



## Report # 2025-26

To: Mayor and Council

From: Julia Crowder, Manager of Economic Development and Tourism

Date: March 13, 2025

Special Committee of the Whole Date: March 17, 2025

Title: BR&E and Investment Attraction Strategy

☐ For Direction

☐ For Information

☒ For Adoption

☒ Attachment (44pg)

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**Recommendation: THAT Council endorse the 2025-2030 Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) and Investment Attraction Strategic Plan**

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**Purpose:**

To provide Council with the final draft BR&E and Investment Attraction Strategic Plan for endorsement.

**Background:**

It is typical for municipalities to develop strategic plans to guide and support sustainable growth, improvements and service deliveries for their communities. In 2019(?), staff developed the 2019-2022 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy with key priorities to foster BR&E, Investment Attraction, Tourism, Marketing and Communication and Partnership Development. The thoughtful and ambitious plan included 63 individual action items, building the foundation and direction of the department, and with many programs remaining in place today.

In June 2024, a Request for Proposal (RFP) to obtain proposals from qualified consultants was released. The RFP closed on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and the contract was awarded to Optimus SBR.

The purpose of the new plan is to continue on with important main stay initiative from the 2019 plan, further build upon new areas of opportunity, and action Council priority 5.1 of the 2023-2026 Council Strategic Plan. The Plan provides direction, goals and outcomes that will guide the attraction of new and diverse businesses, as well as retaining and supporting expansion of current businesses and workforce.

**Analysis and Options:**

The preparation of the BR&E and Investment Attraction Strategy included a robust background review and consultation process to engage with key local and regional stakeholders and the broader community to understand the current state and develop initiatives that were realistic and achievable. Goals and actions were developed based on current local and regional contexts which ultimately identified gaps and opportunities the plan should address.

The new 5-year strategy contains 4 overarching goals;

- **Create a high-function business support ecosystem** – align efforts of partners and stakeholders to foster stronger cooperation and collaboration and update/create policies which support an Open for Business climate.
- **Engage and support youth in the trades** – engage with youth and the trades sector to make connections and build local workforce opportunities and talent.
- **Build Stronger Entrepreneurs and Small Business** – supporting local businesses to empower themselves to foster innovation and change by continued engagement and development/promotion of local and regional resources.
- **Position the Town for Investment Attraction Success** – develop targeted attraction tools and materials and incentives to attract new and diverse investments, products and services needed for continued growth and sustainability.

Each of the goals contains specific actions and measurement of success to achieve the overarching goals and are outlined in the action plan attached as Appendix A.

The Strategy, although focused on more traditional economic development initiatives, speaks to the importance of Tourism, Arts and Culture for Smiths Falls in building and supporting its economy. Because tourism and placemaking is a critical component, staff felt it warrants its own focused destination strategy, which will be undertaken in-house by staff this year.

This new strategy will ensure that economic development activities for the Town of Smiths Falls are in line current and future goals and objectives outlined in the Town's current corporate Strategic Plan.

Staff are providing the following options for Council's consideration:

- **Option 1 (Recommended)** – Council endorse the 2025-2030 BR&E Investment Attraction Strategic Plan as drafted.
- **Option 2** - Endorse the strategy with modifications or additions.
- **Option 3** - Council provide alternative direction.

### **Budget/Financial Implications:**

Budget was allocated for this project as part of the 2024 annual budget. Costs to implement action items will be budgeted and funded through the operational budget.

### **Link to 2023-2026 Strategic Plan:**

Priority 5.1 – New Business Attraction - Develop a business attraction and retention plan that will include targeting franchised hotels/restaurants and green industries (industries/businesses producing a product, service or initiatives that contributes to the preservation and enhancement of the quality of the environment).

**Existing Policy:** 2019-2022 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy

### **Consultations:**

- Members of Council and Staff

- Economic Development Partners
- Local Businesses
- Public at Large

**Attachments:**

- Appendix A - BR&E Investment Attraction Strategy, 2025-2030 (44 pgs)

**Notes/Action (space for Council Member's notes):**

Respectfully Submitted:

Original Copy Signed by  
Julia Crowder, Ec.D.  
Manager of Economic Development and Tourism

Approved for agenda by CAO:

Original Copy Signed by  
Malcom Morris, CMO.  
Chief Administrative Officer

2025-2030

# BR&E and Investment Attraction Strategy



**SMITHS FALLS**

RISE AT THE FALLS



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# 1. Introduction

## Message from the Mayor

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Hello, Smiths Falls.

Every morning, we all wake up with a unique responsibility to build a remarkable community. Whether you are building a career, a business, a family, a home, a vacation, or simply a better life. Smiths Falls is a place where people build things. It's a place people can afford and it's a place where people can work hard to get ahead.

Growth is imperative for our community, as it provides opportunities for our youth, new residents, our businesses and workforce, and new social and entrepreneurial ventures that build the fabric of our Town.

Our Councillors, business owners, community leaders, and next generation understand this imperative, as does our Economic Development and Tourism department. Over the past months, community stakeholders were engaged to talk about our past, present, and future – where we are and the opportunities ahead, and there are many.

The decade ahead will be defined by growth, innovation, youth engagement, prosperity, and pride but only if we work together as one community, one ecosystem, that is aligned by a unified vision and strategy which contains the actions and steps needed for success.

This economic development (investment, business retention and expansion) plan is our footprint. It is a plan that calls for a united effort towards five achievable goals and benefits that will echo for generations.

I am personally committed to bringing this plan to life with all of Smiths Falls. It is our collective responsibility to make Smiths Falls remarkable.

It's time to Rise at the Falls.

Mayor Shawn Pankow.

## How the Plan Was Created

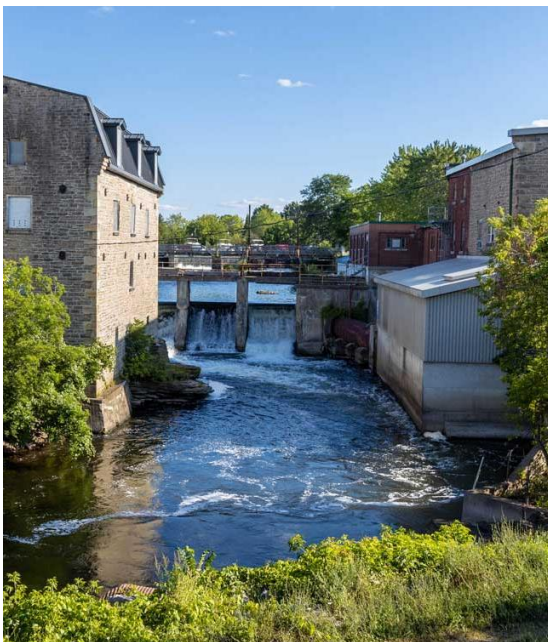
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The following five-step approach was used to create the BR&E and Investment Attraction Strategy.



## Contents of this Document

The following elements form the foundation of a successful strategy and position Smiths Falls for long-term success.



- A **Strategic Framework** that sets actionable goals, directs business retention and investment attraction activities, and ensures strategic targeting for economic impact.
- An **Action Plan** that outlines the steps needed to make the strategic framework a reality, with expected timelines and assigned responsibilities. This provides a roadmap for achieving strategic goals.
- A **Summary of Insights** from the research and analysis phase of the project that help shaped the Strategic Framework and Action Plan.

## Executive Summary

So much new potential awaits Smiths Falls, and it is important to continue the recent momentum and success by taking stock of the current economic climate and take new action to move forward. This is a chance to further capitalize on a story of renewal. How a town came together to redefine itself, its character, and its uniqueness.



**Economic Development Mission:** To build a thriving, self-sustainable community that is resident-focused, visitor-friendly and attractive to talent and investment. By fostering and supporting the growth and resiliency of the local economy and leveraging our unique human and natural assets, we will continue to grow a vibrant community that brings prosperity and pride to all.

This mission encompasses the following strategic goals:

1. Create a High-Functioning, Business Friendly Economic Development Ecosystem
2. Engage Youth by Leaning into the Trades
3. Build Stronger Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses
4. Position the Town for Investment Attraction Success

Achieving this mission requires a renewed commitment to economic development, rooted in collaboration, engagement, and a shared purpose.

To drive meaningful and sustainable economic growth, the strategic goals are aimed to ensure Smiths Falls focuses on key pillars that will serve as a roadmap for success:

- **Economic Development as a Team Sport:** Collaboration is key. By aligning the municipal council, partner organizations, businesses, and the community, Smiths Falls can harness the collective power of its stakeholders to drive impactful change.
- **Building a Strong Foundation:** Clearly defining and communicating the roles of organizations within the town's business support ecosystem helps the community understand where to turn for resources, guidance, and opportunities. A well-structured foundation ensures Smiths Falls can efficiently coordinate efforts, provide essential support, and respond to the evolving needs of local businesses and residents.
- **Seizing the Opportunity:** Smiths Falls is uniquely positioned to capitalize on significant opportunities to enhance its economic profile. These efforts will diversify the economy and strengthen local businesses.
- **Acting with Urgency:** The current economic landscape presents a time-sensitive window to attract investment and foster growth.

## The Role of Strategy in Economic Development

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An economic development strategy is the cornerstone of a thriving, resilient community. It provides a clear roadmap to unlock growth opportunities, ensuring all residents benefit from a vibrant local economy. While this document represents the Town's strategy it is important to consider the valued partner organizations the Town works with to promote a vibrant and sustainable economy in Smiths Falls. A well-crafted strategy drives



collaboration, aligns resources, and empowers businesses to succeed, creating jobs and attracting investments. By prioritizing strategic planning, Smiths Falls is not just preparing for the future, it is actively shaping it.

## Economic Development Strategy



**Strengthens Competitiveness and Municipal Branding:** Leveraging our unique strengths allows us to stand out from competitors by showcasing our municipality's appeal as a top choice for living, working, and investing.



**Fosters Ecosystem Coordination:** A clear strategy aligns efforts across government, businesses, and the community to achieve shared economic goals.



**Drives Effective Attraction Programs:** With a strategic framework, we can implement targeted programs to attract businesses and skilled workers.



**Unites the Community and Fosters Sustainable Growth:** A unified plan inspires collaboration, rallying the entire community toward economic prosperity while establishing a resilient, inclusive economy that sets the stage for long-term success.



**Measures Progress and Adapts:** Tracking key metrics enables us to refine strategies, ensure growth, and achieve lasting impact.

## 2. Opportunities Ahead: Smiths Falls' Economic Growth Story

### What We Heard in Smiths Falls and Trends Impacting Economic Growth

#### What We Heard

Smiths Falls is uniquely positioned to harness its strategic location, community strengths, and rich history. Situated within Ontario's thriving economic corridor, the town has the opportunity to become a key player in the region's growth by embracing emerging trends, fostering innovation, and building on its strong sense of community.

The insights gathered during the situational analysis reflect the perspectives, experiences, and priorities of Smiths Falls' residents, businesses, and stakeholders. These key themes highlight the strengths and challenges facing the community and have shaped a focused and impactful BR&E and Investment Attraction Strategy.



