

Cover image:

Word cloud depicting strengths of Norfolk County, based on responses to online survey of residents, 2018

Report prepared by:

Clark Hoskin

Director, Tourism & Economic Development

Norfolk County

185 Robinson Street, Suite 200

Simcoe ON N3Y 5L6

www.norfolkbusiness.ca/strategy

© 2019 Corporation of Norfolk County

Table of Contents

Interim Recommendations	1
Executive Summary	4
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Priorities	5
Values	6
Readiness	11
Strategic Directions	29
Interim Recommendations	30
Next Steps.....	34

Executive Summary

This interim report provides a sneak peek at the strategic directions suggested by people who responded to online surveys or attended round tables for the Norfolk County Economic Development Strategy Review.

Creating a welcoming business environment was consistently highlighted as a high-priority for small businesses. Downtown revitalization is extremely important but it means different things to different communities. Labour shortages are a huge issue in all sectors. While the general public wants to see jobs and development, businesses would like to expand and provide jobs, but are finding it extremely difficult to locate a willing and able workforce.

By analyzing the data and feedback provided to date, the key strategic directions identified to this point in the review process are as follows: solve labour shortages and provide decent work, support business and cut red tape, revitalize downtowns, and lean on our strengths.

The priorities or directions expressed by the public are welcome, however not all are realistic, sustainable or politically palatable. However, with increased collaboration and reallocation of financial and human resources, complementary goals can be nurtured. Therefore, four groups of recommendations have been drafted for the Norfolk County Economic Development Strategy:

- Grow and diversify our population
- Help make our entrepreneurs more successful
- Harness community energy to improve our spaces

This interim report explores these ideas in further detail. The document will be circulated and shared with stakeholder groups, participants in the process, the local media, business associations, elected representatives, and staff from local government and supporting agencies. A set of consultations will be established early in 2019 to seek further feedback before the recommendations are refined and revised, and presented to Norfolk County Council for approval.

Complete background for this project can be reviewed at norfolkbusiness.ca/strategy.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Priorities

The Economic Development Strategy Review project included the “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats and Values Survey” conducted from June to September 2018. Total responses were 1,001. Results were carefully analyzed to find commonalities between various themes.

For more detailed analysis on community values, review the “Survey Analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Industries Envisioned, Obstacles, High Priority Issues & Values” Report at norfolkbusiness.ca/strategy.

Strengths

1. Agriculture and Tourism
2. Entrepreneurial Spirit
3. Quality of Place & Life

Industries Envisioned

1. Tourism
2. Industry, manufacturing, business
3. Farming & food processing

Weaknesses

1. Downtowns
2. Regulatory Issues & Leadership
3. Lack of well-paying jobs / Workforce

Obstacles

1. Vision, red tape² and taxes
2. Status of downtown
3. Infrastructure, services, workforce

Opportunities

1. Tourism
2. Green industry, agriculture and food
3. Amenities¹

High Priority Issues

1. Welcoming business environment
2. Downtown revitalization
3. Jobs

¹ Definition of amenity: Something that conduces to comfort, convenience, or enjoyment. *Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

² Definition of red tape: Official routine or procedure marked by excessive complexity which results in delay or inaction. *Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

Values

Citizens of Norfolk County ranked various community values in a survey conducted in the summer of 2018 as part of the Norfolk County Economic Development Strategy Review. Respondents were asked to rank:

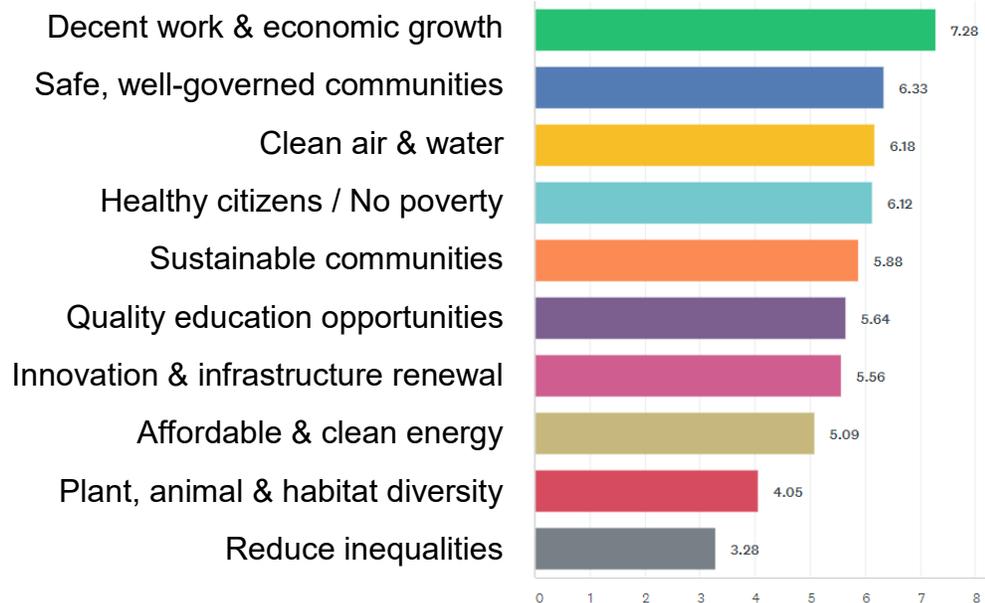
“Which community values are most important to you for a positive future?”

