

**Subject: Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan Implementation
Update**

File Number: ACS2025-SI-ED-0001

**Report to Finance and Corporate Services Committee on 1 April 2025
and Council 16 April 2025**

**Submitted on March 21, 2025 by Sheilagh Doherty, Director, Economic
Development Services**

**Contact Person: Cindy VanBuskirk, Program Manager, Economic Development
Services**

613-580-2424 x28355, Cindy.VanBuskirk@ottawa.ca

Ward: Citywide

**Objet : Mise à jour sur la mise en œuvre de la Stratégie de développement
économique et Plan d'action**

Numéro de dossier : ACS2025-SI-ED-0001

Rapport présenté au Comité des finances et des services organisationnels

Rapport soumis le 1er avril 2025

et au Conseil le 16 avril 2025

**Soumis le 2025-03-21 par Sheilagh Doherty, Directrice, Services de
développement économique**

**Personne ressource : Cindy VanBuskirk, Gestionnaire de programme, Services
de développement économique**

613-580-2424 x28355, Cindy.VanBuskirk@ottawa.ca

Quartier : À l'échelle de la ville

REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Finance and Corporate Services Committee recommend Council:

Receive for information the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan Implementation Update.

RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité des finances et des services organisationnels recommande au Conseil :

Reçoive à titre informatif la mise à jour de la mise en œuvre de la Stratégie de développement économique et Plan d'action.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan Update

The [Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan](#), approved by Council on April 3, 2024, supports the 2023-2026 Term of Council priority “A city with a diversified and prosperous economy” and provides a flexible framework to guide Ottawa’s economic growth, diversification, prosperity and resiliency.

A vision statement and eight guiding principles were created to guide the development of the strategy and provide a local context and a lens for economic implications and opportunities. The strategy includes seven strategic priority areas and a series of corresponding actions to address Ottawa’s economic opportunities and challenges while enhancing the city’s competitiveness, reputation, and quality of life.

An update on the progress of the implementation of the strategy is to be delivered to Council annually and will include an overview of Ottawa’s economy, a summary of key economic development programs, projects and initiatives as well as highlights from the Nightlife Commissioner Office and the ByWard Market Public Realm Office, both important components of the strategy.

As part of the Ontario-Ottawa Agreement, the Province is providing the City, through Economic Development Services, \$18,500,000 over three years to support its economic development objectives and specifically fund downtown revitalization efforts. Projects include high-impact public realm improvements to enhance downtown public spaces, funding for the ByWard Market Public Realm Plan, marketing of the downtown area to promote economic activity, funding for the Somerset West Community Health Centre for

community and business safety initiatives, and collaboration on the implementation of the Ottawa Board of Trade's "Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda".

As Council is aware, the City is broadly engaged with Bloomberg Associates, the philanthropic consulting arm of Bloomberg Philanthropies. Economic Development Services is working with the Bloomberg Associates Economic Development Practice on several files and is directly benefitting from their subject-matter expertise informed approach to identifying impactful solutions to overcome challenges and capitalize on new opportunities to drive economic growth and prosperity.

This report provides an update on the following key highlights from the Economic Development Services workplan that are currently underway and address several Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan priorities and action steps:

- Business Improvement Area (BIA) Grant Funding Program
- Community Economic Development (CED) Grant Funding Program
- Small Business Needs Assessment
- Tariff Toolkit and "Shop Local. Buy Canadian" Campaign
- Bytown and ByWard Market 200th Anniversary Celebration
- Labour Market Study and Talent Action Plan
- High Economic Impact Projects (HEIP) Program
- Economic Development Dashboard
- Downtown Revitalization – Downtown Vibrancy Office, Arts, Culture and Entertainment (ACE) District, Downtown Tactical Team, Downtown Marketing
- Special Economic District Action Plans
- Orléans Economic Action Plan
- Rural Economic Development Strategy Update
- Ottawa Film Office Soundstage Business Case
- Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative

Nightlife Commissioner Office Update

In May 2023, Council approved the [Nightlife Economy Action Plan](#). The four-year plan addresses the economic challenges and opportunities of Ottawa's nightlife through a series of ten recommended actions that support the development and delivery of nightlife infrastructure, amenities, and experiences, and bring valuable economic and social benefits and cultural energy to the city. All recommendations are planned for implementation during the current Term of Council and create a foundation for the growth and development of the nightlife economy in Ottawa. This report provides an update on each of the recommended actions and identifies several initiatives completed and in progress.

Completed:

- Established the Nightlife Commissioner Office and hired Ottawa's first Nightlife Commissioner;
- Created the Nightlife Council composed of six economic development and cultural industries organizations and 12 at-large members selected from over 500 on-line applicants;
- Collaborated with Ottawa Tourism to develop nightlife specific content for ottawatourism.ca to promote nightlife businesses and experiences to residents and visitors;
- Established the Instagram account [@ottnightnuit](#) to provide updates on Nightlife Commissioner Office activities, share interesting statistics from the Nightlife Economy Action Plan, and promote nightlife venues and events; and
- Engaged with City colleagues to ensure a nightlife lens is applied to projects such as the Special Events and Licensing By-law review and provided subject matter expertise to inform pending report recommendations to Council that will, if approved, significantly reduce administrative burden for the City and venue operators and event producers seeking an All-Night Dance Event License.

Underway:

- Supporting the delivery of the "Canada After Dark" forum, a 2-day event bringing together national and local city officials, industry leaders, and subject matter experts to discuss best practices for growth and management of nightlife across Canada, as part of Capital Music Week (May 20-25);

- Supporting several organizations and entrepreneurs working to establish new nightlife attractions and experiences including live performance venues, events, and public realm activations;
- Developing a nightlife safety plan, with input from Ottawa Public Health and other organizations and reflecting international nightlife best practices, to be delivered in Q3 2025 and to include an awareness campaign emphasizing messaging to post-secondary students and young adults; and
- Developing a branded website for delivery in Q2 2025 to promote nightlife venues, attractions, and experiences and host a resource centre for nightlife businesses, organizations, and participants that will include tools related to the nightlife safety plan, information on City processes (permits, licenses), etc.

More detailed information on these and other Nightlife Commissioner activities is included later in this report. The work of the Nightlife Commissioner Office demonstrates the importance of a robust nightlife to quality of life and city building and facilitates necessary conversations between nightlife stakeholders and the City to ensure policymaking in support of the nightlife economy aligns with industry needs.

ByWard Market Public Realm Office Update

The ByWard Market Public Realm Office was established in 2023 with the goal of revitalizing public spaces within the ByWard Market. This work is guided by the vision of the Council-approved [ByWard Market Public Realm Plan](#).

To support the ByWard Market District Authority, the ByWard Market Public Realm Office, acts as a liaison between the Authority and City services. This includes providing operational support, issue identification and resolution and coordination with City services to support programming within the operational boundaries of the ByWard Market District Authority which includes both the ByWard Market and Parkdale Market.

In June 2024, the City executed a Service and Asset Management Agreement with the ByWard Market District Authority and established an Integrated Operations Team to support the ByWard Market District Authority. This team is comprised of key City service areas (including Road Services, Parking Services, By-law and Regulatory Services, Traffic Management, Event Central, Solid Waste Service and Right of Way) and the ByWard Market District Authority working collaboratively on proactive and enhanced service delivery.

The ByWard Market Public Realm Office is actively working on priority projects confirmed by City Council including:

- William Street and ByWard Market Square street renewal;
- The creation of York Street Plaza; and
- The redevelopment of the 70 Clarence Street municipal parking garage.

The ByWard Market Public Realm Office is currently focused on the delivery of three important near-term priorities:

- Feasibility Analysis – City of Ottawa Asset Renewal

The City is undertaking a feasibility analysis to evaluate and understand the technical and financial aspects of the projects listed below.

- Destination building located at 70 Clarence Street (existing municipal parking garage)
- Replacement parking options
- Reimagined Plaza on York Street
- Rehabilitation of the historic market building located at 55 ByWard Market Square
- Street Renewal Projects - William Street and ByWard Market Square (between George Street and York Street)

As part of the Ontario-Ottawa Agreement downtown recovery funding, the City will receive \$11.8 million over three years to undertake the detailed design of the William Street and ByWard Market Square (between George Street and York Street) street renewal projects and the construction of the William Street segment, which is planned to be completed in 2026.

- Evaluation Framework

The ByWard Market Public Realm Office and Bloomberg Associates have undertaken extensive research on the economic, social and environmental benefits of public realm investment to support the vision of the ByWard Market Public Realm Plan and build the "case for change" in the ByWard Market. A baseline assessment will be completed in 2025.