#### **Small Business Support and Economic Sustainability**

There is an emphasis on creating a balanced, self-sustaining economy focused on small businesses, avoiding dependency on a single industry, sector or business.

Theme	Current State Findings	Implications for Economic Development Strategy
Continue Support for Service and Retail Sector	The service and retail sectors face challenges in competing with larger stores and markets, particularly in terms of visibility and attracting consistent customer traffic.	Continued approaches, such as targeted promotions, collaborative marketing, event-based retail opportunities and effort to attract new/diverse retail mix should continue to strengthen the downtown business environment.

Community-Focused Business Culture	Local businesses focus on relationship-building and mutual support, which creates a unique town character.	Leveraging this community-centric approach can strengthen local entrepreneurship and enhance collaboration, contributing to a resilient economy.
Strengthening Collaboration Among Local Business Organizations	Local business organizations each operate in alignment with their mandates and governance structures. While they pursue independent strategic goals, they have similar overarching objectives and a shared desire for economic success across Smiths Falls. This provides opportunities for collaboration on shared initiatives, placemaking, workforce development, investment attraction and promoting local offerings to maximize impact and efficiency.	While the BR&E and Investment Attraction Strategy is a Town document, developing a strategic focus and effectively communicating goals and objectives with partner organizations and businesses will help to enhance collaboration, coordination and long-term planning.
Developing a Self-Sustaining Economy	There's an emphasis on creating a balanced, self-sustaining economy, focused on small and medium businesses, avoiding dependency on a single industry or sector.	Continuing to promote and support entrepreneurship and independent small business growth will diversify the economy and continue to achieve a more stable foundation for future development.



## Housing and Accommodations

While rents are affordable compared to surrounding towns, there still remains an attainability issue. There is a lack of housing to support those ideal for retail employment as well as hotels and short-term accommodations to build extended tourism growth.

Theme	Current State Findings	Implications for Economic Development Strategy
Short-Term Accommodations	Town has a limited number of attractive hotel accommodations, which constrains its ability to host larger events and encourage extended tourist stays.	Increasing hotel and short-term accommodation options will boost tourism, support event hosting, and contribute to broader economic growth through investment in tourism infrastructure.



## Youth Empowerment Through Trades

There is a strong desire to support and empower youth with pathways to enter trades and build successful careers locally.

Theme	Current State Findings	Implications for Economic Development Strategy
Trades Education and Opportunities	There is an increased interest in trades from the younger population in Smiths Falls, driven by school programs and co-op opportunities. There is a strong desire to support and empower youth with pathways to enter trades and build successful careers locally.	Supporting and promoting programs such as apprenticeship, co-op placements, and certifications will empower youth, build a skilled workforce, and support local industries.



## Recreation and Culture

The Town has the potential to enhance recreation and cultural offerings by leveraging its recreational assets, activating the canal with multi-seasonal activities and continuing to enhance its arts and culture scene to enrich community life and attract visitors.

Theme	Current State Findings	Implications for Economic Development Strategy
Indoor and Outdoor Recreation Needs	The Town has two arenas that can be leveraged for hockey tournaments but lacks usage of summer indoor space for community/tourism events and other sports tourism activities. There's also interest in activating the canal and parks for winter activities like outdoor staking, snowshoeing and skiing.	Expanding year-round recreation options will attract visitors, support tourism, and enhance community engagement through diverse activities.  The development of a separate Destination Plan will provide the mechanism to flush out these specific opportunities and action items.
Diversify Arts and Culture	The Town has a good arts and culture base which plays a role in enriching community life and attracting visitors.	Continuing to work together to support and strengthen the arts and culture scene through private investments and the newly developed Public Arts Master Plan will enhance the Town's attractiveness, boost tourism, and contribute to a vibrant local economy.



## Infrastructure and Future Growth

There is limited buildings and shovel ready land for future industrial and employment park development, exacerbated by complicated site-specific challenges and restrictions of current stock.

Theme	Current State Findings	Implications for Economic Development Strategy
Regional Transportation and Rail Accessibility	<p>The Town is working with the County to investigate a regional transportation network and is currently working on a Transportation Master Plan as part of the Official Plan Project</p> <p>There is also hope for high-frequency rail stop (e.g., Via Rail) to enhance regular commuting, which could open doors for more residents to work in nearby cities and provide alternative faster and more frequent travel options for visitors.</p>	<p>Regional transportation networks and enhanced rail service will assist in attracting and retain a strong workforce by providing alternative methods of accessing educational and trade opportunities in nearby cities as well as bringing skilled worker from the large centres to Smiths Falls. Strengthened infrastructure will support local businesses by capitalizing on increased visitor traffic and commuter activity from major centres encouraging investment and tourism.</p>
Land Availability and Property Constraints	<p>The Town is nearing a shortage of land for future development. Key challenges include redesignating lands off Lorne Street for employment purposes, addressing infrastructure and ecological constraints on Walker Road, and resolving industrial operations in the Canal District to enable revitalization. Opportunities for post-secondary investment, particularly in skilled trades, remain crucial, with potential sites including the Gallipeau Centre and Ferrara Drive lands. Additionally, the Old Mill Road redevelopment presents significant potential for tourism, economic development, housing, accommodations, and convention spaces.</p>	<p>Resolving heritage, land ownership and other constraints could unlock development opportunities, supporting long-term growth and investment attractiveness.</p> <p>With the removal of the former water treatment plant building and related constraints, such as heritage designation, the Town could explore new investment opportunities, including issuing RFPs to attract visionary projects for this transformative area.</p>

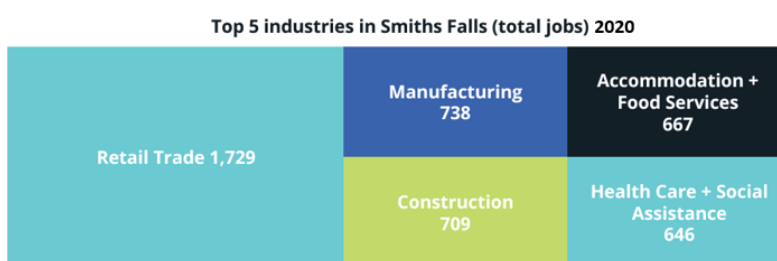
## Trends Impacting Economic Growth

Smiths Falls' current landscape presents both challenges and opportunities that have shaped and driven the direction of its BR&E and Investment Attraction Strategy.

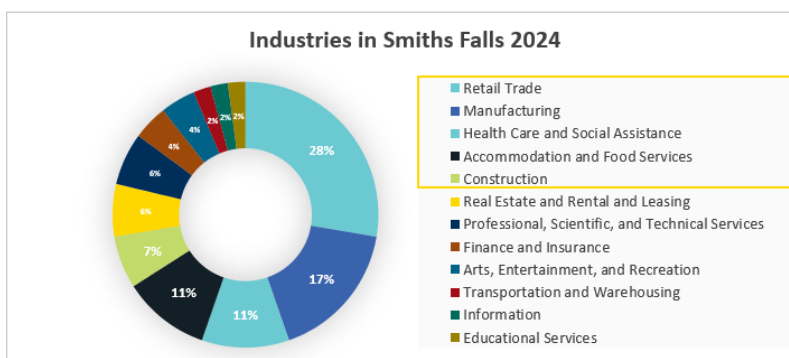
### Limited Business Sector Diversity

Smiths Falls' top 5 industries have remained consistent from 2021 to 2024 (see **Figure 1**). This lack of sectorial diversification limits resilience to economic shifts, making the town vulnerable to market and industry-specific disruptions.

**Figure 1: Top 5 Industries in Smiths Falls 2020 vs 2024<sup>1</sup>**



Source: Town of Smiths Falls Investment Profile 2021



Source: Smiths Falls BR&E Survey - September 2024

Over the past 5-7 years, Smiths Falls has focused on rebuilding, revitalizing, and growing its economy. Between 2019 and today, the town has seen the opening of 94 new businesses, with only 45 closures (some retirements of business owners), resulting in a net gain of 49 businesses. Uncertainty post-pandemic, such as fluctuating government restrictions, economic downturns, and rising operational costs, has slowed momentum, however this year (to date) 9 new businesses have either opened or are in the process of opening, which signals Smiths Falls is a desirable place to do business. An added challenge for the downtown business community is the perception that existing businesses do not always

<sup>1</sup><https://www.smithsfalls.ca/en/business-and-development/resources/Documents/Economic-Development/InvestorProfile-2021-FINAL.pdf>

align with the needs of local shoppers. Some residents feel that downtown offerings are either priced for tourists or lack the variety of goods and services they are seeking, leading them to shop elsewhere. At the same time, there is a need to attract high-quality retail options to appeal to both residents and visitors. Addressing this challenge will require strategic efforts to attract new sectors, support entrepreneurship to value add or change product offering, and invest in infrastructure and workforce development to foster growth beyond the existing industries.

### **Rising Unemployment Signals Ongoing Labor Market Issues**

The Town faces labor force challenges, with rising unemployment rates and declining participation, particularly among older workers, following major economic shifts such as the Hershey Plant closure in 2008 and Canopy Growth's scale-back in 2023, compounded by ongoing impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. This underscores the need for strategies to attract, retain, and upskill a younger and more resilient working-age population.

### **Local Workforce Commutes Short Distance**

Smiths Falls offers convenience and accessibility for the working population, with over 60% of the workforce travelling less than 15 minutes to work. This geographic advantage presents a key opportunity to attract businesses seeking easy access to a local labor pool. With 82 businesses in the professional, scientific, and technical services sector, Smiths Falls fosters innovation and attracts skilled professionals, further enhancing its workforce capabilities. The close proximity to employment hubs, combined with ongoing infrastructure investments, makes Smiths Falls an ideal destination for businesses looking to establish themselves in a location that supports quick and efficient commutes for employees.<sup>2</sup>



### **High Housing Prices Despite Affordable Comparisons**

Population growth and affordability compared to neighboring towns has increased demand in the housing market, particularly for rentals and diverse housing options (see **Figure 2**).

***Figure 2: Smiths Falls Housing List Prices Compared to Nearby Cities***

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.investlanarkcounty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Community-Economic-Snapshot-Report-Smiths-Falls.pdf>



**(5 Month Time Period)<sup>3</sup>**

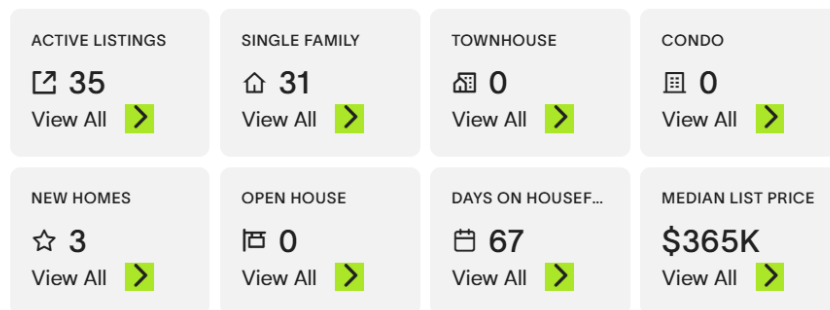


Source: OJHome Canada Ltd. ("Houseful")

However, the overall housing market remains constrained, with limited types of residential properties, predominantly single-family homes, making it harder for potential buyers to find affordable options (see **Figure 3**). This hinders the town's ability to attract and retain residents and workers unless action is taken to expand housing availability.

