

Staff Report

Report To: Community Services Committee

Report From: Rebecca Ellerdiem, Community & Business Development Advisor

Meeting Date: June 25, 2025

Report Code: CM-25-015

Subject: Community & Business Development Mid-Year Update

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CM-25-015 respecting Community & Business Development Mid-Year Update, the Community Services Committee recommends that City Council direct staff to lead the preparation and submission of an application to the Ontario Trade-Impacted Communities Program for project funding to advance sector-wide innovation and economic development in coordination with Grey County and Georgian College.

Highlights:

- The Community and Business Development Advisor has advanced the City's priorities in three key areas: Economic Development, Community Relations, and Government Relations.
- The collaborative process used to develop the new Community Profile, released in April 2025, has resulted in strong working relationships with key stakeholders and community members.
- Special projects and initiatives involving inter-departmental or inter-governmental collaboration have been successfully executed, and work is ongoing to advance the City's priorities.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Prosperous City.

Climate and Environmental Implications:

This supports the objectives of the City's Corporate Climate Change Adaptation Plan by considering climate adaptation in the development of the City's strategies, plans and policies.

Specific actions include initiatives to increase public engagement and education such as partnering with the Youth Climate Action Conference, supporting the development and promotion of clean energy and decarbonization initiatives by local businesses, and adapting our promotional strategy to be conscious of environmental impacts and reduce waste.

Previous Report/Authority:

[Report CM-25-013 Re: Agreement with Experience Grey Bruce May 26, 2025](#)

[Report CM-25-011 Re: New Owen Sound Community Profile April 16, 2025](#)

Background:

The Community and Business Development Advisor position has been vacant since September 2024. A contract position created in December 2024 primarily focused on the development of a new Community Profile.

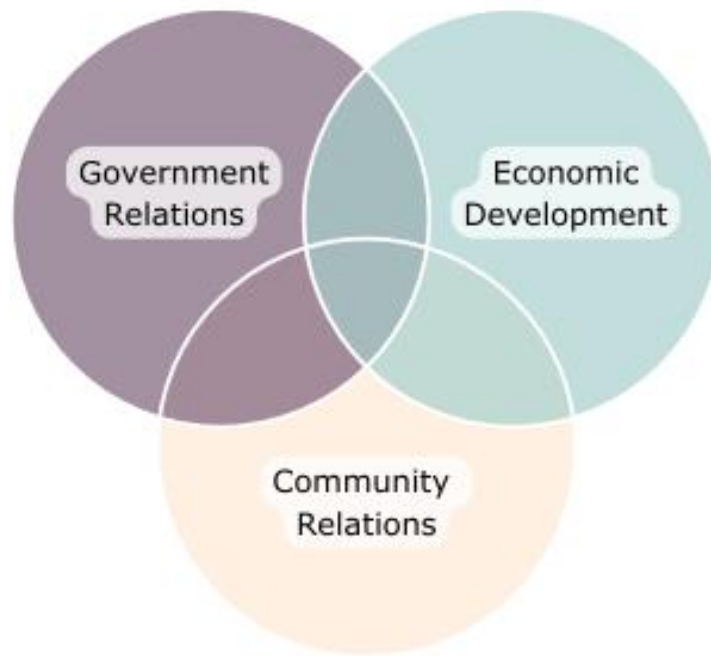
Additional needs and opportunities were identified that led to contributions to other special initiatives in support of the City's strategic priorities.

This update is intended to provide an overview of the work undertaken thus far and to highlight key outcomes of the three main areas of focus:

- Economic Development
- Community Relations
- Government Relations

Analysis:

The work of the Community and Business Development Advisor requires a significant degree of collaboration with interdepartmental teams and external partners. This primarily falls within one or more of three key focus areas:



Staff are building on the foundation of the community engagement undertaken in support of the forthcoming Vision 2050 strategic plan, and the storytelling approach of the new community profile to create a narrative for the City of Owen Sound that highlights our unique value as a regional hub for employment, health care, education, arts & culture, and community services.



Economic Development: Telling the story of our prosperity

- Led the creative development, copywriting, and launch of a new community profile, including a premium print booklet and dedicated landing pages on the city website, blending storytelling and quantitative data in an innovative, digital-forward approach.
- Undertook additional training to optimize the City's usage of Govstack CMS to improve user experience and create a seamless flow between print and digital assets.
- Collaborated with Grey County economic development team to integrate interactive tables and up-to-date infographics into our

website using data from Environics Analytics, and shared best practices and insights with economic development counterparts across all nine member municipalities.

