

Perspective 2020 InSight

An economic development strategy for the Corporation of the Town of
HEARST, ONTARIO



Canada 

Hearst Council, in partnership with many community stakeholders, has prepared this Economic Development Strategy, which sets out our community's approach for building our local and regional economy in a sustainable manner.

As Mayor of Hearst, it is my pleasure to present the culmination of the long but enjoyable process of planning for our future. This vision and plan that we have achieved together, will enable us to confidently face the challenges that our dreams will undoubtedly bring.

When Council undertook this unique planning approach, it was clear that public participation would be the most important element for achieving success. Many people dedicated themselves to ensure that this plan represents the ideas of everyone in the community. I take pride in the fact that our future is predicated on our citizen's needs - as expressed by ourselves.

I would like to acknowledge the special dedication of Council, the members of all the working groups, and particularly, the many volunteers who participated in the discussion groups and community consultations. Additionally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to municipal staff that determinedly went beyond their duties to make this plan a reality for all of us.

Change is coming and we are prepared.

Yours very truly;

Roger Sigouin

Perspective 2020 InSight

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Hearst Strategic Plan Executive Summary

Scope

This Hearst Economic Development Strategy:

- Only relates to those matters where Hearst Town Council can add value and where it is proper for local government to contribute;
- Applies to the local government area of Hearst;
- Represents the interest of local stakeholders as presented by and through the community consultation process;
- Works alongside regional, provincial and federal economic development initiatives, namely: the Northeastern Ontario Municipal Association's – ***Facing the Millennium***; The Province of Ontario's – ***Smart Growth Initiative***; and the Government of Canada's – ***Action Plan for Northern Ontario***;
- Builds on work already being conducted locally and within the region, but gives clarity to the specific roles that Council can play;
- Is informed and acknowledges the mandates and efforts of lead agencies such as Nord-Aski, MNM, FedNor, and Constance Lake First Nation; and
- Is a living document that is supported by an action plan and accountability measures.

Hearst Economic Vision Statement

We, the community of Hearst, through this 20-year economic strategic plan, aspire to be the community of choice for ourselves and future generations. We will achieve our vision through a healthy economy based on our forestry heritage and the development of our natural resources, sustainable secondary business sectors, strong and diverse tourism related businesses, vital neighbourhoods, excellent schools, and extensive recreational, social and health services and cultural opportunities. We will preserve and cherish our rich cultural roots, welcome our aboriginal neighbours and celebrate the diversity of our people.

Our Common Values

The development of the Hearst economic development strategy and its game plan is structured on a platform of common values shared by individuals, agencies and businesses in the Hearst community. These values are:

- Public safety supersedes all economic needs.
- Municipal revenues are public funds for the betterment of municipal services that are applied to the greater community good and delivered in an open and accountable fashion.
- Quality of life extends beyond economic returns and includes quality education, health and social services, safe and free public space, access to affordable leisure and recreational facilities.
- Private sector initiatives are at the core of the Hearst economic structure, and competitiveness is defined and achieved through standard market conditions without government interference.
- The natural resource based industries, including forestry, tourism, mining and agriculture, are the economic foundation on which Hearst has been developed and are the heritage that will ensure prosperity and a stable future.
- All sectors must work harmoniously to preserve existing businesses and facilitate the development of new businesses.
- Environmental sustainability and effective management of natural resources are critical elements of a long term and prosperous future.
- The cultural diversity of the local population, including the francophone majority and the anglophone and aboriginal minorities, is an integral part of the Hearst community and its future.

The Economic Goals and Objectives

The underlying target of economic development is job growth. To grow more jobs and to offer a wider choice of jobs and employment opportunities, it is necessary to expand Hearst's and the region's economic pie. While it is the role and investment of private sector business that will grow the pie, local government, in concert with regional stakeholders, can contribute to the development of an environment that is conducive to such investment. Growth is often a slow and complex process, which benefits from the vision, governance and resources of government.

Perspective 2020 InSight incorporates goals and objectives to ensure that a prosperous community is present for the current and future generations of Hearst residents. These goals and objectives include:

- Support the economic competitiveness of Hearst and area businesses through the efficient provision of municipal services and through an equitable tax levy.
- Establish Hearst as a leader in forestry value added manufacturing.
- Establish Hearst as a year-round tourist destination, structured on the community's cultural heritage and outdoor adventure assets.
- Achieve controlled economic diversification without compromise to the core elements of the existing economic structure.
- Create development catalysts to encourage private sector investment and job creation.
- Increase Hearst's regional relevance as an education, health and social services centre for surrounding communities.
- Ensure adequate infrastructure is available to support growth and development.
- Assist and work through local economic development agencies to avoid duplication in sponsoring growth and development.
- Increase the participation of the First Nation's community in all aspects of the economy and its various sectors.
- Achieve long term sustainable growth without compromise to the common values shared by all residents of the Town of Hearst.

Strategy Targets

In Hearst, expanding the economic pie requires strategies aimed at four fronts:

1. Sustaining local business, jobs and reinvestment.
2. Growing local business, jobs and opportunities.
3. Attracting external business and investments.
4. Developing existing tourism assets.

The Strategic Balance

Developing balance is a cornerstone of sustainable development. Through the implementation of this plan, made under a collaborative approach through all stakeholders of the community, council is dedicated to assure a balanced approach to development. Elements of the plan hold a diverse and even portfolio of activities that recognizes the importance of each of the following core principals:

Investment anchors jobs.

Small business creates new net jobs.

Globally competing industry is the foundation of the Hearst economy.

Small home-based enterprises generate wealth.

Public sector financial risk is unacceptable.

Economic strategies are long-term investments.

Stakeholder participation is essential.

Critical to success is the recognition of the public sector bottom line e.g. the importance of balancing (1) social, (2) environmental and (3) economic considerations over the long term.

Council Leadership and Organizational Focus

As an organization, Hearst Council has an important role to play in helping to create an environment that is conducive to investment and job creation. The task of delivering economic development strategies requires a whole-of-council approach and the empowerment of Council's economic development tools, namely its "Economic Development Corporation" and Council's influence on local associations and agencies to act in concert with Council towards common goals and objectives. Central to this concerted effort by Council, is a consistent message and strategy, based on the principals of:

Action
Communication
Competitive practice
Continuous improvement
Teamwork & Accountability

The Hearst Economic Development Strategy

To achieve its economic development goals and objectives, the Council, through the *Perspective 2020 InSight* planning initiative, has developed a four-pronged economic development strategy.

The first strategy revolves around focusing Council's processes and assets to support the growth of the Town and the regional economy, by delivering customer oriented, outcome-driven works and services. This prong of the strategy recognizes that effective and efficient local government gives an economy a competitive edge.

The second strategy entails collaborating with other stakeholders to deliver outcomes beyond the individual capability and resources of local institutions, by forging partnerships at a regional and provincial level. This recognizes that economies transcend immediate municipal boundaries and that regional collaboration achieves more than individual efforts.

The third strategy is concerned with supporting and encouraging the development of select business sectors, such as forest value added manufacturing, tourism, regional retail and others, to build and strengthen clusters by providing appropriate planning, facilitation and support. This recognizes that competitive economies need strong drivers and diverse sectors.

The fourth strategy focuses on developing social capital and high quality of life (including quality environmental, recreational and public space) to facilitate and support economic development by providing leadership, planning and governance. This recognizes that a healthy, educated, and mobile workforce is a critical ingredient of a competitive economy.

Strategy One:

Focus Council's Processes and Assets

The first prong of the strategy involves directing Council's resources, assets and processes to support economic development and investment. The strategy has several objectives, which are outlined below:

Provide Clear Planning and Zoning Guidance

A stable and clear planning environment is a key pre-condition for leadership in economic development. It is critical that there be a long-term perspective for development in Hearst, to ensure that there is sufficient space, services and infrastructure for future economic development and that there are clear development controls and appropriately designed physical environments to support growth.

Beautification of Highway 11 Corridor

Hearst's Highway 11 corridor or Front Street is a critical element of the Town's image and its ability to draw transient traffic into the community. It is necessary for business retention and to encourage tourism flow that the physical environment of this commercial area be improved along with public safety and access. Existing assets and public investments need to be optimally utilized.

Mandate Hearst Economic Development Corporation

The re-establishment of the Hearst Economic Development Corporation is a tangible vehicle to execute Council's strategic plan. The Hearst EDC can be used as a vehicle to leverage external government funding and in partnership with other community partners, it can realize unique programming on behalf of Council.

Communicate the Plan and Create a Pride Campaign

The need to create awareness of Council's strategic planning initiative is instrumental to the plan being adopted by related agencies and like-minded organizations. In addition, community pride and awareness of the importance individual economic sectors enhances the quality of life of Hearst residents, and are often the best means of ensuring the long term participation of residents and the success of the overall strategic plan.

Deploy Council Assets to Support Specific Economic Development Activities

When used in an optimal and judicious fashion, the resources and assets that Council has at its command can often be used to unlock forms of economic activity and investment that would not have otherwise been attained. The potential is particularly evident in relation to cultural and recreational facilities and assets under Council's control.

