

**DUFFERIN**

**BUILDS**

**TOGETHER**

**Dufferin County Economic Development  
Strategy and Action Plan**

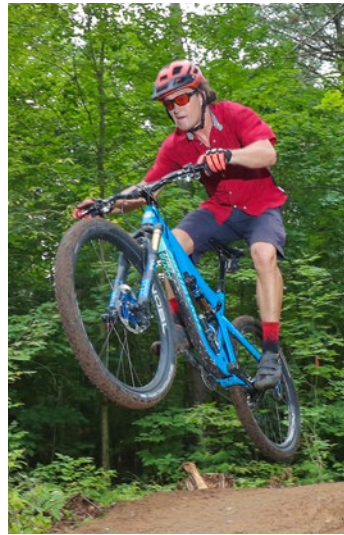
**2025-2030**



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## Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that Dufferin County resides within the traditional territory and ancestral lands of the Tionontati (Petun), Attawandaron (Neutral), Haudenosaunee (Six Nations), and Anishinaabe peoples. We also acknowledge that various municipal within the County of Dufferin reside with the treaty lands named under the Haldimand Deed of 1784 and two of the Williams Treaties of 1818: Treaty 18: the Nottawasaga Purchase, and Treaty 19: The Ajetance Treaty. These traditional territories upon which we live and learn, are steeped in rich indigenous history and traditions. It is with this statement that we declare to honour and respect the past and present connection of indigenous peoples with this land, its waterways and resources.

# A MESSAGE

FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER  
**SONYA PRITCHARD**



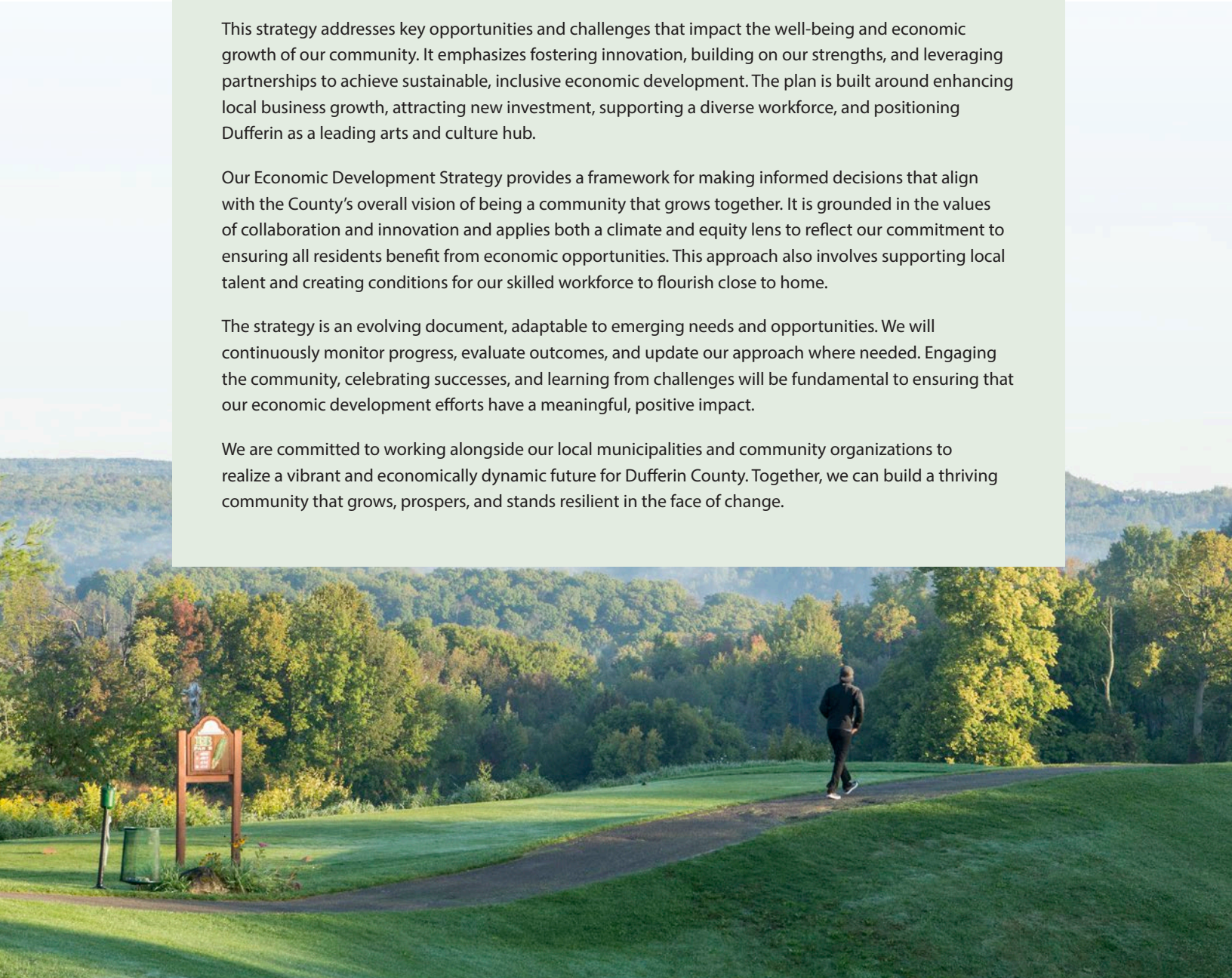
**We are excited to share the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan for Dufferin County. This plan, which is born out of the County's Corporate Strategic Plan represents a collaborative effort involving local municipalities, businesses, and community stakeholders, aiming to shape a prosperous future for our region.**

This strategy addresses key opportunities and challenges that impact the well-being and economic growth of our community. It emphasizes fostering innovation, building on our strengths, and leveraging partnerships to achieve sustainable, inclusive economic development. The plan is built around enhancing local business growth, attracting new investment, supporting a diverse workforce, and positioning Dufferin as a leading arts and culture hub.

Our Economic Development Strategy provides a framework for making informed decisions that align with the County's overall vision of being a community that grows together. It is grounded in the values of collaboration and innovation and applies both a climate and equity lens to reflect our commitment to ensuring all residents benefit from economic opportunities. This approach also involves supporting local talent and creating conditions for our skilled workforce to flourish close to home.

The strategy is an evolving document, adaptable to emerging needs and opportunities. We will continuously monitor progress, evaluate outcomes, and update our approach where needed. Engaging the community, celebrating successes, and learning from challenges will be fundamental to ensuring that our economic development efforts have a meaningful, positive impact.

We are committed to working alongside our local municipalities and community organizations to realize a vibrant and economically dynamic future for Dufferin County. Together, we can build a thriving community that grows, prospers, and stands resilient in the face of change.



# INTRODUCTION

Nestled just 45 minutes north of Toronto, Dufferin County is home to approximately 71,000 people and boasts of picturesque landscapes, vibrant local economy, and charming small towns. Dufferin County is also a growing community. Dufferin's population increased from 61,735 in 2016 to 66,257 in 2021<sup>1</sup>, and is expected to reach 95,000 by 2051<sup>2</sup>.

current  
2024  
population  
**71,400**

population  
projection  
for 2051  
**95,000**

Considering this reality, Dufferin County designed its 2023-2026 Strategic Plan with a forward-looking focus to guide the organization in its efforts to manage and direct this growth. **The Strategy lays out two main goals for an economy that will support a growing and thriving community:**

- 1. Advance County-wide economic and workforce development**
- 2. Improve broadband and cellular connectivity.**

To advance these goals, the County hosted an economic development workshop in November 2023 which was attended by County Councilors, County and local municipal staff, and community stakeholders. This workshop marked the first phase of the development process for the County's Economic Development Strategy. Through this workshop, it was identified that there is a gap in the availability of comprehensive data about Dufferin's unique economic opportunities. The workshop also revealed a lack of consensus on the appropriate direction for the County's economic development efforts. **These two identified challenges helped define the objective behind this economic development strategy:**

*To create a dynamic and inclusive economic development strategy for Dufferin County that harnesses comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data to unlock our unique direction for sustainable growth and prosperity across the County.*

With this objective, the County's Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan will serve as an integral extension of the County's broader Strategic Plan, which emphasizes sustainable growth, enhanced quality of life, and fostering community resilience. As the County continues to grow and evolve, this Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan seeks to harness Dufferin's unique assets while addressing key challenges such as workforce commuting patterns, regional wage disparities, and the need for more localized job opportunities.

By aligning with the County's Strategic Plan, the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan aims to promote a thriving local economy by fostering business growth and expansion, upskilling local workforce, investment attraction, local innovation, and destination development. It is guided by the principles of sustainability, inclusivity, and economic resilience, ensuring that Dufferin remains a vibrant, competitive, and welcoming community for residents, businesses, and investors alike. Through collaboration between public and private stakeholders, Dufferin County is committed to advancing its economic potential while preserving the natural qualities that make the County a unique place to live and work.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed June 6, 2024)

<sup>2</sup> Estimated in the County of Dufferin Official Plan (2024)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The creation of the Economic Development and Action Plan relied on input received from Dufferin residents, businesses, and community stakeholders during our extensive public engagement process. Dufferin County would like to especially acknowledge several individuals and organizations for their contributions to the development of this Strategy and Action Plan:

- Paul Knafelc *Community Benchmarks | Prof. at University of Waterloo*
- Brock Dickenson *Adjunct Prof. at University of Waterloo*
- Erik Lockhart *Lockhart Facilitation Inc. | Queens University*
- Diana Morris *Executive Director, Dufferin Board of Trade*
- Jennifer Payne *Executive Director, Headwaters Communities In Action*
- Katrina Lemire *Manager, Economic Development & Culture, Town of Orangeville*
- Carol Maitland *Economic Development Officer, Town of Shelburne*



# COMMUNITY PROFILE

Dufferin County is a dynamic, rural region in southern Ontario with a growing population and a diverse economy. Encompassing the local municipalities of Orangeville, Shelburne, Mono, Melancthon, Mulmur, Amaranth, East Garafraxa, and Grand Valley, Dufferin County blends a rich agricultural heritage with emerging sectors in manufacturing, construction, and tourism. Strategically located near the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), Dufferin offers both opportunities and challenges as it navigates growth, urbanization pressure, and economic diversification.

According to the 2021 Census, Dufferin County has a population of approximately 66,257 people, reflecting a 7.3% growth from the 2016 Census<sup>3</sup>. This population increase is largely attributed to families and individuals relocating from urban centers to take advantage of the more affordable housing and rural lifestyle. Dufferin's median age is 40.4 years<sup>4</sup>, indicating a relatively balanced age distribution. However, there is a growing aging population that will influence healthcare and housing demands in the future.

The County has a participation rate of 69.3%, slightly above the national average of 63.7%, with a median income of \$45,200 per year, compared to the national median of \$41,200<sup>5</sup>. A significant proportion of Dufferin's labour force with a regular place of work –51.4%– commutes out of the County for work, primarily to Peel Region (Brampton, Mississauga), Halton, and the GTA<sup>6</sup>. This commuter trend poses challenges in terms of local job creation and retaining skilled workers, especially as wages in these urban areas tend to be higher than in Dufferin itself.

## Key Economic Sectors

### Agriculture

Agriculture is a cornerstone of Dufferin County's economy, with nearly 50% of the County's land dedicated to farming. According to the 2021 Census of Agriculture, Dufferin has nearly 700 farms producing a variety of goods. Key activities include cash crops such as corn, soybeans, and wheat, as well as livestock farming. Agriculture in Dufferin generated \$195 million in gross farm receipts in 2021<sup>7</sup>, a significant contribution to the local economy. The sector faces pressures from urban sprawl, labour shortages, and climate change. However, opportunities lie in the growing local food movement and agri-tourism, with many farms diversifying their operations to offer direct-to-consumer sales and experiences.

### Manufacturing

The manufacturing sector in Dufferin County has long been a key economic driver, particularly in Orangeville and Shelburne. According to 2021 data from Statistics Canada, 12% of Dufferin's workforce is employed in manufacturing, with industries focusing on transportation equipment, food processing, and plastics fabrication<sup>8</sup>. Wage differences between manufacturing jobs in Dufferin and nearby Peel Region, coupled with increasing housing cost, has led to challenges in retaining local talent, particularly among skilled trades workers who may commute to higher-paying jobs in the GTA.

Labour force that commutes  
out of the County

51.4%

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed June 6, 2024)

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed June 6, 2024)

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation).

<sup>7</sup> OMAFRA 2021 County Profiles. Released June 6, 2024. <https://data.ontario.ca/dataset/ontario-farm-cash-receipts-by-county-and-crop>

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed June 6, 2024)

# COMMUNITY PROFILE

## Construction

Construction has emerged as a booming sector, driven by both population growth and demand for housing. Dufferin's proximity to urban centers like the GTA has made it a popular choice for those seeking more affordable housing, resulting in a surge of residential developments. According to Statistics Canada's 2021 Census, construction employs about 11% of Dufferin's workforce<sup>9</sup>. In 2023, the County saw \$143 million in total value of building permits issued, reflecting robust activity in both residential and commercial developments<sup>10</sup>.

## Retail and Services

Dufferin's retail sector is concentrated in its urban centres – Orangeville and Shelburne, which serves as the County's commercial hub. In 2021, retail trade accounted for 12% of total employment in Dufferin, according to Statistics Canada<sup>11</sup>. A combination of large chain stores and small, independent businesses contributes to a diverse retail landscape. Additionally, services such as healthcare, education, and hospitality form an essential part of the economy, especially as the population grows and ages.

## Tourism

Dufferin County is building a reputation as a tourism destination with unique arts and culture experiences. The County's natural beauty, including the Bruce Trail, Rail Trail, and Mono Cliffs Provincial Park, along with its cultural assets like the Museum of Dufferin, attract both local and international visitors. Downtown Orangeville, Downtown Shelburne, and Grand Valley serve as urban hubs connecting visitors to culinary offerings and array of amenities. According to Statistics Canada, 8% of the workforce is employed in accommodation, food services, and tourism-related sectors.

## Challenges and Barriers to Population Growth

### Urbanization Pressure

As one of the fastest-growing regions in Ontario, Dufferin County faces increasing pressure from urbanization, especially within its rural townships. The demand for residential developments is pushing up land values, threatening agricultural lands, and

changing the County's rural character. Through this Strategy and other concurring efforts, the County must balance growth with the preservation of its agricultural base and natural landscapes.

### Labour Shortages

Despite an increasing population, Dufferin County struggles with labour shortages, particularly in sectors like healthcare, agriculture, and skilled trades. Dufferin's participation rate (69.3%) is healthy, but job vacancy rates, especially in agriculture and manufacturing, are high. Many businesses report difficulty in recruiting and retaining employees, especially when competing with higher wages and more job opportunities in nearby urban centers.

### Commuting Patterns and Wage Disparities

As of 2021, a significant portion of Dufferin's labour force commuted outside the County for work. This commuter trend is likely a result of wage disparities, with workers in the GTA earning significantly more than those employed locally. Addressing the economic implications of these disparities is a major priority in this economic development strategy and action plan. It is also important to recognize the climate implications of this trend. Dufferin's Climate Action Plan identifies transportation as the leading contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the County (49%)<sup>12</sup>.

### Infrastructure Development

Investment in infrastructure, including water supply, wastewater management, transportation and digital connectivity, is crucial to Dufferin's economic future. With limited public transit options, the County should look to improve its transportation networks to better connect its rural areas and ease access for workers who are commuting from the GTA. As the County looks to improve its transportation networks, investing in climate adaptation and mitigation infrastructure such as electric vehicle (EV) charging stations (particularly in rural areas and tourism attractions) will also support residents who commute from the GTA, and contribute to reducing transportation-related emissions<sup>13</sup>. Broadband expansion is also a key initiative to attract businesses and improve quality of life for residents in more remote parts of the County.

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed June 6, 2024)

<sup>10</sup> Dufferin County Building Division. 2024.

<sup>11</sup> Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population.

<sup>12</sup> Dufferin Climate Action Plan (2021)

<sup>13</sup> Dufferin Climate Action Plan (2021)

# COMMUNITY PROFILE

## Housing

The average price of homes in Dufferin is estimated to be about a million dollars. With current mortgage rates, only 14% of Dufferin households would be able to afford homes at these prices<sup>14</sup>. This does not include energy costs which remain a significant cost for many households. Due to the reliance on independent fuel sources in rural areas, Dufferin has a disproportionately high number of households facing energy poverty. This reality eliminates a majority of Dufferin's workers from the prospect of home ownership in Dufferin, driving them further away to more affordable areas. This has presented challenges in talent attraction and retention in key industries. Dufferin's housing challenge presents an inescapable barrier to the long-term growth and vitality of local businesses.