The ten choices for community values on the survey were based on the United Nations’ Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) 17 internationally agreed development goals.

The survey program calculated the overall scores for all respondents to the survey.

Subgroup comparisons were also calculated for the following communities: Delhi, Port Dover, Port Rowan, Simcoe and Waterford; and economic sectors: Agriculture; Arts, Entertainment & Recreation; Education; Health Care & Social Services; Manufacturing; and Tourism.

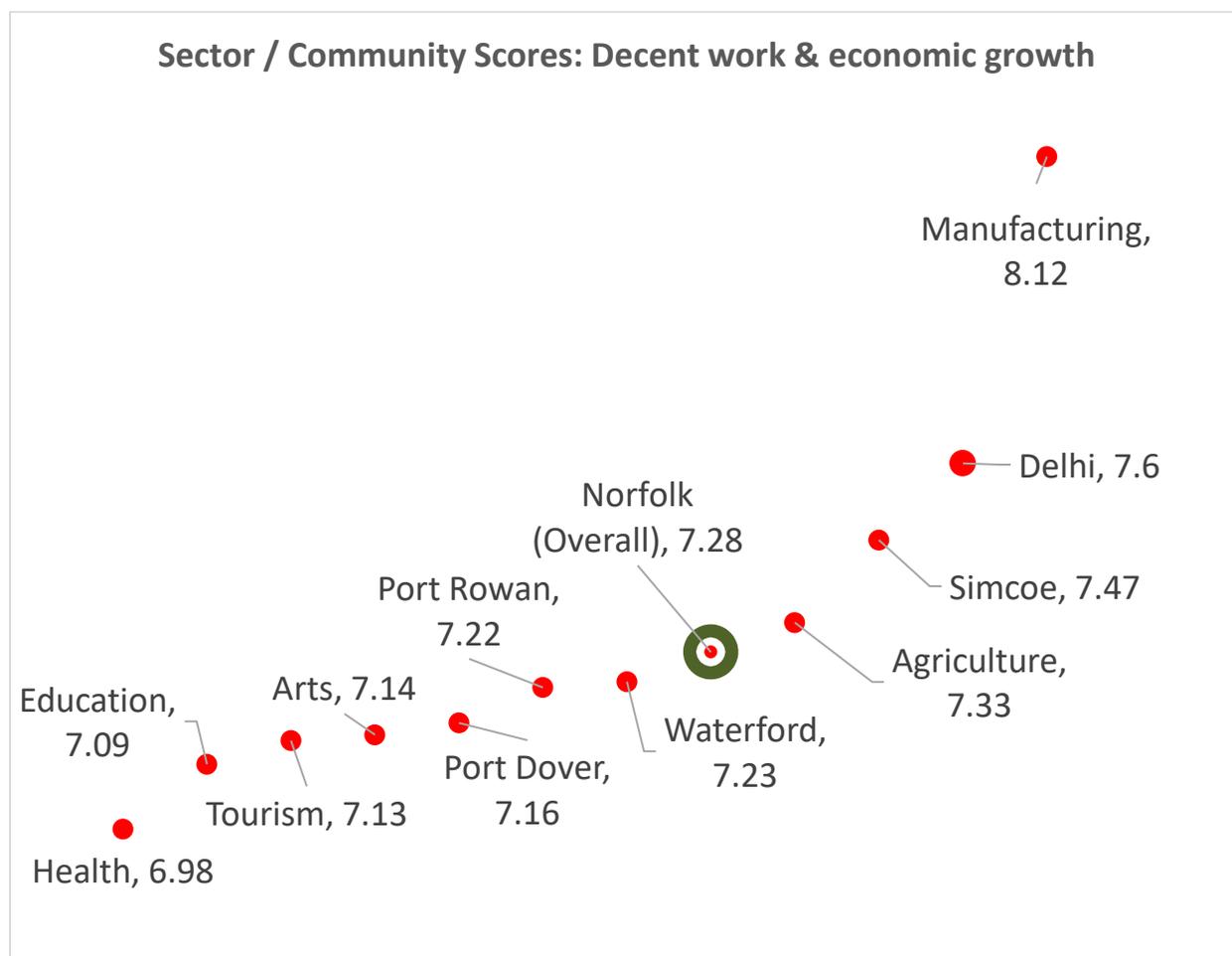
Ranking of Community Values



The following is an analysis of the data, from the community value with the highest score, to the lowest. For more detailed analysis on community values, review the Survey of Community Values Report at norfolkbusiness.ca/strategy.