Strategy Two: Collaborating by Forging Partnerships at Regional and Provincial Levels

The second prong of the strategy is focused on collaborating with local and regional stakeholders to deliver outcomes that are beyond the individual capabilities of local institutions. This strategy has several objectives, which are outlined below.

Develop a Co-operative Network Among Local Governments in the Region

A cornerstone of effective regional development is the ability of local institutions to act together to promote and market a region's uniqueness, and to lobby political support for special projects and cultivate investments. The focus of such co-operative network for Hearst should be to attract new investment to the community and area, by supporting specific business clusters and facilitating new enterprise development from within the region. To do this, it will be necessary to share resources and expertise and to build a common policy and approach towards attracting investments.

Develop a Distinctive Regional Branding and Marketing Platform

To successfully foster commercial and industrial acceptance of major economic sector development, Hearst and its regional partners need to match clearly marketed investment opportunities with specific target markets. To achieve this, it is necessary to develop a commonly agreed upon and supported local branding, and to promote and market those opportunities to the appropriate audience. Within this context Hearst also has to develop a complementary but distinctive brand and identity.

Establish Accountability Measures to Evaluate Success and Performance of Provincial and Federal Small Business Initiatives in Hearst Area

Through a variety of programs, the provincial and federal governments undertake the establishment of initiatives to support grass root economic development. However, such programs are often delivered by individuals and/or agencies located outside of the Hearst community. In order to determine their effectiveness, it is essential to understand the presence of and specific mandate of these initiatives and to develop accountability measures to assure proper delivery to Hearst stakeholders.

Contribute to a Coherent Regional Economic Development Strategy

Insofar as economies transcend local government boundaries, Hearst's economic future hinges in part upon the successful development of the region. A coherent Regional Economic Strategy and action plan is a key instrument in the process of attracting investment to the Highway 11 corridor. It is necessary to ensure that Hearst's approach to development is carefully aligned with other municipalities along Highway 11.

Develop World-Class Infrastructure and Services to Support the Economic Strategy

Although not sufficient in themselves, a sound infrastructure base and a cohesive society are key pre-conditions for investment. One of the main arenas of local government activity is to ensure that infrastructure is in place to support a competitive economy. The role of local government is also to provide adequate planning, consultation and support for infrastructure development, and to contribute to its funding, management and promotion in appropriate ways. In view of the importance of forestry and tourism to the area, investment in road and rail access, green space, public parks and tourism catalysts is essential.

Collaborate with Other Lead Agencies Delivering Economic Projects

As the immediate region's economic hub, the Town of Hearst occupies an important position in relation to the region's lead economic development agencies. Council is able to collaborate with, support and add value to initiatives relating to social infrastructure, including medical services, educational institutions, and social programming.

Strategy Three:

Supporting Target Business Sectors

The third prong of the strategy is concerned with providing specialized support for select business sectors. It is clear that Hearst's long-term prosperity rests with its ability to balance economic activity amongst multiple sectors and to move away from an overbearing reliance on the forestry sector.

Support Primary Forest Industry

The forest industry remains the key economic driver for the Hearst area's economy. It is critical that core support be given to existing companies currently operating in the sector. Advancing competitiveness of these enterprises will assure that the industry remains viable and continues to support the community.

Foster Development of Value Added Forest Manufacturing Industry

The local assets found in the community, in terms of skills, knowledge and ability, lend themselves to the creation and natural placement of a second tier manufacturing industry. Encourage entrepreneurs through a specific development and awareness campaign, employing related educational and support services aids to offset development risks for such entrepreneurs.

Support the Development of Tourism

The tourism sector is regarded as probably the largest and fastest growing employment sector in the world. In Hearst's context, the elements of a world-class destination centre are present and could play an important role in diversifying the local economy. Hearst must harness and focus the contribution of local, regional, provincial and federal agencies and the private sector to develop tourism products and market the area. Tourism should be a priority sector for Council and the subject of specific detailed marketing strategies and undertakings.

Support Mining Exploration and Assist Existing Projects

Although mining has not been a traditional economic sector for the community, recent advances in the exploration of industrial minerals presents a tangible opportunity for establishing a mining operation. Support and aid through a focused effort may result in advancing the project to commercialization.

Support Agriculture & Silviculture Entrepreneurs

Although not a strong contributor to Hearst's economy, the agricultural sector brought settlers to the region and thus is a key part of the heritage of the community and the surrounding hamlets. Efforts to maintain agricultural lands and preserve the industry as a means of encouraging foreign immigration remain a plausible developmental tool.

Support the Development of the Health and Elderly Services Industry

Hearst holds a sophisticated health service industry with a regional delivery mandate. The health sector makes a significant economic contribution, particularly through the activities of Hôpital Notre-Dame Hospital and the expanded "le Foyer des Pionniers" Hearst Nursing Home. The health sector has demonstrated that it has high employment intensity and job diversity, which in turn produces a strong multiplier effect throughout the economy. There is potential to deepen and widen the economic benefits of the health sector through the collaborative efforts of health institutions and local government.

Support the Development of the Education Sector and the Expansion of Trade Apprenticeship Programs

The presences of quality post-secondary institutions in the community are considerable assets for maintaining youth in the community and a strong and vibrant economy. The education sector is known to have a high economic impact on Hearst, both directly through the delivery of educational services and indirectly through the value added to the economy by an educated workforce. L'Université de Hearst and Collège Boréal are the key post-secondary education providers and complement the vocational training efforts of the secondary school system and some private sector programs. There is room to multiply the benefits of the education sector through the student import education push and collaborative vocational training between education institutions and the principal private sector employers.

Encourage the Growth and Ambitions of the Industrial Support Sector

The Hearst industrial support sector has flourished and is becoming a self-sustaining industry providing market links well beyond the boundaries of Hearst. Transportation entrepreneurs have created and established markets in Northwestern Ontario and other points outside Hearst. The availability and presence of such success will facilitate secondary manufacturing initiatives and further support the idea of industrial clustering.

Encourage Retail Enterprises and Small Service Businesses

Hearst is home to an exciting mix of specialty shops, restaurants and local services. Small business accounts for the largest percentage of employment and internal economic trade. Growth of this sector is important to the overall well-being of the economy and in particular, to support broad initiatives in tourism where the merchandise and services of small unique retailers are an essential ingredient to the success of these initiatives.

Strategy Four:

Develop Social Infrastructure and a High Quality of Life

The fourth prong of the strategy involves building up Hearst's social capital, that is to say, its people, their skills and social facilities, in addition to developing a high quality of life through leadership, planning and good governance. This strategy has several objectives, which are set out below.

Provide Leadership and Vision

Community and business confidence can be strongly influenced by the leadership and direction set by elected Council and the professionalism of the Council's organization. As a lead agency, it is incumbent on Council to provide clear strategic direction for the community, its residents and its many organizations.

Actively Facilitate the Formation and Expansions of Not-For-Profit Enterprises

Council is uniquely placed to facilitate and promote community-based enterprises. Examples include: facilitating and supporting the establishment of networks through which business operators can market themselves and come into contact with other businesses; managing the public environment in a way that is conducive to the formation of economic markets that local enterprises can tap into; and making it easier for business operators to understand approval and licensing procedures.

Provide Appropriate Community Facilities

The provision of community infrastructure is a core business of Council. A key requirement for economic development is a high quality living environment that supplements an attractive business climate.

Develop a Sustainable Community

Sustainability is about ensuring adequate consideration of social, environmental and economic matters during decision-making, so that the long-term interests of future generations of the community are protected. Sustainability is fundamental to maintaining a high quality living and working environment. Through its policies, assets and services, Council is able to establish appropriate standards, regulations and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the way of life for Hearst residents and businesses is capable of being sustained on an inter-generational basis.

Make and Manage Key Public Places

Quality public places and adequate infrastructure are catalysts for community economic development. In order to maximize the economic and social development benefits of public places and infrastructure, it is necessary to manage them as though they are economic, social and environmental assets. The objective should be to optimize the overall "return" on public investment. Part of this involves encouraging community ownership of Hearst's public places and assets, to increase usage rates. Developing and maintaining a sense of place, a community of concern and an environment of community responsibility are fundamental to Hearst, in order to attract investment and jobs and to encourage its retiring residents to remain.

Facilitate the Growth and Maintenance of the Community Sector

The provision of a range of community support services, in addition to providing significant opportunities for training and employment, contributes to the quality lifestyle enjoyed by residents. Access to services (ranging from children's services through to elderly care and support for families, youth and people with disabilities) is also a contributing factor for influencing decisions of organizations to relocate to Hearst and area. As well as providing significant employment opportunities covering a range of skills for individuals, a strong community sector is also an important indicator of the health and depth of a community's social infrastructure.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Hearst Council has prepared an Economic Development Strategy, which sets out the Council's approach towards building the economy of the Town of Hearst in a sustainable manner.

The Hearst Town Council is committed to improving the quality of life for Hearst residents through the implementation of a wide range of services and strategies. There is increasing acceptance of the interdependence of the economy on a broader scale and the need for co-operation with other municipalities and neighbouring Local Service Boards. Hearst Council is regarded as a leading Council, committed to community involvement and dedicated to provide integrated services to best serve the economic, social and recreational needs of Hearst residents.

