



2021
— TO —
2025

Town of Ajax
Economic
Development
ACTION PLAN



Contents

List of Acronyms	iii
Executive Summary	1
1. Introduction	3
1.1 The Purpose of the Economic Development Action Plan.....	3
1.2 Aligning our Economic Development Efforts	3
2. Developing the Strategy.....	5
2.1 Strategic Planning Process.....	6
2.2 A Community Profile for Ajax	6
2.3 Employment and Demographic Projections.....	15
3. Business and Community Consultation	18
3.1 Stakeholder Interviews.....	18
3.2 Stakeholder Workshops	21
3.3 Online Community Survey.....	22
3.4 Telephone Business Survey	22
4. SOARR Assessment.....	27
4.1 Determining Strategic Goals and Priorities	30
5. Strategic Goals.....	31
5.1 Goal # 1: Leaders in Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction.....	31
5.2 Goal # 2: Innovators in Business Incubation and Workforce Development	33
5.3 Goal # 3: Supporters of Attractive Place Development	35
5.4 Goal # 4: Champions for Organizational Readiness to Support Growth and Development ..	37
6. Action Plan	40
Goal #1: Leaders in Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction	42
Goal # 2: Innovators in Business Incubation and Workforce Development.....	50
Goal # 3: Supporters of Attractive Place Development.....	54
Goal # 4: Champions for Organizational Readiness to Support Growth and Development	59



List of Acronyms

A number of acronyms are used throughout the Economic Development Action Plan. The following list has been provided to assist the readers.

Figure 1: Common Acronyms

APBOT	Ajax Pickering Board of Trade
BACD	Business Advisory Centre Durham
BIA	Business Improvement Areas
CAIST	Central Ajax Intensification, Servicing and Transportation Strategy
CELR	Commercial Employment Land Review
DEDP	Durham Economic Development Partnership
DWA	Durham Workforce Authority
EDAP	Economic Development Action Plan
GGH	Greater Golden Horseshoe
GTHA	Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area
MEDJCT	Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises





Executive Summary

The Town of Ajax is a rapidly evolving and adapting municipality, unique within Durham Region and, in fact, the province. Ajax has experienced tremendous population growth and has grown to be one of the youngest and most diverse populations east of Toronto. Ajax's business community is also emerging with unique clusters of activity around transportation, logistics and advanced manufacturing, as well as a high concentration of arts, entertainment and culture employment. As part of Durham Region, Ajax continues to enjoy strength in healthcare and information and communications technology. With so many positive signs and attributes, Ajax is well-positioned to continue to grow a vibrant economy.

Competition in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area and beyond is fierce. While simply having available land was once enough to be an attractive destination for investment, municipalities around Toronto are coming to terms with the fact that in order to provide the employment opportunities that their residents desire, it is essential that they shift their thinking away from traditionally land-intensive and low employment industries and focus instead on industries that require people and skills.

To drive job creation and provide opportunities to retain its young and diverse talent base, Ajax has put innovation at the forefront of its economic development efforts. The economic landscape has changed since Ajax last conducted an economic development strategy. Technology continues to be a driving force in the new economy, and Ajax's embrace of innovation has positioned the community to continue to be a leader. The Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP) was developed to build on Ajax's existing appeal and unique assets while also providing a shift in thinking and efforts for the Economic Development section within the Planning & Development Department and the Town as a whole.

Community and stakeholder input was an essential component in the development of the Economic Development Action Plan. Input was solicited from residents, local businesses, industry and community partners, staff and elected officials. These discussions provided valuable insight into the economic development vision for the future. The Economic Development Action Plan also drew heavily and aligned with the Town's 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan. The extensive consultation and outcomes of that visioning exercise helped to inform and shape the goals and actions contained in this document.

The goals outlined within the Economic Development Action Plan represent the areas where focused attention and activities over the next five years can enable the Town to continue to cement their status on the leading-edge of new and emerging economic opportunities, and most importantly, drive job creation for Ajax's residents both now and into the future. The Economic Development Action Plan has four goals, but each is closely intertwined. Success in achieving the goals will continue to build a strong business and entrepreneurial ecosystem, with innovation at the core.

The four goals outlined in the Plan are:

1. **Leaders in Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction**
2. **Innovators in Business Incubation and Workforce Development**
3. **Supporters of Attractive Place Development**
4. **Champions for Organizational Readiness to Support Growth and Development**



Business retention, expansion (BRE) refers to continuing to build and support the existing businesses in Ajax. As the largest driver of job growth, existing Ajax businesses play a critical role in developing the local economy. Ajax's businesses, especially small and medium enterprises, have the greatest potential to drive job creation for local residents. Understanding and supporting their needs, including access to technology, funding opportunities, additional space or talent, is a key feature of the Economic Development Action Plan. Attracting new businesses and tourists will continue to add to the diverse economic make-up of Ajax and ensure that the local economy is growing in a sustainable way that enables reinvestment in the amenities that make Ajax a great place to live.

Business innovation, incubation, acceleration and workforce development recognizes that talent and human capital are the new currency in economic development. An innovation hub can be the spark that will drive a new approach to grow Ajax's economy. Enabling businesses, entrepreneurs and the community at large to participate in the growth of the Town's reputation for innovation will be a game-changer for Ajax. The Economic Development Action Plan refers to the creation of an innovation hub as a catalyst for a broad-based innovation agenda across the Town. As the Town looks to explore the feasibility of such a concept, it is relevant to consider how the spokes from such an effort will extend across the town and the region as the ideas and talent that comes together there spreads across industries, sectors and communities.

The concept of an innovation hub is just one opportunity where this new energy and excitement will be nurtured. Place development refers to the creating and connecting communities across Ajax that are vibrant places to live, work and play. Downtown, Ajax's GO Node and central employment area are just a few examples of where building these connections through strategic investments, advocacy, and engagement can lead to revitalization.

Ensuring organizational readiness is an overarching goal for the Economic Development Action Plan. Ajax has an exceptional opportunity to drive job growth, continue to foster an innovative culture and develop a renewed sense of community for residents and businesses. Ensuring that the Economic Development Action Plan and the organization have the resources required to capitalize on the tremendous opportunity, optimism and energy of the community is a critical factor in the overall success of the EDAP and alignment with Council's strategic direction.





1. Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of the Economic Development Action Plan

The Town of Ajax last undertook an economic development strategy in 2010. Since then, much has changed across the region. Manufacturing has undergone a significant fundamental shift across the Province, and new industries have emerged as the internet of things, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity have fundamentally changed and will continue to change the way we live and the nature of work in many industries.

Durham Region and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) have also undergone significant changes over the past decade. Municipalities across the region are emerging with unique offerings to residents and businesses as they compete for new types of employment, driven by technology and talent, while still maintaining some of their more traditional industry sectors. The western portion of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area has continued to see exponential growth; with cities like Hamilton looking to become leaders in the creative economy, Mississauga continues to be a location of choice for many corporate head offices and a life science cluster. Other municipalities like Vaughan and Brampton have taken the opportunity to re-imagine their downtowns around transit hubs and plan for the future. Markham has also emerged as a fast-growing municipality with a high concentration of information, communications and technology-based (ICT) firms. The GTHA and surrounding areas are the sites of significant changes, with municipalities carving out their own niches and clusters of industry-defining many jurisdictions.

Municipalities themselves are having to reimagine their roles as an organization, including the way in which they deliver economic development services and support for their business communities. Across the GTHA, municipalities are increasingly embracing the idea of becoming smarter as an organization and fully utilizing emerging technology to meet the needs of increasingly sophisticated clients. With so much change taking place, a forward-looking and proactive economic development strategy and a sound action plan is required.

Many of those consulted pointed to the need for Ajax to act quickly and decisively to keep pace with the rapidly changing environment. Matching the Town's ambitious and forward-looking Council with an ambitious action plan will give the Town's Economic Development staff a roadmap to build on the recent momentum and energy within the community. A new Economic Development Action Plan with a five-year horizon will allow the Town of Ajax to take advantage of emerging opportunities, capitalize on the competitive advantages of the region and best position Council and staff to pursue employment and economic growth for a strong Ajax.

1.2 Aligning our Economic Development Efforts

The Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP) builds on the ongoing efforts of the Town of Ajax and its partner agencies to understand and capitalize on the competitive advantages and aspirations of the community. The Town of Ajax undertook the development of a new corporate strategic plan for the term of Council, *2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan – Stronger Together*. The corporate strategic plan represents the goals and priorities of the municipality and involved significant consultation within the organization and the broader community. The corporate strategic plan outlines three overarching goals of 'Connecting our Community,' 'Investing in our Community' and, 'Leading in our Community.'



These goals are complemented with further defined actions, many of which speak to economic development as a priority. The Economic Development Action Plan builds out these priorities with the evidence-based look at the economy, best practice research and the input of the business community, residents and stakeholders across Ajax.

The EDAP also leverages the work done through the Durham Region Competitiveness Study. The Study identifies regional, community, and site-related factors that influence the economic competitiveness of Durham Region. The Study assesses industrial and office market conditions and trends, market readiness, and Durham's relative competitiveness in key target sectors, including health industries, digital media, energy, environment, and engineering and advanced manufacturing. While the analysis is primarily done at the regional level, there are a number of municipal level assessments and analyses that have been reflected in the EDAP. The EDAP also considers the work associated with the recently completed Commercial and Employment Land Review (CELR) and applies an economic development lens to these findings.

The Town of Ajax continues to be active in the innovation space and is exploring the concept of an innovation hub, be it virtual (short-term), centred on downtown or the re-purposing surplus properties elsewhere in the community. As the concept is explored, it will create positive momentum within the community and continue to grow over the life of this Action Plan. Prior to the pandemic, there was considerable activity and energy being driven by Council and staff, and it remains important that the Economic Development Action Plan harnesses this energy into a framework and recommendations that the Economic Development staff can deliver over the next five years to keep the Town moving forward.

This plan will necessarily require some fluidity as the business community and the Ajax community as whole navigate the ongoing impacts of COVID.





2. Developing the Strategy

The Town of Ajax Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP) is a five-year plan designed to identify opportunities and actions required to generate growth by the economic development office in conjunction with departments across the Town of Ajax and with the support of Council. The Ajax EDAP looks at the historical performance of the town's economy, current and projected industry growth trends and emerging market trends, best practices and technological opportunities. The Ajax EDAP also looks at the town in relation to Durham Region and the impact and influence of the City of Toronto and the broader GTHA as the major economic engine for the province. The primary goal of the Ajax EDAP is to provide a targeted 5-year action plan that can be utilized to support business, workforce and place development by:

- Developing proactive, forward-thinking annual business plans by the economic development team
- Growing the diversity of the Town's business and industrial activity, taking into consideration the limits on industrial land
- Balancing anticipated population growth with an increase in the non-residential tax base and local employment
- Assessing and encouraging opportunities for renewal in the downtown and commercial cores
- Increasing the economic viability of the Town of Ajax in the short and long term

The Ajax EDAP includes suggested metrics for evaluating the performance of implementing the plan as well as recommended ongoing engagement activities over the lifespan of the plan. Continuing leadership from the Economic Development Office to drive economic priorities forward and ensure that these efforts are seamlessly, effectively and appropriately communicated is critical to the success of the Economic Development Action Plan over the longer term.

The EDAP process began in July 2019 and followed three phases as follows:

Phase I – Where are we now?

A review of relevant strategies and an economic base analysis that provided an understanding of the local and regional economy. The results of this phase are provided in the research appendix to the EDAP.

Phase II – Where do we want to go?

A comprehensive consultation process that included telephone and online surveys with the business community and residents, business and stakeholder interviews and stakeholder workshop discussions. The results of this phase are also provided in the research appendix to the EDAP.

Phase III – How to get there?

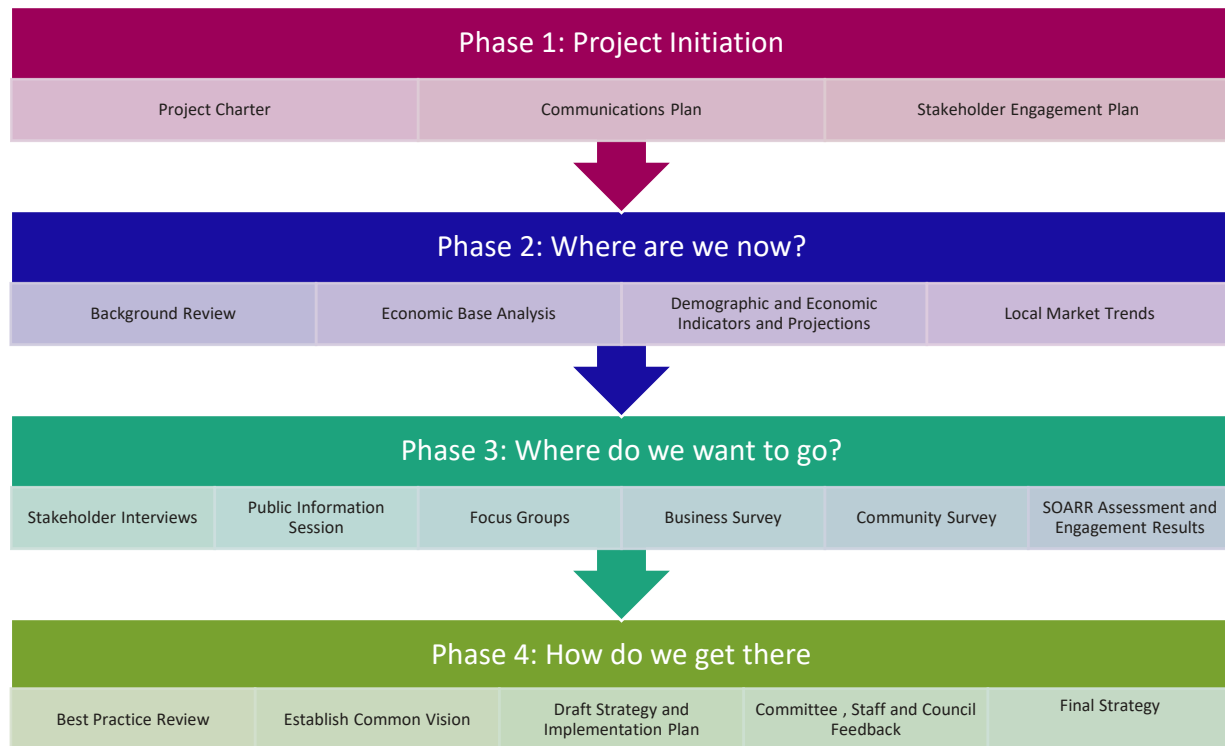
The final phase included a best practice review to inform strategy development, a visioning process and a detailed implementation plan of specific actions and short, medium, and longer-term goals to move the Town's economic development agenda forward.