RÉSUMÉ

Mise à jour de la Stratégie de développement économique et Plan d'action

La [Stratégie de développement économique et Plan d'action](#), approuvée par le Conseil le 3 avril 2024, appuie la priorité du mandat 2023-2026 du Conseil « Une ville avec une économie diversifiée et prospère » et fournit un cadre souple pour guider la croissance économique, la diversification, la prospérité et la résilience d'Ottawa.

Un énoncé de vision et huit principes directeurs ont été élaborés pour guider la mise en œuvre de la stratégie, tout en tenant compte du contexte local et en offrant une perspective sur les répercussions et les possibilités économiques. La stratégie repose sur sept domaines stratégiques prioritaires et une série de mesures associées, pour répondre aux possibilités et aux défis économiques d'Ottawa tout en renforçant la compétitivité, la réputation et la qualité de vie de la ville.

Une mise à jour annuelle sur les progrès de la mise en œuvre de la stratégie sera présentée au Conseil. Celle-ci comprendra un aperçu de l'économie d'Ottawa; un résumé des principaux programmes, projets et initiatives en développement économique; les faits saillants du Bureau du commissaire de la vie nocturne et du Bureau du domaine public du marché By, deux éléments clés de la stratégie.

Dans le cadre de l'Accord Ontario-Ottawa, la province accorde à la Ville, par l'entremise des Services de développement économique, un financement de 18 500 000 \$ sur trois ans afin de soutenir ses objectifs de développement économique et, plus particulièrement, de financer les efforts de revitalisation du centre-ville. Les projets financés comprennent des améliorations à fort impact du domaine public visant à revaloriser les espaces publics du centre-ville; le financement du plan du domaine public du marché By; des initiatives de promotion du centre-ville afin de stimuler l'activité économique; le financement du Centre de santé communautaire Somerset Ouest pour des initiatives en sécurité communautaire et commerciale; ainsi qu'une collaboration à la mise en œuvre du Programme d'action pour le centre-ville d'Ottawa, piloté par la Chambre de commerce d'Ottawa.

Comme le sait le Conseil, la Ville entretient un partenariat actif avec Bloomberg Associates, la branche de conseil philanthropique de Bloomberg Philanthropies. Les Services de développement économique collaborent avec l'équipe de développement économique de Bloomberg Associates sur plusieurs dossiers, bénéficiant directement de leur expertise sectorielle et de leur approche stratégique. Cette collaboration vise à identifier des solutions efficaces pour relever les défis, saisir de nouvelles occasions et

stimuler la croissance économique et la prospérité.

Ce rapport présente une mise à jour sur les principales initiatives en cours dans le cadre du plan de travail des Services de développement économique, qui visent à répondre à plusieurs priorités et mesures de la Stratégie de développement économique et Plan d'action :

- Programme de financement des zones d'amélioration commerciale (ZAC)
- Programme de financement du développement économique communautaire (DEC)
- Évaluation des besoins des petites entreprises
- Trousse sur les droits de douane et campagne « Magasinons local. Achetons canadien. »
- Célébration du bicentenaire de Bytown et du marché By
- Étude du marché du travail et plan d'action pour le développement des talents
- Programme relatif aux projets à fortes retombées économiques (PFRE)
- Tableau de bord du développement économique
- Revitalisation du centre-ville – Service de dynamisation du centre-ville, Quartier des arts, de la culture et du divertissement, équipe tactique du centre-ville, stratégie de marketing du centre-ville
- Plans d'action pour les quartiers économiques spéciaux
- Plan d'action économique d'Orléans
- Mise à jour de la Stratégie de développement économique en milieu rural
- Étude de rentabilité Studio de tournage du Bureau du cinéma d'Ottawa
- Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative

Mise à jour sur le Bureau du commissaire de la vie nocturne

En mai 2023, le Conseil a approuvé le [Plan d'action économique de la vie nocturne](#). Le plan quadriennal prend en compte les défis et les occasions économiques liés à la vie nocturne à Ottawa en formulant dix recommandations. Ces mesures visent à soutenir le

développement et la mise en place d'infrastructures, de commodités et d'expériences nocturnes, tout en générant d'importants avantages économiques et sociaux et en insufflant une énergie culturelle à la ville. Toutes les recommandations devraient être mises en œuvre d'ici la fin du mandat actuel du Conseil. Elles visent à poser les bases d'une croissance durable et du développement structuré de l'économie nocturne à Ottawa. Ce rapport présente une mise à jour sur chacune des recommandations et met en lumière plusieurs initiatives réalisées ainsi que celles en cours de déploiement.

Réalisations:

- Création du Bureau du commissaire à la vie nocturne et embauche du premier commissaire à la vie nocturne d'Ottawa
- Mise en place du Conseil de la vie nocturne, composé de six organisations des secteurs du développement économique et des industries culturelles, ainsi que de 12 membres à titre individuel, sélectionnés parmi plus de 500 candidatures soumises en ligne
- Collaboration avec Tourisme Ottawa pour élaborer du contenu spécifique à la vie nocturne sur ottawatourism.ca/fr, afin de promouvoir les établissements et expériences nocturnes auprès des résidents et des touristes
- Lancement du compte Instagram [@ottnightnuit](https://www.instagram.com/ottnightnuit) pour diffuser des mises à jour sur les activités du Bureau du commissaire à la vie nocturne, partager des statistiques clés du Plan d'action économique de la vie nocturne et promouvoir les lieux et événements nocturnes
- Consultation des services municipaux afin d'intégrer une perspective nocturne aux initiatives telles que l'examen du Règlement sur les événements spéciaux et du Règlement sur la délivrance de permis. De plus, une expertise sectorielle a été fournie pour guider les recommandations du rapport au Conseil, lesquelles, si approuvées, permettront de réduire significativement le fardeau administratif de la Ville, des exploitants de lieux et des organisations d'événements qui souhaitent obtenir un permis pour les danses nocturnes continues.

En cours de réalisation:

- Appui à l'organisation du forum « Canada After Dark », un événement de deux jours réunissant des responsables municipaux nationaux et locaux, des leaders de l'industrie et des experts sectoriels pour échanger sur les meilleures pratiques

en matière de croissance et de gestion de la vie nocturne au Canada, dans le cadre de la Semaine musicale de la capitale (du 20 au 25 mai)

- Soutien aux organisations et entrepreneurs qui souhaitent créer de nouvelles attractions et expériences nocturnes, notamment des salles de spectacles, des événements et des initiatives vitalisation de l'espace public
- Élaboration d'un plan de sécurité pour la vie nocturne, en collaboration avec Santé publique Ottawa et d'autres organisations, qui s'appuiera sur les meilleures pratiques internationales, qui devrait être mis en œuvre au cours du troisième trimestre de 2025, et qui comprendra une campagne de sensibilisation ciblant particulièrement les étudiants postsecondaires et les jeunes adultes
- Création d'un site Web de marque, dont le lancement est prévu au deuxième trimestre de 2025, pour mettre en valeur les établissements, les attractions et les expériences nocturnes. Ce site servira également de centre de ressources pour les entreprises, organisations et acteurs de la vie nocturne, offrant notamment des outils liés au plan de sécurité, ainsi que des informations sur les processus municipaux (permis, licences, etc.)

Des renseignements plus détaillés sur ces initiatives ainsi que sur les autres activités du Bureau du commissaire à la vie nocturne sont présentés plus loin dans ce rapport. Le Bureau du commissaire à la vie nocturne met en lumière l'importance d'une vie nocturne dynamique pour la qualité de vie et le développement urbain. Il joue également un rôle clé dans le dialogue entre les parties prenantes de la vie nocturne et la Ville, veillant à ce que les politiques de soutien à l'économie nocturne soient adaptées aux besoins du secteur.

Mise à jour sur le Bureau du domaine public du marché By

Le Bureau du domaine public du marché By a été créé en 2023 dans le but de revitaliser les espaces publics au sein du marché By. Ces travaux sont guidés par la vision du [Plan du domaine public du marché By](#) approuvé par le Conseil.

Pour soutenir l'Autorité du district du marché By, le Bureau du domaine public du marché By agit comme intermédiaire entre cette autorité et les services municipaux. Cela comprend le soutien opérationnel, la détermination et la résolution des problèmes ainsi que la coordination avec les services municipaux pour appuyer la programmation dans le cadre opérationnel de l'administration du district du marché By, qui comprend à la fois le marché By et le marché Parkdale.

En juin 2024, la Ville a conclu un accord de service et de gestion des actifs avec l'Administration du district du marché By et a mis sur pied une équipe des opérations intégrées pour soutenir ses activités. Cette équipe regroupe les principaux secteurs de service de la Ville, y compris les services des routes et du stationnement, les services des règlements municipaux, la gestion de la circulation, le Bureau central des activités, le service des déchets solides et la gestion des emprises. Elle collabore étroitement avec l'Autorité du district du marché By afin d'assurer une prestation de services proactive et optimisée.