**Figure 3: Smiths Falls Housing Market Trends<sup>4</sup>**

SMITHS FALLS, ON REAL ESTATE INSIGHTS



## Our Opportunity and the Need for Change

There is a fundamental change underway that will drive economic growth and prosperity for Smiths Falls.

In a world of increased costs, influx of immigration, housing shortfalls, low Canadian dollar, and service-oriented economies, Smiths Falls can continue to grow as an industrious small

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.houseful.ca/market-trends/smiths-falls-on/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.houseful.ca/market-trends/smiths-falls-on/>

town which benefits from quality of life and tourism offerings and where people embrace the trades, manufacture a diversity of products, raise families, enjoy recreational and cultural experience, and create homegrown prosperity.

**This is authentically who we are, who we can be, and we need to own it.**

Smiths Falls' economic opportunity can be built around youth, trades, entrepreneurs, and diverse industry, as well as an increasingly animated community filled with tourism, culture, and recreation. It's an industrious mindset blended with a cultural energy, and that is truly unique in Eastern Ontario.

Our success will require change, which is often not easy and requires a new level of engagement and coordination. The Town and business support partners are positioning to work together, mutually supporting one another, for the future prosperity of Smiths Falls.

The following Investment Attraction and Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) strategy outlines the path to prosperity. The steps needed to build upon the upward trajectory of Smiths Falls and to embrace an economic future that is within our reach.



While this BR&E and Investment Attraction Strategy represents a Town document, there is clear recognition that many partner organizations are working towards a successful and vibrant Smiths Falls. To this end, the Town support activities that further promote and strengthen collective engagement across the entire ecosystem. There is awareness that our partner organizations and broad stakeholder base is a position of strength and will help us achieve success related to:

1. **Economic development requires an ecosystem:** Economic development thrives in a strong and connected ecosystem. Smiths Falls is well-positioned to support both existing and new businesses through our robust network of economic development agencies. To maximize impact, it is essential to promote an understanding of unified strategies and priorities, with clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations for all. Strengthening alignment and reducing duplication of efforts will make it easier for businesses to access the support they need, fostering long-term economic growth and success.
2. **Success comes through the efforts of others:** Impact and scale can only be achieved through the engagement and work of a community aligned to a common vision, and their success will bring about the collective change desired.
3. **Effective economic development relies on coordination and shared vision:** The municipal economic development office serves as a facilitator and connector, helping to align efforts, drive initiatives, and create opportunities for collaboration where goals intersect.
4. **Celebrating wins fosters a culture of success:** Recognizing and communicating achievements boosts morale, strengthens engagement, and builds a thriving community. Success is contagious, and when shared, it inspires confidence, collaboration, and a commitment to achieving more together.
5. **Be the change you want to see in others:** Leadership comes through conduct and character – operating with pace, accountability, clear goals and objectives, and genuine cooperation creates a feeling of community, growth, trust, and unstoppableness – the very culture desired in other businesses and successful communities as a whole.





## 3. Economic Development Strategy

### Smiths Falls' Path Forward

#### Smiths Falls' Economic Development Mission

Our mission for economic development is aligned to the Vision for Smiths Falls as outlined in the Municipal Strategic Plan. The mission for economic development serves as a guiding vision for the Town's future growth. It reflects a commitment to creating a community that balances growth with sustainability, celebrates its unique assets, and works for the prosperity for all.

#### Economic Development Mission

To build a **thriving, self-sustainable community** that is resident-focused, visitor-friendly, and **attractive to talent and investment**.

By fostering and supporting the growth and resiliency of the local economy and leveraging our unique human and natural assets, we will **continue to grow a vibrant community that brings prosperity and pride to all**.



## The Need for Teamwork

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During and coming out of COVID-19, business support organizations in Smiths Falls and across the region demonstrated resilience, collaboration, and commitment to the greater good. Recognized efforts from the Town of Smiths Falls, the Downtown Smiths Falls Business Association (DBA), and Smiths Falls & District Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber), the Small Business Advisory Centre, and others such as the CFDC and employment centre, reflect the strength of this ecosystem. As the economy continues to shift and evolve, building on this strong foundation through a unified economic development strategy will help ensure continued success, inclusivity, and long-term growth. Aligning efforts under a unified economic development strategy requires teamwork built on shared values. These values need to be lived by every stakeholders supporting the mission of economic development in Smiths Falls. Each of the Strategic Goals and proposed initiatives contained in this strategy require a clear leader and shared commitment to the following values for success to be achieved:



**Impactful** – Driving meaningful, measurable results that make a difference for the community.



**Supportive of One Another** – Championing collaboration and mutual success across all stakeholders.



**Respect and Community Focus** – Valuing and acknowledging diverse perspectives and challenges while fostering open dialogue and seeking collaborative solutions while keeping the well-being of Smiths Falls residents at the heart of every decision.



**Transparency** – Ensuring open communication and trust in every step of the process.



**Accountable** – Taking responsibility for outcomes and following through on commitments.

## Strategic Goals

This strategy is built around interconnected values and goals, each designed to create a thriving and prosperous community. It reflects the Town's commitment to fostering growth and resiliency, leveraging its unique human and natural assets, and building an economy that benefits residents, attracts visitors, and draws talent and investment. The developed goals outline a pathway to a vibrant and prosperous future for Smiths Falls.

### Our 4 Strategic Goals

#### Strategic Actions

1	2	3	4
Create a High-Functioning, Business Friendly Economic Development Ecosystem	Engage Youth by Leaning into the Trades	Build Stronger Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses	Position the Town for Investment Attraction Success
<p><b>1.1</b> Re-establish a Unified Leadership Group for Economic Development.</p> <p><b>1.2</b> Create an annual engagement event and report to the community.</p> <p><b>1.3</b> Update policies/bylaws to support a business environment.</p> <p><b>1.4</b> Establish a community feedback cycle for by-law and policy updates.</p>	<p><b>2.1</b> Create a Youth Trades Council to provide input on programs, develop ideas for improving trade education, and serve as an advocacy group.</p> <p><b>2.2</b> Work with local businesses to increase the number of co-op placements for high school students.</p> <p><b>2.3</b> Partner with local trade businesses and partners to establish a fund or sponsorship for students pursuing trade-related certifications.</p> <p><b>2.4</b> Establish a formal mentorship program linking interested youth with experienced tradespeople, focusing on flexible, community-based mentorship opportunities that extend beyond formal education or co-op programs.</p>	<p><b>3.1</b> Develop and/or better promote educational toolkits and seminars for small business owners and hold meet-ups for idea exchange.</p> <p><b>3.2</b> Continue to create and partner with the Chamber and DBA in executing "Shop Local" initiatives.</p> <p><b>3.3</b> Celebrate local leaders and business achievements through recognition and storytelling initiatives.</p> <p><b>3.4</b> Initiate a "Pop-Up" program to temporarily transform vacant or underused spaces into venues for local arts, music, and small business pop-ups.</p> <p><b>3.5</b> Work with Valley Heartland, the Local Immigration Partnership, and the Local Employment Centre to develop and implement talent attraction and workforce development initiatives.</p>	<p><b>4.1</b> Embrace the industrial nature of Smith Falls' history, brand, and market positioning while others abandon.</p> <p><b>4.2</b> Review the mixed-use and smart density zoning and explore incentives to accelerate action in the downtown.</p> <p><b>4.3</b> Establish a municipal "Investment in Accommodation" program that incentivizes hotel developers.</p> <p><b>4.4</b> Bring new shovel-ready industrial business park to market.</p> <p><b>4.5</b> Engage neighbouring municipalities in early discussions to expand industrial land strategy through a regional approach.</p> <p><b>4.6</b> Develop sports tourism strategy around existing arena lands.</p>

## Supporting the Arts Master Plan and Promotion of Smiths Falls as a Destination

A vibrant town is one where people gather, connect, and engage with local businesses, creating a dynamic and thriving community. When residents and visitors are actively present, whether for shopping, dining, or attending events, they contribute to the local economy, support small businesses, and enhance the town's overall appeal. Encouraging activity and engagement not only strengthens the business ecosystem but also fosters a sense of place, making the town a more attractive destination to live, work, and visit.

This strategy recognizes the importance that both community art and tourism or destination marketing have in economic development. These priorities will be addressed in standalone Town initiatives and strategies including the recently completed Arts Master Plan, annual tourism marketing plans and a new Destination Plan and so initiatives have not been duplicated in this strategy, however the importance of successfully implementing initiatives focused on the arts and tourism promotion are critical for continued economic growth across the community.

Smiths Falls' Arts Master Plan is a key driver in the Town's efforts to revitalize key areas of the community and support economic growth. Bold public art installations, such as murals and sculptures, have the potential to create vibrant community spaces, celebrate local talent, and attract both residents and visitors. "Pop-Up Downtown" programs to temporarily transform vacant or underused downtown spaces into venues for local arts, music, and small business pop-ups play an essential role in activating underutilized spaces and adding energy to the core. These efforts not only enhance the Town's cultural identity but also align with the broader goals of the BR&E and Investment Attraction Strategy. The Arts Master Plan is an essential piece of the puzzle, serving as a significant enabler for the success of other initiatives outlined in this strategy. Commitment to the Arts Master Plan will be needed to promote a vibrant downtown that draws in local residents and visitors. Continued support in arts and culture is fundamental to achieving the shared vision of a thriving and vibrant Smiths Falls.



The Strategic Goals are briefly summarized below with additional details contained in Appendix A: Action Plan.



## Strategic Goal 1.

### Support a High-Functioning, Business Friendly Economic Development Ecosystem



This goal focuses on supporting a coordinated and collaborative framework for economic development. Smiths Falls is fortunate to have engaged and impactful business support organizations working across the community. With an objective of continual improvement and enhancement, key actions include working closely with these local business support organizations to promote a unified leadership group, clarifying roles among stakeholders, and developing mechanisms for ongoing engagement and feedback. By aligning efforts, streamlining processes, and fostering transparency, this goal ensures Smiths Falls has the structure and capacity to drive sustainable economic growth.

**1**

Create a High-Functioning, Business Friendly Economic Development Ecosystem

#### Our Why

Our efforts need to be aligned to foster economic growth and shift the spirit, engagement and trajectory of our community.

#### Enablers

- Unified economic development priorities, brand, voice and narrative for Smiths Falls.
- Clear mapping of roles, committee structures, meeting cadence, and project management.

