

2023

INVEST HALTON HILLS ANNUAL REPORT



TOWN OF HALTON HILLS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



A MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



I am pleased to be contributing to the 2023 Invest Halton Hills Annual report following my first full year as the Town of Halton Hills Mayor.

Halton Hills Town Council's new Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026 was implemented in December 2023 and outlines Council's commitment to fostering a vibrant and growing community. A key focus area within the Strategic Plan includes building a thriving economy. This priority and its corresponding objectives directly relate to the work done within the Town's Economic Development division, Invest Halton Hills.

This report outlines the Invest Halton Hills team's commitment to supporting a thriving economy where businesses choose to locate, stay and grow, while elevating Halton Hills' competitiveness in the global marketplace. In the coming pages you will see the Town has a robust economic development workplan, including the Business Concierge program that continues to expedite strategic investments in the Premier Gateway and beyond - creating employment opportunities and generating necessary non-residential assessment growth.

The Business Retention and Expansion portfolio provides small, medium, and large businesses with access to financial incentives and support for growth and diversification. Extending Halton Hills' visibility overseas, the Foreign Direct Investment portfolio continues to position Halton Hills as a premier investment destination for businesses within our defined key sectors of Advanced Manufacturing, Food and Beverage Processing, Agri-Business, and Clean Technology/Renewable Energy. And the Visit Halton Hills tourism initiatives drive local residents and visitors to support our businesses to help them succeed and grow.

The economic prosperity of our community continues to be a top-of-mind priority for Council as we move into 2024. We look forward to new business investment opportunities and retention initiatives that support the growth of our community, here in Halton Hills.

Your success is our success.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna Sawlor". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

2023

Invest Halton Hills year at a glance

Investment Attraction

9 Active Project in Business Concierge Pipeline

Foreign Direct Investment Metrics

300%

increase in inbound leads from 2022 to 2023

447

proactive leads in 2023

In Market: 39 in-person meetings at **2** international trade shows in Germany

Business Retention & Expansion

Direct to Business Funding

40K

via the Community Improvement Plan

102K

via the Digital Transformation Grant



Business Events

3 Collaborations with Partner Organizations

- HHCC Business After Hours
- HHPL Picture Perfect Products
- Halton Region Networking Series

Tourism Activations

7

Tourism Signs

Influencer Marketing:

11K views on campaign-related marketing across social channels

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW



The Town of Halton Hills Economic Development division, **Invest Halton Hills**, strives to be an economic development leader, actively attracting and supporting quality local and international business opportunities. Halton Hills is 'open for business' – offering existing and potential businesses a strategic platform for success, proximity to world-class markets, a distinct community with an ideal balance between urban and rural living, and an outstanding quality of life.

Invest Halton Hills provides a full suite of high-quality services and supports to the local business community that in turn foster a thriving economy and enhance quality of life. These include:



Financial incentives via the Community Improvement Plan



Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) programming



Business Concierge Program



Investment attraction, expansion and relocation



Amplifying tourism's economic benefits via Visit Halton Hills



Site selection assistance



Market research



Industry engagement



Workforce development

A number of key strategies and programs have been developed to advance **Council's Strategic Plan** priority of a Thriving Economy. They support existing businesses, attract new investment and market Halton Hills as a prime investment destination, and include:

- Economic Development and Tourism Strategy (2021-2026)
- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Attraction Strategy (2020)
- Business Concierge Program (2021)
- Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Program (2020)
- Digital Main Street Program (2020-2024)
- Community Improvement Plan (2022-2027)
- Key Stakeholder engagement and partnerships (e.g. Business Improvement Areas, Chamber of Commerce, etc.)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM STRATEGY

The five-year **Economic Development and Tourism Strategy (2021-2026)**, approved by Council in February 2021, is focused on increasing non-residential assessment growth and is a key initiative to support the sustainability of the Town's Long Range Financial Plan. It also connects to and/or helps advance other Town strategies and initiatives, including:

- Council's Strategic Plan
- Premier Gateway Phase 2B Secondary Plan
- Community Improvement Plan (CIP)
- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Attraction Strategy
- Affordable Housing Initiatives
- Cultural Master Plan
- Public Art Master Plan
- Transit Service Strategy
- Low-Carbon Transition Strategy
- Climate Change Resiliency Strategy

By the end of the first year of the Strategy (2021), 7% of the Strategy's actions were completed, with an additional 40% underway. By the end of 2022, 59% of the actions were complete and 40% were in progress. The following page highlights the significant progress completed throughout 2023, resulting in 93% of Strategy's actions being in progress or completed.