Decent work & economic growth: 7.28

“Decent work & economic growth” was the most important community value for a positive future with an overall score of 7.28 out of 10. This value’s point spread among disparate groups was neither high nor low compared to other values. Respondents who were most interested in the Manufacturing sector (8.12) valued this choice more than any other stakeholder group. The Health Care & Social Services sector (6.98) had the lowest score for this value. Respondents who identified with the community of Delhi (7.60) valued this choice more than any other community. Port Dover (7.16) had the lowest score among communities. Across disparate stakeholder groups, this community value rated neither highest nor lowest in terms of agreement on scoring. With a spread of 1.14 points between the lowest and highest stakeholder group rankings, “decent work & economic growth” ranked #5 (out of 10) in terms of agreement among all groups on its scoring.



Safe, well-governed communities: 6.33

“Safe, well-governed communities” was the second most important community value with an overall score of 6.33. Respondents who identified with the community of Simcoe (6.52) valued this choice more than any other stakeholder group. Port Rowan (5.82) had the lowest score for this value. Respondents who were most interested in the Arts, Entertainment & Recreation sector (6.48) valued this choice more than any other sector. The Manufacturing sector (6.06) had the lowest score for this value. Across disparate stakeholder groups, this community value rated highly on scoring agreement. With a spread of 0.70 points between the lowest and highest stakeholder group rankings, “safe, well-governed communities” ranked #1 (out of 10) in terms of agreement among all groups on its scoring.



Clean air & water: 6.18

“Clean air & water” was the third most important community value with an overall score of 6.18. However, this community value had the highest point spread among all ten choices, meaning the disparate groups were furthest apart on the scoring. Given that Port Rowan community members scored this value as #2, while manufacturing interests scored it as #7, the score indicates some conflict between proponents of conservation and development. Respondents who were most interested in the Agriculture sector (6.41) valued this choice more than any other sector. Simcoe (5.75) had the lowest score among communities.

Healthy citizens / No poverty: 6.12

“Healthy citizens / No poverty”, with an overall score of 6.12, was the fourth most important community value, but it had the second lowest point spread on scoring among groups, meaning most were in agreement on its scoring. Respondents who were most interested in the Health Care & Social Services sector (6.82) valued this choice more than any other stakeholder group. The community of Waterford (5.85) had the lowest score for this value. Respondents who identified with the community of Simcoe (6.31) valued this choice more than any other community. Agriculture (5.92) had the lowest score among economic sectors.

Sustainable communities: 5.88

“Sustainable communities”, with an overall score of 5.88, was the fifth most important community value, and its point spread among disparate groups was neither high nor low compared to other values. Respondents who identified with the community of Port Rowan (6.36) valued this choice more than any other stakeholder group. The Education sector (5.30) had the lowest score for this value. Respondents who were most interested in the Tourism sector (6.03) valued this choice more than any other sector. Waterford (5.54) had the lowest score among communities. Across disparate stakeholder groups, this community value rated neither highest nor lowest in terms of scoring agreement. With a spread of 1.06 points between the lowest and highest stakeholder group rankings, “sustainable communities” ranked #4 (out of 10) in terms of agreement among all groups on its scoring.

Quality education opportunities: 5.64

“Quality education opportunities” was the fifth most important community value for a positive future with an overall score of 5.64 out of 10. With a spread of 1.42 points between the lowest and highest stakeholder group rankings, “quality education opportunities” ranked #9 (out of 10) in terms of agreement among all groups.

Innovation & infrastructure renewal for global competitiveness: 5.56

“Innovation & infrastructure renewal for global competitiveness” was the fourth least important community value for a positive future with an overall score of 5.56 out of 10. Across disparate stakeholder groups, this community value rated as having very low scoring agreement. With a spread of 1.37 points between the lowest and highest stakeholder group rankings, “innovation & infrastructure renewal for global competitiveness” ranked #8 (out of 10) in terms of agreement among all groups.

Affordable & clean energy: 5.09

“Affordable & clean energy” was the third least important community value for a positive future with an overall score of 5.09 out of 10. With a spread of 0.87 points between the lowest and highest stakeholder group rankings, “affordable & clean energy” ranked #2 (out of 10) in terms of agreement among all groups.

Plant, animal & habitat diversity: 4.05

“Plant, animal & habitat diversity” was the second least important community value for a positive future with an overall score of 4.05 out of 10. With a spread of 1.16 points between the lowest and highest stakeholder group rankings, “plant, animal & habitat diversity” ranked #6 (out of 10) in terms of agreement among all groups.

Reduce inequalities – gender, race, disability, etc.: 3.28

“Reduce inequalities (gender, race, disability, etc.)” was the least important community value for a positive future with an overall score of 3.28 out of 10. With a spread of 1.26 points between the lowest and highest stakeholder group rankings, “reduce inequalities (gender, race, disability, etc.)” ranked #7 (out of 10) in agreement among all groups.

Readiness

To evaluate Norfolk County's perceived readiness, the *Rural Community Economic Development Planning & Assessment Guide*³ was utilized. This Guide, written by the Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership and funded by the Province of British Columbia, is the only tool available that provides numeric evaluation of community readiness in Canada.

