promotional materials.
- Utilize social media platforms, email newsletters, and targeted online advertisements to raise awareness about economic development initiatives and events.
- Conduct community surveys to gather feedback and identify areas of improvement for enhanced engagement with community members.
- Forge partnerships with local media to share community stories and promote upcoming events.
- Invest in public projects and streetscape improvements that enhance the community's aesthetic appeal to visitors, boost local pride, and create a sense of place.



Thank You

The economic development strategy for Oromocto is designed to position the town as a dynamic and attractive destination for growth and investment. By conducting a thorough Land Use Assessment and developing a Strategic Land Development Plan, Oromocto will capitalize on areas with high growth potential while addressing the needs of commercial and light industrial sectors.

The strategy emphasizes the importance of leveraging the town's strategic location, including proximity to the Trans-Canada Highway and Port Saint John, to attract and support emerging, value-added industries. Engaging with stakeholders, maintaining up-to-date data, and streamlining regulatory processes will ensure that Oromocto remains responsive to the needs of investors and businesses. Through active promotion and collaborative efforts, Oromocto is poised to enhance its economic vibrancy, foster sustainable development, and achieve long-term success in a competitive landscape.



4 Doyle Drive, Oromocto NB E2V 2V3
(506) 357-4400
gengov@oromocto.ca



Overview

With its rich tapestry of community spirit, natural beauty, and strategic location, Oromocto is poised to become a hub of economic vitality and innovation. The town has collaborated with partners and stakeholders to develop a forward-thinking economic development strategy that promotes sustainable growth and prosperity.

Community Profile

The Town of Oromocto was incorporated in 1956 and is now home to approximately 12,148 residents. The estimated tax base of this entity is \$1,455,310,543. The town contains 522 businesses, over 25 parks and green spaces, 5 healthcare locations, and 2 dental care locations. The town offers multiple education and childcare options, with over 27 childcare centres and 10 K-12 schools. Oromocto is home to the 5th Canadian Division Support Base-Gagetown (5CDSB), one of the largest military training centres in the Commonwealth.

Strategy

Oromocto's economic development strategy is to be a guiding compass, steering the town towards inclusive growth, job creation, and enhanced quality of life for all residents. The plan aims to harness Oromocto's diverse strengths, addressing the challenges while embracing the opportunities that lie ahead. Through collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to sustainable practices, we envision a town that survives and thrives in the ever-evolving economic landscape.

Vision

The Town of Oromocto will become a regionally recognized community known for its resident-friendly atmosphere, where business and industry foster innovation and community engagement.

Strategic Areas

The economic development strategy for Oromocto focuses on several key areas: Strategic Land Development, Business Development, Workforce Development, Housing Availability, and Community Promotion and Engagement. These strategic areas aim to enhance the town's infrastructure, support business growth, attract and retain a skilled workforce, ensure adequate affordable housing, and actively promote community involvement and visibility.