STRATEGY PROGRESS BY THE NUMBERS

137 Total Action Items

PROGRESS IN 2022

59% Actions Complete **40%** Actions in Progress **11%** Actions Remaining



FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI) STRATEGY

The Town's **FDI Strategy** is focused on the target markets of Germany and the Netherlands, and the sectors of Advanced Manufacturing, Food and Beverage Processing, Agri-Business, and Clean Technology/Renewable Energy. FDI is part of the Town's broader Economic Development and Tourism Strategy and non-residential investment attraction program. FDI activities can benefit local businesses, help create quality local jobs, increase non-residential assessment and attract net new jobs.

Investment Attraction staff provide a full suite of quality local economic development programs, and work side-by-side with investors to provide tailored assistance and showcase Halton Hills as a prime investment destination. The Town's FDI efforts are focused exclusively on attracting investment to Halton Hills by leveraging detailed knowledge of local investment opportunities, market and community value propositions, and tailoring all messaging through a Halton Hills lens.

Over the past five years, Halton Hills' capacity to attract, service and retain FDI has significantly improved. At the close of 2023, staff had completed all 33 FDI activities included in the three-year Action Plan. The below timeline provides a summary of the Town's key FDI activities undertaken since 2019.

Halton Hills' FDI Progress

2019

- Halton Hills begins development of 5-year FDI Attraction Strategy and 3-year Action Plan.

2021

- Outreach to initial pipeline of 60 investment leads.
- FDI marketing material further refined.
- First meeting with German and Dutch Trade Commissioners.
- Outreach to local developers/realtors to understand future investment opportunities.

2023

- New Community Profile document developed by marketing company.
- 5 FDI videos developed to showcase Halton Hills to investors.
- Second Town trade mission executed in partnership with OMCA.

2020

- Town's first FDI Attraction Strategy approved by Council.
- 4 sector-specific Investment Business Cases are developed.
- Halton Hills' first Community Profile is created in-house.
- Participation in 2 virtual tradeshows

2022

- Planned and executed Town's first international trade mission, including 27 in-market meetings.
- Digital marketing campaign through LinkedIn garnered 110,000 impressions.

2024

- Up to 4 targeted in-market trade missions, including in-person meetings and attending sector-specific tradeshows.

2023 FDI ACTIVITIES



In-Market Trade Missions

Staff successfully executed the Town's first international trade mission in Fall 2022, conducting over 20 face-to-face meetings with pre-qualified investment leads and seven key investment intermediaries – resulting in significant exposure for the Invest Halton Hills brand. In September 2023, staff returned to market as part of an Ontario Manufacturing Communities Alliance (OMCA) delegation, conducting 39 in-person meetings at two tradeshows (IAA Mobility in Munich, Germany and hy-fcell in Stuttgart, Germany), over the course of nine business days.

During both the 2022 and 2023 trade missions, numerous supply-chain, trade, innovation, and collaboration opportunities were identified that have the potential to benefit local Halton Hills companies from a business retention and expansion perspective. Staff communicate these opportunities, along with any applicable market intelligence gained while in-market, to local companies during regular business visits and meetings.

In addition to the September 2023 trade mission, several other FDI initiatives were advanced in 2023, including:

Halton Hills' First FDI Site Visit

Staff hosted Halton Hills' first site visit/familiarization tour with a foreign company in Fall 2023. This was the first site visit to come as a direct result of the Town's FDI program, with a large multi-national company visiting Halton Hills to assess three potential sites. Staff organized the visitation itinerary that included a visit with the Mayor, tours of three potential local development sites, a tour of a local business in the same sector as the visiting company, as well as a tour of Halton Hills' hamlets and tourism sights.

Provincial Site Information Initiative

Staff submitted detailed local site information for the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation & Trade's "Strengthening Ontario's Competitiveness for Future Investments" initiative. 10 high-potential development sites were submitted through this program and staff have seen a noticeable increase in Requests for Information from the Province as a result of active participation in this initiative.

2023 FDI ACTIVITIES

Manufacturing Sector Report Marketing

Halton Hills invested in a targeted marketing campaign that included the development of an Invest Halton Hills “advertorial” for an Ontario Advanced Manufacturing Sector report prepared by Perspective News.

Perspective works in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation & Trade to create a series of sector reports that are utilized by trade staff worldwide.

This marketing initiative was comprised of both a digital and print campaign and involved Perspective working closely with trade staff.



INVEST HALTON HILLS – ROOM TO GROW. ROOM TO BREATHE.

