



# CITY OF OTTAWA RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (DRAFT)

MARCH 2020



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## Executive Summary

The Rural Economic Development Strategy (REDS) was developed to address the unique characteristics of the city of Ottawa. As a national capital and a globally recognized city, Ottawa is comprised of a large rural constituency and rural economy that distinguishes it from other cities across Canada. Rural Ottawa is home to a large and growing population base, diverse industries and entrepreneurs that contribute to the broader economy of the city and the region. The REDS looks to understand and harness the strength and potential of rural Ottawa to ensure that it remains a vibrant and sustainable element of the overall fabric of the city.

Rural Ottawa is defined as the wards of West Carleton-March (Ward 5), Cumberland (Ward 19), Osgoode (Ward 20), and Rideau-Goulbourn (Ward 21). These four wards make up eighty percent of the city, are home to over 86,000 residents and over 2,000 businesses including a significant number of farming operations. Rural Ottawa residents and businesses share in the overall economic benefits of a large urban centre but also have their own unique requirements and opportunities. In developing the strategy, the City and its stakeholders like Ottawa Tourism, have a better appreciation for the impact and opportunities available in rural Ottawa.

Actions within the REDS align with five key priorities; A Supportive Business Environment; A Vibrant Rural Lifestyle; A Strengthened Rural Tourism Position; Innovation in Agriculture and Agri-food Production; and Advocating for Rural Priorities. Together, these five priorities are designed to help achieve the mission:

*“Rural Ottawa is recognized for the significant economic contribution that it provides to the city. Businesses, entrepreneurs and communities in Ottawa’s rural areas are supported with programming and resources that assist them to thrive and grow sustainably.”*

A supportive business environment refers to the tools and programs that will lead to the establishment and growth of small and medium-sized businesses (SME’s) and support entrepreneurship. This supportive business environment can be achieved by addressing barriers to business growth and investment, building community capacity and funding support for local businesses, marketing and promotion. A vibrant rural lifestyle refers to diverse economic opportunities that support a high quality of life for residents and leverage community strengths. Limited housing options and current infrastructure gaps will continue to pose a challenge to the vibrancy of rural communities and the REDS provides some direction for rural Ottawa to revitalize, diversify its economic base and reinvent themselves for building a vibrant rural lifestyle for residents.

A strengthened rural tourism position refers to the creation of an authentic distinct rural experience that appeals to both visitors and residents. Rural tourism experiences can comprise farm-based activities, outdoor recreational and adventure tourism and involve arts and heritage, eco-tourism, and cultural tourism. A strengthened rural tourism position will contribute to both economic growth and community development. Ottawa Tourism has already made significant progress in rural tourism development and the REDS is designed to further leverage the city’s rural assets and meet a growing demand for a rural experience.

Innovations in agriculture and agri-food production refers to the use of precision agriculture, filling in broadband connectivity gaps and advancing innovation and agri-tech start-ups to increase the impact and viability of the agriculture sector and increase employment in rural Ottawa. The REDS recommends



policies and tools that include the expanded use of Community Improvement Plan policies to enable on-farm diversification and value-added operations and the introduction of local agricultural programming and agri-business supports that give operators in rural Ottawa the tools they need to compete effectively. The final strategic priority is focused on effective advocacy for rural priorities, including the strategic priorities within the REDS. A strong voice for rural Ottawa is considered essential to ensure the effective implementation of the REDS within the city and across other levels of government.



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Aim of the Strategy

One of the distinct features of Ottawa is the largely rural constituency that surrounds the city's urban core. In all, eighty per cent of the city is made up of the rural area<sup>1</sup>, one of the biggest rural areas of any municipality in Canada<sup>2</sup>.

Rural Ottawa contributes to the quality of place and variety of experiences for both residents and out of town visitors through access to attractive landscapes, cultural heritage and recreation opportunities. Beyond its natural and historic assets, rural Ottawa is first and foremost home to approximately 86,000 people<sup>3</sup> and over 2,000 businesses and entrepreneurs, including more than 1,000 farms<sup>4</sup>.

These businesses and entrepreneurs provide the foundation for economic activity across the area, generating more than \$1.96 billion in annual revenue<sup>5</sup>. The contribution of rural Ottawa to the broader regional economy is complex and stretches beyond traditional agricultural operations, aggregates and forestry. Rural Ottawa provides locations for manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, retailing, and creatives industries, among others. This employs people in education, agribusiness, healthcare, tourism, construction and professional service occupations. The economy of rural Ottawa is diverse, and so too are the needs of the residents and businesses that contribute to its vibrancy.

In preparing a Rural Economic Development Strategy (REDS), the City of Ottawa is being proactive in its efforts to understand the unique requirements of its rural business community. While rural businesses and entrepreneurs in Ottawa face many of the same challenges as their urban counterparts, they also face unique barriers to entry and sustainability. Access to broadband, serviced employment land, business support programming, transportation and a ready workforce are some of the obstacles faced by rural businesses. The unique needs of rural businesses require unique solutions and are reflected in Ottawa's REDS, which has been informed through extensive research and consultation with stakeholders.

Ottawa's REDS is designed to go beyond a traditional rural sector-based model grounded in agriculture and begin to embrace policies and strategies based on the rural condition as well as current and emerging market opportunities. Research suggests that the future prosperity of rural regions will be in part driven by innovation and new technologies.

The primary objectives of the strategy are to:

- Define and guide rural economic development efforts of the City in relation to the economic opportunities and challenges;
- Build on the strategic focus of Rural Economic Development as set out in the City's Economic Development Strategy and its 'Four Areas of Focus';

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<sup>1</sup> Rural Residential Land Survey 2015-2016 Update, City of Ottawa, Planning, Infrastructure, and Economic Development (May 2017).

<sup>2</sup> A rural community development strategy for Ottawa's Community Resource Centres.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population.

<sup>4</sup> Includes 1,009 businesses by industry obtained through 2019 InfoCanada Database and 1,045 farms in Ottawa obtained through the 2016 Agricultural Census of Canada.

<sup>5</sup> Refers to the total revenues generated by all industry in the rural wards. Calculated using the business data obtained through InfoCanada. Business in the InfoCanada database report a range of revenues; the mid-point calculation was used to determine the mid-point of revenues and multiple with the number of businesses to provide approximate measures of revenue.



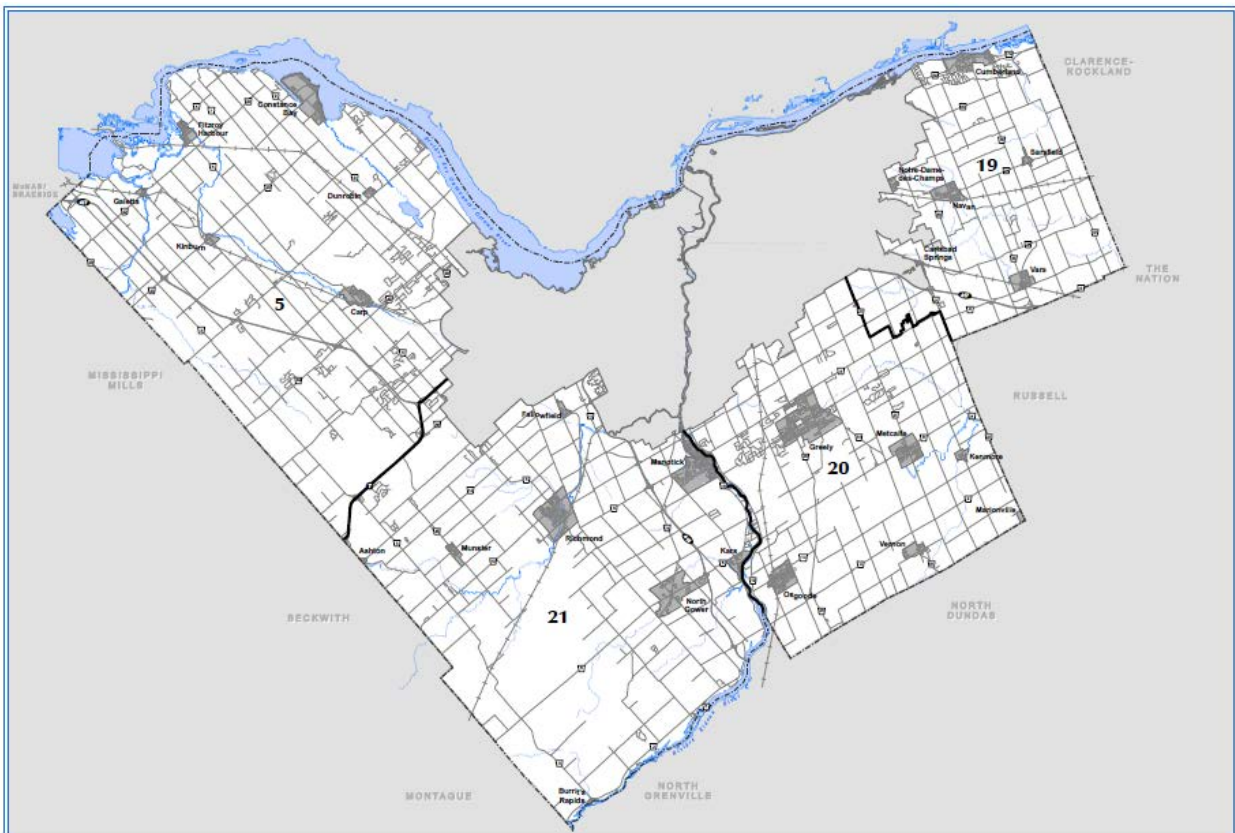
- Complement and inform the initiatives and efforts of the City’s Rural Affairs Office and Ottawa Tourism; and
- Respect the rural character of the area as set out in the City’s Official Plan, Village Secondary Plans and other rural planning documents and inform updates to these documents.

