



## Report to Council

Department: Development Services  
Division: Development Services  
Date: April 20, 2026  
Prepared by: Lori Chadwick, Director, Development Services  
Nelson Silveira, Manager, Economic Development  
Report Number: Development Services-2026-06  
Subject: 2025 Economic Development Year in Review  
Number of Pages: 6 plus attachment

### **Recommendation(s)**

**That** Development Services Report 2025-06 entitled “2025 Economic Development Year in Review” prepared by Lori Chadwick, Director, Development Services and Nelson Silveira, Manager, Economic Development dated April 20, 2026 be received.

### **Purpose**

To introduce Council to the inaugural “Economic Development Year in Review”, to provide Council with a comprehensive summary and infographic of the Economic Development Division’s activities, achievements, and key outcomes for 2025, to highlight progress made in advancing various Strategic Initiatives, and to introduce future Quarterly Newsletters and consolidation of reporting.

## **Background and Discussion**

The 2025 year marked strong progress in advancing the Town of Essex's Economic Development priorities. Through targeted business support, strategic partnerships, tourism promotion, and forward-looking planning initiatives, the Town continued to foster economic growth, enhance community vitality, and position Essex as an attractive place to live, work, and invest.

The 2025 Economic Development Year in Review, **attached** to this report, is intended to enhance transparency and awareness of Economic Development initiatives by consolidating key performance metrics, project updates, and community impacts into a single, accessible, and graphical document. As this is the first time Council is receiving a report in this format, it establishes a new approach to communicating annual achievements and aligning departmental efforts with various cross-functional corporate strategic initiatives.

Key areas of focus in the Year in Review include:

- Supporting local business growth and retention
- Strengthening community partnerships
- Advancing tourism development
- Driving strategic initiatives

This report also introduces the opportunity to implement a Quarterly Economic Development reporting framework moving forward. These quarterly reports would follow a similar format as the attached Year in Review, and will provide

more frequent updates to Council, while also consolidating multiple reporting streams into one cohesive document, and may include:

- Tourism Events Fund reporting
- Community Improvement Plan (CIP) reporting
- Building Activity and Development Overview
- Other relevant economic development and growth-related updates

The proposed Quarterly approach is intended to improve efficiency, reduce reporting duplication, and provide Council with timely, streamlined insights to support informed decision-making throughout the year.

Administration would like to thank Council for its continued openness, support, and commitment to advancing Economic Development initiatives. Council's leadership and willingness to embrace new approaches to communication have been instrumental in enabling the Department to evolve its practices and improve how information is shared.

### **Financial Impact**

There are no direct financial impacts associated with the preparation of the Year in Review and the proposed Quarterly reporting framework, as these initiatives can be accommodated within current staff resources.

Overall, the activities demonstrate a strong return on investment through external funding leverage, support for local economic growth, and the identification of new revenue opportunities.

## **Consultations**

RaeAnn Schroeder, Analyst, Economic Development and Business Relations

### **Link to Strategic Priorities**

- Embrace asset management best practices to build, maintain, and continuously improve our municipally owned infrastructure.
- Leverage our Town’s competitive advantages to promote jobs and economic investment.
- Take care of our natural environment and strengthen the sense of belonging to everyone who makes Essex “home”.
- Deliver friendly customer service in an efficient, effective, and transparent manner while providing an exceptional working environment for our employees.
- Build corporate-level and community-level climate resilience through community engagement and partnership and corporate objectives.

**Report Approval Details**

Document Title:	Annual Economic Development Report - Development Services-2026-06.docx
Attachments:	- Final EcDev Infographic - Town of Essex.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Apr 13, 2026

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Giurissevich". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