#### Measures of Success

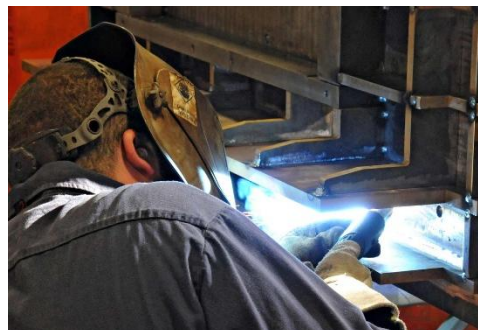
- Formalized roles and responsibilities
- Improved ecosystem coordination
- Culture of teamwork

Strategic Actions	Initiatives	Timeline	Cost	Key Players
1.1 Re-establish a Unified Leadership Group for Economic Development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalize the group's mandate and objectives including a term of reference that enables candid discussion. This should include identifying the best location for the group.</li> <li>• Identify and invite industrial leaders.</li> <li>• Set up bi-monthly meeting schedule.</li> <li>• Organize informational sessions.</li> <li>• Conduct surveys to identify overlapping roles and efficiencies.</li> <li>• Compile findings in a summary report.</li> </ul>	Year 1	\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> Chamber</li> <li>• <b>Partners:</b> EcDev, DBA, Tourism, SBAC, Valley Heartland, Industry</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form workings groups and terms of reference. Emphasis should be on Project Management operating philosophy to be execution focused.</li> <li>• Provide orientation for each Working Group.</li> <li>• Set up quarterly milestones.</li> </ul>	Year 2-3		
1.2 Create an annual engagement event and report to the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize a "State of the Economy" event to inform stakeholders of trends, key achievements, and future objectives.</li> <li>• Utilize surveys during the event to collect feedback from participants, which will inform future economic development initiatives and strategy adjustments.</li> </ul>	Year 2-3	\$ \$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> Chamber, DBA, SBAC, Valley Heartland</li> </ul>
1.3 Update policies/bylaws to support a business environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incentivize mixed-use development.</li> <li>• Explore a reverse vacancy tax to activate vacant properties.</li> <li>• Ensure zoning by-laws allow flexibility for innovative projects.</li> <li>• Review and remove business licensing by-law.</li> </ul>	Year 1-3	\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</li> <li>• <b>Partners:</b> Chamber, DBA, Business Owners and Community</li> </ul>
1.4 Establish a community feedback cycle for by-law and policy updates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a regular schedule for reviewing key by-laws and policies, ensuring consistency and accountability.</li> <li>• Host public forums (including online engagement) or town halls to collect feedback on existing regulations and proposed changes.</li> <li>• Leverage existing working groups/committees to review and discuss proposed changes.</li> <li>• Publish a summary of community feedback and how it informs by-law and policy decisions to build trust and accountability.</li> </ul>	Year 3	\$ \$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> Chamber, DBA, Business Owners and Community</li> </ul>

## Strategic Goal 2.

### Engage Youth by Leaning into the Trades

With a strong focus to capitalize on the existing manufacturing strength of Smiths Falls and to build a future ready workforce, this goal empowers local youth to pursue careers in the trades. Initiatives include engaging with youth, parents and schools to develop opportunities and address barriers faced by youth searching for employment. This may include building upon existing mentorship programs, increasing co-op placements, organizing job fairs, and providing sponsorship opportunities for certifications. These actions will build a skilled workforce, support the manufacturing sector, and provide young residents with meaningful career pathways.


**2**

#### Engage Youth by Leaning into the Trades

##### Our Why

With a growing interest in trades from youth, Smiths Falls aims to attract and build local talent to support the Town's future needs.

##### Enablers

- School partnerships for trade program promotion
- Support from trade organizations for co -ops and job fairs

##### Measures of Success

- Increase in workforce population
- Increase in skilled trades working in Town

Strategic Actions	Initiatives	Timeline	Cost	Key Players
<b>2.1</b> Create a Youth Trades Council to provide input on programs, develop ideas for improving trade education, and serve as an advocacy group.	Initial Survey: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and distribute survey and conduct focus groups across schools and youth groups .</li> <li>• Share results with parents and students through school boards, community centers, and social media channels.</li> <li>• Engage with local schools to understand information currently distributed to youth and evaluate the effectiveness of existing job fair initiatives. Based on these insights, identify gaps and opportunities to create an information packet for parents that highlights trade career pathways, local resources, and actionable steps for supporting youth in pursuing trades.</li> </ul> Council Establishment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit youth representatives interested in trades.</li> <li>• Hold quarterly meetings for program input and advocacy.</li> <li>• Facilitate regular meetings with local businesses, educational institutions, and government bodies to discuss and implement the Council's recommendations.</li> </ul>	Year 1-3	\$ \$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> Local Businesses, Schools, Youth, Employment Centre</li> </ul>
<b>2.2</b> Work with local businesses to increase the number of co-op placements for high school students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with partners explore how co-op placements can be better utilized and supported, including developing resources and encouraging opportunities for students to gain both practical experience and essential workplace skills.</li> <li>• Meet with local businesses to assess co-op capacity.</li> <li>• Encourage businesses to adopt co-op agreements.</li> <li>• Help promote co-op opportunities in high schools.</li> </ul>	Year 1-3	\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> Chamber, DBA, Local Businesses, High School, Employment Centre</li> </ul>
<b>2.3</b> Partner with local trade businesses and partners to establish a fund or sponsorship for students pursuing trade-related certifications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build partnerships to fund trade-related resources for students (e.g., toolkits, certification support).</li> <li>• Launch annual scholarship cycle.</li> </ul>	Year 2-3	\$ \$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> Chamber</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> EcDev, Local Businesses, Schools, Trade System Organizations, Post Secondary</li> </ul>
<b>2.4</b> Establish a formal mentorship program linking interested youth with experienced tradespeople, focusing on flexible, community-based mentorship opportunities that extend beyond formal education or co-op programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify interested tradespeople for mentorship roles during BR&amp;E visits.</li> <li>• Develop a mentorship matching system tailored to youth outside of formal education, such as those not participating in co-op or apprenticeship programs.</li> <li>• Support flexible mentorship opportunities that provide customized guidance for youth's career goals and interests.</li> <li>• Support an orientation for mentors and mentees.</li> </ul>	Year 3-5	\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> Chamber, local construction and manufacturing sector</li> </ul>

## Strategic Goal 3.

### Build Stronger Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses



This goal strengthens Smiths Falls' entrepreneurial ecosystem by encouraging local businesses to empower themselves to foster innovation and change. Actions include continuing buy-local campaigns, and hosting events to celebrate business achievements. By offering well-promoted resources, enhanced collaboration in marketing, networking opportunities, and targeted support, this goal empowers both new and established business owners to succeed. In doing so, it fosters entrepreneurial growth and strengthens small businesses, building a resilient and diverse local economy.

**3**

#### Build Stronger Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses

##### Our Why

We are enhancing our engagement with the business community to foster partnerships, align efforts, and maximize the impact of our resources.

##### Enablers

- A unified economic brand, voice and narrative for Smiths Falls
- Ongoing stakeholder involvement
- Increased Ec Dev and Tourism capacity

##### Measures of Success

- Engaged businesses
- Completion of community-led projects
- High business satisfaction

Strategic Actions	Initiatives	Timeline	Cost	Key Players
3.1 Develop and/or better promote educational toolkits and seminars for small business owners and hold meet-ups for idea exchange.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue offering and updating existing resources, such as the "New Business Welcome Guide" and support/promote current workshops/seminars hosted by the SBAC.</li> <li>• The Town will continue to engage with partner business support organization and business owners to identify needs and connect businesses with existing toolkits already developed by partner organizations including the SBAC, Valley Heartland CFDC, and other groups.</li> <li>• Expand sector-specific roundtable meetings to include retail and other key sectors in addition to local restaurants.</li> <li>• Organize sector-specific meet-ups to address unique challenges and opportunities.</li> </ul>	Year 1-2	\$ \$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> SBAC, Valley Heartland, Industry Groups and Business Representatives, DBA, Chamber, Business Representatives</li> </ul>
3.2 Continue to create and partner with the Chamber and DBA in executing "Shop Local" initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the current "Stop &amp; Shop" campaign and identify areas for improvement.</li> <li>• Expand the campaigns by incorporating storytelling that highlights the impact of local spending on the community.</li> <li>• Incorporate improvement opportunities to continue promoting local businesses via digital channels, social media, and community events.</li> </ul>	Year 1-5	\$ \$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> Chamber/DBA</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> EcDev, Local Businesses</li> </ul>
3.3 Celebrate local leaders and business achievements through recognition and storytelling initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the Chamber with an annual event to award and recognize local leaders and business achievements.</li> <li>• Collaborate with the Chamber, DBA, and other stakeholders to highlight business achievements through profiles and success stories on the Town's website, social media channels, and events such as the annual Summit.</li> <li>• Build on existing business directories and the regional shop local website/campaign to promote local businesses, products, and services.</li> <li>• Involve local media to promote the event and draw in attendees.</li> </ul>	Year 1-5	\$ \$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> Chamber</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> EcDev, DBA, Local Businesses</li> </ul>
3.4 Initiate a "Pop-Up" program to temporarily transform vacant or underused spaces into venues for local arts, music, and small business pop-ups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop-up events and opportunities should align with other initiatives or events developed in support of the Arts Master Plan or other cultural/community building efforts.</li> <li>• Collaborate with local artists, musicians, and entrepreneurs to showcase talents and products.</li> </ul>	Year 2	\$ \$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> Chamber, Property Owners, Local Businesses, Artists</li> </ul>
3.5 Work with Valley Heartland, the Local Immigration Partnership, and the Local Employment Centre to develop and implement talent attraction and workforce development initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect potential employees from larger urban communities to local trades and manufacturing employers looking for talent by offering workforce tours.</li> <li>• Develop multimedia materials highlighting housing, lifestyle, community services, and career opportunities to attract skilled workers and their families.</li> <li>• Collaborate with Valley Heartland, the Local Immigration Partnership, and the Local Employment Centre to enhance programs for attracting and integrating foreign workers, including resources such as language training and cultural orientation.</li> <li>• Offer targeted skill-upgrading workshops, training for trades and manufacturing, and initiatives to support underrepresented groups, such as women in trades.</li> </ul>	Year 4-5	\$ \$ \$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> Valley Heartland, Local Immigration Partnership Group, Local Employment Centre, SBAC, Local Businesses</li> </ul>

## Strategic Goal 4.

### Position the Town for Investment Attraction Success

Focusing on infrastructure, branding, and policy alignment, this goal positions Smiths Falls as a competitive destination for investment. Actions include bringing a new industrial business park to market, incentivizing hotel development, and utilizing key assets such as the Gallipeau Centre and vacant lands on Ferrara Drive. These efforts create opportunities for pop-ups and new businesses to expand into the market while addressing retail and service leakages by attracting businesses that meet local needs. By highlighting the Town's industrial heritage and embracing innovative approaches, this goal attracts new businesses, boosts tourism, and expands economic opportunities.



4

#### Position the Town for Investment Attraction Success

##### Our Why

We are preparing sites to attract sustainable investments and revitalize dormant lands, to position Smiths Falls as a place to do business.

