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**Date** December 10, 2024 **Report No.** 2024-73  
**To** Chair and Members  
Committee of the Whole – Planning and Administration  
**From** Michael Bradley  
Chief Administrative Officer

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## 1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item   
Item For Consideration

## 2.0 Topic **Economic Development Strategy (2024-2031)**

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## 3.0 Recommendation

- A. THAT Report 2024-73 titled “Economic Development Strategy (2024-2031)” BE RECEIVED;
- B. THAT the City of Brantford Economic Development Strategy (2024-2031) (**Appendix A**) BE APPROVED and IMPLEMENTED in order to further economic growth and development in the City of Brantford;
- C. THAT the supporting information contained in the Brantford Community Profile (**Appendix B**), Situational Analysis (**Appendix C**), Retail Analysis (**Appendix D**) and Economic Development Strategy (2016) – Final Report Card (**Appendix E**) BE RECEIVED; and,
- D. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to report back to Council, annually, on the progress of implementation of the Economic Development Strategy (2024-2031).

## 4.0 Executive Summary

The City of Brantford's Economic Development Strategy (2024-2031) is a pivotal corporate document that will guide the municipality's economic growth and vitality and complements existing City strategies and plans. Initiated in January 2023 and completed in March 2024, this comprehensive strategy was led by McSweeney and Associates in collaboration with staff and the Economic Development, Tourism and Cultural Initiatives Advisory Committee and Brantford Municipal Airport Board. Built in collaboration with industry stakeholders, community partners and residents, the modernized Economic Development Strategy builds on the foundation laid by previous corporate strategies while setting new goals and actions for the next seven years.

Public consultation played a significant role in development of the strategy, and will continue to play a significant role in developing the subsequent implementation plan that will be flexible enough to adapt to the City's business climate and allow for new and evolving partnerships. Along with consultation, a thorough review of existing corporate policies and a competitive analysis of Brantford's economy, the new Economic Development Strategy identifies seven (7) key areas of focus with 65 strategic actions, which align closely with Council's priorities to focus on partnerships, community engagement and downtown revitalization:

- Goal 1: Transform downtown into a "destination" that residents are proud of.
- Goal 2: Be investment ready and business friendly by creating a business-first climate.
- Goal 3: Integrate economic development (including small business), real estate and tourism with critical City initiatives, including transit and active transportation planning.
- Goal 4: Recognize the Creative Industries sector as a significant economic and social pillar for the economy.
- Goal 5: Work with the local post-secondary institutions to provide more employment opportunities to support local business.
- Goal 6: Improve partnerships to build a more cohesive business community.
- Goal 7: Build tourism for the people of Brantford first.

Additionally, specific strategies and actions were developed for the Brantford Municipal Airport and the Brantford Farmers' Market to leverage these assets for economic growth.

The Economic Development Strategy (2024-2031) presents a forward-looking roadmap to stimulate economic growth in Brantford, enhance community well-being and pride of place, and solidify Brantford's position as a prosperous, dynamic and business friendly community.

## 5.0 Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this report is to bring forward the City of Brantford Economic Development Strategy (2024-2031) (the "Strategy") for Council review and approval. The report outlines the process followed which assisted in the completion of the Strategy, including community consultation and an overview of the goals related to the City of Brantford as a whole as well as specifically the Brantford Municipal Airport and the Brantford Farmers' Market. The report also includes: the final Economic Development Strategy (2024-2031) document (**Appendix A**), which includes all of the 65 strategic actions; a Community Profile (**Appendix B**), which is used for business attraction efforts and is a "living document" that is updated regularly by staff; a Situational Analysis (**Appendix C**) and Retail Market Assessment (**Appendix D**), which are data driven documents used to inform the final recommendations in the Strategy, and lastly, the final report card (**Appendix E**) related to the previous Strategy.

