

To: Economic and Development Services Committee

From: Anthony Ambra, Commissioner,
Economic and Development Services Department

Report Number: ED-26-07

Date of Report: January 7, 2026

Date of Meeting: January 12, 2026

Subject: 2025 Oshawa Economic Development Key Initiatives

Ward: All Wards

File: 03-05

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this Report is to provide a concise overview of progress made under Oshawa's Economic Development Strategy ("O.E.D.S.") and highlight key milestones and achievements to City Council as per the directive endorsed within Report ED-23-213.

2.0 Recommendation

That the Economic and Development Services Committee recommend to City Council:

That Report ED-26-07 dated January 7, 2026 concerning the 2025 Economic Development Key Initiatives be received for information.

3.0 Input From Other Sources

Not applicable.

4.0 Analysis

Business and Economic Development remains a core service for the City of Oshawa, driving growth and positioning the community as one of Canada's fastest-growing urban centres. In 2025, Oshawa's economy continued its transition from a traditional manufacturing base to a diverse, knowledge-driven economy anchored by advanced manufacturing, health and biosciences, information technologies, energy generation, and multimodal logistics.

The City's labour force now benefits from the strength of four post-secondary institutions – Durham College, Ontario Tech University, Trent University Durham GTA, and the Queen's-Lakeridge M.D. Family Medicine Program – providing a pipeline of more than 35,000

students and over 140,000 alumni. This talent base has supported growth in professional, scientific and technical services, finance and insurance, energy generation, and multimodal logistics, reinforcing Oshawa's reputation as a premier location for investment, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Business and Economic Development Services continues to focus on four strategic pillars:

- Business Expansion, Retention, and Sector Development
- Investment Attraction
- Marketing and Promotion
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Since the endorsement of the O.E.D.S. in 2023, the branch has advanced foundational initiatives to align with future opportunities. Despite global economic disruptions that have been experienced across the world in 2025, a continued focus on the strategy and development of new tools, initiatives and partnerships has delivered measurable progress in investment attraction, talent development, and sector diversification. Oshawa's competitive positioning – proximity to major North American markets, robust infrastructure, and a skilled workforce – ensures the City remains on a substantial growth trajectory.

4.1 Milestones and Substantial Achievements

4.1.1 Tariff Response Efforts

At the beginning of 2025, Oshawa Economic Development undertook a coordinated tariff response to mitigate the impacts of new U.S. trade measures. This initiative strategically aligned with the four pillars of the branch: Business Expansion and Retention, Investment Attraction, Marketing and Promotion, and Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

Oshawa's business expansion and retention efforts in 2025 focused on direct engagement with local employers. Site visits and consultations provided timely support that helped companies adapt supply chains and sustain operations, reinforcing the City's commitment to retaining and growing its business base.

On investment attraction, Oshawa positioned itself as a proactive leader through advocacy with Ontario's Big City Mayors and the Ontario Auto Mayors' Caucus. Efforts to secure temporary tariff exemptions under United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. rules of origin and reduce interprovincial trade barriers protected the City's competitive advantage and signaled resilience to investors.

Marketing and promotion initiatives, including collaboration with the Durham Economic Task Force, showcased Oshawa manufacturers to new markets and emphasized the City's strengths – its educated workforce, investment incentives, and infrastructure projects – reinforcing Oshawa's reputation as a prime destination for growth.

Entrepreneurship and innovation were advanced through the launch of the Tariff Resource Hub, which provided businesses with tools such as the Canada Tariff Finder and funding supports. This empowered entrepreneurs to innovate and explore new markets, strengthening Oshawa's transition toward a knowledge-based economy.

The tariff response initiative directly advanced the objectives of the Oshawa Economic Development Strategy by striving to protect local jobs, diversify trade opportunities, strengthen business resilience, and reinforce Oshawa's competitive positioning. This work demonstrates the City's ability to act decisively and with great agility in the face of global challenges while remaining firmly focused on long-term economic growth and sustainability.