Halton Hills is a vibrant and growing community with a rich history of manufacturing excellence. The town's strategic location, world-class infrastructure, and skilled workforce make it an ideal location for investors seeking to expand their operations in the manufacturing sector. The town's commitment to innovation and sustainability, along with its high quality of life, makes it a desirable location for both businesses and residents. The town's diverse economy and strong business environment provide a competitive advantage for investors. The town's strategic location, world-class infrastructure, and skilled workforce make it an ideal location for investors seeking to expand their operations in the manufacturing sector. The town's commitment to innovation and sustainability, along with its high quality of life, makes it a desirable location for both businesses and residents. The town's diverse economy and strong business environment provide a competitive advantage for investors.

The report was circulated to all Canadian international trade staff around the world – with an initial run of 56,000 printed copies, as well as a digital version hosted on Perspective’s website (Halton Hills’ advertisement can be seen on pages 4-5).

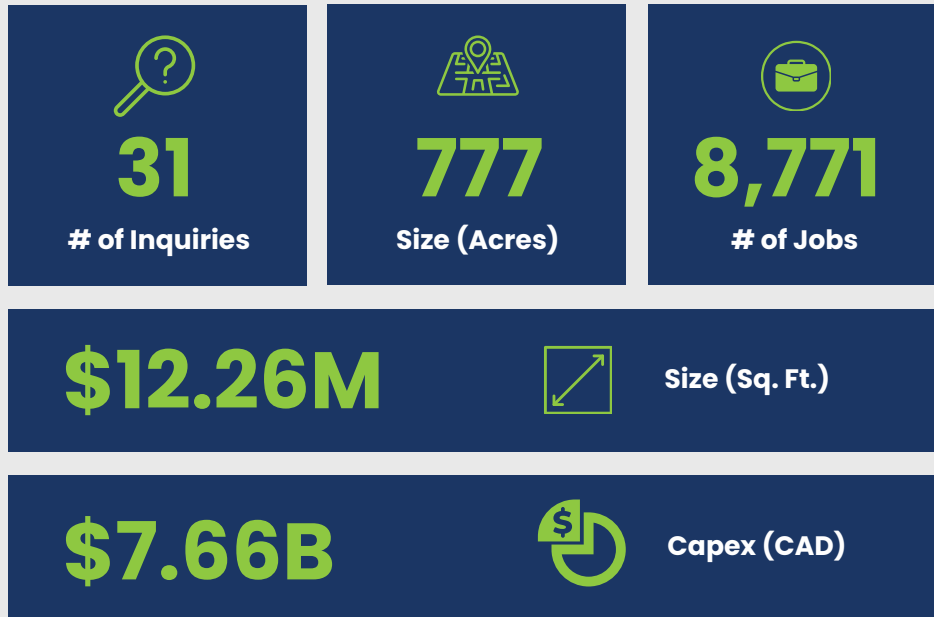
Update and Refinement of FDI Materials

Staff improved existing FDI marketing materials and developed new collateral throughout 2023. This included updating and refining the Town’s series of FDI pitch decks, Investment Business Cases and marketing materials, along with a new comprehensive Community Profile, a new 2.5-minute Invest Halton Hills Economic Development video, and four 1-minute sector-specific FDI Attraction videos – highlighting the local Advanced Manufacturing, Agri-Business, Food and Beverage Processing, and Clean Technology/Renewable Energy Sectors. The Community Profile and FDI Attraction videos will be publicly available in Q2 2024.



Inbound investment and development inquiries for land, buildings and leasable space have increased significantly in recent years:

2023 Inbound Investment Inquiries



- 300% increase in inbound (reactive) leads from 2022 to 2023.
- Summary of proactive lead generation efforts:
 - 2021 - 58 Leads
 - 2022 - 51 Leads
 - 2023 - 447 Leads
 - 2024 - 130* Leads (*projected; higher-quality)
- Does not include \$1.3B in projected Capex and 3,100 projected jobs associated with 9 active Business Concierge Program projects.

While these investments are not guaranteed, the focus is on attracting major non-residential investments in a proactive manner that aligns with local economic development priorities and opportunities. These activities help maintain Halton Hills' competitiveness in a highly competitive economy, where municipalities are competing for investment and the associated tax revenue to deliver local services.

Recognizing that investment attraction is a long-term process requiring ongoing commitment, subsequent in-market delegations have been planned for 2024 that will help sustain momentum, continue to elevate Halton Hills' profile as a prime investment destination, and help ensure that investment leads translate into actual investments.



BUSINESS CONCIERGE PROGRAM

The Town's **Business Concierge Program** continues to assist and support major non-residential investment projects in Halton Hills. The program is designed to assist Halton Hills in being a competitive destination to do business, grow non-residential assessment, and attract high-quality local jobs by streamlining the review and delivery of key economic development leads and projects. The Business Concierge Program assists projects along the full continuum of business attraction and retention – from initial concept and site selection, through to construction, project completion and beyond.