The Town of Hearst is the economic and social services centre for many neighbouring towns and jurisdictions. As such, it has a role and responsibility beyond its local government boundaries. Hearst is impacted by, and impacts upon, the wider regional economy, which itself is subject to provincial, national and global influences and trends.

There are a number of agencies and associations in the region that work to improve regional economic opportunities. It is important that Council does not duplicate these roles, but through its leadership, support appropriate strategies, provide relevant infrastructure, identify local priorities and develop community capacity to take advantage of potential opportunities.

Hearst Town Council's Economic Development Strategy complements, and is an important component of the regional development ambitions as presented by the provincial and federal initiatives for long-term sustainable developments. Hearst Town Council has the important responsibilities of governance, leadership, management, planning and facilitation of job creation and investment in Hearst as well as its surrounding communities. These will enhance the ability of the local area and wider region to generate and attract sustainable investments and jobs.

1.2 Scope of Report

This document

- Only relates to those matters where Hearst Town Council can add value and where it is proper for local government to contribute;
- Applies to the local government area of Hearst;
- Represents the interest of local stakeholders as presented by and through the community consultation process;

- Works alongside regional, provincial and federal economic development initiatives, namely: the Northeastern Ontario Municipal Association's – ***Facing the Millennium***; The Province of Ontario's – ***Smart Growth Initiative***; and the Government of Canada's – ***Action Plan for Northern Ontario***;
- Builds on work already being conducted locally and within the region, but gives clarity to the specific roles that Council can play;
- Is informed and acknowledges the mandates and efforts of lead agencies such as Nord-Aski, MNDM, FedNor, and Constance Lake First Nation; and
- Is a living document that is supported by an action plan and accountability measures.

2.0 The Hearst and Area Economy in 2003

The principal economic driver remains the forest industry. Strategically, Hearst is a critically important location for forestry companies operating on a Northeastern Ontario basis with a global market focus. The composition and quality of timber mix provide the base elements to support long-term investment.

Since its settlement, Hearst's economy has been dominated by the forest industry. It is home to four significant forestry operations that define the economic landscape for the community. Lecours Lumber, although not directly in the community, remains one of the most significant independent sawmills in Northern Ontario. Through consolidation, Tembec, Columbia, and to a large degree, the Tricep–Tembec relationship, provides local economic stability, although the overall sector itself is facing considerable challenges. The principal operations, together with the mix of supporting businesses in harvesting, reforestation, and industrial support, account for 41% of the local labour force with an estimated indirect multiplier factor of 3.1.

The importance of Hearst as a centre of education, regional health and social services and financial activity is directly related to the relative economic stability, the industrial strengths and the cultural identity. Hearst is perceived as having a strong mix of both public and private institutions that renders a strong quality of life. This mix of images remains an important asset in Hearst's ability to retain a higher level of its population relative to other Northeastern Ontario communities.

Hearst has fared considerably better than other similar communities facing general population declines in Northern Ontario. Hearst has managed to maintain superior property values, a diverse retail presence and enhance its social and recreational infrastructure without compromising its fiscal stability.

Although the forest industry remains the principal economic driver, other labour sectors also contribute to the community's relative stability, including:

- **Education** – Holding strong and defined educational facilities, Hearst enjoys a considerable mix of post-secondary programs addressing the academic and trade skills needs of its residents and of students from throughout the region. Although the administrative functions of the elementary and secondary school boards have been centralized, Hearst holds a proportionately larger front line of teaching position levels than other similar Northern Ontario communities.
- **Health and Social Services** – the growing regional relevance of Hôpital Notre-Dame Hospital and the relocation and expansion of le Foyer des Pionniers Hearst Nursing Home provide a structured and consistent contribution by the sector to the overall Hearst economy, through this sector's labour levels and its destination attributes. Given the unique francophone cultural environment of

Hearst, the community's effort to attract and retain medical professionals is considerably superior to any other Northeastern Ontario municipalities.

- **Tourism, Accommodations and Entertainment** – Hearst's hospitality infrastructure continually exceeds other Northeastern Ontario towns, and represents a significant contributor to the local economic structure. The tourism industry, both consumptive and non-consumptive, plays a role in defining Hearst as a destination point for provincial and international tourists. Additionally, grass roots organizations supporting the francophone culture through festivals and events, make Hearst a regional centre drawing visitors to the community. The strong recreational efforts, driven by volunteers and supported by modern municipal recreational infrastructure, enable activities to provide tangible economic returns to both the hospitality and small business sectors of the community.
- **Transportation & Construction** – Hearst is home to several large transportation and construction companies involved in all aspects of the logging, hauling and construction industries. These companies not only meet the needs of the Hearst economy, but also of communities and industry throughout Northern Ontario. Overall, the transportation and construction economic sectors represent a net import of revenues to the Hearst economy.
- **Retail and Small Business** - Hearst holds a pronounced retail and industrial support sector that is competitive and maintains a strong presence in the community. The trends affecting this sector of local merchants and small businesses are not unique to Hearst, Mattice-Val Côté or other communities being benchmarked. Hearst's isolation, to a certain degree, provides a marginal protection to retail leakage. The Hearst small business segment is fairing better than its peers in most Northern Ontario communities.

Hearst's economy holds relative stability in a region experiencing considerable transition and uncertainty. Since the consolidation in the late 1980's and early 1990's, the local forest industry has been modified through expansions and investments to become low cost producers and thus better able to withstand changes in market and pricing conditions - even against similar operations held in the same corporate family.

The spatial configuration of Hearst's economy has changed marginally over the last ten years. Traditional shopping and commercial areas have lost market share as retailing and commercial activities declined in part due to mobility, closure or relocation. The proportionate mix of shops and services in the Hearst downtown BIA area has reversed in composition, as vacant retail space was and is consumed by service-oriented operations. The availability of land west of the central core on Highway 11 or Front Street has resulted in new growth of retail and industrial support operations. The result has created two retail commercial zones holding a mix of use and orientation.

As private infrastructure and business premises along Front Street have aged, and in some cases become obsolete, the visual appeal or lack thereof, further perpetuates the decline in occupancy of this area in favour of locations west of the Town's central core.

Primary industry has developed to a level where future growth is impeded by land limitations (Fontaine Drive) and policy issues (Columbia buffer zone). The increase in traffic volume, resulting from primary economic activities and changes in municipal traffic flow, has created transportation issues and conflicts between residential and industrial vehicle patterns.

3.0 The Hearst and Area Economy in 2020

Hearst has chosen to define itself for the future and maintain the integrity of its francophone, aboriginal and forestry heritage. It seeks to establish itself as a regional centre for education and health services and to achieve economic growth through a balanced diversification program. It will be necessary to foster and champion the development of new value added forestry sectors and to expand the tourism significance towards the economy. These efforts are made to balance long-term growth and to reduce dependence upon one traditional sector.

To ensure growth through external revenues, it will be necessary to encourage tourism investment in both accommodations and supporting services. Catalysts, which can be created through private and public partnerships to achieve projects such as the rebirth of the train station, are essential to promote investment, job creation and the expansion of the Town's tax base.

To contribute productively to the modern economy, it will be necessary to skill and equip the workforce appropriately. It will be necessary to work with local educational institutions to ensure new skilled workers are available to fill the vacancies from an ageing labour pool seeking retirement.

It will also be necessary to ensure that new economic activity is environmentally sustainable and congruent with the interests of the forestry industry, and that disused, contaminated land is rehabilitated and reused (e.g. former Shell bulk fuel depot, Imperial Oil (Esso) service station lands). Stagnant economic centres, especially Front Street, will need to be revitalized because they are critical ingredients in a vibrant and high quality living environment. Ageing and obsolete infrastructure will need to be renewed and replaced to meet the technological and space requirements of a modern economy.

Hearst has a substantial array of resources from which to launch an economic development strategy. For example, it is widely regarded as the francophone cultural centre of Northern Ontario. Also, it holds tourism assets such as the Tour of the Line Train, vast snowmobile trail system, superior waterways and recreational facilities. Hearst has a large forest industrial base supported by physical and social infrastructure and served by a sophisticated industrial support sector that in itself, forms the elements of the "Industrial Clustering Concept".

Hearst holds and is building the core elements to ensure its regional significance in the medical and social services delivery system. It will be important and necessary to work with provincial authorities to maintain and augment Hearst's medical professionals to ensure quality and superior services are available to serve an ageing population.

3.1 Economic Factors Influencing Development

3.1.1 A Decreasing and Aging Population

Although the population decreases felt in Hearst over the past ten years are less than those found in the balance of Northeastern Ontario communities, the long-term trends demonstrate a marked shift in the population makeup of the community. There will be lower levels of enrolment in local schools; recreational facilities will need to reorient activities and events to serve a mature client base; and community-marketing campaigns will need to be undertaken to attract not just professionals, but skilled workers to the community.

