



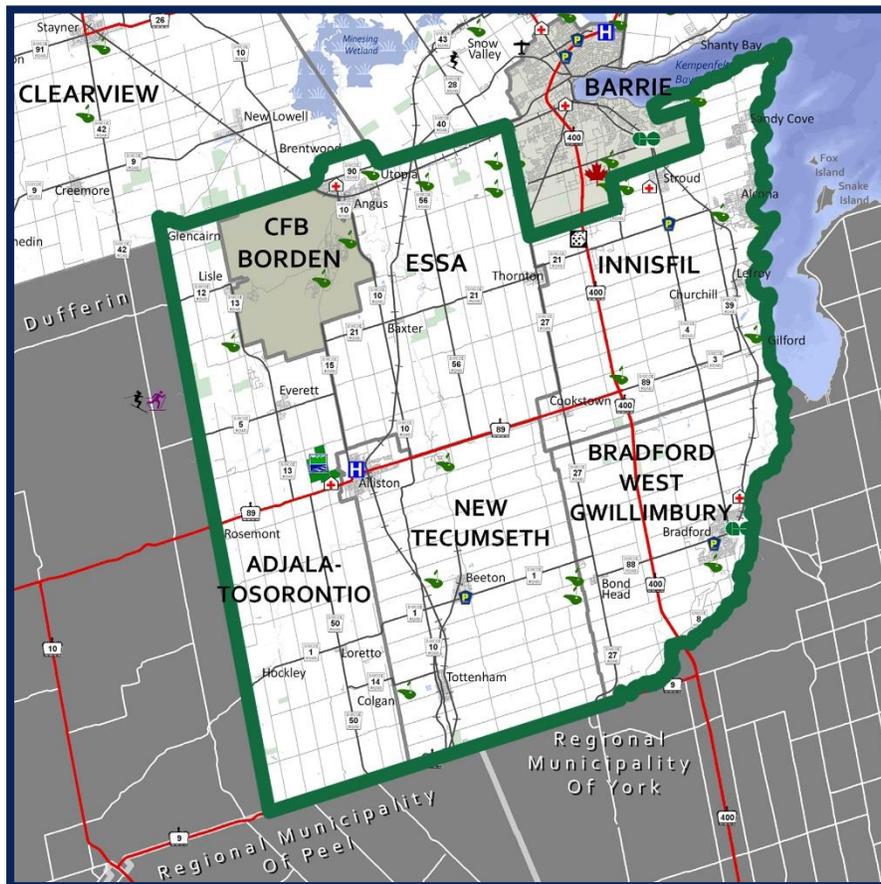
**Nottawasaga  
Futures**



In Partnership with the  
Municipalities of South Simcoe

# Township of Essa Business Retention & Expansion Survey

## Manufacturing Sector 2015



Map Courtesy of the County of Simcoe

Nottawasaga Futures would like to thank all of our partners who made this project a success.



## **Introduction**

Nottawasaga Futures, in partnership with the County of Simcoe and the Municipalities of South Simcoe, conducted a business support program for the manufacturing sector of South Simcoe. The model used was the Business Retention and Expansion program (BR+E) adapted to the Ontario business environment by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and is intended to identify specific barriers to growth and highlight opportunities for expansion through a carefully designed survey.

This survey has been presented in each of the five South Simcoe municipalities with dedicated support and full participation. This report is a companion report to the South Simcoe Business Retention & Expansion Survey report, and should be taken in context.

## **Methodology**

This report summarizes the results of a business visitation survey conducted with manufacturers from across the Township of Essa. In the Township of Essa the manufacturing sector is a modest contributor to the employment base. In 2014, manufacturing accounted for 3.6% of all jobs in the Township of Essa, making it the 10<sup>th</sup> largest employment sector in the municipality. Four businesses were selected as a representative sample of the various sub-sectors within the manufacturing sector, representing a diversity of operations and sizes within the Township. Of the four selected, two agreed to participate.<sup>1</sup> Many businesses across South Simcoe declined to participate, stating they were too busy, not interested, or did not need the assistance available to them. In an effort to increase uptake, Nottawasaga Futures and the municipalities tried a number of different approaches. Over 600 phone calls were made, as well as direct emails and phone calls from the municipalities to additional contacts, a targeted postcard mailed to all 128 businesses, and door to door visits to 27 businesses that had not responded by phone or email.

The Economic Development office of the Township of Essa, in partnership with Nottawasaga Futures, interviewed business owners between September 2014 and February 2015 using the Standardized OMAFRA Business Retention and Expansion questionnaire.

The Business Retention and Expansion program focuses on existing business in a community. While the attraction of new business is an important aspect of a balanced economic development strategy, the Business Retention and Expansion process recognizes the need to do more to assist existing businesses, helping them to survive and grow. Through the BR+E process we were able to get a better understanding of business needs, including the necessary information and resources required to address those needs. Through the Nottawasaga Futures Business Resource Centre businesses were able to access business resources and meet one on one with consultants.

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<sup>1</sup> Given that this survey was of a limited number of respondents, it cannot be definitively concluded that all manufacturing businesses in the area share similar experience.

As well, individual businesses were provided with information on grant programs available to them.

The survey was a tool used to gather information from businesses in the Township of Essa with the intention of discerning the critical issues relevant to business retention and expansion. The survey was structured to identify Red Flag issues in key areas such as;

- Manufacturing Activities
- Business Climate
- Future Plans (downsize, relocate, expand/renovate, close)
- Business Development
- Workforce Development
- Training
- Local Community Advantages and Disadvantages

The following report is a discussion of the key areas, with the results summarized and cross-tabulated<sup>2</sup>, to better understand the survey responses. The tool used for analysis was *Executive Pulse*. The survey included community based questions. Some questions required discrete answers from pre-determined lists (with options to identify additional or other answers), while others were open-ended questions that elicited qualitative responses.

## Survey Findings

Essa businesses that responded to the survey are locally owned and operated, with the owners involved in the day to day operation of the business. Both businesses have been operating in the community for under 10 years. These are small businesses each employing less than 10 employees. The businesses identified the region and nation as their primary markets. Both businesses rated the community as a good to excellent place in which to do business. Furthermore, both have had a positive change in attitude toward the community as a place of business over the last 3 years.

Both businesses view their respective industries in a growth mode moving forward and are expecting to expand over the next 18 months, with one of the businesses relocating within the Town of Angus. The planned expansion(s) are expected to lead to an increase in the workforce (7 new jobs in total), increased need for employee training, additional product lines, and process improvements.

In terms of the workforce as a factor of doing business in the community, both businesses rated it as fair. The businesses identified the community as a poor factor in the ability to attract new

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<sup>2</sup> Cross-tabulation refers to the investigation of one question based on the response of another question.

employees. In terms of hiring challenges, lack of appropriate skills and training of applicants was identified. Both businesses mentioned that they were facing barriers for their employees to receive any necessary training. These are the costs associated with the training itself and loss of productivity during training periods.

Some of the comments that were offered suggest discontent with various aspects including:

- availability of industrial space for rent or lease;
- lack of support from the Chamber of Commerce;
- uncompetitive development charges;
- building permit application processes for expansion;
- and support from the municipality.

Overall the business community was happy with the state of business in the Township of Essa. They valued their quality of life and feel there is good availability of adequate housing and support from local residents. The businesses were content to remain in the community and for both of them, expanding and renovations will continue to be in their plans for the future.

Looking forward, the businesses would like to see other community businesses and the town come together to promote local entrepreneurship. They would also like to see more in terms of small business support from the municipality, i.e. a more streamlined and efficient zoning and permitting process.



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