##### Enablers

- A unified economic brand, voice and narrative for Smiths Falls
- Strategic infrastructure development
- Proactive government policies

##### Measures of Success

- Increased industrial development
- Increased land readiness and business investments
- Improved land utilization

Strategic Actions	Initiatives	Timeline	Cost	Key Players
<b>4.1</b> Embrace the industrial nature of Smiths Falls' history, brand, and market positioning while others abandon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position Smiths Falls as an industrial hub, promoting the area's existing businesses and historical strengths.</li> <li>• Promote local success stories as proof of concept for industrial investment. As other actions in this strategy gain momentum, this should also include a focus on evolving Smiths Falls' image and reputation to start including an industrial startup community as part of its brand.</li> <li>• Update branding and PR strategy to highlight Smiths Falls as a startup-friendly community.</li> </ul>	Year 1	\$ \$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> Chamber, Local Businesses, Regional Marketing Agencies</li> </ul>
<b>4.2</b> Review the mixed-use and smart density zoning and explore incentives to accelerate action in the downtown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct zoning review with a focus on mixed-use and smart density.</li> <li>• Identify incentive options (e.g., tax rebates, grants) for developers.</li> </ul>	Year 2-3	\$ \$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> Developers, Site Selectors and Regional/Provincial IA Partners</li> </ul>
<b>4.3</b> Establish a municipal "Investment in Accommodation" program that incentivizes hotel developers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create incentives for hotel developers to invest in Smiths Falls, including grants and support for infrastructure development.</li> <li>• Provide clear guidelines for hotel development and partner with developers to ensure alignment with Smiths Falls' growth strategy.</li> <li>• Focus on accommodation needs for tourists, business travelers, and future investors.</li> </ul>	Year 3-4	\$ \$ \$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> Hotel Developers, Tourism Organizations, Site Selectors and Regional/Provincial IA Partners</li> </ul>
<b>4.4</b> Bring new shovel-ready industrial business park to market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify underdeveloped industrial lands and remove barriers to make them shovel-ready (zoning adjustments, infrastructure upgrades, and environmental assessments).</li> <li>• Partner with private developers and investors to fund land preparation.</li> </ul>	Year 3-5	\$ \$ \$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> Developers, Site Selectors and Regional/Provincial IA Partners</li> </ul>
<b>4.5</b> Engage neighbouring municipalities in early discussions to expand industrial land strategy through a regional approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider land-sharing agreements, collaborative investment, and shared ROI models to bring unused or underused lands into development.</li> <li>• Develop investment attraction funding relationships with Invest Ontario and Invest in Canada to strategically pursue targeted sectors.</li> <li>• Investigate joint ventures between public and private sectors to enhance industrial development opportunities.</li> </ul>	Year 4-5	\$ \$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> Regional Municipalities and Partners, Developers</li> </ul>
<b>4.6</b> Develop sports tourism strategy around existing arena lands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop strategy to expand usage of arena and nearby lands support increased capacity to host tournaments, positioning Smiths Falls as a regional hub for sports tourism.</li> <li>• Develop a training and tournament program that can attract teams and families year-round.</li> <li>• Collaborate with hotels and restaurants to create packages for visiting teams, building on the "Stay &amp; Play" model to offer comprehensive visitor experiences.</li> </ul>	Year 4-5	\$ \$ \$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</li> <li>• <b>Partner:</b> Developers, Hockey Associations, Sports Tourism Experts, Hotels and Restaurants</li> </ul>

## 4. Economic Development Roles and Responsibilities

Effective implementation of the BR&E and Investment Attraction Strategic Plan depends on clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all partners. By focusing on our respective areas of expertise and aligning efforts, we can ensure resources are used effectively, duplication is minimized, and outcomes are maximized. Collaboration will be key, with each stakeholder contributing their strengths to achieve shared goals. This section outlines the specific roles and responsibilities of each partner, providing clarity to support streamlined efforts and drive the success of the plan.

Key Stakeholders	Roles	Responsibilities
Municipal Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure alignment of the strategy with municipal goals and policies.</li> <li>Act as champions for economic development initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve and allocate adequate resources for economic development and tourism.</li> <li>Advocate for local needs with provincial and federal governments.</li> <li>Monitor and evaluate the progress of strategy implementation through regular reporting.</li> </ul>
Economic Development Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead the day-to-day execution of the economic development strategy.</li> <li>Act as the primary point of contact for economic development activities in the municipality.</li> <li>Foster partnerships with businesses, organizations, and regional stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement specific programs for business retention, expansion, and attraction.</li> <li>Facilitate investment readiness by preparing data and resources to attract investors.</li> <li>Track economic performance metrics and report to the municipal council and stakeholders.</li> <li>Organize stakeholder engagement events, including roundtables and consultations.</li> </ul>
Local Business Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively participate and engage with partners in implementing business-focused elements of the strategy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with the municipality and other stakeholders on initiatives like marketing campaigns, workforce development, or local events.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide insights into market conditions and business needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer mentorship and support to new or growing businesses.</li> <li>• Provide feedback on municipal economic development policies and programs.</li> </ul>
Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve as an advocate for local businesses and a key partner in implementing the strategy.</li> <li>• Take an active lead in celebrating and promoting business successes.</li> <li>• Facilitate business networking and create connections between businesses in the wider community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead business-focused workshops and training programs in partnership with the municipality.</li> <li>• Advocate for policy changes that are beneficial to the business community.</li> <li>• Promote membership benefits and discounts, such as group insurance, gas discounts, and other small business perks.</li> <li>• Secure and distribute grants aimed at supporting small businesses.</li> </ul>
Downtown Business Association (DBA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve as the key advocate for downtown businesses and a partner in implementing the strategy.</li> <li>• Focus on promoting and celebrating business successes within the downtown district.</li> <li>• Lead business-focused initiatives, workshops, and events specific to the downtown area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversee the improvement, beautification, and maintenance of municipally owned land, buildings, and structures in the area beyond what is provided at the expense of the municipality.</li> <li>• Promote the downtown area as a business and shopping destination for residents and visitors.</li> </ul>
Small Business Advisory Centre (SBAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support entrepreneurs and small business owners through training and advisory services.</li> <li>• Act as a resource hub for business planning and development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer tailored business support via consultations and established mandated programs for new businesses to help them launch and grow throughout Lanark County, Smiths Falls, and north Leeds Grenville.</li> <li>• Host workshops and events in alignment with businesses and municipalities throughout the catchment area as per our mandate.</li> <li>• Collaborate with all municipalities to identify gaps in services or support for local entrepreneurs.</li> </ul>

Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) Valley Heartland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide financial support through loans and other funding mechanisms for small businesses.</li> <li>• Encourage entrepreneurship and economic diversification.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work closely with the municipality to align funding priorities with the strategy.</li> <li>• Support businesses with resources for expansion.</li> <li>• Share insights on regional economic trends and challenges.</li> </ul>
Residents and Community Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act as active participants in shaping and supporting the strategy.</li> <li>• Advocate for economic development initiatives that align with community values.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide feedback on initiatives through consultations or surveys.</li> <li>• Support local businesses.</li> <li>• Contribute to grassroots initiatives that enhance the community's economic appeal.</li> </ul>
Ontrac Employment Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide FREE Employment Resource Services to job seekers and employers and is a continuing partner in employment services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support local businesses.</li> <li>• Work closely with the municipality to create and implement workforce development initiatives.</li> <li>• Share insights on local and regional workforce trends.</li> </ul>



## 5. Critical Enablers

### Community Building is Key

Community building is a cornerstone of effective economic development, aligning social cohesion, inclusivity, and local identity with economic goals. This BR&E and Investment Attraction Strategy includes recommendations to enhance community building. The strategy will need to be embraced and implemented by the community. Embracing the Teamwork mentality and building our community is the only way we can succeed.

It is important for Smiths Falls moving forward to work towards an environment that continues to foster strong positive social networks and trust among residents, businesses, and organizations. These networks create social capital, which drives collaboration, collective action, and resilience in the face of economic challenges. Across the country, vibrant communities with a clear sense of identity and inclusivity are better positioned to attract talent, investment, and entrepreneurs, as well as retain residents by enhancing their quality of life.

This strategy also emphasises good practices that emphasis the value of place-based economic strategies which leverage a community's unique history, culture, and natural assets. Initiatives such as cultural events, public art, and recreational opportunities foster local pride, support small businesses, and reduce economic leakage.

For Smiths Falls, this will mean leaning into the heritage and history surrounding the canal and early railway/transportation; embracing an attitude and image as a community that builds, fixes and creates things with their hands; and capturing the attention of prospective entrepreneurs who may want to escape the constraints and expenses of big cities. By involving diverse voices in planning and decision-making, community building ensures equitable growth and stronger ownership of development initiatives. Ultimately, integrating community building into economic development creates an adaptable, inclusive, and thriving ecosystem that benefits all residents while achieving long-term economic sustainability.

## 6. Appendix A – Action Plan: Detailed Strategic Actions

### Goal 1: Create a High-Functioning, Business Friendly Economic Development Ecosystem

Strategic Action:	1.1 Re-establish a Unified Leadership Group for Economic Development
<b>Current State Challenges Addressed:</b>	<p>To drive the successful implementation of the economic development strategy, it is essential to create a collaborative leadership group. Bringing together industrial leaders, business owners, and economic development partners, this group will address challenges, align efforts, and drive initiatives that support economic growth.</p> <p>By establishing a centralized forum that offers a private setting for candid discussions, this initiative promotes open problem-solving, strategic decision-making, and collaboration. It enables resource mobilization, drives innovation, and addresses complex challenges, all while maintaining confidentiality. At the same time, it upholds accountability through shared transparency and regular updates to stakeholders and the community.</p> <p>As part of the unified leadership group, focused working groups should be considered to support Youth &amp; Trades, Startup Smiths Falls, Industrial Land Activation, and Community Vibrancy. Guided by clear terms of reference, project management principles, and quarterly milestones, these groups will ensure execution-focused progress, aligning stakeholders and resources to advance the Town's Economic Development strategy.</p>

Proposed Initiatives:	Year One:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Formalize the group’s mandate and objectives including a term of reference that enables candid discussion. This should include identifying the best location for the group</li><li>Identify and invite industrial leaders.</li><li>Set up bi-monthly meeting schedule.</li><li>Organize informational sessions.</li><li>Conduct surveys to identify overlapping roles and efficiencies.</li><li>Compile findings in a summary report.</li></ul>		
	Year Two-Three		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Form workings groups and terms of reference. Emphasis should be on Project Management operating philosophy to be execution focused.</li><li>Provide orientation for each Working Group.</li><li>Set up quarterly milestones.</li></ul>		
	The four working groups have been suggested based on alignment to current state finds and opportunities for the Town		
	<b>Youth &amp; Trades</b> – There is a strong manufacturing and industrial base in Smiths Falls that is supported and enabled through trades professionals. This working group will ensure interest among local youth, address barriers, promote pathways, and build a skilled workforce.		
	<b>Startup Smiths Falls</b> – There is a need for enhanced support for small businesses and entrepreneurs. This working group will promote the establishment of a startup eco-system, highlighting innovation potential, collaboration spaces, and support for new businesses.		
	<b>Industrial Land Activation</b> – In Smiths Falls today there is limited developable land and an opportunity to position Smiths Falls as an industrial hub. This group will focus on making industrial lands shovel-ready and attracting investment.		
	<b>Community Vibrancy</b> – Through the development of the Economic Development Strategy, there was considerable emphasis heard on enhancing downtown spaces, arts, and recreation to attract tourism, boost local business, and improve quality of life. This working group will focus on making downtown Smiths Falls a year-round destination for existing residents and individuals from the local region.		
Timelines	Costs	Key Players	
Year 1	\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> Chamber <b>Partners:</b> EcDev, DBA, Tourism, SBAC, Valley Heartland, Industry	
Measuring Success			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Participation:</b> Number of industrial leaders, business owners, and partners actively involved in the group.</li><li><b>Initiatives Supported:</b> Number of economic development initiatives successfully launched or advanced by the group.</li><li><b>Clarity Achieved:</b> Completion of a clear roles and responsibilities framework shared with stakeholders.</li><li><b>Engagement:</b> Number of businesses and committees participating in the process.</li></ul>			

- **Collaboration:** Evidence of improved coordination and alignment among stakeholders.
- **Community Impact:** Tangible outcomes from initiatives, such as business growth, investment attraction, or job creation.
- **Feedback:** Positive responses from stakeholders on the group's effectiveness in driving economic development.