Le Bureau du domaine public du marché By travaille activement sur des projets prioritaires approuvés par le Conseil municipal, notamment :

- la rénovation de la rue William et de la place du marché By;
- la création de l'esplanade de la rue York;
- le réaménagement du garage de stationnement situé au 70, rue Clarence.

Le Bureau du domaine public du marché By se concentre actuellement sur la réalisation de trois priorités importantes à court terme :

- Analyse de faisabilité – renouvellement des actifs de la Ville d'Ottawa

La Ville entreprend une analyse de faisabilité pour évaluer et comprendre les aspects techniques et financiers des projets énumérés ci-dessous.

- Bâtiment d'intérêt situé au 70, rue Clarence (actuellement un garage de stationnement)
 - Options de remplacement du stationnement
 - Esplanade repensée sur la rue York
 - Rénovation de l'édifice historique du marché By situé au 55, place du marché By
- Projets de réfection - rue William et place du marché By (entre la rue George et la rue York)

Dans le cadre de l'Accord Ontario-Ottawa sur le financement de la relance du centre-ville, la Ville recevra 11,8 millions de dollars sur trois ans pour entreprendre la conception détaillée des projets de réfection des rues William et ByWard (entre les rues George et York) et de la construction du tronçon de la rue William, qui devrait

être terminée en 2026.

- Cadre d'évaluation

Le Bureau du domaine public du marché By, en collaboration avec Bloomberg Associates, a mené des recherches approfondies sur les avantages économiques, sociaux et environnementaux des investissements dans le domaine public. Ces travaux visent à soutenir la vision du Plan du domaine public du marché By et à présenter les arguments en faveur du changement pour le marché By. Une évaluation de référence sera réalisée en 2025.

BACKGROUND

The [Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan](#), approved by Council on April 3, 2024, supports the 2023-2026 Term of Council priority “A city with a diversified and prosperous economy” and provides a flexible framework to guide Ottawa’s economic growth, diversification, prosperity and resiliency. It also serves as a roadmap to prioritize the City’s resources and investment in economic development to achieve maximum impact.

A vision statement and eight guiding principles were created to guide the development of the strategy and provide a local context and a lens for economic implications and opportunities. The strategy’s vision is to “Leverage bold thinking and innovative approaches to establish Ottawa as the most livable mid-sized city in North America”. The eight guiding principles are: Environmental Sustainability, Preparedness and Resilience, Growth and Diversification, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Talent and Innovation, Unique Geography, Partnerships and collaboration, and One City, Two Languages.

The strategy builds upon well-established partnerships and programs and includes seven strategic priority areas and a series of corresponding actions to address Ottawa’s economic opportunities and challenges while enhancing the city’s competitiveness, reputation, and quality of life. The seven strategic priorities are: Partnerships and Collaboration, City Building Projects, Connectivity, Talent, Downtown and the ByWard Market, City Branding, and Key Sector Support.

The strategy highlights a collaborative approach to economic development where the City’s role varies depending on the requirements of specific priorities or actions. While the City’s Economic Development Services leads and delivers several economic development programs and initiatives, the City also relies on funded service delivery

partners and other economic development organizations to help meet sector specific needs.

To reflect the uncertainty of today's economic environment and the importance of maintaining flexibility to capitalize on new opportunities and address unforeseen challenges, a strategy implementation update is to be provided to Council annually. This report will include an updated overview of Ottawa's economy and emerging economic trends as well as a summary of key programs, projects and initiatives. It will also specifically highlight the activities of the Nightlife Commissioner Office and ByWard Market Public Realm Office, both important components of the strategy.

DISCUSSION

Economic Update

The Conference Board of Canada's January 2025 forecast for the Ottawa-Gatineau Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) economy, which predates the current escalation in U.S. tariff and other threats, indicates growth in real Gross Domestic Product (inflation adjusted) of 1.0 per cent in 2024, 1.9 per cent in 2025 and 2.2 per cent in 2026. This reflects a downward adjustment from earlier forecasts of 1.2 per cent in 2024 but an upward adjustment from 1.5 per cent in 2025 and 1.9 per cent in 2026.

In early March, the Conference Board of Canada's assessment was that Ottawa's economy would not be overly impacted by U.S. tariffs, given the city's economic activity is highly concentrated in services. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce ranks Ottawa's vulnerability to tariffs as 29 out of 41 Canadian cities. Goods exported from the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA to the U.S. represent 8.4 per cent of the region's GDP. However, Ottawa's technology and housing industries, for example, may feel the impact of tariffs more acutely as these businesses rely more heavily on sales to the U.S. and U.S. imports than other sectors. Ottawa, like the rest of the country, will see rising inflation, a corresponding decrease in consumer spending and confidence, and economic uncertainty for the foreseeable future.

Total employment in Ottawa-Gatineau is forecast to increase by 11,000 jobs in 2025 (1.3 per cent) and only 5,000 jobs in 2026 (0.7 per cent), following a 12,000 job increase in 2024 (1.4 per cent). The federal government announcement that it plans to shed 5,000 public service jobs by 2028 through attrition, adversely affects the Ottawa employment outlook. However, these forecasts are generally aligned with Canada's total employment forecast increases of 1.0 per cent (195,000 jobs) in 2025 and 0.3 per cent (68,000 jobs) in 2026 following an increase of 1.6 per cent (330,000 jobs) in 2024.

Following an unemployment rate of 5.9 per cent in 2024, Ottawa-Gatineau's unemployment rate is forecast to be 5.6 per cent in 2025 and 5.1 per cent in 2026. This compares favourably to Canada's forecast unemployment rate of 6.2 per cent in 2025 and 5.6 per cent in 2026, following a reported unemployment rate of 6.3 per cent in 2024.

Ottawa-Gatineau's population is forecast to grow by 24,000 in 2025 (1.5 per cent) and 11,000 in 2026 (0.6 per cent) following an increase of 45,000 in 2024 (2.7 per cent). The federal government's announcements in 2024 to reduce non-permanent residents and decrease immigration targets has depressed Ottawa-Gatineau's expected population growth. For comparison, Canada's population is forecast to grow by only 0.6 per cent in 2025 (247,000) and decline by 0.1 per cent in 2026 (37,000), following a reported population increase of 3.0 per cent in 2024 (1,184,000). The combination of caps on international student permits and reduced immigration targets by the federal government last year is contributing to a downward pressure on overall population growth and the talent pool contribution by Ottawa's post-secondary institutions.

From a sectoral perspective, forecast employment growth in the professional, scientific and technical services sector is expected to lead the way with 2.2 per cent average annual compound growth over the 2026 to 2029 period, surpassing the 100,000 jobs milestone and following a projected 4.5 per cent annual growth rate in 2025. Similarly, in the health care and social assistance sector, annual employment growth rates of 2.2 per cent in 2027 and 2.9 per cent in 2028 will bring the sector to more than 100,000 jobs by the end of 2028. Meanwhile, public administration employment is forecast to increase by only 600 jobs between 2024 and 2029, increasing from 205,800 to 206,400 jobs.

To respond to anticipated technology sector growth and acknowledging post-secondary institution contributions to the supply of high-tech talent, it is vital that Ottawa prioritizes graduate retention, cooperative student placements, and industry-academia collaboration. Industry utilization of the available post-secondary graduate pool, especially STEM graduates, will be critical to the city's economic prosperity. Also, in response to potential U.S. tightening of H-1B temporary foreign worker visas, Ottawa may be able to attract foreign STEM talent unable to access U.S. employment opportunities.

It is important to note that Ottawa's nightlife economy support, recreation and tourism infrastructure, low crime rate, housing affordability relative to other large cities, environmental stewardship, and social well-being programs are important contributors to graduate retention and talent attraction. The same quality-of-life factors also

contribute to federal government retiree retention, which is important, especially given anticipated public service downsizing, as any loss of accumulated wealth and pensions, through relocation, could have a negative impact on municipal property taxes and local business revenues.

The tourism sector has rebounded post-pandemic and continues to grow with strong results in the meeting and conventions and major events segments of the market. Leisure travel is stable, while business travel is unlikely to reach pre-pandemic levels given the rise of hybrid and remote work and the availability of technology supporting virtual collaboration. Given the evolving nature of the situation, the impact of recent U.S. tariffs and other potential measures on Ottawa's visitor economy remains uncertain. Ottawa's visitor mix is primarily domestic (90 per cent) with only 5 per cent U.S.-based. There is some potential upside in the near-term with more Canadians looking to vacation in Canada in 2025 and the low dollar making Canada an attractive destination. The Ottawa International Airport reported 4.6 million passengers in 2024, a 12.5 per cent increase over 2023 but well-short of 5.5 million passengers in 2019. The availability of talent is critical to this sector's continued growth. The Conference Board of Canada forecasted a 1.5 per cent increase in accommodation and food services employment in 2026 to 44,800 jobs and a 1.9 per cent and 2.1 per cent increase in 2027 and 2028 respectively.