9 CURRENT / ACTIVE PROJECTS

INVESTMENT



Over \$1.5 billion in investment*

EMPLOYMENT



Over 3,000 direct jobs

DEVELOPMENT



Approx. 6M SF of built/leasable space*

Since launching in 2021, the program has evolved and remains nimble when addressing new development needs, opportunities, challenges, and trends. Along with facilitating and expediting major investments, the Business Concierge performs the following additional services:

- Leads the Strategic Economic Development Team (SEDT).
- Acts as the primary Economic Development contact and commenter for internal planning, development engineering, transportation, and building related matters and projects.
- Provides strategic guidance, advisory services and comments from an economic development perspective on matters involving external agencies, including Halton Region, Conservation Authorities and Provincial Agencies.
- Provides an economic development perspective on cross-departmental projects by actively participating on project committees.
- Responds to site selection and development inquiries for potential industrial, commercial, institutional and tourism-related investments.
- Represents the Town at Halton Region Economic Development Directors meetings.



Domestic
or
FDI Lead



Business
Concierge
Program



Development



Business Retention
& Expansion
Program



CONESTOGA COLD STORAGE



Conestoga Cold Storage is currently constructing a state-of-the-art cold storage facility with a built-out capacity exceeding 96 million cubic feet. The facility will become one of the largest cold storage facilities in the world, boasting cutting-edge technology and sustainable practices. The first \$200 million phase is scheduled to open in 2024.

The facility is intended to meet the growing demand for cold storage solutions and specifically designed to minimize environmental impact by incorporating energy-efficient technologies, advanced waste management systems, and renewable energy sources. When all phases are completed, the development will create between 150-250 new employment opportunities. This development represents an important atypical warehousing/logistics use that heavily utilizes automation and requires a skilled employment pool, with nearly half of the jobs created requiring technical skills.



PROLOGIS



ProLogis received approval for their Zoning By-law Amendment application in November 2023. They have resubmitted a Site Plan Approval application, which is nearing conditional approval, for the construction of over 1.3 million SF of leasable space, within 3 buildings in Halton Hills' Premier Gateway Employment Area.

The development represents an investment of over \$200 million. The site recently underwent a site alteration phase, that has prepared the land for construction once the appropriate approvals are in place. ProLogis expects to break ground on construction within 2024.



QuadReal



QuadReal is currently working through the approvals process for a 5-building, phased industrial proposal containing over 1.5 million SF of leasable space. The proposed industrial subdivision will be located in the Premier Gateway and will consist of development lots of varying sizes.

This development is garnering interest from major international companies looking to do business in Halton Hills. QuadReal will be resubmitting their application package in Q1 of 2024 and hopes to break ground on construction before the end of the year.

BUSINESS CONCIERGE PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



Enbridge is proposing to construct a 60,000 SF office building with an accessory operations component located at the southwest corner of Steeles Avenue and Winston Churchill Boulevard in the Premier Gateway. The new facility will consolidate three office operations from Brampton, Milton and Burlington into a West GTA Office and operations facility with capacity to hold 160-200 employees.

The project is the first major office development of its kind in the Premier Gateway, and one that aligns with the Town's goals to attract higher density employment uses. The proposed building also integrates several green development elements into its construction and design. Enbridge put the project on hold throughout 2023 but has plans to resubmit their Site Plan Application in Q1 2024 with a construction start date before the end of 2024.



PANATTONI®



Panattoni Development Company is nearing completion of their 141,000 SF industrial building located on Futura Drive in Acton. The project represents a \$40 million investment, with leasing or purchase opportunities now available.

The industrial facility features a contemporarily designed building that can potentially accommodate 100-200 employees, offering the perfect location for manufacturing, warehousing or logistics-type uses. Through the Business Concierge Program, Panattoni achieved Site Plan Approval and a full Building Permit for their facility in under one year.

Currently, Investment Attraction staff are assisting Panattoni through the Invest Halton Hills website and additional digital marketing touchpoints to promote the development's availability for occupancy.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP)

The **CIP** program enables the Town to provide incentives and supports to local businesses and encourage revitalization and private sector investments. The program's focus areas include: Storefront/Main Street Revitalization, Brownfield Redevelopment, Agricultural/Agri-Business Supports, Heritage Buildings, Climate Change, Accessibility, and Affordable Housing.