## Economic Diversification and Emerging Opportunities

### Construction Innovation

Recent investments in other municipalities from federal and provincial governments towards skilled trades training and innovation in housing construction presents an opportunity to address several of Dufferin's barriers to growth. Exploring the creation of a skilled trades training facility in Dufferin focused on the production of modular homes would upskill local talent, spur innovation, and address local housing shortages, while providing new jobs in construction and skilled trades.

## Local Job Creation and Retention

Dufferin County faces a unique challenge in retaining its labour force, with about half of its working population commuting outside the region for work. To address this, the County should leverage its proximity to the GTA and develop investment attraction initiatives to attract more businesses in target sectors and create local employment opportunities.

## Technological Innovation and Green Economy

There are tangible environmental and economic benefits to exploring opportunities in the green economy and technology sectors. There is potential for investment in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and green building practices through collaborative efforts with the County's Climate and Energy Division. Expanding broadband access in rural areas should also be a key priority, as digital infrastructure is essential for supporting business growth and attracting tech-based companies.

## Sustainability in Agriculture

Local farmers are increasingly adopting sustainable practices, such as regenerative agriculture which positions farmland to act as carbon sinks and aligns with the County's climate targets. These practices not only improve crop yields but also support long-term environmental stewardship. There is an opportunity to spur a new generation of farmers in Dufferin by introducing more young people to these sustainable practices and creating more opportunities to support farming as a career.

*Dufferin County is at a critical juncture in its economic development journey. With a growing population, a thriving agricultural sector, and expanding opportunities in construction, manufacturing, and tourism, the County is well-positioned for continued growth. However, challenges such as urbanization pressure, labour shortages, and commuting patterns require strategic planning and investment. By focusing on job creation, sustainability, and infrastructure improvements, this Strategy aims to position Dufferin as a resilient and diverse economy while maintaining its unique rural character. With targeted initiatives to attract new industries and retain talent, Dufferin is set to become a more self-sustaining and prosperous region in the coming decades.*

<sup>14</sup> Estimates based on Statistics Canada data and internal analysis of the 2023 housing and real estate market in Dufferin.



# DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

Inclusivity is a fundamental principle that underpinned the roadmap to developing this Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan. This *bottom-up* approach brought together diverse perspectives, fostered community engagement, and ensured the incorporation of comprehensive data and analysis.

This Strategy was developed over three main phases:

1. Education and planning
2. Public engagement and data analysis
3. Plan approval



## Phase 1 – Education and Planning

It was important to start this collaborative strategy development process by first establishing a general understanding of the importance of an economic ecosystem. This would be done through an intensive economic development learning process led by some of the leading minds in modern economic development. In November 2023, the County hosted a two-day economic development workshop to kickstart this learning process. The workshop was attended by County Councilors, County and local municipal staff, and community stakeholders.

Brock Dickinson, adjunct professor at the University of Waterloo, was joined by Paul Knafelc of Community Benchmarks and Erik Lockhart of Lockhart Facilitation Inc. to lead and facilitate this workshop. The topics discussed at the workshop included:

- **Overview of Economic Ecosystem:** Understanding what constitutes an economic ecosystem.
- **Economic Development from a Practitioner’s Perspective:** Insight into what economic development entails from a practical viewpoint.
- **Data and Statistics Presentation:** Using data and statistics to outline Dufferin County’s current economic ecosystem, identifying its challenges, opportunities, and emerging trends.

In addition, there was a collaborative consultation process that involved presenters guiding senior leaders in attendance to identify 3 to 5 strategic economic challenges or opportunities. This also involved brainstorming sessions, creating lists, and prioritizing these challenges/opportunities through a facilitated democratic process.

Through this workshop, it was identified that there is a gap in the availability of comprehensive municipal-level data that defines Dufferin’s unique economic opportunities. The workshop also revealed a lack of consensus on the appropriate direction for the County’s economic development efforts. These revelations informed the direction of the next phase of the strategy development process.

## DEVELOPING THE **STRATEGY**

### Phase 2 – Public Engagement and Data Analysis

The second phase of this process involved municipal and stakeholder engagement, coupled with quantitative data research and analysis. The main objective for this phase was to leverage the knowledge gained from the learning sessions and data research, and engage community leaders in the identification of economic development priorities based on identified challenges and opportunities in the local communities. From January through March 2024, County economic development staff liaised with local municipal staff to determine how and when these priorities would be developed by each municipality. Through this process, each municipality developed its own unique approach for developing their economic development priorities, with varying levels of support from County staff.

By April 2024, the roadmap was set for soliciting community sentiments through a myriad of avenues. These included municipal workshops, guided discussions at local Council meetings, and brainstorming sessions by local economic development committees. In addition to these, the County partnered with the Dufferin Board of Trade (DBOT), and Headwaters Communities In Action (HCIA) to facilitate a series of workshops that targeted specific municipalities, key industries, businesses and community groups. The series, which was dubbed the Community Insights Workshop Series, ran from April through July 2024 and anchored the public engagement phase of the strategy development process.

The Community Insights Workshop Series was highlighted by the data insights that were presented. Through consultation with Community Benchmarks, a premier data consulting company based in Pelham, Ontario, relevant quantitative data was unearthed and presented at the workshops. The data informed the discussions and priorities that were generated. This approach helped decentralize the economic development learning process from Phase 1, and facilitated a collective understanding of modern economic development practice, leading to the identification of local challenges and opportunities.

Acquiring both qualitative and quantitative data during this second phase was crucial for building the Strategy. Each type of data provided unique insights that complemented one another. The quantitative data, acquired through consultation with Community Benchmarks, offered measurable, objective metrics—such as employment rates, income levels, and commuting patterns—that revealed trends and opportunities at a macro level. However, the qualitative data, derived from the Workshop Series and other municipally determined avenues, captured the subjective experiences, opinions, and needs of local industry and communities, adding pertinent local context to the numbers. Together, these data types ensured a well-rounded understanding of Dufferin’s economic landscape, enabling an informed, nuanced analysis that addresses both statistical realities and community perspectives.

### Phase 3 – Plan Approval

The third phase involved creating and presenting the draft Municipal Economic Development Action Plans and the Dufferin County Economic Development Action Plans to the Community Development and Tourism Committee, the respective local municipal Councils, and the general public for comments and feedback. Each body was given appropriate time to review, provide feedback, and endorse the Strategy and Action Plans. By involving a diverse range of stakeholders through each phase, including upper and lower-tier municipalities, local industry, not-for-profit organizations, and residents, a broader and more representative perspective was achieved. This phase was completed in November 2024.

The next phase of this Strategy and Action Plan will involve annual status update reports to County Council. The reports will cover the progress made on the identified actions, challenges encountered, and any adjustments made to the plan. This annual check-in and reaffirming process will ensure that the Strategy remains dynamic and responsive to the evolving economic landscape and community needs. It also promotes transparency, accountability, and adaptability in the implementation of the action plan. This approach will ensure that the initiatives that are developed by the County from this Strategy and Action Plan are resilient, relevant, and in line with the unique aspirations and needs of the local communities and municipalities.

# ENGAGEMENT

## Community Insights Workshop Series

The public engagement phase of the strategy development process was anchored by the Community Insights Workshop Series, an initiative designed to equip a diverse range of stakeholders with the knowledge and tools necessary to foster economic development within their communities.

*The Workshop Series had the additional objective of facilitating the gathering of important community feedback and economic development priorities to inform the direction and goals of the County's Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan.*

Inclusivity, as a fundamental principle of this Strategy, was brought to life through the Community Insights Workshop Series. This public engagement initiative was made up of a series of workshops across the County where stakeholders and community members collaboratively explored the transformative potential of data-driven approaches in shaping community prosperity. As part of this collaborative approach, the County partnered with local municipalities and two key community organizations (the Dufferin Board of Trade (DBoT) and Headwaters Communities In Action (HCIA) to develop content and to facilitate the execution of the Workshop Series.

**There were three main categories that characterized these workshops:**

- 
1. Industry
  2. Municipal
  3. General Public
- 

### Target Industry Workshops

The industry workshops targeted the agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, and real estate industries by leveraging existing connections with industry groups and County-facilitated roundtables. The County also partnered with the economic development departments at the Town of Orangeville and the Town of Shelburne to facilitate these workshops. (Engagement Level: Involve)

### Municipal Workshops

The municipal workshops were facilitated in conjunction with local municipalities who have chosen to partner with the County to develop their economic development priorities. (Engagement Level: Collaborate)

### General Workshops

These workshops strategically targeted stakeholders and community members whose voices were not heard during the industry and municipal workshops. (Engagement Level: Involve)

The workshops enabled participants to not only gain a deeper understanding of the economic dynamics within their local communities, but also acquire the skills to bridge the gap between data analysis and actionable goals. By harnessing the power of data and inclusive community engagement, the Community Insights Workshop Series laid the foundations for a resilient, innovative, and thriving County that is poised for long-term success. Overall, the discussions around the content and data insights provided valuable local context for the in-depth analysis that the Strategy will seek provide.



## Summary of Community Sentiments

### Industry Workshops

#### AGRICULTURE

##### Vision Statement

To cultivate a thriving and sustainable agricultural community in Dufferin County where local food is produced, consumed, and celebrated, farmers can make a living, and holistic, regenerative systems are integrated. With cutting-edge technology, high-speed internet, and supportive infrastructure, we empower our farmers while ensuring the population is well-educated in agriculture. Our policies protect farmland from development pressures, maintaining Dufferin as an affordable and vibrant place for farmers to live and work and for agriculture as an industry to thrive and grow.

##### Agricultural Sector Assets:

###### 1. Human Capital

- Experienced farmers with deep local knowledge
- Passionate local farmers
- New farming enthusiasts
- Strong farm advocacy groups such as NFU, EFAO, HFFA, etc.
- Collaborative and connected community

###### 2. Natural Resources:

- Great soils and water
- Unique climate and soil
- Varied topography and biodiversity

###### 3. Agricultural Promotion and Education:

- Dufferin Farm Tour
- Educational branches for farming science and technologies (DFA, NFU, EFAO, HFFA, etc.)

##### Top Priorities for Agricultural Sector

1. Create a **thriving local economy** where people can afford locally-produced foods.
2. Policy changes to **protect farmland**. This should include changes to government regulations on food processing for poultry and grains.
3. Embark on a **public education and awareness** campaign with the goal of increasing support and patronage of local produce.

### Industry Workshops

#### TOURISM

##### Vision Statement

To establish Dufferin County as a key, accessible, and thriving tourism destination where diverse natural assets, arts, food, and people are seamlessly integrated. By fostering strong connections between tourism businesses and local communities, we aim to create a financially self-sustaining destination that attracts consistent, year-round visitors. Our tourism industry will balance environmental sustainability with economic growth, driving business development and ensuring longer, enriching stays for all visitors.

##### Tourism Sector Assets:

###### 1. Location and Accessibility:

- Proximity to Greater Toronto Area
- Major highways (Highway 10, Airport Road, Highway 89, Highway 50, Highway 9, Highway 124 etc.)
- Accessible region and tourism assets via major roadways

###### 2. Natural, Recreational, and Agricultural Resources:

- Open green spaces
- Trails
- Parks and amenities
- Picturesque scenery and landscape
- Farmgates, equine and experiential farms

###### 3. Cultural and Creative Assets:

- Art community (theatre production, art galleries, etc.)
- Creative, welcoming business owners
- Orangeville's food and restaurant cluster

# ENGAGEMENT

Community Insights Workshop Series

## 4. Accommodation and Hospitality:

- Hotels
- BnBs outside major towns
- Clean look and feel

## 5. Sports and Recreation:

- Sports teams and facilities (arenas, pools, etc.) attracting visitors from outside the County

### Top Priorities

- 1. Asset Development and Enhancement:** Expand and maintain key tourism assets like accessible parks, public art, and the Rail Trail. Promote tourism sub-sectors such as cycling and farm experiences to encourage longer visitor stays.
- 2. Connectivity and Collaboration:** Improve connections between businesses, rural and urban areas, and stakeholders. Utilize technology and data to enhance marketing, create accessible itineraries, and streamline visitor experiences.
- 3. Support for Local Businesses and Infrastructure:** Provide targeted support to small businesses, particularly in accommodation and the filming industry. Encourage diverse lodging options and promote the County as a filming destination.

## Industry Workshops

### REAL ESTATE

#### Vision Statement

To create inclusive, complete communities in Dufferin County where residents can live, learn, work, play, and shop locally. We envision a diverse range of affordable, shovel-ready real estate that supports balanced growth across commercial, residential, and industrial sectors. By planning proactively for the next 10 years and beyond, streamlining processes, and fostering a welcoming mindset, we will meet the evolving needs of new and existing residents while ensuring a sustainable and vibrant future.

#### Real Estate Sector Assets

##### 1. Quality of Life:

- Small community feel
- Lower crime rates than major urban centers
- Better homes for lower prices

## 2. Location and Proximity:

- Dufferin as the next frontier due to proximity to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and neighboring municipalities

## 3. Infrastructure Access:

- Access to urban infrastructure, including wastewater plants for Orangeville and Shelburne

### Top Priorities

- 1. Infrastructure Development:** Focus on enhancing essential infrastructure, including schools, roads, water, and sewer systems, with special attention to sensitive aquifers.
- 2. County-wide Collaboration:** Promote County-wide decision-making in planning policies and infrastructure development, especially regarding water and sewer systems, to achieve economies of scale.
- 3. Community-Driven Vision:** Align decision-makers with the vision of creating complete communities in Dufferin County, ensuring that resources are allocated to support living, working, and playing locally without the need for commuting.

## Municipal Workshops

### TOWNSHIP OF AMARANTH

#### Vision Statement

To cultivate a vibrant, family-oriented community in Amaranth where natural resources are protected, agriculture thrives, and residents take pride in their sense of place. We envision robust recreational opportunities, a growing industrial and commercial sector, and a thriving downtown core that serves as a hub for local residents and businesses. By prioritizing fiscal sustainability, active transportation, balanced housing, and community education on agriculture and environmental stewardship, Amaranth will be a well-connected and informed community ready for the future.

#### Township of Amaranth Assets:

##### 1. Agriculture and Food Production:

- Agricultural sector
- Dufferin County Culinary Collective connecting food producers with restaurants

##### 2. Governance and Strategic Planning:

- New Strategic Plan
- Growth in attendance at council meetings

# ENGAGEMENT Community Insights Workshop Series

### 3. Recreation and Community Engagement:

- Local Parks and Recreation Committees
- Uptake on Rail Trail

### 4. Natural Resources and Environmental Stewardship:

- Natural resources and biodiversity
- Environmentally friendly farm practices
- Rural water quality programs

#### Top Priorities

**1. Intentional Growth and Development:** Foster collaboration through working groups with multi-sector representation, including businesses, citizens, and the local community, to guide thoughtful growth and development.

**2. Public Education on Agriculture:** Enhance public understanding of agricultural practices to promote coexistence and reduce conflicts, utilizing diverse communication methods beyond the internet.

**3. Strengthening Partnerships:** Build strong partnerships with neighboring municipalities, the County, and organizations like the Dufferin Federation of Agriculture to support shared goals and initiatives.

## Municipal Workshops

### TOWN OF MONO

#### Vision Statement

To preserve Mono's natural environment while fostering a thriving, connected community. We envision gentle, low-impact development that supports home-based businesses and limited commercial growth. As a sought-after recreational destination, Mono will attract visitors who contribute to the local economy with minimal impact on our infrastructure and environment.

#### Town of Mono Assets:

##### 1. Infrastructure and Connectivity:

- New high-speed internet
- Location: Highways and proximity to major urban areas

##### 2. Natural and Protected Lands:

- Public accessible lands (natural)
- Niagara Escarpment (attracts visitors, provides growth controls under environmentally protected lands, and natural beauty)

##### 3. Healthcare and Services:

- Close to a good hospital

### 4. Leadership and Governance:

- Strong local leadership against external pressures

#### Top Priorities

**1. Strengthening Mono's Identity:** Educate residents about Mono's unique identity, emphasizing land and environmental stewardship, and fostering a strong sense of community pride.

**2. Responsible Tourism Development:** Promote tourism that benefits Mono, including exploring a Municipal Accommodation Tax to offset the costs on residents, ensuring tourism supports the town's sustainability.

**3. Support for Local Businesses:** Protect existing employment lands from residential conversion and provide accessible guidance for home-based businesses to start or scale up into commercial spaces.