The Conference Board of Canada also reported on Ottawa-Gatineau's real estate market (using CBRE and CMHC data). The downtown Class A office market vacancy rate was 12.3 per cent in the third quarter of 2024 with an average net rent price of \$23.86 per square foot compared to 11.1 per cent and \$22.85 per square foot in Q3 2023. The industrial market vacancy rate was 2.6 per cent with an average net rent price of \$15.86 per square foot compared to 2.2 per cent and \$15.50 per square foot in Q3 2023. The apartment market vacancy rate was 2.0 per cent with a 2-bedroom unit renting for an average of \$1,582 per month. This compares to a year prior when the vacancy rate was 1.9 per cent and average rent was \$1,515 per month.

With respect to new construction, the Conference Board of Canada reported 0.3 per cent growth in Ottawa-Gatineau's office space in 2023 to a total of 18.914 million square feet compared to 18.881 million square feet in 2022. Building permits for 2023 included \$3.2 billion in value for residential construction (\$3.8 billion in 2022), \$667 million for commercial (\$754 million in 2022), \$691 million for public administration and non-commercial (\$451 million in 2022), and \$51 million for industrial (\$84 million in 2022). Housing starts were reported to be 11,170 units in 2024 (forecast was 11,993 units) compared to 12,283 units in 2023, a decline from 15,023 starts in 2022. Housing start

forecasts anticipate 13,260 units in 2025, 14,400 in 2026, and 14,740 in 2027. Notwithstanding current Conference Board of Canada forecasts for the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA, U.S. tariffs are likely to impact the housing market in 2025 and offset any potential upside from lower interest rates.

Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan Implementation Update

Following the approval of the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan in April 2024, the former Planning, Real Estate and Economic Development Department was reorganized. Economic Development Services was moved to the newly created Strategic Initiatives Department and lifted from a branch under the former Economic Development and Long-Range Planning service area, to its own service area. The Nightlife Commissioner Office and ByWard Market Public Realm Office were also moved to Economic Development Services as part of the realignment. This change recognizes the significance of economic development as a driver of city growth and prosperity and establishes the foundation for Economic Development Services, working with key internal and external partners, to effectively execute the priority actions identified in the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan. Two important developments positively impacting strategy implementation, are the Ontario-Ottawa Agreement and Economic Development Services work with Bloomberg Associates.

As part of the Ontario-Ottawa Agreement, the Province is providing the City, through Economic Development Services, \$18,500,000 over three years to support its economic development objectives and specifically fund downtown revitalization efforts. Projects include high-impact downtown public realm improvements to enhance public spaces, funding for the ByWard Market Public Realm Plan, marketing of the downtown area to promote economic activity, funding for the Somerset West Community Health Centre for community and business safety initiatives and collaboration on the implementation of the Ottawa Board of Trade's "Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda". In addition, the Province is providing \$1,500,000 directly to Invest Ottawa to support business and investment attraction initiatives.

As Council is aware, the City is broadly engaged with Bloomberg Associates, the philanthropic consulting arm of Bloomberg Philanthropies. Bloomberg works on a pro-bono basis with client cities around the world to improve quality of life for residents taking a strategic, collaborative and results oriented approach to making cities stronger, safer, more equitable and efficient. Economic Development Services is working with the Bloomberg Associates Economic Development Practice on several files and is directly benefitting from their nimble, data-driven, and subject-matter expertise informed

approach to identifying impactful solutions to overcome challenges and capitalize on new opportunities to drive economic growth and prosperity.

2024 and 2025 Economic Development Services Workplan Highlights

Below are the key highlights from the Economic Development Services workplan that are addressing several Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan priorities and action steps. In addition to the highlights below, Economic Development Services continues to deliver foundational programs and initiatives such as the Community Improvement Plan Program, Immigrant Entrepreneurs Awards and Small Business Week and collaborates regularly with partners to support sector specific programs, projects and initiatives.

Business Improvement Area (BIA) Grant Funding Program

The City supports BIAs through [four funding programs](#) with a total budget in 2024 of \$340,000. The Anti-Graffiti Funding Program budget totalled \$180,000 and the City contributed \$175,449.07 for graffiti removal initiatives last year. Of the remaining \$160,000 in available funds, the City contributed \$149,341.84 towards 17 BIA projects including one Formation & Expansion project, nine Mural & Architectural Design Feature projects and seven Research projects.

The Formation & Expansion grant funded project supported the boundary expansion and rebranding of the Sparks Street BIA to the Downtown BIA effective January 1, 2025. The BIA is a critical delivery partner in the programming, beautification and marketing of downtown as a desirable destination for workers, residents and visitors.

As part of the 2025 budget process, Council approved an additional \$100,000 contribution to the BIA Grant Funding Program directed to the Mural & Architectural Design Feature Funding stream. This increase supports investment in more low-cost public realm interventions to enhance commercial district placemaking – an action identified in the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan. With a new budget totaling \$440,000, \$180,000 will be allocated to the Anti-Graffiti Funding Program with the remaining \$260,000 already allocated to 26 projects including three Formation & Expansion projects, 15 Mural & Architectural Design Feature projects and eight Research projects.

Community Economic Development (CED) Grant Funding Program

The CED Grant Funding Program seeks to positively impact historically under-represented segments of the Ottawa population (e.g. residents of lower income

neighbourhoods, youth, older adults, rural residents, new immigrants, racialized and Indigenous populations, people with disabilities, etc.) through financial support to non-profit agencies for new, or expanded, projects that assist targeted groups to overcome identified obstacles to the creation of new jobs and/or new enterprises. Non-profit agency applicants propose how they will support a beneficiary population to overcome identified obstacles through, and beyond, the funding period. The CED Grant Funding Program awards a total of up to \$285,000 per year, distributed among the proposals selected by a jury panel of reviewers.

In 2024, the CED Grant Funding Program received 28 applications. Successful project proponents included the Centre for Innovative Social Enterprise Development (CSED), EcoEquitable, iSisters, Matthew House, Operation Come Home, Social Planning Council of Ottawa, Mindtrust, and Ottawa Community Loan Fund/Ottawa Community Benefits Network.

An example of how the CED Grant Funding Program supported an applicant initiative is the successful EcoEquitable application. Through EcoEquitable's established training program to support newcomer and others to become skilled seamstresses ("Sewing for Jobs"), program participants were equipped to earn an income through an in-demand skill. However, the infrastructure to connect the graduated skilled seamstresses to higher volume sewing contracts was hampered by a lack of awareness of the services available to potential customers, as well as by the lack of coordination and organization required to bid on contracts and marshal the collective capacity of the graduates. The CED program application sought to develop a business plan, web-based and physical marketing materials to market collective sewing capacity to meet the needs of larger volume sewing contracts. The result saw an increase in service requests from 20 in the previous year to 26 to date, as well as an increase in sales of more than 30 per cent and 18 seamstresses added to the eList of seamstresses available for contracts.

Small Business Needs Assessment

An important action outlined in the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan under the Key Sector Support priority, Economic Development Services initiated an assessment of the small business ecosystem in Ottawa. The objective was to identify systemic barriers to small business growth and prosperity and identify a series of actionable recommendations the City can consider such as improving access to business resources and supports and making it easier to navigate City licensing and permitting processes. While this initiative includes all small businesses, there was a deliberate focus on the challenges and barriers experienced by main street businesses

and Indigenous, racialized and Francophone businesses. Project work to date, supported by Bloomberg Associates, has included significant background research, best practice review, existing small business services scan, individual and small group stakeholder sessions, and a survey directed to small business owners which garnered 291 responses. Following a detailed analysis of the survey results and development of preliminary recommendations, all stakeholders engaged in the process will be invited to a virtual presentation to hear more about the survey results and next steps, including how the preliminary recommendations will form the basis of an action plan to be implemented in 2025 and 2026.

Tariff Toolkit and “Shop Local. Buy Canadian” Campaign

In response to the ongoing threat of U.S. tariffs and resulting business and resident uncertainty, and to support the work of Mayor Sutcliffe’s Economic Council, Economic Development Services has consolidated information and resources from various sources into a Tariff Toolkit available on [ottawa.ca Economic support | City of Ottawa](https://ottawa.ca/Economic-support). This resource can help residents and business owners understand the potential impact of tariffs on their supply chains and the local economy, and how they can help support local and Canadian producers and businesses as they adapt to a rapidly evolving environment. Economic Development Services will update the Tariff Toolkit page regularly as new information and resources become available.

