



**Research Report:
Ideas for Future Solutions
Economic Development Strategy Review**

The Corporation of Norfolk County

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(Attachment C – Staff Report DCS 19-48 Economic Development Strategy)

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Communities around the world provide examples of possible solutions or best practices that Norfolk County can draw upon for implementation of the Economic Development Strategy. In some cases, Norfolk County has already implemented programs that may continue to support strategic directions.

Ideas to ‘help entrepreneurs to expand wealth and prosperity’

1. **Food processing support:** In Northumberland County, the Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre¹ (OAFVC) is a not-for-profit, small-batch food-processing facility supports fresh fruit and vegetable value-adding opportunities to increase farm revenue. The facility also helps "foodies" with recipe development while staff work with food-processing start-up companies and expansions, in Ontario, to progress research and development, test batches, and to facilitate small-batch co-packing. The project was funded by the municipality of Northumberland County in cooperation with the local federation of agriculture, and senior levels of government.
2. **Business incubators and investment platforms:** According to the MaRS Discovery District in Toronto, North America’s largest urban innovation hub, accelerators and incubators² provide a “combination of services for online and mobile startups, including mentorship, funding, networking, training and/or office space. Most accelerator programs run a few months long and they often take equity in exchange for providing their services.” Community groups and business startups can also use crowdfunding platforms³. Private capital can also be sourced from angel investors, venture capitalists and other sources.
3. **Overnight tourist accommodation:** Norfolk County, in partnership with Ontario’s Southwest, Haldimand County and Elgin County, has been working on a multi-phase Alternative Accommodation Study to address the challenges in providing suitable accommodation options for visitors during peak tourism season, specifically where year-round visit demand does not justify the development of branded accommodations. Completed phases include a current situation analysis, policy framework, stakeholder input, opportunities and case studies. Currently the group is working on an Alternative Accommodation Toolkit, to be designed for property owners and stakeholders

¹ Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre. Source: www.oafvc.ca

² MaRS. Source: learn.marsdd.com

³ National Crowdfunding & FinTech Association. Source: ncfacanada.org

interested in learning more about developing alternative accommodations on their property.

4. **Accessibility market:** According to the report, *Ontario Innovators in Accessibility and Universal Design*⁴, the tourism sector in Ontario will see \$1.5 billion in new spending, helping generate increases in retail sales. Norfolk County has invested in accessible beach mats for Port Dover beach. More can be done by the public and private sectors to cater to this important, emerging sector. Also, the Long Point World Biosphere Reserve Foundation has recommended that Norfolk County implement the Blue Flag Beach⁵ program, an international eco-certification for beaches and marinas. Elgin County has three Blue Flag beaches: Port Burwell, Port Stanley and Port Glasgow. “When you see a Blue Flag flying, you know a beach or marina is clean and accessible; has great water quality; meets high safety standards; and is working hard to protect shorelines and ecosystems,” according to Environmental Defence, the organization that administers the program in Canada.
5. **Technology-oriented traffic and parking solutions:** Examples include ride-hailing services, pay-to-park technologies, local-friendly parking policies, added parking spaces and lots, improved ingress/egress, and shuttle services. Examples: Rover⁶ connects empty and unused parking spots with those looking for affordable and convenient parking. An Ontario law firm has provided some insight into the implications of Uber⁷ for drivers and passengers in Ontario.
6. **Startups:** Startup Grind⁸ is the largest independent startup community, actively educating, inspiring, and connecting more than 1,500,000 entrepreneurs in over 500 chapters. We nurture startup ecosystems in 125 countries through events, media, and partnerships with organizations like Google for Startups.
7. **Culinary tourism centre:** The New York State Wine & Culinary Center⁹ in Canandaigua (pop. 11,000) showcases the State’s wine, craft beer and food. The centre is well known for its demonstration theatre and hands-on kitchen.

⁴ Towards an Accessible Future. Source: marsdd.com

⁵ Blue Flag Canada. Source: environmentaldefence.ca/blue-flag/

⁶ Rover Parking app. Source: roverparking.com

⁷ Information about Uber in Ontario. Source: bolandhowe.com

⁸ StartUp Grind. Source: startupgrind.com/about-us/

⁹ Finger Lakes Wine & Culinary Cente. Source: nywcc.com

Classes and workshops include everything from wine pairing and bread baking to sausage making and knife skills. A tasting room at the centre features a rotating array of New York wines, beers and spirits. The centre also has a gift shoppe, conference room, and a restaurant with a patio that overlooks a lake. The center opened its doors in 2006 after Constellation Brands, Wegmans Food Markets, Rochester Institute for Technology, and the New York Wine and Grape Foundation came together to create a gateway for the people to experience New York agriculture and viticulture. During a tour of the Finger Lakes by Norfolk County entrepreneurs in 2016, a participant comment: “If Norfolk County had a culinary centre much like the one we visited, it could become a valuable tool to promote the foods, wine, beer and spirits of our area, attract tourists and serve the local community as well.”