Available financial incentives for business owners to explore under the updated CIP:

- **Façade Improvement Grant Program**
- **Building and Property Renovation Program**
- **Agricultural Building Renovation Grant Program**
- **Commercial Property Accessibility and Energy Efficiency Enhancement Program**
- **Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) Grant Program**
- **Multi-stream Tax Increment Equivalent Grant (TIEG) Program**
- **Planning Fees and Building Permit Grant**
- **Non-residential Development Charge (DC) Deferral Program – Interest Grant**
- **Affordable Housing Development Charge (DC) Related Program**
- **Environmental Remediation Tax Cancellation Assistance Program**



CIP 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

2023 Program Progress

12

Program Inquiries

2

Completed Projects

3

Projects in Approval Pipeline
(est. completion 2024)

CIP Marketing

Marketing efforts to promote the CIP update continued throughout 2023. Success stories of approved grant recipients were consistently shared through both traditional and digital marketing channels to support increased visibility of the program’s financial incentives. Roadside signs were added to the marketing strategy in 2023 to capture daily awareness of the CIP. Curbex signs were placed on Town property locations in both Georgetown and Acton from August 2023 - October 2023. Signs were placed on Maple Avenue in front of Town Hall, at the Guelph Street and Maple Avenue intersection outside of Dominion Gardens and on Queen Street, close to the Acton Arena marquee.

Expanded CIP marketing efforts are in motion for 2024, including a mailer to all business and property owners in Q2, dynamic showcasing of completed projects through digital storytelling being collected throughout the year, along with another round of roadside signage.



CIP Success Story Meta Results:

2,060 Accounts Reached

132 Accounts Engaged

140 Post Engagements

CIP 2023 RECIPIENTS



Lily Thai Cuisine Façade Improvement Grant Recipient

On November 3, Lily Thai Cuisine, a beloved culinary gem in Georgetown, was a successful recipient of the Façade Improvement Grant, within the Town's Community Improvement Plan, to undertake a transformative enhancement of their building façade. The grant, totaling \$15,961.25, was allocated towards a series of upgrades aimed at revitalizing the exterior of the building and protecting its heritage assets.

"The process was very smooth, and I enjoyed how everyone was very responsive and professional when asking for help and guidance through all this...we really appreciate being a part of the community and having support from the Town to help maintain our property." **Helen Lu - Owner, Lily Thai Cuisine**



The Roxy Centre Building and Renovation Grant Recipient

On November 27, The Roxy Centre, a versatile and community-centric facility designed to enrich the lives of Acton residents, was the first recipient of the Building and Property Renovation Program under the Town's CIP. The project was completed in fall 2023 and represents a pivotal phase in repurposing the facility, catering to diverse community groups, facility rentals, co-working initiatives, and kitchen rentals. Through the CIP, the Town contributed \$29,057.50 to this project.

"We are so incredibly grateful for the opportunity to receive this grant. Not only does it help us operate but it allows us to continue operating the many different services that we offer at The Roxy Centre... it was a positive experience applying and the staff answered all the questions we needed as we were going through this process. Thank you, Halton Hills!" **Payge Lucas - Director, Acton Roxy**

LOCAL BUSINESS SUPPORTS & INITIATIVES

Business After Hours Event

On September 21, 2023, Invest Halton Hills staff hosted the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours. The Mayor, along with senior staff and elected officials, joined over 30 business owners for an evening of networking and learning about the Economic Development division's key offerings, supports, and services.

Small Business Week 2023

The Town celebrated Small Business Week from October 16-20 with new and returning programming, including spotlighting opportunities to showcase the Halton Hills small business community:

Small Business Week Display Case

Six small businesses who had accessed Business Retention and Expansion programming, including the Digital Transformation Grant and Community Improvement Program, were featured in a display at the Georgetown Branch of Halton Hills Public Library. Businesses had the opportunity to highlight their products and direct passersby to their digital touchpoints to learn more about their business offerings.



Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce: Business Expo

Invest Halton Hills team members participated in the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce Business Expo as a vendor. The team was able to connect with local business owners and budding entrepreneurs to share programs and supports the Economic Development division offers.

