

"Proud History - Progressive Future"

Economic Development Strategy

2018-2023

www.ramara.ca/edo

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Executive Summary

The Township of Ramara's 2017-2022 Corporate Strategic Plan identifies a priority to support Economic and Tourism Development. This priority aims to grow the local economy and strengthen local businesses while promoting the natural assets in the Township. To achieve this goal, the Township must have a plan in place that is reflective of the current environment with realistic actions and objectives.

The Township's Economic Development Staff and Ramara Economic Development Committee worked with the Rural Economic Development Advisor from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) to create a realistic and achievable Economic Development Strategy. This strategy is aligned with the overall strategic direction of the municipality while reflecting the current business environment in Ramara.

Through extensive consultation and planning with local and regional economic development stakeholders, businesses and residents; the Township's 2018-2023 Economic Development Strategy was developed with five strategic goals:

- 1. Increase the amount of infrastructure available to the businesses and community, including internet, natural gas, water, wastewater and transportation.**
- 2. Enhance and increase the level of capacity and service for economic development in Ramara Township**
- 3. Identify and address barriers to development**
- 4. Support Business Retention and attraction from start-up to expansion**
- 5. Promote Investment in Ramara**

Objectives and action areas have been identified within each goal. These objectives and actions will help establish priority areas of focus and guide activities for the Township's Economic Development Staff and Committee.

Key performance indicators will be established for each of the goals and objectives, and annual reports will be submitted to provide updates on the progress that is being made.

Economic Development in Ramara

In consultation with businesses and stakeholders many benefits of doing business in Ramara were identified including:

- Helpfulness from municipal staff
- Quality of life for business owners and employees (helps with employee retention)
- Location – proximity to Lakes Couchiching and Simcoe, Highway 12 corridor, Orillia and the GTA
- Buy local initiative within community and business community
- Untapped business opportunities exist for incoming businesses

Ramara Township’s population is forecasted to increase to 13,000 residents by 2031.

Residential Building Permit values increased 292% from 2011 to 2017	Year	Permit Value
	2011	\$8.46 Million
	2017	\$24.72 Million

Ramara Township is a **net exporter** of workers with approximately 2,994 jobs within the municipality and a labour force of more than 8,295. The fastest growing occupations are positions in art, culture, recreation and sport, health occupations, and natural resources, agriculture and related production occupation.

Based on location quotient scores, Ramara has a strategic advantage in 6 NAICS industry sub sectors, the most substantial of which is in the arts, entertainment and recreation sub-sector.

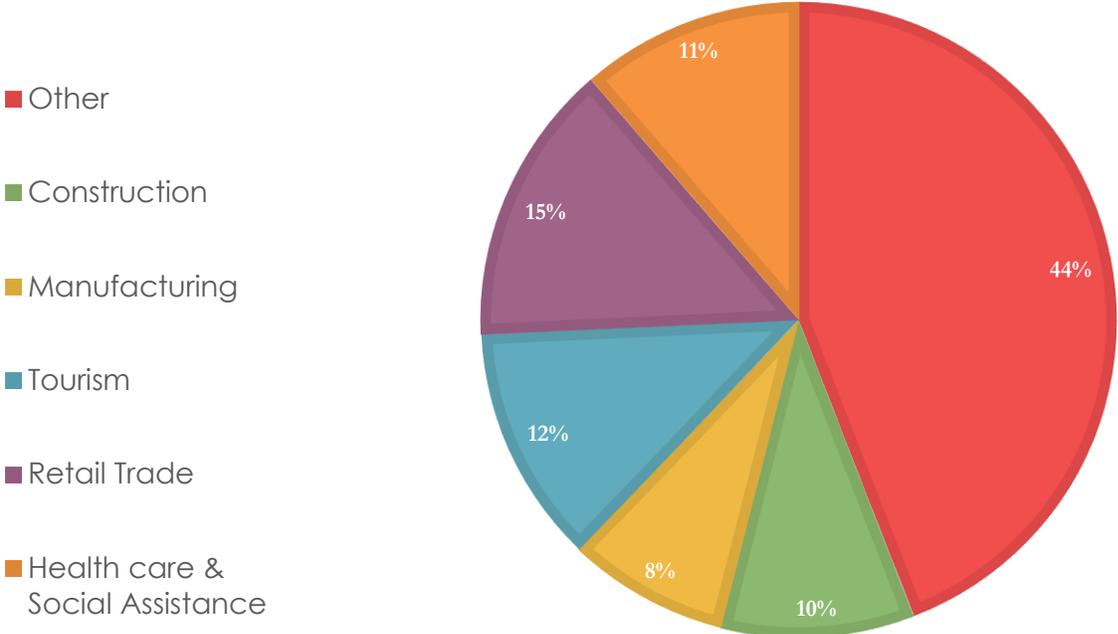
Ramara’s Top 5 Industry Sub-sector by Location Quotient	
Arts, entertainment and recreation	3.78
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	3.71
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	2.21
Accommodation and Food Services	1.86
Public Administration	1.80