The Guide provides an easy-to-score assessment so communities can begin to gauge their strengths and weaknesses in six foundational areas of community economic development:

- A. **Connections and Cooperation** - Does the community have the ability to draw together to achieve community-wide goals? Is everyone included?
- B. **Community Vitality** - Does the community have a rich and dynamic cultural and social life; is there pride in achievements, and celebrations of success?
- C. **Leadership** - Do individuals and groups take effective leadership responsibility and are they responsive and democratic?
- D. **Strategic Capacity** - Are the physical and financial resources available to meet the community's vision? Is there a community plan?
- E. **Community Sustainability** - Does the community have economic, social and environmental self-sufficiency?
- F. **Business Health** - Does the community identify and act on business opportunities? Does the community encourage and support its entrepreneurs?

Under each of the six discussion areas, several scenarios were outlined to respondents, who were asked to rate their agreement on a scale of +2.0 points for "Completely Agree" to -2.0 points for "Completely Disagree":

³ *Rural CED Planning & Assessment Guide*, 2011. Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership. Source: <https://ccednet-rcdec.ca/sites/ccednet-rcdec.ca/files/starting-strong-rural-community-economic.pdf>

- Completely Agree (+2.0 points)
- Somewhat Agree (+1.0 point)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree (0.0 points)
- Somewhat Disagree (-1.0 point)
- Completely Disagree (-2.0 points)
- Don't Know (0.0 points)

Citizens and business owners were encouraged to assess the community online during the summer of 2018. There were 510 respondents to the survey. Scores were then averaged across respondents in total and in various community and sector samples. For example, if a value received a score of +0.9, it means that on average, respondents indicated on average that they “Somewhat Agree” on average, where “Somewhat Agree” is a score of 1.0.

Once scores were generated for each of the scenarios within the six foundational areas, the six scores were added to provide an overall score ranging between +72 and -72. Depending on the overall score, the Guide proposes more than 20 practical tools and strategies that have proven effective, so communities can determine which approach best matches that score. The guide also links each tool to resources, case studies and best practices.

The following pages outline the assessment scores provided by survey respondents, followed by potential approaches suggested by the Rural Community Economic Development Planning & Assessment Guide to address low scores. For more details, review *Community Readiness Survey Analysis* at norfolkbusiness.ca/strategy.

Connections and Cooperation

Does the community have the ability to draw together to achieve community-wide goals? Is everyone included?

Norfolk County cooperates with neighbouring counties	0.2
It is easy to find volunteers for projects	0.6
In general, groups within Norfolk County work together on shared goals	-0.1
There is a vision or plan that addresses the needs of all groups within Norfolk County	-0.6
Diversity (age, culture, interests) is represented in community activities	-0.2
Norfolk County is able to deal constructively with conflict	-0.8
Total Score (Connections and Cooperation) – between +12 and -12:	-0.70

Potential Approaches to Connections and Cooperation:

- **Increase participation:** “Municipal and community leaders often comment that a relatively small number of individuals tend to shoulder the load. At the same time, community residents often say that they don’t have a voice, that they are not listened to, or that they don’t know how to contribute their talents and ideas. The result of these two sources of dissatisfaction is that communities can miss the opportunity to tap into a larger pool of talent, which can result in volunteer burnout. It is essential that municipal governments and community organizations seek out new and innovative ways to engage a broad spectrum of people in the community.”
- **Develop a community vision:** “The work to create a community vision can result in new relationships and collaborative partnerships and can access hidden resources in the community. The visioning process needs a local champion to promote it and a skilled facilitator to lead it.”
- **Engage youth and improve intergenerational connections:** “Many small communities are concerned about their ability to retain and engage their youth. The health and well-being of youth and of communities are interconnected. Many young people feel that they have limited opportunities to interact with anyone outside their own age group other than their parents and teachers. Mentoring by adults outside the family has been shown to help at-risk children by increasing their self-esteem, ability to relate to adults, decision-making ability and resiliency in the face of adversity.”
- **Map community assets:** “Asset mapping is a process that identifies and emphasizes the positive assets of individuals, associations and institutions in the community, rather than on the community’s shortcomings. The distinction is an important one. Focusing too much on a community’s challenges can be divisive and can result in competitive rivalries that stall forward momentum. Asset mapping can help shape a common identity and bring people in a community together. Assets include not just physical assets but the range of resident skills, talents, and activities in the community.”
- **Create a more welcoming and inclusive community:** “A welcoming and inclusive community may gain new ideas and expertise, where diversity is celebrated and all citizens have opportunities to participate.”

Community Vitality

Does the community have a rich and dynamic cultural and social life; is there pride, and celebration of success?

<p>There are friendly public spaces – parks, squares, fountains, outdoor cafes, benches, playgrounds – where a variety of people feel welcome.</p>	<table border="1"> <tr><td>1.4</td></tr> <tr><td>0.7</td></tr> <tr><td>1.6</td></tr> <tr><td>1.2</td></tr> <tr><td>0.1</td></tr> <tr><td>0.5</td></tr> </table>	1.4	0.7	1.6	1.2	0.1	0.5
1.4							
0.7							
1.6							
1.2							
0.1							
0.5							
<p>Norfolk County celebrates itself – it engages in fun and laughter.</p>							
<p>There is at least one public festival that generates a feeling of magic and excitement.</p>							
<p>My community has an optimistic spirit.</p>							
<p>A spirit of life-long learning and a hunger for knowledge is present in Norfolk County.</p>							
<p>Newcomers are welcome in my community.</p>							
<p>Total Score (Community Vitality) – between +12 and -12:</p>	<p>+5.5</p>						