Strategic Action:	1.2 Create an annual engagement event and report to the community	
Current State Challenges Addressed:	Establishing an annual “State of the Economy” event will create a platform to share key achievements, trends, and goals with stakeholders while fostering transparency and collaboration. By collecting feedback on activities, the event will help to promote community input and inform future initiatives. This action will strengthen the economic development ecosystem by aligning stakeholders, encouraging engagement, and driving continuous improvement in strategy execution.	
Proposed Initiatives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Organize a “State of the Economy” event to inform stakeholders of trends, key achievements, and future objectives.</li><li>• Utilize surveys during the event to collect feedback from participants, which will inform future economic development initiatives and strategy adjustments.</li></ul>	
Timelines	Costs	Key Players
Year 2-3	\$\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev <b>Partner</b> Chamber, DBA, SBAC, Valley Heartland
Measuring Success		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Event Participation:</b> Number of attendees at the “State of the Economy” event.</li><li>• <b>Stakeholder Engagement:</b> Volume and quality of feedback collected through surveys.</li><li>• <b>Community Awareness:</b> Increased understanding of economic trends and initiatives among stakeholders.</li><li>• <b>Strategy Impact:</b> Evidence of strategy adjustments informed by feedback.</li><li>• <b>Positive Feedback:</b> Stakeholder satisfaction with the event’s relevance and value.</li></ul>		

<b>Strategic Action:</b>	<b>1.3 Update policies/bylaws to support a business environment</b>		
<b>Current State Challenges Addressed:</b>	<p>Smiths Falls is committed to building an environment in which businesses can operate easily and have the ability to grow without unnecessary burdens or challenges. While there may not be any existing bylaws that represent significant barriers to the business community, the Town is nonetheless committed to continual improvements. The current policy and bylaw environment of the Town can be enhanced by addressing zoning regulations that may limit flexibility for emerging or hybrid business models, that could make it difficult to adapt to evolving market trends.</p> <p>Downtown animation and development are a priority of the Town, and vacant or underutilized properties in the downtown core reduce economic activity and detract from the vibrancy of the community. Smiths Falls has an opportunity to implement</p>		

	<p>innovative policies to promote the use of all downtown properties. Additionally, the need to incentivize mixed-use developments remains critical to aligning growth with the Town's vision for a vibrant and sustainable downtown.</p>	
<b>Proposed Initiatives:</b>	<p>Smiths Falls should explore opportunities to review and update bylaws related to:</p> <p><b>Incentivize Mixed-Use Development</b>  Implement tax rebates, development charge discounts, or fast-track approvals for mixed-use projects in key zones like the Downtown Core to encourage development and ensure alignment with community design standards. This is aligned to Strategic Action 4.2.</p> <p><b>Explore a Reverse Vacancy Tax to Activate Vacant Properties</b>  Explore the ability to implement a reverse vacancy tax program to incentivize property owners to activate vacant or underutilized spaces, particularly in the downtown core. By offering tax rebates or grants for leasing, redevelopment, or temporary uses, this initiative will reduce long-term vacancies, support economic revitalization, and align with Smiths Falls' goals of enhancing community vibrancy and economic growth.</p> <p><b>Ensure Zoning By-laws allow flexibility for innovative projects</b>  The Zoning By-law lists permitted uses within each zoning category, such as commercial, residential, or mixed-use zones. While this approach provides clarity, it may unintentionally exclude emerging or hybrid uses (e.g., co-working spaces with retail or makerspaces that combine light industrial and community activities). There may be opportunity to explore the inclusion of general categories (e.g., "flexible workspace" or "community hub") that can accommodate evolving business models and hybrid spaces. The Town could explore the creation of specific guidelines to facilitate adaptive reuse projects that maintain alignment with zoning goals.</p> <p><b>Review and Remove Business Licensing By-Law</b>  Review business licensing by-law to identify opportunities to simplify or remove requirements that may create barriers for entrepreneurs. This work should include consulting stakeholders to assess the by-law's impact and determine changes that balance oversight with fostering a more business-friendly environment.</p>	
Timelines	Costs	Key Players
Year 1-3	\$	<p><b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev</p> <p><b>Partner:</b> Chamber, DBA, Business Owners and Community</p>
<p><b>Measuring Success</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Policy Changes Implemented:</b> Number of policies or by-laws updated or introduced to support business growth.</li> <li>• <b>Stakeholder Engagement:</b> Feedback from businesses and stakeholders indicating improved processes or reduced barriers.</li> <li>• <b>Business Growth:</b> Increase in business openings, expansions, or investments following updates.</li> <li>• <b>Vacancy Reduction:</b> Decrease in the number of vacant or underutilized properties, particularly in key areas like the downtown core.</li> <li>• <b>Economic Impact:</b> Growth in tax revenue, employment, or other economic indicators tied to the updated policies.</li> </ul>		

Strategic Action:	1.4 Establish a community feedback cycle for by-law and policy updates		
Current State Challenges Addressed:	Integrate a regular review and feedback cycle into Smiths Falls' processes to gather community input on potential by-law and policy changes. This initiative ensures continuous alignment with local needs, fosters transparency, and supports proactive economic development through collaborative decision-making. This Action would build on Strategic Action 1.3 by establishing a culture of continual review and enhancement.		
Proposed Initiatives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish a regular schedule for reviewing key by-laws and policies, ensuring consistency and accountability.</li><li>• Host public forums (including online engagement) or town halls to collect feedback on existing regulations and proposed changes.</li><li>• Leverage existing working groups/committees to review and discuss proposed changes.</li><li>• Publish a summary of community feedback and how it informs by-law and policy decisions to build trust and accountability.</li></ul>		
Timelines		Costs	Key Players
Year 3		\$\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev <b>Partner:</b> Chamber, DBA, Business Owners and Community
Measuring Success			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Participation Rates:</b> Number of residents, businesses, and stakeholders providing input</li><li>• <b>Feedback Utilization:</b> Percentage of actionable suggestions integrated into by-law/policy updates.</li><li>• <b>Stakeholder Satisfaction:</b> Positive feedback from participants on the process and outcomes.</li><li>• <b>Policy Outcomes:</b> Improved alignment of by-laws and policies with community needs, demonstrated by fewer conflicts or amendments needed post-implementation.</li></ul>			

## Goal 2: Engage Youth by Leaning into the Trades

<b>Strategic Action:</b>	<b>2.1 Create a Youth Trades Council to provide input on programs, develop ideas for improving trade education, and serve as an advocacy group</b>		
<b>Current State Challenges Addressed:</b>	<p>This action is positioned to directly address workforce sustainability and growth. Smiths Falls has an opportunity to capitalize on its strong trades and manufacturing sectors. To do this it is important to understand the current youth and trade ecosystem in Smiths Falls including resources and supports available.</p> <p>Young people should be engaged directly to help shape programs targeted towards them and focus engagement with businesses/employers and educational institutions. Establishing a Youth Trades Council would aim to push opportunities to strengthen trades education, align programs with industry needs, and further strengthen Smiths Falls trades workforce development.</p>		

	An initial activity to support the establishment of the Council should be to engage directly with Youth through surveys and focus groups. Through this the Town will gain valuable insights into youth interests, barriers in entering trades, and effectiveness of existing job fair work which will enable targeted strategies to attract young talent. Sharing results and creating informational materials will raise awareness among students and parents, fostering informed career decisions and reducing stigma around trades careers. By connecting youth with local resources and pathways, this action will help to continue building skilled workers, reinforcing the Town's economic resilience and supporting sectoral growth.		
Proposed Initiatives:	Initial survey: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Design and distribute survey and conduct focus groups across schools and youth groups.</li><li>• Share results with parents and students through school boards, community centers, and social media channels.</li><li>• Engage with local schools to understand information currently distributed to youth and evaluate the effectiveness of existing job fair initiatives. Based on these insights, identify gaps and opportunities to create an information packet for parents that highlights trade career pathways, local resources, and actionable steps for supporting youth in pursuing trades.</li></ul>		
	Council Establishment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recruit youth representatives interested in trades.</li><li>• Hold quarterly meetings for program input and advocacy.</li><li>• Facilitate regular meetings with local businesses, educational institutions, and government bodies to discuss and implement the Council's recommendations.</li></ul>		
	Timelines	Costs	Key Players
Year 1-3	\$\$	Facilitator: Ec Dev Partner: Local Businesses, Schools, Youth, Employment Centre	
Measuring Success			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Council Participation:</b> Number of youth representatives recruited and actively engaged.</li><li>• <b>Meeting Outcomes:</b> Number of actionable recommendations developed and implemented.</li><li>• <b>Collaboration:</b> Frequency of meetings with businesses, schools, and government bodies.</li></ul>			

<b>Strategic Action:</b>	<b>2.2 Work with local businesses to increase the number of co-op placements for high school students</b>
<b>Current State Challenges Addressed:</b>	By increasing co-op placements for high school students, Smiths Falls will build stronger connections between youth and local businesses in the trades and manufacturing sectors. Engaging businesses to adopt co-op agreements and promoting these opportunities in schools will create a clear pathway for students to gain hands-on experience and develop essential skills. This initiative ensures a steady talent pipeline, supports workforce development, and solidifies Smiths Falls' position as a hub for skilled trades and manufacturing.