## 1.2. Context

### 1.2.1. Geography

The rural areas covered by the REDS are depicted in Figure 1 and include the wards of West Carleton-March (Ward 5), Cumberland (Ward 19), Osgoode (Ward 20), and Rideau-Goulbourn (Ward 21).

Figure 1: Rural Ottawa by Wards, City of Ottawa



Source: <https://documents.ottawa.ca/sites/documents/files/documents/rural-wards-en.pdf>.

Ward 5, West Carleton-March, is bordered at the southern end by Highway 7 and the Queensway and includes the rural northern portion of the former City of Kanata. Communities in the ward include Carp, Antrim, Fitzroy Harbour, Kinburn, Constance Bay, Dunrobin, Westwood, and Malwood. Ward 19, Cumberland, is situated in the far east end of the city and includes Avalon, Chaperal, the rural areas of the former City of Cumberland and former villages of Sarsfield, Navan and Vars. Ward 20, Osgoode, is in the rural southeast corner of Ottawa. Communities of this ward include Osgoode, Greely, Metcalfe, Kenmore, Vernon and South Gloucester. Rideau-Goulbourn, Ward 21, is in the rural south end of the city and includes rural areas west of the Rideau River and the villages of Manotick, Richmond, Kars, Fallowfield and former Goulbourn Township south-west of Stittsville.





While this strategy seeks to reflect the strengths and opportunities associated specifically with growing the rural economy, it is important to recognize the broader context and linkages to other citywide initiatives. Activities underway across the rest of Eastern Ontario and Canada, as well as the capacity of Economic Development Services to undertake the recommended strategic actions, are all key considerations in the development of the strategy.

### **1.2.2. Economic Development Responsibilities**

The City's Planning, Infrastructure & Economic Development (PIED) Department is responsible for Economic Development and Long-Range Planning (EDLRP) across the city. In partnership with key economic development stakeholders, Economic Development Services, a branch of EDLRP, works to facilitate and promote Ottawa as a premier destination for talent, investment, entrepreneurship, and tourism. Rural Economic Development is one of four areas of focus of the City's economic development efforts, together with Knowledge-Based Businesses, Tourism and Creative Industries, and Urban Services and Mainstreets. Economic Development Services is responsible for the development and delivery of rural economic development efforts.

The Rural Affairs Office, which is also part of PIED and EDLRP, oversees rural issues as well as general programming specific to rural Ottawa. For example, the Rural Affairs Office monitors and supports issues affecting rural Ottawa, ensuring that current and emerging rural issues are a prime focus of City staff and Council.

Ottawa Tourism, Ottawa's non-profit tourism organization, is responsible for Ottawa's destination marketing and development, including that of rural Ottawa. Recognizing the important balance of Ottawa's urban and rural regions as an attractor for visitors, along with growing visitor interest in natural, cultural and historic 'off-the-beaten-path' experiences, Ottawa Tourism has recently identified a series of rural tourism development objectives (in consultation and collaboration with the City and rural tourism stakeholders) to help guide rural tourism growth. These objectives include identifying the needs of Ottawa's rural tourism regions, identifying unique tourism experiences and development opportunities, and taking the lead on tourism enhancement opportunities.

### **1.2.3. Policy Framework**

Ottawa's REDS takes into consideration relevant planning and policy initiatives at the City as well as those undertaken by partners and other levels of government. The REDS will both leverage existing strategies and contribute to planning and policy development that is underway.

#### **Local**

A consideration for the development of the REDS is the role it can play in helping to shape the Official Plan process that is currently underway. The forthcoming Official Plan provides a unique opportunity for rural economic development to feature prominently in the Plan and to reflect the priorities and objectives that will help shape the economic potential of rural Ottawa.

#### **Regional**

While the REDS seeks to reflect the strengths and opportunities associated with growing Ottawa's rural economy, it is important to recognize the wider context and economic development initiatives across Eastern Ontario and at the national level.





For example, it is worth noting that Canada's Federal Government released its first-ever Rural Economic Development Strategy in 2019. This strategy is focused on extending high-speed internet and wireless connectivity, strengthening rural economies to create jobs and opportunities, renewing rural infrastructure, protecting against climate change, preparing rural Canadians for the jobs of tomorrow, ensuring access to affordable housing, and attracting newcomers. The strategy acknowledges the inter-relationship between the country's urban and rural communities and the contribution that rural economies make to tourism, high-tech and the manufacturing sectors. This situation is playing out in Ottawa as well.

A further consideration in the creation of Ottawa's REDS is the Regional Economic Development Strategy prepared by the Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus in 2010 and updated in 2018. Several of the counties impacted by the strategy are contiguous with rural Ottawa and could be considered 'both competitors and natural collaborators' for Ottawa in the attraction and retention of rural business investment. The outcome of the update was confirmation of the priorities in the 2010 strategy, which places emphasis on workforce development and deployment, technology integration and innovation, and integrated and intelligent transportation systems together with the implementation of associated work plans.

Many of the priorities and considerations included in these strategies also emerged in the engagement phase of Ottawa's REDS.

### **1.3. Strategy Development Process**

Economic development strategic planning is the process of defining where a community wants to go and creating a road map to get there. Good economic development planning seeks to enhance competitiveness – that is the ability of a city or region to compete with other cities or regions for investment, talent, and market share.

In the case of Ottawa's REDS, the process has also been framed by the City's four areas of focus for Economic Development. In 2020, the City will be refreshing its Economic Development Strategy to include a geographic overlay in addition to the four areas of focus. The REDS will provide the geographic lens and approach for rural Ottawa.

The figure below describes the strategy development process.



**Figure 2: Strategy Development Process**



The starting point for the REDS was a comprehensive analysis of the local and broader regional and provincial economy. This resulted in a Research Study that assessed the economic performance of rural Ottawa against a range of socio-economic criteria combined with business and industry data. Consideration was also given to reports, studies, and strategies that would have a direct impact on economic development activities and programming in rural Ottawa. This was combined with an inventory of community assets that included education, healthcare, arts and culture, recreation and the natural environment. The results of this research were then used to inform stakeholder discussions about the opportunities and the challenges facing rural Ottawa in an effort to enhance the value proposition for the attraction of business, entrepreneurs and investment as well as the preparation of a SOARR (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results and risks) Assessment.

Given the importance of seeking input and developing an informed strategy, an extensive consultation process was undertaken. One-on-one interviews and small group discussions were conducted that included key community stakeholders, business leaders, economic development partners, elected officials and senior management from the City. These discussions provided further insight into trends related to socio-economic make-up, the City’s land use and policy framework, and current economic development activities. Four community workshops were hosted in June 2019, one in each of the rural wards, and an electronic community survey was also administered. As well, a random sample telephone-based survey was administered with the business community in the four rural wards. Lastly, the City hosted a Rural Day Workshop with Planning and Economic Development staff to discuss the strategic priorities for rural economic development that had emerged from the process and the broad implications this might have on the forthcoming Official Plan review.