4.1.2 Launch of Business Funding and Support Finder and Grant Writing Workshop

Understanding the immediate needs of local business through the team's tariff response outreach and feedback received through the business retention and expansion survey, Oshawa Economic Development quickly procured and successfully launched the Business Funding and Support Finder, powered by Oshawa's partnership with Fundica. This complimentary online tool provides Oshawa businesses with a streamlined way to identify and access government and private sector funding opportunities across Canada. By leveraging Fundica's proprietary search system and intelligent filtering, Oshawa entrepreneurs and corporations can now quickly discover tailored programs that match their business profile and funding needs.

Key benefits for Oshawa businesses:

- Quick and easy access to an extensive database of funding programs
- Customized results tailored to each business's sector, stage of growth, and location
- Expert insights and resources to strengthen funding strategies and improve application success

To complement the tool's launch, the City hosted a free Grant Writing Workshop in partnership with the Business Advisory Centre Durham and the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce that provided hands-on training in preparing competitive applications. The workshop emphasized practical strategies for navigating grants, tax credits, and loan programs, ensuring participants could maximize the benefits of the platform. Over 100 guests participated in the workshop spanning across start-ups, established businesses and not-for-profit organizations.

To date, more than 165 businesses have registered an account with the tool and continues to be the news most frequently accessed through the branch's e-newsletter distributions.

This initiative directly supports the goals of the O.E.D.S. by enhancing business retention and expansion, fostering entrepreneurship, and strengthening Oshawa's competitive advantage in attracting investment. The Business Funding and Support Finder tool and associated workshop demonstrate the branch's proactive approach to equipping businesses with the resources they need to thrive in a rapidly evolving economy.

4.1.3 Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) Status Update

The City of Oshawa formally launched its BR+E Program in 2024, beginning with a survey that engaged local businesses. The survey provided valuable insights into the needs and priorities of Oshawa's business community, highlighting workforce challenges, supply chain pressures, and opportunities for growth. Businesses emphasized the importance of

talent attraction, access to funding, and infrastructure readiness as critical factors in sustaining competitiveness.

Building on these findings, a BR+E workshop was convened in 2025 to bring together stakeholders locally that form the program's resource network in an effort to address the feedback received. The workshop served as a forum to review high level survey results, validate key themes, and identify practical steps to strengthen support for Oshawa's employers. Participants confirmed that businesses place high value on stronger connections to local resources and networks, and that the City's role in facilitating these linkages is essential to long-term success.

Since the program's launch, Oshawa Economic Development has integrated the survey and workshop outcomes into its broader service delivery, including the City's new economic development microsite. This platform now provides businesses with direct access to funding tools, sector insights, and support programs, ensuring that the lessons learned through BR+E are translated into practical resources.

Looking ahead, the next phase of the program will expand outreach to additional businesses to broaden the dataset and strengthen sector representation. Targeted action plans will be developed to address talent, infrastructure, and innovation gaps identified in the survey and workshop. These efforts will continue to align with the O.E.D.S.

The BR+E program has established a strong foundation for understanding and responding to local business needs. By embedding its outcomes into Oshawa's digital and strategic framework, the City is ensuring that businesses are supported, investors are engaged, and the community remains positioned for growth.

4.1.4 Oshawa Economic Development Website Launch

In October 2025, Oshawa Economic Development unveiled its refreshed website, designed to highlight the City's competitive advantages and provide a streamlined, user-focused experience for investors, entrepreneurs, and businesses. The site consolidates Oshawa's economic strengths, sector opportunities, and support programs into a single digital hub, reinforcing Oshawa's position as one of Canada's fastest-growing urban economies.

The launch of the website directly supports all four of the key areas of work undertaken by the Oshawa Economic Development team as follows:

Business Expansion and Retention

By offering accessible tools such as the Business Retention and Expansion Program and site selection assistance, the microsite strengthens relationships with existing employers and supports sustainable growth.

Investment Attraction

The site showcases Oshawa's competitive edge – zero city development charges on industrial and downtown projects, sector strengths, and strategic location – making it easier for investors to evaluate opportunities.

Marketing and Promotion

The refreshed design and consolidated resources enhance Oshawa's brand as a forward-looking, investment-ready city, positioning it competitively in the global marketplace.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Through resources like the Business Funding and Support Finder and small business support, the microsite empowers entrepreneurs to access capital, incentives, and advisory services, fostering innovation-driven growth.