- Cultivated strong working relationships with key stakeholders through consultation on the new community profile, creating a versatile marketing tool that has been enthusiastically received by partners such as Grey County, Georgian College, and Brightshores.
- Designed and coordinated the delivery of assets for regional magazines to promote economic development and support conversion of visitors into residents while reinforcing the new community profile's invitation to meet "Your Future Neighbours".
- Acted as the City's lead economic development officer, representing the City at Grey County's Planning and Economic Development Advisory Committee meetings, the Warden's Leadership Luncheon, the Gather Campaign launch, the Regional Job Fair, Indigenous days of remembrance, and other community events.
- Advanced the City's interests in the medical isotope industry by establishing a strong working relationship with partners at the Nuclear Innovation Institute (NII), Bruce Power, and municipal leadership and staff across the Clean Energy Frontier, attending quarterly Southwestern Ontario Isotope Coalition (SOIC) meetings, and representing the City at events such as NII Connects, and the 2025 National Radiotheranostics Leaders Summit in Toronto hosted by the Canadian Nuclear Isotope Council.
- Drafted and/or coordinated approvals for media highlighting economic development in Owen Sound, including a sponsored column in the Owen Sound & District Chamber of Commerce's Outlook Magazine, and a feature on medical isotopes for OMERS.
- Supported the City's plan to revitalize the waterfront in collaboration with a cross-departmental team including the Manager of Corporate Services, Manager of Parks and Open Spaces, Manager of Legislative Services, Manager of Planning and Heritage, the Deputy Treasurer, the City Clerk, the Director of Community Services, and the City Manager to approve site plan changes initiated by the municipal boat launch operator and negotiate a new agreement that will stabilize revenue, reduce administrative overhead, and extend a successful partnership for up to ten years.

- Facilitated approval for a film shoot by Collingwood Film Co., helped coordinate permits for food truck operators, and provided input into new internal processes to streamline future applications and permit approvals requiring input from multiple departments.
- Fielded queries about space requirements for business-owners looking to establish or expand within Owen Sound and coordinated with senior staff and Grey County to support key industry partners.



Community Relations: Telling the story of our connections

- Collaborated with more than three dozen locals to support the creation of the community profile, meeting with key stakeholder groups and building positive relationships with community leaders in business, health, education, the arts, and conservation.
- Met with community members across multiple sectors to build trust, initiate a two-way dialogue, share ideas, and support opportunities for positive engagement with City initiatives.
 - Business community members and developers working building the infrastructure to support current and future needs.
 - Arts and culture non-profits and individual artists contributing to the City's profile as a regional arts and culture hub.
 - Indigenous community members and allies collaborating to educate, celebrate, and commemorate our shared history and the work of reconciliation.
 - New and recently-returned residents sharing their perspectives on why they chose Owen Sound as their home.
 - Parents and caregivers investing in our future generations.
 - Educators, health care providers, community organizers, and volunteers working to build connection, safety, and wellbeing.
- Invested in community partnerships that align with the City's strategic priorities, including a new partnership to host the Youth

Climate Action Conference at the Bayshore Community Centre, a successful grassroots initiative now in its fourth year.

- Assisted with leading school visits to City Hall, coordinating with educators and colleagues to curate age-appropriate presentations in alignment with the school curriculum to teach students about municipal government and career development.
- Participated in a Career Coaching initiative for Grade 9 and 10 students at St. Mary's Catholic High School.



Government Relations: Telling the story of our partnerships

- Created a new initiative to capture news clippings throughout the week and prepared a weekly media scan summarizing current City issues and coverage in local and national press to support Council and senior leadership to stay informed and to identify opportunities for proactive issues management.
- Met with Indigenous leadership and community members, and corresponded with the SON Environmental Office to build a solid working relationship and secured feedback on key initiatives and future opportunities for collaboration.
- Coordinated with municipal partners and other stakeholders to prepare delegation requests for six ministries at AMO 2025, including contributing to joint submissions led by other parties to ensure Owen Sound's priorities are represented. We are now awaiting information from AMO as to which delegations receive delegation status.
- Conducted additional background research to support a novel argument to amend the use of the Ruralty Index of Ontario scoring to secure rural health incentive funding for Owen Sound and other small urban communities who are currently deemed ineligible.
- Prepared briefings and key messages for staff and council attending ROMA 2025 and coordinated a joint release with Grey County that

resulted in positive media coverage and interest from potential partners to advance the City's priorities.