2.1 Strategic Planning Process

The figure below displays the strategic planning process that was undertaken in the development of the Economic Development Action Plan. While each phase is presented sequentially, there were instances where new information, the release of documents or external developments in the community may have caused aspects of the process to be adapted or revisited.

Figure 2: Strategic Planning Process for the Ajax Economic Development Action Plan



2.2 A Community Profile for Ajax

A background review and economic base analysis were undertaken to outline the current economic, demographic and socio-economic situation within the Town of Ajax. Using Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, EMSI Analyst data and metroeconomics' labour force projections, a community profile was created that forms the basis for understanding Ajax's relative strengths and opportunities. The community profile is presented in infographic form, followed by an analysis of the key findings. The full economic base analysis is included in the Research Study Report appendix.



About Ajax

"In the heart of Durham Region, the Town of Ajax is a progressive, diverse and vibrant, waterfront community. Ajax is a unique place where people, nature and history connect and Ajax Council and staff welcome you to experience all that we have to offer!"

-Town of Ajax



Image source: Region of Durham



127,900

Population (2019)



\$104,997

Median household income (2018)



70.0%

Participation rate (2018)



6.35%

Unemployment rate (2018)

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, 2018 Manifold Data Mining, 2019 metroeconomics



57%

of people are between the ages of 15 to 54



67%

of people have a post-secondary diploma/degree



\$563,311

Median value of dwellings (2018)



22.3%

lower than the Toronto Area



Business Patterns



2,649

Businesses with employees



15%

are professional, scientific and technical services



11%

are retail businesses



60%

of businesses are small-size businesses, employing 1 to 4 people



Businesses with a higher concentration of labour force (Location Quotient) include:



Utilities



Finance & insurance



Information & cultural industries

Employment by Industry



11%

of people employed work in retail trade (2018)

Industries that added most job since 2011:



Transportation & warehousing

+1182 jobs



Educational services

+1039 jobs



Retail trade

+1049 jobs

Employment by Occupation



23%

of people employed work in sales and services (2018)

Occupations that added most job since 2011:



Sales & service occupations

+3148 jobs



Trades, transport & equipment operators

+2048 jobs

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, 2018 Manifold Data Mining



Rapidly Growing, Diverse and Relatively Young Population

Ajax has experienced rapid population growth over the last 15 years, where population information is available from Statistics Canada. From the period of 2001 to 2016, the population of Ajax grew by 62.3%. According to the estimates from metroeconomics, the 2019 population for the Town was 127,900. Over the 15 year period covered by available Census data, the population growth rate of Durham Region was 27.4%, and for the Province of Ontario was 17.9%. Even among the eight municipalities that make up Durham Region, Ajax's population growth was significantly higher than Whitby (46.9% - second) and Clarington (31.8% - third). This rapid population growth over the past 15 years, driven primarily by in-migration, has contributed to Ajax having a relatively young population compared to the province.

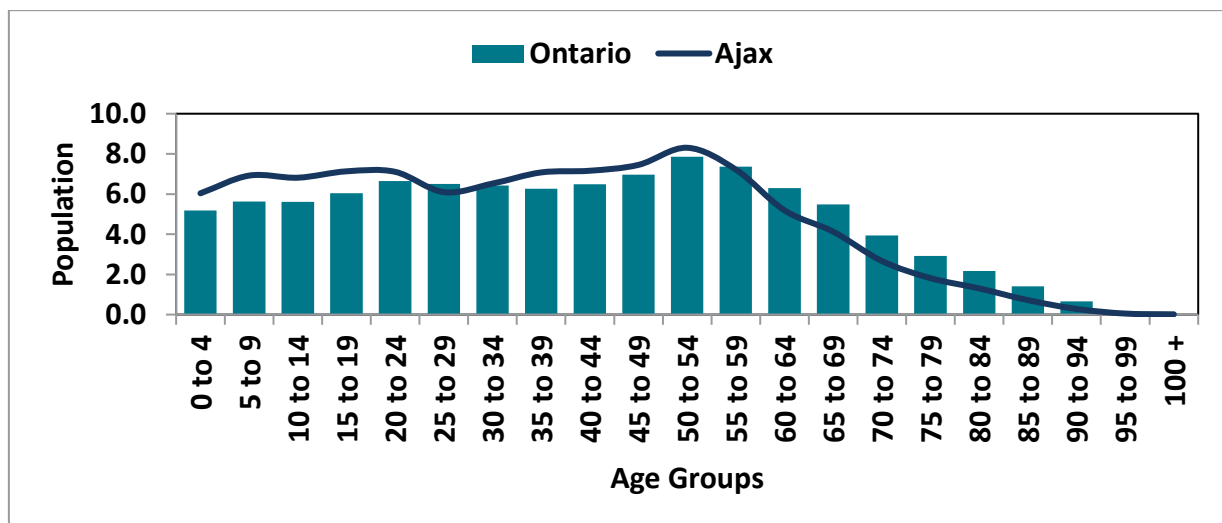
*Ajax Advantage:
Rapid population growth has ensured a large talent pool now and over the next 20 years*

In all five-year age groups up to ages 55-59, Ajax has a greater proportion of the population than Ontario, with the exception of the 25 to 29 years age group. The share is especially higher among adults aged 35 to 59 – the family-oriented age cohorts – and among children under 20. The high proportion of younger age residents bodes well for Ajax when looking at the overall makeup of the labour force and is a competitive advantage when compared to other portions of the province with an older age profile.

Ajax's population is also extremely diverse, with 39% of all residents being immigrants (not Canadian citizens by birth), and 32.7% of immigrants have come to Ajax since 2001. Additionally, 92.1% of all immigrants to Ajax were 44 years and under at the time of immigration compared to 90.6% at the provincial level. The immigration of a young and diverse cohort into Ajax has helped fuel the younger age demographic, with 48.7% emigrating from Asia, 28.8% from the Americas, excluding the United States).

Consistently applying a lens of inclusion and diversity in planning and decision making will ensure Town of Ajax services, programming, relationships, and partnerships reflect the community's diversity and leverage resulting growth opportunities.

Figure 3: Ajax Population by Five-Year Age Groups (2016)



Source: metroeconomics, Statistics Canada, 2016 Census



Evolving Housing Options

Ajax is predominantly made up of single-detached (65.8%), semi-detached (5.7%) and row houses (15.1%). With such a high proportion of housing made up of these categories, there are limited apartment options, with only 13.4% of dwellings being in apartments compared to 30.6% in Ontario. Combined with the high proportion of owner occupancy (86.2%) compared to 69.7% in Ontario, the Ajax housing market is primarily made up of single-family and owned dwellings. According to the Census, the median value of dwellings in Ajax was \$507,102, which was slightly higher than the Durham Region median value (\$450,398) but considerably less when compared to other peripheral municipalities to the city of Toronto. According to economic modelling by Manifold Data Mining, the 2018 median value of dwellings had risen to \$563,311 in Ajax and \$513,880 in Durham Region. Recent increases in the GTA and Ontario housing market, as a whole, have continued to push the selling price of homes higher and higher. The Toronto Real Estate Board reported that the average year to date sales price for single-detached homes was \$1,360,246 within the 416 area and \$943,494 within the 905 area for an overall average of \$1,044,138.¹ The Durham Region Association of Realtors reported the average year to date price of all single-detached homes in Ajax was \$726,605 for the same period.² While Ajax housing prices have increased, the Town still enjoys a very competitive cost to entry in the GTHA for those looking for single-detached housing options. Given the scope of the Medallion development at Pat Bayly Square, which will bring thousands of rentals and condo units to market in the near term, Ajax will continue to provide a strong value proposition for first-time single-family home buyers and an emerging supply of housing options for young professionals in the downtown.

High Household Income Levels

The median total household income for Ajax was \$96,949 in 2015, which was higher than the Durham Region at \$89,834 and significantly higher than Ontario at \$74,287. Economic modelling for 2018 figures shows that Ajax's median income had risen to \$104,997, with Durham Region's rising to \$98,665. These

Ajax Advantage: A variety of housing options coming soon – more residents choosing to live in Downtown Ajax.

strong household income numbers are somewhat muted by the higher incomes in neighbouring municipalities in Pickering and Whitby. Median total household incomes in Ajax have increased 10% from 2011 to 2016, which is similar to the rate of increase in both Durham Region (11%) and the Province of Ontario (12%).

At the individual level, the median total income was \$36,107, which represents an increase of just 0.4% from the 2011 to 2016 Census, while the region saw an 8% increase and the province a 10% increase. One potential explanation for the low individual income growth and total household income growth more in line with the regional and provincial figures could be the increased number of persons in a household from 3.1 to 3.2 persons. Larger

household size could be an indicator of more income earners per household as adult children face greater barriers to entering the housing market.

¹ <http://www.trebhome.com/files/market-stats/market-watch/mw1911.pdf>

² http://www.durhamrealestate.org/pdfs/housing_november_2019.pdf



Strong Employment Growth

Employment by Industry

While the analysis of the industries and occupations that residents of Ajax work in is important, it tells the story of the workforce's employment rather than the employment available within Ajax. For this reason, Statistics Canada still provides the most accurate information on employment by place of work.

Census data indicate that employers provided a total of 29,195 jobs³ at locations within the town of Ajax in 2016, up from 23,045 in 2001, for an absolute gain of 6,150 and a percentage gain of 26.7%. In other words, jobs (employment by place of work) within the Ajax grew at less than half the 62.3% gain of its population over the same span. Nevertheless, Ajax's employment gain of 26.7% was twice that of the Region at 13.7% and more than twice that of the province as a whole at 11.7%. It should be noted that employment by place of work numbers do not include employed persons residing within Ajax who have 'No Fixed Place of Work' or don't report to a regular workplace location at the start of a shift.

The economic activities occurring in any community can be divided into those that are *export-based* and those that are *community-based*.

- **Export-based** (economic base) industries produce goods that are shipped to markets outside the community (agriculture, forestry, fishing and manufacturing); they provide services to visitors or temporary residents of the community (hotels, tourism attractors, specialized hospitals, colleges and universities); or they provide services to businesses outside the community (specialized financial, professional, scientific and technical services).
- **Community-based** (population serving) industries produce services that primarily meet the needs of residents in the community (retail, medical, primary and secondary education, and personal and government services).

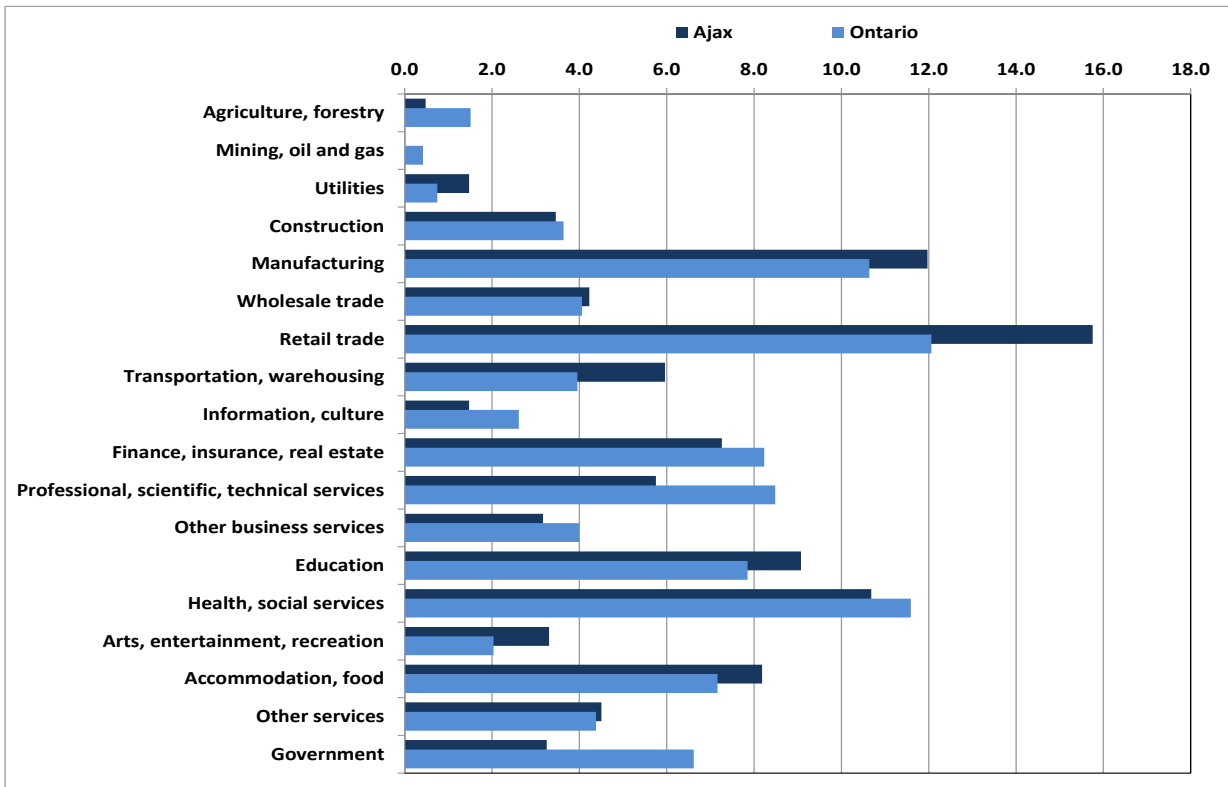
Export-based employment expansion can lead to the recruitment of workers from outside the area, workers who, in turn, bring with them spouses and other dependents. Every new export-based job brings with it additional population gain. This population growth, in turn, drives growth in the demand for *community-based* activities such as retail, education, health, recreation, etc. And the growth in these population serving jobs, in turn, leads to the further recruitment of workers from outside the area and, in turn, to additional population growth. In Ajax's case, the expansion of export-based employment may not drive population growth to the same extent as it typically might be due to the high proportion of the workforce that commutes out for work. Nevertheless, the increase in these jobs can help support the already attractive case for living in Ajax, provide local employment opportunities, and increase the activity rate closer to the Official Plan target of one job for every two residents.

When looking at the industrial distribution of jobs within Ajax compared to that of Ontario as a whole, Ajax's shares exceeds those of the province by the widest margins in retail trade (3.7 percentage points), transportation and warehousing (2.0), manufacturing (1.3), arts, entertainment and recreation (1.3), education (1.2), food and accommodation (1.0) utilities (0.7) and wholesale trade (0.2), while its shares fall short of the province by the widest margins in government (-3.4), professional, scientific and technical services (-2.7), information and culture (-1.1), agriculture (-1.0), finance and insurance (-1.0), health and social services (-0.9) and other business services (-0.8).

³ Jobs in Ajax include only those with a fixed place of work.