Potential Approaches to Community Vitality:

- **Revitalize downtown:** “A rural downtown should be a friendly public space, with a variety of shops and services, and where people want to be because it is attractive, welcoming and relaxed. It should be equally accessible to pedestrians as it is to automobiles. Downtown revitalization can be an effective economic development strategy. It can facilitate the growth of existing small businesses, create conditions for new businesses, attract shoppers and increase the attractiveness of the town to those who may be considering living, working and investing there.”
- **Create an annual community festival:** “A community festival can be an excellent way generate and demonstrate community pride. A festival can focus attention on the community, bring the uniqueness of the community to the attention of others, stimulate volunteerism, and provide opportunities for members of the community to meet and mingle. It is an opportunity for the community to celebrate itself.”
- **Develop artistic and cultural tourism:** “An arts-focused town will attract tourists and appeal to professionals looking to relocate from larger centres. It will also attract other artists. Many rural artists sell their work in cities or go on tour, and as a result revenues earned outside the community are spent locally. The arts can play a significant role in downtown revitalization.”
- **Initiate a First Impressions program:** “First Impressions Community Exchange is a structured process that reveals to the community the first impressions that tourists, potential investors and others form of the community. This approach offers a fresh perspective on the community’s appearance, services and infrastructure and can help the community identify its strengths and weaknesses. Volunteer “visiting teams” from two exchange communities do unannounced, incognito visits, record their observations and then provide constructive feedback to their exchange community.”
- **Measure community vitality:** “Quality of life means different things to different people: employment rate, outdoor recreation opportunities, arts, public safety, access to health care. However “quality of life” is defined, the community must have enough of it to attract new people with varying interests and to retain existing residents. It can be measured by coming up with the appropriate indicators.”

Leadership

Do individuals and groups take effective leadership responsibility, and are leaders responsive and democratic?

Residents and local government have an active, respectful dialogue.	<p>A bar chart with a vertical axis and a horizontal axis. The bars represent scores for different statements. From top to bottom, the bars are: green (-0.3), blue (0.1), yellow (0.7), light blue (-0.1), orange (-0.3), and purple (-0.2). Below the chart, the total score is listed as -0.10.</p>
Norfolk County residents have opportunities to develop leadership skills.	
There is a pool of talented people who are available for leading community initiatives.	
Youth leadership is supported and developed in my community.	
People representing the interests of the non-profit, private and government sectors jointly participate in community decision-making.	
Local elections attract many talented and diverse candidates.	
Total Score (Leadership) – between +12 and -12:	

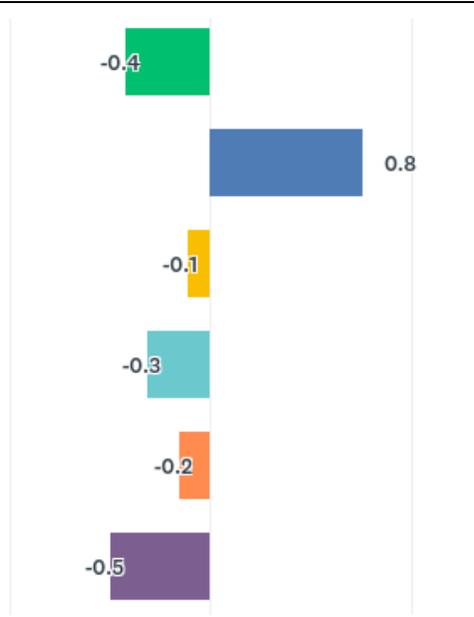
Potential Approaches to Leadership:

- **Provide training in collaborative leadership:** “Rural communities can thrive when their leaders understand the economic development needs of the new rural economy. These new leaders will need to be inclusive and collaborative.”
- **Additional approaches:** The Guide also suggests increasing participation, developing a community vision and mapping community assets, as outlined under “Connections and Cooperation”, as additional approaches.

Strategic Capacity

Are the physical and financial resources available to achieve the community’s vision, and is there a plan?

There is an up-to-date community vision or plan for Norfolk.	
There is a vibrant centre or community core in my community.	
Norfolk County has the financial resources to meet its basic needs.	
Physical infrastructure is reliable, well-maintained and modern in my community.	
A variety of real estate is available to accommodate business expansion, attraction or creation in Norfolk County.	
Capital is readily available for new and expanding businesses.	
Total Score (Strategic Capacity) – between +12 and -12:	-0.70



Potential Approaches to Strategic Capacity:

- **Establish a community foundation:** “Community foundations encourage and co-ordinate donations from the community to the community. Donors’ interests are matched with community needs. Donations typically cover a wide range of community activity: the arts, the environment, recreation and social needs. In addition to their financial and philanthropic functions, community foundations encourage and foster leadership, collaboration and vitality.”
- **Explore infrastructure grants:** “The federal and provincial governments from time to time announce a variety of infrastructure funding programs. It is a good idea to stay informed of these programs.”
- **Initiate a business retention and expansion program:** “Program is aimed at nurturing and supporting existing local businesses by improving competitiveness or identifying and addressing their needs, concerns and opportunities.”
- **Initiate a workforce development program:** “Training and skills development allows residents to transition to new economies, leads to new business opportunities by stimulating investment and innovation and can help to attract and retain existing workers and young entrepreneurs. This may slow the exodus of workers and families from a community.”
- **Additional approaches:** The Guide also suggests developing a community vision and mapping community assets, as outlined under “Connections and Cooperation”, as additional approaches.

