



## The Corporation of the Town of LaSalle

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council

**Prepared by:** Dawn Hadre, Director of Strategy and Engagement Department

**Department:** Strategy and Engagement

**Date of Report:** April 5, 2024

**Report Number:** SE-02-2024

**Subject:** Establishing a Business Network in LaSalle

### Recommendation

That the report of the Director of Strategy and Engagement dated April 5, 2024 (SE-02-2024) regarding Establishing a Business Network in LaSalle be received for Council's information.

### Report

In 2018, administration worked with Mellor Murray Consulting to complete an Economic Development Plan.

The goals of the plan include:

1. A vibrant local economy, with an adequate shovel-ready land supply: invest in the infrastructure, tools, resources, and programs that provide the foundation for continued growth and economic development activity.
2. A vibrant waterfront district: establish LaSalle's waterfront as a destination for recreation, higher density residential, mixed-use, commercial, and tourism activity.
3. A supportive planning environment: strengthen and formalize the connection between economic development, land use, transportation, and infrastructure planning to facilitate and encourage business investment.
4. Targeted investment attraction and support: attract new services and other business development, diversify tax revenues, and increase services and jobs in LaSalle.
5. **Business community engagement/collaboration: harness the power of the business community to establish LaSalle as a dynamic center of commercial activity.**

With the introduction of Economic Development under the Strategy and Engagement Department's portfolio, one of the first areas of focus is to engage with the business community to encourage business-to-business collaboration. The first activity to support this was the Town's partnership with the Windsor Essex Regional Chamber of

Commerce. An “After Business Networking Event” was held at the Event Centre in May 2023. This allowed participants to see the Event Centre and meet other members of the region’s business community.

LaSalle does not have a business network to represent the views of the business community. Years ago, the LaSalle Business Association was in existence but has ceased operation. The Strategy and Engagement Department contracted the services of Mellor Murray Consulting to assess the opportunity to establish a business network in LaSalle. This included research of comparable business networks, the development of an introductory discussion paper, workshops, and recommendations on the next steps. The “Final Report: Establishing a Business Network” report is attached.

Local businesses were invited to attend the Business Workshop through the following methods:

- Business email list of roughly 143 contacts
- Mayor Crystal Meloche and Deputy Mayor Mike Akpata hand-delivered invitations to roughly 100 businesses located along Front Road and Malden Road
- Town’s website and social media platforms

On October 17, 2023, a Business Workshop was held at the Event Centre. There were 28 representatives in attendance to discuss options for the establishment of a business network in LaSalle. Those in attendance were very engaged in the process and provided valuable insights and feedback. There was also interest from a few others who were unable to attend. The Strategy and Engagement Department will include all those who expressed interest in future communications.

The participants identified several potential benefits from the establishment of a business network including:

- contribution to business growth,
- potential for business networking, partnerships, and cross-promotion,
- beautification efforts,
- organization of consistent events, and
- sharing in advertising costs.

The participants also noted some concerns:

- maintaining momentum,
- ensuring longevity and value,
- political conflict,
- generating revenue and low membership costs, and
- volunteer commitment.

On November 6, 2023, a workshop was held involving LaSalle Council and members of the Town’s Senior Leadership Team. This discussion focused on interest in establishing a business organization to address challenges and foster a prosperous business community in LaSalle.

Overall, the discussions were similar at both workshops. The consensus was that the establishment of a Chamber of Commerce would be beneficial for both the business community and the Town. There was discussion about the Chamber of Commerce being the first step with the long-term goal of establishing a Business Improvement Area.

### **Definition of Chamber of Commerce**

A Chamber of Commerce is a voluntary business organization, supported by its member firms to promote the area's economic growth and development. Chambers enable business people to accomplish collectively what they may not be able to do individually, creating a pool of professional and business resources from which they can draw inspiration, new ideas, energy, and finances. ([atlanticchamber.ca](http://atlanticchamber.ca))

### **Definition of a Business Improvement Area (BIA)**

A BIA is an association of commercial property owners and tenants within a defined area who work in partnership with the Municipality to create thriving and safe business areas (a defined area within a Municipality) that attract shoppers, diners, tourists, and new businesses. By working collaboratively as a BIA, local businesses have the resource capacity (funds and people) to actively enhance the quality of life in their local neighbourhood and the Municipality as a whole. ([obiaa.com](http://obiaa.com))

The benefits of considering the Chamber of Commerce versus a Business Improvement Area are that it allows for voluntary membership, it can include businesses within the entire municipality, and a business or an employee would be eligible to join. There was discussion about the importance of having representation from the three main commercial areas in LaSalle (Front Road, Malden Road, and Sandwich West Parkway) on the Board of Directors.

There are some options to introduce a Chamber of Commerce into the community:

- establish a new and separate Chamber of Commerce,
- establish a shared service agreement where a LaSalle Chamber of Commerce contracts administrative support from another local chamber, or
- support from a neighbouring chamber to include LaSalle in its mandate.

The next steps will entail contacting the business community to gauge interest in supporting a Chamber of Commerce, and to identify the champions of the project who will take a lead role in the establishment, growth, and maintenance of the organization. It is important to note that the Town will assist in the establishment of the Chamber of Commerce and would become a member, however, the Board of Directors must involve representation from the business community. This project will only move forward if there is sufficient interest from the business community to move the process forward.

## **Consultations**

None

## Financial Implications

The fee for the consultant's report was taken from the Strategic Planning budget. Costs may be incurred in the future to support the establishment of a Chamber of Commerce. This will be determined as the process continues and will be shared with Council.

### Prepared By:



Dawn Hadre, Director of Strategy and Engagement Department

## Link to Strategic Goals

1. Enhancing organizational excellence - Not Applicable
2. Strengthen the community's engagement with the Town - Yes
3. Grow and diversify the local economy - Yes
4. Build on our high-quality of life - Yes
5. Sustaining strong public services and infrastructure - Not Applicable

## Communications

Communication will continue with the business community.

### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Establishing a Business Network in LaSalle.docx
Attachments:	- LaSalle Business Network Final Report -accessible.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Apr 8, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



Chief Administrative Officer

Joe Milicia