



**To:** COUNCIL  
**Meeting Date:** 9/2/2025  
**Subject:** Economic Development Advisory Committee Update  
**Submitted By:** Michael Launslager, Director of Economic Development  
**Prepared By:** Karisa Downey, Manager of Economic Development  
**Report No.:** 25-008-CRE  
**File No.:** C11  
**Wards Affected:** All Wards

## **RECOMMENDATION(S):**

THAT Report 25 -008-CRE Economic Development Advisory Committee Update be received;

AND THAT the Economic Development Advisory Committee be dissolved;

AND FURTHER THAT an Economic Development Working Group be established;

AND FURTHER THAT the Economic Development Working Group Terms of Reference be approved.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

### **Purpose**

Staff recommend that the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) be discontinued in its current state, and a Working Group be created in its place to support the deliverables identified in the 2025-2029 Economic Development Action Plan.

### **Key Findings**

In order to align with the goals and objectives in Cambridge's 2025-2029 Economic Development Action Plan, it is necessary to modernize the current committee (EDAC) format which has been in place since 2010. Staff are recommending that the Economic Development Advisory Committee be dissolved, and a Working Group be established

as a replacement with a mandate to support the implementation of the City of Cambridge's 2025-2029 Economic Development Action Plan.

**Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications.

**STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:**

Strategic Action

**Objective(s):** Not Applicable

**Strategic Action:** Not Applicable

**OR**

Core Service

**Program: Governance**

**Core Service:** Council and Citizen Committees

**BACKGROUND:**

The Economic Development Advisory Committee has functioned in its current state since 2010, with a mandate to:

- Advise City Council on economic development strategy and policies to sustain the vitality of the City's economic base;
- Provide a forum for discussion and co-ordination of economic development initiatives and programs with other community groups and agencies.

This model has not evolved in recent years, despite a changing landscape within the regional and local economy, and the emergence of new economic development priority areas for the City of Cambridge, including a strategic focus on attracting and retaining investment in key sectors such as Advanced Manufacturing, Creative Industries and Tourism.

In 2024, Economic Development staff lead members of EDAC through a series of engagement sessions to better understand their perspectives on participation in the committee, with the goal of identifying options to modernize the committee's function through a more focused approach. Over the course of two engagement sessions, staff learned that committee members sought the following from their participation in EDAC:

Experience: the people and experiences around the table are crucial to the group's success.

Collaboration: there was an interest in sharing information with purpose and using experiences to share best practices and support positive outcomes.

Growth: supporting the community through population and industry growth.

Priorities: the group indicated a need for better alignment with strategic priorities of the Corporation and Council.

Work Towards a Goal: as a group, work towards the goals and initiatives set in the Economic Development Action Plan (2025-2029).

EDAC members indicated that the current format of the committee was not fulfilling the needs of the participants, nor the economic development division. This feedback has validated staff's view that the committee's current structure should be modernized with a new format in order to identify and achieve:

- A clear mandate that sets out the strategic priorities of the group
- A plan to evolve and adapt to ensure maximum outcomes in alignment with Economic Development Action Plan
- Cost-benefit to the volunteer members, staff and Council to ensure the group is providing value in support of advancing economic development in Cambridge

## **ANALYSIS:**

### **Moving Forward:**

In response to observed challenges and feedback from EDAC members, staff committed to creating a new term of reference including a refined mandate, deliverables and group membership. After an extensive analysis on priority focus areas, best practices and functional requirements, staff identified the most appropriate path forward to address these changes was to dissolve EDAC and replace it with an Economic Development Working Group.

Under a one-year pilot program, it is recommended that an Economic Development Working Group be established with the following mandate:

The Economic Development Working Group acts in a support capacity to staff and Council, providing industry experience and perspective on a variety of strategic priorities as identified in the 2025-2029 Economic Development Action Plan. Through this lens, the working group may advise on specific projects, initiatives or policy issues.

Provide a forum for discussion and co-ordination of strategic issues in order to promote collaboration and enable working group members to function as ambassadors of Cambridge Economic Development by empowering and encouraging members to accurately communicate key messages to external stakeholders.