Lastly, staff from Economic Development also engaged in consultation with stakeholders in order to hear first-hand some of the emerging themes and issues. Staff spoke with youth from the rural community in order to get their perspective on living and working in rural Ottawa. Staff were able to validate what had been heard through the engagement phase and ensure that the challenges and opportunities that emerged were relevant to Ottawa’s rural youth.

Input has been obtained from more than 285 businesses, community leaders and staff across the city.







## 2. Ottawa's Rural Economy

Ottawa's economy is unique among Canada's major cities. Unlike Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton or Montreal, Ottawa includes a largely rural area with significant agricultural lands, aggregate resources, rural hamlets and villages. Rural Ottawa is unique in nature because of its interconnectedness to the urban core and the ability to access the products, services and the consumer market that a large city provides.

As one of the biggest rural areas of any municipality in Canada<sup>6</sup>, rural Ottawa makes up 80% of the city of Ottawa's land area<sup>7</sup>. With a contribution of over \$1 billion to the city's GDP<sup>8</sup>, the rural economy has seen strong population and employment growth with economic activity derived in large part from agriculture, retail sales, construction, tourism and manufacturing sectors. Rural Ottawa has also become a destination for creative industries with investments in value-added agriculture, food-based tourism, eco-tourism and unique leisure experiences.

Rural Ottawa's wards each have unique characteristics that contribute to the diversity of opportunities that are present in rural Ottawa. Home to the Carp Road Corridor and Carp Village Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), West Carleton-March is characterized by a significant concentration of construction businesses, commercial activity along the Carp Road Corridor and a hub of light industrial activity that runs between Highway 417 and Carp Airport. West Carleton-March also exhibits a significantly higher median household income of \$113,631 as compared to Ottawa's median household income of \$85,981<sup>9</sup>. Strong population growth (10% from 2006 to 2016), high incomes and the light industrial corridor contribute to the Ward's strong growth potential.

Like West Carleton-March, Osgoode also features an exceptionally high median household income at \$115,271<sup>10</sup>. Based on the median household income, households in West Carleton-March generated approximately \$1.03 billion in income in 2015; the highest among any of the rural wards<sup>11</sup>. Osgoode's population growth at 11% (2006 to 2011) and young median age (40.2 years) suggests that this ward has become attractive to new residents including visible minorities which represented 7% of the total population in 2016, the highest of any rural ward.

Cumberland has the lowest unemployment rate among all of Ottawa's four rural wards at just 4.1% during the last Census period which was 3.1% lower than Ottawa's rate and 3.3% lower than the province. Cumberland also had the highest proportion of the labour force employed in public administration (19.8%)<sup>12</sup> among any of the rural wards and boasts 198 businesses<sup>13</sup>. Most recently Cumberland has benefitted from the construction of an Amazon fulfilment centre in Carlsbad Springs. At approximately 1 million square feet, the facility will provide over six hundred permanent jobs with

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<sup>6</sup> A rural community development strategy for Ottawa's Community Resource Centres.

<sup>7</sup> Rural Residential Land Survey 2015-2016 Update, City of Ottawa, Planning, Infrastructure, and Economic Development (May 2017).

<sup>8</sup> City of Ottawa Economy and demographics. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the monetary value of all finished goods and services and can be used to estimate the size of an economy.

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population. For the 2016 Census, the reference period is the calendar year 2015 for all income variables.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*

<sup>11</sup> Calculated using data from Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population. Household income is a factor of net households and median household income.

<sup>12</sup> Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population.

<sup>13</sup> 2019 InfoCanada Database,



over one hundred of those in human resources, information technology, engineering and operations.

Amazon's development has the potential to drive additional investment to rural Ottawa. The presence of Amazon signals that there is capacity and a supportive business climate including suppliers and transportation and logistics operations, all of which could be attractive to other large employers.

Of all the rural wards, Rideau-Goulbourn has the most significant number of businesses. The Ward has 456 businesses which is just under half of all rural businesses (45%)<sup>14</sup>. Rideau-Goulbourn also has the highest number of households with 9,110 with a combined net household income of \$1.02 billion<sup>15</sup>. Home to the Manotick BIA and an active Community Association, the Village of Manotick is a highly engaged community of rural Ottawa. The existing networks within the Ward, particularly in Manotick, provide a valuable resource for developing and delivering economic development programming.

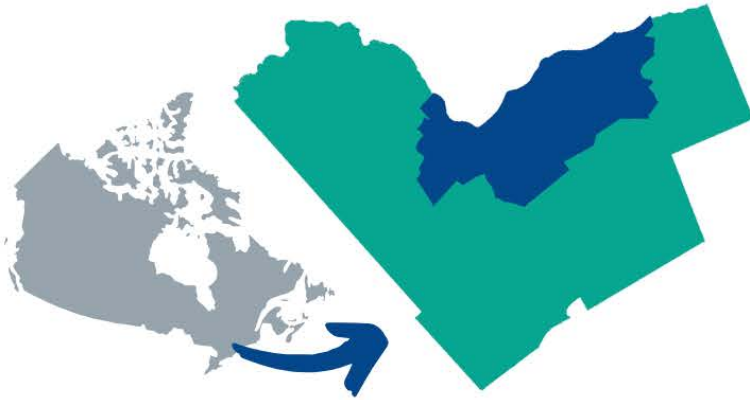
The discussion that follows presents the key findings from the analysis of the rural economy.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Calculated using data from Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population. Household income is a factor of net households and median household income.

# Rural Ottawa Snapshot



 Rural Ottawa

The rural wards make up 80% of Ottawa's land area



Rural Ottawa home to approximately

**86,000**

9% of Ottawa's population



**8%**

net population increase between 2006 and 2016



**\$112,868**

Median household income (2015) - 23% higher than median income in the urban core



**10%**

of Ottawa's immigrant population



**10%**

Of Ottawa's labour force



**69%**

Participation rate (2016)



**\$1 Billion**

Rural Ottawa's contribution to the City total GDP



**\$192 M**

Residential building permits increased by 96% since 2014



**1,000+**

businesses located in Ottawa's rural wards



**1,000+**

Farms located in Ottawa's rural wards



**809 ha**

of designated vacant industrial and business parkland in the rural areas

Concentrations of vacant industrial space are located along Carp Road, along Highway 417 East, and Bank Street South

## Priority sectors



Construction



Agriculture  
Agri-business



Tourism





## 2.1. Key Findings

### Rural Ottawa Makes a Significant Contribution to Ottawa's Economy

Over 2,000 businesses are in rural Ottawa<sup>16</sup>. Most businesses (56%) were identified to be small establishments employing between 1 to 4 employees. Despite their size, local businesses generate approximately \$1.96 billion in revenue<sup>17</sup>. It is estimated that the construction sector, which is one of the largest employment sectors, generates total revenues of \$544 million, accounting for 28% of total rural industry revenue<sup>18</sup>.

Although the agriculture sector accounts for only 3% of the total labour force (1,327 people), the sector generated business revenues of \$224.6 million in 2016<sup>19</sup>. As per the 2016 Census of Agriculture, approximately 60% of all farms in Ottawa are involved in crop production and 40% are geared towards animal farming and production. Opportunities exist to support and grow smart agriculture, agritourism and local food production, processing and distribution. In addition to economic benefits, increasing food production will promote food security. However, the decreasing number of farms, large-scale commodity farming and the urban-rural interface, are a challenge to maintaining and increasing local food production.

Tourism is also a priority sector for rural Ottawa. The total economic impact of tourism in Ottawa is estimated to be \$5.5 billion, with an annual tax impact of approximately \$755 million<sup>20</sup>. Opportunities exist to leverage local assets, along with the city's population growth and visitor appeal, to create and support rural tourism opportunities, specifically as it relates to further developing a rural Ottawa identity, improved market readiness and tourism product.

### Rural Lifestyle Has Strong Appeal for New Residents

The proximity of rural Ottawa to the city's urban core has resulted in a strong rate of population growth in recent years. Between 2006 and 2016, rural population increased by 8%, a net increase of 6,519 people<sup>21</sup>. Rural Ottawa has also attracted a significant number of new Canadians and immigrants. While immigrants generally choose to settle in urban areas as opposed to rural regions, rural Ottawa comprises approximately 10% of Ottawa's immigrant population compared to comprising only 8% in the other rural areas of eastern Ontario<sup>22</sup>. This is likely driven by housing affordability, access to employment opportunities in both the rural and urban areas of the city and existing cultural networks.

