



Mississippi
Mills

Mississippi Mills 2048

Our Community, Our Future



Economic Development Strategic Plan

Cultivating Growth in a Picturesque Community

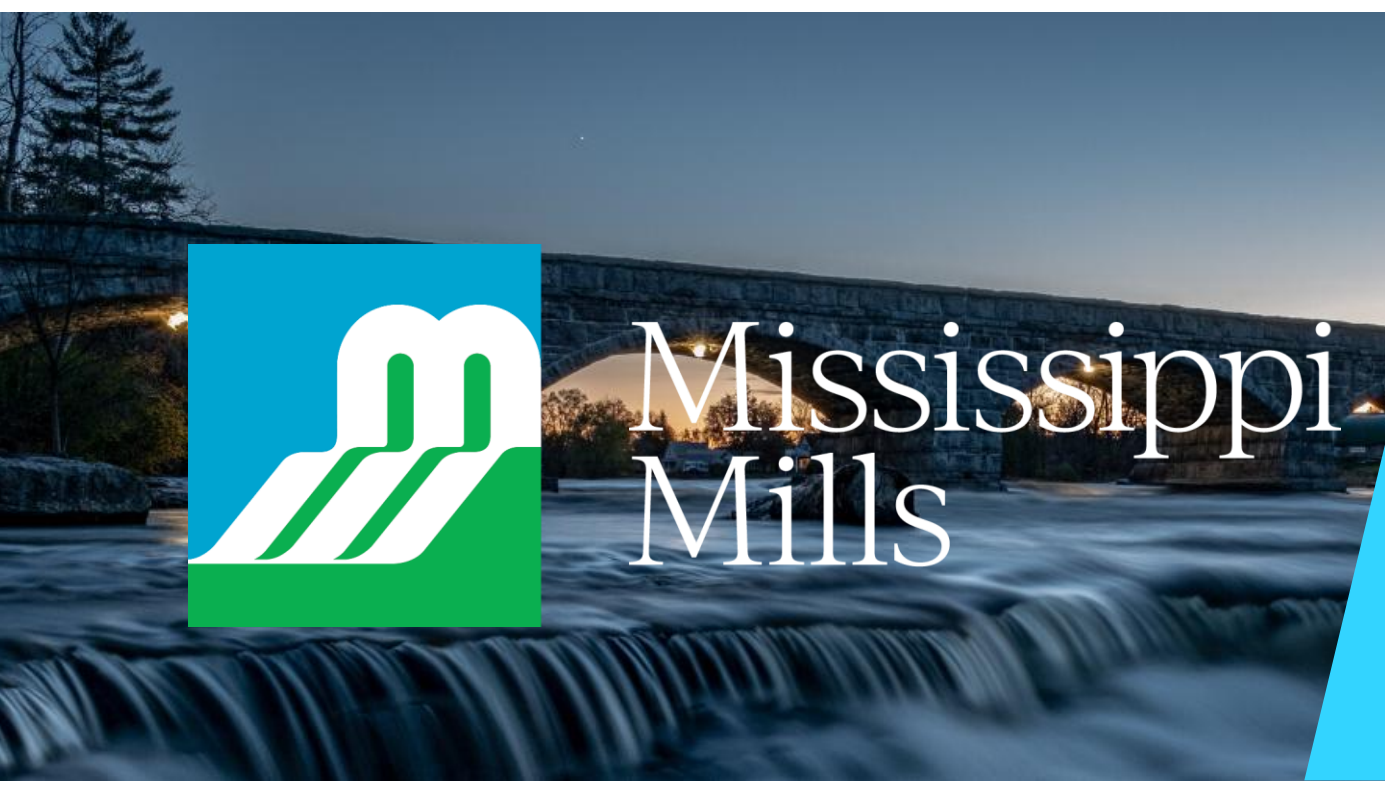
The Municipality of Mississippi Mills is a dynamic and picturesque community located in eastern Ontario, Canada, encompassing a blend of historic charm, vibrant culture, and natural beauty.

Known for its heritage architecture and stunning landscapes, the municipality is home to thriving rural and urban areas, including the town of Almonte and the village of Pakenham. The Ramsay ward contains smaller communities of Clayton, Appleton and Blakeney. Mississippi Mills boasts a strong sense of community, rooted in its agricultural heritage, innovative spirit, and dedication to sustainability.

With a diverse economy spanning small businesses, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, and creative industries, Mississippi Mills is strategically positioned to foster economic growth and resilience. The Municipality's commitment to preserving its natural and cultural assets while nurturing economic vitality reflects the values of its engaged and resourceful residents.

This Economic Development Strategic Plan aims to chart a course for sustainable development, ensuring that Mississippi Mills continues to flourish as a dynamic and welcoming place to live, work, and invest.