The launch of the new Oshawa Economic Development microsite represents a significant milestone in advancing the O.E.D.S. By integrating investment tools, sector insights, and business support resources into a modern digital platform, the City has strengthened its ability to attract investment, retain businesses, and foster entrepreneurship. This initiative ensures Oshawa remains competitive, resilient, and well-positioned for continued growth.

4.1.5 Launch of GrO | City Building Summit

In 2025, Oshawa Economic Development introduced GrO – City Building Summit, a revitalized version of the City's legacy realtor and developer event. This purpose-driven forum brought together business leaders, developers, real estate leaders, investors, and civic partners to accelerate economic growth and attract new investments that strengthen both Oshawa and Canada. The Summit underwent a venue change and was hosted at the Oshawa Executive Airport in an effort to showcase the modernization projects underway to support business and corporate aviation needs. The repositioning of this event resulted in a 60% increase in attendee registration, achieving the objective of expanding the audience to representatives who have not conducted business in Oshawa to further the recognition of Oshawa's strong value proposition.

The Summit was designed to provide participants with curated opportunities, including shovel-ready sites, incentive programs, and strategic partnerships. By convening decision-makers who influence job creating opportunities, GrO creates a platform for collaboration that reduces risk, speeds time-to-market for projects, and enhances visibility for companies and initiatives seeking to be part of Oshawa's next growth chapter.

The summit aimed to strengthen relationships and ensure the business community has access to resources and opportunities that support growth. Furthermore, GrO showcased Oshawa's competitive advantages – including zero development charges on industrial and downtown projects, strategic location, and sector strengths – positioning the City as a prime destination for new capital investment and projects.

The Summit elevated Oshawa's profile by highlighting shovel-ready sites, incentive programs, and sector opportunities to a carefully curated audience of investors and developers. By encouraging participants to bring projects, capital, and ideas, GrO fostered innovation and collaboration, generating momentum for new ventures that contribute to Oshawa's evolving economy.

The launch of GRO – City Building Summit represented a significant evolution of Oshawa's engagement with the real estate and development community. By modernizing the City's legacy event into a purpose-driven forum a platform was created that advanced the objectives of the O.E.D.S., strengthened partnerships, and positioned the City for continued growth and investment.

4.1.6 Areas of Focus for 2026

Looking ahead to 2026, the Oshawa Economic Development team will continue to build on the strong foundation established through recent initiatives. A key priority will be the implementation of actions arising from the BR+E program, ensuring that the insights gathered from local employers are translated into supports and solutions. At the same time, staff will continue to advance actions within the O.E.D.S.

Investment attraction will remain a central focus, with efforts directed toward securing new jobs and diversifying Oshawa's trade partnerships for landed businesses. This work will be complemented by initiatives to broaden awareness of Oshawa's value proposition, ensuring that investors and site selectors recognize the City's competitive advantages. To strengthen economic prosperity and enable the branch's programming, staff will actively pursue grant opportunities that can provide additional resources to support the business community.

The team will also continue to deliver high-quality, timely services, with concierge-style support offered to businesses and investors navigating opportunities in Oshawa. Collaboration with partners and stakeholders will remain essential, as the City works to align local needs with provincial and national priorities, ensuring that Oshawa's growth trajectory is strong, stable and in alignment with needs of the Canadian economy.

Collectively, these areas of focus directly support the objectives of Oshawa City Council through the both the Oshawa Strategic Plan and the O.E.D.S. By fostering economic growth, promoting investment readiness, and strengthening partnerships, the Oshawa Economic Development team is advancing Council's vision of a prosperous, resilient, and innovative city that continues to attract talent, investment, and opportunity.

5.0 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications for the Economic and Development Services Committee to recommend to City Council to receive this Report as information. It is important to note that continuing to advance the O.E.D.S. may result in future budget asks subject to the particular initiative being advanced.

6.0 Relationship to the Oshawa Strategic Plan

This Report responds to the Oshawa Strategic Plan Priority Area:

“Innovate: Vibrant Culture and Economy” with the goal to attract new businesses and support existing businesses and industry.



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