There is one very noticeable exception to these population trends. In contrast to the demographic decline experienced by Hearst and other area towns, First Nations and Metis populations continue to grow. As a result, these populations are significantly younger than the general population. Over half the aboriginal population is 25 years old or younger. Overall, the aboriginal population in Canada is projected to increase by 20% during the period 2001 – 2010. This increase in population is expected to result in higher demand for a variety of services, including health care, social services, education, housing and infrastructure. As a result, economic development opportunities could result from additional partnerships between Hearst businesses and members of the Constance Lake First Nation.

3.1.2 Centralizing Community Services to Larger Centres

Since 1995, considerable changes have occurred in the local availability of community and social services delivery in small communities. The trend is expected to continue through the use of temporary field offices and increased use of Internet-based contact points.

Removing the direct local presence of services holds greater economies of scale, yet it also removes direct accountability and specific cultural links between service providers and residents. A consequence of centralization of services, in part, encourages the exodus of dependant residents, thereby exacerbating population declines in small rural communities.

The regrouping of federal and provincial services to larger centres does have a direct negative impact on the study region; however, Hearst specifically enjoys, in part, the positive effect of centralization on a micro level, as it becomes a regional service centre for essential medical and educational services within the catchment area.

3.1.3 Hearst's Distance from Major Urban Centres

Examples are present where Hearst interests are marginalized by central delivery agencies. The challenge exists to participate in discussions, meetings and direct dialogue with such agencies under a cost effective approach. The added distance creates an inequality of participation, as elevated travel costs limit participation.

FORESTRY FACTORS

3.1.4 The Evolution of the Regional Forest Industry

The symbiotic relationship achieved by operators within the industry over the past decade has created an advancement of economies of scale. However, the operating paradigm created by such synergies also acts as an impediment towards innovation. Furthermore, the approach has created an environment whereby the interdependency of the mills increases the impact of economic downturns, thus rendering a fragile economic structure.

Value added products are being explored as a means of creating additional wealth and opportunities in the Northeast. However, government and the private sector employ non-congruent approaches to the development of opportunities. There is base confusion on the meaning and definition of value added parameters, even within government agencies and private operations. Access to fibre remains a constant obstacle for the development of new initiatives.

The economies of scale to access non-merchandise timber remain an obstacle to realizing opportunities. The major companies, who undertake to build roads to access SPF strands, remain the only true means of harvesting secondary species. Therefore, opportunities need to be achieved within the available volume found through the access of SPF strands.

The forest industry will require active participation with First Nations in order to access and comply with MNR requirements in accessing future allocations of forest resources under the North of 50 “Northern Boreal Initiative”.

3.1.5 Government and Authorities are Seeking Greater Economic Benefits to Area Communities

The Ministry of Natural Resources is actively pursuing three forest related initiatives:

- *Forest Sector Initiative:* Combined efforts of the MNR and other Ministries will identify strategies and tactics to respond to the challenges and opportunities facing the forest sector and its competitiveness.
- *The Living Legacy Trust and the Value Added Initiative:* An information gathering exercise looking at market opportunities for Ontario’s value added products.
- *The Canada Wood Export Program:* A program to increase international awareness and use of Canadian wood products, thus reducing traditional reliance on U.S. markets.

All three initiatives focus on value added activities in the forestry sector.

3.1.6 Proposed and Anticipated Changes in Tembec's Corporate Family

Tembec plans to modernize and increase planner capacity within the next five years. Such a capital plan is expected to be in the range of \$9 to \$10 million dollars. Tembec also plans to downsize sawmill operations by reducing its current 6 saw lines down to 3. Employment levels are expected to decline. However, the significant consequences of such efforts (e.g. loss of capital facilities) will be negative on neighbouring communities and a boon for the Hearst Mill. The loss of employment is predicted to rely on the attrition of the direct labour pool.

3.1.7 Anticipated Changes at Columbia Forest Products

Columbia Forest operations anticipate, as market conditions return, to recall laid off workers and increase its base workforce by an additional 100 full-time positions over the next five years. The positions are net new growth as a result of operational changes in its business model. The creations of the positions are conditional upon market demand and general business performance. The company is exploring value added capital investment (e.g. UV paint line) to bolster profits and product depth.

3.1.8 Anticipated Changes at Lecours Lumber Co. Limited

The company's land lease with Constance Lake First Nation expires in 2008. The company is actively pursuing negotiations and options to extend the lease, however the company has also explored the possibility of moving the manufacturing facility to another location.

3.1.9 Changes in Harvesting Methods and Periods Translate into Inconsistencies for Local Operators

Summer harvesting ground is minimal and corporate efforts to manage road construction costs have reduced the harvesting season to approximately four months. The consequences on the local operator are material, as cash operating requirements add new constraints for smaller operators. The transition of harvesting techniques to "cut to length" methods, which is being explored by major wood producers, will require existing harvesting companies to modify current practices and increase capital expenditures. The result of this process will promote the consolidation of the area's smaller operators and create the need for superior training in new technology.

3.1.10 Perpetual Technology Improvement in the Manufacturing of Local and Regional Wood Products

Due to global competitive pressures, the industry grows continually more sophisticated in its application of new technology. The gains being made are directly linked to reducing inefficiencies in grading requirements that result from human errors. The planned introduction of optical scanning methods will place downward pressure on the labour needs.

TOURISM FACTORS

3.1.11 Snowmobile Market Slow Down

Consistent annual gains enjoyed over the past five years within the local and regional snowmobile markets are expected to slow and perhaps decline marginally in the near future, if no new investments are made to adjust the local product and service mix.

3.1.12 Lack of Entrepreneurial Champions

The unavailability of local champions to undertake risk-based developments is a significant issue to the economic development process. Although funding gaps may be addressed to some degree, the lack of operators and the need to import entrepreneurs increases the risk to the implementation and eventual effectiveness of the strategic plan.

3.1.13 Tourism Focus Requires Considerable Volume

The Hearst accommodation inventory is limited and may not react well to a considerable, but short-term increase in demand. The resulting price increase would create a positive climate for investment in new units - yet should demand falter, all facilities, both new and old would suffer.

3.1.14 Operators Remain in Opposition to the Forest Industry

Local and regional tourism operators believe that forest harvesting operations and road-based recreation have the greatest likelihood of negatively impacting their business in the immediate and foreseeable future. These concerns are greatest for remote and water-based operators. It has been determined and documented that increased involvement of the tourism operators in the forest management process will not increase the satisfaction of the operators.

3.1.15 Cultural and Heritage Travel is the Largest Opportunity for Growth

Development of a dual-track experience (cultural/heritage and the outdoors) is a key strategy for Northern communities interested in building a stronger tourism market,

and this could strengthen the all-season appeal of Northern destinations. Hearst has superior attributes that link its existing resources to the growing travel trends.

3.1.16 Regional Vacuum in Broader Marketing Initiatives

With the cancellation of the Northern Ontario Tourism Marketing Board by the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, no structured approach is in place to provide a unified direction.

The James Bay Frontier Travel Association is exploring means and mechanisms for providing functional services to ensure that the area is well represented. However, the mandate of the organization is led by its membership and the membership structure is largely consumptive resource-based tourism operations. Such a configuration may not provide the required environment for municipal development agencies seeking to develop other markets.

3.1.17 Regional Partnerships With Destination Attractions are Both Inviting and Dangerous

The premise that collaborative initiatives with other destination facilities (such as Science North, Shania Twain Centre and others) provide opportunities to access existing regional markets may be mistaken, as the collaborative process may create mixed messaging and dilute the key aspect of a unique and contrived marketing approach for the study area. Additionally, collective advertising efforts may marginalize the local community's advertising budget to underwrite the marketing efforts of a much larger area.

3.1.18 Distance is Not Necessarily the Draw Back it is Perceived

Specific segments of the travel market view long distances as enhancement of the travel experience. The case is particularly true of rail riders and bus tour operators. Specific comfort requirements must be met to ensure that the travel experience is enhanced from point of departure to point of destination. The travel mode as an experience in itself, must be factored into the overall tourism product.

3.1.19 Beyond a Single Attraction

Notwithstanding a unified vision, Hearst must expand and grow its tourism base. In general, opportunities for the study area need to be built on the basis of the natural and cultural resources that can be packaged to suit the specific niche markets identified in future market trends. The vast expanse of natural wilderness around Hearst and the aboriginal, forestry heritage form the foundation for any strategy to be developed. By matching various products and services to the specific needs of the target markets, the study area can benefit from the growth of tourism. For success, product development needs to be matched by reliable service, well focused promotion and competitive pricing in the target market.

Support for the tourism strategy from area residents and commercial enterprises is essential to the success of any strategy. Marketing efforts must include an internal community approach as well as an external approach to the target audience.

3.1.20 Need for Certification and Standards

It is important both for quality assurance and risk management that consistency is found in the availability of the area's tourism products and services. This approach assures that expectations created through an organized marketing effort will be met.

TRANSPORTATION FACTORS

3.1.21 Increased Periodic Traffic

The harvesting plans, initiated by the major forest companies create unique stressors on the local transportation infrastructure in so far as volumes (3/4 of the annual harvested volumes) and peak periods are generally being compressed within a four month window during the winter months. The compressed harvesting period creates added traffic on municipal roads and the traffic volume increases noise and other pollution that is incompatible with residential neighbourhoods.