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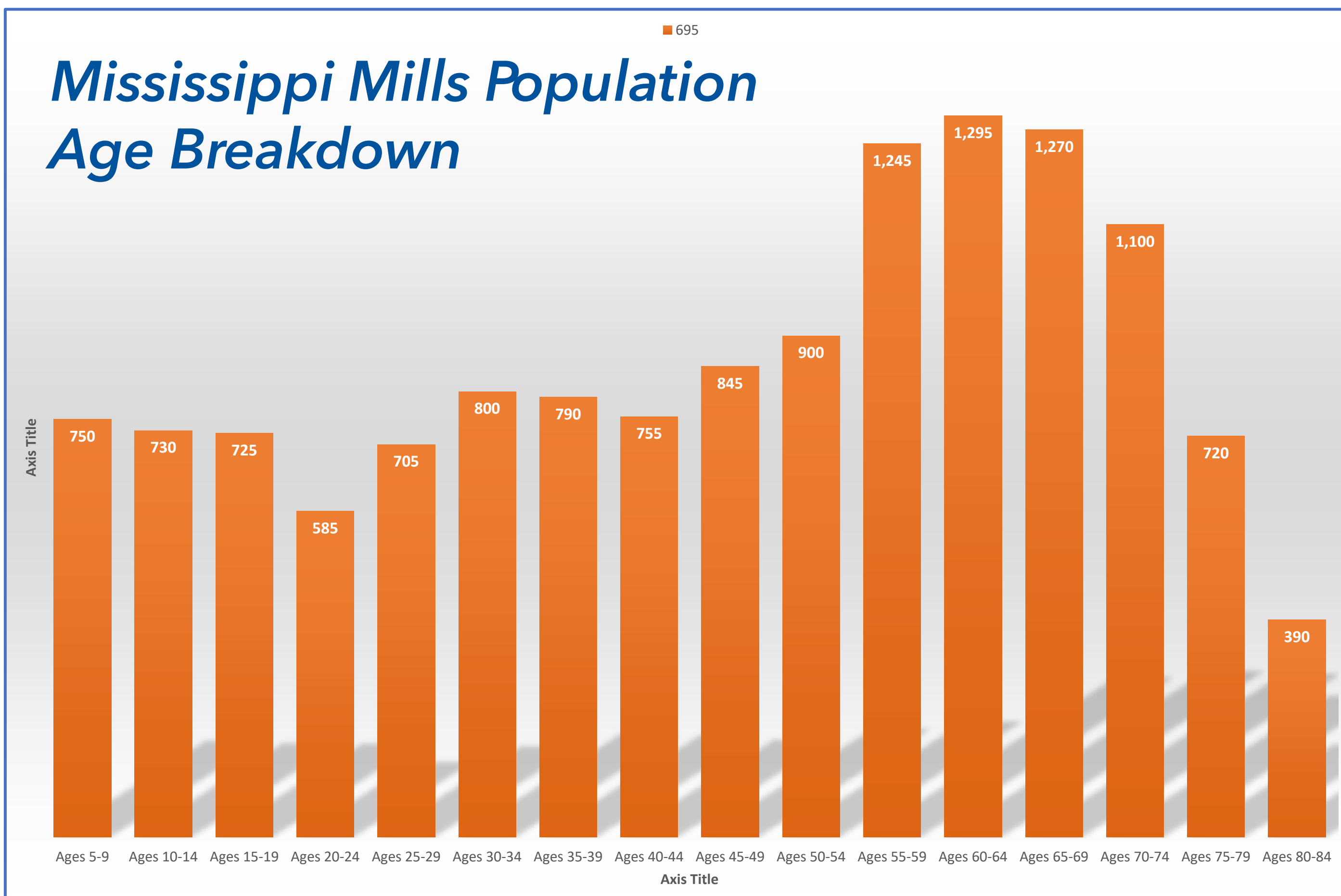
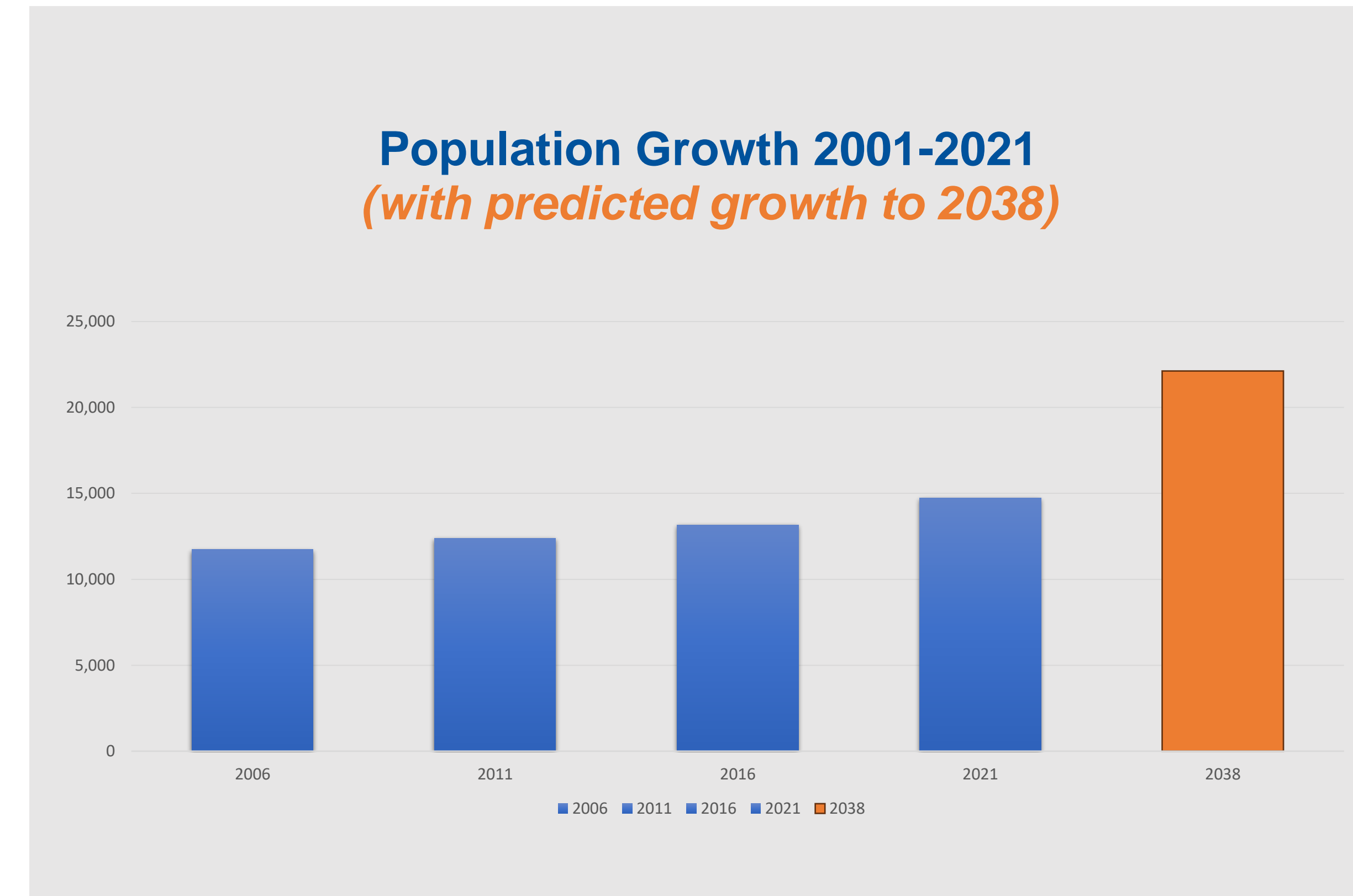
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Mississippi Mills: Growing for a Thriving Future