Community Sustainability

Is the community economically and environmentally self-sufficient?

For leaders or key community members, thought is being given to replacing them if the need arises (for example, retirement).	<table border="1"> <caption>Community Sustainability Statement Scores</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Statement</th> <th>Score</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>For leaders or key community members, thought is being given to replacing them if the need arises (for example, retirement).</td> <td>-0.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>For people in Norfolk County, the integrity of the environment is a priority.</td> <td>0.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Middle-income earners can afford to buy a house in Norfolk County.</td> <td>-0.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Young adults age 25-34 consider Norfolk County a desirable place to live.</td> <td>-0.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Norfolk County is not dependent on a small number of employers.</td> <td>-0.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Norfolk County considers environmental sustainability in its community planning.</td> <td>-0.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Score (Community Sustainability) – between +12 and -12:</td> <td>-1.70</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Statement	Score	For leaders or key community members, thought is being given to replacing them if the need arises (for example, retirement).	-0.4	For people in Norfolk County, the integrity of the environment is a priority.	0.5	Middle-income earners can afford to buy a house in Norfolk County.	-0.3	Young adults age 25-34 consider Norfolk County a desirable place to live.	-0.7	Norfolk County is not dependent on a small number of employers.	-0.7	Norfolk County considers environmental sustainability in its community planning.	-0.1	Total Score (Community Sustainability) – between +12 and -12:	-1.70
Statement		Score															
For leaders or key community members, thought is being given to replacing them if the need arises (for example, retirement).		-0.4															
For people in Norfolk County, the integrity of the environment is a priority.		0.5															
Middle-income earners can afford to buy a house in Norfolk County.		-0.3															
Young adults age 25-34 consider Norfolk County a desirable place to live.		-0.7															
Norfolk County is not dependent on a small number of employers.	-0.7																
Norfolk County considers environmental sustainability in its community planning.	-0.1																
Total Score (Community Sustainability) – between +12 and -12:	-1.70																
For people in Norfolk County, the integrity of the environment is a priority.																	
Middle-income earners can afford to buy a house in Norfolk County.																	
Young adults age 25-34 consider Norfolk County a desirable place to live.																	
Norfolk County is not dependent on a small number of employers.																	
Norfolk County considers environmental sustainability in its community planning.																	
Total Score (Community Sustainability) – between +12 and -12:	-1.70																

Approaches to Community Sustainability:

- **Develop a sustainability plan:** “This is an over-arching strategy that could include any of the other tools and strategies mentioned in this section. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities states that sustainable community development is an integrated process that strengthens a community’s social, economic, and environmental assets to bring people closer to living within the sustaining capacity of local and global ecosystems. Sustainability planning allows communities to reconcile the sometimes conflicting goals of protecting the environment and developing the economy. A sustainability plan envisions a community of the future that is environmentally and economically viable. Sustainability planning should involve elected officials, professional planners and administrators, but also include a range of stakeholders from the community, including youth, arts and sports organizations, seniors, businesses, recent immigrants, First Nations, churches, schools and more.”
- **Identify the local economic leaks:** “Once money flows into a community, what do consumers, public services and businesses do with it? Too often money leaves a community because it is spent on goods and services with no local presence. Some of the tools and strategies that follow (buy local, business retention and expansion, community foundation) are aimed at plugging these economic ‘leaks’. A first step is to identify the many ways that money leaks from the community.”
- **Start a Buy Local program:** “Buy local programs are typically run by local businesses, business associations or non-profit groups and involve promoting local products by using ads, maps, buy local guides and community awareness campaigns. Such programs can reduce economic leakages in a community, build community pride, create connections, increase economic strength and lower the community’s carbon footprint via the reduction of transportation associated with importing food and other goods. One potential outcome of a buy local program could be an increase in community support for local food products. For example, in recent years there has been a noticeable rise in farmers markets and the labeling of ‘local foods’ at many supermarkets. These types of programs could also be applied to other sectors such as manufacturing or the arts. There are several examples of buy local campaigns created by local businesses or non-profits.”

- **Develop sustainable tourism:** “Tourism is generally a local economic undertaking aimed at attracting tourists to the community and providing them with creative and entertaining ways to spend money locally. A combination of commercial tourism assets and well managed environmental assets can be a powerful formula for attracting tourist dollars to the community.”
- **Additional approaches:** The Guide also suggests creating a community foundation and initiating a business retention and expansion program, as outlined under “Strategic Capacity”, as additional approaches.

Business Health

Does the community identify and act on business opportunities? Are entrepreneurs encouraged and supported?