A “Shop Local. Buy Canadian” campaign launched in March to mobilize residents and encourage their continued support for local businesses and Canadian goods and services. The campaign will run for approximately eight weeks in English and French and includes a combination of digital advertising on Canadian news websites (CBC, Postmedia, LeDroit and Radio-Canada) and on Meta social channels. Advertising includes digital ads on transit shelters, digital screens across the city (including City of Ottawa digital screens and billboards at several City facilities) and printed posters. To extend campaign messaging and reach, storefront window clings will be distributed to local businesses through the city’s 18 Business Improvement Areas and other partners.

Bytown and ByWard Market 200th Anniversary Celebrations

As approved through the 2025 budget, a three-year temporary position has been created within Economic Development Services to facilitate the development and delivery of a program commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the founding of Bytown in 2026 and the ByWard Market in 2027. This work will be co-led by Ottawa Tourism, supported by the 200th Anniversary Celebration Advisory Committee, co-chaired by

Mayor Sutcliffe, and informed by engagement with Indigenous, Francophone and cultural stakeholders, community associations, and business organizations and champions. The 200th Anniversary Celebration program will focus on four pillars: Proud History & Local Heritage, Cultural Experiences, Partnerships & Community, and Legacy Projects. A program overview with key dates and initiatives identified, along with the creation of a visual identity, is in development for review by the Advisory Committee in Q2 2025 and subsequent communication to Council and the broader community later this year.

Labour Market Study and Talent Action Plan

As part of the Talent priority of the strategy, Economic Development Services undertook a Labour Market Study for Ottawa in 2024, aimed at informing high-level recommendations to bolster the city's overall talent attraction and retention efforts. This analysis assessed Ottawa's ability to attract, retain, develop, and compete for talent by evaluating global, national, and local trends, and benchmarking Ottawa's competitiveness. The study also examined workforce needs through to 2035 across various economic sectors, occupations, and skill sets, identifying misalignments between talent supply and demand. Through extensive stakeholder engagement with economic development partners and sector leaders, findings were validated, and strategic high-level recommendations were identified to address talent shortages and enhance Ottawa's workforce competitiveness. The study will be finalized shortly, and findings shared with post-secondary institutions, industry sectors and other partners. The work will inform a Talent Action Plan for development and implementation later year.

The Talent Action Plan will aim to advance economic diversification and job creation by aligning talent supply with future job market demands. Key steps will include validating the study's recommendations with stakeholders and prioritizing proposed actions and implementation efforts for both the City and partners. The plan will focus on strategies to better attract, develop, and retain a diverse workforce, with the goal of strengthening Ottawa's workforce development efforts to support sustained and inclusive economic growth and competitiveness.

High Economic Impact Projects (HEIP) Program

The HEIP Program supports significant development initiatives that align with the City's economic development strategy and city-building priorities. Eligible projects meeting established criteria including project type, scope, scale and jobs created, are assigned a

dedicated Planner and Economic Development Officer to help navigate the municipal approvals process, ensuring economic development objectives are met while collaborating with subject matter experts across the City. In 2024, the program facilitated eight applications, including the new Nokia Canada Inc. R&D Campus in Kanata North, the University of Ottawa Advanced Medical Research Centre on Smyth Road, and three federal laboratory facilities located across the city. In 2025, work will continue on some of these projects alongside new applications that contribute to the City's economic development and city-building goals.

Economic Development Dashboard

To modernize the City's approach to providing economic data to residents, the business community, and economic development partners, Economic Development Services is collaborating with colleagues in Information Technology Services and Service Optimization and Data Insights to deliver an online economic development dashboard to replace the quarterly Economic Development Update. The dashboard will provide relevant and timely data on the local labour force, real estate, livability and downtown and include internal City data on water consumption, food premises licenses, patio/café permits, and commercial tax revenue. Bloomberg Associates, through the Bloomberg City Data Alliance, has shared helpful best practices from dashboard work they supported in Phoenix, Tampa, Baltimore, Lisbon, and Bratislava. The dashboard will launch in Q2 2025.

Downtown Revitalization

The impacts of the pandemic and remote/hybrid work models on downtown commercial vibrancy are well known. Declines in transit ridership, office occupancy and footfall and escalating street level social disorder, homelessness, addiction and mental health issues are concerning. With downtown often providing visitors with their first impression of the city, revitalizing and reimagining downtown Ottawa requires a multi-partner, multi-year approach that holds all stakeholders accountable. Future downtown resiliency will be dependent on a diversity of economic activity and new residential and institutional uses. This is especially important given the federal government is reducing its real property footprint and the City is working to address housing and climate change emergencies.

In May 2024, the Ottawa Board of Trade led, City of Ottawa supported, and Canadian Urban Institute developed "A Living Capital: Investing in Downtown Ottawa for a Dynamic Future – An Agenda for Aligned Action", was released. The report, known as

the “Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda”, outlines a vision for downtown Ottawa with specific deliverables including 16 actions and 60 steps to implementation. The report provides a clear leadership path and framework for action to transform downtown and aligns with both the City’s Strategic Plan and the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan. Below are four downtown initiatives led or supported by Economic Development Services:

- *Downtown Vibrancy Office*

The Downtown Vibrancy Office, led by the Ottawa Board of Trade and supported by partners including the City, is responsible to lead the coordination and implementation of the “Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda”. Key activities include promoting, supporting and tracking the advancement of downtown Ottawa revitalization projects and milestones, convening and supporting the champions and implementation tables, collecting and documenting data from partners to track progress and outcomes, and building confidence in Action Agenda progress by communicating success stories. Economic Development Services is supporting the Downtown Vibrancy Office with a financial contribution of \$150,000 annually for three years allocated from the Ontario-Ottawa Agreement.

- *Arts, Culture and Entertainment District*

Identified in the “Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda” as a catalytic move to reimagine downtown, Economic Development Services, with Ontario-Ottawa Agreement funding support, is working to establish a downtown Arts, Culture and Entertainment District. A framework will be developed in 2025 that will be shaped by an understanding of how to leverage and expand existing cultural and entertainment assets, what new initiatives should be considered, and how best to engage with business and not-for-profit stakeholders to secure buy-in. The objective of this initiative, anticipated to launch in 2026, is to drive increased visitation and economic activity by promoting downtown as a destination for arts, culture and entertainment experiences. Economic Development Services is partnering with the Ottawa Art Gallery on this project, supported by subject matter experts from Bloomberg Associates.

- *Downtown Tactical Team*

The City is implicated in many of the actions and steps to implementation outlined in the “Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda”. To review and prioritize City led actions, with consideration given to quick wins and work already underway,

Economic Development Services is establishing a cross-departmental Downtown Tactical Team. This team of service area subject matter experts will meet regularly to share updates and provide input on other projects contemplated that may require Council direction/approval, have resource implications, etc.

Economic Development Services, as a member of the Downtown Vibrancy Office Implementation Table, will share the City's progress on various initiatives as part of "Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda" progress tracking.

- *Downtown Marketing*

The Ontario-Ottawa Agreement provides \$200,000 annually in 2025 and 2026 for downtown marketing. Economic Development Services will look to partners to leverage this funding to deliver an impactful marketing campaign targeted to residents and visitors that increases awareness for the unique attributes of Ottawa's downtown area, highlights its many attractions and experiences, and creates reasons to visit. Staff will also examine opportunities to utilize this funding for targeted business / investment attraction initiatives.

Special Economic District Action Plans

The Official Plan designates two Special Economic Districts – the Kanata North Economic District and the Ottawa International Airport Economic District – to reflect their significance in shaping the city's identity and intrinsic role in advancing economic development growth and prosperity. Through the approval of the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan, Council directed staff to develop a tangible action plan for both districts in collaboration with Invest Ottawa, the Kanata North Business Association, Ottawa International Airport, and other partners. With a goal of driving sustainable economic growth, developing these action plans will require engagement and collaboration with local businesses, internal City stakeholders, and an openness to considering new approaches. Bloomberg Associates is supporting staff and partners in developing the Kanata North Economic District Action Plan, with stakeholder engagement and framework development work already underway. The Action Plan for the Ottawa International Airport Economic District will follow.

Orléans Economic Action Plan

As directed by Council, Economic Development Services is developing a tactical economic plan for Orléans that leverages the Integrated Orléans CIP, Orléans Corridor Secondary Plan, and investment in Stage 2 LRT to inform opportunities to prioritize and drive economic growth and prosperity in Orléans. Early ideas include a strategic

relaunch of the Integrated Orléans CIP program, engagement with business organizations including the Heart of Orléans BIA, Ottawa Board of Trade and Invest Ottawa to identify opportunities to collaborate on initiatives that raise awareness for Orléans as an attractive location for business and investment attraction and identifying and promoting potential commercial and mixed-use development opportunities. Economic Development Services will deliver a full plan later this year and include an implementation approach and timeline. In the more immediate term, plans are underway to relaunch the Integrated Orléans CIP later this spring.