Projected Population Expansion to Drive Employment, Attract New Industries and Enhance Economic Resilience

Mississippi Mills is poised for substantial growth in its employment opportunities and labour force over the coming decades, reflecting its projected population expansion from an estimated 15,126 in 2022 to 22,122 by 2038. This population increase is fueled by factors such as urban boundary expansions, housing developments, and migration trends within Lanark County, which will drive demand for skilled workers and diversify the labour market. These developments provide an ideal foundation for fostering economic growth, attracting new industries, and enhancing workforce capacity, ensuring the municipality remains vibrant and economically resilient in the future.



Ages 0-4	695
Ages 5-9	750
Ages 10-14	730
Ages 15-19	725
Ages 20-24	585
Ages 25-29	705
Ages 30-34	800
Ages 35-39	790
Ages 40-44	755
Ages 45-49	845
Ages 50-54	900
Ages 55-59	1,245
Ages 60-64	1,295
Ages 65-69	1,270
Ages 70-74	1,100
Ages 75-79	720
Ages 80-84	390
Ages 85+	435

Population & Investment Attraction

Population is the sum of births plus in-migration and it signifies the total market size possible in the area. This is an important metric to measure their economic health and investment attraction. Businesses also use this as a metric for market size when evaluating startup, expansion or relocation decisions. Which means a growing population makes good business sense for someone considering our community.