## Municipal Workshops

### TOWNSHIP OF MELANCTHON

#### Vision Statement

Melancthon envisions a thriving, innovative agricultural sector that leads in cutting-edge technology and green energy, positioning the township as a hub for agri-tourism and agricultural innovation. The township is committed to maintaining its rural charm, while embracing investments in high-speed internet to support work-from-home opportunities and home-based businesses. With a strong focus on recreation through the Rail Trail and other trail systems, Melancthon strives to offer a balanced, connected, and vibrant community for residents and visitors alike.

#### Township of Melancthon Assets

##### 1. Natural and Recreational Assets:

- Trails
- Parks

##### 2. Renewable Energy and Sustainability:

- Wind turbines

##### 3. Community and Human Capital:

- Aspirational residents
- Demand for connections between schools and farms

##### 4. Location:

- Strategic location

# ENGAGEMENT Community Insights Workshop Series

## Top Priorities

- 1. Regional Collaboration:** Foster stronger partnerships with neighboring municipalities to adopt a regional approach to recreation, tourism, and economic development. This will enable shared resources and coordinated strategies that enhance opportunities for residents and businesses.
- 2. Agri-Tourism and Innovation:** Build on Melancthon's agricultural strength by promoting agri-tourism and establishing the township as a hub for agricultural innovation and green energy. Strengthen connections between schools and local farms, promoting agricultural education and creating pathways for youth engagement in farming and green technology sectors.
- 3. Connectivity and Infrastructure:** Ensure high-speed internet access across the township to support work-from-home opportunities, home-based businesses, and enhance digital connectivity for rural economic development. This will also strengthen Melancthon's position as a desirable location for both residents and businesses.
- 4. Recreation and Quality of Life:** Enhance recreational assets, such as trails and parks, and integrate them into a broader County-wide network. This will improve the quality of life for residents while attracting tourists who value outdoor activities and rural charm.

## Municipal Workshops

### TOWNSHIP OF EAST GARAFRAXA

#### Vision Statement

East Garafraxa will be a thriving, sustainable community where quality employment opportunities flourish alongside a strong agricultural sector. Our vibrant public schools will serve as a cornerstone for residents, while diversified use of employment lands will drive economic growth. By fostering business development, supporting farm infrastructure, and facilitating accessible housing within the County, East Garafraxa will continue to grow as a dynamic and inclusive place for families and businesses to thrive.

#### East Garafraxa Assets

##### 1. Natural and Recreational Assets:

- Trail network
- Recreational activities
- Large public events

##### 2. Geographical and Infrastructure Assets:

- Location (Marsville as a central location with several major intersecting roads)

##### 3. Economic and Developmental Assets:

- Employment lands (potential to expand through cross-municipal agreements)

#### East Garafraxa Priorities

- 1. Economic Growth and Business Attraction:** a) Leverage the County's leadership on economic development to attract businesses that provide good quality jobs. b) Expand and diversify the use of employment lands through cross-municipal partnerships.
- 2. Infrastructure and Land Development:** Create more shovel-ready residential and commercial land by partnering with neighboring municipalities to facilitate necessary servicing.
- 3. Community and Education Development:** Support vibrant public schools to enhance community appeal for residents and families.
- 4. Agricultural Strength and Sustainability:** Maintain a strong agricultural sector by reinforcing farm infrastructure and supporting agricultural development.
- 5. Recreational and Event Promotion:** Promote East Garafraxa's trail network, recreational activities, and large public events to enhance community engagement and attract visitors.

## General Public

#### Vision Statement

To build a proud and vibrant community in Dufferin where businesses, families, and individuals work together to create a dynamic environment. We envision a County where economic and employment opportunities foster a balanced work, play, and visit experience. With a strong sense of place, Dufferin will be renowned as a foodie destination, an arts-friendly hub, and a center for sustainable industry. Through collaboration, eco-friendly job creation, and a commitment to affordable housing, we aim to strongly position our urban centres to support our rural and natural assets, ensuring a thriving live-work community for all.

## Dufferin's Assets:

### 1. Cultural and Arts Assets:

- Amphitheatre (Island Lake)
- Theatre Orangeville
- Vibrant arts community
- Museum
- Festivals and events (Blues and Jazz festival, etc.)
- Rich history

### 2. Natural and Recreational Assets:

- Rail Trail
- Bruce Trail
- Dufferin County Forest
- Clean air and natural beauty
- Year-round recreation and natural assets
- Farms and farm markets
- Agricultural destination
- Publicly accessible lands (trails, Island Lake, etc.)

### 3. Community and Social Assets:

- Community-minded people
- Amazing service groups
- Safe community and great schools
- Not-for-profits and co-op housing
- County-owned housing (though insufficient to meet demand)
- Dufferin residents and workers (commitment and collaboration)
- Small town vibe

### 4. Economic and Tourism Assets:

- Affordable spaces for small businesses
- Restaurants and food destination
- Hotels and accommodation
- Vibrant college in Orangeville
- Transportation routes and location (two major highways, proximity to Pearson airport)
- Grey bus service (though ending soon)
- Tourism assets (trails, Island Lake, etc.)
- Orangeville's downtown with free parking (also available in Shelburne and throughout the County)

### 5. Education and Workforce Assets:

- Highly skilled/educated workforce

## Top Priorities

**1. Attracting Quality Employment:** Focus on bringing in higher-paying jobs by targeting employers that address local employment gaps and supporting economic development initiatives that center around people and community needs.

**2. Affordable Housing and Development:** Implement strategies to reduce housing prices and create attainable housing through partnerships with various levels of government, ensuring the development of mixed-use spaces and addressing zoning and childcare requirements.

**3. County-Wide Collaboration and Pride:** Foster a "County" mindset by encouraging collaboration across municipalities, setting County-wide goals, and promoting pride in being a County resident. This includes enhancing transportation, developing healthcare facilities, and creating programs for low-income families while training people in trades through a unified County-wide approach.



## PUBLIC

# ENGAGEMENT

## Additional Economic Development Priorities

### Town of Orangeville

#### PRIORITIES

##### **Developing a Resilient Business Community**

Economic diversity is one of the most effective ways to increase long-term economic resilience. Having a diverse economy means Orangeville can weather downturns in the economy, resist disruptive events (e.g., COVID 19) and help provide a more sustainable environment for business start-up, success and growth. It's all about retaining local business, providing opportunities for business to grow and attracting new business to the community while providing a climate conducive to investment.

##### **Supporting Small Business**

Small businesses are the heart of Orangeville. Most of the jobs in Orangeville are provided by small businesses (5 to 9 employees) across a diverse range of sectors including manufacturing, retail, professional services, construction, and the creative sector. Beyond employment, small businesses support the economy by creating valuable local connections, investing in community initiatives, contributing significantly to the local tax base, and demonstrating pride for their community.

##### **Fostering Tourism and Culture**

Tourism and culture are intertwined. Creative industries are considered a key sector in Orangeville and are also important tourism drivers. In Orangeville, culture includes heritage, the performing arts (music, visual arts, dance), writing, film, and public art as well as festivals and events that celebrate our community. Tourism supports local business and draws visitors to spend money in the community. By supporting tourism and culture through authentic and unique experiences, the Town can strengthen the local sense of community and enhance community pride.

### Township of Mulmur

#### PRIORITIES

##### **Protect Agriculture**

Ensure the protection of farms, farmland, and farmers through policies and actions that safeguard agricultural land and livelihoods.

##### **Sustainable Tourism**

Promote tourism that aligns with Mulmur's vision, benefiting local businesses while protecting farms, infrastructure, residents, and the environment.

##### **Enhance Services and Infrastructure**

Support the development of educational facilities, an Emergency Services Hub, secure additional water capacity in Mansfield, and attract essential medical services.

##### **Recreational Investment**

Encourage investment in both public and private recreational facilities, and promote diverse use of County forests and trails, ensuring appropriate amenities like parking, washrooms, and wayfinding signage.

##### **Collaborative Economic Development**

Advocate for Dufferin County to host an annual Economic Development Conference to foster regional collaboration and support local business growth.

### Town of Grand Valley

#### PRIORITIES

The Town of Grand Valley aims to foster a thriving business environment by focusing on two key priorities:

##### **Develop Employment Lands within the Urban Boundary**

The potential of designated employment lands will be maximized through collaboration between the County, Business Improvement Area (BIA) and the Economic Development Committee (EDC). Economic development opportunities will be identified, and support will be provided to new and expanding businesses. In this way, long-term growth and job creation will be fostered within the community.

##### **Position Grand Valley as a Premier Business Destination**

Grand Valley will be promoted as an ideal location for both local entrepreneurs and external investors. Business attraction strategies will be implemented, and collaborations with key stakeholders will be facilitated. Efforts to retain and expand businesses will be supported, ensuring the local economy is strengthened and the town remains a vibrant business-friendly environment.

## Town of Shelburne

### Vision

Shelburne is a vibrant, inclusive community where local businesses thrive, and residents enjoy a high quality of life. By developing Fiddle Park into a regional destination, fostering a dynamic arts and cultural scene at Grace Tipling Hall, and revitalizing the downtown area with new retail and beautification efforts, Shelburne aims to increase the attraction of both visitors and new businesses. Shelburne is committed to balancing economic, environmental, and social considerations to ensure long-term prosperity and well-being for the entire community. This commitment creates opportunities for local employment, innovation and collaboration. Through these initiatives, Shelburne aims to build a thriving, resilient community that balances economic growth with the well-being of its residents.

### Town of Shelburne Assets

#### 1. Workforce and Economic Assets

- Diverse workforce
- Entrepreneurial spirit (new residents driving business growth)
- Diverse range of national manufacturers (KTH, Stella Jones, Blue Mountain Plastics)
- Significant commercial retail growth (Emerald Crossing Plaza, Fieldgate, Summerhill Plaza)
- Knowledgeable Economic Development Team
- Residents' high degree of knowledge (subject matter experts)

#### 2. Cultural and Recreational Assets

- Grace Tipling Concert Hall and art gallery
- Fiddle Park Master Plan (year-round accessibility with pathways and trails)
- Jack Downing Park
- Greenwood Park (sports tourism: soccer fields, splash pad)

#### 3. Community and Supportive Infrastructure

- Robust community groups (Rotary, Legion)
- Strong community support services
- 3 elementary schools and 1 high school
- Medical Hub (diverse range of medical services for Dufferin)

### Shelburne's Top Priorities

Based on the statements, the top economic development priorities for Shelburne are:

- 1. Infrastructure Investments:** Address Shelburne's wastewater capacity issues through investments from all levels of government to support the expansion and modernization of wastewater infrastructure.
- 2. Fiddle Park Development and Trail Connectivity:** Develop Fiddle Park as a tourism and visitor asset and increase trail connectivity to enhance accessibility and promote recreation throughout the town.
- 3. Downtown Revitalization and Accessibility:** Improve accessibility in the BIA district through the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) and eliminate or reduce traffic in the downtown area with a truck bypass to improve pedestrian experience and local business activity.
- 4. Cultural Development and Events:** Invest in the renovation and modernization of Grace Tipling Concert Hall and host a variety of cultural events, fostering partnerships with local artists and cultural organizations to attract visitors and boost tourism.
- 5. Business and Community Engagement:** Continue business outreach and strengthen partnerships with community services/organizations to foster local employment, economic growth, and community engagement.

The Shelburne Economic Development team is set to update its Economic Development Strategy for the 2025-2029 period, with a strong focus on community engagement. The Town is preparing for significant residential growth by 2051, with over 2,000 new homes and an expected population increase of 5,500, bringing the total to over 15,000 residents. However, the town's Wastewater Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) has limited remaining capacity. Originally designed for a population of 6,000 (with upgrades allowing for 10,000), the plant's capacity is fully allocated to approved and proposed developments, necessitating urgent infrastructure upgrades to support future growth.

# ENGAGEMENT

## Emerging Themes

*The various statements and community sentiments gathered from different sectors and municipalities within Dufferin County reflect a diverse but interconnected set of priorities and aspirations. Across the various communities and industry sectors, several key themes emerge regarding economic development, infrastructure needs, and the preservation of unique local characteristics. The overarching goals across these municipalities focus on diversifying economies, enhancing employment opportunities, and creating environments conducive to business growth and retention. Dufferin's local municipalities are driven by the desire to attract high-quality jobs, with special emphasis on sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, and the arts. These municipalities are actively seeking partnerships with other levels of government, business associations, and local organizations to achieve these objectives.*

### Economic Resilience and Diversity

Across different communities and sectors, there is a strong emphasis on economic diversity as a path to long-term resilience. By diversifying their economic bases, communities aim to better withstand external shocks and avoid overreliance on one sector. This aligns with a forward-thinking approach to economic development that balances tradition with innovation.

- **Orangeville and Shelburne:** Building a resilient business community through economic diversity is central to weathering disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Melancthon and Amaranth:** Innovation in agriculture, such as green energy and agri-tourism, further highlights the push for economic diversification in rural areas, moving beyond traditional farming into sectors that are innovative and future-focused.
- **Real Estate Sector:** There is a recognition of the need for a balanced mix of commercial, industrial, and residential development, which will sustain economic growth over time.

### Support for Small Businesses and Home-Based Enterprises

Small businesses are viewed as the backbone of local economies, providing jobs, community investment, and local pride. There is widespread recognition that creating a nurturing environment for small and home-based businesses is critical for community stability. Providing resources like accessible guidance, financial support, and technological infrastructure is viewed as a priority to ensure these businesses thrive.

- **Orangeville and Shelburne:** Most jobs are created by small businesses, and supporting their growth is seen as essential to maintaining a strong economy.
- **Mono and Melancthon:** Encouraging home-based businesses and providing infrastructure like high-speed internet ensures that residents can work from home, further supporting the local economy.

### Tourism and Asset Development

Tourism is a critical component of the economic development vision in many communities, with the intent to capitalize on Dufferin's tourism assets such as its natural landscape, trails, parks, and growing arts communities. Arts and culture are seen as valuable tools for not only economic growth but also for enhancing community pride. Theatre Orangeville, Grace Tipling Hall, and the vibrant arts community across Dufferin County are recognized for their potential to draw both local residents and tourists, strengthening the community's cultural fabric.

- **Orangeville:** Creative industries such as performing arts, festivals, and public art contribute both culturally and economically, attracting visitors and supporting local businesses.
- **Shelburne:** Highlighting public spaces as core tourism assets. Fiddle Park is set to become a centerpiece for tourism with enhanced amenities and event spaces. Grace Tipling Hall is set to act as a center for the visual and performing arts through activations.
- **Melancthon and Mono:** Highlight natural landscapes, trails, and unique agricultural experiences as core tourism assets.
- **General Public:** The scenic landscape, trails, and recreational amenities across the County, as well as a vibrant arts and cultural scene, position tourism as an economic pillar.

## Agriculture and Agri-Tourism as Economic Drivers

Agriculture remains a cornerstone for many communities in Dufferin, with sentiments reflecting a strong desire to protect farmland, support farming innovation, and promote unique agribusinesses. Moreover, agri-tourism is seen as a growing opportunity to leverage natural assets and rural culture to generate economic benefits. This includes promoting farm tours, supporting local food producers, and establishing culinary collectives that connect farmers with restaurants and tourism-related businesses. By capitalizing on the County's natural beauty, culinary culture, and agricultural heritage, there is an opportunity to draw more visitors, support local businesses, and foster community pride.

- **Melancthon:** Emphasize innovation in agriculture and green energy, highlighting Dufferin's commitment to remaining at the forefront of sustainable farming practices.
- **Amaranth:** Agri-tourism is a major focus, linking agriculture with tourism to create a sustainable source of income for farmers while drawing visitors to the area.

## Sustainable Growth, Attainable Housing and Infrastructure Development

Population growth must be managed carefully to balance economic development with environmental protection and community well-being. Growth is viewed not as an end in itself, but as a means to enhance community well-being while preserving the unique natural and rural characteristics of the area. A significant concern across communities in Dufferin is infrastructure capacity, particularly related to wastewater treatment and land servicing for future growth. Another prevalent theme is the need for attainable housing as a key focus in this ongoing growth. Sustainable growth strategies are therefore crucial to maintaining the quality of life that makes the County attractive to residents and visitors alike.

- **Shelburne:** There is the need to upgrade wastewater management systems to support ongoing population growth.
- **East Garafraxa:** There is a focus on expanding and servicing employment lands to attract businesses and diversity local economies.