Rural Economic Development Strategy Update

A Rural Economic Development Strategy was approved by Council in March 2020. This strategy addresses the unique characteristics of Ottawa's rural economy and focuses on delivering a supportive environment for rural businesses, rural tourism, agricultural innovation, and advocacy for rural priorities. The strategy will be updated beginning in 2025 to ensure alignment with the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan and the work of the City's Rural Affairs Office while also incorporating any new opportunities arising from the 2024 Rural Summit. The update will also consider opportunities aligned with the Province's new Rural Economic Development Strategy announced in January 2025.

Ottawa Film Office Soundstage Business Case

As approved by Council through the 2025 budget, Economic Development Services is providing funding support to the Ottawa Film Office to prepare a feasibility study and business case for a reimagined soundstage project that demonstrates the potential impact of the development on the local production sector and wider Ottawa economy. The Ottawa Film Office still has a site under lease with the National Capital Commission at the Greenbelt Research Farm and is pursuing opportunities to align with potential development and operating partners to finally bring the project to fruition. Economic Development Services recognizes the significant economic benefits of this important and necessary development to support economic diversification broadly but to also capitalize on a local sector that saw significant growth through the pandemic but may be at risk of reduced growth if the necessary soundstage infrastructure is not realized. An updated feasibility study and business case will support the Ottawa Film Office's advocacy and partner recruitment.

Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative

The City was a successful applicant to the first 12-global city cohort of the Leading

Economic Development in Cities program offered by the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative in collaboration with Harvard's Growth Lab and fully supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies. The program's mission is to support cities in building new paths to shared prosperity and sustainable growth, advancing city priorities and improving the lives of residents.

As a challenge-based program, the City identified an over-reliance, amplified by the pandemic, on the federal public service as a primary driver of economic activity, employment, real estate and downtown vibrancy, as an opportunity to examine existing sector growth opportunities and identify emerging sectors to support economic diversification. Following in-depth case study work, data analysis, and peer-to-peer discussion, the City team, led by Economic Development Services, is exploring specific sector growth opportunities in life sciences, aerospace, defense and security, and clean tech. While sector diversification is a city-wide opportunity, the challenge does have an emphasis on steps to mitigate downtown issues to prevent further decline. To that end, the work also includes exploring additional opportunities to increase housing availability by increasing supply and options and advancing planned placemaking and public realm initiatives and activations.

Nightlife Commissioner Office Update

In May 2023, Council approved the [Nightlife Economy Action Plan](#). The four-year Plan addresses the economic opportunities and challenges of Ottawa's nightlife through a series of ten recommended actions that support the development and delivery of nightlife infrastructure, amenities, and experiences, and bring valuable economic and social benefits and cultural energy to the city. The Plan is based on an analysis of Ottawa's then current nightlife economy, best practice research, and input from internal and external stakeholders. It also builds on the Ottawa Music Strategy (2018-2020), a cross-departmental collaboration aimed at supporting the growth of the local music industry and establishing Ottawa as a global music city. With timely and effective implementation in mind, recommendations were organized into two broad categories: those to be implemented by Economic Development Services within existing resources and those directed to the proposed Nightlife Commissioner Office. All recommendations are planned for implementation during the current Term of Council and create a foundation for the growth and development of the nightlife economy in Ottawa. Below is an update on each of the ten recommended actions. Please note that several actions will remain ongoing until the end of 2026.

Recommendation 1 - Establish the framework for a 'Nightlife Commissioner' Office, for implementation in 2024

The creation of a Nightlife Commissioner role is a best practice in global nightlife development. Several cities around the world have management positions dedicated to nightlife as part of their administrative structures, including iconic cities like London, New York and Amsterdam, but also smaller cities like Austin, Raleigh and Pittsburgh. Working with key nightlife sectors and stakeholders, the Nightlife Commissioner leads the implementation of the Nightlife Economy Action Plan and delivers the City's vision of a more vibrant, diverse, inclusive, viable, safe, and well managed nightlife. Based on stakeholder input received during the development of the Nightlife Economy Action Plan, Economic Development Services established the vision, mandate, and operating model for the Nightlife Commissioner Office, developed the job description for the Nightlife Commissioner position, and secured Council's approval for a new permanent FTE to lead the office.

The role of Ottawa's first Nightlife Commissioner, a first for Canada as well, required a credible, experienced and bilingual leader who could communicate the City's nightlife vision, engage with nightlife businesses and audiences, liaise with City officials and regulators, and help enable the conditions necessary to grow the nightlife economy. After an extensive recruitment process, the City selected Mathieu Grondin for the position of Nightlife Commissioner effective June 10, 2024.

Since joining the City, the Nightlife Commissioner has met (in-person and virtually) with over 110 groups and individuals invested in the nightlife economy, attended more than 30 economic development and cultural industries events at the request of organizers, delivered numerous presentations to groups ranging from Youth Ottawa to the Urban Land Institute (Ottawa) to the Canadian Urban Institute, and given more than 40 interviews to local, national and international news outlets highlighting the City's leadership in establishing the Nightlife Economy Action Plan and prioritizing the creation of the Nightlife Commissioner Office as a means of investing in the future of Ottawa's cultural identity. All these interactions have provided an opportunity for the Nightlife Commissioner to communicate the importance of the nightlife economy to the city's economic prosperity and quality of life while hearing directly from residents, businesses, and other stakeholders on sector challenges and opportunities for growth.

Later this spring, the Nightlife Commissioner Office is partnering with the [Ottawa Music Industry Coalition](#) to support the delivery of the "Canada After Dark" forum as part of the inaugural Capital Music Week (May 20-25). This two-day event will bring together

national and local city officials, subject matter experts, and industry leaders to discuss best practices for the growth and management of nightlife across Canada.

Recommendation 2 - Promote city-wide and neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood participation of residents, visitors and businesses in the nightlife economy

A key strategic priority of the Nightlife Economy Action Plan is to promote and increase the participation of residents and businesses in the wide range of experiences and cultural activities that are central to the nightlife economy. As part of this recommendation, the City is collaborating with Ottawa Tourism, the Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas (OCOBIA) and others to identify, promote and increase awareness of nightlife businesses and experiences across the city. The Nightlife Commissioner has visited most of Ottawa's 18 BIAs with the goal of understanding the nightlife product available, opportunities for growth, and any areas of existing tension between main street nightlife hubs and adjacent neighbourhoods.

The Nightlife Commissioner Office has established an Instagram account *@ottnightnuit* where the Nightlife Commissioner provides updates on Nightlife Office activities, shares pertinent regulations such as the Musician and Artist Loading Permit and Municipal Letter of Significance (Alcohol Service), interesting statistics from the Nightlife Economy Action Plan, and promotes and amplifies nightlife venues and events. The delivery of a branded nightlife website later this spring (see *Recommendation 9*) will provide new opportunities to highlight nightlife and cultural product citywide.

Recommendation 3 - Consider amendments supportive of the nightlife economy while undertaking reviews of City by-laws, policies, procedures, and services

The City's new Official Plan highlights a variety of objectives relating to intensification, economic development, and culture that also benefit nightlife through the principles of 15-minute neighbourhoods. Specifically, the cultural policies in the Official Plan that support nightlife include creating multi-use spaces and places for culture to live, grow and innovate; reinforcing neighbourhood and place identity through architecture and urban design; promoting the arts as an important element of placemaking; and strengthening the economic impact of creative and cultural industries.

Ottawa's nightlife businesses and stakeholders continue to identify barriers that impede nightlife growth, sustainability, viability, and investment, as well as the need to streamline procedures, and identify services and opportunities that support a more vibrant, diverse, inclusive, viable, safe, and well managed nightlife environment. By considering amendments that are supportive of the nightlife economy while undertaking

reviews of City by-laws, policies, and procedures, service delivery can be simplified and become more efficient for both the City and nightlife businesses. For example, By-Law and Regulatory Services has implemented on-line permitting systems / applications. Also, through the Zoning By-law review currently underway, the Nightlife Commissioner is engaged with staff to ensure they are considering broadened permitted land uses to stimulate new investment. The Nightlife Commissioner encouraged nightlife businesses and stakeholders to contribute to both the Special Events and Licensing By-law review processes through engage.ottawa.ca and is also engaged with staff working on the Special Events By-law Reviews on aspects supportive of the nightlife economy. A review of food premises licensing will also begin shortly, as the City looks to modernize these regulations to reflect industry changes.

One preliminary recommendation advocated for by the Nightlife Commissioner is an amendment to the All-Night Dance Event regulations in the Licensing By-law whereby a venue operating under an AGCO Temporary Extension of Hours of Sale license would not require an All-Night Dance Event License from the City. Should this recommendation move forward, it will significantly reduce administrative burden for the City and venue operators, restaurant owners and event producers delivering extended hours programming. Additional recommendations under consideration as part of the Special Events By-law Reviews that would benefit the nightlife economy include added flexibility for food trucks and mobile vendors during special events, and recommended amendments to noise exemption regulations to provide operational flexibility for outdoor events impacted by weather delays or other unforeseen circumstances.