Norfolk County identifies and acts upon opportunities.	-0.8
Local leadership is committed to recruiting or attracting businesses to the area and uses strategies or incentives to do so.	-0.7
Norfolk County has a distinctive or unique brand or marketing image.	0.4
People prefer to purchase local products and services.	1.1
Successful businesses want to remain in Norfolk County.	0.7
Local leadership recognizes that businesses are important and valuable for the development of Norfolk County.	-0.2
Total Score (Community Sustainability) – between +12 and -12:	+0.50

Potential Approaches to Business Health:

- **Create a youth entrepreneurship development program:** “Local and global economies thrive on new ideas and fresh thinking, and young people, with their curiosity about the world, their natural creativity, willingness to take risks and unbridled enthusiasm, are a natural source for this fresh perspective. Many small business owners today are nearing retirement age and giving serious thought to transitioning their businesses to a new generation. Investing in youth entrepreneurship programs is seen by many communities as a sound investment in the community’s future.”
- **Form a business incubator:** “Business incubators stimulate and support the creation and growth of new small businesses while providing support that increases the likelihood of business success. The most common objectives of incubation programs are creating jobs in a community, enhancing a community’s entrepreneurial climate, and retaining businesses in a community. Business incubators provide assistance with marketing, networking, alternative financing, workspace, links to partners and educators, and business management advice and training.”
- **Measure and improve business friendliness:** “Do young adults and families find your community attractive? Do you have a business-friendly council? Do business and education work together to provide appropriate, timely and convenient training? Do businesses market their products jointly? Do lenders in the community understand the needs of entrepreneurs? These are some examples of the questions that need to be asked to determine the business friendliness of a community. Many communities say they want to attract more businesses, but they are often unsure of what kinds of actions will actually create a more positive business climate. A consequence of this knowledge gap is that actions taken can yield counterproductive results and new opportunities can be realized in spite of the community’s efforts, not because of them.”
- **Recruit compatible enterprises and investment:** “Many rural communities are faced with the loss of the primary resource industries that have defined their local economies for generations. What constitutes a “compatible enterprise” for one community will be defined differently for another. A community that knows what kind of industry or business it wants and can go out to attract these businesses is ahead of those communities that passively wait for opportunities.”

- **Additional approaches:** The Guide also suggests identifying local economic leaks and starting a ‘Buy Local’ program, as outlined under “Community Sustainability”, and initiating a business retention and expansion program, as outlined under “Strategic Capacity”, as additional approaches.

Overall Readiness Score

The Rural CED Planning & Assessment Guide suggests adding the scores together for each area, then adding the scores of all themes together. The Guide proposes strategies that fit for the community’s level of readiness.

Area	Score
Connections and Cooperation	-0.70
Community Vitality	+5.50
Leadership	-0.10
Strategic Capacity	-0.70
Community Sustainability	-1.70
Business Health	+0.50
TOTAL SCORE (Between +72 and -72)	+2.80

Suggested Approach and Strategic Directions

Based on the overall score of **+2.80** between a range of +72 and -72 points, the Guide suggests that Norfolk County use a “**Large Steps**” approach:

- Move from small project (one time only) to program (ongoing) approach to ensure continuity and success
- Integrate principals into most community planning and programming, as Community Economic Development (CED) is understood by most community leaders

Scoring Guide

	1. Getting Ready to Move	2. Small Steps	3. Large Steps	4. Large Leaps
Overall Score	-72 to -37	-36 to -1	0 to + 36	+37 to +72
Approach and Strategic Directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take stock of assets • Bring in outside conflict and mediation specialist (possibly) • Create community conversations to build momentum • Hold conversations with local non-elected leaders • Offer basic workshops on CED for local elected and non-elected leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackle small apolitical projects to build trust and respect • Use early project success to build momentum • Offer advanced workshops on CED 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move from small project (one time only) to program (ongoing) approach to ensure continuity and success • Integrate principals into most community planning and programming, as CED is understood by most community leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate sophisticated approaches • Become a leader community and a catalyst for teaming up with neighbouring communities • Integrate CED principles into all programming, as they are second nature to all groups and organizations in the community

Strategic Directions

Survey respondents named agriculture and tourism, entrepreneurial spirit, and quality of place and life as the major strengths of our economy. Participants in our round tables were asked which strengths we should lean on. Most said community, agriculture and tourism. When asked what opportunities we should focus on, most said tourism and community.

A careful assessment of our weaknesses and obstacles disclosed that most survey respondents saw our downtowns, regulatory issues and leadership, and the lack of well-paying jobs and workforce issues as key. This collective opinion was reflected in the obstacles preventing progress: vision, red tape and taxes; status of downtown; and infrastructure, services and workforce.

In terms of readying ourselves for the future, most commonly discussed themes at round tables were: employers' need for workers, more community events and festivals, help downtowns, promote tourism, assist youth, mentorship programs, and grow population diversity.

High priority economic development issues, as articulated by our survey respondents, focus on creating a welcoming business environment, downtown revitalization, and jobs.