Median household incomes across rural Ottawa is significantly higher at \$112,868 than the urban core area at \$85,981<sup>23</sup>. Based on median income, rural households generated nearly \$3.51 billion dollars in

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<sup>16</sup> Includes 1,009 businesses by industry obtained through InfoCanada and 1,045 farms in Ottawa obtained through the 2016 Agricultural Census of Canada.

<sup>17</sup> Refers to the total revenues generated by all industry in the rural wards. Calculated using the business data obtained through InfoCanada. Business in the InfoCanada database report a range of revenues; the mid-point calculation was used to determine the mid-point of revenues and multiple with the number of businesses to provide approximate measures of revenue.

<sup>18</sup> Refers to the total revenues generated by all industry in the rural wards. Calculated using the business data obtained through InfoCanada. Business in the InfoCanada database report a range of revenues; the mid-point calculation was used to determine the mid-point of revenues and multiple with the number of businesses to provide approximate measures of revenue.

<sup>19</sup> Census of Agriculture, 2016, gross farm receipts.

<sup>20</sup> Economic Impact of Tourism in Ottawa.

<sup>21</sup> Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population. For the 2016 Census, the reference period is the calendar year 2015 for all income variables.



income, which is approximately 11% of the city's total value<sup>24</sup>. This suggests that the city's rural areas have populations with significant purchasing power and ability to invest in their local community. Increasing the commercial and retail offerings in rural Ottawa can help to keep some of this purchasing power local. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that 51% of the rural population earns less than \$50,000, which may impact affordability<sup>25</sup>. This compares to 69% of all households in Eastern Ontario.

### **Out Commuting is a Key Characteristic of Rural Workforce**

Even though rural Ottawa comprise a significant proportion of the city's workforce, much of this labour force commutes outside of the rural areas to work. As per the recent census<sup>26</sup>, only 17% of rural residents work in rural Ottawa while 76% travel to other areas of the city or beyond for employment. Only 2% of urban Ottawa residents work in rural Ottawa.

Considering the commuting patterns, employment clusters, and the higher incomes associated with the rural Ottawa, it is likely that the workforce in professional occupations is commuting out of the rural areas to work. The large proportion of out-commuting workers, low unemployment rate and transportation gaps pose a significant challenge to businesses and workers.

### **Broadband, Transit and Infrastructure Gaps Limit Growth**

The rural lifestyle and proximity to the urban core make rural Ottawa attractive to residents and business. However, rural developments have relatively low population density and are further away from the urbanised area. Therefore, the provision of various services has higher costs. For example, traditional transit service cannot be efficiently provided to areas where demand is relatively low, and the travel distances are relatively long. As a result, there is less public transportation infrastructure, broadband infrastructure, and water and wastewater services. This in turn can impact the ability of rural businesses to attract a workforce, expand their operations or implement technology-based business solutions, limiting potential economic growth.

Specific to broadband, many of the rural areas lack access to effective and reliable broadband and cellular service. This is true for much of rural Canada, and as a result, the federal government has made access to broadband internet for all Canadians a goal for 2030 and acknowledged it as an essential service. The Eastern Ontario Regional Networks has also made progress in extending broadband access through a combination of fibre and satellite projects across Eastern Ontario, but those initiatives have mostly excluded Ottawa.

### **Limited Awareness of Business Support Programming**

Despite a high level of overall satisfaction with rural Ottawa as a place to own and operate a business, many of the businesses surveyed for the REDS lack awareness of the grants and support programs available to them.

Ottawa's current business support programming is delivered through a variety of providers and is focused on small and medium business growth and entrepreneurship. However, due to Ottawa's large geographic area and the challenges and costs associated with providing widespread programming, most economic development programming is concentrated outside rural areas, resulting in limited business

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<sup>24</sup> Calculated using data from Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population. Household income is a factor of net households and median household income.

<sup>25</sup> Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population. For the 2016 Census, the reference period is the calendar year 2015 for all income variables

<sup>26</sup> City of Ottawa, 2016 based on Statistics Canada Data



support. The location of services and workshops also affects the types of programming offered. Geographically removed from needs of agri-business operations and surrounded by high-tech and adaptive technology firms, programming tends to focus more on the former. This suggests a service void for those businesses operating in rural Ottawa.

### **Lack of Housing Options to Accommodate Growth of Population**

Rural Ottawa is largely characterized by single-family, detached homes. Some higher density housing options exist, but these are available in only a few of the larger villages. Without diversification of housing options and densification of Ottawa's rural villages, the ability to attract and sustain a diverse population and workforce is compromised. With limited housing options for the aging demographic, aging in place will also be increasingly difficult for rural residents should they choose to downsize from their current homes. New Canadians, immigrants and younger workers may also experience challenges with living in rural communities where they may be working given the higher cost of housing and the lack of available rental options. Any efforts to increase the variety of housing options in rural Ottawa should take into consideration the current limitations with water and wastewater servicing. The lack of servicing in most of rural Ottawa's villages means that this may continue to be a major constraint to densification and diversification of the housing stock.

### **Investment Readiness Behind Surrounding Rural Communities**

Rural Ottawa has lower industrial, commercial and residential property tax rates when compared to the urban core. Stakeholders have suggested that current development charges are too high for a largely un-serviced rural location which has implications for future investment and re-development opportunities. Currently, rural Ottawa provides approximately 50% (809.2 net hectares) of the total vacant industrial and business parkland in the city<sup>27</sup>. In large part, these lands primarily serve industries that do not require high water consumption including warehousing, construction and storage and certain types of manufacturing. Despite the existing supply of vacant industrial lands, there are concerns with the quality of these lands and their developability. Of the 809 net hectares in rural areas, 777 of those hectares were privately held, and only 32.2 hectares were under public ownership<sup>28</sup>. Current municipally owned and serviced industrial and business park lands in nearby Russell and Mississippi Mills may put rural Ottawa at a disadvantage to attract future investment.

Given the future demand for employment land, ensuring the competitiveness of these lands is important, including where full servicing of lands may be appropriate and financially feasible. While the *2019 City of Ottawa, Building Permits Data*, suggests that the value of non-residential building permits in rural Ottawa increased from \$31 million in 2014 to \$122 million in 2018 this increase of approximately 70% can be attributed in part to the location of Amazon's new fulfilment centre and not to any significant industrial development trend across the rural areas.

### **Flexible Policies Required to Support Small Scale and Innovative Agriculture Operations**

The development of precision agriculture and the agri-tech sector is a key area of focus for the City. The sector can leverage an existing educated workforce, access to government researchers and regulators and a strong knowledge-based economy and technology ecosystem that exists in Ottawa. The sector can also provide opportunities to link the urban and rural economy with knowledge sharing, information and innovation flow, particularly considering the challenges associated with increasing food production

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<sup>27</sup> City of Ottawa Vacant Industrial and Business Park Inventory, August 2018

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.





and climate change.

As more emphasis is placed on knowing where food comes from, the proximity of rural businesses, particularly farms and food producers to the city's urban population results in a strong farm to fork value chain. While commodity farming dominates, residents in Ottawa have access to local food products ranging from common regional meats and produce to newer varieties of fruits, vegetables and grains. It has been suggested that the current policy framework discourages investment on many small agricultural parcels by deeming them unviable, which in turn fosters farm consolidation or re-designation. Increasing flexibility for agriculture in the General Rural designation may alleviate some of these challenges and protect the long-term viability of agriculture.





## 3. Rural Value Proposition

This section of the strategy focuses on articulating a value proposition that is unique and compelling for rural Ottawa and enhances the area's competitive advantage within Ottawa. A well-defined rural value proposition will result in a focused set of recommendations that form the basis for future economic development activities.

The rural value proposition is framed by a Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks and Results (SOARR) assessment. The assessment outlines the conditions that affect the economic and broader community development potential of rural Ottawa.

### 3.1. SOARR Assessment

The SOARR assessment is informed by an analysis of the policy environment, the performance of the local economy and the input derived from the consultation process.

The key themes that emerged from the SOARR assessment are presented below.

#### Strengths

**S** **STRENGTHS**  
What can we build on?

- What are we doing well?
- What key achievements are we most proud of?
- What positive aspects have individuals and enterprises commented on?