<b>Proposed Initiatives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with partners explore how co-op placements can be better utilized and supported, including developing resources and encouraging opportunities for students to gain both practical experience and essential workplace skills.</li> <li>Meet with local businesses to assess co-op capacity.</li> <li>Encourage businesses to adopt co-op agreements.</li> <li>Help promote co-op opportunities in high schools.</li> </ul>	
Timelines	Costs	Key Players
Year 1-3	\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev <b>Partner:</b> Chamber, DBA, Local Businesses, High School, Employment Centre
Measuring Success		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Business Engagement:</b> Number of businesses participating in co-op programs.</li> <li><b>Co-op Opportunities:</b> Increase in co-op placements available to high school students.</li> <li><b>Student Participation:</b> Number of students taking part in co-op placements.</li> <li><b>Awareness:</b> Reach and impact of co-op promotions in high schools.</li> <li><b>Long-Term Impact:</b> Number of students pursuing trades careers or apprenticeships after co-op experiences.</li> </ul>		

<b>Strategic Action:</b>	<b>2.3 Partner with local trade businesses and partners to establish a fund or sponsorship for students pursuing trade-related certifications</b>	
<b>Current State Challenges Addressed:</b>	Partnering with local businesses to fund scholarships and resources for students pursuing trades certifications will lower barriers to entry and work to attract more youth to skilled trades. This initiative strengthens workforce development, supports industry needs, and reinforces the Town's position related to trades and manufacturing.	
<b>Proposed Initiatives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build partnerships to fund trade-related resources for students (e.g., toolkits, certification support).</li> <li>Launch annual scholarship cycle.</li> </ul>	
Timelines	Costs	Key Players
Year 2-3	\$\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> Chamber <b>Partner:</b> EcDev, Local Businesses, Schools, Trade System Organizations, Post Secondary
Measuring Success		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Funding Secured:</b> Total amount contributed by local businesses to the fund.</li> <li><b>Student Support:</b> Number of students receiving scholarships or resources.</li> <li><b>Participation:</b> Number of businesses sponsoring or contributing to the initiative.</li> <li><b>Career Outcomes:</b> Increase in students completing certifications or entering trades careers.</li> </ul>		

<b>Strategic Action:</b>	<b>2.4 Establish a formal mentorship program linking interested youth with experienced tradespeople, focusing on flexible, community-based mentorship opportunities that extend beyond formal education or co-op programs</b>
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<b>Current State Challenges Addressed:</b>	Connecting youth with experienced tradespeople through mentorship fosters skill development and career pathways. This initiative strengthens the talent pipeline and promotes knowledge transfer, while targeting youth not engaged in formal co-op or apprenticeship programs. The program also focuses on real-world insights, career guidance, and community integration, ensuring effective mentorship beyond traditional school partnerships.	
<b>Proposed Initiatives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify interested tradespeople for mentorship roles during BR&amp;E visits.</li><li>• Develop a mentorship matching system tailored to youth outside of formal education, such as those not participating in co-op or apprenticeship programs.</li><li>• Support flexible mentorship opportunities that provide customized guidance for youth’s career goals and interests.</li><li>• Support an orientation for mentors and mentees.</li></ul>	
<b>Timelines</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Key Players</b>
Year 3-5	\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> Ec Dev <b>Partner:</b> Chamber, DBA, Local Businesses, Manufacturing Plants
<b>Measuring Success</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Participation:</b> Number of mentors and mentees involved in the program.</li><li>• <b>Engagement:</b> Retention rates and feedback from mentors and mentees.</li><li>• <b>Impact:</b> Number of mentees pursuing trades careers or apprenticeships.</li><li>• <b>Program Growth:</b> Increase in mentorship matches year-over-year.</li></ul>		

## Goal 3: Build Stronger Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses

<b>Strategic Action:</b>	<b>3.1 Develop and/or better promote educational toolkits and seminars for small business owners and hold meet-ups for idea exchange.</b>
<b>Current State Challenges Addressed:</b>	This initiative equips entrepreneurs across sectors with practical resources and opportunities for collaboration. The Town has developed a New Business Welcome Guide which currently provides valuable information on resources available in the community and checklists for key activities. There is an opportunity to build on this valuable resource and provide small businesses with the tools or guidance needed to address key areas such as marketing, financial management, or leveraging government programs. Offering tailored toolkits and hosting meet-ups fosters skill development, idea exchange, and cross-sector partnerships. The focus is on strengthening Smiths Falls' entrepreneurial ecosystem and driving small business growth.
<b>Proposed Initiatives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue offering and updating existing resources, such as the "New Business Welcome Guide" and support/promote current workshops/seminars hosted by the SBAC</li> <li>• The Town will continue to engage with partner business support organization and business owners to identify needs and connect businesses with existing toolkits</li> </ul>

	<p>already developed by partner organizations including the SBAC, Valley Heartland CFDC, and other groups. Examples of new resources that could be developed to support the business community include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Co-Op and Internship Integration: A guide for businesses to establish partnerships with schools, develop co-op placements, and access youth employment programs.</li><li>○ Navigating Regulations: Expand on how to navigate permits and by-laws (e.g., signage, patio, and noise by-laws) with examples and FAQs to simplify understanding. An additional opportunity is to expand the development of toolkits and resources to provide support to more established businesses. This could include resources focused on:</li><li>○ Workforce Development and Retention: Strategies for attracting and retaining skilled employees, particularly in trades and manufacturing. Summary of information on training programs, apprenticeships, and local co-op opportunities. This could also include guidance on accessing provincial or federal workforce development grants.</li><li>○ Succession Planning and Business Transition: Step-by-step guidance for developing a succession plan. Identification resources for business valuation and preparing for sale or ownership transition. Introduction to the legal and financial considerations for smooth transitions.</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expand sector-specific roundtable meetings to include retail and other key sectors in addition to local restaurants.</li><li>• Organize sector-specific meet-ups to address unique challenges and opportunities (e.g., "Innovating in Trades and Manufacturing," "Downtown Business Marketing," or "Boosting Tourism Through Collaboration").</li></ul>	
Timelines	Costs	Key Players
Year 1-2	\$\$	Facilitator: EcDev Partners: SBAC, Valley Heartland, Industry Groups and Business Representatives, DBA, Chamber, Business Representatives
Measuring Success		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Toolkit Reach:</b> Number of toolkits distributed, with sector-specific breakdowns (trades, downtown businesses, tourism operators).</li><li>• <b>Participation:</b> Attendance at sector-specific and cross-sector meet-ups and workshops.</li><li>• <b>Engagement:</b> Feedback from participants on the relevance and usefulness of the toolkit and meet-ups.</li><li>• <b>Collaboration:</b> Number of partnerships or cross-sector initiatives resulting from meet-ups.</li><li>• <b>Implementation Impact:</b> Number of businesses implementing strategies or solutions from the guides (e.g., adopting digital marketing, securing grants).</li><li>• <b>Business Growth:</b> Reports of improved practices, increased revenue, or other positive outcomes from participants across all sectors.</li><li>• <b>Resource Expansion:</b> Requests for additional topics or detailed guides, indicating engagement and value.</li></ul>		

<b>Strategic Action:</b>	<b>3.2 Continue to create and partner with the Chamber and DBA in executing "Shop Local" initiatives</b>	
<b>Current State Challenges Addressed:</b>	Enhancing the "Stop & Shop" campaign will encourage local spending, reducing economic leakage and supporting Smiths Falls' small businesses, including local small business retailers, tourism providers, trades and manufacturers. This can also include targeted messaging to ensure that residents of Smiths Falls are fully aware of the local retail opportunities in their community, including those downtown and how to engage with them. By incorporating storytelling and expanding digital and community outreach, this action strengthens local economic sustainability and highlights the vital role of entrepreneurs and small businesses in the Town's economy.	
<b>Proposed Initiatives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the current "Stop &amp; Shop" campaign and identify areas for improvement.</li> <li>• Expand the campaigns by incorporating storytelling that highlights the impact of local spending on the community.</li> <li>• Incorporate improvement opportunities to continue promoting local businesses via digital channels, social media, and community events.</li> </ul>	
<b>Timelines</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Key Players</b>
Year 1-5	\$\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> Chamber/DBA <b>Partner:</b> EcDev, Local Businesses
<b>Measuring Success</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Campaign Reach:</b> Increase in engagement on digital platforms and social media.</li> <li>• <b>Community Participation:</b> Attendance at events and participation in campaign activities.</li> <li>• <b>Local Spending:</b> Growth in sales reported by local businesses.</li> <li>• <b>Awareness Impact:</b> Positive feedback on campaign storytelling and educational materials.</li> <li>• <b>Economic Retention:</b> Reduction in economic leakage through increased local purchasing.</li> </ul>		

<b>Strategic Action:</b>	<b>3.3 Celebrate local leaders and business achievements through recognition and storytelling initiatives</b>	
<b>Current State Challenges Addressed:</b>	Creating an annual event that recognizes local leaders and business achievements will highlight the contributions of entrepreneurs across trades, downtown businesses, and tourism. By showcasing products, sharing success stories, and involving local media, this initiative boosts community pride, fosters business visibility, and strengthens Smiths Falls' reputation as a vibrant hub for small business innovation and growth.	
<b>Proposed Initiatives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the Chamber with an annual event to award and recognize local leaders and business achievements.</li> <li>• Collaborate with the Chamber, DBA, and other stakeholders to highlight business achievements through profiles and success stories on the Town's website, social media channels, and events such as the annual Summit.</li> <li>• Build on existing business directories and the regional shop local website/campaign to promote local businesses, products, and services.</li> <li>• Involve local media to promote the event and draw in attendees.</li> </ul>	
<b>Timelines</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Key Players</b>

Year 1-5	\$\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> Chamber <b>Partner:</b> EcDev, DBA, Local Businesses
<b>Measuring Success</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Attendance:</b> Number of participants, including business owners and community members.</li> <li>• <b>Recognition:</b> Number of businesses or leaders awarded and showcased.</li> <li>• <b>Media Reach:</b> Coverage by local media and engagement on social media platforms.</li> <li>• <b>Business Impact:</b> Feedback from participants on the event's role in boosting visibility or connections.</li> <li>• <b>Community Engagement:</b> Increased interest in local businesses following the event.</li> </ul>		

<b>Strategic Action:</b>	<b>3.4 Initiate a “Pop-Up” program to temporarily transform vacant or underused spaces into venues for local arts, music, and small business pop-ups.</b>	
<b>Current State Challenges Addressed:</b>	The “Pop-Up” program to activate vacant spaces into venues for arts, music, and small business showcases supporting local talent and new or homebased businesses aligning with Smiths Falls’ Economic Development strategy to enhance tourism, culture, and small business growth.	
<b>Proposed Initiatives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop-up events and opportunities should align with other initiatives or events developed in support of the Arts Master Plan or other cultural/community building efforts.</li> <li>• Collaborate with local artists, musicians, and entrepreneurs to showcase talents and products.</li> </ul>	
<b>Timelines</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Key Players</b>
Year 2	\$\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev <b>Partner:</b> Chamber, Property Owners, Local Businesses, Artists
<b>Measuring Success</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Event Participation:</b> Number of pop-up events, vendors, and attendees.</li> <li>• <b>Local Engagement:</b> Number of collaborations with local artists, musicians, and entrepreneurs.</li> <li>• <b>Economic Impact:</b> Increase in foot traffic and sales for downtown businesses.</li> <li>• <b>Community Feedback:</b> Positive responses from attendees and participants on the program’s impact.</li> </ul>		