Recommendation 4 - Establish a Nightlife Ambassador Council comprised of industry and community leaders to provide feedback and support to the Nightlife Commissioner Office

As a department-led working group, the Nightlife Council, established in November 2024, is composed of up to 18 members and is led by the Nightlife Commissioner. Participation on the Nightlife Council is voluntary (no remuneration provided) and the Council meets a minimum of four times per year. Six seats on the Nightlife Council are allocated to economic development and cultural industries organizations engaged in the nightlife economy with the remaining at-large members selected for a two-year term through a public application process. At-large members must be engaged in / interact with the nightlife economy as a participant, business owner, or worker. Recruitment of at-large members was undertaken through an online call for applications that generated over 500 applications. Applications were reviewed against standard eligibility requirements, community profiles and themes, applicant experience and background,

and with consideration given to the diversity within Ottawa's nightlife sector. The Nightlife Commissioner conducted virtual meetings with several short-listed applicants to assist with the final selection.

A complete list of Nightlife Council members is available on ottawa.ca. The first meeting of the Nightlife Council was held in December 2024 and focused on orienting members to their role, reviewing the Nightlife Economy Action Plan, and previewing Nightlife Commissioner Office priorities for 2025. The second meeting was held on January 30, 2025 and included a presentation and discussion with By-law and Regulatory Services regarding the Special Event By-law Review. The next meeting is scheduled for March 25, 2025 and will focus on safety issues for nightlife workers and participants with input and presentations from Ottawa Public Health and the Ottawa Police Service.

Recommendation 5 - Develop an annual 'Nightlife Commissioner's Report' that highlights Nightlife Commissioner Office achievements and nightlife economy developments

As the Nightlife Commissioner Office is part of Economic Development Services, a decision was made to include the Nightlife Commissioner's report as part of the annual update to Council on Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan implementation.

Recommendation 6 - Collaborate with Ottawa Tourism to promote nightlife experiences to visitors as part of destination marketing investments and advocate for the development of new nightlife experiences through the Destination Development Fund

In 2023 and 2024, in advance of the creation of the Nightlife Commissioner Office, Economic Development Services invested \$40,000.00 with Ottawa Tourism, using existing resources, to support the development of marketing tools to promote nightlife businesses and experiences to residents and visitors [Nightlife in Ottawa | Ottawa Tourism](#). Ottawa Tourism is supportive of the development of new nightlife product and is considering opportunities to leverage the Destination Development Fund to encourage new and existing businesses, entrepreneurs and producers to develop or expand, new or existing, nightlife focused attractions and experiences. The Nightlife Commissioner will continue working with Ottawa Tourism to develop and enhance opportunities to promote and grow Ottawa's nightlife.

Recommendation 7 - Develop a city-wide Nightlife Safety and Security Plan for nightlife workers and participants

The Nightlife Commissioner has started work to develop a nightlife safety plan designed for participants, workers and businesses to be delivered later this year. The purpose of the plan is to ensure that everyone involved in Ottawa's nightlife economy can engage in healthy, responsible, and safe nightlife experiences. The plan will leverage international best practices and existing industry and city programs and capitalize on subject matter expertise available through Ottawa Public Health and Ottawa Police Service. One important element of the plan will be the availability of online and in-person training tools, workshops and resources to prevent substance abuse and workplace violence and harassment ensuring everyone, regardless of age, cultural background, gender or sexual orientation, can enjoy a positive nightlife experience. The Nightlife Council's expertise will be leveraged to make sure the safety plan reflects the current nightlife landscape and industry priorities. The plan is expected to be delivered in Q3 2025 and, while broadly focused, will have a particular emphasis on reaching post-secondary students and young adults during the back-to-school period. An advertising and awareness campaign will be deployed across the city targeting live music venues, bars, nightclubs, campuses, etc. with the collaboration and support of business owners, student associations, promoters, and festival and event planners.

Recommendation 8 - Facilitate, with partners, new and diverse cultural and placemaking activities

The Nightlife Commissioner is supporting several organizations and entrepreneurs working to establish new nightlife attractions and experiences. For example, a group of event producers has developed a business plan to create an outdoor activation space downtown to contribute to neighbourhood and commercial vibrancy. The Nightlife Commissioner has provided significant guidance, helped the proponents identify and secure a site, made introductions to potential funding partners and suppliers, and helped identify potential support available through the City's Right of Way, Heritage and Urban Design service area related to downtown public realm interventions and placemaking. Ultimately, these young entrepreneurs are responsible to market and deliver their proposed project, but without the advice and support of the Nightlife Commissioner, they would not have advanced their concept as quickly.

The Nightlife Commissioner has also facilitated introductions between City service areas and several local and national businesses involved in placemaking and event activations, helping the City acquire additional expertise to develop its public realm plans. The Nightlife Commissioner and the Nightlife Economy Action Plan were featured as forward-thinking municipal policies in the recently released Canadian Urban Institute report, [Let's Talk About Placemaking | Canada's Placemaking Community](#), highlighting

the synergy between nightlife and placemaking and underlining Ottawa as a pioneer in the integration of placemaking into nightlife strategies to catalyze public realm development.

Recommendation 9 - Develop a virtual nightlife resource centre of tools and resources for new and established nightlife businesses and event organizers to encourage diverse, sustainable, inclusive and compatible experiences, events, and businesses

The Nightlife Commissioner, supported by colleagues in Economic Development Services, is developing a branded website to promote nightlife venues, attractions and experiences, increasing the visibility of nightlife product for residents and visitors. The website will also host a resource centre for nightlife businesses, organizations, and participants that will include tools related to the new Nightlife Safety Plan (i.e., training modules, downloadable signage, links to external resources, etc.) as well as information on City processes (i.e., business licensing, permit applications, etc.), and more. The website will be delivered in Q3 2025.

Recommendation 10 - Identify opportunities to support the establishment of new mid-size venues (1,500-2,000 person capacities) for events and live music.

The Nightlife Economy Action Plan recognizes that music is an integral part of the nightlife economy and a vital contributor to Ottawa's brand and quality of life. City support for the local music industry is championed and supported by the Nightlife Commissioner Office and Economic Development Services in collaboration with the Ottawa Music Industry Coalition. The availability of live performance venues, specifically mid-size venues, is critical to positioning Ottawa as a "music city". Prior to the Nightlife Commissioner's arrival, the National Capital Commission announced a deal with Live Nation to bring a 2,000-seat live performance venue to the ByWard Market (former Chapter's building). Partnering with global icon Drake, Live Nation will deliver an elevated live music experience through [History Ottawa](#), a new venue that will feature artists that previously would not have toured in Ottawa.

More recently, City at Night venue owners announced the opening of another live performance venue in the space formerly occupied by Mavericks on Rideau Street. The owners specifically cited the Nightlife Commissioner's work in facilitating networking opportunities and nightlife community advocacy for changing the nightlife narrative in Ottawa and creating new business opportunities.

Like many Canadian cities and G7 capitals, Ottawa's nightlife faces post-COVID challenges such as changing consumption habits, rising cost of living, inflation, razor

thin margins for business operators, outdated or cost-prohibitive policies, and a housing crisis that is pushing artists and creatives out of their preferred communities to the edges of the urban core and beyond. These conditions can hinder nightlife economy growth and deter some from participating. The work of the Nightlife Commissioner Office shines a light on these issues by highlighting the importance of a robust nightlife to quality of life and city building and facilitates conversations between external stakeholders and internal City services, ensuring City policymaking aligns with the current industry landscape and needs.

ByWard Market Public Realm Office Update

The ByWard Market Public Realm Office was established in 2023 with the goal of revitalizing public spaces within the ByWard Market. This work is guided by the vision of the Council-approved [ByWard Market Public Realm Plan](#) and is taking the current needs of residents and businesses into consideration.

Revitalizing downtown and the ByWard Market is a strategic objective for this term of Council and is recognized as a strategic priority and action in the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan. Enhancing the public realm in the ByWard Market forms part of the City's holistic approach to revitalize the district, alongside other efforts such as community safety and wellbeing initiatives, enhanced maintenance and cleanliness, and the establishment of the district governance and operating model with the creation of the ByWard Market District Authority in 2023.

Below is an update on the ByWard Market Public Realm Office accomplishments in 2024 and ongoing work that supports revitalizing public spaces in the ByWard Market.

Support to the ByWard Market District Authority

The ByWard Market District Authority is a Municipal Services Corporation created and approved by Council on June 14, 2023, through the [ByWard Market Strategic Alignment Initiative and Public Realm Plan Update](#).