Location quotient (LQ) is a measure of a region’s share of an industry in relation to the provincial or national economy. A LQ score of greater than 1 is considered to be above the provincial average, and over 1.2 is considered a strategic advantage compared to other parts of the province.

Other sub-sectors with a substantial increase in jobs between 2011-2016 are information and cultural industries, and professional, scientific and technical services.

Ramara's fastest growing industries are mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction, health care and social assistance, retail and manufacturing

KEY INDUSTRIES BY JOB NUMBERS



Other: Agriculture forestry, fishing and hunting, Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction, Utilities, Wholesale trade, Transportation and warehousing, Information and cultural industries, Finance and insurance, Real estate and rental and leasing, Professional, scientific and technical services, Management of companies and enterprises, Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services, Educational services, Other services (except public administration), Public administration

Strategy Development

With assistance and direction from the Rural Economic Development Advisor from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), the Ramara Economic Development Committee (REDC) and staff undertook a comprehensive process to prepare an Economic Development Strategy for the Township of Ramara. Currently the municipality does not have an Economic Development Strategy, however direction from the Corporate Strategic Plan highlighted a need for more focus on Economic Development.

A series of consultations, workshops and planning sessions were held from September 2017 through March 2018. These sessions included:

- Business and external stakeholder open houses were held on November 15th 2017
- A business questionnaire email was sent to businesses for the week after the open house
- A resident survey was posted online from September 27th 2017 to October 27th 2017
- OMAFRA's Community Economic Development (CED) 101 Workshop was held on January 14, 2018 with the REDC to provide an overview of economic development practices and activities to help establish roles, responsibilities, priorities, and direction for the plan; and
- Three strategic planning workshops were held on February 2, 2018, February 9, 2018 and March 16, 2018 with the Ramara Economic Development Committee that refined the direction of the plan, established its scope, identified specific goals and objectives, and developed performance measures.

The findings from several other projects that were completed in advance of the Economic Development Strategic Planning Exercise were considered when developing the plan. These projects included:

- A Regional Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) Study completed in 2016
- A Regional Tourism Asset Mapping Exercise completed in the Fall of 2016.

- A First Impressions Community Exchange (FICE) program that recommended key improvements to the Village of Brechin and identified positive features as well.

The information gathered from these studies and the elements of the Strategic Planning exercise provided valuable insight regarding community and business strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This information shaped the direction of the strategy and the steps the municipality needs to take in Economic Development.

MISSION

To serve as a connector, advisor and facilitator of the economic development ecosystem that will support the attraction, retention and expansion of business in Ramara.

VISION

Our vision is for a cohesive, well-serviced community that has facilitated the development of a diverse and profitable business community and municipality.



Strategic Goal #1

Increase the amount of infrastructure available to the businesses and community, including internet, natural gas, water, wastewater and transportation.

Objective 1: Meet and advocate with servicing companies to provide necessary infrastructure within the community

Action Areas

- Identify priority areas – establish a rationale to facilitate a pitch
- Identify suppliers in Ontario, potentially Canada
- Meet with the most likely suppliers (prioritized list) to advocate for servicing, find out the requirements to bring infrastructure in
- Create an action plan to address the gaps in requirements

Objective 2: Investigate appropriate and achievable tactics to bring infrastructure to the Township, prioritizing the Rama Road Corridor

Action Areas

- Advocate to the County to support/coordinate efforts to share the “need for infrastructure” message to other levels of government
- Connect with other municipalities who have been successful in obtaining infrastructure funding to learn from their success
- Connect with relevant levels of government to advocate for the need, and to better understand the funding process
- Research best practices and creative ways to drive forward infrastructure development