- **Mono:** There is a clear desire to protect the natural environment while supporting limited and low-impact development, such as home-based businesses.
- **Amaranth and Melancthon:** There is a focus on protecting farmland and ensuring that agricultural growth is compatible with environmental sustainability. For instance, the wind turbines in Melancthon highlight a commitment to green energy.
- **Real Estate Sector:** There is a push for more attainable housing, mixed-use spaces, and infrastructure that supports sustainable, complete communities.

## Collaboration and Regional Approaches

Working together regionally is seen as the most effective way to maximize resources and achieve shared goals. Collaboration across municipalities, businesses, and sectors is recognized as necessary to achieve economic and environmental sustainability. By adopting a County-wide mindset, communities can address issues such as infrastructure, housing, and economic development more efficiently and cohesively.

- **Melancthon:** A regional approach to tourism and economic development, along with collaboration among municipalities, is seen as essential for better outcomes for residents.
- **Mulmur:** Encouraging Dufferin County to host an annual economic development conference illustrates the desire for more collaboration and shared learning among different regions.
- **Mono and Amaranth:** Protecting the identity of each community while fostering inter-municipal cooperation is seen as vital for sustainable development and better management of shared resources.

## Education, Workforce Development, and Innovation

Developing the local workforce and fostering innovation are critical for long-term economic sustainability. Education, particularly in the trades and agriculture, is seen as a key driver for the future workforce. Communities recognize that they must cultivate homegrown talent and provide the infrastructure necessary to retain these workers. Innovation, particularly in agriculture and green energy, is seen as a way to stay competitive and sustainable.

- **Shelburne:** Investing in initiatives to support local businesses, and attracting a diverse workforce, and providing career growth opportunities is seen as a priority.
- **Melancthon and Agricultural Sector:** There is a focus on agricultural education, connecting schools with farms, and promoting innovation in agriculture through green technology.
- **Real Estate and Construction Sector:** Emphasizing the need for housing that meets the evolving needs of the population, and streamlining the process for developing second dwellings, shows a proactive approach to addressing housing shortages.
- **General Public:** The push for job creation that aligns with green values and eco-friendly practices is tied to a broader vision of sustainable economic growth.

## Quality of Life and Community Pride

Maintaining a high quality of life and fostering a strong sense of community pride is central to many of the community's goals. Maintaining and enhancing the small-town vibe, community engagement, and overall quality of life are seen as vital to retaining residents and attracting new ones. Residents want to feel a sense of pride in their community, and this is closely tied to the County's economic, cultural, and environmental sustainability.

- **Mono and Melancthon:** Emphasize low-impact developments that align with environmental stewardship values.
- **Amaranth:** Ensuring that residents remain connected, informed, and engaged is a key factor in instilling community pride.
- **Orangeville and Shelburne:** Community pride and a sense of place are viewed as essential for both residents and visitors, with the downtown core seen as a hub of activity and culture.
- **General Public:** There is a desire for residents to feel proud of their community and to promote Dufferin as a live-work destination, where good-paying jobs and affordable housing create a high quality of life.

*The overall vision that emerges from the collected statements is one of balanced, sustainable growth that prioritizes economic diversity, small business support, regional collaboration, and environmental protection. There is a strong emphasis on community pride, preserving rural charm, and fostering innovation, particularly in agriculture and green energy. Tourism, driven by the County's natural beauty, creative culture, and agricultural heritage, is seen as a key economic driver. The desire for collaborative regional approaches to development and a focus on creating attainable housing and workforce development are central to addressing long-term challenges such as housing affordability and economic resilience.*

# THE BIG MOVE

Over the last decade, Dufferin County has experienced major changes in its population. Dufferin’s population increased from 61,735 in 2016 to 66,257 and is expected to reach 95,000 by 2051. However, population growth rarely happens in a linear manner. People are constantly moving in and out of regions. The net gain in this movement over time is what is accounted for in population growth. Table 1.1 demonstrates this movement of people into and away from Dufferin. Among persons aged 15 years or older, Dufferin experienced a net population gain of 2,175.

**Table 1.1**  
**Number of Movers, Dufferin, 2016 to 2021**

	Moved to Dufferin	Moved Away from Dufferin	Dufferin Net Gain/Loss
Population 15+	13,230	11,055	2,175
Labour Force 15+	9,870	7,490	2,380
Labour Force as a % of the Population	74.6%	67.8%	-

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

The effects of this movement on the availability of labour in the County is a paramount question in developing this strategy. Of note, the labour force in this context is limited to people who live within Dufferin County. In dissecting this question, it is important to first understand where these new members of Dufferin’s labour force are coming from, and where previous members are moving to. It is evident from Table 1.2 that the majority of these new residents within the labour force came from Peel Region.

Table 1.3 also shows that the County experienced a net loss of movers to neighboring municipalities in Grey County, Wellington County and Simcoe County. What these two tables demonstrate is an outward migration of people from the Greater Toronto Area. The tables also demonstrate a smaller migration from Dufferin to Counties that are to the west, north and east of Dufferin and the GTA. It is unclear whether there is causality between these two migration patterns. What is clear, however, is that these patterns indicate an overall outward migration away from the GTA and the immediate surrounding areas.

**Table 1.2**  
**Top 5 Net Gain Movers by Origin and Destination, 2016 to 2021**

Census Division	Moved to Dufferin	Moved Away from Dufferin	Net Gain
Peel - 3521	5,305	805	4,500
Toronto - 3520	1,060	520	540
York - 3519	360	135	225
Halton - 3524	495	270	225
Durham - 3518	100	85	15
<b>Total - Canada</b>	<b>9,870</b>	<b>7,490</b>	<b>2,380</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

**Table 1.3**  
**Top 5 Net Loss Movers by Origin and Destination, 2016 to 2021**

Census Division	Moved to Dufferin	Moved Away from Dufferin	Net Loss
Bruce - 3541	10	130	-120
Muskoka - 3544	10	145	-135
Waterloo - 3530	85	345	-260
Simcoe - 3543	610	1,110	-500
Wellington - 3523	400	940	-540
Grey - 3542	190	810	-620
<b>Total - Canada</b>	<b>9,870</b>	<b>7,490</b>	<b>2,380</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

# THE BIG MOVE

## Age Demographics of Dufferin's Movers

While tables 1.1 and 1.2 indicate a labour force net gain of 2,380 in Dufferin, this data alone provides no insight on demographic shifts and trends, which is essential for planning long-term economic growth. Precisely, tracking the movements and changes in age cohorts within a municipality's labour force is essential for effective workforce planning, economic sustainability, talent attraction, housing and population planning, economic resilience, and targeted policy development. This understanding will ensure that this strategy is aligned with the evolving demographic realities of the municipality.

Table 2.1 addresses this question by identifying these Dufferin labour force movers by age cohort. As indicated, the majority of movers into Dufferin were in 25-to-44-year range. This cohort also saw the largest move away from Dufferin, resulting in a net gain of 2,025, the largest among any age cohort. Notably, there was a net loss of 140 people among those aged 15 to 24, and a net loss of 150 people among those aged 55 years and older. This table seems to support the notion that 25-to-44 year olds typically have the flexibility to move across regions for more conducive living and working conditions. Of note, Table 2 also indicates that there was a net loss of 55+ year olds in the labour force. This cohort of the labour force are typically the most experienced professionals, and in most occupations, essential for training and ushering in a new generation of workers.

**Table 2.1**  
**Movers by Age Cohort, Labour Force 15+, Dufferin, 2016 to 2021**

Age Cohort	Moved to Dufferin	Moved Away from Dufferin	Dufferin Net Gain/Loss
15 to 24 years	1,115	1,255	-140
25 to 44 years	5,750	3,725	2,025
45 to 54 years	1,750	1,090	660
55 years and older	1,260	1,410	-150
<b>Total 15+</b>	<b>9,870</b>	<b>7,490</b>	<b>2,380</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

## Effects on Dufferin's Talent Pool

Table 2.1 brings into question which occupations experienced largest net gains and losses during this period. The ensuing analyses of the occupations of those moving into and out of a municipality is essential for assessing economic impacts, addressing skill gaps, supporting economic growth, and guiding community and infrastructure planning. Table 3.1 lists the top 5 occupations that experienced the highest net gain of residents in Dufferin between 2016 and 2021. As shown, skilled trades have emerged as a key driver of population growth in Dufferin County, with both general trades and technical trades showing significant net gains between 2016 and 2021. General trades occupations saw a net increase of 230 people, while technical trades and transportation operators added 210, reflecting a strong demand for skilled labour in sectors like construction, infrastructure, and logistics. Additionally, professional occupations in law, education, and social services, along with front-line public protection services, contributed to workforce growth, though skilled trades dominated the influx.

**Table 3.1**  
**Top 5 Net Gain Movers by Occupation, 2016 to 2021**

Occupation	Moved to Dufferin	Moved Away from Dufferin	Net Gain
<b>Total - Occupation - Unit group - National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021</b>	<b>9,870</b>	<b>7,490</b>	<b>2,380</b>
73 General trades	620	390	230
72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers	930	720	210
41 Professional occupations in law, education, social, community and government services	595	385	210
42 Front-line public protection services and paraprofessional occupations in legal, social, community, education services	415	220	195
14 Administrative and financial support and supply chain logistics occupations	505	335	170

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

# THE BIG MOVE

Table 3.2 lists the top 3 occupations that experienced the highest net loss of residents during this period. While these losses may seem statistically negligible, it is important to continue to monitor the loss of persons with occupations in sales and service as they are essential to the visitor economy and the viability of small businesses as a whole. The continued net loss of residents in these occupations may indicate a lack of access to affordable or attainable housing in Dufferin for specific occupations which could have negative implications for certain industries.

**Table 3.2**  
**Table 3.2 Top 5 Net Loss Movers by Occupation, 2016 to 2021**

Occupation	Moved to Dufferin	Moved Away from Dufferin	Net Loss
Total - Occupation - Unit group - National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021	9,870	7,490	2,380
6410 Retail salespersons and non-technical wholesale trade sales and account representatives	275	320	-45
7420 Transport equipment operators, utility maintenance and related maintenance workers	10	45	-35
9421 Furniture, wood, plastic and other products assemblers, finishers and inspectors	35	65	-30

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

Overall, Tables 3.1 and 3.2 underscore the importance of focusing on skilled trades development and retention in the County's Economic Development Strategy, as these occupations will be critical to supporting future economic growth and infrastructure needs. Further analysis of movers data related to skilled trades is essential to understand the underlying factors driving this population influx and to identify specific opportunities for targeted economic growth. Table 4.3 provides deeper insight into these specific movers by providing the net gains and net losses for 3-digit occupational classifications that fall within the top 2 net gainers identified in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.3**  
**Movers by Occupation in Skilled Trades, 2016 to 2021**

Occupation	Moved to Dufferin	Moved Away from Dufferin	Net Gain/ Loss
Total - Occupation - Unit group - National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021	9,870	7,490	2,380
7 Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	2,220	1,640	580
72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers	930	720	210
720 Technical trades contractors and supervisors	165	90	75
721 Technical industrial trades	140	135	5
722 Technical electrical trades	140	105	35
723 Technical construction trades	175	120	55
724 Technical maintenance trades	275	230	45
725 Technical equipment operation trades	0	15	-15
726 Transportation officers and controllers	15	25	-10
729 Other technical trades	10	0	10
73 General trades	620	390	230
731 General construction trades	105	70	35
732 Building maintenance installers, servicers and repairers	100	65	35
733 Transportation occupations	330	210	120
734 Operators, drillers and blasters	80	45	35

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

The top 2 net gainers in Table 3.1 both fall within the broader occupational classification of 'trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations.' As indicated in Table 3.3, there was a net gain of 580 residents within this classification, which was the highest among all occupations. Further, the top net gainers by 3-digit occupations in the skilled trades were technical construction trades, technical trades contractors and supervisors, and transportation occupations.



# THE BIG MOVE

## Movers to Commuters?

So far, the data indicates an influx of residents in the skilled trades into Dufferin. However, there is no indication of where these residents work or general trends that may be influencing the influx of people within these specific occupations. Examining trends such as the industries attracting these workers and where these industries are located can help tailor economic development efforts as it relates to investment attraction, talent attraction and workforce development. Further, analyzing commuting patterns and the possible reasons behind these behaviors will offer insights into how the County can better support and sustain its skilled workforce who are a critical component in the County's projected population and economic growth. The ensuing data focuses on the commuting patterns of Dufferin residents within the labour force and those who work in Dufferin.

Commuters are defined as residents who travel to their regular place of work. This subsection of Dufferin residents represents nearly 70% of Dufferin's employed labour force<sup>15</sup>. It is assumed that this percentage is significantly higher in 2024 as this data was gathered at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020) when many employers were operating under fully remote work settings. Table 4.1 shows that **51.4%** of all residents with a regular place of work commuted outside of the community for work. Table 4.1 contextualizes this by comparing this commuting pattern of Dufferin's residents to residents in other Census Divisions (CD) across Ontario. In this context, Census Divisions are defined as counties and regional municipalities. This data reveals that Dufferin has the second highest percentage of its residents commuting outside their Census Division for work in the entire province. All of Dufferin's neighboring Counties and regional municipalities fall outside the top 10 in this category.

**Table 4.1**  
**Top 10 CDs with the highest percentage of residents who commute outside the CD**

Census Division (County/Regional Municipality)	Total # of residents with a regular place of work	Total # of residents who work within Census Division	% of resident who work within Census Division	Total # of resident who work outside Census Division	% of Residents who Work Outside Census Division
Lennox and Addington	12,845	5,670	44%	7,175	<b>55.9%</b>
<b>Dufferin</b>	<b>21,540</b>	<b>10,465</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>11,075</b>	<b>51.4%</b>
Kawartha Lakes	20,685	11,085	54%	9,600	<b>46.4%</b>
Prescott and Russell	27,750	15,030	54%	12,720	<b>45.8%</b>
Haldimand-Norfolk	35,455	20,515	58%	14,940	<b>42.1%</b>
Prince Edward	6,060	3,510	58%	2,550	<b>42.1%</b>
Halton	146,785	86,095	59%	60,690	<b>41.3%</b>
York	284,225	173,415	61%	110,810	<b>39.0%</b>
Elgin	29,145	17,800	61%	11,345	<b>38.9%</b>
Durham	184,455	114,355	62%	70,100	<b>38.0%</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

<sup>15</sup> Statistics Canada, 2023. (table). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-renewement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed June 6, 2024)

# THE BIG MOVE

Table 4.2 indicates that not only did 11,075 *Dufferin* residents commute outside of the County for work, but another 3,940 people commuted to *Dufferin* for work. This resulted in a net loss of 7,135 workers. As well, a total of 10,465 *Dufferin* residents both lived and worked in the community. Table 4.2 also indicates that overall, *Dufferin* residents who commuted outside of *Dufferin* earned a median employment income of **\$50,000**, which is significantly more than *Dufferin* residents who worked in *Dufferin* (\$38,000). Outside residents who commuted into the community for work also earned more than live-work residents. This is the same pattern observed in 2016.

**Table 4.2**  
**Median employment income of Dufferin commuters (2021)**

	Number	Median employment income
Live in Dufferin, work outside	11,075	\$50,000
Live outside, work in Dufferin	3,940	\$41,200
Live and work in Dufferin	10,465	\$38,000

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

Table 4.2 seems to indicate that *Dufferin* residents who commute outside of the Census Division are motivated to do so because of higher wages. So where are these residents commuting to? Table 4.3 indicates that Peel Region was the main destination for commuting *Dufferin* residents.

**Table 4.3**  
**Where Dufferin Residents Commute to Work**

Live In	Work in	Number
Dufferin	Dufferin	10,465
Dufferin	Peel	6,005
Dufferin	Simcoe	1,135
Dufferin	Toronto	1,095
Dufferin	Wellington	955
Dufferin	York	855
Dufferin	All other regions	1,030

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

## Top occupations commuting out

- 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **1,520**
- 14 Administrative and financial support and supply chain logistics: **735**
- 73 General trades: **685**
- 42 Front-line public protection services and paraprofessional occupations in legal, social, community, education services: **585**
- 75 Helpers and laborers and other transport drivers, operators and laborers: **535**

*These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$39,200 to \$62,000. Three of the top five occupations were in 7 Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations, which has a median income of \$53,600.*

## Top industries commuting out

- 336 Transportation equipment manufacturing: **825**
- 611 Educational services: **750**
- 913 Local, municipal and regional public administration: **665**
- 238 Specialty trade contractors: **565**
- 622 Hospitals: **425**
- 541 Professional, scientific and technical services: **410**
- 484 Truck transportation: **390**
- 621 Ambulatory health care services: **310**
- 561 Administrative and support services: **260**
- 722 Food services and drinking places: **245**

*These top industries have median employment incomes ranging from \$15,800 to \$87,000. Three of the top ten industries were in 62 Health care and social assistance, which has a median employment income of \$46,000.*

## Dufferin Workers

A total of **3,940** people (**27.4%** of all workers) commuted to *Dufferin* for work.