3.1.22 Anticipated Consolidation in the Transportation Sector

Competitive forces within the sector, specifically in periods of poor market performance as has been seen over the past 20 to 24 months, create unique challenges which most self-employed owner/operators find hard to overcome. The logging sector consists principally of a large number of owner/operators and a few key consolidated operations. This mix is similarly present in the transportation of finished goods, yet the disparity between the owner/operators and regional/provincial carrier companies is considerably greater.

3.1.23 Economic Opportunities Through Collective Initiatives

There are considerable opportunities to achieve cost savings through collective initiatives within the Hearst transportation sector, specifically amongst the independent operators. Traditional fears of collaborative efforts with competitors are present and any constructive approach towards such operating evolution will need to be initiated by a neutral third party.

RETAIL AND SMALL BUSINESS FACTORS

3.1.24 Net Loss in Retail Expenditures

It is also recognized that a certain portion of the overall Hearst trading area accounts for an inflow of retail expenditure in Hearst. However, in conversation with the local retailers, and based on local trends in the retail and small business sector, the volume of money coming into the community is negligible in comparison to the values leaving through leakage.

3.1.25 Buying Habits by Major Mills are Completed Out of Town

The forest industry consolidation in the area has had negative consequences on local trade. As companies seek to cut costs, purchasing power is concentrated in head offices as a means for achieving greater economies of scale. The process traditionally begins with bulk purchases and as the practice evolves, smaller purchase are consolidated as well. The practice applies pressure on local merchants to maintain inventories of lower turnover items and to maintain lower margins as well.

3.1.26 Efficient Same Day Deliveries and Just In Time Inventories

The introduction of next day delivery orders by virtual stores has affected local spending habits. Companies, via Internet directly from local offices or through regional offices, purchase known velocity items that are delivered overnight to the community. Qualifying this value is extremely difficult, given that industrial purchases are not tracked through traditional methods. It is believed that up to 20% of consumable office and administrative and shop supplies is purchased externally from the community.

3.1.27 Business Zones Operating in Vacuum of Information

Hearst's commercial and retail market is segmented into two distinct geographic zones and merchants in each zone hold no formal or informal links. The consequence is a misunderstanding of operating structures, where benefits are believed to be received by merchants in the other zone - even though none exist. This information gap creates a perception of mandate duplication by like-minded business organizations, notably the Hearst Downtown BIA and the Hearst, Mattice-Val Côté and Area Chamber of Commerce.

3.1.28 Business Improvement Area Needs Physical Rejuvenation

The BIA is an active organization whose membership participates in functions and initiatives. The need to expand on past success through concepts such as the beautification of the Highway 11 corridor (Front Street) will ensure that past gains made by the organization are carried into the future.

MINING FACTORS

3.1.29 Growing Interest in Hearst Area Mining Potential

The Hearst economy is closely linked to forestry; however, mineral deposits in the greater area hold promise for significant economic diversification. MCK Mining, in partnership with Baltic Resources, Falconbridge and Constance Lake First Nation are exploring the exploitation of a phosphate deposit north of the Hearst town limits. The efforts by the project partners are significant, insofar as a similar development close to Kapuskasing (Agrium Mine) has resulted in considerable economic returns for that community. Issues and factors concerning the “Martinson” project remain confidential. It will be necessary for the community to maintain strong links with the project partners to ensure opportunities for Hearst are maintained and realized.

4.0 Vision Statement and Future Hopes

Through the development of the strategic plan and based on the undertakings made as part of the community consultation process, specific trends and expectations were found to be commonly shared between residents of Hearst. Public and stakeholder comments received during this process led to vision statements that could potentially be applied to each of the sectors in the community. These comments and sector statements are set out in companion documents. For the purposes of the overall strategy however, a single vision statement is required.

Hearst Economic Strategic Plan Vision Statement

We, the community of Hearst, through this 20-year economic strategic plan, aspire to be the community of choice for ourselves and future generations. We will achieve our vision through a healthy economy based on our forestry heritage and the development of our natural resources, sustainable secondary business sectors, strong and diverse tourism related businesses, vital neighbourhoods, excellent schools, and extensive recreational, social and health services and cultural opportunities. We will preserve and cherish our rich cultural roots, welcome our aboriginal neighbours and celebrate the diversity of our people.

5.0 The Game Plan

5.1 Common Values

The development of the Hearst economic development strategy and its game plan is structured on a platform of common values shared by individuals, agencies and businesses in the Hearst community. These values are:

- Public safety supersedes all economic needs.
- Municipal revenues are public funds for the betterment of municipal services that are applied to the greater community good and delivered in an open and accountable fashion.
- Quality of life extends beyond economic returns and includes quality education, health and social services, safe and free public space, access to affordable leisure and recreational facilities.
- Private sector initiatives are at the core of the Hearst economic structure, and competitiveness is defined and achieved through standard market conditions without government interference.
- The natural resource based industries, including forestry, tourism, mining and agriculture, are the economic foundation on which Hearst has been developed and are the heritage that will ensure prosperity and a stable future.
- All sectors must work harmoniously to preserve existing businesses and facilitate the development of new businesses.
- Environmental sustainability and effective management of natural resources are critical elements of a long term and prosperous future.
- The cultural diversity of the local population, including the francophone majority and the anglophone and aboriginal minorities, is an integral part of the Hearst community and its future.

5.2 Economic Goals and Objectives

The underlying target of economic development is job growth. To grow more jobs and to offer a wider choice of jobs and employment opportunities, it is necessary to expand Hearst's and the region's economic pie. While it is the role and investment of private sector business that will grow the pie, local government, in concert with regional stakeholders, can contribute to the development of an environment that is conducive to such investment. Growth is often a slow and complex process, which benefits from the vision, governance and resources of government.

Perspective 2020 InSight incorporates goals and objectives to ensure that a prosperous community is present for the current and future generations of Hearst residents. These goals and objectives include:

- Support the economic competitiveness of Hearst and area businesses through the efficient provision of municipal services and through an equitable tax levy.

- Establish Hearst as a leader in forestry value added manufacturing.
- Establish Hearst as a year-round tourist destination, structured on the community's cultural heritage and outdoor adventure assets.
- Achieve controlled economic diversification without compromise to the core elements of the existing economic structure.
- Create development catalysts to encourage private sector investment and job creation.
- Increase Hearst's regional relevance as an education, health and social services centre for surrounding communities.
- Ensure adequate infrastructure is available to support growth and development.
- Assist and work through local economic development agencies to avoid duplication in sponsoring growth and development.
- Increase the participation of the First Nation's community in all aspects of the economy and its various sectors.
- Achieve long term sustainable growth without compromise to the common values shared by all residents of the Town of Hearst.

5.3 Strategy Targets

In Hearst, expanding the economic pie requires strategies aimed at four fronts:

1. Sustaining local business, jobs and reinvestment.
2. Growing local business, jobs and opportunities.
3. Attracting external business and investments.
4. Developing existing tourism assets.

5.4 Strategy Balance

Balance is a cornerstone of sustainable development. The lesson learned from the recent past is that Hearst needs to avoid the pitfall of putting "all of its eggs in one basket". A diverse and balanced portfolio, which recognizes the importance of each of the following components is necessary:

- Investment anchors jobs.
- Small business creates new net jobs.
- Globally competing industry is the foundation of the Hearst economy.
- Small home-based and micro enterprises generate wealth.
- Public sector financial risk is unacceptable.
- Economic strategies are long-term investments.
- Stakeholder participation is essential.
- Critical to success is the recognition of the public sector bottom line e.g. the importance of balancing social, environmental and economic considerations over the long term.

5.5 Council Leadership and Organizational Focus

As an organization, Hearst Council has an important role to play in helping to create an environment that is conducive to investment and job creation. The task of delivering economic development strategies requires a whole-of-council approach and the empowerment of Council's economic development tools, namely its "Economic Development Corporation" and Council's influence on local associations and agencies to act in concert with Council towards common goals and objectives. Central to this concerted effort by Council, is a consistent message and strategy, based on the principals of:

- Action
- Communication
- Competitive practice
- Continuous improvement
- Team work, and
- Accountability.

5.6 Hearst Key Economic Development Strategy

To achieve its economic development goals and objectives, the Council, through the *Perspective 2020 InSight* planning initiative, has developed a four-pronged economic development strategy.

The first strategy revolves around focusing Council's processes and assets to support the growth of the Town and the regional economy, by delivering customer oriented, outcome-driven works and services. This prong of the strategy recognizes that effective and efficient local government gives an economy a competitive edge.

The second strategy entails collaborating with other stakeholders to deliver outcomes beyond the individual capability and resources of local institutions, by forging partnerships at a regional and provincial level. This recognizes that economies transcend immediate municipal boundaries and that regional collaboration achieves more than individual efforts.

The third strategy is concerned with supporting and encouraging the development of select business sectors, such as forest value added manufacturing, tourism, regional retail and others, to build and strengthen clusters by providing appropriate planning, facilitation and support. This recognizes that competitive economies need strong drivers and diverse sectors.