The rapid growth of Ottawa is seen as a strength for rural Ottawa; as per the 2016 census, the population in the wards increased by 8% from 2006 to 2016. Household income of residents has also increased, leading to greater purchasing power and potential for reinvestment in the community. In addition, the area's natural assets (rural land with mixed forest, agriculture, waterways, lakes and rivers, and wildlife) and arts and cultural assets (e.g. Diefenbunker Museum) significantly raise the quality of place experience for residents and visitors. Local pride and the high-level of volunteerism are also seen as attributes of a strong community.

Proximity to the urban core and the ability to leverage services, post-secondary education, an international airport, a strong technology sector and large public sector are positive factors for the long-term sustainability of rural Ottawa. In addition, the network of 400 series highways increases access to regional and international markets.

Rural Ottawa has demonstrated strengths in agriculture, agri-tourism, professional, scientific and the emerging creative industries. Stakeholders point to an emerging rural innovation ecosystem, especially in the agriculture sector. The presence of world-class educational institutions and nationally designated research land can ensure access to incubation and commercialization opportunities and targeted response to industry needs.



## Opportunities



### OPPORTUNITIES

What are our best possible future opportunities?

- What changes in demand do we expect to see in the future?
- What external forces or trends may positively affect development?
- What are the key areas of untapped potential?
- What weaknesses or threats can be converted into SMART improvements?

Rural Ottawa provides opportunities for the development of vibrant commercial and residential hubs. The encouragement of mixed-use development and a wider variety of housing options can help create community hubs that retain and grow the population and business base and revitalize the area's main streets. The introduction of shared workspace opportunities could help to support the attraction and retention of small business operations and entrepreneurs.

Improving access to relevant business support programming is a key consideration for rural Ottawa. Satellite offices in the rural nodes could be established to serve local businesses better and understand where barriers and bottlenecks exist. Improved tools and marketing and communication efforts will increase the awareness and uptake of existing and future economic development programming.

Providing the necessary mediums to attract and support business investment in rural Ottawa includes effective promotion of local businesses, showcasing available land and buildings, improving broadband and cellular service and addressing succession planning for existing business particularly in the agriculture sector.

Improved understanding of existing value chains is also required for future investment attraction efforts. This is particularly true for the agriculture sector but also to attract complementary manufacturing and foster the growth of creative industries and technology-based businesses. Value-added agriculture and agri-business represent a tremendous investment opportunity for rural Ottawa. Growth in these sectors can be encouraged by programming and infrastructure support that can maximise agri-food and agri-tourism initiatives including wineries, brewery and cider making, precision agriculture and niche and speciality crop development.

The integration of agritourism and rural cultural tourism with the city's more urban experiences represents a unique tourism opportunity for Ottawa. Support for rural tourism product development for visitors will make Ottawa distinctive among its peer communities.

## Aspirations



### ASPIRATIONS

What do we care deeply about achieving?

- What are we deeply passionate about?
- As a region, what difference do we hope to make (e.g. to residents, for institutions, to businesses)?
- What does our preferred future look like?

A key aspiration for rural Ottawa is the creation of a strong and diverse business community. Support for rural businesses and entrepreneurs and targeted investment attraction are key elements for ensuring a vibrant and sustainable rural economy. Investment readiness is a related aspiration for rural Ottawa to ensure a level of competitiveness at the local and regional level.





Opportunities exist to provide for a more diverse range of housing options, including housing that will appeal to a younger cohort, newcomers, single households and seniors who want to age in place. This, in turn, will encourage residents to remain in or retire to rural Ottawa.

Rural Ottawa's residents recognize the need to focus on growth that goes beyond increasing the population. They see themselves as part of a connected and vibrant region where the diversity is recognized and celebrated. This connectivity between the city's urban and rural wards can be in terms of a shared quality of life experience, or through improved accessibility to the city's employment areas and urban centres.

## Risks

	<b>RISKS</b> How will we recognize and mitigate or eliminate potential risks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What challenges do we need to be aware of?</li><li>• What policy shifts could impact our aspirations?</li><li>• What contingencies should we have in place to address threats or unexpected consequences?</li></ul>
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Lack of diversity of housing is a barrier to work for newcomers that want to live and work in a rural area. In addition, gaps in aging in place infrastructure may impact population growth.

The lack of adequate broadband service and cellular service also acts as a constraint in attracting and retaining businesses to rural Ottawa, particularly those with high data requirements. With adequate broadband capabilities, rural Ottawa can grow technology-based industries which often provide more jobs with higher skill and education requirements. Another risk to the sustainability of the rural economy is limited transit. Local businesses have suggested they are challenged in attracting workers to their operations, particularly when these workers do not live in proximity to where they work. Residents also suggested that the lack of transit also means they are unable to access rural businesses.

It should also be noted that increasing services can potentially result in increased property tax, with the potential to discourage investment.

Limited high-quality shovel ready employment land has a direct impact on rural Ottawa's ability to attract future business investment. Many neighbouring municipalities have serviced industrial land and business parks which provides them with a competitive advantage in the attraction of businesses that require access to 400 series highways.

Elements of the agriculture sector are also seen to be at risk, particularly smaller innovative and value-added agriculture businesses. Growth pressures that favour urban boundary expansions and the consolidation of small farms into larger operations make the development of market farming and niche crop development difficult.



## Results

	<b>RESULTS</b> How will we know we are succeeding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the key goals we would like to accomplish in order to achieve these results?</li><li>• What meaningful measures will indicate that we are on track toward achieving our goals?</li><li>• What resources are needed to implement our most vital projects and initiatives?</li></ul>
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### **Develop a Supportive Business Environment**

A supportive business environment in the rural context includes enhanced opportunities for new and existing businesses and community-based initiatives to start, grow and expand. Increased uptake (requested funds) and the economic impact of the Rural Affairs Partnership Program on rural communities can be tracked and measured on an annual basis. The development of streamlined permitting and licensing processes and tracking timelines (number of days) from initiation through completion can demonstrate successful implementation and discrepancies with processes within the urban core.

Business support also consists of tools, workshops and the availability of financing for business development and growth. In the absence of formal CFDC programming, the number of workshops and the number of attendees can help demonstrate demand for the services in ongoing discussions with the federal government.

### **Increased Investment in Rural Ottawa**

Investments in rural employment lands, the city's villages and hamlets and infrastructure are all enablers of economic growth and opportunity for residents and businesses. Development and building permits on rural employment lands and within rural villages can be used to track and report on increased investment activity. The implementation of a rural-focused CIP would provide a number of its own key performance metrics including the number of applicants on a year over year basis and the total grant portion or tax incentive as a proportion of total project value of approved CIP projects and investment in rural Ottawa.

### **Agriculture is an increasingly valued and protected component of the rural economy**

The role of agriculture in the economy of rural Ottawa and the city as a whole is recognized both within the urban core and across the region. The value of on-farm receipts is a strong indicator of the overall contribution of the sector. While the number of farms and on-farm employment is subject to consolidation and automation, the value of goods grown is a strong ongoing metric. With aspirations to become a leader in smart agricultural practices and precision agriculture, the number of smart agriculture and precision agriculture conferences held within Ottawa as well as adoption rates by new and existing agriculture operations can demonstrate progress over time.

The development of a rural-focused CIP would presumably have agricultural/value-added agriculture components and tracking the number of applications as well as employment growth from value-added activities over time as well as the value of any incentive compared to overall project value and agricultural investment.



## 3.2. Key Considerations

Based on the findings from research and engagement and informed by results of the SOARR Assessment, several key considerations for the REDS emerge. These considerations are designed to improve the competitiveness of rural economy and further inform the development of the REDS.

### 3.2.1. Increase Rural Economic Development Programming

Rural Ontario municipalities and rural municipalities bordering Ottawa have access to the range of programming and financial support offered by Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs). Services provided by CFDCs include confidential business counselling, assistance in developing business plans, assistance with cash flow, inventory management and other business processes. These services are offered free of charge through funding provided by the Government of Canada's Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario. CFDCs also offer loan services to businesses and entrepreneurs who are not able to access funding through traditional lenders.

CFDCs often administer funding programs delivered through other levels of government to businesses and community organizations. For example, through the Rural Innovation Initiative, Eastern Ontario provided non-repayable funding of up to \$100,000 to SMEs in Lanark County and North Leeds to expand and adopt business innovations. The funding was made available through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario. The inability to access these funding opportunities puts businesses in rural Ottawa at a distinct disadvantage.