In summary, the four major strategic directions that participants in surveys and round tables expressed were:

- Solve Labour Shortages / Provide Decent Work
- Support Business / Cut Red Tape
- Revitalize Downtowns
- Lean on our Strengths: Agriculture and Tourism

Not all priorities or directions are realistic, sustainable or politically palatable. However, with increased collaboration and reallocation of financial and human resources, complementary goals can be nurtured. Therefore, three groups of recommendations have been drafted based on the strategic directions:

- A. Grow and diversify our population
- B. Help make our entrepreneurs more successful
- C. Harness energy to improve our spaces

Interim Recommendations

Based on detailed feedback from survey comments, round table discussions and engagement with the Project Oversight Team and Technical Advisory Team, several interim recommendations were drafted for each of the Strategic Directions.

A. Grow and Diversify our Population

1) Connect the workforce to job opportunities

- a) Consult major employers on how best to address labour shortages
- b) Collaborate on employer recruitment drives currently organized separately
- c) Improve linkages between local school boards and businesses
- d) Attract additional relevant post-secondary education programs to Norfolk County
- e) Leverage relationships with existing workers to grow our labour force

2) Connect workers with housing and amenities

- a) Build attainable housing options for youth, retirees and newcomers
- b) Centralize amenities and infrastructure to serve changing needs
- c) Expand public transit and other local government amenities using technology
- d) Link public transit to major cities

3) Attract new residents

- a) Use tourism-marketing tactics as tools to attract new residents
- b) Collaborate with immigration programs to attract new immigrants
- c) Host trips by newcomers and real estate brokers to area
- d) Consider incentives and tactics to repatriate local youth
- e) Collaborate with community groups to welcome new residents

B. Help Make our Entrepreneurs More Successful

1) Improve municipal regulations, processes and communication

- a) Review development policies, identify improvements and streamline processes
- b) Expedite land use approvals for priority development, where possible
- c) Support as-of-right land uses in compatible zones
- d) Improve customer service in all County Divisions
- e) Explore worker housing alternatives
- f) Re-engineer agriculture property taxes
- g) Streamline polices and processes related to community events and festivals
- h) Enact a Municipal Accommodation Tax to fund tourism development
- i) Celebrate businesses through events, symposiums, awards, etc.

2) Support existing growth businesses

- a) Visit employers regularly to understand their markets and needs
- b) Connect businesses to funding and other support programs
- c) Host workshops for businesses on a variety of pertinent topics
- d) Focus local incentive programs on industries with highest return
- e) Prioritize value-added niche food processing, technology-related agricultural and other light manufacturing, culinary, ag-related and sustainable tourism
- f) Support entrepreneurship programs and networking groups for youth, women newcomers and other niche groups
- g) Explore business incubators and funding platforms focused on strengths and opportunities
- h) Enhance access to high-speed communications
- i) Increase inventory and types of overnight tourist accommodation options
- j) Increase tourism spending in the off-season by encouraging overnight stays and quality, monetized, sustainable experiences by businesses
- k) Support parking solutions in high-traffic areas through pay-to-park technologies, local-friendly parking policies, added parking spaces and lots, and shuttles
- l) Support public amenities such as accessibility for disabled persons, public washrooms, beach improvements, gardens, public art, and boat dockage

3) Attract emerging industries

- a) Host tours of site selectors, real estate contacts from target markets
- b) Prioritize development with high-paying jobs and workers who reside here
- c) Prioritize companies that value work-life balance and quality of place
- d) Prioritize food processors that value our terroir and the food we grow
- e) Expand film, television and media production opportunities
- f) Support water-based transportation alternatives to link population centres
- g) Develop an agri-food showcase and culinary-tourism centre
- h) Develop outdoor concert venues that are compatible with existing residents
- i) Encourage legal cannabis-themed tourism experiences
- j) Explore emerging solutions to energy generation, water and waste management

C. Harness Community Energy to Improve Our Spaces

1) Improve mutually beneficial links between business and government

- a) Collaborate with business associations to advance improvements
- b) Encourage business-to-business collaboration and networking opportunities

2) Increase participation by citizens in community projects

- a) Provide training in collaborative leadership
- b) Enable growth in volunteerism by harnessing a centralized database
- c) Engage citizens in idea-friendly events that boost involvement in community
- d) Build amenities for youth and expand youth programs
- e) Engage service clubs to explore efficient ways to collaborate

3) Turn downtowns into attractive places to visit and invest

- a) Focus Community Improvement Plan incentives on areas of highest need
- b) Encourage owners to develop their properties by creating a vacant non-residential building registry and organizing events to promote empty properties
- c) Encourage home-based businesses to move into storefronts
- d) Create spaces in downtowns for creative individuals to network and collaborate
- e) Organize events more regularly, such as weekly street parties and concerts
- f) Promote tourism experiences by increasing compatible nightlife
- g) Explore solutions to social challenges in low-income areas
- h) Enforce by-laws to discourage property neglect and social decay

Next Steps

1. Receive feedback from Norfolk County Council
2. Share the draft strategic directions with the general public and seek feedback
3. Revise and prioritize the directions
4. Prepare and present the Final Report to Council for approval
5. Implement strategy through reallocated human and financial resources