The fourth strategy focuses on developing social capital and high quality of life (including quality environmental, recreational and public space) to facilitate and support economic development by providing leadership, planning and governance. This recognizes that a healthy, educated, and mobile workforce is a critical ingredient of a competitive economy.

6.0 Strategies and Objectives

6.1 Strategy One: Focus Council's Processes and Assets

The first prong of the strategy involves directing Council's resources, assets and processes to support economic development and investment. The strategy has several objectives, which are outlined below

6.1.1 Provide Clear Planning and Zoning Guidance

A stable and clear planning environment is a key pre-condition for leadership in economic development. It is critical that there be a long-term perspective for development in Hearst, to ensure that there is sufficient space, services and infrastructure for future economic development and that there are clear development controls and appropriately designed physical environments to support growth.

Game Plan Requirements

- Ensure the strategic plan is evaluated annually and updated as needed.
- Ensure the community exceeds the MNDM investment readiness model.
- Ensure the official plan is aligned with the interests of the Town of Hearst, the Township of Mattice-Val Côté, and the LSBs in the unincorporated territories.
- Appoint and maintain Council representation on community development organizations.
- Update and maintain the Town's web site and employ this vehicle to promote economic development.
- Facilitate the relocation of Fontaine Drive.
- Work with Columbia Forest Products Inc. to create an industrial buffer zone around this industrial facility.
- Develop a George Street traffic policy.
- Promote and communicate Council's Economic Development Strategy.
- Develop publications on small business licensing, permits and protocol checklists by individual sector (e.g. restaurant, home-based business, tavern, etc.)

6.1.2 Beautification of Highway 11 Corridor

Hearst's Highway 11 corridor or Front Street is a critical element of the Town's image and its ability to draw transient traffic into the community. It is necessary for business retention and to encourage tourism flow that the physical environment of this commercial area be improved along with public safety and access. Existing assets and public investments need to be optimally utilized.

Game Plan Requirements

- Develop a Highway 11 corridor policy, operating and accountability guideline.
- Develop a working group in partnership with the Hearst BIA, Chamber of Commerce, and other affected groups and agencies.
- Explore public and private sector development partnerships with motel owners and Constance Lake First Nation.
- Explore construction and/or relocation of train station as a component of the beautification and development process.
- Explore partnerships for the remediation of former bulk plant and service station contaminated lands under the provincial Brownfield program.
- Explore programming options to encourage private building owners to upgrade and enhance building façades.
- Where possible, secure external government resources (NOHFC, FedNor, OMAFRA, OSTAR, and HRDC) for priority projects.

Provide leadership and planning support for the creation of a light industrial/commercial zone at the western intersection of Fontaine Drive and Highway 11. The creation of a transportation incubator industrial mall will support and facilitate the collective efforts of individual and small transportation companies.

Game Plan Requirements

- Develop mall policy and accountability guidelines.
- Undertake a fiscal feasibility analysis to determine mall components and potential sale of lots, services and take-up rate.
- Champion access to external government funding support.
- Facilitate development committee in partnership with Nord-Aski, Chamber of Commerce and other associated agencies.

6.1.3 – Mandate Hearst Economic Development Corporation

The re-establishment of the Hearst Economic Development Corporation is a tangible vehicle to execute Council's strategic plan. The Hearst EDC can be used as a vehicle to leverage external government funding and in partnership with other community partners, it can realize unique programming on behalf of Council.

Game Plan Requirements

- Ensure broad community representation and economic sector participation on the Hearst EDC.
- Maintain and publish a regular “state of the local economy” newsletter for local distribution.
- Create a lobby committee to represent the interests of specific economic sectors at regional and provincial levels.
- Appoint a First Nation Liaison Officer.
- Create investment request response protocols.
- Undertake feasibility assessments of a centralized shipping yard, back haul broker and other opportunities.
- Mandate the agency to participate in development of Regional Tax Zone initiative and Grow Bonds.
- Appoint a representative to regional development organizations including MNR, Forest Council, etc.

6.1.4 – Communicate the Plan and Create a Pride Campaign

The need to create awareness of Council’s strategic planning initiative is instrumental to the plan being adopted by related agencies and like-minded organizations. In addition, community pride and awareness of the importance individual economic sectors enhances the quality of life of Hearst residents, and are often the best means of ensuring the long term participation of residents and the success of the overall strategic plan.

Game Plan Requirements

- Develop and test community pride campaign.
- Contribute to the preparation and implementation of a regional image for a marketing plan.
- Publish regular newsletters on tourism and economic development functions.
- Market Hearst through media exposure and editorials.
- Develop marketing and impact awareness strategies for specific economic sectors: Forestry, Tourism, Retail, etc.
- Develop annual tracking and survey structure to assess local participation and resident satisfaction.

6.1.5 – Deploy Council Assets to Support Specific Economic Development Activities

When used in an optimal and judicious fashion, the resources and assets that Council has at its command can often be used to unlock forms of economic activity and investment that would not have otherwise been attained. The potential is particularly evident in relation to cultural and recreational facilities and assets under Council’s control.

Game Plan Requirements

- Strengthen links with Conseil des Arts to increase regionally specific and culturally based events and programming.
- Actively seek out competitions to host provincial and national events such as “Special Olympics”, “Science Fairs”, etc.
- Support cultural development activities and events that utilize and revitalize Council assets.
- Create partnership for development of multi-use trails, in the Town of Hearst and to other communities.
- Support expansion of Ecomusée and similar organizations for the development of cultural-based local heritage attractions.
- Explore realization of moto/snow-cross track with Council assets.

6.2 Strategy Two: Collaborating by Forging Partnerships at Regional and Provincial Levels

The second prong of the strategy is focused on collaborating with local and regional stakeholders to deliver outcomes that are beyond the individual capabilities of local institutions. This strategy has several objectives, which are outlined below.

6.2.1 – *Develop a Co-operative Network Among Local Governments in the Region*

A cornerstone of effective regional development is the ability of local institutions to act together to promote and market a region’s uniqueness, and to lobby political support for special projects and cultivate investments. The focus of such co-operative network for Hearst should be to attract new investment to the community and area, by supporting specific business clusters and facilitating new enterprise development from within the Region. To do this, it will be necessary to share resources and expertise and to build a common policy and approach towards attracting investments.

Game Plan Requirements

- Establish links with the City of Sault Ste. Marie and explore joint initiatives via the ACR line.
- Take a leadership role in FONOM, NEOMA, Living Legacy Trust, and other pan-Northern bodies.
- Actively participate in Joint Action Groups of economic development offices – re-establish Net 11.
- Initiate the development of regional policy on issues such as tourism marketing, incentives, sustainability, health and ageing services, Northern Ontario Medical School.
- Co-operatively initiate regional conferences on regional development and economic clustering strategies.

6.2.2 – Develop a Distinctive Regional Branding and Marketing Platform

To successfully foster commercial and industrial acceptance of major economic sector development, Hearst and its regional partners need to match clearly marketed investment opportunities with specific target markets. To achieve this, it is necessary to develop a commonly agreed upon and supported local branding, and to promote and market those opportunities to the appropriate audience. Within this context Hearst also has to develop a complementary but distinctive brand and identity.

Game Plan Requirements

- Undertake collaborative efforts with Nord-Aski, Chamber of Commerce, MNDM, FedNor and other agencies to focus development efforts on Value Added Manufacturing, Cultural and Heritage Tourism.
- Develop commercial opportunities for products and services supporting sector specific development and market these opportunities to Hearst and area entrepreneurs as well as entrepreneurs in key trading areas (Sault Ste. Marie, Upper Michigan State, Northeastern Ontario).
- Create mid-term partnership with “Northern Ontario Business” to effectively communicate identified opportunities and the willingness of the community to aid in the establishment of these ventures.
- Work to have other organizations recognize and support the efforts of local developmental agencies (Nord-Aski) and individuals involved in community developments.

6.2.3 – Establish Accountability Measures to Evaluate Success and Performance of Provincial and Federal Small Business Initiatives in Hearst Area

Through a variety of programs, the provincial and federal governments undertake the establishment of initiatives to support grass root economic development. However, such programs are often delivered by individuals and/or agencies located outside of the Hearst community. In order to determine their effectiveness, it is essential to understand the presence of and specific mandate of these initiatives and to develop accountability measures to assure proper delivery to Hearst stakeholders.

Game Plan Requirements

- Define service delivery frameworks applicable to Hearst through FedNor, Industry Canada, OMAFRA, OSTAR, Trillium, HRDC, NOHFC, MNDM, BDC etc.
- Streamline and facilitate application processes on behalf of Hearst stakeholders to relevant programs.
- Maintain database and participate in annual program review processes undertaken by supporting agencies.

6.2.4 – Contribute to a Coherent Regional Economic Development Strategy

Insofar as economies transcend local government boundaries, Hearst's economic future hinges in part upon the successful development of the Region. A coherent Regional Economic Strategy and action plan is a key instrument in the process of attracting investment to the Highway 11 corridor. It is necessary to ensure that Hearst's approach to development is carefully aligned with other municipalities along Highway 11.