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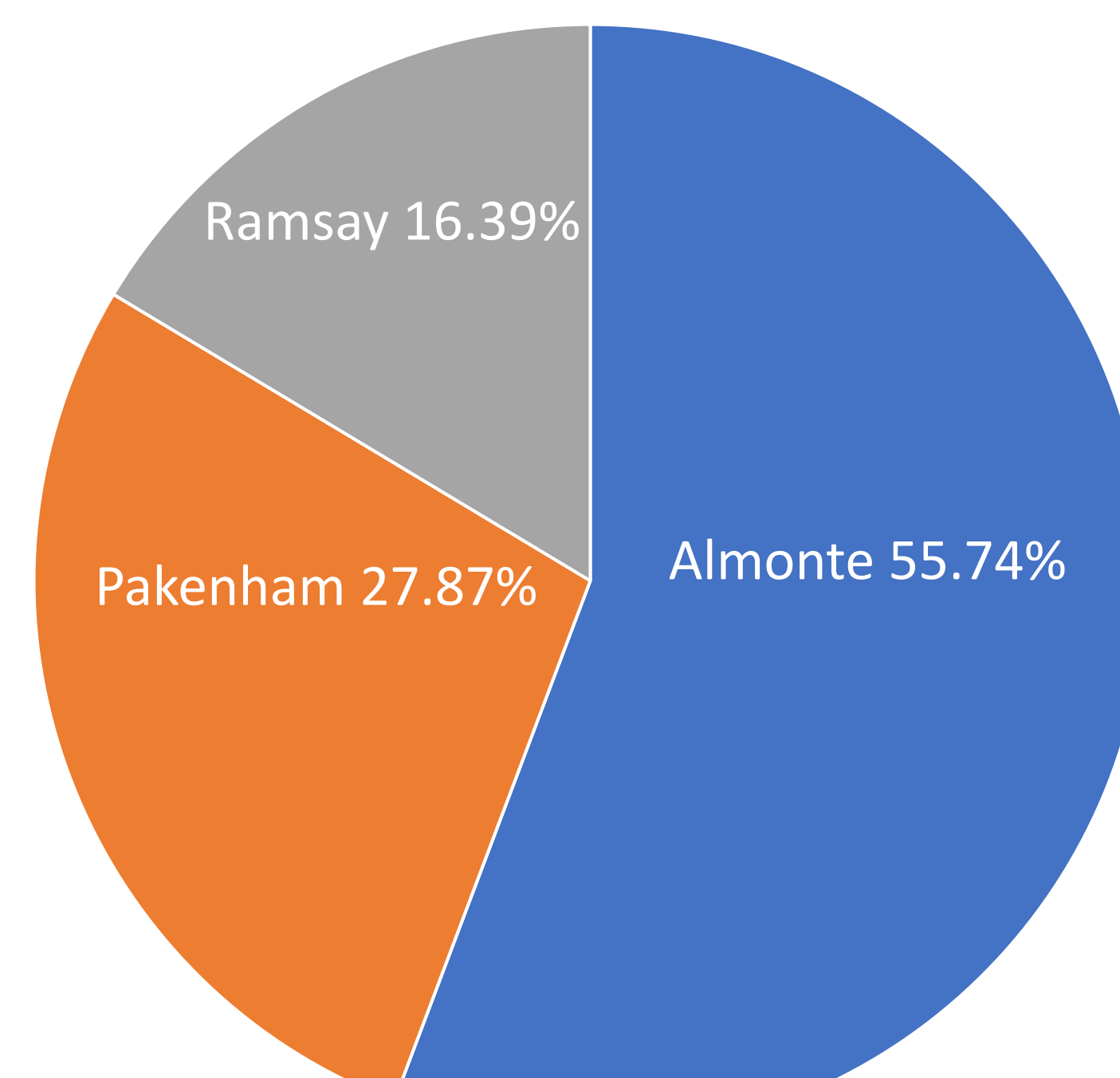
Business Survey

To support the Municipality's economic development needs and inform our **Economic Development Strategic Plan for 2025-2029**, we launched the Municipality of Mississippi Mills Business Survey in 2024. The survey aimed to gather insights from existing business owners and operators who are invested in Mississippi Mills, emphasizing the importance of two-way communication to build an effective partnership between local businesses and the Municipality.

The survey was divided into two parts: **Part A**, which included the main survey for all businesses, and **Part B**, which focused on sector-specific questions. The data collected through the survey was intended to educate decision-makers at all levels of government, identify trends requiring urgent attention and plan future economic development strategies and programs. Personal information provided by respondents was kept confidential.

The survey received responses from various wards, including Almonte, Pakenham and Ramsay, with a diverse mix of businesses such as retail trade, accommodation and food services, health care and social assistance, agriculture and professional services. Business sizes ranged from small operations with 1-4 employees to larger establishments with over 100 employees.

The results of the survey were statistically significant, indicating a meaningful association between the wards and business types. This valuable information helped shape the Municipality's approach to supporting local businesses and fostering economic growth.



Sizes of Businesses (# of Employees):

- **1-4 employees:** 34 businesses
- **5-9 employees:** 17 businesses
- **10-19 employees:** 10 businesses
- **20-29 employees:** 4 businesses
- **30-49 employees:** 1 business
- **100-299 employees:** 1 business

Mix of Businesses

- **Retail trade:** 14 businesses
- **Accommodation and food services:** 8 businesses
- **Health care and social assistance:** 7 businesses
- **Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting:** 7 businesses
- **Professional, scientific, technical services:** 6 businesses
- **Manufacturing:** 5 businesses
- **Other services:** 5 businesses
- **Arts, entertainment and recreation:** 5 businesses
- **Construction:** 4 businesses
- **Real estate and rental and leasing:** 3 businesses
- **Educational services:** 2 businesses
- **Information and cultural industries:** 2 businesses
- **Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services:** 2 businesses
- **Transportation and warehousing:** 1 business
- **Finance and insurance:** 1 business





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Summarized Business Survey Observations

Advantages of Doing Business in Mississippi Mills:

- Strong sense of community and support from residents.
- Attractive setting and proximity to Ottawa, which helps in attracting visitors/customers.

Disadvantages:

- Limited availability of commercial space and high rental costs.
- Challenges with municipal services and infrastructure, particularly in Pakenham.