In addition, staff recommend that the following be identified as deliverables to be included in the Terms of Reference for the Economic Development Working Group:

- Identify agenda items relevant to achieving goals and objectives in Cambridge's Economic Development Action Plan and consider presentations by individuals and/or organizations on matters affecting economic development within the City of Cambridge.
- In alignment with pillars and objectives in Cambridge's Economic Development Action Plan, offer industry perspectives, act as a sound board for new ideas, and offer connections for staff engaged in sector work.
- Act as ambassadors of the economic development function by amplifying economic development projects, connecting businesses to the economic development office and promoting City programming.
- At the request of Council, to convene meetings on issues and/or matters related to the City's economic well-being.
- As an active group member, regularly provide industry insights and bring relevant agenda items forward for group discussion and insight.
- Assist in building strong connections with other relevant community groups, industry organizations and educational institutions.
- Liaisons to support a better understanding of key economic development opportunities and drivers across the community, acting as advisors to the City of Cambridge staff.

Membership for the proposed Economic Development Working Group is recommended to reflect the key sectors, themes and priorities identified in the 2025-2029 Economic Development Action Plan, which will ensure that members have tools to act as ambassadors, amplifying economic development projects and connecting businesses to the economic development office. Staff recommend that working group membership consists of business representatives under the following categories:

- Advanced Manufacturing sector
- Creative Industries sector
- Tourism sector
- Industrial/Commercial Real Estate sector

- Small Business sector
- Chamber of Commerce
- Post-secondary Institutions
- Mayor
- Council Representatives (2)

In consideration of this new format, staff recommend a one-year pilot be implemented to test the Working Group approach, with meetings taking place on a bi-monthly basis, with additional meetings as needed. The Working Group will also issue regular progress updates to Council as part of the Economic Development Division's communications.

**EXISTING POLICY / BY-LAW(S):**

By-law 23-035 to govern the proceedings of Council and its Committees.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There is no financial impact.

**PUBLIC VALUE:**

**Collaboration:**

The introduction of an Economic Development Working Group will allow for an enhanced level of collaboration between City of Cambridge Economic Development staff, industry, business support services and Council. This format will permit fruitful and raw conversations about the realities of the existing business environment, and what can be done to make Cambridge a desirable place for industry, talent and visitors.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT:**

**Advisory Committees Consulted:**

The Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) was consulted on this project in the summer of 2024 at two separate meetings. EDAC members had an opportunity to voice their opinions on the existing EDAC format, as well as indicate what would create a more productive environment through two facilitated sessions. As a result, the following were identified as keys to a positive future state:

1. Share Industry Information: Share with the group/ economic development staff, industry information that may impact the work that EDAC or economic development staff are conducting.

2. **Be Ambassadors:** Be ambassadors of the economic development function by sharing the work that is being done, connect businesses to the economic development office and promote City programming.
3. **Build Connections:** Assist in building strong connections with other relevant economic development groups and educational institutions.
4. **Work Towards City Priorities:** Engage other divisions within the City to insure EDAC members have knowledge of City and Council priorities.

#### **PUBLIC INPUT:**

Posted publicly as part of the report process.

#### **INTERNAL / EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:**

##### **Internal:**

Economic Development staff has consulted with the office of the City Clerk.

##### **External:**

Current members of the Economic Development Advisory Committee were engaged on the future of EDAC in the summer of 2024 over the course of two facilitated sessions.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Staff recommend that the Economic Development Advisory Committee be dissolved and an Economic Development Working Group be established in its place to better serve the business community in Cambridge and align with the goals and objectives set out in the 2025-2029 Economic Development Action Plan.

#### **REPORT IMPACTS:**

Agreement: **No**

By-law: **Yes**

Budget Amendment: **No**

Policy: **No**

#### **APPROVALS:**

**This report has gone through the appropriate workflow and has been reviewed and or approved by the following as required:**

**Director**

**Deputy City Manager**

**Chief Financial Officer**

**City Solicitor**

**City Manager**

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. 25-008-CRE Appendix A – Economic Development Advisory Committee Terms of Reference (2019)
2. 25-008-CRE Appendix B – Economic Development Working Group Terms of Reference (2025)