**Kate Giurissevich, Chief Administrative Officer - Apr 13, 2026 - 9:27 PM**

# Town of Essex Economic Development

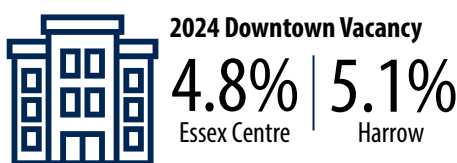
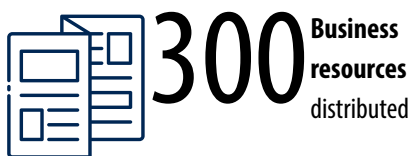
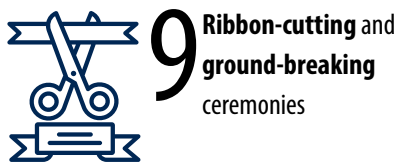
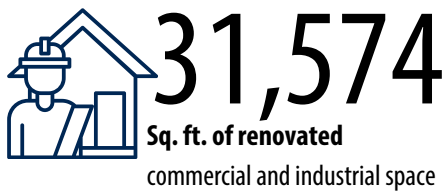


2025 Year in Review

In 2025, the Town of Essex Economic Development Department delivered a range of initiatives and services that supported local business growth, expanded investment opportunities, strengthened tourism, and promoted the Town as a great place to live, work, and visit. Through proactive business retention efforts and collaborative partnerships, the team advanced strategic priorities that supported sustainable growth.

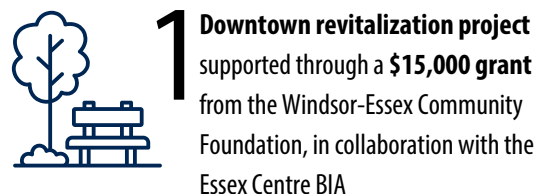
## Business Retention and Expansion

Business retention and expansion in the Town of Essex focuses on helping local businesses thrive. By engaging directly with businesses and entrepreneurs, our team provides hands-on support and connects them with resources that promote long-term vitality. Through proactive and responsive business retention and expansion initiatives, the team helps ensure local business needs are clearly understood and effectively supported.



## Community Impact

Our team is committed to fostering a positive impact on the local community through various initiatives, partnerships, and tailored support. By working directly with businesses, nonprofits, and organizations, the team helps create opportunities for economic growth, strengthen community connections, and enhance the quality of life for residents.



### Strategic Initiatives

2025 marked a year of significant progress in advancing strategic initiatives outlined in the 2023–2027 Strategic Action Plan. Key accomplishments included launching a Rural Transit Feasibility Study to identify transportation options for residents, exploring the implementation of a Municipal Accommodation Tax to support tourism initiatives, developing an Industrial Community Improvement Plan to stimulate industrial growth and investment attraction efforts, and implementing a Sponsorship and Naming Rights Policy to generate additional revenue streams for municipal programs and assets.

#### Rural Transit Feasibility Study

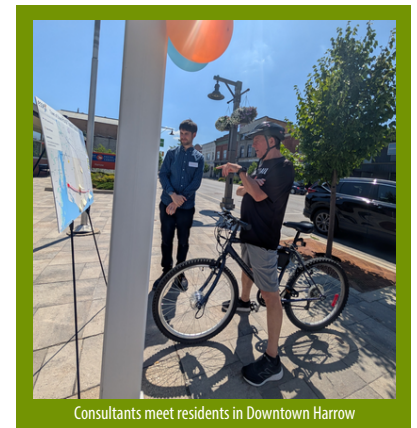
Launched to explore the feasibility of public transit within the Town and assess how improved public transit could enhance the quality of life for residents. The study examined the unique travel needs of the Town’s diverse communities and proposed a feasible solution to meet local travel demand.



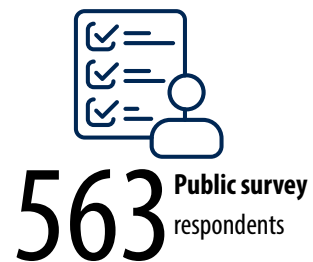
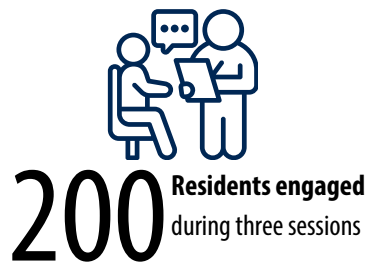
Residents engage with consultants at Essex Fun Fest



Feedback board at Essex Fun Fest



Consultants meet residents in Downtown Harrow



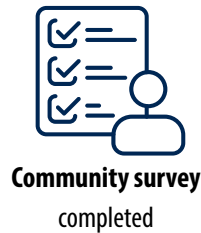
#### Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT)

Explored the feasibility of implementing a Municipal Accommodation Tax within the Town, assessing how potential revenue could support tourism initiatives, community events, and the enhancement of local amenities.



