

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Introduction

Contact: Cara Finn, Director of Economic Development

The Economic Development Department promotes Middlesex County as an ideal place to establish and grow business while enjoying a high quality of life.

The department's main objectives are to nurture and attract private sector investment thereby, creating/maintaining job opportunities, and increasing the property tax base. To accomplish these objectives, the department engages in strategic economic development planning, and partners with local area municipalities, private industry, and educational institutions, along with various regional economic development and trade agencies.

Business retention and expansion, as well as new investment attraction, are priorities. Visitor attraction is carried out by the department; which acts as the Destination Marketing Organization for the County.

Key sectors include:

- Agri-business
- Manufacturing
- Tourism
- Small Business and Entrepreneurship

These sectors are promoted through the development of goal-oriented programs, key partnerships, and marketing campaigns and by providing an effective response to investment inquiries.

The Department of Economic Development serves four main functions in its role of supporting both the Economic Development and Tourism Development of the County:

1. Research and Information Management
2. Marketing and Communications
3. Business Retention
4. Investment Attraction

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### 2023 Budget Highlights

- The Economic Development and Tourism budget is directly aligned with the priority objectives of the Middlesex County Strategic Plan and 2021-2025 Economic Development Strategic Plan which call for the Continuation/Enhancement of Tourism Marketing Support and for the Expansion of Foreign Direct Investment and Economic Development Services
- The 2023 budget continues to emphasize Business Retention and new Investment Attraction. Alliance with regional investment attraction agencies is a key component; as well as supporting local municipalities with their development efforts including Industrial Land Analysis and Community Improvement Plan implementation
- The department will be hosting an in-person Tourism Symposium and Sector Tours (i.e. Agri-Business) in 2023. Such initiatives were put on hold for 2020-2022 due to COVID-19 but form an important part of our Business Retention and Expansion programs



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- Several Provincial and Federal grant applications have been made and/or confirmed in order to advance the initiatives of the Economic Development Department in 2023:
  - A grant of Rural Economic Development Funding from OMAFRA has been successfully acquired to advance the Workforce Development Partnership initiatives that form a significant part of our Strategic Plan extending from 2022 through to March 31, 2023. Initiatives taking place under this program include a downtown revitalization best practice sharing exercise, a workforce development workshop with Fanshawe College, an International Women's Day special presentation, and a successional planning training series for small businesses
  - An additional grant of Rural Economic Development Funding from OMAFRA has been successfully acquired to implement a special project aimed at advancing cooperative education and work-integrated learning opportunities in partnership with Middlesex employers and secondary and post-secondary institutions through to December 31, 2023
  - Partnership funding has been successfully acquired from the following organizations to support the next "From Our Hands to Your Table" campaign in 2023: Middlesex Federation of Agriculture, Lambton Federation of Agriculture, Tourism Sarnia-Lambton, Sarnia-Lambton Economic Partnership
  - CanExport Funding from Global Affairs Canada has been successfully secured to support the department's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) efforts, including both Lead Generation and Travel in 2023. We have also been successful in securing CanExport Funding for the FDI efforts of the Ontario Food Cluster in 2023.