Game Plan Requirements

- Use NEOMA to ensure that the role of local government and Hearst in particular, is recognized in regional and provincial activities.
- Launch the Hearst Economic Strategy by September 2003 and communicate the plan to all municipalities along the Highway 11 corridor.
- Take a lead role in guiding the redevelopment of the Net 11 economic development team.
- Solicit provincial and federal political support for the launch of the strategic plan.

6.2.5 – Develop World-Class Infrastructure and Services to Support the Economic Strategy

Although not sufficient in themselves, a sound infrastructure base and a cohesive society are key pre-conditions for investment. One of the main arenas of local government activity is to ensure that infrastructure is in place to support a competitive economy. The role of local government is also to provide adequate planning, consultation and support for infrastructure development, and to contribute to its funding, management and promotion in appropriate ways. In view of the importance of forestry and tourism to the area, investment in road and rail access, green space, public parks and tourism catalysts is essential.

Game Plan Requirements

- Become proactive in the solicitation of priority projects for infrastructure development by specific industry.
- Employ planning tools and by-laws to provide common theme and development elements for tourism branding.
- Undertake the development of an ecological park within Town limits to be used as a catalyst for tourism development opportunities.
- Encourage local arts program for streetscape highlights and focus on a cultural heritage theme.
- Assess signage programs within Hearst and draw points on Highway 11 and Highway 17.
- Work with ONR and ACR to facilitate passenger disembarkation at a centralized point.
- Support efforts by BIA, Conseil des Arts, Nord-Aski and other development agencies.

6.2.6 – Collaborate with Other Lead Agencies Delivering Economic Projects

As the immediate region’s economic hub, the Town of Hearst occupies an important position in relation to the region’s lead economic development agencies. Council is able to collaborate with, support and add value to initiatives relating to social infrastructure, including medical services, educational institutions, and social programming.

Game Plan Requirements

- Explore joint initiatives to access funding for delivery of social services on behalf of or with Constance Lake First Nation.
- Seek the support and participation of local organized labour in the development of labour sponsored venture capital pools unique to Hearst and the region.
- Provide support and encourage local educational facilities (Collège Boréal, Université de Hearst) to develop research programs for value added forest manufacturing initiatives.
- Lobby Tembec, Columbia and other major industrial forest operators to locate their research and development departments in Hearst.
- Lobby Forintek to establish a field office in conjunction with CEFNO, and explore federal and provincial funding to facilitate this co-location.
- Lobby and approach provincial and federal forest associations to hold offices and research facilities associated with CEFNO and local industry.

6.3 Strategy Three: Supporting Target Business Sectors

The third prong of the strategy is concerned with providing specialized support for select business sectors. It is clear that Hearst’s long-term prosperity rests with its ability to balance economic activity amongst multiple sectors and to move away from an overbearing reliance on the forestry sector.

The table on the following page identifies key business sectors and illustrates the existing or potential benefits that they bring to Hearst’s economy. Value added manufacturing, tourism, health, education and regional industrial support services are among the sectors that have performed the strongest in terms of employment creation. In addition, there are several other important sectors that build on existing capacity, bring new skills and investment to the community, and that have strong potential with projects being actively planned.

Legend	Value Added Manufacturing	Tourism	Mining	Agriculture	Health	Education	Industrial Support	Retail & Small Business
1- very favourable								
2- favourable								
3- neutral								
4- negative								
5- very negative								
Employment Generators	1	2	1	3	2	2	3	2
Short Term Jobs	3	4	5	3	5	5	2	1
Long term Restructuring	4	2	5	5	1	1	4	3
Build on Existing capacity	1	4	5	3	3	3	3	2
Advance Forestry clustering	1	5	5	5	3	2	2	5
Export Potential	1	1	1	1	5	3	3	4
Support Hearst objectives	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	1
Level of Investment required	4	4	5	4	3	3	2	2
Brings Additional Benefits	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	2
Strong Champion in place	3	2	2	5	2	1	3	3
Active projects	4	2	3	5	3	2	4	4

6.3.1 – Support Primary Forest Industry

The forest industry remains the key economic driver for the Hearst area’s economy. It is critical that core support be given to existing companies currently operating in the sector. Advancing competitiveness of these enterprises will assure that the industry remains viable and continues to support the community.

Game Plan Requirements

- Ensure representation of the main local employers on the Economic Development Corporation.
- Actively solicit companies’ comments on their needs and requirements.
- Lobby provincial and federal political institutions on the benefits of the industry and the importance of the industry’s global competitiveness.
- Maintain active communication between the major industry and its supporting economic sectors, and facilitate, where possible, conflict resolution negotiations.
- Actively participate in planning exercises of MNR and Sustainable Forest Management Plans.
- Explore energy generation options with provincial authorities and private sector companies to increase local competitiveness.

6.3.2 – Foster Development of Value Added Forest Manufacturing Industry

The local assets found in the community, in terms of skills, knowledge and ability, lend themselves to the creation and natural placement of a second tier manufacturing industry. Encourage entrepreneurs through a specific development and awareness campaign, employing related educational and support services aids to offset development risks for such entrepreneurs.

Game Plan Requirements

- Undertake, through the Living Legacy Trust resources, a feasibility analysis for the development of an entrepreneurial incubator mall, dedicated to secondary manufacturing opportunities resulting from primary products generated by area mills.
- Work with the MNR, through their economic development mandate, to identify significant and low risk market entry products.
- Form joint initiatives with Constance Lake First Nation in re-establishing their finger jointing operation.
- Complete an assessment of similar communities in other areas, which have advanced secondary manufacturing industries, and analyze local gaps that are identified.
- Develop, in partnership with CEFNO and Nord-Aski, business templates on known products in the secondary manufacturing industry.
- Encourage Nord-Aski to seek funds from provincial or federal agencies for creating a state of the art reference and resource library to encourage entrepreneurial research.
- Solicit provincial and federal development agencies to sponsor a risk capital pool, unique to the area and administered through Nord-Aski for the express purpose of stimulating secondary manufacturing.
- Review strategy with industry participation and support.
- Carry out local marketing and awareness campaign of known opportunities for and by existing companies.
- Undertake an annual conference specifically oriented to the development of initiatives relating to the secondary manufacturing industry.

6.3.3 – Support the Development of Tourism

The tourism sector is regarded as probably the largest and fastest growing employment sector in the world. In Hearst's context, the elements of a world-class destination centre are present and could play an important role in diversifying the local economy. Hearst must harness and focus the contribution of local, regional, provincial and federal agencies and the private sector to develop tourism products and market the area. Tourism should be a priority sector for Council and the subject of specific detailed marketing strategies and undertakings.

Game Plan Requirements

- Undertake a specific development plan to structure a joint venture with the ACR to improve the Tour of the Line rail product.
- Incorporate the development and revitalization of the train station into the Highway 11 corridor beautification project.
- Encourage partnerships between First Nations, private sector and the Hearst Economic Development Corporation for the specific purpose of an in-town interpretive centre.
- Encourage and facilitate the expansion of the wildlife exhibit at the Hearst Welcome Centre (tourism information centre).
- Structure a tracking and follow-up marketing campaign to callers using the toll free tourist information telephone number.
- Establish a reservation service for area accommodation providers through a toll free telephone number.
- Create a marketing and service delivery partnership with Destination Nord.
- Explore development opportunities for new accommodation inventory in the community.
- Assist Constance Lake First Nation in the realization of the Eagle's Earth Cree and Ojibway Historical Centre tourism project.
- Create marketing and development links with the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation to focus on Hearst as a destination.
- Explore the viability of a voluntary room surcharge on area accommodation operators and use revenues for contrived tourism marketing campaign.
- Encourage private sector development of waterway commercial opportunities.
- Focus marketing campaign and orient municipal signage infrastructure towards francophone and aboriginal cultural heritage.
- Expand on events and activities to encourage increased day traffic and single night travel activities.
- Forestry/Heritage Museum

6.3.4 – Support Mining Exploration and Assist Existing Projects

Although mining has not been a traditional economic sector for the community, recent advances in the exploration of industrial minerals presents a tangible opportunity for establishing a mining operation. Support and aid through a focused effort may result in advancing the project to commercialization.

Game Plan Requirements

- Request from MNDM and maintain an inventory of known mining prospects found in the Hearst region for the express purpose of ensuring that potential land use conflicts are identified and incorporated into the planning process.
- Communicate with existing exploration companies and seek participation in the developmental process.
- Review and assess potential road links to the proposed Martinson site to ensure that road access is achieved through Hearst.
- Lobby exploration companies and First Nations to assure economic benefits are also provided for Hearst.

6.3.5 – Support Agriculture and Silviculture Entrepreneurs

Although not a strong contributor to Hearst's economy, the agricultural sector brought settlers to the region and thus is a key part of the heritage of the community and the surrounding hamlets. Efforts to maintain agricultural lands and preserve the industry as a means of encouraging foreign immigration, remain a plausible developmental tool.

Game Plan Requirements

- Complete an inventory of municipally owned agricultural lands and evaluate options of combining parcels as a means for development, assembling commercially viable parcels of 500 acres or more, and offering such lands for sale by public tender, with marketing to European and Asiatic countries through the investor immigrant program.
- Explore partnerships with existing agricultural and silvicultural operators to market goods and services to new markets.