8. **Municipal Accommodation Tax:** Under provincial law, Norfolk County has the opportunity to establish a Municipal Accommodation Tax¹⁰, a portion of which can be directed to the municipality for tourism-related initiatives. The transient accommodation tax authority allows each municipality that chooses to implement a transient accommodation tax to determine the types of short-term accommodation the tax would apply to, including hotels, motels, bed and breakfast establishments, and short term rentals booked through AirBnB and other online platforms. However, purchases that do not consist of accommodation cannot be taxed. Purchases that consist of accommodation that is not short-term in nature cannot be taxed¹¹. Typically the tax is 4%. Municipalities that have approved such a tax include Barrie, Brockville, Cambridge, Cornwall, Hamilton, Kenora, Kingston, London, Marathon, Markham, Mississauga, Niagara Falls, North Bay, Oakville, Sault Ste. Marie, Stratford, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Vaughan, Windsor, and others. Brantford, Kawartha Lakes and Peterborough are actively considering a Municipal Accommodation Tax. The recently approved tax in Cambridge is expected to generate more than \$3 million annually.¹²
9. **Transportation alternatives:** UberBoat is piloting its new water-based service in Croatia¹³ and India where passengers can access boats to connect them to destinations on the water. There are reports of pilots also in Muskoka and Cannes, France. In addition, respondents to strategy surveys raised the

¹⁰ O. Reg. 435/17: Transient Accommodation Tax under Municipal Act, 2017. Source: ontario.ca

¹¹ TIAO FAQs. Source: tiaontario.ca

¹² Kitchener Record article. Source: therecord.com

¹³ UberBOAT: Discover Croatia in style. Source: uber.com

opportunity of re-establishing commercial passenger ferry service to the United States. The concept was considered in 2004-2005 but did not move forward¹⁴.

10. **Festivals and events:** Norfolk County is home to several successful festivals, some of which have received recognition as Top 100 Festivals and Events by the organization Festivals & Events Ontario (FEO). These include the Norfolk County Fair & Horse Show, Simcoe Christmas Panorama, Eat & Drink Norfolk, Waterford PumpkinFest, and others. Recent new examples, such as the Norfolk Beerstock, Norfolk Popcorn Party and the Routes to Roots Film Festival demonstrate there is a willingness in the community to organize events. The Prince Edward Island Festival of Small Halls¹⁵ uses community halls and churches over a two-week period each summer to present music, dance and storytelling.
11. **Outdoor concerts:** The Gentleman of the Road Simcoe Stopover in 2013, produced by the British rock band Mumford & Sons¹⁶, is considered an excellent example of how a private enterprise and a community can work together to support tourism and economic development. Changes to the Norfolk County Official Plan since the event hopefully will help to facilitate music events like this in the future.
12. **Film production:** Norfolk County has an established Film Liaison Office¹⁷ through the Tourism and Economic Development Department. Currently basic resources allow for processing simple film production permits and collaboration with other departments. By working with the provincial agency Ontario Creates, Norfolk County could maximize film and television production.¹⁸
13. **Cannabis tourism:** Jurisdictions where cannabis has been legal for some time have already established themed experiences. Examples include Cannabus of Seattle, Washington, which provides a three-hour bus tour of dispensaries; Bud + Breakfast in Denver, Colorado; and Flow Kana Institute in Mendocino, California, offering guests a peek inside the cannabis production process.¹⁹

¹⁴ Globe and Mail: "Ferry fever in Port Dover and Pennsylvania". Source: theglobeandmail.com

¹⁵ Small Halls Festival. Source: smallhalls.com

¹⁶ Footsteps of Mumford & Sons. Source: norfolktourism.ca/mumford

¹⁷ Norfolk County Film Liaison Office. Source: norfolkbusiness.ca/filming

¹⁸ Ontario Creates. Source: ontariocreates.ca

¹⁹ Ten companies taking cannabis tourism to the next level. Source: cannabition.com

Ideas to help ‘harness community energy to improve public spaces’