Figure 4: Employment by Industry by Place of Work, Ajax (Dark Blue Bars) and Ontario (Light Blue Bars). As a Percent Share of Total Employment by Place of Work in 2016⁴



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016

In 2016 there were 4.1 million jobs on a place of work basis in the Greater Golden Horseshoe⁵. *metroeconomics* estimates 1.1 million of those jobs were export-based jobs with their industrial distribution as follows:

- Manufacturing 454,000
- Finance, insurance and real estate 118,000
- Professional, scientific and technical services 96,000
- Health and social services 65,000
- Transportation and warehousing 47,000
- Wholesale trade 44,000
- Retail trade 42,000
- Education 41,000
- Agriculture 37,000
- Government 36,000
- Information and culture 35,000
- Accommodation and food 33,000
- Other business services 25,000
- Construction 20,000
- Arts, entertainment and recreation 17,000
- Utilities 8,000
- Mining 6,000

⁴ Statistics Canada Place of Work data is only available for 2016.

⁵ The total number of jobs is calculated on a 'place of work' basis and does not include those employed within the GGH with 'No Fixed Place of Work'.



Geographically 427,000 of the GGH's 1.1 million export base jobs were located in Toronto, 152,000 in Mississauga, 69,000 in Vaughan, 40,000 in Hamilton, 34,000 in Markham, 34,000 in Brampton and 27,000 in Waterloo. These seven municipalities alone accounted for 783,000 (or 69%) of the 1.1 million economic base jobs within the GGH. In other words, those industries that are the engines of growth for the entire GGH are heavily concentrated in only a few of the area's municipalities. Ajax accounted for 3,700 of the area's economic base jobs in 2016, with manufacturing accounting for 3,500 of that total and agriculture (140) and utilities (70) accounting for the rest.

*Ajax Advantage:
Significant recent growth
in a number of export
base jobs*

The list of economic base jobs within the GGH suggests significant opportunities for the expansion of Ajax's economic base lie in such areas as professional, scientific and technical services; information and culture; finance and insurance; health and social services; and other business services. Each of these industries accounts for a significant number of economic base jobs within the GGH, but each is underrepresented on the job front within Ajax when compared to the province as a whole.

The figure below tabulates the job gains made by industry in Ajax since 2001 and provides job totals for each industry for each census year. Over the entire span from 2001 to 2016:

- The total number of jobs by place of work grew by 6,150 (26.7%)
- Manufacturing fell by 2,065 jobs
- Finance, insurance and real estate grew by 1,085 jobs
- Retail trade grew by 1,005 jobs
- Transportation and warehousing grew by 960 jobs
- Education grew by 850 jobs
- Accommodation and food grew by 725 jobs
- Arts, entertainment and recreation grew by 710 jobs
- Health and social services grew by 705 jobs
- Professional, scientific and technical grew by 695 jobs

Collectively the losses and gains across the above nine industries accounted for 76% of the overall job gain of 6,150 in Ajax since 2001.





Figure 5: Town of Ajax Employment by Industry by Place of Work, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016 and Change from 2001 to 2016

	Number Employed by year			
	2001	2006	2011	2016
Total all industries	23,045	24,415	26,820	29,195
Agriculture, forestry	160	165	175	140
Mining, oil and gas	0	10	0	0
Utilities	255	240	315	430
Construction	815	770	935	1,010
Manufacturing	5,560	3,925	3,125	3,495
Wholesale trade	935	1,345	1,840	1,235
Retail trade	3,595	4,490	4,400	4,600
Transportation, warehousing	780	870	1,380	1,740
Information, culture	365	395	350	430
Finance, insurance, real estate	1,035	1,390	1,665	2,120
Professional, scientific, technical services	985	1,150	1,420	1,680
Other business services	710	930	955	925
Education	1,800	2,245	2,280	2,650
Health, social services	2,415	2,400	2,825	3,120
Arts, entertainment, recreation	255	675	785	965
Accommodation, food	1,665	1,655	2,100	2,390
Other services	1,065	1,250	1,305	1,315
Government	650	510	965	950

Source: Statistics Canada, Censuses of 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016

Looking at the more recent past, and especially the period following the 2008 global recession, the figure above suggests Ajax is already making major strides in achieving job growth in many of the GGH's key export-based industries and in many of the industries where historically the Town has been underrepresented when compared to the province, most notably in professional, scientific and technical services; finance, insurance and real estate; and health and social services.

Using province-wide estimates of real Gross Domestic Product per worker by industry in 2016 and applying those estimates to the number of persons employed in each industry in Ajax that year *metroeconomix* estimates the Ajax economy produced \$3,362 million of GDP in constant 2012 dollars in 2016. The major contributors to that total were manufacturing (\$482 million), real estate (\$478 million), finance and insurance (\$264 million), wholesale trade (\$237 million), education (\$234 million), construction (\$229 million), retail trade (\$216 million) and health and social services (215 million).

Employment by Occupation

High levels of population-based employment categorize Ajax with Retail Salesperson, Cashiers and Food Counter Attendants, Kitchen Helpers and related support occupations making up three of the four



highest occupations by category from 2019 job estimates. Evidence of the transportation and logistics strength of the Town can be found in the high levels of employment-related to the sector. Retail and Wholesale Trade Managers, Transport truck drivers and Material Handlers were also top 10 employment occupations with Material handlers and transport truck drivers increasing by 25% and 22%, respectively, since 2015.

Business Counts

Businesses in Ajax are primarily small in nature. Of the total 9,631 businesses in Ajax, there were 2,649 businesses that reported having employees or 27.5%⁶. Analysis of the business count data for businesses with employees indicates that 60% employed between 1 to 4 people. Professional, scientific and technical services (415); and retail trade (299) are the industries with the largest number of businesses with employees. Professional, scientific and technical services; real estate, rental and leasing; and construction are the industries with the largest number of businesses without employees.

Location quotient (LQ) analysis is a measure of the relative concentration of an industry sector in a community to identify areas of strength and potential clusters. When looking at the location quotient for businesses with employees in Ajax, there were a few industry sectors where LQ's in Ajax were significantly above the 1.0 provincial benchmark, indicating a greater concentration than would be expected by provincial norms. These industries included Educational Services (1.34), Accommodation and Food Services (1.22), and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (1.18).

2.3 Employment and Demographic Projections

Projected Employment Growth Sectors by Place of Work

Given the age of the current census data, the figure below tabulates the anticipated level of employment by major industry (2-digit NAICS) estimated for 2019 and projected for 2024 and 2029 for Ajax. Over the next decade, *metroeconomics* high-level employment model projects total employment by place of work will increase from an estimated 31,159 in 2019 to 41,455 in 2029, a gain of 10,295 or 33%. These projections also assume employment in Ajax's economic base industries will grow at the rates projected for those industries province-wide, and they assume employment in Ajax's community base industries will grow per capita at the rates projected for them province-wide.⁷ These numbers will need to be further refined by the Regional Municipality of Durham as part of its population and employment projections or with future census data.

⁶ December 2018 Canada Business Counts uses information from the Statistics Canada's Business Register. The 9,631 total businesses include unclassified businesses (not classified by NAICS) and businesses of indeterminate size (incorporated and with minimum of \$30,000 in revenue). Because of changes to Statistics Canada's methodology and industrial classification, these figures are not directly comparable over time.

⁷ Latest projections prepared by *metroeconomics* suggest slightly greater gains of 35 percent (population) and 37 percent (employed) for Ajax suggesting even more optimism about Ajax today than a year ago.



Figure 6: Town of Ajax Employment by Industry by Place of Work, Estimated for 2019 and Projected for 2024 and 2029

	Number Employed			Change 19-29	
	2019	2024	2029	Number	Percent
Total all industries	31,159	35,971	41,455	10,295	33.0
Agriculture, forestry	123	125	126	3	2.4
Mining, oil and gas	0	0	0	0	0.0
Utilities	501	548	597	96	19.1
Construction	1,089	1,287	1,514	425	39.0
Manufacturing	3,560	3,596	3,630	70	2.0
Wholesale trade	1,154	1,228	1,304	151	13.1
Retail trade	5,068	5,727	6,449	1,381	27.3
Transportation, warehousing	2,003	2,454	2,986	983	49.1
Information, culture	431	489	553	123	28.5
Finance, insurance	1,491	1,663	1,849	358	24.0
Real estate	728	883	1,063	336	46.1
Professional, scientific, technical services	1,865	2,209	2,601	735	39.4
Other business services	950	1,119	1,311	361	38.0
Education	2,805	3,317	3,899	1,094	39.0
Health, social services	3,418	4,188	5,095	1,677	49.1
Arts, entertainment, recreation	996	1,192	1,419	423	42.5
Accommodation, food	2,541	3,140	3,849	1,308	51.5
Other services	1,397	1,610	1,846	449	32.1
Government	1,041	1,194	1,363	323	31.0

Source: *metroeconomics, 2019*

Over this span, the population of Ajax is projected to increase up to 35% in 2029 from 2019 estimates⁸. Over this period, Ajax’s projected population growth should drive a similar rate of growth in its community-based jobs. The projected gains in population serving jobs account for most of the 33% increase in total employment by place of work in the town.

The figure above indicates the following:

- The largest gain among the major industries over the 2019 to 2029 span will occur in health care and social assistance (1,677), stemming from overall population growth and from the ageing of the

⁸ In the case of suburban municipalities that are part of a metropolitan area (such as Ajax) the population potential depends on the municipality’s internal economic base expansion. It also depends on the pace of growth in jobs in the urban core of the metropolitan area to which its residents can commute. Ajax’ population growth potential is significant because jobs in nearby major employment centres like Toronto, Vaughan and Mississauga are growing quickly. The greatest constraint on population growth in Ajax is its capacity for, and its willingness to accept, residential expansion. *metroeconomics* projections have assumed Ajax favours growth.



population already residing in Ajax. Three new long-term health care facilities in development will provide close to 800 beds.

- Other major gains will occur in retail trade (1,381), accommodation and food services (1,308), educational services (1,094), transportation and warehousing⁹ (983), and professional, scientific and technical services (735).¹⁰

The projections suggest the significant historical erosion of employment in manufacturing and agriculture is now over. The goods-producing sectors are not about to undergo major employment reversals; rather, the levels that currently exist are expected simply to hold steady in the years ahead. In contrast, the Ajax economy will continue to witness significant gains in service sector jobs across a wide range of services, including technology-based services. Local initiatives directed toward broadening the economic base of the Ajax economy could significantly alter the projections. Figure 6 should be considered a “business as usual” projection based on the assumption that Ajax achieves job growth over the next decade at a pace that might otherwise be expected given expected trends by industry province-wide. One of the objectives of the Economic Development Action Plan is to increase the growth of the export base employment sectors beyond the expected increases.



⁹ Projections do not reflect the recent Amazon announcement.



3. Business and Community Consultation

The Economic Development Action Plan for the Town of Ajax builds on the results of the economic base analysis as well as a review of the existing policies, documents and framework provided by the Town of Ajax and regional strategic plans and studies. This situational analysis lays the foundation for the Economic Development Action Plan. In order to ensure that the action plan reflects both the historical and projected data as well as the reality of the business and stakeholder community, a robust consultation process was undertaken to inform the information received and reflect on the aspirations for the next five years. The full stakeholder engagement results can be found in the appendix with a summary of each engagement activity presented below.

Ajax Advantage: Strong growth in office-based sectors including professional, scientific and technical services; finance, insurance and real estate

3.1 Stakeholder Interviews

During the summer of 2019, a series of confidential interviews were conducted with key stakeholders to identify and inform emerging issues for further investigation and validation through the research and engagement phase of the Economic Development Action Plan. These interviews were conducted with Town of Ajax staff, administration, members of Council, as well as business and community partners from across the region. The confidential nature of the interviews provided both internal and external stakeholders with an opportunity to share their feedback on the current state of the Ajax economy, areas of strength, challenges, and most importantly, the opportunities that they felt could be capitalized on through the Economic Development Action Plan. The full interview engagement results can be found in the appendix with a summary of the key emerging themes and issues presented below based on a series of common questions.

What are the Town's advantages for attracting businesses and future business growth and investment?

- **Location:** Ajax's location is commonly referenced as a strength. Being strategically located along the 401, 407, and 412 highways provide efficient access to and from the GTHA and on to other markets both in Canada and the United States. Proximity to Toronto also provides access to the amenities of an international city, including arts, entertainment and Pearson International Airport.
- **Economic Development Team:** Economic development staff are well regarded by the business community and Council. The level of engagement and number of events and programs the municipality offers were recognized by stakeholders. Business stakeholders had a high level of familiarity with the Economic Development team, the work that they do and their willingness to help. Council itself was positively viewed by the business community as partners and proponents in Economic Development. Stakeholders expressed confidence that economic development is a priority for Council and that staff are well-positioned to deliver on this mandate.
- **Technology and Broadband investments:** Ajax and Durham Region as a whole are becoming more synonymous with technology and innovation through public sector investments and partnerships with the private sector. While Ajax had previously been regarded as somewhat lagging in the GTHA,



partnerships with post-secondary, the emerging AI sector, the exploration of an interconnected innovation hub and overall investment in broadband infrastructure that the Town has approved have positioned Ajax for the changing economic landscape and to start being considered as a tech community if the investments can lead to job creation in the sector.

- **Lakefront:** Ajax's lakefront contributes to the high quality of life and attractiveness of the community for residents. Ajax's lakefront is unique among GTHA municipalities because it has not been commercially developed, nor is it the site of industrial development and is primarily enjoyed as a recreational space.

What are the major barriers to economic growth in the community?

- **Out-Commuting Workforce:** A large proportion of the workforce leaves Ajax every day to work in other communities (primarily the City of Toronto) and other GTHA municipalities. Highly skilled workers and professionals leaving Ajax and commuting into Toronto represent a 'brain drain' of sorts as the talent and innovation they represent are utilized by firms outside of Ajax. Young professionals were referenced as a cohort where the appeal of working downtown Toronto was especially prevalent.
- **Land Constraints:** Ajax has a lack of land available for greenfield development due to its size, the existing build-out of the employment land within the municipal boundaries and much of the northern and eastern sections of the municipality protected from development under the Greenbelt. The vacant land that does exist within the municipality is privately held without much development activity. Demand for land is high, with many current greenfield landowners holding and not developing.
- **Downtown Servicing Constraints:** There is a number of areas that are constrained by available servicing capacity, with the downtown being most commonly cited. Increased servicing and capacity are largely dependent upon upper levels of government (Durham Region, Province of Ontario) with limited ability for Ajax to proceed on its own.
- **Lack of Clear Economic Vision:** Stakeholders struggled to articulate the value proposition or how the Town is defined from an economic development perspective, especially as compared to other GTHA municipalities. Stakeholders expressed a lack of a clear vision of what differentiates or defines Ajax. The lack of a clear vision and value proposition also extended to the two Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) within Ajax as stakeholders expressed a desire for a review of the value of the BIAs, along with their focus, accountability and transparency.

