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King moving forward with its economic strategy

By Mark Pavilons

The groundwork has been laid to foster King Township's economic development strategy.
The process has been going on for several months, led by consultants Millier Dickinson Blais, who conducted research and engaged all sectors of King to provide valuable input.
Their findings will help set the stage for King's economic progression into the future.
Lauren Millier, from Millier Dickinson Blais, presented some key findings to the Sustainability Committee March 26. These findings and major themes will form the basis of the strategy.
Over the coming weeks, the consulting team will finalize a draft of the Economic Development Strategy to be presented to council on May 6 at 6 p.m. and the public is encouraged to attend and learn about the strategy.
King's population has been growing, albeit at a slower pace (7.4%) than the rest of York (41.6%)?between 2001-2011.?King is estimated to hit 34,900 by 2031.
King also has a slightly older median age ? 42.9. The median age in York is 39.3 and in Ontario it's 40.4.
King does have one of the most educated populations around, with 60% over the age of 15 having some post-secondary education.
There are roughly 2,646 businesses in King Township, split evenly between urban and rural locations. The major economic activities are agriculture, retail, construction and other services.
While Nobleton has the most businesses (123) of the three villages, Schomberg boasts the highest density and largest assessed value ($64 million).
There are 1,687 home-based businesses in the municipality, down slightly from the 1,814 in 2004. Of those, 959 have employees.
The bulk are construction companies, professional services and real estate offices.
More than a third are employed in a creative or artistic occupation ? 36.7%.
The bulk of King's workforce (85%) still commutes and less than 7.4% take transit or an alternative form of transportation.
King's labour force of 12,517 is finding more work locally. Jobs in King grew from 4,154 in 2002 to 6,284 in 2012.
But King's ratio of residential to business is still lop-sided. Residental makes up 87.2% of the assessment, followed by farms (7.9%), commercial (3.4%)?and industrial (.9%).
Another factor that somewhat hinders King's prosperity is the cost of land. It averages $500,000 per acre of unserviced land. Local tax rates, however, are in line with other neighbouring municipalities.
It's not surprising that King has 239 farms, which account for 28.9% of all farming operations in York Region. And 39.7% of our farms range from 10-69 acres in size. Primary activities include vegetables, horse/equine, tree nurseries, grain and hay farming. The average gross receipts for farms in King is just under $300,000 and capital assets (equipment, machinery, buildings and livestock) is pegged at an average of $3.3 million.
These are just some of the key findings from the report. The presentation can be found at
http://economicking.ca/2013/04/02/presentation-of-findings-and-major-themes/
With this information, and input from local sources such as businesses, organizations, politicians and the media, King's economic development strategy will be tailor-made to provide some direction as King progresses. Some of the next steps include setting goals, objectives and actions to make it all happen.