Desired Improvements:

- Better internet and cell phone service, especially in rural areas.
- More affordable housing and commercial space to support business growth.
- Increased marketing and promotional efforts to attract visitors and new businesses.

Conclusion

The survey results highlight a community of businesses that are deeply rooted in Mississippi Mills with a strong desire to grow and support each other. While there are challenges, particularly related to infrastructure and municipal services, the overall sentiment is positive, with businesses looking forward to a prosperous and sustainable future.





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Business Survey Key Observations

Economic Development Vision:

- Common themes for the economic future of Mississippi Mills include prosperity, historical/cultural connection and environmental sustainability.
- Businesses emphasize the importance of supporting local business owners, attracting visitors and growing in a way that fits the community.

Business Characteristics:

- Many businesses are locally owned and operated with one location.
- A significant number of businesses have been in operation for over 10 years, indicating stability and long-term commitment to the community.

Employment:

- The majority of businesses have a small number of employees, typically ranging from 1 to 10.
- There is a mix of full-time, part-time and seasonal employment, with some businesses experiencing difficulties in hiring and retaining employees.

Challenges and Barriers:

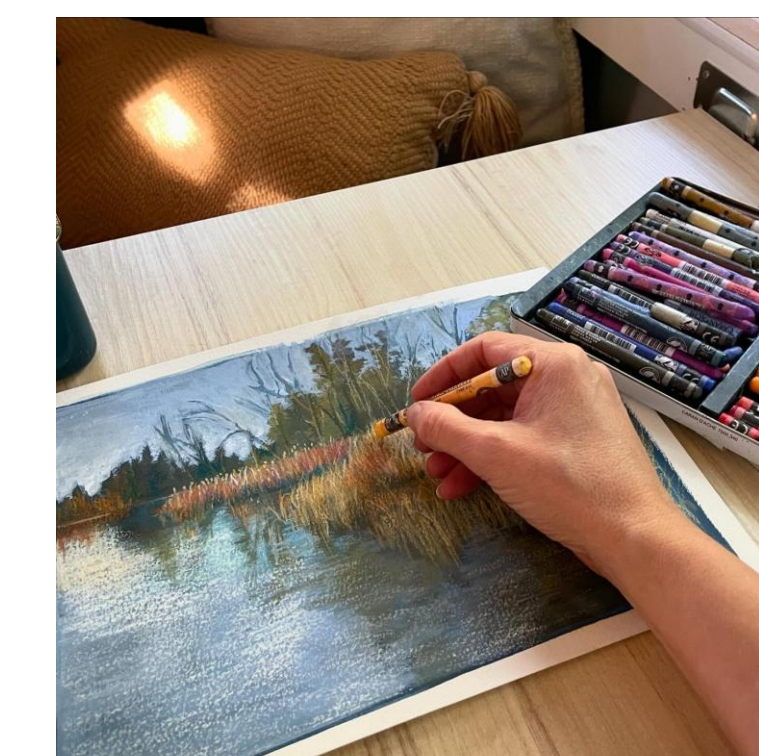
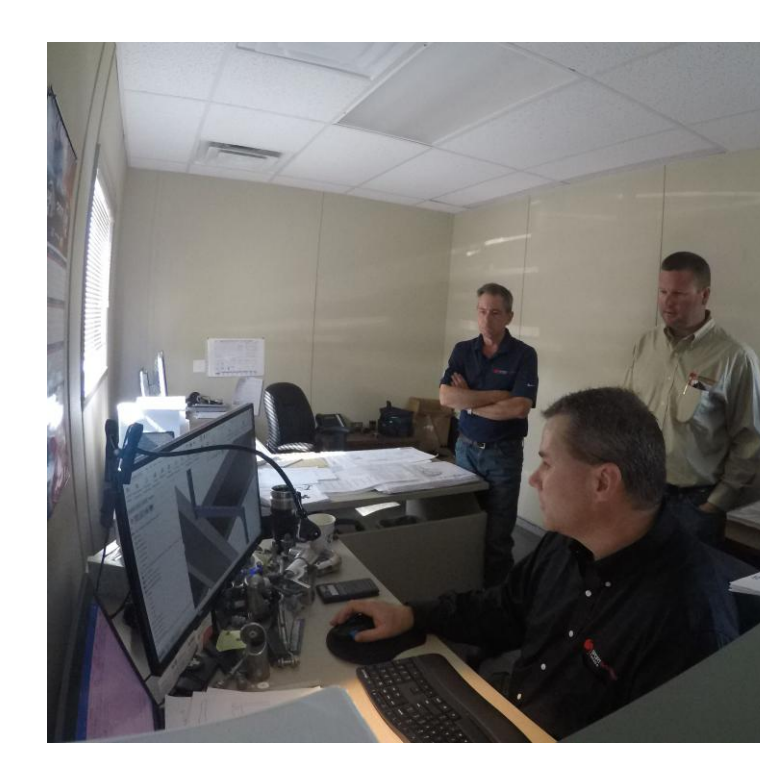
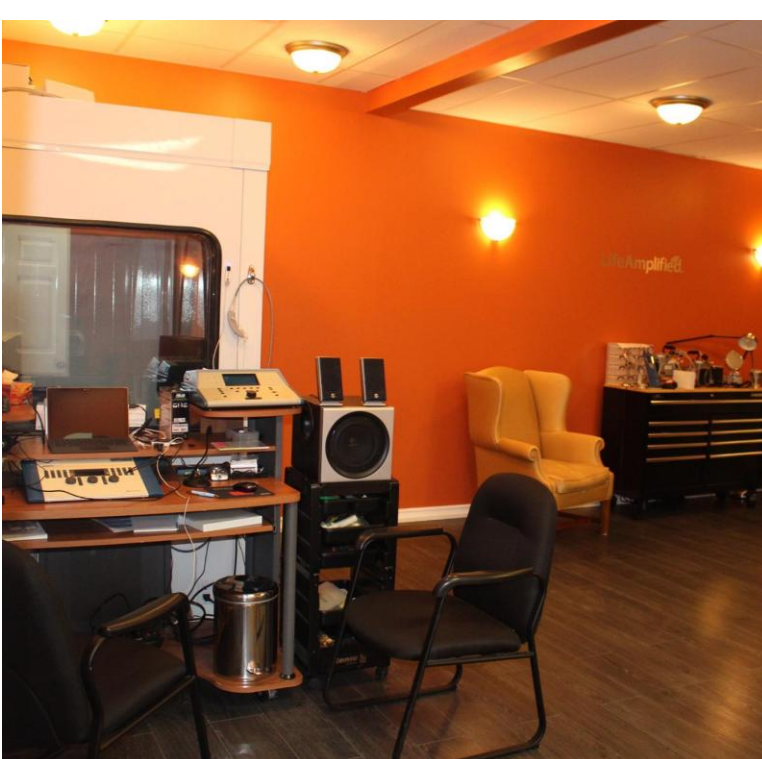
- Common challenges include internet speed, competition, and the cost of doing business.
- Some businesses report difficulties related to municipal services, such as building permits and infrastructure support.

