

# Summary

## Economic Development

**Subject:** Mayor's Roundtable on Economic Development

**Meeting Date:** Wednesday May 29th, 2024

**Time:** 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

**Location:** Collingwood Public Library  
55 Ste Marie St, Collingwood, ON L9Y 0W6  
Community Room C, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

**About:** The Town of Collingwood regularly hosts the Mayor's Roundtable on Economic Development to actively engage the business community. This Roundtable meeting concentrated on business support resources in Collingwood. The primary objective was to identify opportunities and address gaps in the local business ecosystem.

### Welcome and Introductions

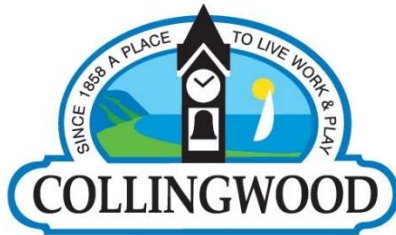
- Mayor Hamlin provided welcome remarks and participants introduced themselves.

### Overview of Business Support Resources:

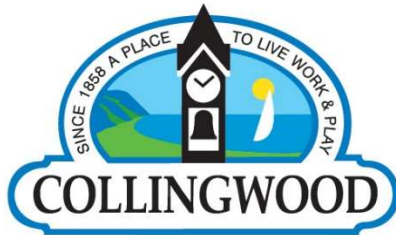
- Overview of Business Support Resources were provided by the following:
  - o J. Griggs: Town of Collingwood Economic Development
  - o T. Newton: Small Business Enterprise Centre
  - o G. Fairley: Community Futures SGB
  - o P. Heinke: Georgian Bay Accelerator
  - o T. Irwin: Collingwood Chamber of Commerce

### Roundtable Discussion

- Discussion regarding leveraging the wealth and knowledge of the community to better support scaling businesses through investment and mentorship, especially related to intellectual property (IP).
  - o The GB Accelerator leverages some of this through their mentor network.
  - o The Georgian Angels Network was identified as a possible source of investment.
  - o Businesses need to be selective with investors to ensure they have the appropriate match with their company needs.
  - o The Small Business Enterprise Centre is leveraging Intellectual Property Ontario (IPON), a new provincial agency focused on IP support for Ontario based innovators, to deliver workshops in the region.



- Discussion about more support for Intellectual Property (IP) through post secondary institutions and programs to support IP. It was noted that IPON has some funding to support costs of securing IP.
- Discussion regarding what skills are needed and if there are opportunities to work with Post Secondary Institutions (PSIs) like Georgian College to address workforce gaps.
  - It was identified that training is costly and anything the town can do to help offset costs would be welcomed by the business community. However, many businesses provide training in house because the available training is not keeping pace with the rapid changes in the market.
  - There are opportunities to work with PSIs on research and development, leverage grants, and expertise which also acts as a funnel for staffing.
  - The attraction of more PSI programming and students would help to address labour shortages for industries that do not require skilled labour.
  - Challenges in attracting a PSI and students is that there needs to be an urban environment/lifestyle that students and graduates are attracted to for education and early careers.
  - Georgian College is developing a strategic plan. This is an opportunity for local businesses to engage with them and provide input into what is needed to support labour needs.
  - Challenges with transportation to urban centres (Barrie, Toronto, Waterloo) was identified as a barrier to attracting workforce.
  - There is interest in identifying and targeting key issues for businesses by bringing industry together and identifying priorities. Ideal timing would be August.
- Housing was identified as a barrier to workforce attraction.
  - Town staff noted that there seems to be a lack of the business community's voice at the table when housing related matters are discussed. How can the town better engage the business community in attainable housing initiatives? One opportunity is coming up, a quick-wins zoning by-law public meeting related to reduced parking standards and increased permissions for additional dwelling units and the voice of employers would be welcome (see attached notice)
  - A business identified a keen interest in incorporating workforce housing on their industrial site to serve multiple employers. However, due to planning policies and land use regulations at the provincial level, Town staff can't officially support a recommendation to move forward. A Ministerial Zoning Order was suggested to seek approval to proceed directly from the provincial government without going through the traditional planning process, if the proposal is in the public interest.
    - Staff are researching examples of employee housing on industrial lands in an effort to identify precedence and are open to coordinating more discussions about employers underwriting rental developments.



- It was acknowledged that some companies are providing rental housing for employees by securing residential units throughout town.
  - The affordability of developing rental housing was discussed. When the County subsidised housing was developed, it cost \$340K per unit, now the cost is \$500K per unit. Approximately 27% of the cost of housing is fees and taxes. The uncertainty of the process is also costly to developers.
    - Opportunity for the town to eliminate barriers and be a more welcoming community for investors as well as act as a development partner when working with other agencies (i.e. NVCA).
    - Development charge wavers for affordable housing are being proposed at the provincial level and could be available as early as June/July 2024.
  - A regional approach to housing and engagement/establishment of a NFP to support housing development was discussed.
  - Opportunity to bring the various players (i.e. various levels of government, builders, project managers, etc.) to identify the barriers, associated costs and identify interested parties to mobilize solutions.
  - It was suggested that the Town have a more focused discussion on housing with the business community to help identify solutions.
- Discussion regarding the complexity of the challenges to workforce attraction.
- There is no one solution but the government can be a leader to roll out a road map on how to address the issues and grow from within our community. The challenge is multifaceted and includes items like daycare, education, social organizations, welcoming newcomers, etc.
  - It was acknowledged that this would require strong leadership and allocation of resources/funding.
- Discussion regarding access to business data/profiles to enhance connections between businesses.
- Data is available based on National Occupational Classification (NOC) and North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes but there is no listing of all the businesses in the community.
  - There is a need to be able to better identify local supply chains to make strategic connections. However, the challenge is keeping a business list up to date and relevant as it would require businesses to provide updates whenever their products/services change.
  - The Chamber of Commerce is interested in providing support in this area and utilizing AI as a data collection tool.
  - The Business Development Centre (BDC) was recognized as a central source of information for the business community.

## Wrap Up

Participants were thanked for their time and input and encouraged to connect with staff and Council as appropriate to further discuss various items.