# THE BIG MOVE

**Table 4.4**  
**Where Dufferin workers Commute From**

Live In	Work in	Number
Dufferin	Dufferin	10,465
Peel	Dufferin	1,090
Wellington	Dufferin	850
Simcoe	Dufferin	710
Grey	Dufferin	705
All other regions	Dufferin	585

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

### Top occupations commuting in

- 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **380**
- 31 Professional occupations in health: **275**
- 65 Sales and service support occupations: **265**
- 60 Middle management occupations in retail and wholesale trade and customer services: **245**
- 64 Sales and service representatives: **205**

*These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$19,000 to \$77,000. Three of the top five occupations have a median income lower than the Canadian median income. Three of the top five occupations were in Sales and service occupations, which has a Canadian median income of \$27,600.*

### Top industries commuting in

- 621 Ambulatory health care services: **320**
- 611 Educational services: **255**
- 623 Nursing and residential care facilities: **250**
- 622 Hospitals: **225**
- 722 Food services and drinking places: **200**
- 326 Plastics and rubber products manufacturing: **190**
- 238 Specialty trade contractors: **140**
- 541 Professional, scientific and technical services: **135**
- 445 Food and beverage stores: **120**
- 452 General merchandise stores: **110**

*These top industries have median employment incomes ranging from \$15,700 to \$65,000. Three of the top ten industries were in 62 Health care and social assistance, which has a median employment income of \$46,000.*

### Median employment income

Workers who commute to Dufferin earned a median employment income of **\$41,200** in 2019.

### Dufferin Live-Work Residents

A total of **10,465** Dufferin residents both lived and worked in the County.

### Top occupations

- 65 Sales and service support occupations: **1,765**
- 64 Sales and service representatives and other customer and personal service occupations: **920**
- 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **695**
- 14 Administrative and financial support and supply chain logistics: **615**
- 60 Middle management occupations in retail and wholesale trade and customer services: **535**

*These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$19,000 to \$62,000. Three of the top five occupations were in Sales and service occupations, which has a median income of \$27,600.*

### Top industries Commuting In

- 722 Food services and drinking places: **995**
- 621 Ambulatory health care services: **615**
- 611 Educational services: **560**
- 445 Food and beverage stores: **690**
- 623 Nursing and residential care facilities: **530**
- 622 Hospitals: **355**
- 238 Specialty trade contractors: **435**
- 541 Professional, scientific and technical services: **365**
- 326 Plastics and rubber products manufacturing: **310**
- 452 General merchandise stores: **385**

# THE BIG MOVE

*These top industries have median employment incomes ranging from \$13,800 to \$67,500. Three of the top ten industries were in 62 Health care and social assistance, which has a median employment income of \$46,000.*

## **Median employment income**

Dufferin residents working in **Dufferin** earned a median employment income of **\$38,000** in 2019, much lower than residents who commute out.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

*Overall, this data suggests that residents in Dufferin with specific occupations may find substantial financial incentives to commute to other regions for work. As well, Dufferin's employer base is largely supported by retail and service based industries that are offering relatively lower wages. It is important to note that lower wages for those working locally could contribute to increased economic inequality in Dufferin. Evidently, Dufferin's economy is not substantially benefiting from the influx of residents from Peel over the last decade. The data suggests that these residents, many of whom are in the skilled trades, maintained their Peel jobs when they moved to Dufferin, and did so due to higher wages, and perhaps a lack of available opportunities in Dufferin. However, the County-level data that has been analyzed so far does not tell the whole story.*

# A DEEPER DIVE

## INTO DUFFERIN

Dufferin County comprises of several towns and townships – Orangeville, Shelburne, East Garafraxa, Mono, Mulmur, Melancthon, Grand Valley and Amaranth - each with unique local economies and labour dynamics. The ensuing data takes a deeper dive into the median employment income and commuting patterns of residents in each local municipality in Dufferin.

### East Garafraxa

A total of **780** East Garafraxa residents commuted outside of the community for work and **280** people commuted into East Garafraxa for work. A total of **115** East Garafraxa residents both lived and worked in the community. The community saw a **net loss of 500 workers**.

**Table 5.1**  
**Median Employment Income of East Garafraxa Commuters**

	Number	Median employment income
Live in East Garafraxa, work outside	780	\$59,200
Live outside, work in East Garafraxa	280	\$47,600
Live and work in East Garafraxa	115	\$50,400

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

In terms of median employment income, East Garafraxa performs well in comparison with other municipalities in Dufferin County. Overall, East Garafraxa residents who commuted outside of East Garafraxa earned more than East Garafraxa residents who worked in East Garafraxa. Outside residents who commuted into the community for work earned less than live-work residents.

#### East Garafraxa Residents

A total of **780** East Garafraxa residents (**87.1%** of all residents) commuted outside of the community for work with Orangeville being the most popular destination.

**Table 5.2**  
**Where East Garafraxa Residents Commute To Work**

Live In	Work in	Number
East Garafraxa	Orangeville	225
East Garafraxa	Mississauga	120
East Garafraxa	East Garafraxa	115
East Garafraxa	Brampton	75
East Garafraxa	Centre Wellington	60
East Garafraxa	Guelph	55
East Garafraxa	All other regions	245

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

#### Top occupations commuting out

- 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **100**
- 73 General trades: **65**
- 60 Middle management occupations in retail and wholesale trade and customer services: **50**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from **\$48,800 to \$68,000**.

#### Median employment income

East Garafraxa residents who commute out, earned a median employment income of **\$59,200** in 2019.

#### East Garafraxa Workers

A total of **280** people (**70.9%** of all workers) commuted into East Garafraxa for work.

# A DEEPER DIVE

## INTO DUFFERIN

**Table 5.3**  
**Where East Garafraxa Workers Commute From**

Live In	Work in	Number
East Garafraxa	East Garafraxa	115
Orangeville	East Garafraxa	65
Centre Wellington	East Garafraxa	40
All other regions	East Garafraxa	175

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

### Top occupations

1. 73 General trades: **40**
2. 12 Administrative and financial supervisors and specialized administrative occupations: **25**
3. 94 Machine operators, assemblers and inspectors in processing, manufacturing and printing: **25**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$43,600 to \$52,000.

### Median employment income

Workers who commute to *East Garafraxa* earned a median employment income of **\$47,600** in 2019.

### East Garafraxa Live-Work Residents

A total of **115** *East Garafraxa* residents both lived and worked in the community.

### Top occupations

1. 80 Middle management occupations in production and agriculture: **25**
2. 64 Sales and service representatives and other customer and personal service occupations: **15**
3. 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **15**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$28,000 to \$62,000.

### Median employment income

*East Garafraxa* residents working in **East Garafraxa** earned a median employment income of **\$50,400** in 2019.

## Amaranth

A total of **1,235** *Amaranth* residents commuted outside of the community for work and **355** people commuted into *Amaranth* for work (for a **net loss of 880 workers**). A total of **165** *Amaranth* residents both lived and worked in the community.

**Table 6.1**  
**Median Employment Income of Amaranth Commuters**

	Number	Median employment income
Live in Amaranth, work outside	1,235	\$49,200
Live outside, work in Amaranth	355	\$45,200
Live and work in Amaranth	165	\$44,000

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation).

Overall, *Amaranth* residents who commuted outside of *Amaranth* earned more than *Amaranth* residents who worked in *Amaranth*. Outside residents who commuted for work earned slightly more than live-work residents.

### Amaranth Residents

A total of **1,235** *Amaranth* residents (**88.2%** of all residents) commuted outside of the community for work.

**Table 6.2**  
**Where Amaranth Residents Commute To Work**

Live In	Work in	Number
Amaranth	Orangeville	345
Amaranth	Brampton	185
Amaranth	Amaranth	165
Amaranth	Mississauga	120
Amaranth	Shelburne	100
Amaranth	All other regions	485

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation).

# A DEEPER DIVE

## INTO DUFFERIN

### Top occupations commuting out

- 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **200**
- 65 Sales and service support occupations: **185**
- 42 Front-line public protection services and paraprofessional occupations in legal, social, community, education services: **80**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$19,000 to \$62,000.

### Median employment income

Amaranth residents who worked outside the community earned a median employment income of **\$49,200** in 2019

### Amaranth Workers

A total of **355** people (**68.3%** of all workers) commuted into Amaranth for work.

Table 6.3

#### Where Amaranth Workers Commute From

Live In	Work in	Number
Amaranth	Amaranth	165
Orangeville	Amaranth	85
Shelburne	Amaranth	45
Grand Valley	Amaranth	35
All other regions	Amaranth	190

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

### Top occupations

- 73 General trades: **75**
- 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **70**
- 14 Administrative and financial support and supply chain logistics: **35**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$39,200 to \$62,000.

### Median employment income

Workers who commute to Amaranth for work, earned a median employment income of **\$45,200** in 2019.

### Amaranth Live-Work Residents

A total of **165** Amaranth residents both lived and worked in the community.

### Top occupations

- 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **25**
- 80 Middle management occupations in production and agriculture: **15**
- 51 Professional occupations in art and culture: **15**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$31,400 to \$62,000.

### Median employment income

Amaranth residents working in Amaranth earned a median employment income of **\$44,000** in 2019.

## Grand Valley

A total of **1,070** Grand Valley residents commuted outside of the community for work another **205** people commuted into Grand Valley for work. A total of **180** Grand Valley residents both lived and worked in the community. The community saw a **net loss of 865 workers**.

Table 7.1

#### Median Employment Income of Grand Valley Commuters

	Number	Median employment income
Live in Grand Valley, work outside	1,070	\$50,800
Live outside, work in Grand Valley	205	\$32,400
Live and work in Grand Valley	180	\$28,600

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

# A DEEPER DIVE

## INTO DUFFERIN

In terms of median employment income, Grand Valley has the highest level of inequality in Dufferin County (comparing live-work scenarios). Grand Valley residents who commuted outside of Grand Valley earned significantly more than Grand Valley residents who worked in Grand Valley.

### Grand Valley Residents

A total of **1,070** Grand Valley residents (**85.6%** of all residents) commuted outside of the community for work.

**Table 7.2**  
**Where Grand Valley Residents Commute To Work**

Live In	Work in	Number
Grand Valley	Orangeville	195
Grand Valley	Grand Valley	180
Grand Valley	Mississauga	145
Grand Valley	Brampton	125
Grand Valley	Centre Wellington	70
Grand Valley	Wellington North	65
Grand Valley	All other regions	470

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

### Top occupations commuting out

- 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **175**
- 73 General trades: **90**
- 14 Administrative and financial support and supply chain logistics: **80**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$39,200 to \$62,000.

### Grand Valley Workers

A total of **205** people (**53.2%** of all workers) commuted into Grand Valley for work.

**Table 7.3**  
**Where Grand Valley Workers Commute From**

Live In	Work in	Number
Grand Valley	Grand Valley	180
Orangeville	Grand Valley	35
Brampton	Grand Valley	30
Amaranth	Grand Valley	25
All other regions	Grand Valley	115

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

### Top occupations commuting in

- 7 Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations: **60**
- 6 Sales and service occupations: **50**
- 4 Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services: **25**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$27,600 to \$55,200.

### Median employment income

Workers in Grand Valley earned a median employment income of **\$32,400** in 2019

### Grand Valley Live-Work Residents

A total of **180** Grand Valley residents both lived and worked in the community.

### Top occupations

- 6 Sales and service occupations: **60**
- 7 Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations: **35**
- 1 Business, finance and administration occupations: **25**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$27,600 to \$53,600.

### Median employment income

Grand Valley residents working in **Grand Valley** earned a median employment income of **\$28,600** in 2019.



# A DEEPER DIVE

## INTO DUFFERIN

### Mono

A total of **2,135** *Mono* residents commuted outside of the community for work and **975** people commuted into *Mono* for work. **470** *Mono* residents both lived and worked in the community. The community saw a **net loss of 1,160 workers**.

**Table 8.1**  
**Median Employment Income of Mono Commuters**

	Number	Median employment income
Live in Mono, work outside	2,135	\$50,000
Live outside, work in Mono	975	\$46,400
Live and work in Mono	470	\$45,200

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

In terms of median employment income, *Mono* performs well in comparison with other municipalities in Dufferin County, (far more income parity among live-work scenarios)

### Mono Residents

A total of **2,135** *Mono* residents (**82.0%** of all residents) commuted outside of the community for work.

**Table 8.2**  
**Where Mono Residents Commute To Work**

Live In	Work in	Number
Mono	Orangeville	680
Mono	Mono	470
Mono	Brampton	355
Mono	Mississauga	220
Mono	Toronto	175
Mono	All other regions	705

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

### Top occupations commuting out

- 65 Sales and service support occupations: **235**
- 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **205**
- 14 Administrative and financial support and supply chain logistics: **140**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$19,000 to \$62,000.

### Median employment income

*Mono* residents who worked outside the community earned a median employment income of **\$50,000** in 2019.

### Mono Workers

A total of **975** people (**67.5%** of all workers) commuted into *Mono* for work.

**Table 8.3**  
**Where Mono Workers Commute From**

Live In	Work in	Number
Mono	Mono	470
Orangeville	Mono	275
Shelburne	Mono	110
Caledon	Mono	80
Melancthon	Mono	50
All other regions	Mono	460

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

### Top occupations commuting in

- 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **170**
- 64 Sales and service representatives and other customer and personal services occupations: **115**
- 65 Sales and service support occupations: **100**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$19,000 to \$62,000.

### Median employment income

Workers in *Mono* earned a median employment income of **\$46,400** in 2019.

### Mono Live-Work Residents

A total of **470** *Mono* residents both lived and worked in the community.

# A DEEPER DIVE

## INTO DUFFERIN

### Top occupations

1. 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **45**
2. 80 Middle management occupations in production and agriculture: **40**
3. 64 Sales and service representatives and other customer and personal service occupations: **40**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$28,000 to \$62,000.

### Median employment income

Mono residents working in **Mono** earned a median employment income of **\$45,200** in 2019.

## Orangeville

A total of **5,760** Orangeville residents commuted outside of the community for work, while **4,485** people commuted into Orangeville for work. A total of **4,460** Orangeville residents both lived and worked in the community. The community saw a **net loss of 1,275 workers**.

Table 9.1

### Median Employment Income of Orangeville Commuters

	Number	Median employment income
Live in Orangeville, work outside	5,760	\$50,400
Live outside, work in Orangeville	4,485	\$40,400
Live and work in Orangeville	4,460	\$35,200

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

In terms of median employment income, Orangeville performs below average in comparison with other municipalities in Dufferin County. Overall, Orangeville residents who commuted outside of Orangeville earned significantly more than Orangeville residents who worked in Orangeville.

### Orangeville Residents

A total of **5,760** Orangeville residents (**56.4%** of all residents) commuted outside of the community for work.

Table 9.2

### Where Orangeville Residents Commute To Work

Live In	Work in	Number
Orangeville	Orangeville	4,460
Orangeville	Brampton	1,475
Orangeville	Mississauga	1,035
Orangeville	Caledon	710
Orangeville	Toronto	510
Orangeville	Vaughan	240
Orangeville	All other regions	2,670

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

### Top occupations commuting out

1. 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **775**
2. 14 Administrative and financial support and supply chain logistics: **415**
3. 73 General trades: **365**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$19,000 to \$77,000.

### Median employment income

Orangeville residents who commute out, earned a median employment income of **\$50,400** in 2019.

### Orangeville Workers

A total of **4,485** people (**50.1%** of all workers) commuted into Orangeville for work.

Table 9.3

### Where Orangeville Workers Commute From

Live In	Work in	Number
Orangeville	Orangeville	4,460
Mono	Orangeville	680
Caledon	Orangeville	425
Shelburne	Orangeville	405
Brampton	Orangeville	345
All other regions	Orangeville	2,630

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

# A DEEPER DIVE

## INTO DUFFERIN

### Top occupations commuting in

1. 65 Sales and service support occupations: **555**
2. 31 Professional occupations in health: **365**
3. 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **335**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$19,000 to \$77,000.

### Median employment income

Workers in *Orangeville* earned a median employment income of **\$40,400** in 2019

### Orangeville Live-Work Residents

A total of **4,460** Orangeville residents both lived and worked in the community.

