

## Position Paper: King Township Municipal Budget 2023

King Chamber Advocacy Committee

### Background:

There is a strong partnership between the King Chamber of Commerce and the Township of King, working together to create a vibrant and prosperous community. A complete community, which includes employment opportunities so people can live, work and play in King Township, but also one that offers supportive environments for business growth in designated areas in the Official Plan.

By far, the largest percentage of municipal tax revenues derive from residential property taxes. To achieve a more balanced tax base, growth of the business community is essential. The King Chamber of Commerce, in consultation with its member businesses, have reviewed the 2023 municipal budget, and are providing feedback to Council and the community regarding priorities for spending allocations.

### Local Context:

- As King Township continues to grow, it is essential to address each of these factors:
  - **JOBS:** Ensure good quality employment opportunities in King Township
  - **TALENT:** Diversify the types of businesses operating here to create a strong foundation that will attract and retain talent, and create new opportunities
  - **REVENUES:** Increase the percentage of municipal revenues coming from commercial property taxes, easing the burden on residential property taxes
  - **SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS:** Continue to offer critical programs and supports to help small businesses grow, especially along Main Streets in our three neighbourhood centres.

- **INFRASTRUCTURE:** Investing in key infrastructure and adhering to timelines for planned investments, to ensure King Township remains an attractive place for businesses to grow - energy, transportation, while preserving the natural environment that is King's heritage and responsibility
- **SUSTAINABILITY:** Committing to meet and exceed targets for reducing GHG, investing in innovative solutions, supporting knowledge mobilisation to engage businesses across the community in advancing sustainable projects for responsible growth, in line with official plans

#### Broader Context - 2023 Headwinds for Businesses and Communities:

- Inflation, increasing energy costs, high interest rates, supply chain issues and labour shortages will continue to negatively impact business activity at all levels, including locally.
- Ontario: Bill 23 will directly impact municipal tax revenues needed for all services, but particularly economic development, as it has been traditionally an area of under-investment for King Township. Will impact this year and the next several years.
- Ontario: Bill 109 caps development charges and is driving changes to the municipal planning and development processes, creating more financial pressures on commercial and residential tax rates to fund critical infrastructure.
- Ontario: Coming into effect in 2023: Producers responsible for costs of recycling; already in place for batteries, tires, excess soil, chemicals, but this year, will apply to everything produced - impacting packaging, production processes and supply chains
- Future federal and provincial legislative requirements on ESG, GHG emissions, carbon taxes - will create uncertain environments and higher operating costs for businesses

#### Immediate Economic Issues in King Township Requiring Solutions

Looking at issues faced by businesses in King Township today, there are immediate priorities requiring collaborative and creative solutions to address barriers to achieving sustainable business growth. These issues include:

1. Lack of commercial rental spaces - low to no availability
2. Lack of availability of mixed residential/commercial properties
3. Slow/no progress on mixed use developments in the three growth centres of Nobleton, King City and Schomberg
4. The slow speed at which commercial development is happening, lagging the growth of residential development.
5. Underutilization of designated employment lands, and the lack of visibility into reporting, attraction efforts, timelines
6. Delayed deployment of investment into growth centres to address parking, services and infrastructure.

The King Chamber of Commerce encourages the municipality to have ongoing dialogues with the business community, property owners and residents to develop specific action plans to address these priority areas.

### 2023 Municipal Budget

***“Government doesn’t create economic growth on its own, but they do play a central role in creating the right conditions to support competitiveness and growth” - Rocco Rossi, CEO of Ontario Chamber of Commerce***

### Recommended Action 1: Reduce Barriers for Businesses

- CULTURE AND MINDSET: The municipality should foster and develop within its staff, a culture of being “Open for Business”, with business services and programs that are optimized for efficient and effective delivery. The municipality should continue to Invest in streamlining permitting processes for businesses, a key barrier that has been cited by many of our business members. An immediate example:
  - The Transition from Pre Consultation Meeting (PCM) to Collaborative Application Approval Process (CAPP) with more steps and stages before an application is deemed complete and the clock starts ticking on the time for applications to be processed and municipality is not penalized if process times are not met

- Although driven by Bill 109, the elimination of the pre-consult has resulted in more silos within the municipality, more time delays to advancing projects, and increased costs for businesses.