Community and Support:

- Businesses generally have a positive impression of the community as a place to do business, with many noting the supportive and welcoming nature of the local population.
- There is a desire for more collaboration and joint marketing efforts among local businesses.

Future Plans:

- Many businesses plan to expand or remain stable in the near future, with some looking to hire more employees or increase their physical space.
- There is interest in receiving support for business planning, marketing, and training.





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Observations Regarding the Future

Based on the survey responses, we can consider several trends and insights about the future of businesses in the Municipality of Mississippi Mills over the next five years:

Business Growth and Expansion

- **Expansion Plans:** Many businesses plan to expand their operations, hire more employees, and increase their physical space. This indicates a positive outlook for business growth and economic development in the municipality.
- **Stability:** A significant number of businesses intend to remain stable, focusing on maintaining their current operations and market position.

Employment Trends

- **Full-time Employment:** There is a steady demand for full-time employees, with businesses looking to hire more staff to support their growth/expansion plans.
- **Part-time and Seasonal Employment:** Part-time and seasonal employment will continue to play a crucial role, especially in sectors like retail, agriculture, and tourism. Businesses will rely on flexible staffing to meet fluctuating demand.

Challenges and Barriers

- **Internet Speed and Infrastructure:** Are significant challenges for businesses, especially in rural areas. Addressing these issues is crucial for business growth and attracting new enterprises.
- **Municipal Services:** Businesses face difficulties with municipal services, such as building permits and infrastructure support. Streamlining these processes and improving communication is essential.

Community and Support

- **Positive Community Impression:** Businesses generally have a positive impression of the community as a place to do business. The supportive and welcoming nature of the local population is a significant advantage.
- **Collaboration and Networking:** There is a strong desire for more collaboration and joint marketing efforts. Creating opportunities for networking and resource-sharing will help businesses thrive.

Desired Improvements

- **Affordable Housing and Commercial Space:** Businesses seek more affordable housing and commercial space to support their growth and attract new talent. Addressing these needs will be vital for sustaining economic development.
- **Marketing and Promotion:** Increased marketing and promotional efforts are needed to attract visitors and new businesses. Enhancing the visibility of local businesses will drive economic growth.

Future Outlook

- **Sustainability and Resilience:** Businesses emphasize the importance of environmental sustainability and resilience. Adopting sustainable practices and building resilient operations will be key priorities for the future.
- **Innovation and Adaptation:** Businesses are looking to innovate and adapt to changing market conditions. Embracing new technologies and business models will be essential for staying competitive.



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Observations on Demographics


Based on Statistics Canada Census 2021

Mississippi Mills is a small, close community with approximately 14,740 people. Many families earn a good income, with most making around \$100,000 a year, which helps the local economy grow. However, most of the population is older (the median age is 50), which means fewer young workers in the future as people retire. In 2021 when the data was collected were approx. 410 people visible minorities, adding valuable skills and culture to the community.

To keep growing, Mississippi Mills will need to attract young families and workers. This could be done by building affordable homes, offering job training, and creating activities and services for both younger and older people. The town has a solid base to work from, but careful planning is needed to make sure it stays vibrant and successful.