- Supported our physician recruitment and retention efforts with strategic advice and key messaging, conducting additional research to support the City's request for eligibility for rural health incentives and the establishment of a local walk-in clinic.
- Initiated the creation of a provincial Issues Binder to welcome and brief the incoming Member of Provincial Parliament on urgent priorities and secured the first municipal meeting of the lower-tier Grey municipalities for Mayor Boddy and MPP Vickers, establishing a positive working relationship at both the staff and leadership level.
- Facilitated the timely approval of quotes to ensure the City is represented in relevant media releases by provincial counterparts.
- Collaborated with Grey County and economic development officers from all nine member municipalities to advance the region's interests and coordinate data-sharing through monthly meetings.
- Provided advice on government relations initiatives and strategy to municipal counterparts and other stakeholders, including Georgian College, NII, and Brightshores Health System, promoting regional economic resiliency and collaboration.
- Shared resources and feedback to support municipal counterparts responding to new interprovincial trade opportunities, including an initiative to create new opportunities for Grey County cidermakers.
- Proactively sought information for new funding opportunities, including Ontario's Trade-Impacted Communities Program for up to 100% of costs from \$250,000 to \$10 million, and initiated collaborative discussions with stakeholders to support investment readiness and identify bold and achievable project ideas suitable for these types of sector development initiatives.



Conclusion & Next Steps

Staff have identified significant opportunities to advance the City's priorities and attract new investment and industry development, particularly in the life sciences and the research, education, and training to support rapid developments in nuclear medicine and our region's critical strategic role in the global supply of medical isotopes.

However, economic development does not happen in a vacuum—our community has also identified a need for a strong education sector, childcare resources, integrated health care, and multi-modal transportation among other quality of life indicators such as investment in our natural and cultural resources.

Building on the opportunities identified through this preliminary work along with the extensive engagement supporting the upcoming Vision 2050 strategic plan will require extensive collaboration and relationship-building with external partners in order to enhance the City's investment readiness and develop sector-wide strategies.

Staff are seeking a recommendation to initiate this work by preparing an application to the Trade-Impacted Communities Program in coordination with Grey County and Georgian College, for submission this summer in advance of the September 11, 2025 deadline.

Additionally, over the next three months, staff will develop an 18-month External Relations and Investment Attraction Plan to present to the Community Services Committee in September 2025, inclusive of initiatives and ideas such as the following:

- Development of an Economic Health Report Card, identifying 10-12 trackable data characteristics which can be updated on an annual basis to measure and track indicators such as affordability, housing cost, commercial-residential ratio, property taxes, and vacancy rates.
- Expanding rural access to radiotheranostic medicine through partnership with Brightshores Health System, Georgian College, and leading academic and health care institutions in London to establish a local hub for treatment, education, and workforce training.
- Supporting health care resiliency and physician recruitment in collaboration with the Grey-Bruce Ontario Health Team to connect all residents with a local primary care provider and establish clinic support for urgent, same-day access for both rostered and unrostered patients,

such as tourists, workers, or temporary residents who usually access primary care elsewhere, as well as other initiatives to reduce the burden on rural emergency departments throughout our region.

- Promotion of the City of Owen Sound as a natural incubator for creativity and innovation, inviting partners across multiple sectors to a Digital and Environmental Stewardship summit, developed in collaboration with Indigenous leadership, local creators and entrepreneurs, and other Clean Energy Frontier partners.
- Continue to collaborate with colleagues and external partners on inter-departmental projects and initiatives to grow the City's reputation as a strong team player and regional leader.

Financial Implications:

All current and planned expenditures are accounted for within the Community and Business Development operating budget.

Communication Strategy:

All communications products are developed in collaboration with the Communications Division.

Consultation:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

Attachments:

1. YCAC Flyer 2025
2. OMERS Community - How Owen Sound is taking the fight to cancer in a unique way 03-03-2025
3. Outlook Magazine - Owen Sound's legacy of nation-making and Economic resilience - Spring 2025
4. Sydenham Sportsman - Salmon Derby Full-Page Advertisement - Summer 2025
5. Trade Impacted Communities Program Webinar Deck – May 2025
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Recommended by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Rebecca Ellerdiem, Community & Business Development Advisor at rellerdiem@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 x1254.