The municipality should proactively assess whether the transition to CAPP has achieved the stated objectives, collect metrics on the impacts to businesses, and commit to a timely review process to quickly identify issues with the process and address them.

- **INCREASE EFFICIENCY OF KEY PROGRAMS:** Barriers impact all businesses, large and small. Many local small businesses do not take advantage of support programs such as CIP grants due to:
  - Labour shortages
  - Supply chain issues for materials
  - Challenges in getting contractors to prepare quotes and estimates for relatively small projects.
  - Costs of building materials
  - The complexity of navigating municipal processes across multiple departments - planning, building, permitting, by-law, public works.

The municipality should make it a priority to identify these barriers, and measure impacts of improvements, with regular reports to council. Progress in creating a culture of business-efficient processes could be a quarterly report to Council and the Business community.

## **Recommended Action 2: Expand Investment in Economic Development**

- Section 1.5.2 of the Official Plan (OP) highlights eighteen (18) Economic Goals and objectives to achieve a balanced community; those goals need to be prioritized and resourced appropriately. The OP in combination with the budget and business plan must be the guiding documents for Council. **WE MUST NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THESE.** Without economic prosperity, the objectives cannot be met, as there will be a lack of good paying employment opportunities and unsustainable dependency on residential property taxes will mean lack of municipal control over our future.

- Ensure full staffing complement in economic development is in place, so no momentum is lost, and business development efforts can continue. There is a need for URGENCY, given the changing landscape for businesses, the ongoing residential growth, and the highly competitive environment for business attraction amongst municipalities.
- The Economic Development Budget needs to be increased to allow for more staff resources to provide services and supports to a growing business community, in an increasingly competitive environment; budget for economic development has remained a very small percentage of the overall municipal budget for years, but as we turn our eyes forward to economic recovery from COVID and putting a foundation for the future in place, MORE RESOURCES ARE NEEDED

### **Recommended Action 3: Stay Focused on Strategic Work**

- Key studies are in the works that need to stay on track as they are critical for the future prosperity of King Township. The municipality must ensure the resources are available to see these studies to completion in a timeline fashion, we urge continued progress on the following:
  - New Economic Strategy Plan - more important than ever given the massive changes in the world since the last one was done (COVID, priority industry sectors, labour etc)
  - Employment Lands Study
  - Doctor's Lane
  - Highway 11
- Planned large capital projects must move forward in a timely manner. For example, the Main Street Schomberg Streetscaping Project keeps getting pushed further and further out in the 10-year capital plan. Preliminary design works has been done but no detailed design has been completed. This big dig project would include bridge replacement, water, sewer, stormwater, parking and street configuration, all items that meet both immediate priorities as well as longer term ones.
- Tackling Climate Change and Sustainability: The pressing challenges related to climate change are significant for the business community. The need to reduce GHG emissions,

incorporate sustainable means of production, and aggressively pursue innovative solutions for energy, recycling, and sourcing locally, are key to our shared future prosperity. Business must work hand in hand with community members, environmental organizations, and government to advance solutions together. Sustainability and Climate Change are priority issues requiring strong collaboration. Business prosperity and climate change mitigation are not mutually exclusive issues. The Chamber strongly encourages the municipality to elevate climate change within the township to have greater focus, impact, and engagement. Specifically:

- Ensure the new positions and full staff complement of individuals are in place within Climate Change, Sustainability and Environment roles (4 staff).
- Have those staff focused on climate issues beyond just the municipal corporation, where we know there is only a small percentage of GHG emissions. Ensure that the staff are developing and supporting community-led initiatives to have a greater impact on reducing GHG emissions.
- Ensure cross-departmental coordination on key community strategies, particularly those that have longer term impacts such as with Planning and Economic Development.
- Re-constitute a committee of counsel with community members participating, to assist the municipality in addressing climate change, and ensuring visibility and accountability for meeting objectives.

The King Chamber of Commerce and its member businesses are strong champions for balanced growth. We remain committed to continuing our collaboration with government and residents to find creative and effective solutions to the challenges of business growth within the Township, in pursuit of a complete and prosperous community.

#### Reference Documents

[Ontario Chamber of Commerce: Supporting Economic Growth in Uncertain Times](#)