### Top occupations

1. 65 Sales and service support occupations: **930**
2. 64 Sales and service representatives and other customer and personal service occupations: **475**
3. 14 Administrative and financial support and supply chain logistics: **240**
4. 60 Middle management occupations in retail and wholesale trade and customer services: **240**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$19,000 to \$54,000. Three of the top four occupations were in 6 Sales and services occupations, which has a median income of \$27,600.

### Median employment income

*Orangeville* residents working in **Orangeville** earned a median employment income of **\$35,200** in 2019.

## Mulmur

A total of **935** *Mulmur* residents commuted outside of the community for work, another **225** people commuted into *Mulmur* for work. A total of **145** *Mulmur* residents both lived and worked in the community. The community saw a **net loss of 710 workers**.

**Table 10.1**  
Median Employment Income of Mulmur Commuters

	Number	Median employment income
Live in Mulmur, work outside	935	\$60,800
Live outside, work in Mulmur	225	\$48,800
Live and work in Mulmur	145	\$60,400

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

In terms of median employment income, *Mulmur* performs very well in comparison with other municipalities in Dufferin County, ranking as #1 for the incomes of residents, workers, and live-work residents.

### Mulmur Residents

A total of **935** *Mulmur* residents (**86.6%** of all residents) commuted outside of the community for work.

**Table 10.2**  
Where Mulmur Residents Commute To Work

Live In	Work in	Number
Mulmur	Mulmur	145
Mulmur	Orangeville	110
Mulmur	Mississauga	100
Mulmur	Brampton	85
Mulmur	Shelburne	50
Mulmur	All other regions	590

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

### Top occupations commuting out

1. 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **110**
2. 65 Sales and service support occupations: **65**
3. 42 Front-line public protection services and paraprofessional occupations: **65**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$19,000 to \$62,000.

# A DEEPER DIVE

## INTO DUFFERIN

### Median employment income

Mulmur residents earned a median employment income of **\$60,800** in 2019

### Mulmur Workers

A total of **225** people (**60.8%** of all workers) commuted into Mulmur for work.

**Table 10.3**  
**Where Orangeville Workers Commute From**

Live In	Work in	Number
Mulmur	Mulmur	145
Shelburne	Mulmur	45
Melancthon	Mulmur	30
All other regions	Mulmur	150

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

### Top occupations

1. 6 Sales and service occupations: **75**
2. 4 Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services: **65**
3. 7 Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations: **40**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$27,600 to \$53,600.

### Median employment income

Workers in Mulmur earned a median employment income of **\$48,800** in 2019

### Mulmur Live-Work Residents

A total of **145** Mulmur residents both lived and worked in the community.

### Top occupations

1. 4 Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services: **35**
2. 1 Business, finance and administration occupations: **25**
3. 7 Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations: **20**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$60,800 to \$72,000.

### Median employment income

Mulmur residents working in **Mulmur** earned a median employment income of **\$60,400** in 2019.

## Melancthon

A total of **775** Melancthon residents commuted outside of the community for work and another **145** people commuted into Melancthon for work **225** Melancthon residents both lived and worked in the community. The community saw a **net loss of 630 workers**.

**Table 11.1**  
**Median Employment Income of Melancthon Commuters**

	Number	Median employment income
Live in Melancthon, work outside	775	\$49,200
Live outside, work in Melancthon	145	\$42,000
Live and work in Melancthon	225	\$44,400

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

In terms of median employment income, Melancthon residents who commuted outside of Melancthon earned more than Melancthon residents who worked in Melancthon. Outside residents who commuted for work into the community earned less than live-work residents. The difference in these income amounts is not as significant as in several other Dufferin municipalities.

### Melancthon Residents

A total of **775** Melancthon residents (**77.5%** of all residents) commuted outside of the community for work.

**Table 11.2**  
**Where Melancthon Residents Commute To Work**

Live In	Work in	Number
Melancthon	Melancthon	225
Melancthon	Shelburne	170
Melancthon	Orangeville	135
Melancthon	Brampton	55
Melancthon	Mono	50
Melancthon	All other regions	365

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

# A DEEPER DIVE

## INTO DUFFERIN

### Top occupations

1. 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **170**
2. 65 Sales and service support occupations: **70**
3. 73 General trades: **60**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$19,000 to \$62,000.

### Median employment income

Melancthon residents earned a median employment income of **\$49,200** in 2019

### Melancthon Workers

A total of **145** people (**39.2%** of all workers) commuted into Melancthon for work.

Table 11.3

#### Where Melancthon Workers Commute From

Live In	Work in	Number
Melancthon	Melancthon	225
Shelburne	Melancthon	15
Brampton	Melancthon	15
All other regions	Melancthon	115

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

### Top occupations

1. 7 Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations: **65**
2. 6 Sales and service occupations: **25**

These top occupations have median employment incomes of \$53,600 and \$27,600, respectively.

### Median employment income

Workers in Melancthon earned a median employment income of **\$42,000** in 2019

### Melancthon Live-Work Residents

A total of **225** Melancthon residents both lived and worked in the community.

### Top occupations

1. 8 Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations: **65**
2. 1 Business, finance and administration occupations: **60**
3. 7 Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations: **35**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$40,800 to \$53,200.

### Median employment income

Melancthon residents working in Melancthon earned a median employment income of **\$44,400** in 2019.

## Shelburne

A total of **2,235** Shelburne residents commuted outside of the community for work and **1,125** people commuted into Shelburne for work. **860** Shelburne residents both lived and worked in the community. The community saw a **net loss of 1,110 workers**.

Table 12.1

#### Median Employment Income of Shelburne Commuters

	Number	Median employment income
Live in Shelburne, work outside	2,235	\$47,200
Live outside, work in Shelburne	1,125	\$39,600
Live and work in Shelburne	860	\$32,800

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

In terms of median employment income, Shelburne performs very poorly in comparison with other municipalities in Dufferin County, ranking as last for the income of residents, and as #7 for the income of workers and live-work residents.

# A DEEPER DIVE

## INTO DUFFERIN

Overall, Shelburne residents who commuted outside of Shelburne earned significantly more than Shelburne residents who worked in Shelburne. Outside residents who commuted for work earned more than live-work residents.

### Shelburne Residents

A total of **2,235** Shelburne residents (**72.2%** of all residents) commuted outside of the community for work.

**Table 12.2**  
**Where Shelburne Residents Commute To Work**

Live In	Work in	Number
Shelburne	Shelburne	860
Shelburne	Brampton	410
Shelburne	Orangeville	405
Shelburne	Mississauga	275
Shelburne	Toronto	155
Shelburne	Caledon	125
Shelburne	Mono	110
Shelburne	All other regions	755

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

### Top occupations

1. 72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers: **210**
2. 14 Administrative and financial support and supply chain logistics: **175**
3. 73 General trades: **165**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$39,200 to \$62,000.

### Median employment income

Shelburne residents earned a median employment income of **\$47,200** in 2019

### Shelburne Workers

A total of **1,125** people (**56.7%** of all workers) commuted into Shelburne for work.

**Table 12.3**  
**Where Shelburne Workers Commute From**

Live In	Work in	Number
Shelburne	Shelburne	860
Melancthon	Shelburne	170
Orangeville	Shelburne	165
Amaranth	Shelburne	100
Mono	Shelburne	65
All other regions	Shelburne	625

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

### Top occupations

1. 33 Assisting occupations in support of health services: **145**
2. 65 Sales and service support occupations: **105**
3. 94 Machine operators, assemblers and inspectors in processing, manufacturing and printing: **100**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$19,000 to \$43,600.

### Median employment income

Workers in Shelburne earned a median employment income of **\$39,600** in 2019.

### Shelburne Live-Work Residents

A total of **860** Shelburne residents both lived and worked in the community.

### Top occupations

1. 65 Sales and service support occupations: **205**
2. 33 Assisting occupations in support of health services: **65**
3. 64 Sales and service representatives and other customer and personal service occupations: **55**

These top occupations have median employment incomes ranging from \$19,000 to \$35,600. Two of the top three occupations were in 6 Sales and service occupations, which has a median income of **\$27,600**.

### Median employment income

Shelburne residents working in **Shelburne** earned a median employment income of **\$32,800** in 2019.

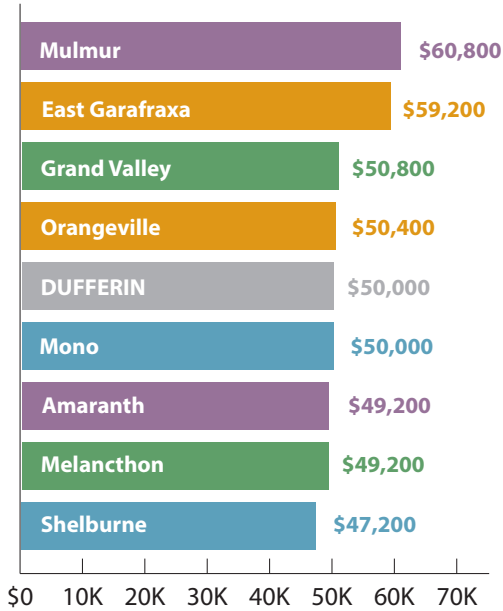
# A DEEPER DIVE

INTO DUFFERIN

## Municipality Comparison

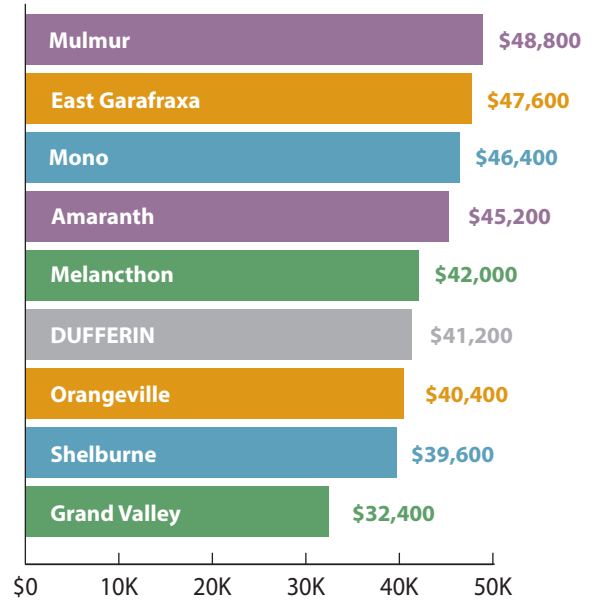
Graph 13.1

**Median employment income: Residents**



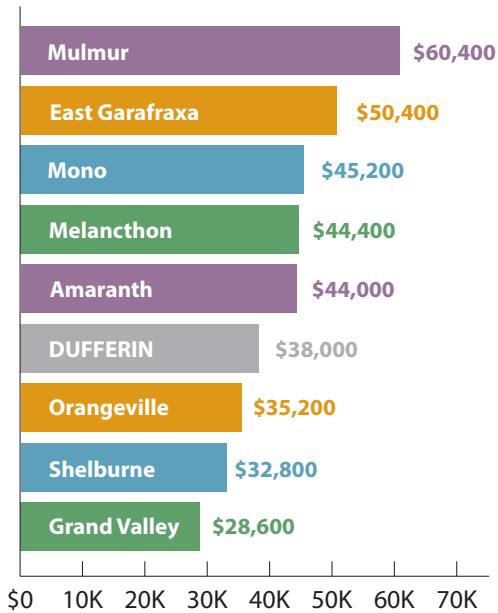
Graph 13.2

**Median employment income: Workers**



Graph 13.3

**Median employment income: Live-work Residents**



# A DEEPER DIVE

INTO DUFFERIN

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

*The data and analysis of commuting patterns and employment incomes within Dufferin's local municipalities reveals several important trends that can inform the County's economic development strategy and action plan. Here are the key takeaways:*

### Significant Outbound Commuting

- A large portion of residents in Dufferin County's municipalities commute outside of their communities for work. For example, 87% of East Garafraxa residents, 88% of Amaranth residents, and 85% of Grand Valley residents travel to neighboring municipalities.
- While industries in Peel and other regions remain the significant employers of Dufferin's commuting residents, several Dufferin municipalities are dependent on each other for employers and employees, especially in retail, sales and service based industries.
- Commuting residents consistently earn higher incomes than those working locally. For instance, East Garafraxa residents who work outside earn \$59,200 on average, compared to \$50,400 for those who live and work locally.

### Income Disparities

- There is a clear median employment income gap between those who work locally and those who commute outside. In municipalities like Grand Valley, live-work residents earn significantly less (\$28,600) than those commuting out (\$50,800), indicating that high-paying jobs are located outside the community.
- Mulmur is an outlier, with residents who work locally earning a comparable median employment income with those who commute out, reflecting a stronger local economy or higher-paying sectors within the community.

### Top Occupations

- Across municipalities, technical trades, transportation officers, and general trades dominate as the top occupations for outbound commuters, with high-income ranges up to \$68,000. This suggests that Dufferin County is home to a significant number of skilled tradespeople and workers in transportation, logistics, and construction sectors.
- Inbound workers often fill positions in general trades, administrative, and manufacturing roles, which tend to have lower median incomes.

### Net Loss of Workers

- All municipalities experience a net loss of workers, with more residents commuting out than non-residents commuting in. For example, Amaranth loses 880 workers, and Mono loses 1,160 workers. This indicates limited local employment opportunities, which pushes residents to seek jobs elsewhere.



# CONNECTION TO PEEL

The data above indicates a strong economic connection between Dufferin's commuters and Peel region. There are evident wage discrepancies between those who commute outside of Dufferin for work and those who work within Dufferin that require further analysis. The table below compares the median employment income of Dufferin and Peel by occupation.

## Occupations with largest income differences between Dufferin Workers and Peel Commuters

Table 14.1

**Occupations with largest income differences between Dufferin Workers and Peel Commuters**

Employed labour force aged 15 years and over having a usual place of work	Live in Dufferin		Median Empl. Income Peel \$	Median Empl. Income Dufferin \$	Income Difference
	Number that work in Peel	Number that work in Dufferin			
Total - Occupation - Unit group - National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021	6,005	10,465	65,000	38,000	27,000
42 Front-line public protection services and paraprofessional occupations in legal, social, community, education services	360	330	111,000	40,000	71,000
62 Retail sales and service supervisors and specialized occupations in sales and services	115	275	73,500	28,600	44,900
70 Middle management occupations in trades and transportation	205	75	88,000	54,000	34,000
72 Technical trades and transportation officers and controllers	905	695	78,000	48,800	29,200
90 Middle management occupations in manufacturing and utilities	65	90	102,000	74,500	27,500

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census (Custom Tabulation)

The table above indicates that Dufferin County residents commuting to Peel for work earn significantly more than those working locally, with the largest wage discrepancies seen in public protection services (up to \$71,000 more) and retail supervisors (\$44,900 more). Middle management roles in trades, production, and manufacturing also show substantial gaps, with Peel workers earning \$27,500 to \$34,000 more. Technical trades and transportation roles follow a similar trend, with Peel workers earning \$29,200 more.

# CONNECTION TO PEEL

## Implications

*With Dufferin commuters spending a significant portion of their day outside the County, a substantial portion of their spending is likely directed to Peel and other regions. This ongoing trend has broader implications on Dufferin's economy:*

### 1. Local Business Revenue Loss

Commuters may spend more on goods and services near their workplaces in Peel, reducing the flow of disposable income into Dufferin's local businesses. This can weaken local retail, hospitality, and service industries, hindering their growth.

### 2. Leakage of Economic Activity

The outflow of wages to neighboring regions creates economic leakage, where potential local economic activity (e.g., spending on housing, dining, and entertainment) is lost, limiting Dufferin's overall economic growth and tax revenue generation.

### 3. Reduced Community Investment

When a significant portion of the workforce spends less time and money locally, there's less incentive for them to engage in community activities, support local initiatives, or invest in local real estate, further slowing down the community's development.

### 4. Challenges for Innovation and Attracting Investments

Outbound commuting may result in lower demand for certain types of businesses and industries (such as restaurants, retail shops, and entertainment) within Dufferin, reducing the need for these businesses to expand or innovate. The outflow of economic activity could also make it more challenging to attract investments to support growth and innovation in these industries, as these potential investors may perceive a weaker local customer base and less vibrant economic ecosystem.

### 5. Infrastructure Burden

Commuting patterns increase reliance on transportation infrastructure, which can lead to added costs for the county in maintaining roads, public transit, and related services, without corresponding increases in local spending or investment.

Addressing these implications requires Dufferin to create more local employment opportunities, promote local businesses, and ensure that economic development efforts encourage residents to spend more within the county. The data points to a need for local job creation strategies, especially in higher-paying sectors. There is also a need for local workforce development initiatives focused on training and upskilling. These could help bridge the wage gap by aligning local workers' skills with the demands of higher-paying industries.