14. **Bank of I.D.E.A.S. and more:** “The New Barn-Raising” by Dr. Gareth Potts is a toolkit²⁰ for citizens, politicians, and businesses looking to sustain community and civic assets. Its objectives are to propose possible short-term responses to public spending cuts and private spending constraints and to propose possible medium-to-long term visions for sustaining assets. Resources such as SAVEYOUR.town²¹, established in the Midwest U.S. by Becky McCray and Deb Brown, and Your Town Rising²², established by Gregg McLachlan of Norfolk County and Leslie Fournier, also provide resources for rural areas to explore their futures. Peter Kenyon’s Bank of I.D.E.A.S.²³ offers numerous options on how to engage citizens. Since its creation in 1989, the Bank of I.D.E.A.S. has worked with over 2,000 communities throughout Australia and overseas seeking to facilitate fresh and creative ways that stimulate community and local economic renewal. In response to laments from communities waiting for a “white knight” to ride in and solve problems, Peter Kenyon says: “You are the ones you have been waiting for.”
15. **Neighbourhood resource centre:** The Neighborhood Resource Center²⁴ (GNRC) in Geneva, New York, is a conduit between the residents, the neighborhood associations that they have created, and City Government, assisting in the overcoming of challenges, improvements and beautification of neighborhoods, and bringing community members together in order to accomplish their own unique vision through their own eyes. The GNRC helps to facilitate events (musical porch parties, street parties), provide opportunities to develop pride in place (public butterfly gardens, neighbourhood cleanup events), and supports the notion that it is not what the City Government wants to accomplish, but what the City can do to help residents accomplish their goals.
16. **Volunteer database:** Create a ‘Retain, Recognize and Reward Volunteers Initiative’ and involve volunteers in its design and implementation. Create lots

²⁰ The New Barn-Raising. Source: community-wealth.org

²¹ SAVEYOUR.town. Source: saveyour.town

²² Your Town Rising. Source: facebook.com/yourtownrising

²³ Bank of I.D.E.A.S. Source: bankofideas.com.au

²⁴ Neighborhood Resource Centre of Geneva NY. Source: cityofgenevany.com/gnrc

of opportunities for volunteers to socialize, recreate and network with each other. These are just two ideas from the Bank of I.D.E.A.S. web resource.²⁵

17. **Business network:** Haldimand County has established the Haldimand Business Network, a quarterly meeting of chambers of commerce, boards of trade, and business improvement areas in collaboration with the County's Economic Development and Tourism Division.
18. **Empty storefronts:** Empty Building Tours²⁶ have been organized in small towns across the U.S. Webster City, Iowa, (population 8,000) had 14 empty buildings in its downtown. The Chamber of Commerce worked with property owners, realtors and local volunteers to hold a tour of 12 of the empty storefronts and buildings. Community engagement as a result helped fill 10 properties within two years. Norfolk County staff are planning an Empty Building Tour for downtown Simcoe in 2019.
19. **Vacant property protocol:** Vacant Building Protocols²⁷ in cities such as Hamilton, Kitchener, London and Windsor provide a proactive approach to property standards enforcement of vacant buildings and a comprehensive and consistent procedure for monitoring vacant buildings to protect them against continued deterioration. Norfolk County staff are researching a Vacant Building Registry for our communities.
20. **Rural Social Enterprise Collaborative:** The Rural Social Enterprise Collaborative provides an excellent overview about social enterprise in its 2016 report²⁸: The practice of social enterprise is well established in the nonprofit sector. Organizations and communities have been engaging in social enterprise for decades. Many nonprofits across Ontario have created their own revenue streams, with an average of 45% of nonprofits' revenues coming from earned income, according to a report by Imagine Canada²⁹. Social Enterprise is a strategy to help create resilient, innovative nonprofit organizations and sustain services to build healthy communities.
21. **Cash Mobs and Community Currencies:** Numerous cities and towns across North America, including Windsor and Sarnia, have developed Cash Mobs³⁰,

²⁵ 83 Ways to Retain Volunteers. Source: bankofideas.com.au

²⁶ Empty Building Tours. Source: saveyour.town

²⁷ Hamilton Vacant Building Registry. Source: hamilton.ca.

²⁸ Rural Social Enterprise. Source: ekonomos.com

²⁹ The Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector in Ontario. Source: imaginecanada.ca

³⁰ Cash Mob. Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cash_mob

groups of people who assemble at a local business to make purchases. The purpose of these mobs is to support both the local businesses and the overall community. They may also serve a secondary purpose in providing social opportunities. Downtown Simcoe and Port Dover currently have community currencies in place. Additional currencies could be added or a County-wide currency could be established. The Community Currencies in Action pilot in Europe (2011-2014) offers some helpful learning opportunities.³¹

22. **Youth solutions:** Since 2006, the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre³² in Ingersoll, Ontario, and its Social Enterprises (SEs) have evolved in response to the interest and feedback received from young people programs. Youth purchase an annual \$5 membership. Programs include training in music, audio recording, art, graphic design, photography, television production, video editing, digital game development, computer repair, radio broadcasting, fitness, recreation, nutrition, cooking, and entrepreneurship. In addition to daily programs, other youth activities and services include a skate park, billiards, a lounge, Game Zone, an Internet Café, and an onsite food shop.
23. **Social Innovation Review:** The concept of a think-and-do tank is based on the need to put actions behind thought and policy to ensure that communities and stakeholders do not lose interest in the goals of a group with a mission, especially a collaborative set of organizations. Stanford University's Social Innovation Review provides some lessons³³.