What economic development and community development opportunities or trends is the community missing out on?

- **Downtown Development:** The development of a cohesive downtown area with a compelling reason to visit was identified as a missing component to Ajax's economic development. While other GTHA municipalities have been investing in their downtown and re-establishing them as a hub of retail, residential and entertainment, due to servicing constraints, Ajax's downtown redevelopment has been slow and continues to be the site of low density, strip plazas and surface parking lots. While the downtown has a BIA intended to support revitalization, it has been historically ineffective in leading the vibrancy that is being experienced in other GTHA downtowns.



- **Office Development:** The lack of commercial office development was cited as a missed opportunity. Significant development of this type of employment in municipalities to the north and west of Toronto were referenced with particular mention of Mississauga and Markham.
- **Arts, Culture, Food and Entertainment District:** There were a number of mentions of the lack of compelling venues and amenities that would keep young people in the community and spending their disposable incomes locally. While there was a recognition that Ajax could not provide the level of entertainment that competes with Toronto, the development of concentrated areas for younger demographics, including trendy shopping, entertainment, cafes and restaurants, was referenced as a missing component that also may be contributing to an out-commuting workforce.
- **Walkable Destinations:** Ajax's development has historically catered to car culture, and the inability to navigate the Town without owning a car was seen as a major barrier to young workers who are not interested in owning a vehicle. Many communities are focusing on walkable and pedestrian-first development where the use of a car is not required, and stakeholders expressed a desire for Ajax to adopt pedestrian first principles and advocate for increased transit connectivity. Downtown and Pickering Village have the pedestrian infrastructure in place, but a lack of attractions and businesses conducive to foot traffic need to be addressed to encourage more street-level activity.

What key considerations need to be reflected in the Town's economic development strategy?

- **Zoning:** One of the key considerations that were expressed was the need for the examination of the current zoning bylaws to allow flexibility, especially for recognized areas to encourage mixed-use development to accommodate live-work-play communities. As Ajax looks to encourage density and to make the best use of the limited employment land that is available and the redevelopment of ageing industrial areas, there must be a consideration for new uses that may be proposed, including vertical agriculture.
- **Red Tape:** Streamlining of the development and approval process was highlighted as a point of concern. There was not a clear consensus as to whether the approval process itself was slower or more cumbersome than other municipalities or whether it was a lack of understanding by the development community about the process. There was a consensus that the Town could look to create pathways for express development processes/red tape reduction where possible.
- **Downtown:** The current status of the downtown was consistently cited as an area that the Economic Development Action Plan must address. The current composition of the downtown is dominated by single-story plazas and parking lots and a mostly uncoordinated business community despite the presence of a BIA. Stakeholders expressed a desire to see a plan and reimagining of Ajax's downtown and more tools to enable revitalization, including intervention by the Town of Ajax, particularly as it relates to the viability of the Downtown BIA. Many BIAs across the province have evolved and taken on more sophisticated roles and responsibilities, while others have found it more efficient for the municipality to offer services directly to businesses across their jurisdiction as opposed to isolated areas.
- **Small Business:** The need to support small businesses through spaces for business acceleration and incubation was a key component that emerged through the interview process. Ajax's economy is primarily made up of small businesses. The recent Gordon Foods investment was referenced as an example of a recent large employer investing in Ajax, but even those large employers will require small businesses that support the supply chain or provide services to the company.



- **Incentivize Higher Employment Industries:** With the high out-commuting workforce and a large number of local employment opportunities in the retail sector, stakeholders expressed the need for increased job growth in Ajax. There have been recent investments in transportation and logistics, but these industries do not provide a high density of jobs when compared to the amount of physical space they take up. There was a desire to develop incentives for targeted industries (technology-enabled firms, creative industries, business services) that drive employment growth, especially in the professional, scientific and technical sectors.
- **Transportation:** Several significant transportation projects in Durham Region will have a significant impact on the economic development potential of Ajax.

3.2 Stakeholder Workshops

Three stakeholder workshops were held on September 17-18, 2019, at the Town of Ajax municipal office. The sessions were segmented to capture input from a broad range of stakeholders and included one business and community session, one staff session and one session targeted at small and medium enterprises and high growth companies with locations in Ajax. The sessions included an economic overview of Ajax's economy, followed by an interactive discussion facilitated by Erik Lockhart of the Queens Executive Decision Centre.

Attendees were asked to consider several questions related to Ajax's current and future economic opportunities in both Individual and small group discussions to explore the initial economic findings and emerging trends and issues. Using collaborative technology, the sessions utilized a real-time brainstorming, evaluation and prioritization exercise focused on specific opportunities and challenges. The full stakeholder workshop results can be found in the appendix with a summary provided below:

What are the good news stories and key areas of strength for the economy of Ajax?

- Multiple post-secondary institutions in the Region
- New logistics companies with the potential to build a cluster across the Region
- Ajax active in technology space, AI, partner with Durham College
- Diversity of cultures, residents and business offerings
- Economic development-minded Council

What do you consider to be the 3 greatest opportunities for the Town of Ajax to sustain its economic growth in the coming 5 years?

- Downtown redevelopment - mixed-use - live work play model with a new or expanded community improvement areas (Pickering Village, Downtown)
- The economic development-focused Council presents an opportunity to further reduce red tape and rethink municipal incentives through the updating of community improvement plans
- Target and specialize in technology (i.e., Robotics, AI, cybersecurity) and connect any proposed innovation hubs with other tech hubs in the region

What challenges are limiting economic growth in Ajax?

- Regulatory roadblock, red tape and perception of a lack of urgency



- Better coordination between levels of government and some competing priorities within and between municipalities in the Region looking for growth
- Lack of a common vision of what Ajax is and would like to be leading to a need for clarity and support of priorities and specific actions needed
- Resources (money, space, staff, budget allocation for economic development programs and services)

3.3 Online Community Survey

An online survey was available on the Town of Ajax website during September and October of 2019. The survey provided an opportunity for members of the public and business owners who were not able to attend the public workshops to provide input into the Economic Development Action Plan. The survey questions were similar to those asked during the in-person workshops.

Although the survey was promoted through the Town of Ajax newsletter and social media, it received a limited number of responses, in part due to several concurrent surveys in the community for the corporate strategic plan and other organizational strategies. A total of 10 individual responses were gathered through the online survey from residents of Ajax, five currently working in Ajax and five working in other GTHA municipalities. Although the sample is small, it does provide some reflection on the community's perceptions.

When asked to rate the level of satisfaction with the quality of services in Ajax, the community ranked the public library, recreation facilities and services, retail shopping environment, community festivals and events, healthcare services and waste management as areas where they were more satisfied than unsatisfied. Housing choices, education, business-related services, business-related events, transportation infrastructure, planning and development and employment services received neither a satisfied nor dissatisfied response. The Town of Ajax's corporate strategic plan, which was conducted concurrently, received a great deal of community input on service areas as well as specific recommendations on economic development and business services. The results of the corporate strategic plan were reviewed and consolidated as part of the background document review.

3.4 Telephone Business Survey

A Business satisfaction survey was completed via CATI (Computer-Aided Telephone Interview) with 201 businesses located in Ajax. The random selection of the businesses and scientific approach ensured that the results have a high level of accuracy and statistical significance in representing the business community in Ajax. From a statistical point-of-view, this sample results in a margin of error of approximately +/-10 with a confidence interval of 19 times out of 20. Businesses were asked about their industry sector, the number of employees, sales and plans for their business, as well as their satisfaction with 16 other unique factors of doing business in Ajax.

The composition of the business responses included all sectors, ownership structures, and age of businesses operating in Ajax. The business responses also represented businesses ranging from the very small (self-employed) to the very large (100+ employees). A full outline of survey responses can be found in the appendix. A snapshot of the business survey and the key inputs it provided into the Economic Development Action Plan follows.



BUSINESS SURVEY

Random telephone survey of Ajax business locations



Overall

Ownership

Years in Operation



201
Total
Businesses
Surveyed

Locally Owned **43.8%**
Self Employed **30.8%**
Externally Owned **21%**

78.1%
Been in Operation
for 6+ years

Number of Employees

Overall Satisfaction

Businesses with
5 or less
employees **63.2%**

94%

25.8% of businesses had 6-20 employees with 11% having 21 or more employees

25.9% of businesses were more positive now than 12 months ago with only 9.0% more negative

Businesses Looking Ahead

Plans for the Next 24 Months



Planned Expansions **16%**



Planned Downsizing or Closure **6%**



Planned Sale or Relocation **7.5%**



50.2%

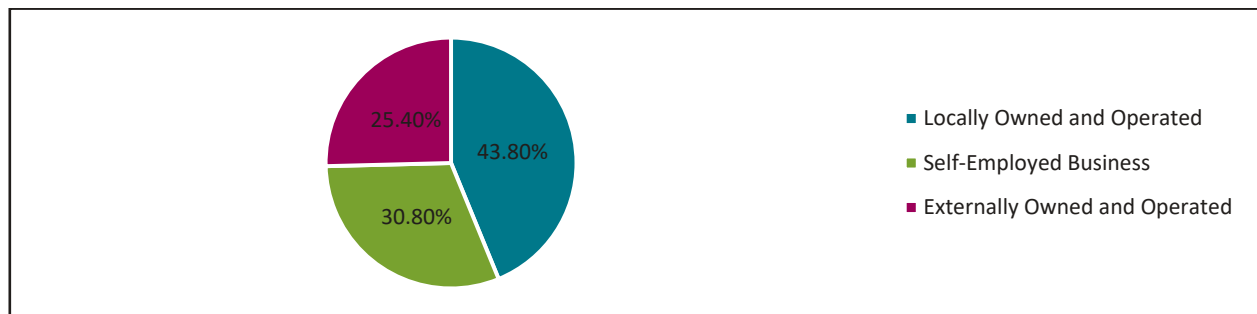
of businesses anticipated higher sales in the next 12 months compared to the previous 12 months

Data sources:
Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing Survey of Businesses, 2019



The ownership type of a business is a key factor when looking to initiate economic development programming. Locally owned and operated business, as well as self-employed businesses, are generally more receptive to an intervention from the local economic development staff. These types of businesses have local decision makers who are more likely to be influenced by municipal policies and initiatives. Externally owned and operated businesses may be headquartered in another municipality or even another country. Decision making at these firms can often be the result of national or international business decisions based on global performance or other factors. Figure 7 below outlines the breakdown of respondents by ownership type.

Figure 7: Ownership Type of Responding Businesses



N=201

Businesses interviewed represented both newer and more established businesses across Ajax. When asked to indicate their number of years operating in Ajax, 51.2% had been in business for over 10 years, 26.9% between 6-10 years and the remaining 21.9% had been in business for less than five years. In terms of the size of businesses, 63.2% of businesses had 1-5 employees, 25.8% had between 6-20 employees, and 11% had 21 or more employees.

When asked about their levels of satisfaction with doing business in Ajax, their satisfaction levels with various business factors and revenues, Ajax businesses responded in a mostly positive manner. When asked about their attitude towards doing business in Ajax now as compared to 12 months ago, 25.9% of businesses were more positive, with only 9.0% of businesses feeling more negative and the remaining 65.2% having no change. The differential of more positive to more negative for businesses in Ajax is +16.9% and when looked at in the context of the high overall business satisfaction, seems to indicate that the current business environment is good and has experienced improvement over the past 12 months.

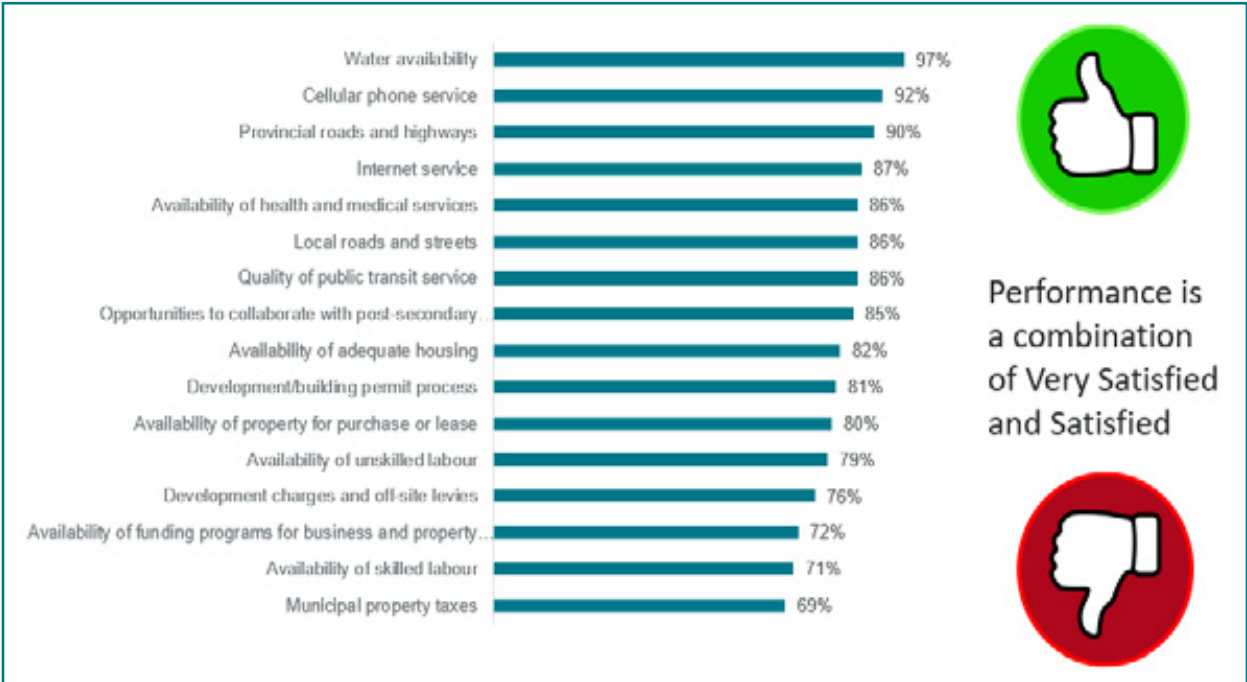
When asked about revenues, 31.3% of businesses had increased revenue over the past 12 months, with 20.9% experiencing a decrease. Looking forward to revenue expectations over the next 12 months, 50.2% of businesses anticipated higher revenue compared with just 13.9% anticipating lower revenue with the remaining businesses either unsure or expecting similar revenues. This increased revenue and projected higher revenues again emphasizes business confidence in Ajax.

Businesses were asked about their overall level of satisfaction with doing business in Ajax as well as their level of satisfaction with 16 individual business factors. The overall business satisfaction in Ajax was extremely high. When looking at overall performance, Ajax had a 94% satisfaction level, with 59.2% of businesses being very satisfied. On the other side of the spectrum, only 1% of businesses responded that they were very dissatisfied.