Median Household Income
\$100,000



Median Age
50 years



Scan this code for more information on MM2048



Total Population 14,740



Total Visible Minorities
410



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Labour Force Data

Statistics Canada Labour Market Survey Data 2025

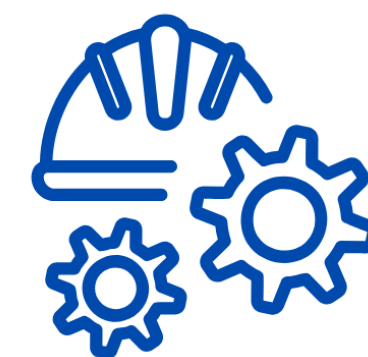
Mississippi Mills has a diverse labor force, with strengths in trades, transport, sales, and service occupations, as well as business and finance roles. The municipality has seen steady growth in population and employment opportunities, contributing to a positive labor force outlook.



Total Labour Force 7,295



Unemployment Rate 7.6%



Largest Industry by Occupation: Trades & Transport



Participation Rate 60.4%



Employment Rate 55.9



Largest Industry by Labour Force: Construction

Statistics Canada defines the **labour force** as the civilian, non-institutional population aged 15 years and older who, during the survey reference week, were either employed or unemployed.

The Participation Rate is a key labour market indicator that measures the proportion of the working-age population (typically aged 15 and older) that is actively involved in the labour force. This includes individuals who are either **Employed or Unemployed but Actively Seeking Work**.

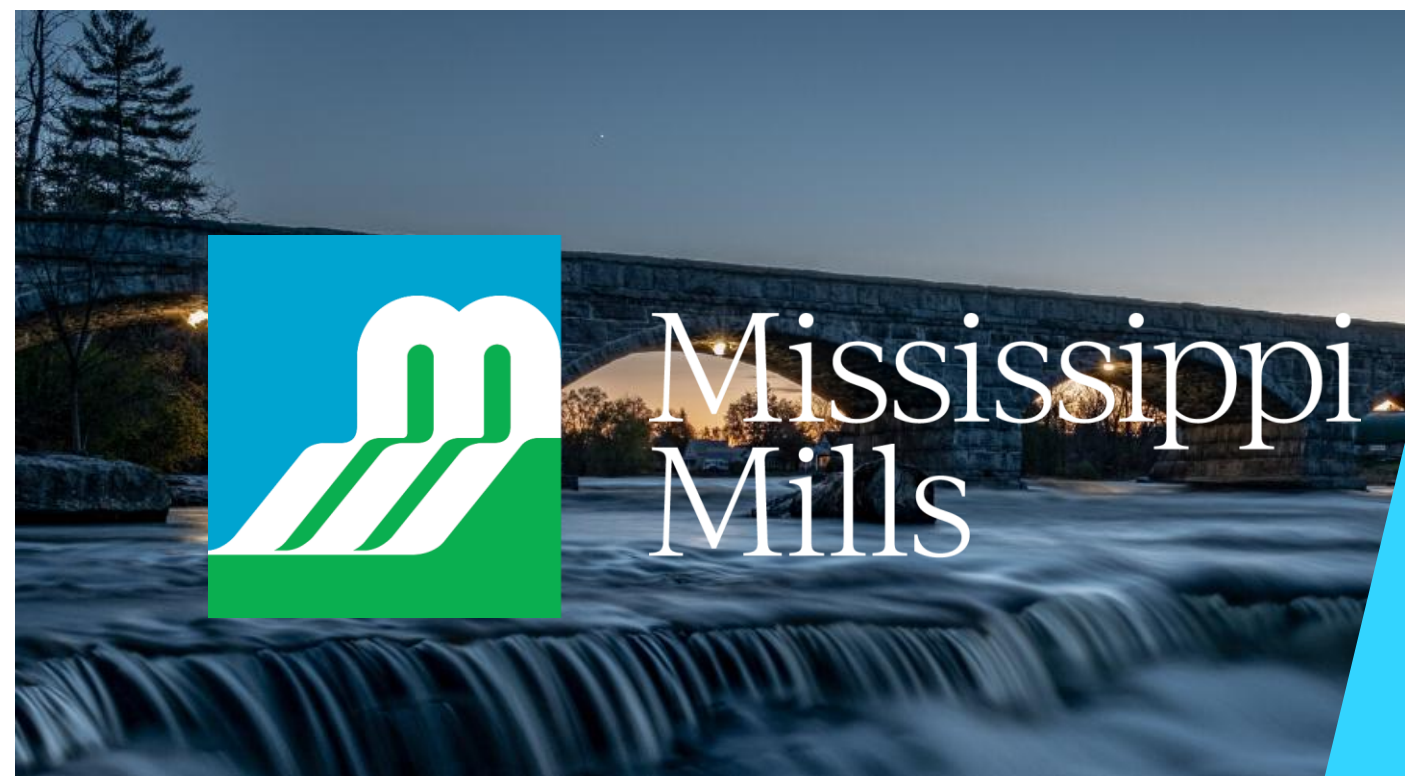
This metric helps gauge the level of economic activity and workforce engagement in a given area. For Mississippi Mills, 60 out of 100 working-age individuals are either employed or looking for work.