To support the ByWard Market District Authority, Economic Development Services acts as a liaison between the ByWard Market District Authority and City services. This includes providing operational support, issue identification and resolution and coordination with City services to support programming within the operational boundaries of the ByWard Market District Authority which includes both the ByWard Market and Parkdale Market.

In June 2024, the City executed a Service and Asset Management Agreement with the

ByWard Market District Authority and established an Integrated Operations Team to support the ByWard Market District Authority. This team is comprised of key City service areas (including Road Services, Parking Services, By-law and Regulatory Services, Traffic Management, Event Central, Solid Waste Service and Right of Way) and the ByWard Market District Authority working collaboratively on proactive and enhanced service delivery. Since its creation, the Integrated Operations Team has been effective in elevating the day-to-day visitor experience in the ByWard Market through programming, activation of public spaces, and higher maintenance and cleanliness standards. These efforts have played a key role in the significant recovery of visitation since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In 2024, tangible operational improvements attributable to the work of this team, included:

- Expedited asset repairs (e.g., decorative features and catenary lighting on William Street);
- Coordination of seasonal street closures (e.g., William Street summer and winter closures to support enhanced programming);
- Event and film coordination (e.g., Day of the Dead Festival, first annual Christmas Market);
- Support to ByWard Market District Authority led pilots;
- Support with patio permit approvals and enforcement, and
- Enhanced street cleaning and snow removal (e.g., to support large events such as the World Junior Hockey Tournament).

Starting in 2024, the City provides an annual Council approved funding contribution of \$800,000.00 to the ByWard Market District Authority to realize their Council approved mandate and strategic priorities, which include:

- Maintenance of the ByWard Market District streetscape and public realm spaces;
- Enhancing the resident and visitor experience within the District;
- Hosting special events and activities of both city-wide and national significance;
- Advocating for initiatives that improve community safety and well-being within the ByWard Market;

- Advocating for investment within the ByWard Market; and
- Supporting and advocating for property, small business and entrepreneurial interests within the ByWard Market.

ByWard Market Priority Projects

The ByWard Market Public Realm Office is actively working on the priority projects confirmed by City Council as outlined in the report recommendation in the *ByWard Market Strategic Alignment Initiative and Public Realm Plan Update* to Council in June 2023. The priority projects include:

- William Street and ByWard Market Square street renewal;
- The creation of York Street Plaza; and
- The redevelopment of the 70 Clarence Street municipal parking garage.

Priorities Underway

Feasibility Analysis – City of Ottawa Asset Renewal

The City is currently undertaking a feasibility analysis to evaluate and understand the technical and financial aspects of the projects listed below.

- Destination building located at 70 Clarence Street (existing municipal parking garage)
- Replacement parking options
- Reimagined Plaza on York Street
- Rehabilitation of the historic market building located at 55 ByWard Market Square

The results of the evaluation and feasibility analysis will inform Council's decisions on next steps for the redevelopment of the City's assets located in the ByWard Market. An update to Council is anticipated in early 2026.

Street Renewal Projects - William Street and ByWard Market Square (between George Street and York Street)

As part of the Ontario-Ottawa Agreement Downtown Economic Recovery Funding announcement in 2024, the City will receive \$11.8 million over three years to undertake

the detailed design of the William Street and ByWard Market Square (between George Street and York Street) street renewal projects. The funding also includes the construction of the William Street segment, which is planned to be completed in 2026 in advance of the ByWard Market's 200th Anniversary in 2027.

In November 2024, three technical studies commenced to evaluate the required roadway alignments, traffic signals, street lighting, and outdoor market vending stalls to support detailed design work of the William Street and ByWard Market Square Street renewal project. The remaining detailed design work underway will consolidate these requirements, support upcoming public and business engagement, and provide detailed site plans and visual renderings.

Once completed, William Street will be an important corridor between Rideau Street and will draw visitation into the heart of the Market. The renewed spaces will include new street lighting and illumination, interactive public realm features, multi-use vending stalls, extended space for patios and storefront activations, street trees, seating and improved accessibility to provide an enhanced visitor experience. This project represents the first stage towards revitalizing City of Ottawa spaces within the ByWard Market and is intended to demonstrate proof of concept with the goal of inciting future investment from all levels of government and the private sector.

Evaluation Framework

The ByWard Market Public Realm Office and Bloomberg Associates have undertaken extensive research on the economic, social and environmental benefits of public realm investment to support the vision of the ByWard Market Public Realm Plan and build the "case for change" in the ByWard Market. The research compiled draws on the findings of existing literature, case studies and best practices and supports the well-established conclusion that investment in the public realm produces positive net benefits to municipalities, businesses, residents and visitors from an economic, social, safety, and environmental perspective.

With support from Bloomberg Associates the ByWard Market Public Realm Office is developing an evaluation framework to assess the impacts of the public realm projects and the implementation of the vision of the ByWard Market Public Realm Plan to support the revitalization of the ByWard Market and broader downtown recovery efforts. A baseline assessment will be completed in 2025 to form the basis of further evaluation and provide a snapshot of existing conditions in the ByWard Market.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan will be implemented from within existing resources. As part of the Ontario-Ottawa Agreement, the Province is providing the City, through Economic Development Services, \$18,500,000 over three years. The budget authority for the Ontario-Ottawa agreement is included within existing capital and operating account(s), in alignment with the fiscal years of the respective initiatives.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to receiving this report for information.

COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)

The Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan is city-wide.

CONSULTATION

No consultation was required or undertaken to support the preparation of this information report.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

The Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan considers the city's unique and diverse communities and incorporates equitable and inclusive practices. A strong economy serves the needs of Ottawa's diverse population and equally benefits people with disabilities. By incorporating equitable and inclusive actions, the City can ensure that everyone benefits from employment and economic development opportunities. Economic Development Services remains committed to working with the Accessibility Office through action plan implementation, as required and is committed to meeting the obligations of the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)* under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*.

ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations documented in this report are consistent with the City's Comprehensive Asset Management (CAM) Program objectives. The implementation of the Comprehensive Asset Management program enables the City to effectively manage existing and new infrastructure to maximize benefits, reduce risk, and provide safe and reliable levels of service to community users. This is done in a socially, culturally, environmentally, and economically conscious manner. When the City commits to the acquisition of new assets, consideration must also be given to the City's commitment to

fund future operations, maintenance, and renewal costs. It must also account for future depreciation when reviewing long-term financial sustainability. When reviewing the long-term impacts of asset acquisition, it is useful to consider the cumulative value and lifecycle costing of the acquired assets being taken on by the City. Any assets acquired in future through the implementation of the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan would be added to the inventory of assets and financial forecasts in the appropriate Asset Management Plan (AMP).

CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

One of the Guiding Principles of the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan is Environmental Sustainability. The strategy includes priorities and actions to address the intersection of climate change mitigation and economic development, including raising awareness of climate risks to Ottawa's business community and supporting readiness through outreach, education and information on programs that businesses can leverage to invest in climate resilient solutions

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no delegation of authority implications associated with this information report.

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Economic implications of the ongoing implementation of the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan include increased job creation, business investment and improvements in metrics such as commercial vacancy rates, visitor volumes and spending, airport passenger volumes, and the downtown recovery rate. Economic Development metrics will be reported as part of the City's Strategic Plan process and an update on the city's economy is included in the annual report to Council on action plan implementation.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications associated with this information report.

INDIGENOUS, GENDER AND EQUITY IMPLICATIONS

The Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan includes several priorities and actions to advance equitable participation in the economy for racialized and underrepresented segments of Ottawa's population. Such actions include expanding economic development partnerships with diverse stakeholders, working with partners to

address challenges related to the economic integration of immigrants, ensuring the city's diversity of people and place is represented in Ottawa's brand, and reviewing economic development led and service delivery partner programs to ensure they are equitable, accessible, and inclusive. The establishment of the Nightlife Council, a key recommendation of the Nightlife Economy Action Plan, considered diversity and inclusion principles through the public recruitment process to ensure the Council reflected the broad diversity of communities across the nightlife ecosystem. Economic Development Services remains committed to working with the Anti-Racism Secretariat to ensure alignment with the economic development priority contained in the City's Anti-Racism Strategy.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications associated with this information report.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

A Rural Economic Development Strategy was approved by Council in March 2020. This strategy, which addresses the unique characteristics of Ottawa's rural economy, will be updated beginning in 2025 to ensure alignment with the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan and incorporate any new outputs or direction arising from the 2024 Rural Summit.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

There are no technology implications associated with this information report.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan supports the Term of Council priority of "A city with a diversified and prosperous economy". It provides a framework to guide Ottawa's economic growth, diversification, prosperity, and resiliency for this Term of Council and beyond.

DISPOSITION

Economic Development Services will continue the implementation of the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan, Nightlife Economy Action Plan, and ByWard Market Public Realm Plan.