When looking at the individual factors that helped Ajax to have a high level of overall satisfaction, the figure below shows the performance of each individual business factor. Even the lowest-performing business factor, 'Municipal property taxes', had a performance score of almost 70%.

Figure 8: Performance of Business Factors



N=201

Using the derived importance methodology, business' overall satisfaction is correlated to the performance of each business factor, the level of satisfaction with each individual business factor and the overall satisfaction responses by all businesses to determine the derived importance. Derived importance allows the Town of Ajax to understand which individual factors are most likely to have an impact on increasing overall business satisfaction.

The figure below outlines the business factors in priority sequence. Priority is determined through a combination of performance and derived importance. The highest-ranking business factor was the 'Availability of funding programs for business and property improvement.' 'Municipal property taxes,' 'Availability of skilled labour' and 'Development charges and off-site levies' and 'Development/building permit process' rounded out the top five.





Figure 9: Priority Business Factors

Business Factor	Performance	Derived Importance	Priority Ranking
Availability of funding programs for business and property improvement	72%	9	1
Municipal property taxes	69%	7.1	2
Availability of skilled labour	71%	7.1	3
Development charges and off-site levies	76%	6.7	4
Development/building permit process	81%	7.1	5
Availability of unskilled labour	79%	6	6
Availability of property for purchase or lease	80%	5.8	7
Opportunities to collaborate with post-secondary institutions for R&D and sourcing talent	85%	6.7	8
Availability of adequate housing	82%	5.6	9
Quality of public transit service	86%	7.1	10
Local roads and streets	86%	6.2	11
Availability of health and medical services	86%	5.6	12
Internet service	87%	5.6	13
Provincial roads and highways	90%	6	14
Cellular phone service	92%	5.6	15
Water availability	97%	5.6	16

One of the important features of the telephone-based business survey was the ability to identify the future plans of businesses through the identification of green and red flags. Armed with this intelligence on specific business plans, Economic Development staff are well-positioned to follow up and provide customized resources to ensure the best possible outcome for a business to expand in Ajax or potentially mitigate a closure, downsizing, sale or relocation.



4. SOARR Assessment

Using the SOARR, we are able to explore and validate emerging strategic directions and understand what is actionable. The SOARR Assessment allows the Town to identify the strengths and specific sub-sector development opportunities that will be translated into the strategic directions that will make up the Economic Development Action Plan.

	<h3>Strengths</h3> <p>What can we build on?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are we doing well?• What key achievements are we most proud of?• What positive aspects have individuals and enterprises commented on?
	<h3>Opportunities</h3> <p>What are our best possible future opportunities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What changes in demand do we expect to see in the future?• What external forces or trends may positively affect development?• What are the key areas of untapped potential?• What weaknesses or threats can be converted into SMART improvements?
	<h3>Aspirations</h3> <p>What do we care deeply about achieving?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are we deeply passionate about?• What difference do we hope to make for businesses, residents, and institutions?• What does our preferred future look like?
	<h3>Risks</h3> <p>How will we recognize and mitigate or eliminate potential risks?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What challenges do we need to be aware of?• What policy shifts could impact our aspirations?• What contingencies should be in place address threats or consequences?
	<h3>Results</h3> <p>How will we know we are succeeding?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the key goals we would like to accomplish in order to achieve these results?• What meaningful measures will indicate that we are on track toward achieving our goals?• What resources are needed to implement our most vital projects and initiatives?

Strengths

- **Local Ownership:** The random telephone business survey revealed that 74.6% of businesses in Ajax were locally owned or self-employed. The high degree of local ownership means that many of the business decision-makers are located in Ajax, and there is an ability to reach them via business retention and expansion efforts.



- **Location:** Ajax is strategically located along the 401 and 407 Highways, which provides efficient access to and from the GTA and to markets. The lakefront is regarded as a positive factor for the quality of life. Ajax also has quick access outside to cottage country and natural trails not available in Toronto.
- **Economic Development Team:** Economic development staff are well regarded by the business community and Council. Council itself is positively viewed by the business community as partners and proponents in Economic Development, and there is a perception of momentum.
- **Technology and Broadband focus:** Partnerships with post-secondary, emerging AI sector, innovation hub concept and overall interest in broadband infrastructure position the Town for changing economic landscape.
- **Lakefront:** Ajax's lakefront contributes to the high quality of life and attractiveness of the community for area residents.
- **High Overall Business Satisfaction:** 94% of businesses were satisfied with doing business in Ajax, with many reporting an even more positive outlook for the next 12 months.
- **Post-Secondary Institutions:** Durham College and Ontario Tech's presence in the region is an asset for Ajax residents and businesses.
- **Transportation and Logistics:** There is an emerging hub within this sector with a potential for cluster development, especially in services that support supply chains.
- **Promotion of High Performing Business Factors:** The statistically significant telephone business survey highlighted the strength of many business factors, particularly infrastructure and connectivity and derived importance methodology underscored the factors that would lead to even higher overall business satisfaction.

Opportunities

- **Housing Costs:** Ajax provides an affordable housing option for those working in the GTHA and can also be leveraged as an attraction factor for new business, professionals and remote workers.
- **Downtown Development:** Opportunity to promote and incentivize mixed development for live, work, play. The Medallion Developments projects will bring thousands of units to the downtown, many of which will be suited to young professionals.
- **Office Development:** Leveraging broadband and retain out commuting workforce through office development. Capitalize on remote working trends for professionals and tech workers travelling to Toronto.
- **Red Tape Reduction and Incentives:** Opportunity to leverage the positive momentum in the community with a mostly new Council and to take bold actions to reinforce the already business-friendly public perception of the local business environment.
- **Innovation:** Build on innovation culture and brand while researching an innovation hub concept as a place for business incubation and acceleration – virtual and physical.
- **Tourism:** Enhanced tourism efforts with a focus on sports tourism, festival and events and conventions and quality of places elements. There are opportunities for tourism product development and more effectively leverage assets like Ajax Downs and the Ajax Casino.



- **Leverage Marquee Investments:** Durham Live on Ajax's border, Gordon Food Service, and Amazon represent massive investments in the area. Capitalizing on increased traffic and supply chain opportunities associated with these investments can increase their economic impact in Ajax.
- **Improved Transportation Networks:** The completion of Highway 412's Lake Ridge Road Interchange and future interchange at Rossland Road will further connect Ajax businesses and residents with the region and major east-west transportation corridors along Highway 401 and 407. Enhanced public transportation along major north-south routes within Ajax, including from the GO Node through to Uptown, can help connect communities.

Aspirations

- **Keep Workers Local:** Increased rates of workforce retention, keeping youth and young professionals in the community. Provide higher levels of local employment to meet the growth of the population.
- **Ajax is Synonymous with Innovation:** An innovation hub, virtual or physical, is a driving force behind increased entrepreneurship and innovation within Ajax. The build-out of an innovation hub will create a mini-cluster of technology, cybersecurity, AR/VR, AI and machine learning businesses.
- **Maintain High Quality of Life:** Ajax is the municipality of choice within the GTHA for families based on the high quality of life with a wide variety of entertainment, restaurants and amenities for families and young professionals.
- **Live, Work, Play:** Businesses and the Town embrace the live, work, play mindset and support and encourage development that reflects this. Downtown is envisioned as the epicentre of this shift from car culture and bedroom community to complete communities.
- **Ajax as a Smart City and Technological Leader:** Leverage technology and start to be considered a leader among the Smart Cities conversation in the GTHA. The Economic Development Department can be at the forefront of implementing new technologies to further enhance their position as a leader and innovator.

Risks

- **Low Assessment Growth:** Continued low assessment growth and low employment industries taking up much of the limited available space for development.
- **Development Slows:** Speculation on lands – as Toronto prices continue to rise, risk of developers holding Ajax lands and sitting on them over the long term rather than developing them to meet current employment growth needs.
- **Fractured Business Communities:** In the increasingly competitive retail sector, small and independent businesses that don't have the marketing budgets or the internal resources to conduct business development activities on their own fall victim to changing retail landscape. A lack of vision and innovative action through the BIAs leads to further isolation and businesses turning inwards.
- **Missed Opportunity:** There is the potential for a loss of momentum and optimism that currently exists among the existing business community towards the new Council.

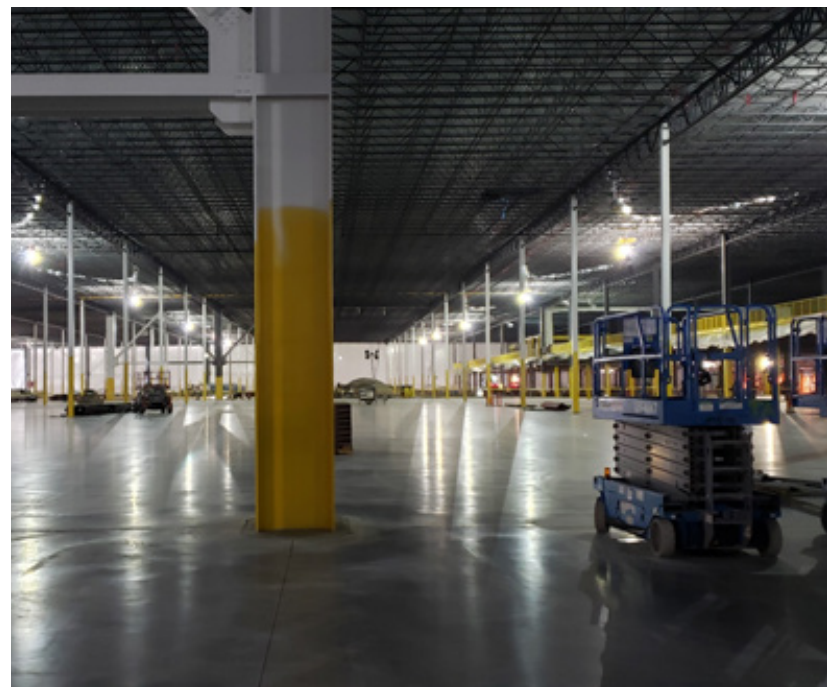


Results

- **Sustainable Growth:** The Town of Ajax sees steady assessment of industrial/commercial growth that supports population and increasing service level requirements. Employment in higher-order industries and export-based industries contributes to increased GDP and jobs for residents.
- **Build the Brand:** Maintain a high level of overall satisfaction among existing businesses with increased performance among the highest priority ranked factors. The current level of enthusiasm for Council and the appreciation of the work in the Economic Development office is maintained over the course of the Action Plan.
- **Office Development:** Attract a significant head office investment to raise the profile of the town as a viable location within the GTHA and leverage the competitive cost environment.
- **Innovation:** Successful proof of concept/business case and development of an innovation hub (virtual or physical) as a key driver of entrepreneurship and business acceleration within Ajax.

4.1 Determining Strategic Goals and Priorities

Based on the research, the SOARR Assessment and consultation with the business community and stakeholders, a series of strategic goals were developed, and priorities were established. The strategic goals are a result of the refining and answering the questions, ‘where do we want to go’ and ‘how do we get there?’ These strategic goals identify what the communities must do to achieve their vision and act as milestones along the way. Informed by the situational analysis and the consultation with the community, the strategic goals are the building blocks for the Economic Development Action Plan. While the list of strategic goals based upon the initial consultation process was extensive, a number of goals and aspirations rose to the forefront and were verified by the Project Steering Committee based upon their knowledge of the community, their expertise and their capacity as partners in economic development to implement the related actions.





5. Strategic Goals

5.1 Goal # 1: Leaders in Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction

What do we mean?

Business retention and expansion (BR+E) programming is a critical feature of an effective economic development strategy. BR+E is designed to strengthen the relationship between existing businesses and the community to enable their future growth in Ajax. Traditional BR+E programs involve meeting with business owners and decision-makers on an ongoing basis through an in-person interview. BR+E programs may be segmented by industry, business size, location or may be conducted on a more general level.

Enabling the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) refers to those businesses that have less than 500 employees. Small businesses are classified by Industry Canada as those having between 1-99 employees, with medium businesses having between 100 and 499 employees.

In addition to building on the successful Ajax-based business and entrepreneurs, attraction efforts are designed to draw in new companies, entrepreneurs and visitors to add to the local economy and spur investment and job creation. Growth sectors in Ajax, including advanced manufacturing, transportation and logistics, and professional services, are most likely to occur among small and medium businesses as opposed to large scale industrial employers relocating to Ajax.

Why is it important?

Enabling growth among existing businesses through BR+E activities helps businesses create and preserve local employment. Local businesses also offer a vital contribution to the local tax base and increasing their share of the overall tax base can help lead to the greater financial sustainability of the municipality as a whole. Research and the experience of economic development leaders have demonstrated that efforts spent on nurturing and enabling growth among existing businesses provide a much more effective return on investment in terms of both time and resources than pursuing new businesses through investment attraction efforts. Although statistics differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, the most commonly cite statistics from across North America attribute 80% of net new jobs to existing businesses.

SMEs are the backbone of any local economy. SMEs nationally make up 99.8% of all businesses with employees, with 97.9% considered small with less than 100 employees.¹¹ In Ajax, SMEs represented over 99% of all businesses with employees with just two large employers in manufacturing, two in public administration, one in arts, entertainment and recreation and one in health care and social assistance. A high concentration of businesses in 'Accommodation and Food Services' and

*Ajax Advantage:
Exceptionally high level of
satisfaction among existing
business community and
high regard for Council and
Staff.*

¹¹ Key Small Business Statistics – January 2019 https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/eng/h_03090.html#point1-1



'Professional, Scientific and Technical Services' are dominated by small businesses, and the growth of both industries are reliant on being able to attract workers who may currently be commuting out for work.

Ajax already has a good start on retaining and growing businesses of all sizes. The Town of Ajax currently has a very high level of business satisfaction based on the statistically significant business survey that was conducted for EDAP. Based on the results of the survey, businesses were both very satisfied with Ajax as a place to do business and had high levels of satisfaction with many of the individual business factors within the Town. Economic development staff, administration and Council were all well regarded by the business community as expressed through a more positive business outlook compared to 12 months ago (since the municipal election) and a positive outlook over the near term (next 12 months). Leveraging the high levels of business confidence and optimism and promoting the overall business satisfaction levels can help to drive investment and showcase Ajax as a great place to grow a business.

Due to the existing servicing constraints, limited marketable spaces for greenfield development and primarily private ownership, large scale industrial attraction may be limited under the current circumstances. With SMEs making up a large portion of employers in Ajax, enabling their growth through BR+E programs and activities is essential to the long-term growth of the overall Ajax economy. While there have been some large-scale investments in Ajax, including Gordon Food Service, Amazon, and the emerging growth of Durham Live on the Pickering border as a multi-venue entertainment and shopping centre, these large employers will require SMEs in the form of suppliers, contractors and trades to support their growth, ongoing operations and supply chains. Focus on SME growth by understanding their unique needs and connecting them with each other, and larger employers can help maintain strong growth in the local economy beyond just population-based employment. Strengthening local supply chains can help to create local jobs and ensure that spin-off employment and investment is retained in Ajax.