Halton Region Networking Series

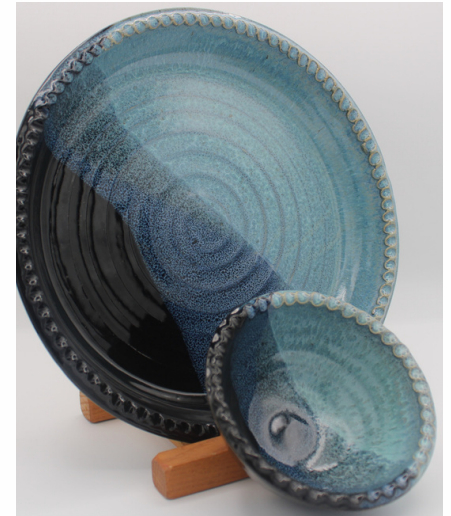
In collaboration with the Halton Small Business Centre, the Invest Halton Hills team hosted a networking event at the Halton Hills Cultural Centre on October 18. As part of this regional networking series, 45 small business owners from across Halton attended to connect, share ideas, and learn from one another. Guest speaker, Dorothy Bossé of Inspired by Choice, delivered a compelling interactive presentation with focus placed on how to battle imposter syndrome as an entrepreneur. Halton Hills has solidified plans with the Region to host another networking event in October 2024 as part of this annual ongoing regional series.



Small Business Week 2023 Con't

Picture Perfect Products

The third annual Picture Perfect: DIY Product Photography event took place during Small Business Week allowing local business owners, including start-ups and home-based businesses, to try their hand at product photography. The initiative was offered at both Halton Hills library locations in Georgetown and Acton, with business owners able to access support from the Town's Digital Main Street Coordinator, private studio space and photography equipment to produce high-quality images to be used online to promote their products. The Halton Region Small Business Centre was also on site facilitate drop-in sessions for any start-up or business expansion inquiries.



Digital Spotlight Series

To further highlight the ongoing success of Business Retention and Expansion programs, five business owners who were recipients of granting programs were spotlighted through a digital video campaign during Small Business Week. In-person interviews were conducted at each business location, along with a content shoot to showcase their brick-and-mortar location and products. The video campaign shared via Instagram Reels proved successful, resulting in **7.9K Views** and **145 Engagements** (likes, shares & saves).

Participating businesses included:

- Dirty Adventures Scuba (Digital Transformation Grant Recipient)
- Pauline Gladstone Artist (Digital Transformation Grant Recipient)
- The Mexican Way (CIP & Digital Transformation Grant Recipient)
- Momentum Financial Services Inc. (Digital Transformation Grant Recipient)
- Trendos Interiors (Digital Transformation Grant Recipient)



DIGITAL MAIN STREET (DMS)

Administered by the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association, and delivered by the Town of Halton Hills, Digital Main Street (DMS) is a provincial program that helps small businesses build their capacity in e-commerce, improve their resiliency and achieve their digital transformation goals. Halton Hills was the successful recipient of a third round of DMS funding in July 2022. The funding allowed the Town to retain a DMS Coordinator through to March 2024 to continue to deliver digital marketing programming, supports, and grants to the small business community in Halton Hills.

Digital Transformation Grant

The Digital Transformation Grant (DTG) program is designed to assist small businesses with adoption of technologies. The program provides training, advisory support and \$2,500 grants to brick-and-mortar small businesses looking to increase their capacity through digital transformation. The metrics below depict Halton Hills' total Digital Transformation Grant program results from 2020 - 2023.



400+
Businesses Served



102
Approved Grants

\$255K
Total Funding to
Halton Hills Small Business

DIGITAL MAIN STREET
CONSULTATION SERVICES TESTIMONIAL



“
When I started speaking to the Town’s Digital Main Street Coordinator, I felt right at ease. The (Digital Transformation Grant) application process can be a little bit cumbersome, and you want to make sure you do all the right things. I felt very comfortable – everything the Digital Main Street Coordinator sent me was super clear and very detailed.”
- Jessica Louca
Owner, Re - Juvenation Cosmedical Injectables

DIGITAL MAIN ST OBIAA Ontario tabia INVEST

DIGITAL MAIN STREET
CONSULTATION SERVICES TESTIMONIAL



“
The DMS Coordinator was the reason behind me applying for the Digital Main Street grant! They were incredibly helpful, knowledgeable and efficient when I needed help or had any questions. The DMS Coordinator helped me connect with the right people when I had questions and was sure I understood everything I needed to complete every step on the way!
- Marissa Baptista
Owner, Melissa Marie Artistry

DIGITAL MAIN ST OBIAA Ontario tabia INVEST

DMS PROGRAMS

Canada Digital Adoption Program (CDAP)

In 2022, as part of the Canada Digital Adoption Program, Digital Main Street expanded their ShopHERE powered by Google program to deliver the Grow Your Business Online grant to small businesses across the country. Successful applicants received a micro-grant of up to \$2,400 to help with the costs related to adopting e-commerce. Metrics below outline program progress from 2022-2023.

6

Grant Recipients

\$14,300

Total Funding to Halton Hills Businesses

ShopHERE Powered by Google Program

The ShopHERE program provides independent small businesses and artists with a quick, easy and no-cost way to get selling online right away. The program helps create and optimize online stores, and offers e-commerce support that allows business owners to create a sales channel outside their home-based or brick-and-mortar business. Metrics below outline program progress from 2020-2023.