### Industrial Community Improvement Plan (CIP)

Developed an Industrial Community Improvement Plan to stimulate private investment, expand employment opportunities, modernize the Town's industrial areas, and incentivize business retention and expansion.



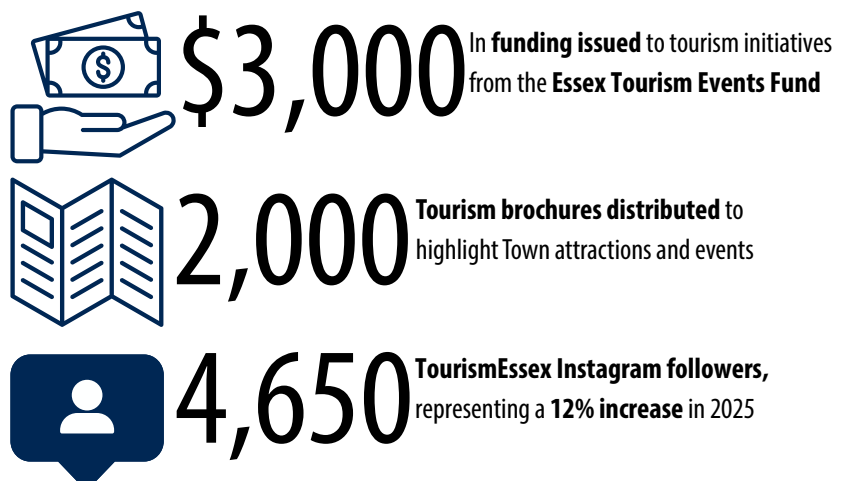
### Sponsorship and Naming Rights Policy

Implemented a Sponsorship and Naming Rights Policy to generate additional revenue and support the maintenance and enhancement of Town assets, community initiatives, and events. The team continues to pursue partnerships with local organizations and businesses to establish mutually beneficial sponsorship and naming rights agreements.



### Tourism

Our team is committed to advancing tourism and positioning Essex as a vibrant destination for visitors by promoting local assets and attractions, supporting events, and strengthening partnerships with businesses and organizations. These efforts help to elevate the community's tourism profile and enhance the overall visitor experience.



Town of Essex Tourism Booth at the 2025 TWEPI Staycation Expo

### Explore Essex: Summer Tourism Marketing Campaign

To boost tourism in the region, the team collaborates with internal departments to deliver targeted marketing campaigns. In Summer 2025, the team launched a 12-week **Explore Essex** campaign showcasing local experiences.

# 595,000

Total impressions across Facebook, Instagram, and Google

# 129,355

People reached through Facebook and Instagram

# 10,000

Tourism Essex website visits from digital advertisements

### Future Initiatives

The team is planning several forward-looking initiatives aimed at strengthening economic growth, community engagement, and operational efficiency.



#### Sponsorship and Naming Rights

Issue a Request for Proposals to generate interest in Sponsorship and Naming Rights opportunities



#### Essex Centre Sports Fields

Issue a Request for Expressions of Interest to gather proposals from qualified private sector parties



#### Business Concierge Program

Implement a Concierge Service to support and guide eligible proponents through the development approval process



#### Roadmap to Ribbon Cutting

Develop and design a developers checklist to illustrate the various stages of the development process, from project initiation to completion



#### Housing Needs Assessment

Develop a Housing Assessment to better understand current and future housing needs. This report will guide the creation of a Housing Action Plan in 2027



#### Industrial Community Improvement Plan (CIP)

Implement CIP incentives to revitalize industrial lands and support long-term economic growth



#### Downtown Vacancy Report

Conduct a 2026 Downtown Vacancy Study in Essex Centre and Harrow to document commercial vacancies



#### Business Milestone Recognition Program

Launch a program to honour and recognize local business milestone anniversaries