Enhanced Infrastructure to Assist in Business Attraction

Business retention and expansion is also closely linked to business attraction. Attracting complementary businesses for strategic growing sectors and developments is an essential component of the Economic Development Action Plan. The build-out of Durham Live in Pickering on the Ajax border provides an opportunity for support businesses and complementary tourism product development. An innovation hub can also serve as an attractor for businesses, visitors and talent. As a business case for an innovation hub, virtual or physical, continues to be developed, consideration should be given to incorporating a broad range of technology-based activities that include tech tourism and hosting events, particularly in the AI, robotics and cybersecurity space. Attracting tourism products such as hotels, destination dining and retail as well as other support services for an innovation hub, virtual or physical, and Durham Live can leverage the presence of those facilities and create jobs for Ajax residents. Attracting businesses that are reliant on people as opposed to land-intensive businesses is a key feature of the Action Plan.

Business retention, expansion and attraction efforts focus on SMEs, leveraging marquee initiatives and growing employment in sectors where Ajax has demonstrated strength and opportunities. Ajax has experienced growth in the transportation and logistics supply chain due to its strategic location along Highway 401, Highway 407. The completion of Highway 412 interchanges will further enhance Ajax's competitive advantage. There is the potential for further growth in this sector, particularly in the areas of smaller distribution centres, to accommodate the growth of online retailing and just-in-time



manufacturing, which is focused on smaller inventories and more frequent truck transportation. The Durham Region Competitiveness Study identified the Deep-Sea port in Oshawa as a competitive advantage to businesses within the Region, but the study highlighted the disadvantage that eastern GTHA municipalities faced with regards to airport access. With the Region of Durham's position and support of the Federal Government's report, the Toronto East airport was cited as a major factor for existing businesses plans to expand and will most certainly be a key factor in the attraction of new businesses and further enhance Ajax's already strong locational advantages.

The CELR provides several anticipated sectors of growth using a land needs perspective. The growth sectors from the CELR and the EDAP both focus on people, technology and innovation as key drivers of growth. Encouraging smaller footprints and more vertical warehouse, logistics and distribution businesses, as opposed to large scale distribution centre locations, has the benefit of preserving the limited employment lands and delivering higher employment densities. Attracting advanced manufacturing that relies on technology and a skilled workforce, smaller and more compact goods movement businesses, and office sector development (finance and insurance, professional, scientific and technical services, real estate) are areas where the CELR's focus on employment land and the EDAP's focus on driving the growth of jobs for residents of Ajax closely align. The CELR outlines some of the locations where this growth is likely to occur (GO Transit Node, Central Employment Area), and the EDAP provides recommendations on activities to support this development.

Attracting and Developing Complementary Tourism Products

Accommodation & food and arts, entertainment and recreation, are strong performers and projected growth sectors for Ajax, and they play a vital role in attracting and retaining workforce and visitors. Tourism product development is a contributor to the overall quality of life and quality of place considerations for visitors and residents. Tourism products and entertainment options are also vital to the attraction and retention of young talent to Ajax. Support and encouragement for niche tourism businesses can leverage the return on investment of new and existing festivals, events and efforts to bring people into Ajax and increase their spending within the community, all to create local employment.

Ajax can leverage its momentum in tourism product development (i.e. hotels, banquet, golf courses, casino, heritage preservation areas, and film locations) to attract further investment. Additionally, supporting business retention and expansion of existing tourism-related businesses will play a key role in growing destinations, including Pickering Village and Downtown Ajax.

5.2 Goal # 2: Innovators in Business Incubation and Workforce Development

What do we mean?

Innovation is the application of new ideas or inventions into a good or service that creates value. It is often described as the intersection of invention and commercialization. Providing support to businesses and individuals that are involved in the innovation space involves ensuring the required resources are available to enable new businesses and new ideas to grow and succeed in Ajax. The resources may be physical space, access to capital and funding, access to talent or networking opportunities between like-minded firms and other creatives.



Innovation is also closely associated with workforce development and a businesses ability to scale their business. As new technologies and innovations emerge, access to talent will be a differentiator when attracting innovative firms and spurring job creation through the development and commercialization of homegrown innovations.

Why is it important?

Today's economy is increasingly driven by innovation, technology and entrepreneurs who can turn an idea into a business with the right support. Innovation creates jobs and wealth and is driven by people, entrepreneurs, research and creativity. Durham Region is emerging as a hotbed of innovation and is building an ecosystem that supports new ideas and enables businesses to ramp up. The Region contains Durham College, Ontario Tech University, and Trent University Durham, which are key partners in developing the talent pipeline and applied research that can support business growth and commercialization of new ideas. Leveraging these education and research assets is essential to further developing the growth of technology and higher-order employment within Ajax.

Ajax Advantage: An innovation hub, post-secondary connections and growing housing options can make Ajax the go-to place for talent and quality of life

The innovation ecosystem in Durham is well developed and growing. Innovation centres include the Spark Centre in Oshawa, 1855 in Whitby, and Durham College's AI Hub, among others. These innovation centres and accelerators provide start-up support and resources that support Ajax's recent efforts to determine the potential for an innovation hub in the community. As the Town moves forward with researching a business case to validate this effort, it should look to provide a made-in-Ajax solution that supports local businesses and ideas as a component of the larger ecosystem. This could ensure that Ajax is competitive in the innovation space over the long term. Preliminary research suggests the Town has an opportunity to establish a niche in the ecosystem in the areas of cybersecurity and AI. Another critical and differentiating aspect of the Town may be in the area of technology training. Having a training hub as part of the regional innovation ecosystem could help cement Ajax's position as the go-to jurisdiction for talent and innovators looking to take a hands-on approach and take advantage of the industry-leading partnerships and facilities being proposed. Having an innovation hub that has the potential to attract and foster the creation of technologies and products will create value and higher levels of local economic base employment that is currently dominated in the GTHA by the City of Toronto, Mississauga and other peripheral municipalities.

As businesses become increasingly focused on talent and Ajax businesses have identified skilled labour as a priority through the business survey, the more access to technology, innovation and support that Ajax can provide will help it to be attractive to new and existing businesses, start-ups and entrepreneurs. Access to talent, affordable space and a strong support system can help existing small businesses scale up operations and help retain some of the current outflows of workers to other GTHA municipalities. In the absence of a regional or satellite post-secondary campus in Ajax, an innovation hub with associated bricks and mortar or on-line training facilities could provide space for increased partnerships with universities, colleges and private training organizations that fosters a learning environment for residents and students and talent pipeline for Ajax businesses.



Ajax as the Go-To Place for Talent

The goal of transforming Ajax into a leading jurisdiction for innovation and talent also requires a strong support infrastructure for the current and future workforce. Stiff competition from the City of Toronto and other GTHA municipalities with more established professional and social networks means that Ajax must continue to push out messages that the community is emerging as a vibrant place for young professionals and families to locate or relocate after years of commuting out for employment or leisure.

The Durham Region Competitiveness Study reported that Durham ranks 4th in the digital media sector in terms of the available labour force and existing business base. The study highlights that the Region is home to more digital media businesses than Waterloo. Durham also has lower operational costs than York, Peel, Waterloo and Halton, and has relatively lower costs of entry for digital media start-ups when looking at land and development costs. Durham Region also ranks 2nd in competitiveness in the EN3 sectors, defined as Energy, the Environment and Engineering. With one of the lower office development costs in the GTHA and the lowest commercial tax rates of GGH comparator municipalities, Ajax and the region has the potential to attract innovative professional service and technology firms to add to the growing cluster of activity and talent pipeline from Ontario Tech University, Durham College and the creation of an innovation hub.

Attracting, retaining and developing the innovative workforce of tomorrow for Ajax requires a combination of formal workforce development initiatives as well as softer network development. Ajax must actively nurture and promote the town as a destination for talent. Many of the leading tech jurisdictions in Canada and the US have been successful in not only developing the environment and ecosystem where businesses and start-ups can develop and grow, but they also have a strong focus on creating the social environment where young talent, entrepreneurs and innovators find likeminded individuals, social networks and a collaborative peer group. For Ajax to continue to emerge as an attractive location for innovators and talent, the Town must play an active role in fostering partnerships, delivering programming and offering unique opportunities to engage young professionals and technology-intensive firms.

5.3 Goal # 3: Supporters of Attractive Place Development

What do we mean?

Place development and placemaking is a community and economic development tool that looks to capitalize on local assets to create appealing places for people to live, work and play. Placemaking and place development often requires looking at locational assets and features in a new way and actively working to change existing attitudes and perceptions through marketing, planning and policies that encourage community development and public participation. The Town of Ajax has tremendous place-making potential that can be supported through the Economic Development Action Plan.

Ajax has several strategic locations where public and private sector investments have contributed to a renewed sense of place. Pat Bayly Square as a gateway to the downtown and the area around the GO Station are a few of the examples of where strategic policies, investments and partnerships could contribute to place development. These strategic locations can exemplify the live, work, play philosophy but will also create connections across the town of Ajax as transit, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and public spaces are encouraged. Leveraging and continuing to build these unique communities within



Ajax will contribute to attracting the innovative companies and workforce that will enable local job creation.

Why is it important?

Historically being a low-cost environment was the key to attracting business investment and jobs to a community. The emergence of innovation, entrepreneurship and SME development as key driving factors in job creation has shifted thinking across the economic development sector. In addition to nurturing homegrown entrepreneurship and the scale-up of existing businesses, economic developers, and companies themselves, are increasingly focused on talent as determining factors in location decisions. With increasing competition for talent, place development plays a key role in providing an attractive environment for talent attraction.

The downtown core is a key feature of any municipality that highlights the vibrancy of the community. A welcoming downtown invite both residents and visitors and provides a unique value proposition. Niche retail options, housing and entertainment, support a unique community of downtown residents and provides a gathering space for the broader community to come together. The redevelopment of Downtown Ajax is a key feature of the Economic Development Action Plan and the focus of other municipal intensification efforts that are already underway. The transformation of Downtown Ajax has already begun with the significant investments and developments around Pat Bayly Square by Medallion Developments. The development will see thousands of units coming to market and add to the civic square and the growing mix of residential, commercial and retail space. The injection of energy and amenities into downtown will help to transform Ajax's core and make it more attractive to visitors and residents.

An Innovation Hub as a Catalyst for Place-Making

In addition to its role in the innovation ecosystem, a bricks and mortar innovation hub could also contribute to the Town's placemaking efforts. With the attraction of technology-based businesses and entrepreneurs, there is potential for the activity to spill out and into the community more broadly. Businesses that use the innovation hub may find a scale-up business location, local supplier partners, access to professional or business services or chose to live in the area. Ensuring the conditions are right for such an investment could ensure the hub is a catalyst for greater development and contribute to the revitalization of the area and a focal point for talent and businesses.

The consultation process and economic analysis revealed that a large portion of Ajax's workforce commutes outside of the town every day for work, primarily to Toronto and other GTHA municipalities. Ajax and Durham Region has lagged behind other GTHA municipalities in terms of office development despite a relatively competitive cost environment, rent, land, and building prices. Mississauga continues to be a leader in office development, and other competitors within the GTHA are at various stages of rebuilding and rebranding their downtowns, including Brampton, Markham, Burlington and Vaughan. A vision for the downtown which embraces the live, work, play mindset and a focus on mixed-use development can help re-invigorate the area and make it attractive for small to medium office development. Downtown office development can provide spaces for economic base employment industries, stem the outflow of workers and provide a logical transition space for technological and innovation-based firms that get their start through the regional tech hubs and require expanded space.

Centralize and Coordinate Place-Making Efforts

Active placemaking is multi-faceted and must be more than a simple marketing exercise. In the case of



Ajax's BIAs, the involvement of the associations in marketing and community events alone may not provide the optimal return on investment for businesses or the Town and have limited effectiveness in place making. Lack of decisive action could result in marketing and promotion of the status quo and business as usual rather than a re-imagining which the EDAP recommends and the Central Ajax Intensification, Servicing and Transportation (CAIST) study will look to achieve. Many economic development offices have taken on this place making role, and the Town of Ajax can look at ways to bring this function in-house to help create continuity and alignment of placemaking efforts across the Town's emerging centres of economic activity beyond just Downtown and Pickering Village.

The establishment of a 'Win this Space' competition, programs for enhanced accessibility, including mobility ramps, and even smartphone-enabled beacons that alert visually impaired customers when they are nearing a store are some of the ways that economic development departments are offering programs and services previously limited to BIAs more broadly across the community.

Ajax has a number of other areas beyond downtown that also require attention from the Economic Development Action Plan to leverage their growth potential and ensure that they contribute to placing development within Ajax. The GO Transit Station Mixed-Use Area has been designated for a higher density of employment in immediate proximity to the transit station with the development of residential to follow. Prestige employment lands along Highway 401 and adjacent to Casino Ajax are the site of considerable interest. Pickering Village, with its proximity to Durham Live, will continue to provide opportunities for business growth and tourism, along with challenges related to increased traffic and congestion. Economic Development needs to be active across the Town and avoid getting narrowed in on areas with BIAs at the expense of businesses throughout the town.

The Commercial Employment Land (CELR) Review has identified a supply of vacant land, and the consultation process has identified the need for Ajax to actively define its future growth. The province has also designated a Provincially Significant Employment Zone south of Bayly Street West within the Central Employment Area to protect employment lands. The designation is only the first step, and active policy review and development goals are required to spur higher-order employment growth in these opportunity areas. A hands-on approach is required in the downtown corridor and key growth areas to attract new investment, new businesses and create the vibrant, public and pedestrian-friendly spaces that define Ajax as a community with character. Strategic investments, leadership and a willingness to take bold action when opportunities arise should inform the development of the downtown. The Central Ajax Intensification, Servicing and Transportation (CAIST) Strategy has been initiated to address this desire for increased employment and residential density, and the Economic Development Action Plan and engagement by Economic Development staff with the existing business and development community in the area can help inform the ultimate vision of the CAIST Strategy for the Downtown.

5.4 Goal # 4: Champions for Organizational Readiness to Support Growth and Development

What do we mean?

This goal reflects an overarching consideration for the success of the Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP). For the Town of Ajax to achieve the economic development goals that were developed in consultation with businesses, the community and stakeholders from across the region, the Economic Development section must have the necessary resources, technology and support across the



organization to deliver on the EDAP.