## 6.0 Background

The most recent Economic Development Strategy was completed in November 2016, which along with the Economic Recovery Action Plan (2020), was the guiding document for the City's economic development, tourism and cultural undertakings corporately. The 2016 Strategy had 101 Strategic Actions, with the implementation of these actions integrated into employee work plans and special projects over the last seven (7) years. Along with these recommendations, in June 2020, the City of Brantford adopted the Economic Recovery Action Plan. The Economic Recovery Action Plan was completed through the Mayor's Economic Recovery Task Force, and was led by the Task Force until November 2022. The Task Force has since been disbanded and the Economic Development, Tourism and Cultural Initiatives Department became responsible for the ongoing implementation of the Action Plan.

An RFP was issued and was awarded to McSweeney and Associates in late 2022. As anticipated, the project commenced in January 2023 and took

approximately 15 months to complete. The updated Strategy is meant to reflect both the current state and future direction of the City's economic development efforts based upon a comprehensive review of existing corporate policies and plans in concert with a current competitive analysis and community consultation process. The resulting strategy will provide clear strategic directions and the associated resources required to implement the initiatives outlined for the entirety of the strategy's life cycle. The delay in presenting this final draft of the Strategy was a result of staffing changes and project reprioritization in the Department. The Department is structured with focus in four key areas, they are as follows:

- Sanderson Centre for the Performing Arts
- Economic Development and Business Resource Centre
- Tourism, Culture and Sport (Discover Brantford)
- Real Estate Services (Airport and Farmer's Market)

The Sanderson Centre is a grand part of the Department, but purposely not included in the Strategy since the Business Plan was previously taken separately to Council in 2019.

Between January 2023 and March 2024, McSweeney & Associates completed the following project deliverables, which will be discussed in greater detail in Section 9 of this Report:

1. An updated community profile based on historical, current and future demographic and socio-economic trends;
2. A comprehensive competitive analysis of Brantford's economy and sub-economies including sectoral/industrial trends, growth sectors and composition as well as key economic drivers;
3. An updated Economic Development Strategy created through an inclusive and collaborative process aligned with current corporate strategies and founded on economic development best practices;
4. An examination and pertinent recommendations to address the municipality's shortfall of shovel-ready employment lands;
5. An examination of the municipality's role in sustainable economic development to foster economic growth while preserving the quality of the environment for future generations;
6. An examination of the municipality's role in labour force development and recommendations on creative solutions to address the nation-wide labour crisis;
7. A review of the Economic Development, Tourism and Cultural

Initiatives Department's service delivery model and applicable recommendations moving forward with strategy deployment and implementation; and

8. An examination on the roles/actions of City Council in the economic development context and in supporting the strategy moving forward.

Upon review of the 2016 Economic Development Strategy, McSweeney & Associates recommended that 63 of the strategic actions are still relevant and should be either incorporated into new actions or are already incorporated into Department staff work plans. The wording of these ongoing actions has been updated to reflect that many of these initiatives are already underway. Two strategic actions from 2016 were discontinued because they were either completed or no longer relevant. A report card outlining the status of the former Economic Development Strategy is included as **Appendix E**.

Previous Department annual reports outline the progress that has been made by the City as a whole on the now expired Economic Development Strategy and Department initiatives that have been achieved since the Strategy's approval, including:

- 2020: [2020 Year End Economic Update \(2021-300\)](#) and [2020 Economic Development and Tourism Department Year in Review](#).
- 2021: [2021 Economic Development and Tourism Department Year-in-Review \(2022-283\)](#) and [2021 Economic Development and Tourism Department Year in Review](#).
- 2022: [2022 Economic Development, Tourism and Cultural Initiatives Year in Review \(2023-28\)](#) and [2022 Economic Development, Tourism and Cultural Initiatives Department Year in Review](#).
- 2023: [2023 Economic Development, Tourism and Cultural Initiatives Year in Review \(2024-72\)](#) and [2023 Economic Development, Tourism and Cultural Initiatives Department Year in Review](#).

The Economic Recovery Action Plan (2020) has also guided the Economic Development, Tourism and Cultural Initiatives Department staff work plans since the Economic Recovery Task Force disbanded. These actions continue to guide staff work plans where relevant; as many sectors are still experiencing the residual impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. All actions in the Plan were reviewed and informed the Goals and Actions outlined in the updated Economic Development Strategy.