Ideas to 'welcome youth and newcomers to grow the population and workforce'

24. **Collaborative recruitment drives:** The Northern Colorado Networking Group³⁴ offers career support for jobseekers. They hold large job fairs twice a year (April and October). Loveland, Colorado, which held a job fair targeting job seekers aged 50 and older, drew about 900 people to one event. Norfolk County worked with Fanshawe College and local employers to organize the Multi-Sector Job Fair³⁵ in Simcoe in April 2019.

³¹ Community Currencies in Action – Final Report. Source: communitycurrenciesinaction.eu

³² Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. Source: seontario.org

³³ Building a Think-And-Do Tank. Source: ssir.org

³⁴ Northern Colorado Networking Group. Source: noconet.org

³⁵ Multi-Sector Job Fair. Source: norfolkbusiness.ca

25. **Cooperative housing:** Members of a housing cooperative share ownership of the building. They have exclusive rights to a suite (bed / living area and private full bathroom) and an off-street parking space. They share a commercial kitchen, dining room, living room, study and laundry room. The Golden Horseshoe Cooperative Housing Federation³⁶ is the closest agency to Norfolk County.
26. **Tiny Homes:** Cornerstone Landing³⁷, an organization that provides support for homeless youth in Lanark County, have proposed three tiny homes for Smiths Falls to house young people in need. The proposed tiny homes, each of which would be 312 square feet in size built on concrete slabs, would be connected to town services. If the project goes ahead, this grouping of tiny homes would be the first of its kind in Canada. Landowners will be encouraged to host the tiny homes, generating income for them. The tiny homes will allow flexibility for tenants in crisis, alleviating the need for a 12-month lease contract and provide a shelter for their pets, too. Most municipalities have setbacks and minimum square footage requirements for homes that prohibit this new type of housing. Smith Falls will be asked to amend the Official Plan and Zoning By-Law to ensure tiny homes are built to Ontario Building Code standards.
27. **Land value tax:** Pennsylvania experimented with a land tax experiment and cities there have embraced the idea. Enacting a land value tax³⁸ shifts the burden from financially-productive properties to vacant and under-utilized properties. Taxing land at a higher rate than buildings would incentivize redevelopment and discourage owners from sitting on unused land.
28. **Youth repatriation incentives:** Since 2014, Newton, Iowa (population 15,000) has given new home builders and buyers \$10,000 in cash³⁹ plus a welcome package worth \$3,000 to spur development and turn around population loss. Since the first \$10,000 subsidy was given, 55 units have been permitted, 46% percent of which were to new families.
29. **'Stay to Stay' weekend packages for people thinking of relocating:** Stay to Stay Weekends⁴⁰ are exploratory vacations designed for people who are

³⁶ Cooperative Housing in Ontario. Source: chfcanada.coop

³⁷ Cornerstone Landing – Tiny Homes. Source: cornerstonelanding.com

³⁸ Pennsylvania Land Tax Experiment. Source: strongtowns.org

³⁹ Newtown Housing Initiative. Source: newtongov.org

⁴⁰ Stay to Stay Weekends. Source: vermontvacation.com

interested in moving to Vermont. During a weekend away, networking events provide opportunities to connect with employers, realtors, community leaders, entrepreneurs and potential neighbours to provide insight about relocating.

30. **Remote workers:** Tulsa, Oklahoma, developed the Tulsa Remote Program⁴¹. 25 recipients receive \$10,000 in cash, a housing stipend for a fully-furnished apartment in a building downtown, a desk at a local co-working space, and other community supports. Program applicants must be over 18, eligible to work in the United States, and able to move to Tulsa within six months. Applicants have to come from outside Tulsa County, and be doing full-time remote work for a company that's based elsewhere, or be self-employed. To receive all the cash, they must stay the full year. More than 1,800 people applied to the program within two days of its launch. The program is funded by a local private foundation.

31. **Newcomer agencies:** The Norfolk Refugee Committee has attracted three Syrian refugee families to Norfolk County in the past three years. English as a Second Language is a key need in the area for newcomers, as well as public transportation. Other examples of communities working with newcomers include the Municipal Lot Sales Program⁴² of Pipestone, Manitoba. It encourages residential development and provides a format for individuals to purchase municipally owned residential lots at a low price. Purchasers may enter into an offer to purchase one of the available lots within the municipality with a deposit of \$1,000 per lot. The selling price will be \$10 per lot. If this offer is not acted upon within a 90-day period, the applicant will forfeit the \$1,000 deposit per lot. The purchaser is responsible for all legal costs associated with the sale of the property.



⁴¹ Tulsa Remote. Source: tulsaremote.com/

⁴² Pipestone, Manitoba, Municipal Lot Sales Program. Source: <https://bit.ly/2Ci6zlm>