Organizational readiness also refers to the ability of staff across departments to embrace a growth mindset. An organizational culture that embraces a high level of customer service, understanding and appreciation of business investment and economic development will help increase investor and developer confidence. The corporate strategic plan highlighted the priority of dedicating resources to maintain excellent service delivery in response to growth and changes in legislative requirements.

Why is it important?

Competition for growth and investment within the GTHA is fierce. The Durham Region Competitive Study identified several areas where Durham Region, including Ajax, ranked relatively lower compared to other GGH regions primarily associated with its distance to international crossings and Pearson Airport. Organizational readiness and service excellence can be one factor that helps to differentiate Ajax among these competing jurisdictions. Accessing services is one of the most important ways that a business or entrepreneur interacts with its local government. A positive customer service experience can be the difference between pursuing an opportunity in the Town of Ajax or potentially looking at another jurisdiction perceived to be more business-friendly or receptive. The consultation process, including the business survey, has suggested that Ajax's Council and staff are well regarded as progressive and focused on economic development. This positive momentum in the community presents the ideal time to provide the resources required to implement the EDAP and ensure Ajax is at the forefront of economic development.

As Ajax's population and labour force continue to grow, economic development in Ajax must be resourced accordingly.

Focusing Economic Development Efforts Where they are Most Impactful

In addition to increasing resources to meet the requirements of the EDAP, there is also an opportunity to maximize existing economic development resources through re-aligning existing staff time and focus. Actively managing the Town's real estate portfolio, including transactions unrelated to economic development, means that less time is available for pursuing strategic investments or opportunities in other areas. Administration and management of Ajax's two Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) is also an area where operational efficiencies can be attained. The consultation process revealed that much of the BIAs current efforts are limited to location-based marketing and administrative activities. As economic development organizations shift their focus towards placemaking and ensuring connections across communities, a more robust Town-led effort and coordinated approach can potentially provide a better and more comprehensive return on investment.

Organizational readiness also refers to having the processes and procedures in place to manage new and existing development applications and business intelligence effectively and efficiently within and across departments. This case management approach starts even before a developer or business approaches the Town with an application or proposal. The *PriorityPath™* program has proved to be an extremely successful and effective tool for expediting projects with significant investment and employment criteria. The success of the program can be further enhanced by incorporating innovative best practices and technological solutions to help businesses and entrepreneurs to navigate through some of the licensing, application and permit processes more conveniently online. Helping businesses with self-serve and online options can make interactions with Economic Development staff more impactful and, most importantly, save investors valuable time.



The consultation process revealed that some businesses were frustrated with both the number and sequencing of various components of the development process. ‘Development charges and off-site levies’ and ‘Development/building permit process’ were both identified as priorities for the business community. A refocused and revamped *PriorityPath™* program that includes the use of leading-edge technology and marketing of its success stories can help to elevate the already award-winning program. Integrating *PriorityPath™*, BR+E activities and business attraction efforts through a customer relationship management (CRM) tool will ensure that no development, success story or potential investment goes unrecognized.

The exceptionally high levels of overall business satisfaction and the high regard for economic development staff and Council suggest that businesses already view the Town as showing leadership in the future of the community. As the Economic Development section takes on a greater role within the broader innovation ecosystem, increased employment density targets and the strategic opportunities outlined in the EDAP, increased resources and capacity must be considered to maintain the Town’s solid reputation in the economic development space.





6. Action Plan

The Economic Development Action Plan is underpinned by the strategic goals, intended to anchor all of the ensuing actions on the part of the Town of Ajax over the next five years. The goals are a result of prioritizing and validating the Town's overarching vision for the community, alignment with the corporate strategic plan as well as the desired outcomes of the economic development strategic planning process.

It should be noted that the list of actions is a prioritized starting point based on community input and research at a point in time. It is by no means an exhaustive or comprehensive list of all the potential actions for the Town of Ajax or its economic development partners. New actions will emerge and will need to be assessed against the priorities of this Plan.

The goals and actions are presented in the following manner:

- **Strategic Goal** – The desired outcome that emerged from the strategic planning process and a statement of the aspirations of Ajax's stakeholder community.
- **Actions** – The specific direction the Town, its partners, and its stakeholders will undertake to combat the essential issues or opportunities that must be addressed over the length of the Action Plan.
 - **Year Started** – The timeframe for implementing the Action. Year stated indicates when actions are recommended to be started based on the level of priority and alignment with Ajax's Strategic Plan or other planning exercises.
 - **Lead and Partners** – The identification of select leads and internal/external partners that can support economic development objectives.
 - **Performance Indicators** – Benchmarks that demonstrate successful results from implementing actions.
 - **Connection to Ajax's Strategic Plan 2018-2022**

Converting goals into an action/implementation plan requires a structure that facilitates understanding the complexities of economic development planning, the capacity of the Town to implement actions and the ability and capacity of partner organizations within the community and the region. The framework serves as a vehicle for breaking down abstract goals and ideas into actionable steps that can bring about the desired result.

The timing is indicated by the actual or projected year in which an activity is to be started. These timelines are based upon Ajax's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan and other studies and plans that are anticipated over the lifetime of the Economic Development Action Plan. An annual review and report on Action Plan should be undertaken to inform Council and the Senior Management Team of the status of actions as well as any updates to proposed timelines.

COVID-19 Response

The preparation of the Economic Development Action was completed just as the impact of COVID-19 pandemic was starting to be felt by our business community. Reflecting on this situation and recognizing the shifting circumstances associated with the provision of aid by senior levels of government, several actions within the Economic Development Action Plan, especially related to business retention, have been prioritized for early implementation. Additionally, several economic recovery actions have been



included based on Ajax's unique business climate and emerging practices from municipalities as they respond to the unprecedented impact of COVID-19. Recovery efforts and associated programming will continue to emerge based on the needs of the local business community.





Goal #1: Leaders in Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction

Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
SME Support and Development			
1. Update and conduct a new, innovative targeted annual business retention and expansion (BR+E) programming to complement regular business outreach	Economic Development	Connecting: 1.2 Expand our digital communications strategy to include a newscast, podcasts, blogs, video announcements and social media accounts.	2021 (ongoing)
2. Conduct a targeted BR+E of strategic locations to identify area-specific challenges and opportunities. Suggested areas include Midtown, Uptown Regional Centre, Downtown and Pickering Village	Economic Development	Investing: 1.4 Facilitate opportunities for mixed-use intensification projects along regional corridors and major transit routes.	2022-2025
3. Conduct a targeted BR+E of subsegments of the overall business community with a focus on locally owned businesses with less than 50 employees	Economic Development	Investing: 2.2 Promote investment and intensification along Harwood Avenue between Highway 401 and Kingston Road.	2023-2025
4. Conduct a bi-annual survey to identify overall business satisfaction and track progress over time. Consider statistically significant and consistent methodology to ensure comparability and track progress (e.g. Triage BR+E)	Economic Development	Connecting: 2.3 Undertake customer service and satisfaction surveys to gauge performance and perceptions.	2022



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
5. While relevant, conduct an annual business impact survey in conjunction with BR+E outreach to understand the impact of COVID-19	Economic Development	COVID-19 Business Recovery Partners: Durham Economic Task Force	2021
6. Undertake follow up interviews with businesses identifying planned expansions through the Economic Development Action Plan's business survey to ensure expansion takes place in Ajax wherever possible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bring relevant documents, resources and departmental staff to follow up interviews if issues are known 	Economic Development Partners: Building, Planning, BACD	Connecting: 2.5 Develop campaign to encourage customers to use feedback tools to provide regular input on services and programs.	2021
7. Undertake follow up interviews with selling, relocating or closing businesses to identify if succession planning, site or building requirements or other resources can be provided to keep the business open and located in Ajax	Economic Development Partners: Building, Planning, BACD	Connecting: 2.5 Develop campaign to encourage customers to use feedback tools to provide regular input on services and programs.	2022
8. Develop a roster of mentors within Ajax who have successfully built a business and are able to support peers	Economic Development Partners: APBOT	Leading: 1.7 Engage with government networks, boards and associations to advance priorities.	2022
9. Profile and highlight businesses that have adapted their operations to minimize the impact of COVID-19. Connect innovators with businesses struggling to adapt to e-commerce and alternative forms of delivering products and services	Economic Development Partners: Invest Durham APBOT	COVID-19 Business Recovery	2021-2025 (Ongoing)



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
10. Leverage existing strong partnerships with local and regional economic development, business support and community organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure there is a strong referral process with tracking through enterprise CRM to ensure a smooth process and measure outcomes (e.g. HubSpot, Salesforce) 	Economic Development Partners: BACD, APBOT, DEDP	Leading 1.7 Engage with government networks, boards and associations to advance priorities.	2021-2025 (Ongoing)
11. Continue the series of business workshops and seminars with a focus on topics that are key business growth enablers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Angel Investor networks and opportunities for alternative business financing ▪ Artificial intelligence opportunities for small business 	Economic Development Partners: Spark Angel Network, Durham College, Ontario Tech	Connecting: 5.4 Develop technology programming for youth, seniors and businesses with our community partners.	2021-2025 (ongoing)
12. Meet with large employers in the Region to understand their supply chain requirements and connect them with Ajax-based SMEs where possible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a TOA Economic Development Roundtable 	Economic Development DEDP	Leading 1.7 Engage with government networks, boards and associations to advance priorities.	2021-2025 (ongoing)
13. Maintain a centralized webpage with information and links to business grant and support funding opportunities that is available through the Town of Ajax website	Economic Development Partners: BACD, Spark Angel Network	Connecting: 2.5 Develop campaign to encourage customers to use feedback tools to provide regular input on services and programs.	2021-2025 (ongoing)
14. Ensure Ajax businesses continue to have access to financial support and recovery program information from governments and financial institutions	Economic Development Partners:	COVID-19 Business Recovery	2021-2022



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
	Invest Durham Durham Economic Taskforce		
SME Attraction			
15. Develop a soft-landing program under the 'Priority' branding, which acts as a global landing pad for international entrepreneurs and SMEs looking to relocate to Canada	Economic Development Partners: BACD, Durham Region; Spark Centre	Leading 1.7 Engage with government networks, boards and associations to advance priorities.	2022
16. Investigate options for increasing development potential in the surrounding areas of the current Kingston and Audley Road Business Area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engage with landowners in this area to understand the impact of the Highway 412 interchange on their development plans 	Economic Development; Planning		2021-2025
17. Continue to monitor the future of the Pickering Airport Lands as a key connection for targeted goods movement/logistics industries and major office attraction	Economic Development Partners: Durham Region, APBOT; DEDP		2021-2025
18. Advocate for an expedited process for the Pickering Airport Lands as an economic recovery project for provincial/federal post-COVID-19 infrastructure funding	Economic Development Partners: Durham	COVID-19 Business Recovery	2021-2025



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
	Region, APBOT; DEDP		
19. Meet with landowners in the employment areas to identify barriers to lands becoming market-ready 20. Identify potential programs that could be instituted to encourage development (e.g. Brownfield rehabilitation/remediation) 21. Investigate and support zoning updates to reflect new and emerging industries (i.e., vertical farming/urban farming)	Economic Development; Planning; DEDP	Investing: 1.3 (#18) Update the inventory of commercial and employment lands and assess existing policies to ensure we are capitalizing on opportunities for growth. Investing 2.7 Establish zoning permissions for vertical farming in Ajax	2022-2025
Tourism Development			
22. Ensure that tourism road signage and promotion that helps existing businesses and spurs complementary tourism-related businesses is included as the wayfinding strategy evolves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify key gateways, including Pickering Village and the Downtown with enhanced signage ▪ Pickering Village and arterial roads leading to Durham Live ▪ Roads leading into Ajax Casino ▪ Waterfront areas and major arterial roads leading to the recreation 	Planning; Transportation Economic Development; Partners: Durham Region, Durham Tourism	Investing: 6.4 Enhance gateways and update welcome signage to the Town using new design guidelines. Connecting: 7.3 Execute a Directional Wayfinding program to guide and link residents and visitors around Town.	2021-2025



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
23. Market Ajax's hotel/convention spaces and any future innovation hub as venues for technology conferences	Economic Development	Connecting: 6.3 Market the St. Francis Centre as an innovative destination for arts, entertainment and corporate events in Durham Region.	2021-2025 (Ongoing)
24. Contribute to the Recreation and Parks Master Plan consideration of a sports dome that could provide a competitive advantage for attracting sport tourism 25. Contribute to the examination of adding a fairground to host large public gatherings and host a range of events	Recreation, Economic Development	Investing: 3.5 Investigate the potential for a Municipal Fairground and identify infrastructure requirements to host signature events and live entertainment. Investing 3.6 Explore the potential of an indoor Sports Dome and associated amenities.	2021-2025
26. Support a waterfront development plan to identify where and what types of business opportunities can be developed with a focus on tourism-related businesses (i.e., canoe and kayak rentals)	Planning, Recreation, Economic Development; Building and Partners: Durham Tourism	Connecting: 6.5 Introduce new services and businesses to support the Ajax Waterfront and Greenwood as destinations (i.e. bike rentals, concessions, canoe rentals, eco-tours, etc.).	2021-2025
27. Prepare a Tourism Action Plan	Economic Development,	Connecting: 6.4	2021-2025



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identify areas of strength or clusters of activity for increased promotion and economic impact to assist businesses to rebound from the pandemic restrictions ▪ identify and build on our assets, bike infrastructure, lake access, natural environment, sports facilities, Ajax Downs, Ajax Casino etc. ▪ identify gaps in assets for further consideration ▪ Re-establish the Tourism Working Group 	Recreation, Active Trans. Partners: Central Counties Tourism (RTO6); Durham Tourism	Target our tourism strategies to complement local economic development Connecting: 6.6 Partner with tourism and sport organizations to support major conferences and sporting events.	
28. Participate/Host an annual tourism symposium for local operators featuring speakers, best practices and networking opportunities	Economic Development Partners: Central Counties Tourism (RTO6); Durham Tourism	Connecting: 6.6 Partner with tourism and sport organizations to support major conferences and sporting events.	2022-2025
29. Support and facilitate the potential implementation of a Municipal Accommodations Tax (MAT) that supports and funds local tourism initiatives	CAO; Economic Development; Finance; Recreation	Connecting: 6.7 Investigate a possible Municipal Accommodation Tax Program.	2022
30. Review options to implement a tourism stream through Impact Ajax that encourages new events for positive economic impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist festival or event organizers that bring people into the downtown 	CAO; Recreation; Economic Development	Connecting: 5.3 Review the IMPACT Ajax Community Support Program to consider new support streams for the community.	2022-2023