### 3.2.2. Rural Revitalization

Rural Ottawa experiences many of the same challenges found in other rural areas of the province. With private sector investment focussed on urban and suburban areas, the once vibrant main streets are seeing less commercial and residential activity and more vacant storefronts. Rural revitalization is thus an important consideration for rural Ottawa be productive and attractive places to live and work.

An innovative Rural Community Improvement Plan (CIP) could central to rural revitalization efforts as it would help to stimulate investment activity. CIPs are valuable planning tools that enable investments and improvements to a community's physical/built environment. More recently, CIPs have incorporated elements that support main street revitalization, residential development and the growth and diversification of agri-businesses and tourism product. For example, the Invest Well CIP initiated by the County of Wellington has been specifically designed to stimulate the development of new commercial and diverse housing investments in rural villages.

### 3.2.3. Enabling Innovations and Incubations in Agriculture

Enabling innovations and incubations in agriculture entail providing support for agricultural SME's firms to adopt precision agriculture principles. Precision agriculture will allow agricultural SME's to maintain economic viability and stay competitive in their crop and livestock production. Opportunities exist to capitalise on initiatives provided by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and continued partnerships with Farmers Market across Ottawa, Just Food, and Ottawa Research and Development Centre to support local farmers and enable business growth.

Another important consideration is the need to combat challenges related to food insecurity and climate change. Through potential partnerships with Just Food and other organizations as well as leveraging



Ottawa's smart city aspirations, opportunities exist for agricultural SME's to investigate the adoption of innovative opportunities such as the Guelph & Wellington County, Ontario - Our Food Future initiative.

Despite the tremendous opportunity, enabling innovations and incubations in agriculture will require access to technology and broadband connectivity to accommodate the vast amounts of data the sector requires. In addition, as identified in the 2019 Rural Ottawa Official Plan Discussion Paper, edge planning principles could be adopted, to enable the protection of agricultural lands that border the urban areas and identify the best use of lands in the fringe region.

### **3.2.4. Support for Rural Tourism Development**

Rural Ottawa has a wide range of assets that include the Diefenbunker Museum, Rideau Carleton Raceway Casino (future home of Hard Rock Ottawa), Beckett Creek Bird Sanctuary, Osgoode Township Historical Society, Pinhey's Point Historic Site and many others. These community assets could be promoted both as a stand-alone attraction but also as a mix of attractions that appeal to a broad range of markets. Agri150 provided a unique opportunity to showcase the range of assets across rural Ottawa.

Visitors are increasingly seeking authentic tourism experiences. Destination marketing is critical in this regard, as it will attract the desired target market segments. These could include the promotion of core community assets, unique rural markets, restaurants, entertainment and destination retail. There is also a need for improved pedestrian and cycle-way linkages, signage and visitor-friendly navigation options, partnerships with key regional attractions as well as transportation that connects the village main streets to the urban core.

Ottawa Tourism supports rural tourism growth through various marketing and development initiatives such as the Destination Development Fund. In addition, niche rural tourism opportunities have been identified, including festivals and events, cycling, culinary and culture, heritage & Indigenous tourism. Advocacy and policy development to address challenges such as the lack of air and on-ground transportation to rural areas and labour shortages in the tourism sector more generally are important to realising rural Ottawa's tourism potential. Continued partnerships with Ottawa Tourism, will help drive increased tourist visits and spending within rural Ottawa.

### **3.2.5. Advocating for Rural Businesses**

While rural Ottawa provides a high quality of life and an attractive value proposition with an educated and affluent population and industries providing a significant financial contribution to the city's economy, there are limitations in terms of their access to businesses services, infrastructure, transportation and workforce. These limitations also include access to many of the strategic funding programs provided by other levels of government for rural innovation, rural youth employment and other rural challenges that their neighbouring communities and rural municipalities across Ontario can utilize. It is unrealistic to think that the City of Ottawa could replicate these services and funding programs. As a result, the disadvantages faced by the rural local businesses will require a significant level of advocacy on the part of the City of Ottawa to ensure a more level playing field and access to a broader range of services and programs that support the growth of its rural economy.







## 4. Rural Economic Development Action Plan

### 4.1. Economic Vision

*Rural Ottawa is recognized for the significant economic contribution that it provides to the city. Businesses, entrepreneurs and communities in Ottawa's rural areas are supported with programming and resources that assist them to thrive and grow sustainably.*

The vision statement is reflected throughout the economic development strategy and informs the priorities for action and action planning.

### 4.2. Strategic Priorities and Actions

The REDS is underpinned by five strategic priorities, intended to anchor and qualify all strategic initiatives and ensuing actions on the part of the City over the next five years and beyond. The priorities support the City of Ottawa's overarching vision for its rural areas as well as the desired outcomes of the strategic planning process.

It should be noted that the list of actions is a prioritized starting point based on input and research at a point in time. It is by no means an exhaustive or comprehensive list of all the potential actions for the City of Ottawa. New actions will emerge and will need to be assessed against the priorities of the REDS while some actions may be removed should they be deemed unfeasible upon a thorough examination.

By implementing the priorities and actions, and achieving this REDS vision, Ottawa will be well-positioned to be a national leader in rural economic development, in particular, a leader in the urban/suburban/rural economic dynamic.

**Actions** – The direction the City, its partners, and its stakeholders will undertake to address the essential issues or opportunities that should be addressed over the length of the REDS.

**Timing** – The timeframe for implementing the Action Plan. Priority timings are either Immediate (I = 0-18 months), short-term (S = 2-3 years), or long-term (L = 5 years or beyond).

**Lead and Partners** – The identification of select leads and internal/external partners that can support economic development objectives.

**Acronyms** – the following table lists the acronyms used in the City of Ottawa Rural Economic Development Strategy and their respective descriptions.



Acronyms	Description
BIAs	Business Improvement Areas
CSS	Community and Social Services
DR	Development Review
ED	Economic Development
ICS	Innovative Client Services
IO	Invest Ottawa
IS	Infrastructure Services
OFA	Ontario Federation of Agriculture
OLIP	Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership
OT	Ottawa Tourism
PIED	Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development
PP	Policy Planning
PSIs	Post Secondary Institutions
RAO	Rural Affairs Office
RSIFEO	Réseau de Soutien à l'immigration francophone de l'Est de l'Ontario
TP	Transportation Planning
ZI	Zoning & Interpretation



## Strategic Priority 1: A Supportive Business Environment

### Goal

The goal of this strategic priority is to create a supportive business environment to ensure continued economic growth and sustainability of the rural economy. A supportive business environment is one that enhances the creation, establishment and growth of small and medium-sized businesses (SME's) and supports entrepreneurship. This can be done by addressing barriers to business growth and investment, building community capacity and funding support for local businesses and marketing and promotion efforts for business development.

### Rationale

With a key focus area of Rural Economic Development, the City's economic development efforts identified that supporting and growing rural business opportunities is important to the overall growth of Ottawa.

While the City has developed targeted initiatives to support rural businesses and stakeholders, engagement and input point to rural businesses having limited knowledge of the type of services that are available to them and how to access those services. A business survey conducted as part of this strategy identified that over 64% of rural businesses are not familiar with the City of Ottawa's programs and grants. Given these findings, creating a supportive business environment must take into effect the uniqueness of the rural wards and taps into local talent and resources.