## 6.1 Public Consultation

This project involved direct consultation with staff, Council, and Brantford's economic development stakeholders in the form of one-on-one interviews, focus groups, online surveys, onsite surveying, a Let's Talk Brantford campaign and a Strategic Working Session.

The following public consultation was completed in order to gather economic development stakeholder and public input into the Strategy:

- Brantford Municipal Airport Visioning Session with the Brantford Airport Board (February 2023).
- Direct email to 120 key Airport stakeholders to complete Airport-specific survey.
- Direct emails to over 500 stakeholders to complete Economic Development Strategy survey.
- Public, online "Let's Talk Brantford" engagement campaign (920 aware, 598 informed and 141 engaged).
- Onsite engagement with in-person surveying at the Brantford Farmers' Market (June 2023).
- 35 one-on-one interviews (January-April 2023).
- 53 focus group attendees (May 2023).
- Strategic Working Session at the Rope Factory Event Hall with 79 attendees (June 2023).
- Final presentations of Goals and Actions to Brantford Airport Board via report 2023-522 (September 2023).
- Final presentations of Goals and Actions to Brantford Farmers' Market Vendors Association (September 2023).
- Final presentations of Economic Development Strategy to Economic Development, Tourism and Cultural Initiatives Advisory Committee via reports 2023-578 and 2023-696 (October to November 2023).

## 7.0 Corporate Policy Context

The Economic Development Strategy aligns with the following Council Priorities:

- Focus on productive and collaborative partnerships;
- Create a vision and strategy for managing development and affordable housing;
- Effectively and consistently engage with the community; and
- Commit to and implement the downtown revitalization plan and vision.

A comprehensive review of Council-approved City strategic plans was conducted by the consultants in advance of any consultation or drafting of recommendations.

## 8.0 Input From Other Sources

The completion of the Economic Development Strategy (2024-2031) involved the participation of many individuals and groups, including the Economic Development, Tourism and Cultural Initiatives Advisory Committee, City staff, City Council, industry partners and citizens. McSweeney & Associates Ltd. was retained to complete the Strategy. Public consultation was also a component of the project, and included visioning sessions, direct emails to request survey participation, onsite surveying, a Let's Talk Brantford engagement campaign, one-on-one interviews, focus groups and a Strategic Working Session.

The Senior Leadership Team approved the Strategy on October 17, 2023. The final Strategy was reviewed and supported by the Economic Development, Tourism and Cultural Initiatives Advisory Committee via reports 2023-578 and 2023-696. On November 27, 2024, staff presented the final draft (Report 2024-696) of the Strategy to the Committee. The Committee is in full support of the Strategy and approved it unanimously.

## 9.0 Analysis

As previously described, this project involved a number of key deliverables, which has resulted in four (4) separate reports that all contribute to the complete Economic Development Strategy (2024-2031). A report card that summarizes work completed to date on the previous Economic Development Strategy (2016) is also included as **Appendix E**.

## 9.1 City of Brantford Economic Development Strategy (2024-2031)

The key deliverable of this project is the City of Brantford Economic Development Strategy (2024-2031) (**Appendix A**), which identifies seven (7) areas of focus and 65 actions and sub-actions. The Strategy will provide direction for the City to continue to enhance and grow its successful economic development program, and will form the basis for staff work plans.

The Strategy provides the City with a recommended framework for continuing and enhancing its successful economic development program. Based on their findings, McSweeney & Associates identified the following seven areas of focus, which have been endorsed by the Economic Development, Tourism and Cultural Initiatives Advisory Committee:

- Goal 1: Transform downtown into a “destination” that residents are proud of.
- Goal 2: Be investment ready and business friendly by creating a business-first climate.
- Goal 3: Integrate economic development (including small business), real estate and tourism with critical City initiatives, including transit and active transportation planning.
- Goal 4: Recognize the Creative Industries sector as a significant economic and social pillar for the economy.
- Goal 5: Work with the local post-secondary institutions to provide more employment opportunities to support local business.
- Goal 6: Improve partnerships to build a more cohesive business community.
- Goal 7: Build tourism for the people of Brantford first.

