

millierdickinsonblais inc.

Building a Gateway to Tomorrow's Economy

**City of Vaughan Economic Development Strategy
2011-2021**

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1 Executive Summary

This Economic Development Strategy for the City of Vaughan was developed based on a need to integrate economic development activities into a greater framework of partnerships and activities focused on creating a vibrant community life that is inclusive, progressive, environmentally responsible and sustainable. It is a 10-year plan that provides a compass for both public and private resources to achieve those goals, and ties together all of the work done through the Vaughan Vision 2020 Growth Management Plans. As such, it presents Economic Development Department activities as a necessary component to achieving all of the goals and objectives for the City over the next 10 years.

The Strategy represents the culmination of several months of work by staff and an external project team from the consulting firm of Millier Dickinson Blais. As per the original RFP, the report is broad and wide-ranging, covering issues as diverse as economic development target sectors, key development zones within the City, strategic analysis of the City's competitive positioning, an overview of potential economic development marketing directions, a reorientation of the City's international municipal partnerships, and a restructuring of economic development staffing.

To cover this broad range of issues, the report has been broken into key chapters, each addressing a different set of economic development issues. Chapter 1 consists of this Executive Summary, while Chapter 2 is an introduction, providing insight into the key deliverables outlined in the original RFP.

Chapter 3 begins by providing a thematic overview of Vaughan's context in light of current thinking on urban issues and economic development. It begins by analyzing the City's role as an "edge city" – a major centre of future growth at the "gateway" or access point to the GTA "mega region." Because of its geographic position, ample supply of developable land and proximity to major transportation

corridors (especially rail and highway), Vaughan's existing position on the "edge" of the GTA could make it one of the primary investment and economic nodes in the GTA region (and beyond) over the next 20 years. This chapter suggests that Vaughan begin to think of its edge position in the context of a gateway: goods, people, financial flows and economic activity will all flow in and out of the mega region through Vaughan. In this sense, Vaughan is both the entryway and the exit from the GTA, and occupying this position brings considerable economic advantage. To cement this position, the report suggests that Vaughan adopt a "city as incubator" concept to complement its gateway positioning. With investment and economic activity flowing through the community, the City may capture this activity and reap its benefits by establishing structures, programs and activities that provide Vaughan-based businesses with competitive advantages and support services over businesses in other communities. In essence, other communities may have incubators – places where emerging businesses may access increased levels of support – but Vaughan IS an incubator. While the edge city role of gateway will bring investment potential to the community, the incubator role will keep it there.

Chapter 4 builds on the results of the seven sector overviews found in the background economic analysis report, to begin to define a strategic direction for Vaughan's economic development work. Rather than pursuing a scattershot approach to chasing targets in seven distinct sectors, the Strategy looks at areas of "convergence" or overlap between the target sectors. In this manner, it identifies nodes of economic activity where Vaughan is developing strong economic "clusters" or centres of competitive advantage, which may be used to distinguish Vaughan from its competitors, and to attract key investments to the community based on a genuine "value proposition" to business. Through this detailed analysis, the Strategy defines two key areas of activity: the convergence targets sector of "Innovative Research, Development & Design" and the convergence sector of "Advanced Goods Production & Movement." Each of these

convergence sectors is described and explored in detail, and a set of specific economic development opportunities and assets identified.

Chapter 5 examines opportunities in the Vaughan Enterprise Zone, with a particular focus on ways in which the Zone supports the edge city “gateway” role in economic development. A range of best practices in economic development are considered, and linked to opportunities in this area of the City. Chapter 6 provides an overview of opportunities and activities in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC). It considers the VMC’s gateway role as well, and considers best practices in transit-oriented development which provide insight into how Vaughan can make use of the pending subway connection to the rest of the GTA. It also considers the implications of the VMC as an anchor in efforts to promote and enhance arts and cultural activities within the community. These are considered in light of the “creative economy” theories of Dr. Richard Florida and the City’s recent Cultural Plan.

Chapter 7 examines the City’s existing municipal twin and friendship city relationships. It suggests that the existing relationships exist primarily for cultural purposes, and that economic development needs are reflected in a different set of international partnerships. It lays out a series of options for new partnerships building on the “gateway” profile of the City, and looks at logical economic rather than strictly cultural connections.

Chapter 8 examines marketing issues in an economic development context, and lays out a series of objectives for Vaughan as it begins to consider its options for the implementation of this Strategy. In particular, it speaks to ways in which marketing tools may be positioned to further the goals of the Strategy. While a portion of this discussion relates to traditional marketing approaches (websites, brochures, trade shows, etc.), it also considers ways in which the emerging social media tools of Web 2.0 may be employed by the City to further its economic development objectives.

Chapter 9 examines the staffing structure of Vaughan’s Economic Development function in light of the new strategic direction. It also considers comparable operations in other jurisdictions, and makes a series of recommendations regarding the reorientation of some staffing resources within the department. In general, this restructuring creates a department fully aligned with the Corporation’s strategic plans while focusing efforts through business development and retention and expansion.

Chapter 10 provides a detailed Action Plan to be pursued in the implementation of the broader Economic Development Strategy for Vaughan. It divides the proposed actions under four main goals:

1. Position Vaughan as the gateway of economic activity to the Greater Toronto Area
2. Develop Vaughan as the incubator of entrepreneurial and economic activity for the economic region.
3. Provide best-in-class economic development services.
4. Grow Vaughan’s dynamic quality of place and creative economy.

This report is in part based on the Vaughan Background Economic Analysis and Appendices report completed at the start of the Economic Development Strategy process by Millier Dickinson Blais. This background report built off of the results of the Employment Sectors Strategy report, and provided the foundational information that guided the development of the Strategy. This associated report includes detailed sector overviews of the seven sectors identified through the Employment Sectors Strategy, a summary of public consultation findings undertaken through the Economic Development Strategy process, a set of definitions of industrial codes used extensively within the background report, and a draft policy on the hosting of foreign delegations.