#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Demonstrate a commitment to growing the city's rural business community</b>					
1.1.1	Enhance and amend the Rural Association Partnership Program (RAPP) grant to deliver increased economic development outcomes for rural communities.	PIED – ED	RAO	I		
1.1.2	Explore the potential for a Development Permit System to improve efficiencies in the development process (e.g. appropriate development charges, fees and timelines related to application). Pilot the implementation in rural Ottawa to refine it.	PIED	DR PP			L
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Enhance the growth potential of small and medium-sized rural businesses and entrepreneurs</b>					
1.2.1	Develop a rural business toolkit including information on grants, support programs, economic data,	PIED - ED	RAO	I		





#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
	marketing materials, permitting process, and business licensing.					
1.2.2	Develop a rural business workshop series in satellite locations across rural Ottawa to promote the toolkit (above) and increase awareness of services and programming available to small and medium-sized rural businesses.	PIED - ED	RAO	I		
1.2.3	Continue discussions with the CFDC network as to the feasibility of a partnership to deliver business services and financial support to rural businesses.	PIED - ED		I	S	
1.2.4	Introduce policies that would broaden the scope of what could be considered home-based businesses.	PIED-PP	RAO ZI		S	
1.2.5	Explore possibilities for permitting agriculture uses on small rural lots to support more small-scale farms and market gardens.	PIED - PP	ED ZI		S	
1.2.6	Explore the potential for pop-up retail/restaurants in the rural villages.	PIED - ED	BIAs ZI		S	
1.2.7	Explore other innovative technology or smart city technology for rural areas.	PIED - ED			S	
1.2.8	Explore the development of a rural business retention and expansion program.	PIED- ED			S	L
1.2.9	Explore the need for an incubator and/or co-working space to support the growth of rural businesses.	PIED - ED			S	L
<b>1.3</b>	<b>Support and advance the talent needs of rural businesses</b>					
1.3.1	Pilot a Rural Youth Employment & Resource Fair to address barriers to employment opportunities; and increase access of rural youth to employment, training, and career resources and services.	CSSD	PIED - ED	I		
1.3.2	Work with post-secondary institutions and the business community to	PIED - ED	PSIs BIAS		S	



#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
	encourage work placements for students in rural Ottawa.					
<b>1.4</b>	<b>Encourage investment in rural economy</b>					
1.4.1	Identify opportunities for business investment in rural Ottawa and develop marketing materials and programmes to encourage investment.	PIED - ED		I		
1.4.2	Conduct an Asset Mapping project to provide market intelligence to guide investment, identify trends and emerging opportunities, retain and expand existing markets, create more business to business connections, as well as support other municipal priorities such as planning, food charter initiatives, and emergency response measures. Initial efforts will be with Agri-food and manufacturing in rural Ottawa.	PIED - RAO		I		
1.4.3	Explore the use of a rural-focused CIP to make use of grants and tax incentives that will jumpstart business development and investment.	PIED - ED	Rural BIAs		S	
<b>1.5</b>	<b>Leverage other municipalities best practices</b>					
1.5.1	Review rural economic development best practices regularly to inform, add and update the action plan in order to stay competitive.	PIED - ED		I	S	L

## Strategic Priority 2: A Vibrant Rural Lifestyle

### Goal

A vibrant rural lifestyle is one that positions rural Ottawa with diverse economic opportunities and high quality of life to residents and improves its ability to respond to economic and social challenges proactively. Rural Ottawa offers significant strengths including natural features (parks, trails, rivers, lakes, conservation areas and open green spaces), agricultural land and rich farmlands, rural villages and main streets and cultural, heritage and recreational amenities (museums and performing arts companies). Capitalizing on these strengths is important to create and sustain a vibrant rural lifestyle and ensure continued contribution to the larger economy. In addition, opportunities exist to leverage



the immigrant population to ensure long-term viability.

## Rationale

A vibrant rural lifestyle was identified as a strategic priority for rural Ottawa because of its ability to leverage community strengths to contribute to socio-economic growth. Research undertaken as part of this strategy identified that despite its many strengths, rural Ottawa faces challenges. Rural Ottawa is largely composed of single, detached homes as well as limited care/retirement options for an aging demographic. This affects the ability of communities to attract immigrants and younger workers and allow for aging in place. In addition, rural businesses indicate a lack of talent capable of participating in the labour force.

Infrastructure gaps including transit, water and waste management services and broadband are also identified. The evolving nature of the agricultural sector, the rise of large farming corporations and the added stressors of climate change, have affected the future of the sector. Given these challenges, it is important that rural Ottawa continues to revitalize, diversify its economic base, and enhance quality of life, for a continued vibrant rural lifestyle for residents.

#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Support a diversity of housing options</b>					
2.1.1	Continue to support seniors in rural areas under the Ontario Renovates Program, which provides financial assistance to eligible low-income senior homeowners to age in place.	CSS		I	S	L
2.1.2	Provide for more diverse housing options in serviced villages or where servicing regulations permit flexibility.	PIED - PP	PIED - ED PIED - IS		S	
2.1.3	Explore the development of an Age-In-Place Master Plan ( <a href="#">i.e. McFarlane Master Plan, Prince Edward County</a> ) and the subsequent attraction of seniors housing and lifestyle development opportunities.	PIED				L
2.1.4	Encourage the development of new seniors rental housing in Villages as defined in the OP. This action aligns with the Older Adult Plan's goal of increasing the number of affordable rental housing units for seniors.	CSS	PIED - PP PIED - ZI			L



#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Invest in infrastructure that supports targeted growth in rural villages</b>					
2.2.1	Conduct a study of the broadband connectivity landscape in Ottawa and define potential approaches to address any identified inequities, including between rural and urban residents.	ICS	PIED - ED	I		
2.2.2	Consider servicing capacity and municipal infrastructure, as well as economic development impacts, for any new/revised Secondary Plans for Villages.	PIED - PP	PIED - ED		S	L
2.2.3	Investigate the feasibility of on-demand transportation and/or ride-sharing options for tourism and employment-related purposes.	PIED - ED	BIAs OT		S	
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Increase awareness of rural lifestyle and economic opportunities</b>					
2.3.1	Engage in rural storytelling through social media and other channels, showcasing and profiling successful rural businesses and entrepreneurs.	PIED - ED	RAO	I		
2.3.2	Organise familiarization tours with immigrant settlement agencies.	PIED - ED	CSS BIAS OLIP RSIFEO	I		
2.3.3	Explore with existing funded agencies how to connect immigrants interested in farming to local farmers.	PIED - ED	RAO Just Food OLIP RSIFEO		S	
<b>2.4</b>	<b>Enhance Rural Villages and Residential Areas</b>					
2.4.1	Improve rural and village design, which addresses the physical fabric of rural communities and preserves rural character.	PIED-PP			S	
2.4.2	Introduce policies that would allow for a broad range of permitted uses to support complete communities with services to meet the needs of residents and tourists.	PIED-PP			S	





## Strategic Priority 3: A Strengthened Rural Tourism Position

### Goal

The goal of this priority is to enhance and create a distinct rural experience that appeals to both visitors and residents. A strengthened rural tourism position is one that builds on existing community assets, experiences and events. It can result in increased community participation, empowerment and economic benefits that stay within the community.

For rural Ottawa, tourism experiences encompass a wide range of activities, including natural attractions and cultural and heritage amenities and facilities. It can comprise farm-based activities (farm stays, artisan food, craft brewery and wineries, organic produce and other organic products), outdoor recreational and adventure tourism (camping, hiking, fishing, hunting) and involve themes of arts and heritage, eco-tourism, and cultural tourism. Overall, it can be defined as the “country experience”, that takes place in agricultural or non-urban areas.

Strengthening Ottawa’s rural tourism position will result in increased overnight stays and allow visitors to explore varied experiences continually. In addition, it is important to allow for increased re-visitation of certain experiences or destinations that rural Ottawa provides. The community image or identity is critical in this regard, as are authentic experiences.

### Rationale

While the City of Ottawa’s urban core easily resonates as being the capital city of Canada with visitors, the rural wards are not as well recognized. Gaps exist in managing and promoting the tourism products and experiences that rural Ottawa provides. Stakeholder input has suggested that there is room for improvement in rural tourism advocacy and promotion, as this is currently said to be dominated in large part downtown. Moreover, a business survey conducted as part of this strategy identified that 75% of rural businesses are not familiar with Ottawa Tourism’s Destination Development Fund. Respondents, however, indicate that rural Ottawa presents a huge potential for development by leveraging the rural character, access to farmland and the agriculture industry.

A strengthened rural tourism position is thus important as it will contribute to both economic growth and community development. Growing the rural tourism sector will enhance the quality of life consideration in rural Ottawa and improve the wards’ ability to attract new talent and businesses. This positioning is also in alignment with Ottawa Tourism’s rural tourism development objectives, which include identifying the needs of Ottawa’s rural tourism regions; identifying unique tourism experiences and development opportunities that leverage Ottawa’s rural assets and meet visitor needs and taking the lead on tourism enhancement opportunities.