6.3.6 – Support the Development of the Health and Elderly Services Industry

Hearst holds a sophisticated health service industry with a regional delivery mandate. The health sector makes a significant economic contribution, particularly through the activities of Hôpital Notre-Dame Hospital and the expanded le Foyer des Pionniers Hearst Nursing Home. The health sector has demonstrated that it has high employment intensity and job diversity, which in turn produces a strong multiplier effect throughout the economy. There is potential to deepen and widen the economic benefits of the health sector through the collaborative efforts of health institutions and local government.

Game Plan Requirements

- Ensure that opportunities for new medical, support services and housing services aimed at an ageing population are pursued.
- Investigate and support new medical industries based on unique opportunities in Hearst in relation to the new Northern Ontario Medical School.
- Assure that the professional retention package addresses the needs of potential health practitioners seeking to relocate to the community.
- Explore and assist Maison Renaissance in seeking additional funding to expand its facility and services.
- Undertake a specific review of provincial medical services to identify administration functions that can be located in the community e.g. cancer care data management centre.
- Lobby Ministry of Health to relocate administrative staff to Hearst based on the high francophone service delivery.
- Create awareness and develop promotional materials for presentations to students of the Northern Ontario Medical School who are selecting placement programs.

6.3.7 – Support the Development of the Education Sector and the Expansion of Trade Apprenticeship Programs

The presence of quality post-secondary institutions in the community are considerable assets for maintaining youth in the community and a strong and vibrant economy. The education sector is known to have a high economic impact on Hearst, both directly through the delivery of educational services and indirectly through the value added to the economy by an educated workforce. L'Université de Hearst and Collège Boréal are the key post-secondary education providers and complement the vocational training efforts of the secondary school system and some private sector programs. There is room to multiply the benefits of the education sector through the student import education push and collaborative vocational training between education institutions and the principal private sector employers.

Game Plan Requirements

- Work with the Université de Hearst and Collège Boréal to ensure an increased presence and contribution to the local economy.
- Support the preservation of funding to post-secondary institutions by the provincial government.
- Help institutions recognize and meet the needs of growing industrial sectors and link this to the strategic process undertaken by the Municipality.
- Promote the status of the educational facilities as a means of enhancing the Town's image and level of sophistication to area residents and the business community.
- Actively participate in educational planning exercises.
- Support and encourage the development of relevant formal educational and training opportunities that will provide people with the skills that are required to attract job creation and investment opportunities.

6.3.8 – Encourage the Growth and Ambitions of the Industrial Support Sector

The Hearst industrial support sector has flourished and is becoming a self-sustaining industry providing market links well beyond the boundaries of Hearst. Transportation entrepreneurs have created and established markets in Northwestern Ontario and other points outside Hearst. The availability and presence of such success will facilitate secondary manufacturing initiatives and further support the idea of industrial clustering.

Game Plan Requirements

- Encourage Nord-Aski to complete competitiveness assessment and financial product needs of this economic sector and its operators.
- Approach major forestry companies to explore policies on local purchasing power to increase local markets for the sector.
- Identify significant contractors who are not local operators and provide encouragement to relocate to the community.
- Create a link between small operators and College Boréal for the provision of administrative programs flexible to the schedule of individual operators.
- Ensure that municipally controlled agencies hold a “buy local” policy.

6.3.9 – Encourage Retail Enterprises and Small Service Businesses

Hearst is home to an exciting mix of specialty shops, restaurants and local services. Small business accounts for the largest percentage of employment and internal economic trade. Growth of this sector is important to the overall well-being of the economy and in particular, to support broad initiatives in tourism where the merchandise and services of small unique retailers are an essential ingredient to the success of these initiatives.

Game Plan Requirements

- Officially recognize the validity, importance and benefits of small business to the community’s economic structure.
- Link BIA to beautification of the Highway 11 corridor.
- Provide a forum for dialogue between the two retail commercial sectors found in the community.
- Encourage Nord-Aski to undertake a service delivery awareness campaign of its benefits to this sector.
- Incorporate adequate parking and safe pedestrian crossing into the beautification of Highway 11.
- Assure an aid program is available to building owners to update and modernize façades.
- Council should take a more pronounced and rigid position with vacant and non-compliant buildings.
- Encourage the BIA to post comparative shopping information on local merchants and out of town shops on a common website.
- Work with all merchants to create tourism links.
- Undertake to review the willingness and potential benefits of employing common themes based on an overall tourism marketing strategy adopted by the community.
- Create compliance templates for licensing and permitting requirements for new and expanding small businesses.
- Develop a medium marketing businesses whose owners are seeking retirement.
- Encourage Nord-Aski, the Chamber of Commerce and the post-secondary institutions to create workshops for succession planning.
- Review municipal policies on home-based businesses for appropriateness in the electronic age.

6.4 Strategy Four – Develop Social Infrastructure and a High Quality of Life

The fourth prong of the strategy involves building up Hearst's social capital, that is to say, its people, their skills and social facilities, in addition to developing a high quality of life through leadership, planning and good governance. This strategy has several objectives, which are set out below.

6.4.1 – Provide Leadership and Vision

Community and business confidence can be strongly influenced by the leadership and direction set by elected Council and the professionalism of the Council's organization. As a lead agency, it is incumbent on Council to provide clear strategic direction for the community, its residents and its many organizations.

Game Plan Requirements

- Implement Hearst Council' strategic vision and priority objectives.
- Monitor community attitudes towards performance of the strategic plan.
- Develop clear strategic direction statements and management plans.
- Forge community partnerships around key economic events and business sectors.
- Represent Hearst's residential and business citizens to provincial and federal governments.
- Hold open and regular dialogue with business leaders.
- Investigate potential economic, cultural and social benefits of promoting Hearst as a vibrant Northern community.

6.4.2 – Actively Facilitate the Formation and Expansions of Not-For-Profit Enterprises

Council is uniquely placed to facilitate and promote community-based enterprises. Examples include: facilitating and supporting the establishment of networks through which business operators can market themselves and come into contact with other businesses; managing the public environment in a way that is conducive to the formation of economic markets that local enterprises can tap into; and making it easier for business operators to understand approval and licensing procedures.

Game Plan Requirements

- Facilitate tourism business networking and marketing – James Bay Frontier, development of a Hearst hospitality association.
- Encourage business owners and major industry to understand the services at their disposal as presented by various groups.
- Lobby development agencies (FedNor, HRDC, etc.) to increase services to community businesses and entrepreneurs.

6.4.3 – Provide Appropriate Community Facilities

The provision of community infrastructure is a core business of Council. A key requirement for economic development is a high quality living environment that supplements an attractive business climate.

Game Plan Requirements

- Ensure community services and facilities are relevant to Hearst needs and standards.
- Manage the inventory of community facilities and maintain them at appropriate service levels.
- In partnership with related agencies (e.g. Chamber of Commerce), periodically investigate the satisfaction of the business community towards community services and facilities.

6.4.4 – Develop a Sustainable Community

Sustainability is about ensuring adequate consideration of social, environmental and economic matters during decision making, so that the long-term interests of future generations of the community are protected. Sustainability is fundamental to maintaining a high quality living and working environment. Through its policies, assets and services, Council is able to establish appropriate standards, regulations and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the way of life for Hearst residents and businesses is capable of being sustained on an inter-generational basis.

Game Plan Requirements

- Target initiatives which provide potential training and employment for the long-term unemployed, such as the CCEJ initiative.
- Actively encourage the retention of Hearst's youth.
- Educate local and regional businesses on Council's vision of sustainability and the key elements of Hearst's common values.
- Explore opportunities for long-term stable development.

Quality public places and adequate infrastructure are catalysts for community economic development. In order to maximize the economic and social development benefits of public places and infrastructure, it is necessary to manage them as though they are economic, social and environmental assets. The objective should be to optimize the overall "return" on public investment. Part of this involves encouraging community ownership of Hearst's public places and assets, to increase usage rates. Developing and maintaining a sense of place, a community of concern and an environment of community responsibility are fundamental to Hearst, in order to attract investment and jobs and to encourage its retiring residents to remain.

Game Plan Requirements

- Develop and implement economic development policy governing the Hearst Economic Development Corporation.
- Support and facilitate public events in public places – Moose Festival, etc.
- Link public space (Highway 11 corridor beautification) to cultural heritage tourism campaign.
- Develop new public spaces and retrofit others as needed (e.g. Hearst Welcome Centre/Tourist Information bureau) under a consistent and contrived theme that supports the general direction and implementation of the economic strategic plan.

6.4.5 – Facilitate the Growth and Maintenance of the Community Sector

The provision of a range of community support services, in addition to providing significant opportunities for training and employment, contributes to the quality lifestyle enjoyed by residents. Access to services (ranging from children's services through to elderly care and support for families, youth and people with disabilities) is also a contributing factor for influencing decisions of organizations to relocate to the area. As well as providing significant employment opportunities covering a range of skills for individuals, a strong community sector is also an important indicator of the health and depth of a community's social infrastructure.