## Pathway To Dufferin As A Complete Community

Complete communities are urban or rural areas designed to meet the diverse needs of residents by providing convenient access to essential services and amenities, such as housing, employment, education, healthcare, recreation, and transportation options. These communities aim to promote sustainability, inclusivity, and a high quality of life by encouraging mixed-use development, active transportation, and social interaction. They support a range of housing options to accommodate different income levels and life stages, foster local economic opportunities, and ensure that public spaces and services are accessible, safe, and welcoming for everyone. In essence, complete communities are areas where people of ranging income levels can live, work and play.

The natural migration of a highly skilled and educated labour force workers into Dufferin places the County at a unique vantage point in its efforts towards being a complete community. Many municipalities outside of Dufferin have to adopt resource intensive strategies in order to attract or develop a highly skilled labour force, which typically sets the foundation for attracting investments into their communities. Dufferin, by its proximity to the GTA, continues to attract a highly skilled labour force and can therefore focus its efforts on creating more local employment opportunities and supporting efforts to reduce outbound commuting.

# CONNECTION TO PEEL

## These efforts can include:

### Attracting Investments

There is a clear opportunity to attract higher-paying industries to Dufferin, particularly in sectors like manufacturing, skilled trades, and construction. Expanding opportunities in these sectors and occupations could reduce outbound commuting and improve local economic health.

### Investing in Local Industries

Foster investment and development in high-demand, high-wage industries like trades, manufacturing, and agriculture to retain residents and create local job opportunities. Promoting industries that align with the skill sets of existing residents, particularly in technical trades and general trades, could attract both businesses and workers to stay within the community.

### Focused Talent Retention Efforts

These can be geared towards supporting the retail and service sector ecosystem, which provide essential products and services needed to attract and retain a skilled labour force. A thriving retail and service sector with an ecosystem of complimentary industries can also help bridge income disparities between local and outbound workers.

### Enhancing Transportation and Infrastructure

As many residents are commuting outside the County, Dufferin County's Transportation Master Plan should be used as a guide to improving transportation infrastructure and accessibility to employment hubs could support local businesses and facilitate smoother commuting for residents.

### Supporting Mixed-Use Development and Housing Affordability

In alignment with the County's Master Housing Strategy, mixed-use developments should be encouraged to help ensure that residential, commercial, and recreational amenities are accessible. The County could also partner with educational institutions, private companies and not-for-profit organizations to develop housing initiatives that align with local economic needs, such as modular home production, which would create jobs and address housing shortages.

***To build a complete community, Dufferin must address the economic disparities driving residents to seek employment outside the County by fostering local opportunities that offer competitive wages, thereby creating an environment where talent thrives without needing to commute. By attracting investments in high-value industries, supporting workforce development, and nurturing a vibrant local economy, Dufferin can reduce economic leakage, enhance local spending, and create a sustainable, self-sufficient community where residents live, work, and play, and are collectively invested in the successful future of their local communities.***

# BUILD IN DUFFERIN

## ACTION PLAN (2025-2030)

The qualitative and quantitative data analysis provided point to a clear set of actions needed to address Dufferin's challenges and tap into existing and emerging opportunities.

These actions will be led by Dufferin County and involve potential partnerships with local municipal economic development offices, economic development committees, and relevant local and external organizations to implement specific actions. This collaborative approach aims to improve alignment and harmonization on economic development between all lower and upper-tier municipalities, avoiding unnecessary duplication and building capacity within local communities.

Currently, Dufferin County employs two staff persons within its economic development division. Achieving these actions within the scheduled timelines would require ample resources and additional economic developments staff to develop strategies and spearhead initiatives. The Action Plan therefore represents a comprehensive but contextual approach to fostering sustainable economic growth and community well-being across the County's diverse municipalities.

### The Action Plan focuses on five core themes and objectives:

**B** **Business Retention and Expansion:**  
*Support, retain, and foster the growth of local businesses, with a focus on medium-sized enterprises*

**U** **Upskilling the Workforce:**  
*Develop initiatives to enhance skills, training, and create pathways to high-quality employment*

**I** **Investment Attraction:**  
*Promote Dufferin as a prime location for new businesses and attract private investments*

**L** **Local Innovation:**  
*Encourage and support innovative practices across industries*

**D** **Destination Development:**  
*Position Dufferin as a visitor and economic destination, enhancing community connections and fostering a vibrant local economy*

Each of these themes is designed to address the unique opportunities and challenges that exist within Dufferin, from supporting local businesses and retaining skilled talent to creating a vibrant cultural hub that attracts visitors and investors alike. Each action within the B.U.I.L.D. theme is crafted to address the specific dynamics and needs of Dufferin's local municipalities and key economic sectors as revealed in the comprehensive data analysis provided in the Strategy. Together, the objectives and actions within the Action Plan aim to strengthen Dufferin's economy by promoting sustainable growth, local innovation, affordable housing, and high-quality employment opportunities, ensuring a thriving and prosperous community for all residents.

# BUILD

## IN DUFFERIN ACTION PLAN (2025-2030)

### Business Retention and Expansion

#### Support, retain, and foster the growth of local businesses, with a focus on medium-sized enterprises

This theme focuses on not only expanding local businesses but also retaining existing enterprises that form the backbone of Dufferin's economy. While small businesses remain critical for essential products and services, medium-sized enterprises are significant anchors for employment and innovation, particularly in sectors like manufacturing, wholesale trade, professional services, technology and construction. These businesses tend to have more stable employment opportunities and are more likely to export products and services, drawing outside revenue into the local economy. By addressing encouraging mixed-use developments and other affordable housing options, Dufferin can maintain a healthy workforce base, reduce business closures, and foster long-term growth across its municipalities.

	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL SUPPORT PARTNER(S)
<b>Objective 1:</b> Support, retain, and foster the growth of local businesses, with a focus on medium-sized enterprises				
1.1	<b>Proactive Business Retention Initiatives:</b> Establish a program to engage with local businesses, address challenges, and provide tailored support to prevent closures or relocation, focusing on medium-sized enterprises	A	January 2026 and ongoing	MEDOs, MEDJCT
1.2	<b>Business Support Grants:</b> Collaborate with local municipalities to develop a County-wide Community Improvement Plan (CIP) that supports businesses that are innovating, expanding or modernizing (including home-based businesses), and promotes mixed-use developments	A	July 2025-December 2027	MEDOs, LM
1.3	<b>Centralized Business Hub:</b> Create a virtual hub that connects small and medium-sized businesses, fostering partnerships and strengthening the local supply chain	B	January 2027 and ongoing	MEDJCT
1.4	<b>Access to Resources:</b> Build awareness of programs and supports for businesses in the community through collaborative initiatives with community partners and organizations	A	July 2025-December 2027	SBEC, DBOT
1.5	<b>Networking Events:</b> Host business forums and sector-specific events that foster stronger networks and facilitates connections between businesses and local talent	B	July 2025 and ongoing	DBOT, WPB

#### Performance Metrics:

- **Number of Businesses Expanded:** Track the number of existing businesses that have expanded their operations annually.
- **Business Satisfaction:** Conduct surveys to measure satisfaction levels among business owners with County support services.
- **Funding and Resources Accessed:** Monitor the uptake of the Community Improvement Plan and other business support programs.
- **Employment Growth:** Measure the number of new jobs created by expanding businesses.

# BUILD IN DUFFERIN ACTION PLAN (2025-2030)

## Upskill Workforce

### Develop initiatives to enhance skills, training, and create pathways to high-quality employment and affordable housing options.

Dufferin County's workforce dynamics show a significant portion of residents commuting to neighboring regions like Peel for work, with wage disparities being a critical issue. This theme focuses on actions that support upskilling the workforce and providing locally relevant skills and training opportunities, fostering the growth of local economic eco-systems and enabling residents to find and create quality work without needing to leave the County. With a focus on skilled trades and innovation in the construction sector, these actions can be aligned with the goals of the Master Housing Strategy to tackle housing affordability in Dufferin, a major barrier to talent attraction and retention in several key sectors.

	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL SUPPORT PARTNER(S)
<b>Objective 2:</b> Develop initiatives to enhance skills, training, and create pathways to high-quality employment and affordable housing options.				
2.1	<b>Workforce Development:</b> Create a Workforce Development Strategy that focuses on developing programs to upskill and reskill existing workers in skilled trades, healthcare, and education	A	July 2026 – December 2026	WPB, Els
2.2	<b>Youth Engagement:</b> Partner with local high schools, colleges and other institutions to create hands-on programs that prepare young residents for in-demand jobs within Dufferin	B	January 2027 and ongoing	Els, DBOT, DFA
2.3	<b>Establish a Skilled Trades Training Facility:</b> Explore partnerships with educational institutions and local organizations to establish a facility that provides specialized training programs in the skilled trades to foster innovation in modular home production and other affordable housing options	A	January 2025 – December 2026	Els, WPB, DBOT, MEDOs
2.4	<b>Employment Support Services:</b> Provide job-matching and career counseling services to connect residents with high-quality employment opportunities within the County.	C	January 2028 and ongoing	WPB, DBOT, MEDOs

### Performance Metrics:

- **Training Program Participation:** Track the number of individuals participating in County-sponsored upskilling and reskilling programs.
- **Growth of Construction Businesses:** Monitor business counts and the growth in the number of jobs within Dufferin's construction sector.
- **Reduction in Outbound Commuting:** Measure the percentage decrease in residents commuting to neighboring regions for employment.
- **Youth Employment Opportunities:** Track the number of internships, apprenticeships, and co-op placements facilitated by local businesses.

# BUILD

## IN DUFFERIN ACTION PLAN (2025-2030)

### Investment Attraction

#### Promote Dufferin as a prime location for new businesses and attract private investments

Attracting investment is essential for creating sustainable economic growth across Dufferin’s municipalities. Investment can help revitalize underutilized employment areas and turn them into thriving hubs of economic activity. This theme emphasizes actions that position Dufferin as a prime location for new businesses in target sectors. This will support the diversification of the local economy. By bringing new businesses to the region, Dufferin can also generate more high-quality local jobs, reducing the reliance on outbound commuting for employment opportunities.

	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL SUPPORT PARTNER(S)
<b>Objective 3:</b> Promote Dufferin as a prime location for new businesses and attract private investments				
3.1	<b>Develop an Investment Attraction Strategy:</b> Identify industries that are aligned with Dufferin’s strengths and provide a framework for attracting high-value businesses in these industries, while establishing a collaborative approach for addressing infrastructural barriers.	B	July 2025 – December 2025	LM, MEDOs
3.2	<b>Asset Mapping:</b> Collaborate with local municipalities to identify locations across the County that are available for ranging types of commercial and industrial development, and can be presented to site selectors in the form of an investor guide or online portal.	A	January 2025 – December 2025	LM, MEDOs
3.3	<b>Development Facilitation:</b> Act as a liaison to streamline communications between investors and regulatory agencies and departments during development application process	A	January 2025 & ongoing	LM, IO, MEDOs
3.4	<b>Leverage County Assets:</b> Position the Museum of Dufferin, Rail Trail and other County assets as focal points to attract targeted investments and build a unique brand for the region.	B	January 2025 – December 2028	IO, MTCS, LM, MEDOs
3.5	<b>Targeted Marketing Campaigns:</b> Launch marketing campaigns to highlight Dufferin’s assets and competitive advantages to attract investors.	B	July 2025 and ongoing	IO

#### Performance Metrics:

- **New Business Establishments:** Track the number of new businesses that establish operations in Dufferin County.
- **Private Investment Value:** Measure the total value of private investments attracted to Dufferin annually.
- **Vacant Property Utilization:** Monitor the occupancy rate and development of vacant plots, such as those at Airport Road.
- **Marketing Campaign Reach:** Analyze the effectiveness of marketing campaigns by measuring impressions, inquiries, and lead conversions.

# BUILD IN DUFFERIN ACTION PLAN (2025-2030)

## Local Innovation

### Encourage and support innovative practices across industries

Local innovation is a key driver of economic resilience and long-term competitiveness, particularly in the face of changing economic conditions. Innovation relies heavily on reliable digital infrastructure. This theme emphasizes actions that advance advocacy efforts for investments in digital infrastructure, encouraging entrepreneurship and supporting innovative practices. These infrastructural investments are crucial for the growth of Dufferin’s rural municipalities where agri-food businesses can benefit from adopting new technologies and processes to improve productivity and expand their markets.

	ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL SUPPORT PARTNER(S)
<b>Objective 4:</b> Encourage and support innovative practices across industries and municipalities				
4.1	<b>Innovation Hubs:</b> Establish innovation hubs or co-working spaces to provide local entrepreneurs with resources like mentorship, office space, and access to technology.	C	January 2027 – December 2028	Els, DFA, BA, DBOT
4.2	<b>Improve broadband and Cellular Connectivity Across the County:</b> Advocate to upper levels of government for additional funding programs to support remaining underserved areas.	B	January 2025 & ongoing	DFA,DBOT, HCIA, EFAO, NFU
4.3	<b>Talent Attraction:</b> Develop a Talent Attraction and Retention Strategy that aims to attract and retain skilled workers in target industries, fostering innovation, growth and higher wages	B	July 2027 – December 2026	HCIA, DBOT, LM, MEDOs
4.4	<b>Highlight Success Stories:</b> Promote successful local businesses that are innovating through events, media coverage, and County publications.	C	July 2026 & ongoing	DFA, DBOT, EFAO, NFU, CFFO
4.5	<b>Innovation Grants:</b> Launch a small business innovation fund to support businesses adopting new technologies or developing new products in agriculture, manufacturing and other key sectors	C	July 2028 and ongoing	DFA, BA, EFAO, NFU, CFFO, DBOT, LM

### Performance Metrics:

- **Number of Startups and Innovative Projects:** Track the number of new startups and innovation-driven projects launched in the County.
- **Use of Innovation Grants:** Monitor the uptake and distribution of funds through the small business innovation fund.
- **Industry Partnerships:** Count the number of partnerships established between local businesses and educational institutions or research bodies.
- **Innovation Hub Utilization:** Measure the occupancy rate and number of entrepreneurs using the County’s innovation hub or co-working space.



# BUILD IN DUFFERIN ACTION PLAN (2025-2030)

## Destination Development

### Position Dufferin as a visitor and economic destination, enhancing community connections and fostering a vibrant local economy

This theme emphasizes a collaborative approach to improving experiences at Dufferin’s natural, recreational, and cultural assets. By enhancing these offerings, Dufferin aims to create a distinct sense of place while maintaining and strengthening connections between communities. Expanding arts, culture, and recreational opportunities will not only attract visitors but also support talent attraction and stimulate economic activity in key sectors such as retail, hospitality, food services, and creative industries. These efforts will generate economic and social benefits across both urban and rural municipalities, fostering a diversified local economy and building meaningful connections among residents, visitors, and businesses.

ACTIONS	PRIORITY	TIMELINE	POTENTIAL SUPPORT PARTNER(S)	
<b>Objective 5: Position Dufferin as a visitor and economic destination</b>				
5.1	<b>Explore Funding Sources:</b> Conduct a feasibility study of the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) as a revenue source for tourism development in Dufferin	A	January 2025 – December 2025	CCT, LM, MEDOs
5.2	<b>Tourism Promotion:</b> Partner with regional and provincial tourism organizations and travel platforms to promote Dufferin as a vibrant tourism destination for visitors, businesses and investors.	B	January 2025 and ongoing	CCT, MEDOs
5.3	<b>Cultural Events and Agri-tourism:</b> Support the expansion of cultural festivals, farmer’s markets, farm tours, and art events to attract both residents and visitors, leveraging the County’s agricultural and art sector and key assets such as the Museum of Dufferin	B	July 2027 and ongoing	BIAs, LM, HFFA, DFA, DAC, EFAO, NFU, CFFO, DBOT, MEDOs
5.4	<b>Infrastructure Investment:</b> Invest in infrastructure, such as public spaces, trails, and signage, to improve the resident and visitor experience, making the County more appealing for attracting talent, visitors and investors	A	January 2026 and ongoing	CCT, MEDOs
5.5	<b>Public transportation:</b> Explore transportations options that facilitate inbound commuting of workers and visitors and accessibility to Dufferin’s employment hubs, bolstering connectivity between rural and urban areas.	B	January 2026 – December 2027	LM, MEDOs

#### Performance Metrics:

- **Tourism Metrics:** Track the number of visitors to the Museum of Dufferin and other major cultural events.
- **Economic Impact of Tourism:** Measure the economic impact of cultural festivals and tourism, including revenue generated by local businesses.
- **Number of Cultural Events Hosted:** Track the number of cultural events and festivals organized in Dufferin County annually.
- **Resident Satisfaction:** Conduct surveys to gauge satisfaction levels with the County’s tourism and recreational infrastructure and cultural offerings.

# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BA</b>	Boundless Accelerator (Formerly Innovation Guelph)	<b>IO</b>	Invest Ontario
<b>BIAs</b>	Business Improvement Areas	<b>LM</b>	Local Municipalities
<b>CCT</b>	Central Counties Tourism	<b>MEDJCT</b>	Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
<b>CFFO</b>	Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario	<b>MEDOs</b>	Local Municipal Economic Development Offices
<b>DAC</b>	Dufferin Arts Council	<b>MTCS</b>	Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Gaming and Sport
<b>DBOT</b>	Dufferin Board of Trade	<b>NFU</b>	National Farmers Union
<b>DFA</b>	Dufferin Federation of Agriculture	<b>SBEC</b>	Orangeville & Area Small Business Enterprise Centre
<b>EFAO</b>	Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario	<b>WPB</b>	Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo, Wellington and Dufferin
<b>EIs</b>	Educational Institutions		
<b>HCIA</b>	Headwaters Communities In Action		
<b>HFFA</b>	Headwaters Food and Farming Alliance		

The Dufferin Board of Trade (DBOT) is a nonprofit, community-building organization dedicated to helping local businesses thrive. As the local Chamber of Commerce and the advocate for businesses in the region, DBOT has a longstanding tradition of supporting economic development, tourism, and business success in our community. We were pleased to collaborate with the County and HCIA in this strategic planning process, actively listening to participants and gathering insights and feedback from our local businesses. The information we have compiled reflects a combination of input gathered through the workshop series, our daily interactions with local businesses, and data from our annual business surveys. Through our role in this partnership, we aim to ensure that the vital perspectives and needs of our local small businesses are effectively represented and prioritized in Dufferin's new Economic Development Strategic Plan.

A key annual initiative of DBOT is our Business Survey. This year marked our sixth annual business survey which was completed by over 100 local businesses, both DBOT members and non-members, from across all eight lower tier municipalities. Our survey asks businesses to identify their priorities for the year, compare their business performance year over year, and anticipate the challenges they may face in the upcoming year. Respondents were asked to rank their top three concerns their company will face in 2024. In previous surveys, attracting employees has consistently ranked as a top concern. This year however, it was identified by only 26% of businesses as their primary concern, while 60% of businesses cited inflation and rising costs as their number one issue. This represents the largest year-over-year shift we have observed.

We are also part of the Ontario Chamber Network. Their annual economic outlook survey, which included responses from 1,800 businesses, revealed similar concerns. Only 13% of respondents expressed confidence in Ontario's economic outlook this year, compared to 29% in 2021. The primary reasons for this pessimism were the cost of living (82% of respondents) and inflation (80%).

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*Building up our community by helping local businesses thrive*

The workshop series echoed these concerns. "Housing and Development" emerged as the most common theme in discussions. Participants consistently identified the need for diverse housing options—affordable, attainable, and rental properties—as a top priority for Dufferin. The current housing crisis is having an unprecedented impact on businesses, transforming what was once seen as a social issue into a critical business concern. Participants also emphasized the importance of strategic, well-planned development that includes necessary infrastructure and avoids harmful environmental impacts.

Employment concerns were the next most frequently mentioned theme in the workshops. Commuting significantly affects both residents and businesses, impacting local engagement and the economy. Many participants highlighted the need to create more local jobs with competitive wages and benefits to retain the workforce within our community.

Agriculture and local food production were also key themes. There is strong support for local agriculture in Dufferin, with an emphasis on preserving and promoting our local farmers through education, infrastructure, and policy support. The need for local meat processing and egg grading facilities to complete the supply chain within our community was mentioned multiple times.

Tourism development was another priority identified. Participants discussed the importance of promoting local attractions, improving infrastructure, and developing a cohesive plan to attract and retain visitors to Dufferin County. Balancing tourism attraction with the desire to maintain a quiet, safe community and protect the natural environment is crucial. Leveraging cultural, historical, and natural assets to boost local tourism and community pride was also highlighted.

Participants stressed the need to support local small businesses by encouraging growth through business support systems, infrastructure, and government policies. Discussions also covered supply chain challenges and the need to foster local business connections to strengthen the economy.

Skills training, particularly in skilled trades and agriculture, was identified as essential for preparing the local workforce for available jobs. The importance of youth engagement and connecting local youth with local opportunities was also discussed.

Improved transportation and infrastructure were frequently mentioned. Participants called for better public transportation within and outside the County to support commuting, tourism, and overall connectivity. Digital connectivity remains a challenge for many in Dufferin, with enhanced high-speed internet access needed to support businesses, remote work, and educational opportunities.

Environmental and sustainability concerns were raised at every workshop. Our community is seeking a strong emphasis on sustainable conservation and the integration of green values into development plans. The protection of natural resources and biodiversity was a popular topic, with participants insisting that growth should not come at the expense of the environment.

The insights gathered through these economic development workshops, combined with data from our annual surveys and business conversations, underscore the critical improvements that our businesses need to thrive in Dufferin County. While we cannot control outside forces such as inflation, an environmentally sustainable made in Dufferin County solution that will help local business thrive is attainable. The Dufferin Board of Trade is committed to playing a strong roll in Dufferin's new Economic Development Strategic Plan. We will continue to push for the interconnected needs of the local business community which includes affordable housing, local employment and strategic development. Addressing these challenges is essential for fostering a business environment that is resilient, inclusive, and reflective of the needs of all stakeholders in our community. By prioritizing these concerns, we can build a stronger, more vibrant Dufferin County for generations to come.

Headwaters Communities In Action is a registered charity and community backbone organization that has been fostering community development since 2004. We support research and actions that serve a long-term, holistic vision of community well-being for Dufferin County and Caledon, Ontario. We are dedicated to engaging citizens and bringing people from different backgrounds together to shape a thriving community.

In partnership with the County of Dufferin and the Dufferin Board of Trade, HCIA helped facilitate the Community Insights Workshops to gather diverse perspectives for the Economic Development Strategy. Our aim was to listen deeply to the community, highlight strengths, and ensure the strategy reflects local experiences while aligning with existing plans. The combined perspectives of government, business and community brought an open, balanced and holistic approach to the conversations, which will surely help deliver a well-rounded strategy and action plan. In the workshops, participants were invited to articulate a 10-year vision of future success, identify what conditions need to be in place to achieve it, and what is already working in support of that vision. This led to some enlightening conversation about what is possible and what is strong, rather than focusing on what is wrong or problems and fixes, although those did inevitably arise when setting the path. Triangulating all of these inputs will help the County identify where resources can be directed to have the most impact, and where partnerships will be key to building the future we want to see for Dufferin. We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in this important work.

***A thriving community is one where everyone is safe, has a sense of belonging, opportunities to participate and ability to meet their needs, in a healthy environment.***

Communities are shaped by a confluence of factors, from individual personal health and financial stability, employment and recreation, the strength of the social fabric, availability of services, and quality of the natural environment in communities, to resilience to outside pressures and future impacts. Economists often point to seven types of capital—natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial, and built—as the building blocks of thriving communities. As these elements are interdependent, the success of long term plans will be assessed for their impact on all seven, positive and negative, intended or not.

Many areas of community development have a critical role in economic development, and it is clear that many social and environmental challenges are rooted in economic conditions that require economic solutions. Here we offer learnings from other project work that relate to the themes surfaced in the workshops. The sources we selected for this context are:

- **Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) 2024 public survey preliminary results (607 respondents)**
- **Dufferin County Equity Collaborative (DCEC) 2023 Report to Community, consultation with the VOICES of Lived Experience Dufferin**, a poverty advocacy group, and working groups on Housing & Homelessness, Employment, and Health Equity, including the **Dufferin Food Access Subcommittee**
- **Headwaters Food and Farming Alliance**, and the **Headwaters Food Charter**

### **What we heard - Broad Themes and Added Context**

- **Connected communities.** All sessions included comments on the importance of maintaining and strengthening community connections, whether as professional networks by sector - like tourism operators, farmers or creatives, as municipalities connecting with each other, other levels of government and community and business partners, or as residents to share information, celebrate culture and create a sense of place and belonging.
  - **2024 Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Survey:** 70% of respondents would recommend this community as a place to live. A significant number of respondents highlighted the friendliness and engagement of the community as a positive aspect. This includes mentions of supportive neighbours, community events, and a sense of belonging. Emphasis on community engagement and involvement highlights the importance of active participation from residents in shaping the future of the community and addressing its challenges.

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- **Live, work, play communities.** This was a very common theme in the sessions. Value is placed on the small-town feel, vast natural assets, good schools and family-orientation, diverse businesses and creative people who call Dufferin home. Affordability was discussed both as a draw for people moving in from more expensive areas, and as a challenge for those who work here but either do not earn enough to live here, or cannot find available housing in their price range, either for purchase or rent. Workshops revealed the importance of maintaining Dufferin's small-town charm while fostering responsible economic development, focusing on human, environmental, and financial well-being.
  - **2024 CSWB Survey:** Many responses call for increased employment opportunities, livable wages, and supporting local businesses to foster economic growth. Participants highlighted the need for various community supports and infrastructure improvements, including better employment opportunities, education on empathy and kindness, community building across cultural lines, recreational activities for kids, pedestrian and bike safety, reliable and accessible public transportation, social support, skills training for youth, and combating racism and discrimination.
  - **CSWB on Employment:** Local opportunities and livable wages, several respondents called for stronger infrastructure to support growth, e.g. skills training, public transit, and affordable housing.
  - **Applying Data:** Commuting data seems alarming as a single statistic, however taken together with the fact that home-based businesses, entrepreneurs and creative professionals (significant in Dufferin) are not included, and that commuters may work several days from home, further study may be required before commuting rises to priority status versus a symptom that would improve by addressing others, like employment, housing and wages. Data must support decision making, but interpretation, testing and corroboration are key to tell the whole story.
  - This topic intersects with the **DCEC Employment Working Group**, the FindYourJob.ca local insights portal, the County's ECE Workforce Strategy and living wage advocacy and certification, public events and other Workforce Planning Board activities.
  
- **Natural assets, agriculture and food production.** This is another unanimous theme from the sessions, and includes land stewardship, parks and recreational green spaces, protection of natural resources, preservation of agricultural lands and concerns about water, including aquifers.
  - **Headwaters Food Charter:** Goals and actions include protection of prime agricultural land; advocacy for supportive policies in land use, local food procurement, urban agriculture and zoning that help ag operations remain viable; awareness of vulnerabilities to and impact on climate change, practices that help mitigate and adapt, and minimizing food waste. Language here is moving beyond "sustainable" to "regenerative", to build back soils, wetlands, tree canopies and pursue carbon-negative actions that draw down carbon.
  - **2024 CSWB survey:** Appreciation for the rural setting, natural beauty, and peaceful environment of the area, including access to outdoor spaces, proximity to nature, and the quiet, safe atmosphere of small-town life. Calls for preserving green spaces and implementing environmentally friendly practices reflect a commitment to environmental protection and sustainability. Some responses express concerns about pollution, advocating for more monitoring of factories, and ensuring environmental protection measures are in place.
  - This intersects with the County's Climate Action Plan and many lower-tier municipal priorities to preserve the natural landscape and increase ecological services on farms.
  
- **Intentional, low-impact development.** The need to be intentional and cautious about development was a consistent theme in the workshops. Mono prioritized "low-impact development" while Amaranth prioritized "intentional growth", for example. Communities vary in their ability to accommodate growth and their own strategic goals for growth and development are complicated by conflicting goals of real estate and incumbent development companies.
  - **2024 CSWB survey:** Several respondents expressed concerns about the pace and type of development in the area, including urban sprawl, infrastructure issues, and the loss of small-town charm due to growth.
  - The Dufferin Climate Action Plan, Smart Communities Pillar states: "Dufferin County will promote economic development and diversification in established settlement areas, while preserving and protecting agricultural areas and the rural and natural character of the County."
  
- **Affordability.** Housing, food and childcare were three themes discussed both in terms of availability/accessibility and affordability, and related to employment, wages and commuting. Also mentioned was the cost of doing business in Dufferin, the tax rate and the complex regulatory environment.
  - **Housing** was the most mentioned aspect of affordability. Specifically the need for a mix of housing, close to services, employment and transportation, allowing for densification in urban settlements, multi-family dwelling on rural acreage and other options.

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- **VOICES of Lived Experience Dufferin** wrote: “We cannot begin healing while in the pressure cooker of living without a home”. They recommend a multi-approach to meet the diverse needs and circumstances of low-income individuals and families, including a range of housing initiatives, living wage employment and income supports, and innovative ideas like converting abandoned buildings, community land trusts for cooperatives (complete with community gardens), and a framework for improving housing affordability and stability.
- **2024 CSWB Survey:** 28.5% responded that they currently do not have access to affordable housing options. The availability of services and activities for children, teenagers, and families was also a concern. Requests for affordable child care, food, medication, and overall affordability for various services. Housing and Homelessness has been a CSWB priority area since 2021. A significant number of responses emphasized the importance of addressing food security issues, including support for food banks, subsidies or assistance for accessing food, and initiatives to address food insecurity. Additional emphasis was on reducing food prices, supporting local food producers, advocating for basic income, and implementing school food programs.
- This topic intersects with the County’s **Master Housing Strategy** (upcoming) and Dufferin County Equity Collaborative (DCEC) **Housing and Homelessness Working Group**, and a new **Homelessness Task Force**, as well as the **Dufferin Food Access Subcommittee**, which is prioritizing actions identified through consultation with **VOICES**.
- **Infrastructure.** This included everything from digital infrastructure (high speed internet), to municipal infrastructure like roads, land and water management, to employment infrastructure like skills training, transportation and business supports, to agriculture infrastructure like food processing facilities and protection of farmable lands. An even longer term planning horizon was encouraged to consider needs 30-40 years down the road, if the current rate of growth continues, and to ensure a sustainable future for food production in particular. Discussions highlighted the need for clarity about jurisdictions, regulations and consistency in policies among levels of government and between municipalities, as well as council support for more supportive policies.
  - **2024 CSWB Survey:** A recurring theme from the survey is the availability of services and amenities within the community, such as health care, shopping, recreational activities, and cultural events. Accessibility issues, such as lack of public transportation or amenities for specific demographics, were also mentioned. Access to transportation, including concerns about public transit and road conditions, was mentioned by several respondents as both a positive and negative aspect of the community.
  - This intersects with the County’s **Transportation Master Plan** (2023), the **Meat Processing Project** (2022) and aspects of the Official Plan.

For a community to thrive, governments, businesses, institutions, community groups, and individuals must all contribute within their unique spheres of influence to build social, environmental and economic prosperity. An effective regional strategy can offer cohesion, consistency, and economies of scale, but recognizes that one-size-fits-all solutions do not work at the ground level. It creates an environment for success while allowing strategies to be tailored to the strengths and aspirations of each contributor.

Based on the workshop discussions, the County seems well positioned to: serve as a hub for community-level data; activate existing plans like meat processing and transportation; convene sector networks like tourism, agriculture/food, construction/housing, and creative industries; advocate for policy changes and remove red tape without compromising protections; champion municipal plans and spark innovation (e.g. through design contests and RFPs); support collaborative community initiatives through direct participation and championship.

Our hope is that this strategy will help build a well-being economy locally, one that nurtures a business environment that delivers on all seven capitals. One that multi-solves, that addresses community priorities, supported by data, and that celebrates differences among lower-tier municipalities to facilitate the realization of the shared vision established through these engaging Community Insights Workshops. Based on 20 years of supporting transformative collaborative work, we believe it is possible to achieve the vision of a future where Dufferin County is the model of a thriving community.

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# THE PATH FORWARD

The next phase of this Strategy and Action Plan will be a collaborative implementation process involving partnerships with local municipalities and stakeholder organizations. There will be annual status update reports to County Council identifying key performance metrics for each theme. The reports will cover the progress made on the identified actions, challenges encountered, and any adjustments made to the plan.

This annual check-in and reaffirming process will ensure that the Strategy remains dynamic and responsive to the evolving economic landscape and community needs. It also promotes transparency, accountability, and adaptability in the implementation of the action plan. This approach will ensure that the initiatives that are developed by the County from this Strategy and Action Plan are resilient, relevant, and in line with the unique aspirations and needs of the local communities and municipalities.