In total, McSweeney & Associates identified 65 strategic actions and sub-actions as a result of their analysis. These individual strategic actions are included in **Appendix A**. This is quite a large number, especially combined with new actions related to the Airport (9.1.1) and Market (9.1.2), and the existing *Municipal Sport Tourism Strategy* (2019), the



*Museum Sustainability Plan (2020) and Municipal Cultural Plan (2014).* Many of the ongoing actions are already part of the core work plans of Department staff.

### **9.1.1 Brantford Municipal Airport Actions**

As part of the broader Strategy, a visioning process was undertaken regarding the Brantford Municipal Airport to assess how to best utilize and leverage this asset. Specific one-on-one interviews and a visioning session was held with the Brantford Airport Board, and questions related to the Airport were included in all public surveys, consultations and events in order to understand public perception.

The Brantford Airport Board approved the following vision and mission statements for the Airport, alongside four (4) goals and sixteen (16) attainable actions that are further outlined in **Appendix A:**

- Vision: To be recognized as the premier destination in Ontario for small private, corporate and commercial aircraft services.
- Mission: The Brantford Municipal Airport provides private, corporate and emergency service users with a one-stop hub for small aircraft aviation services, amenities and flight training.
- Core Values:
  - We strive to ensure the safety and security of Airport users, employees and customers.
  - We are dedicated to responsibly overseeing the management of the Airport to promote environmental and community well-being.
  - We contribute to the economic growth of the region through technological innovation in aviation.
  - Our energy, passion and enthusiasm in all aspects of aviation sets us apart from other airports.

- Goal 1: Explore potential partnerships to develop a shared vision and business model for an Aviation Business Park.
- Goal 2: Partner with local institutions and flight training schools to deliver aviation training programs at the Brantford Municipal Airport.
- Goal 3: Grow existing and attract new revenue sources.
- Goal 4: Build public awareness of the Airport.

In conjunction with this goal, Council has provided direction to Staff to assess the business case for an Airport Municipal Service Corporation. That work is currently being undertaken by Staff and the City's consultant wherein a detailed analysis will be prepared and presented to Council in Q2 or Q3 of 2025.

### **9.1.2 Brantford Farmers' Market Actions**

Also included in the wider Strategy was a visioning session for the Farmers' Market, conducted in a similar format as the abovementioned Airport. Farmers' Market vendors attended a visioning session, themes around the Farmers' Market were included in wider consultation, and public feedback on the Market was collected onsite during business hours.

The Vendors reviewed the following vision and mission statements for the Market, alongside four (4) goals and twenty three (23) attainable actions that are also further outlined in Appendix A:

- Vision: The Brantford Farmers' Market is a top destination of choice for residents and visitors to meet, shop and experience the world through a diverse array of vendors and products.
- Mission: The Brantford Farmers' Market is a meeting place for the community to find local, fresh award-winning products in a lively, enticing environment.
- Goal 1: Update operational responsibilities for the market and build relationships with vendors.
- Goal 2: Develop a Vendor Recruitment Strategy.

- Goal 3: Generate more awareness of the market.
- Goal 4: Create New Experiences for Customers.

## **9.2 Community Overview**

The Community Overview (**Appendix B**) was completed in December 2023 and provides a current understanding of the area's economic base and the various municipal assets that support the City's economic development efforts. This is not a marketing document, but can be shared with potential investors who are considering relocation or expansion and are seeking more detailed community information. The Community Profile is a "living document" and is regularly updated by staff in order to keep the information as current as possible.

## **9.3 Situational Analysis**

The Situational Analysis (**Appendix C**) is the competitive analysis of Brantford's economy that identifies trends occurring within sectors/industries. It includes demographic, labour force and economic base analyses. The situational analysis provides the background and framework for the recommendations and resources identified in the strategic actions of the Strategy.