#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Build awareness of Ottawa’s rural tourism sector</b>					
3.1.1	Work with the villages to help them define their rural tourism value	PIED - ED	BIAs OT	I		



#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
	proposition and tourism offerings (e.g. “A day in Carp” itinerary).					
3.1.2	Deliver presentations to rural stakeholders on the City’s collaboration with Ottawa Tourism that defines Ottawa’s Place DNA™ and provide the necessary tools and information to leverage and promote Ottawa’s brand.	PIED - ED	BIAs	I		
3.1.3	Explore opportunities to showcase rural Ottawa tourism experiences to the city’s accommodation providers and to tour operators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare packages of offerings that could appeal to conference delegates;</li> <li>Identify rural ambassadors that communicate an authentic representation of the offering to tourists.</li> </ul>	OT	PIED - ED BIAs RAO	I		
3.1.4	Showcase the unique tourist offering that Ottawa presents in having both rural and urban features that are complementary (e.g. rural/urban cycling experiences, half-day and full-day itineraries, etc.).	OT	PIED - ED		S	
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Expand and improve rural tourism products and experiences</b>					
3.2.1	Continue to support cycle route expansion and highlight opportunities to link the cycling market to with accommodations, restaurants, etc.	PIED TP	PIED - ED RAO	I		
3.2.2	Engage with eligible rural tourism entrepreneurs through Ottawa Tourism’s Destination Development Fund process.	OT		I		
3.2.3	Encourage Indigenous experience offerings in rural Ottawa.	OT	PIED - ED	I		



#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
3.2.4	Promote membership of rural tourism businesses with Ottawa Tourism to obtain collective benefits (promotion, profile, member services, cross-promotion, etc.).	OT	PIED - ED	I		
3.2.5	Explore opportunities to link urban tourist accommodations with rural tourism experiences.	OT	PIED - ED	I		
3.2.6	Leverage Ottawa recreational club activities for tourism potential (e.g. invitational club events for snowmobiling, hiking, etc.)	PIED - ED	OT	I		
3.2.7	Offer professional development support to rural tourism operators to address international market expectations.	OT	PIED - ED	I		
3.2.8	Engage with local farms to identify and support agri-tourism attraction and culinary events.	PIED - RAO, ED	OT, Just Food		S	
3.2.9	Explore a Main Street revitalization program in rural villages to make the destinations inviting and unique from alternatives (e.g. Manotick brand, Carp Village brand, etc.).	PIED - ED	BIAs		S	
3.2.10	Explore development opportunities for accommodations and attractions in line with cycling, and waterfront themes.	PIED - ED	OT		S	
3.2.11	Expand rural directional signage.	PIED - RAO	OT		S	
3.2.12	Introduce planning policies that allow the consideration of new tourism development opportunities in the rural area.	PIED - PP			S	



## Strategic Priority 4: Innovation in Agriculture and Agri-food Production

### Goal

Innovation in Agriculture and Agri-food Production will provide local farmers with an opportunity to maintain economic viability and employ precision agriculture to stay competitive in the farming operations. Precision agriculture is based on pinpoint accuracy in crop and livestock production. It is also important to combat challenges related to food insecurity and climate change.

Consultation efforts conducted as part of the strategy identified that the lack of broadband connectivity as a significant challenge to advancing current business innovation and agri-tech start-ups. Broadband connectivity is an important objective of the *2019 Rural Opportunity, National Prosperity: An Economic Development Strategy for Rural Canada*, which recognises the role played by agriculture in investing in innovation and clean technologies.

For Ottawa, opportunities exist to capitalise on targeted agriculture and agri-tech investments, leverage CIP policies to advance agribusiness opportunities including on-farm diversification and value-added operations and to introduce local agricultural programming through the city’s post-secondary institutions. Moreover, the Ottawa L5 Testing Facilities and the NCC’s Greenbelt Research Farm provide significant opportunities to support industry-led collaborations.

### Rationale

A declining knowledge base, gaps in accessing skills and training and low business density has affected the ability of rural economies to innovate compared to their urban counterparts. However, rural Ottawa differs from most rural regions in that it is located close to the city’s urban area and can leverage the opportunities that the city provides. The prevalence of technology-based industries, educational institutions, information and communication technology advancements, and financial resources for investment in innovation are all significant resources that can be capitalized on.

Innovation in agriculture and agri-food production was a key consideration that emerged from the engagement phase of the strategy development process. In 2016, over 24% of farms reported using GPS technology, and 10% of all farms used GIS mapping (e.g., soil mapping). Rural Ottawa is thus well positioned to leverage opportunities in innovation in agriculture and agri-food production.

#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Target investment in precision agriculture and agri-technology</b>					
4.1.1	By leveraging the L5 site, investigate the development of a nationally-significant smart farm in Ottawa to support and demonstrate innovations in agriculture through industry-led collaborations.	IO	PIED – RAO ED	I		





#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
4.1.2	Develop an agriculture strategy that identifies and prioritizes opportunities (e.g. research and development, local food, value-added agriculture, supply chain) and challenges (e.g. land use policy, climate change, costs of entry) relevant to the city's agricultural community.	RAO	IO  OFA Just Food		S	
4.1.3	Develop a strong and targeted investment attraction brand that showcases the agriculture and agri-tech initiatives in Ottawa.	PIED - ED RAO			S	
4.1.4	Explore the use of CIP policies to advance agribusiness opportunities in the city's agricultural areas, including the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings, former institutional properties and advocate for OP policies that support the same.	PIED - ED			S	
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Raise the profile of innovative rural agriculture operations and entrepreneurs</b>					
4.2.1	Explore opportunities to support agriculture by hosting conferences, technology demonstrations and by educating farmers on smart agriculture.	PIED - RAO			S	
4.2.2	Identify and engage 'Anchor Firms' that are considered industry leaders in smart agriculture to foster networking opportunities, promote industry best practices.	PIED - ED RAO	IO		S	L
4.2.3	Work with partners to establish a smart agriculture entrepreneur mentor program to support existing and potential entrepreneurs with mentoring and business guidance.	PIED - ED RAO			S	L



#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Protect agricultural land and enable on-farm diversification</b>					
4.3.1	Implement the Provincial Guidelines for On-Farm Diversified Uses and value-added production. Ensure related policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Include the use of off-site materials to support a broad range of goods; and</li> <li>▪ Support uses such as wineries and breweries and the potential ability to provide related services to other agriculture operations as well as tourism-based operations like event space and restaurants.</li> </ul>	PIED – ZI	RAO		S	
4.3.2	Review edge planning practices to resolve conflicts between adjacent urban and agricultural land uses.	PIED – PP	RAO		S	
4.3.3	Research the applicability of an Agricultural Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to incentivize on-farm diversification and value-added operations.	PIED	RAO		S	
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Strengthen Rural Ottawa’s role in food production and distribution</b>					
4.4.1	Investigates ways to strengthen existing “buy local / farm to table” marketing campaign targeted to suburban and urban residents.	PIED - ED RAO	Just Food	I	S	L
4.4.2	Explore opportunities to strengthen rural Ottawa’s role to become the main pivot in food production, packaging and distribution for the Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec market.	RAO	PP		S	L
4.4.3	Investigates the development of a policy that requires all prepared foods sold at City of Ottawa facilities to have	PIED - ED RAO	Ottawa Farmers’	I		



#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
	at least 15% local ingredient.		Market Association			

## Strategic Priority 5: Advocating for Rural Priorities

### Goal

The goal of this strategic priority is to ensure that the City continues to advocate and seek solutions to needs and gaps that have been identified, but that cannot be addressed solely at a municipal level.

### Rationale

Advocating for rural priorities will result in improved access and awareness of the goals, objectives and actions contained in the Strategy and ensure that it reflects the needs and aspirations of the community.

#	Actions	Lead	Partners	Timing		
				I	S	L
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Promote rural economic development considerations through collaborative partnerships</b>					
5.1.1	Ensure that rural Ottawa businesses have access to connectivity services at competitive rates.	ICS	PIED - ED	I		
5.1.2	Continue to lobby the provincial government for new policies/guidelines regarding individual on-site sewage systems and communal services in rural areas of the city.	PIED - PP	PIED – IS	I		
5.1.3	Continue to advocate to the province and federal government to expand their definition of rural communities so that businesses located in rural Ottawa are eligible for funding.	PIED - ED		I	S	L
5.1.4	Continue to explore opportunities to work and collaborate with organisations within the existing economic development support network serving the rural areas (e.g. OMAFRA).	PIED - ED	RAO Organizations serving rural areas		S	