<b>Strategic Action:</b>	<b>3.5 Work with Valley Heartland, the Local Immigration Partnership, and the Local Employment Centre to develop and implement talent attraction and workforce development initiatives</b>	
<b>Current State Challenges Addressed:</b>	This initiative will address talent attraction and retention challenges by targeting trades and manufacturing sectors, promoting workforce development, and creating synergies with existing immigration and workforce partnerships.	
<b>Proposed Initiatives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect potential employees from larger urban communities to local trades and manufacturing employers looking for talent by offering workforce tours.</li> <li>• Develop multimedia materials highlighting housing, lifestyle, community services, and career opportunities to attract skilled workers and their families.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with Valley Heartland, the Local Immigration Partnership, and the Local Employment Centre to enhance programs for attracting and integrating foreign workers, including resources such as language training and cultural orientation.</li> <li>Offer targeted skill-upgrading workshops, training for trades and manufacturing, and initiatives to support underrepresented groups, such as women in trades.</li> </ul>	
Timelines	Costs	Key Players
Year 4-5	\$\$\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev <b>Partner:</b> Valley Heartland, Local Immigration Partnership Group, Local Employment Centre, SBAC, Local Businesses
Measuring Success		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Participation:</b> Number of employers and workers attending tours, workshops, and programs.</li> <li><b>Talent Attraction:</b> Number of new employees relocating to Smiths Falls.</li> <li><b>Business Outcomes:</b> Increase in new business openings, expansions, or revenue growth among participants.</li> </ul>		

## Goal 4: Position the Town for Investment Attraction Success

Strategic Action:	4.1 Embrace the industrial nature of Smith Falls' history, brand, and market positioning while others abandon	
Current State Challenges Addressed:	By embracing its industrial history and promoting success stories, Smiths Falls will position itself as a hub for industrial innovation and startups. Updating branding and PR to highlight its strengths and startup-friendly environment will attract new investments, support existing businesses, and solidify the Town's reputation as a key player in industrial growth.	
Proposed Initiatives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Position Smiths Falls as an industrial hub, promoting the area's existing businesses and historical strengths.</li> <li>Promote local success stories as proof of concept for industrial investment. As other actions in this strategy gain momentum, this should also include a focus on evolving Smiths Falls' image and reputation to start including an industrial startup community as part of its brand.</li> <li>Update branding and PR strategy to highlight Smiths Falls as a startup-friendly community.</li> </ul>	
Timelines	Costs	Key Players
Year 1	\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev <b>Partner:</b> Chamber, Local Businesses, Regional Marketing Agencies
Measuring Success		



- **Brand Recognition:** Increased awareness of Smiths Falls as an industrial hub through media mentions and social media engagement.
- **Investment Growth:** Number of new industrial startups or investments attracted to the Town.
- **Business Expansion:** Growth or expansion of existing industrial businesses.
- **PR Effectiveness:** Positive feedback on updated branding and PR strategy.
- **Community Impact:** Increased local economic activity linked to industrial and startup growth.

<b>Strategic Action:</b>	<b>4.2 Review the mixed-use and smart density zoning and explore incentives to accelerate action in the downtown</b>	
<b>Current State Challenges Addressed:</b>	Smart density focuses on creating vibrant, sustainable communities by promoting mixed-use developments, increased housing options, and efficient land use. By reviewing zoning policies and offering incentives like tax rebates or grants, this initiative will attract developers, stimulate downtown revitalization, and position Smiths Falls as an investment-ready, livable community that supports economic growth and diverse housing needs.	
<b>Proposed Initiatives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct zoning review with a focus on mixed-use and smart density.</li> <li>• Identify incentive options (e.g., tax rebates, grants) for developers.</li> </ul>	
<b>Timelines</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Key Players</b>
Year 2-3	\$\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev <b>Partner:</b> Developers, Site Selectors and Regional/Provincial IA Partners
<b>Measuring Success</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Zoning Updates:</b> Completion of zoning reviews and adoption of smart density policies.</li> <li>• <b>Incentives Utilized:</b> Number and value of incentives accessed by developers.</li> <li>• <b>Development Activity:</b> Increase in mixed-use and smart density projects in the downtown.</li> <li>• <b>Housing Options:</b> Growth in diverse housing availability, including rentals and affordable units.</li> <li>• <b>Economic Impact:</b> Increase in downtown foot traffic, business openings, and property values.</li> </ul>		

<b>Strategic Action:</b>	<b>4.3 Establish a municipal “Investment in Accommodation” program that incentivizes hotel developers</b>	
<b>Current State Challenges Addressed:</b>	By establishing an “Investment in Accommodation” program, Smiths Falls will attract hotel developers through targeted incentives and infrastructure support. This initiative addresses the needs of tourists, business travelers, and investors, enhancing the Town’s appeal as a destination and strengthening its position for sustained economic growth.	
<b>Proposed Initiatives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create incentives for hotel developers to invest in Smiths Falls, including grants and support for infrastructure development.</li> <li>• Provide clear guidelines for hotel development and partner with developers to ensure alignment with Smiths Falls' growth strategy.</li> <li>• Focus on accommodation needs for tourists, business travelers, and future investors.</li> </ul>	
<b>Timelines</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Key Players</b>
Year 3-4	\$\$\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev

		<b>Partner:</b> Hotel Developers, Tourism Organizations, Site Selectors and Regional/Provincial IA Partners
<b>Measuring Success</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Developer Engagement:</b> Number of hotel developers expressing interest or entering agreements.</li> <li>• <b>Accommodations Built:</b> Number of new hotels or accommodations developed.</li> <li>• <b>Tourism Impact:</b> Increase in overnight stays and visitor spending in Smiths Falls.</li> <li>• <b>Economic Growth:</b> Additional revenue generated from tourism and business travel.</li> <li>• <b>Alignment:</b> Positive feedback from developers on the program's clarity and alignment with the Town's strategy.</li> </ul>		

<b>Strategic Action:</b>	<b>4.4 Bring new shovel-ready industrial business park to market</b>	
<b>Current State Challenges Addressed:</b>	Bringing a new industrial business park to market will position Smiths Falls as an attractive destination for industrial investment. By preparing underdeveloped lands through zoning adjustments, infrastructure upgrades, and partnerships with private investors, this initiative enhances the Town's readiness for economic growth and industrial expansion.	
<b>Proposed Initiatives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify underdeveloped industrial lands and remove barriers to make them shovel-ready (zoning adjustments, infrastructure upgrades, and environmental assessments).</li> <li>• Partner with private developers and investors to fund land preparation.</li> </ul>	
<b>Timelines</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Key Players</b>
Year 3-5	\$\$\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev <b>Partner:</b> Developers, Site Selectors and Regional/Provincial IA Partners
<b>Measuring Success</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Land Preparation:</b> Amount of industrial land made shovel-ready (e.g., acres prepared).</li> <li>• <b>Partnerships Secured:</b> Number of private developers and investors engaged in funding land preparation.</li> <li>• <b>Business Attraction:</b> Number of businesses that establish operations in the industrial park.</li> <li>• <b>Economic Impact:</b> Increase in local jobs and industrial output linked to the park.</li> <li>• <b>Project Milestones:</b> Completion of zoning, infrastructure, and environmental assessments.</li> </ul>		

<b>Strategic Action:</b>	<b>4.5 Engage neighbouring municipalities in early discussions to expand industrial land strategy through a regional approach</b>	
<b>Current State Challenges Addressed:</b>	Smiths Falls can unlock unused or underused lands through partnerships and joint ventures. Collaborative investments and shared ROI models could enhance industrial development opportunities, positioning the Town as a forward-thinking, investment-ready destination.	
<b>Proposed Initiatives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider land-sharing agreements, collaborative investment, and shared ROI models to bring unused or underused lands into development.</li> <li>• Develop investment attraction funding relationships with Invest Ontario and Invest in Canada to strategically pursue targeted sectors.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate joint ventures between public and private sectors to enhance industrial development opportunities.</li> </ul>	
Timelines	Costs	Key Players
Year 4-5	\$\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev <b>Partner:</b> Regional Municipalities and Partners, Developers
Measuring Success		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Land Development:</b> Amount of unused or underused land brought into industrial development.</li> <li><b>Investment Attracted:</b> Number and value of investments secured for industrial projects.</li> <li><b>Regional Impact:</b> Shared ROI and economic benefits realized through the regional approach.</li> <li><b>Project Milestones:</b> Progress on joint ventures and industrial development initiatives.</li> </ul>		

Strategic Action:	4.6 Develop sports tourism strategy around existing arena lands	
Current State Challenges Addressed:	Developing a sports tourism strategy around existing arena lands will expand facility usage, attract tournaments, and establish Smiths Falls as a regional destination for youth sports. By creating training programs and collaborating with hotels and restaurants for visitor packages, this initiative boosts tourism and support local businesses.	
Proposed Initiatives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop strategy to expand usage of arena and nearby lands support increased capacity to host tournaments, positioning Smiths Falls as a regional hub for sports tourism.</li> <li>Develop a training and tournament program that can attract teams and families year-round.</li> <li>Collaborate with hotels and restaurants to create packages for visiting teams, building on the “Stay &amp; Play” model to offer comprehensive visitor experiences.</li> </ul>	
Timelines	Costs	Key Players
Year 4-5	\$\$\$	<b>Facilitator:</b> EcDev <b>Partner:</b> Developers, Hockey Associations, Sports Tourism Experts, Hotels and Restaurants
Measuring Success		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Event Hosting:</b> Number of tournaments and training programs held at the arena.</li> <li><b>Visitor Impact:</b> Increase in teams, athletes, and families visiting Smiths Falls.</li> <li><b>Economic Activity:</b> Growth in revenue for local hotels, restaurants, and businesses.</li> <li><b>Partnerships:</b> Number of collaborations with hotels, restaurants, and sports organizations.</li> <li><b>Feedback:</b> Positive feedback from teams, visitors, and stakeholders on the sports tourism experience.</li> </ul>		

## 7. Appendix B – Project Context and Engagement

### Project Context

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For this engagement, Optimus SBR has defined the Project Mission and what constitutes Project Success.

The **Project Mission** is:

- To develop a comprehensive 5-year Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) and Investment Attraction Plan for the Town of Smiths Falls that will engage the community and provide direction, goals and outcomes for a successful implementation.

**Project Success** will entail:

- A clear understanding of broad stakeholder perspectives.
- Confidence and buy-in from key stakeholders, especially the development community.
- Determination of economic development strategic priorities and actions that leverage the Smiths Falls competitive assets to attract talent and investment.
- Council and Town Leadership confidence in the Economic Development Strategy.

### Situational Analysis Inputs

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A situational analysis of the Town's current state was conducted to inform the strategy. The inputs are as follows:

- **Community Tour:** A guided community tour to better understand the local context and identify opportunities and challenges.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Ten (10) interviews/focus groups with several stakeholders including Council, the Economic Development Committee, the business community, and real estate agents.
- **Past Strategies, Plans, and Reports:** A review of the Town's past economic development and planning documents to ensure alignment with all areas of the BR&E and Investment Attraction Plan.
- **External Scan:** A high-level scan of economic trends that may impact Smiths Falls' economy in the years to come. This was used to understand trends happening around, but outside of Smiths Falls.

## Engagement Process

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Stakeholder insights have been the cornerstone of developing this strategy, ensuring it aligns with local priorities and reflects the needs of the community.

### Stakeholders Involved in the Process

- CAO (Malcolm Morris)
- Manager of Development Services (Karl Grenke)
- Director of Community Services (Stephanie Clark)
- Mayor and Council
- Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown Business Association
- Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) Valley Heartland
- Business Owners
- Community
- Developers
- MEDJCT (Susan Fournier)
- Small Business Advisory Centre (Cindy James)

### Methods of Engagement

- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Roundtables