## **9.4 Retail Market Assessment**

The Retail Market Assessment (**Appendix D**) profiles Brantford's retail trade sector from a supply-side and includes a shift share analysis to understand local impacts on the sector. It also includes a demand assessment, including spending patterns and how demographics impact the sector. Included as well are an analysis of trends within the sector along with national-level industry data. When attracting new retail businesses to Brantford, this report will can be provided to potential investors to assist them in determining what types of retail businesses have the highest probability of success in our community, and will also help current stakeholders better adapt to shifting trends in the retail market.

## **9.5 Implementation**

Once approved by Council, staff will work with McSweeney & Associates, the Economic Development, Tourism and Cultural Initiatives Advisory Committee and community partners to develop the Economic

Development Strategy (2024-2031) Implementation Plan. The Implementation Plan will outline all 65 proposed strategic actions, and will identify the Lead, Support, Estimated Resources, Progress Measures and Timing/Priority Level of each action.

The Implementation Plan will be a supporting document that lays on the approximate level of effort, however it is not prescriptive and is intentionally flexible enough to accommodate changes in the economy and community if needed.

### **9.5.1 The Annual Reporting and Key Performance Indicators**

The development of the Economic Development Strategy (2024-2031) required considerable municipal resources and is important to the continued success of the City's economic development program; therefore it is imperative that it be used and implemented as a framework for future activities.

It is the responsibility of the Economic Development, Tourism and Cultural Initiatives Department to monitor the implementation of the strategic actions and communicate with the necessary partners to ensure that the status of all actions is known. Department staff will review the Strategy annually and prepare an annual update or 'report card' monitoring the status of each strategic action, any current activities or measurable results, and future considerations.

## **10.0 Financial Implications**

The total budget for this project was \$120,000, funded through the City's Capital Budget (ED2201). Final invoices are completed, the final project invoice was \$90,993 (which included consulting services, workshop supplies and focus group participant refreshments). This results in a surplus of approximately \$29,007 which has already been redirected back into the Capital Funding Envelope. Staff may require future additional funding to assist in additional costs related to implementation of the Strategy. Once determined, and if required, Staff will bring a future Report to Council in that regard.

## 11.0 Climate and Environmental Implications

The Economic Development Strategy goals and actions will not have a direct climate and environmental impact. However, since these draft recommendations will identify ways to increase access and use to the municipality, as well as facilities such as the Airport and Farmers' Market, this may lead to an increase in community emissions.

Per Report 2022-571 titled, "City of Brantford Net-Zero Building Strategy," that was approved by Council in October 2022, all new Corporate buildings are to be built net-zero or net-zero ready. Net-zero buildings produce as much energy as they consume and will therefore not increase Corporate energy consumption or greenhouse gas emissions.

Any new construction on the Farmers' Market, Airport, or other lands that may be required to implement these goals and actions, will have climate and environmental implications as they will lead to more energy consumption and thus more GHG emissions. Increased capacity or use of the facility will also increase energy consumption and GHG emissions.

## 12.0 Conclusion

The review and update of the City of Brantford's Economic Development Strategy was a comprehensive multi-year long process that engaged a wide variety of economic development, real estate, tourism and culture stakeholders. McSweeney & Associates has conducted a comprehensive review of corporate plans and policies, current data, and community consultation in order to develop a clear and achievable plan to guide Brantford's economic development efforts over the next seven (7) years.

Since the preparation of the final draft of this Strategy, Council has made some important decisions related to economic development. One of much significance has been the approval of the Sport and Entertainment Complex in the Downtown. In conjunction with this Strategy (if approved) staff will continue efforts in addressing further revitalization of the Downtown, including the potential for an downtown entertainment district if approved.

Staff recommends that Council approve the Economic Development Strategy (2024-2031) and that staff proceed with updated work plans for the implementation of the recommended strategic actions.

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Michael Bradley  
Chief Administrative Officer

Prepared By:  
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Attachments:

Appendix A: Economic Development Strategy, 2024-2031

Appendix B: Community Profile

Appendix C: Situational Analysis

Appendix D: Retail Market Assessment

Appendix E: Economic Development Strategy 2016 – Final Report Card

In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the recommendation section.

By-law required  yes  no

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk  yes  no

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council?  yes  no