215

Explored ShopHere Platform

116

Accessed E-Commerce Support

Free Digital Webinar Series

Five digital marketing webinars were offered in the summer of 2023 from May to August. Webinars covered a variety of topics tailored to business owners at various stages of digital literacy – from start-up ventures looking to establish their digital presence to seasoned business owners exploring new sales channels. During peak times for the Digital Transformation Grant application process, interactive webinars were also offered to outline eligibility for the granting opportunity along with digital marketing support available to Halton Hills small business owners.

GET YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE

DIRECT TO INBOX:
Email & SMS Marketing Explored

#NOFILTER
Instagram explained.

10 MINUTES OR LESS:
SHORT – FORM VIDEO EXPLORER

It's TIME to talk about TikTok

Digital Digest

Published monthly in the Invest Halton Hills e-newsletter, 'Digital Digest' focuses on highlighting digital tips and tools to enhance local small business owners' use of digital technologies. To date, 13 editions of Digital Digest have been shared to over 900 email subscribers monthly, acting as a tool for the Town's Digital Main Street Coordinator to stay connected with the business community.

TOURISM

Visit Halton Hills

Increased tourism offers significant economic benefits. Building upon the growth of the tourism portfolio in 2022, Invest Halton Hills continued to develop strategic partnerships and digital activations in 2023 to promote Halton Hills as a premier day trip destination. The **Visit Halton Hills** brand saw consistent growth and further solidified its position as a competitive tourist destination within the Halton Region, Greater Toronto Area, and beyond.

Tourism Events Attended

Ten local events were attended to provide in-person engagement and promotion of the Visit Halton Hills brand. Branded giveaways were distributed to event attendees in exchange for completing a visitor survey. 388 groups were surveyed with 35% of respondents coming from out-of-town. Visitor data collected was shared with event organizers to provide insights into marketing tactics and demographics for future events. The economic impact of the 10 events was approximately \$1,000,000 spent by visiting attendees.

2023 Events:

- Georgetown Highland Games
- Georgetown Farmers Market
- Rock N'Roll Car Show
- Acton Makers Market
- Head for the Hills: Craft Beer Fest
- Holiday Markets & Light Up the Hills
- RibFest
- Downtown Georgetown Palozza
- Acton Leathertown Festival
- Georgetown Fall Fair



Tourism Signs and Brochures

In August 2023, Halton Hills launched a tourism initiative funded by a \$17,500 Federal Tourism Relief Fund grant, focused on enhancing the visitor experience through digital and physical means. This initiative included installing seven informative signs at key tourist locations and distributing 2,700 updated trifold brochures, with over 100 going to external locations of neighbouring tourism centres, destination Ontario centres, OnRoutes, and the Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Association (RTO).

The signs were designed to blend with the environment and provide directions and information about local attractions, while the brochures offered comprehensive details about Halton Hills' sites and activities – both of which directed viewers to the visithaltonhills.ca website. This approach aimed to support local businesses, distribute tourism materials more effectively throughout target markets, and strengthen Halton Hills' identity as a tourist destination.



Key Results:

- 3,000 Views on dedicated **Instagram Reel** of the tourism signs
- 500 QR code scans to the visithaltonhills.ca website from January 2023–December 2023
 - 31% of scans coming from Toronto
 - 24% of scans coming from Halton Hills
 - 9% of scans coming from Brampton
- 300 Views on the dedicated “Halton Hills Tourism Sign Tour” Google Maps



Artist Tote Bag Project

The Town of Halton Hills received a \$2,500 matching grant from Regional Tourism Organization 3 (RTO3) to produce branded merchandise to promote the Visit Halton Hills brand at tourism-centric events. An artist's call was advertised to local talent to yield submissions for a tote bag design. Artists were asked to submit a piece that they felt depicted the true essence of Halton Hills and what it has to offer. Two local artists were selected: "The Hills are Alive" by Artist Jan Zimmerman and "Adventure Awaits" by Artist Pauline Gladstone. The tote bags acted as an incentive for individuals to participate in visitor surveys and served as a conversation-starter for visitors to engage with staff at events to further outline the various urban and rural areas Halton Hills has to offer.

