

The Living Room of a Rural Community

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

Rural communities are adapting to shifts in demographics, labour forces, and turbulent economic circumstances. Partnered with the COVID-19 pandemic, local governments have adapted to the shifts by re-evaluating plans and curating sustainable strategies to combat the unprecedented challenges.

The research examines the actors and processes in the Town of New Tecumseth as a case study to provide insight on the realities facing a community with strong rural heritage on the edge of the growing Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The research addresses the three questions:

1. What activities attract economic development opportunities?
2. What is the role of local actors in facilitating economic development?
3. What are the influences of COVID-19 on rural economic development?

The data collection occurred over the winter of 2025 and translated in a SWOT analysis to summarize findings.

IMPACTS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

- Cooperation between the different actors is crucial in the success of economic development (partnerships and collaborative governance)

- Leverage geographic location in proximity to GTA, developing tourism base connecting GTA to New Tecumseth and providing housing options to those interested in rural-urban lifestyle.
- A resurgence of community support emerged, and local businesses established buy-local campaigns and implemented new technology to stay relevant

STRENGTHS

- Proximity to GTA
- CPKC main rail line
- 400 series highway
- Strong automotive & agri-business sector

WEAKNESSES

- Business ecosystem
- Lack of public transit
- Health systems
- Competing Interest across three towns

OPPORTUNITIES

- Diversify tourism
- Three distinct downtown cores
- Shifts towards business-minded council

THREATS

- Ageing population
- Lack of retail options
- Commuter town
- Workforce issues
- Lack of infrastructure for growing needs

FURTHER INFORMATION

The thesis can be accessed online at the [University of Guelph's Atrium](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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