Objective 3: Leverage the SWIFT program

Action Areas

- Investigate how SWIFT (for internet) can benefit the municipality
- Follow up for ways to move forward quickly
- Continue partnership with SWIFT

Strategic Goal #2

Enhance and increase the level of capacity and service for Economic Development in Ramara Township

Objective 1: Dedicate the necessary resources to the Economic Development department to complete the objectives identified in the strategy

Action Areas

- Identify time and budgetary requirements to complete strategy (identified in annual work plan)
- Identify any gaps in knowledge and/or personnel
- Address gaps through training and increased staff time dedicated to economic development

Objective 2: Enhance and expand economic development capacity through the leveraging of relevant partnerships

Action Areas

- Continue to liaise with the regional support system to help refer and answer inquiries
- Identify support services where there is no existing connection and explore opportunities for partnership and/or referral
- Improve communications (email/phone/in-person meetings) with all partners regarding initiatives and opportunities in Ramara, and initiatives and opportunities they may be offering to share back to the business community and public

Strategic Goal #3

Identify and address barriers to development

Objective 1: Continue advocating for Ramara's needs through Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw update process

Action Areas

- Identify areas where advocacy is required
- Remain involved in Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw update discussions
- Participate in Zoning Bylaw update for home based businesses to make it easier for start-ups. Support changes to be more inclusive of home based business
- Review existing provisions to identify land use limitations (including road access) and where acceptable and possible, remove land use limitations

Objective 2: Explore the feasibility of a development permitting system (DPS), if feasible, adopt

Action Areas

- Identify agencies that need be involved in DPS
- Discuss with relevant agencies what could be possible under DPS
- If feasible, implement new system
- Communicate about the new system to the business community and public using multiple channels

Objective 3: Advocate for Ramara with local and provincial officials to remove existing barriers to development

Action Areas

- Identify and document comprehensive list of barriers and concerns
- Identify the local/provincial point person(s) responsible for the barriers and concerns identified on the above list
- Connect with point person to better understand how/why the barrier/concern came to exist, what are the long-term plans (i.e. MTO and entrances) and what options are available to remedy the issue
- Where possible, pursue potential options to remedy
- Where not possible, connect with other municipalities facing similar barriers and advocate in creative ways
- Research best practices related to advocacy

Strategic Goal #4

Support Business Retention and Attraction from start-up to expansion

Objective 1: Improve communication with and access to information for the business community

Action Areas

- Welcome/start-up package with CDC/OLC information
- Packages for businesses with zoning information (parking etc.)
- Home based business information package
- Update and modernize economic development website, include a news and information (programs and events) section
- Assess the need and role of social media in connecting with businesses
- Assess the need and role of creating a business focused newsletter to share news and information
- Build and maintain a business database

Objective 2: Improve communication and coordination with business support services

Action Areas

- Maintain and improve relationship with CDC/County/Chamber to support start-ups, expansions, retention, etc.
- Maintain and improve relationship with OLC/Tourism Simcoe County to help promote business community and Ramara from a tourism perspective, as well as support product development
- Explore opportunities to expand partnership with Brechin and Beyond
- Work with partners to develop a business to business networking event to facilitate stronger connectivity in the business community, assess feasibility of creating an on-going event
- Explore best practices with partners for business start-up, retention, and expansion

Objective 3: Implement a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) for property improvement and on-farm diversification

Action Areas

- Connect with Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to understand CIP development process and what incentives/abatements are possible to offer
- Develop and implement CIP
- Promote CIP to existing and incoming business

Strategic Goal #5

Promote Investment in Ramara

Objective 1: Complete a branding exercise

Action Areas

- Perform a branding exercise
- Roll-out and implementation of recommended actions
- Communicate out new brand
- Update Township materials to reflect the brand

Object 2: Improve Township signage

Action Areas

- Explore feasibility of digital signs to advertise community events
- Update Township signage to reflect new brand
- Identify locations and attractions for wayfinding signage (ex. Beach, library, farmer's market)
- Purchase and install wayfinding signage

Objective 3: Market available land and investment opportunities

Action Areas

- Create marketing materials for Township and industrial park: Materials should include a community profile, information on doing business in the Township, information on available properties, etc.
- Identify channels to promote the industrial park
- Promote industrial park lands
- Continue to partner with OLC/County/Small r regional group for investment attraction projects (including: regional marketing partnership, tourism attraction/investment, etc.)