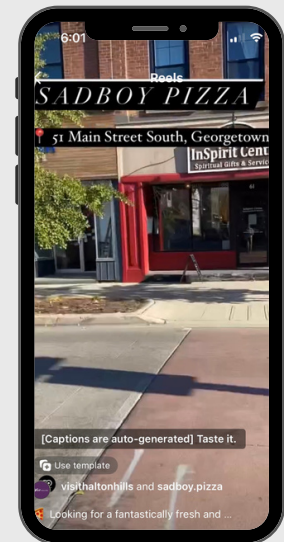


Visit Halton Hills Social Media – Instagram

In 2023, the Visit Halton Hills social media presence experienced significant growth compared to the previous year, resulting in an increase in followers, profile visits, and overall engagement. Notably, there was an increase of **315 Instagram followers**, underscoring the effectiveness of a strategic approach which included frequent posting, utilizing Instagram Reels to showcase business spotlights and itinerary-based activities, along with implementing various follower engagement initiatives such as contests and giveaways.

The Visit Halton Hills engagement rate stands out remarkably when compared to competitors. Out of 1.6K followers, 1.2K are actively engaged – a substantial figure compared to the average engagement of 500 among competitors.

Focusing on follower engagement and creating dynamic content will remain a crucial aspect of the Visit Halton Hills brand strategy moving forward, with many exciting activations and collaborations planned throughout 2024.



Sadboy Pizza x Visit Halton Hills Reels Collaboration

 **14K Views**

 **535 Engagements**
(Likes, Comments, Shares, Saves)

Visit Halton Hills Website

There were over 18,000 new website users in 2023, with top users acquired from the GTA – primarily Toronto, Mississauga and Halton Hills. The website was continuously updated with new content from local businesses and events, with 24 tourism-focused blogs in 2023 generating over 38,000 page views.

Influencer Marketing Campaign

In summer of 2023 the Visit Halton Hills brand expanded into influencer marketing, enlisting the assistance of local influencers Justin Plus Lauren to execute a digital campaign that spanned across multiple digital touchpoints. Justin Plus Lauren’s showcasing of Halton Hills included a 4-day journey through Glen Williams, Acton, Downtown Georgetown, and a Farm Experience. The main objective of the influencer marketing campaign was to increase Halton Hills’ positioning as a premier day trip destination by showcasing easy-to-follow itineraries through both urban and rural areas. The campaign featured 13 tourism-centric businesses and highlighted the best of what the Town has to offer for an “escape from the city”. The campaign proved extremely successful, receiving excellent feedback from featured businesses and confirmed and potential visitors.

Campaign Deliverables

	2 Blogs "25 Best Things to Do in Halton Hills That You'll Love" & "How to Spend the Perfect Day in Glen Williams Ontario"		2 IG Reels	1 YouTube Short
	20 Instagram Stories		2 TikTok Videos	1 YouTube Video
	2 Email Newsletter Features	6 Pinterest Posts	3 Facebook Posts	2 Twitter Posts

Campaign Results

2.3K YouTube Video Views	Instagram	Facebook
2.5K Blog Post Views	18.5K Views	2K Impressions
TikTok	1.1K Engagements (Likes, Comments, Shares & Saves)	1.9K Reach
88K Views	ROI	\$0.06 Cost Per View
2.7 Engagements (Likes, Comments, Shares & Saves)	\$1.70 Cost Per Engagement	

"Before Justin and Lauren's visit this summer, we had been a little low on visitors coming into our studios post-COVID. Restaurants have been thriving, but the small business artist community was still struggling. Sometimes I was going 2-3 days without any visitors. In early August I noticed a shift. I was welcoming sometimes 10, 15, 30 to 50 visitors a day coming into my studio space. I started to ask how folks were hearing about us... their response was TikTok, specifically the post on JustinPlusLauren." **Pauline Gladstone - Owner, Williams Mill Creative Arts Studio**

CONCLUSION

Over the past four years, Halton Hills' approach to economic development and job creation has shifted substantially. With Council's approval of a new five-year Economic Development and Tourism Strategy in 2021, the division's activities are focused, impactful and proactive. Halton Hills offers a sophisticated and comprehensive suite of Economic Development services, programs and supports – and is a prime location for both new and existing businesses to grow and succeed.

Moving forward, the Invest Halton Hills team's approach will continue to involve regular consultation, collaboration and engagement of community partners. By collaborating directly with individual businesses, Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, Georgetown and Acton BIAs, Halton Region and other key stakeholders, the Town will continue to deliver a comprehensive work plan that responds to local business community needs while also attracting new investments that expand high-quality, local job opportunities.

Invest Halton Hills will continue to support existing businesses, showcase the Town as a prime investment destination, and advance strategies and initiatives that will continue to enhance the economic resiliency and diversification of Halton Hills.





TOWN OF HALTON HILLS
BUSINESS, ENVIRONMENT AND
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