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
<p>31. Enhance the Town’s Film production offerings and support throughout the town</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a list of filming assets; leverage both the Province and Region’s Film asset databases ▪ Lead/participate in Film industry familiarization tours ▪ Facilitate/participate in connecting local businesses to the opportunities with the Film industry; establish local film ambassador’s program (i.e., similar to Ontario by Bike) ▪ Facilitate/participate in connecting local talent with the Film industry ▪ Review the Film Permit process and fees for value and potential recurring revenue to support film industry attraction 	<p>Economic Development</p> <p>Partners: Durham Region Film Office</p>	<p>Investing: 5.2</p> <p>Examine revenue sources to ensure all opportunities are explored and leveraged to offset the burden on the tax base.</p>	<p>2021-2025</p>
<p>Key Performance Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ # of businesses engaged through BRE outreach ▪ # of businesses successfully assisted with expansion plans (additional employees, additional buildings/land, permit value) ▪ # of businesses supported through succession planning ▪ # of grand openings for new businesses ▪ Permit value of new investments attracted ▪ Attendance at business development workshops and events ▪ # of new tourism-related businesses ▪ # of film permits issued; inquired 			



Goal # 2: Innovators in Business Incubation and Workforce Development

Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
An Innovation Hub as a catalyst for partnerships			
<p>32. Form a small committee of local industry experts to work with Economic Development staff to research and prepare a report to Council on the costs and anticipated return on investment to create an innovation hub in Ajax. This includes opportunities to provide testing and training for small business development and ensure linkages to other regional business accelerators and private financing networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluate the utilization of municipally-owned surplus properties ▪ Describe the elements necessary to ensure a successful and viable enterprise ▪ Determine the best location for the hub and the opportunity to create a virtual innovation in the interim ▪ Deliver a report for Council’s consideration 	<p>Economic Development</p> <p>Partners:</p> <p>Industry Experts; Invest Durham; Durham College; Ontario Tech University; APBoT</p>	<p>Leading: 2.1 (#9) Collaborate with partners to potentially establish an innovation hub in Ajax – a project where technology, training and knowledge will intersect.</p>	<p>2021-2022</p>
<p>33. Leverage social media relationships with Spark Centre and 1855 to promote/share information and events taking place within the region</p>	<p>Economic Development; Communications</p> <p>Partners:</p> <p>Spark Centre; 1855; DEDP</p>	<p>Connecting: 5.4 Develop technology programming for youth, seniors and businesses with our community partners.</p>	<p>2021-2025</p>



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
34. Partner with Durham Region and the Province to host inbound delegations and familiarization tours for technology, advanced manufacturing and logistics companies	Economic Development Partners: Durham Region; MEDJCT	Leading: 2.1 (#9) Collaborate with partners to potentially establish an innovation hub in Ajax – a project where technology, training and knowledge will intersect.	2021-2025
Ensure Ajax businesses have access to the technology, training and talent that they need			
35. Promote free access to information and resources through the Town of Ajax website and continue to deliver relevant information sessions	Economic Development, Communications Partners: APBoT; BACD; Durham Economic Taskforce	Connecting: 5.4 Develop technology programming for youth, seniors and businesses with our community partners.	2021
36. Deliver an annual, community-wide summit on entrepreneurship, highlighting the state of the sector, trends, funding opportunities, community performance and career opportunities	Economic Development Partners: BACD; APBOT; Durham College; Ontario Tech	Connecting: 5.4 Develop technology programming for youth, seniors and businesses with our community partners.	2022
37. Investigate partnerships with transportation and logistics industry to strengthen the growing sectors ability to adopt innovation	Economic Development Partners: Durham	Connecting 5.4 Develop technology programming for youth,	2021-2025



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
38. Partner with education institutions to highlight advanced technology careers across all sectors	College, Ontario Tech, DWA, others	seniors and businesses with our community partners.	
39. Facilitate and promote the broadband investments within the Town of Ajax as a competitive advantage for ICT firms looking for lower-cost jurisdictions in the GTHA and support local SMEs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitate initiatives that support Smart Cities infrastructure in the town – 5G, small cell, broadband, mesh, autonomous autos/other, IoT, etc. 	Economic Development, Operations, Communications	Investing: 4.1 Undertake a comprehensive asset level of service review of all municipal infrastructure to help improve future planning and investment.	2021
40. Continue to address connectivity challenges due to increased bandwidth usage due to COVID-19 and communicate with service providers	Economic Development	COVID-19 Business Recovery	2021
Establish Ajax as the go-to place for talent and young professionals			
41. Promote Ajax as the go-to municipality for talent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highlight Ajax’s young and diverse demographic profile to current and prospective employers ▪ Provide ongoing training opportunities for Ajax talent through partnerships, collaboration and joint ventures 	Economic Development, Communications	Investing: 7.2 Support and promote youth employment by providing accessible employment services and opportunities. Connecting 5.4 Develop technology programming for youth, seniors and businesses with	2021-2025



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
		our community partners.	
42. Enhance/continue with upNext® and add similar programming to attract, train and retain talent in Ajax	Economic Development Partners: DWA, BACD, Durham Region; local businesses; local school boards, Durham College, Ontario Tech University	Investing: 7.2 Support and promote youth employment by providing accessible employment services and opportunities.	2021-2025
43. Work with local business and industry to address acute worker shortages as a way to uncover potential labour needs	Economic Development	COVID-19 Business Recovery	2021-2025
44. Network and connect with returning/displaced postsecondary students with local opportunities to work and study	Economic Development Partners: Ontario Tech, Durham College, School Boards	COVID-19 Business Recovery	2021-2025
<p>Key Performance Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ # of speaking engagements for staff and the Mayor/Council at regional/provincial conferences ▪ Social media metrics and engagement ▪ # of entrepreneurs and businesses assisted ▪ The increased activity rate of employment ▪ # of participants in upNext® and other talent attraction initiatives 			



Goal # 3: Supporters of Attractive Place Development

Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
Ensure Downtown Ajax is developed a place to live, work and play			
45. Ensure that economic development and the concept of live, work, play is a consideration when the CAIST conducts the visioning exercise, conceptual planning and broad community engagement for Downtown	Planning, Engineering, Council, Legislative and Information Services, Economic Development		2021
46. Review Downtown CIP to determine if program and criteria modifications are required to ensure strategic sites for residential and employment growth can be developed to help diversify the economy in key sectors and facilitate residential intensification and mixed use	Economic Development; Planning; Engineering; Building		2022
47. Build resiliency through the use of innovative economic development tools in the downtown during intensification and recovery efforts. Enable the Town to play an active role in investment, acquisition and public realm improvements that contribute to placemaking in the downtown	Economic Development	COVID-19 Business Recovery	2021-2025
48. Complete a comprehensive review of the Town's two Business Improvement Areas	Economic Development and Legislative and Information Services		2021



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
<p>49. Advocate for regional and provincial funding and support to expand current servicing/transportation capacity constraints in the downtown</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with the DEDP/Region to advocate for funding and priority for key servicing constraints (i.e. Land Servicing Project) 	<p>Council, CAO, Economic Development, Planning, Engineering</p>	<p>Leading: 1.4 Work with Region of Durham to prioritize servicing investments in Downtown Ajax to facilitate growth and development.</p> <p>Connecting: 1.7 Engage with government networks, boards and associations to advance priorities.</p>	<p>2021-2025</p>
<p>50. Identify potential eligible projects (with a focus on shovel-readiness) for any federal/provincial infrastructure funding as part of the post-COVID recovery</p>	<p>Council, CAO, Economic Development, Planning, Engineering</p>	<p>Leading: 1.4 Work with Region of Durham to prioritize servicing investments in Downtown Ajax to facilitate growth and development.</p> <p>COVID-19 Business Recovery</p>	<p>2021-2025</p>
<p>51. Enhance transportation options to and within the Downtown</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigate potential partnerships for a bike-share pilot project within the downtown corridor ▪ Re-introduce local and tourism transportation options (i.e. local bus/trolley) to serve the Downtown and waterfront. 	<p>Economic Development; Transportation Services; Recreation</p>		<p>2024</p>



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
52. Investigate ridesharing, autonomous last-mile and other ideas as potential solutions to current transit gaps in and out of downtown and employment centres	Transportation Services Partners: Economic Development	Leading: 1.7 Engage with government networks, boards and associations to advance priorities.	2024
Connecting Ajax's Communities			
53. Engage with businesses between the GO Node and the Downtown to understand potential plans for development in this strategic area	Economic Development		2025
54. Advocate for expedited addition of Highway 412 Interchanges in Ajax as a key enabler of employment growth in the Audley Road Business Areas	Economic Development, Planning, Council Partner: Durham Region		2021-2025
55. Advocate for better transit options for Ajax residents starting with a grid pattern transit that services the 'communities' (Downtown, Uptown, Pickering Village) and key employment/employer areas	Economic Development; Transportation Partners: Durham Region		2023-2025
56. Investigate options for offering Wi-Fi in public spaces to encourage pedestrian traffic. Consider piloting the service in key strategic locations to identify feasibility (Pickering Village, Downtown)	Economic Development; Operations; Legislative and Information Services		2023-2025



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
57. Promote the broadband investments within the Town of Ajax as a competitive advantage for attracting residents and work from home professionals	Economic Development, Communications		2021-2022
58. Introduce priorities for physical improvements to the public realm/spaces, active transportation, lighting and signage within the employment areas to enhance connectivity to adjacent neighbourhoods and the downtown. 59. Participate and support a wayfinding signage strategy that incorporates business and places.	Economic Development; Transportation; Planning		2021-2025 (Ongoing)
Create spaces for young professionals, tech talent and creatives to converge			
60. Develop a rotating 'After Dark' program that focuses on bringing and keeping people in Pickering Village after hours with a focus on professionals currently commuting out for work	Economic Development Partners: APBOT		2022-2023
61. Support enhancement of local Networking After 5 events to draw in the business community	Economic Development Partners: APBOT; other networking groups		2022-2023
62. Investigate the development of partnerships with property owners that create spaces for non-traditional tenancy within Pickering Village, Downtown and other strategic locations ▪ Support for co-working spaces	Economic Development Partners: private landowners, real		2021-2022



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'Pop-Up' business locations 	estate agents		
63. Work with commercial landlords and realtors to identify alternative/short term tenancy options to fill vacancies left by COVID-19	Economic Development	COVID-19 Business Recovery	2021-2025
<p>Key Performance Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ # of businesses contacted in strategic area ▪ # of attendees at networking events in Pickering Village ▪ Physical and streetscape improvements in the employment areas ▪ Progress on Highway 412 interchanges ▪ Enhanced routes and north-south public transit options ▪ Secured funding from upper levels of government for key infrastructure projects that increase economic development capacity 			





Goal # 4: Champions for Organizational Readiness to Support Growth and Development

Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
<p>64. Deliver a ‘Best in Class Experience’ by incorporating new technology and tools that enable potential investors and developers to conduct initial stages of development and building application processes and/or preliminary investigation online (e.g. the Planning Portal UK https://www.planningportal.co.uk/)</p>	<p>Economic Development, Planning, Legislative and Information Services</p> <p>Partners: Building Department, Durham Region, development approvals or consultations (e.g. utility companies, MTO, Conservation Authority)</p>	<p>Investing 7.6</p> <p>Develop innovative practices in workforce and business development to position ourselves as leaders and a resource to residents, businesses and stakeholders.</p>	<p>2021-2025</p>
<p>65. Update and review the marketing of the Priority Path program to promote the leading-edge program in the region and beyond.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure that successful applicants are profiled online with testimonials ▪ An online and updatable GIS map featuring successful applicants can help to create awareness of the impact of the program ▪ Provide successful applicants with street-level marketing materials that raise the profile of the program (e.g. Priority Path branded temporary lawn or building signs) 	<p>Economic Development, Planning; Legislative and Information Services; Communications</p>	<p>Investing: 1.2</p> <p>Enhance the Priority Path Program to streamline and expedite approvals for new development.</p>	<p>2021-2025</p>



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigate opportunities to attend site selection conferences and tradeshows to promote the program 			
<p>66. Dedicate additional marketing resources to promote the high level of business satisfaction, economic development momentum generated by Council and staff as a competitive advantage</p> <p>67. Enhance the 'Ajax Advantage' brand/campaign and deliver to a wider audience; increase the exposure of the brand to Council and residents.</p>	Economic Development, Communications	Connecting: 2.7 Communicate and celebrate the good work being done by the Town.	2021-2025
<p>68. Develop an economic development and tourism-focused communications and social media strategy, utilizing a variety of social media platforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus on sharing economic development initiatives, ground-breakings and business openings and other milestones ▪ Ensure regular posting schedule and content creation ▪ Leverage partnerships with the Board of Trade, Region, etc. 	Economic Development, Communications	Leading: 1.7 Engage with government networks, boards and associations to advance priorities.	2021-2025
<p>69. Advocacy and support for provincial funding partnership to address capacity issues related to the further development of the Provincially Significant Employment Zone south of Bayly and surrounding the GO Transit station.</p>	Mayor and Council, CAO, Economic Development Partners: Durham Region	Investing: 1.5 (#18) Update the inventory of commercial and employment lands and assess existing policies to ensure we are capitalizing on opportunities	2021-2022



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate organizational awareness of available (marketable and unmarketable) employment land to promote investment and expansion. 		for growth.	
70. Identify actions to enhance integration and recognition for the role of economic development across the organization and increase role in policy development.	CAO, Council, Senior Management Team, Economic Development		2021-2022
71. Identify organization-wide innovations implemented during COVID-19 that can be carried forward as an Ajax Advantage and competitive differentiator	CAO, Council, Senior Management Team	COVID-19 Business Recovery	2021
72. Continue to be a leading economic development organization in process improvement and innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply a Smart Cities lens to initiatives within Economic Development and across the organization 	Economic Development, Planning, CAO; Legislative and Information Services	Leading: 1.7 Engage with government networks, boards and associations to advance priorities.	2021-2025
73. Explore the structure and tools required to facilitate effective and efficient real estate portfolio management	CAO; Economic Development	Investing: 2.8 Develop a Real Estate Strategy to manage our municipal properties to effectively serve our short and long-term economic goals. Investing: 5.2: Examine revenue sources to	2021-2024



Actions	Lead and Partners	Alignment with 2018-2022 Ajax Strategic Plan	Priority Timing (Year)
		<p>ensure all opportunities are explored and leveraged to offset the burden on the tax base.</p> <p>Investing: 7.1 (#7)</p> <p>Invest in Town resources to maintain excellent service delivery in response to growth and changes in legislative requirements.</p>	
<p>Key Performance Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ # of inquiries/applications through the Priority Path program ▪ Opportunities to speak/referrals/inquiries about the Priority Path suite of programs ▪ Overall business satisfaction through a statistically significant survey ▪ Implementation of structure and tools required to facilitate effective and efficient real estate portfolio management ▪ # of applications submitted/funding secured for the upper level of government funding ▪ Formal recognition of Council and staff as economic development leaders ▪ Optimized policy and structure outlining the focus of routine and strategic real estate transactions/agreements 			