Employment: Refers to individuals who are currently working, either full-time or part-time, in paid positions or self-employment. It includes those actively engaged in economic activities.

Unemployment: Refers to individuals who are not working but are actively seeking employment and are available to work. It excludes those who are not looking for work or are unable to work.

Largest Industry by Occupation: This refers to the industry employing the highest number of workers in specific roles or job categories. For example, it might highlight industries with the most accountants, engineers or healthcare professionals.

Largest Industry by Labour Force: This focuses on the total number of people involved in an industry, including both employed and unemployed individuals actively seeking work within that sector. It provides a broader view of the industry's workforce size.



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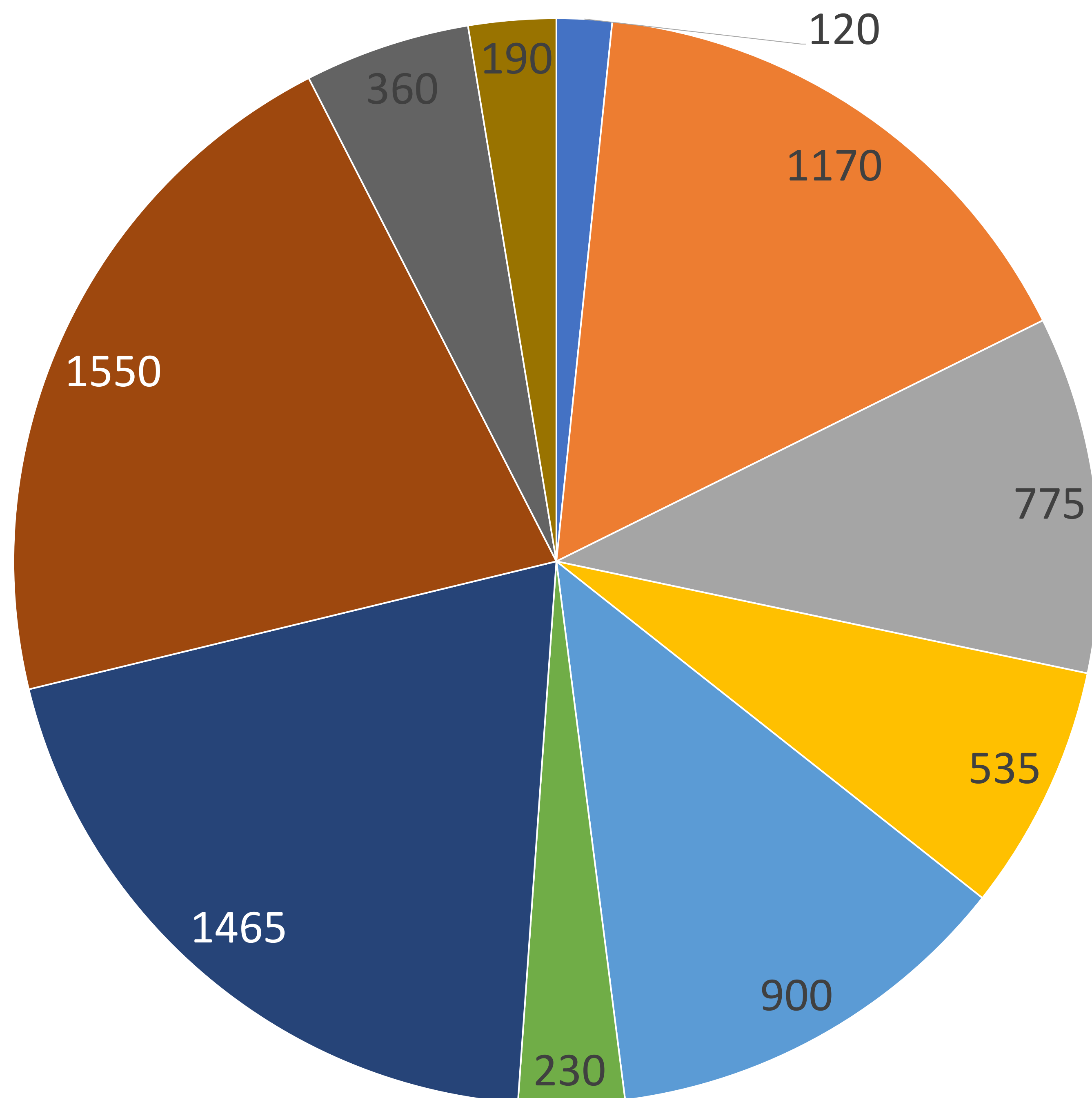
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Mississippi Mills Labour Force Data

Labour Force by Occupation

Statistics Canada Labour Market Survey Data 2025



Art & Sports	230
Business & Finance	1,170
Education, Law & Government	900
Health	535
Management	120
Manufacturing	190
Natural Resources	360
Sales & Service	1,465
Sciences	775
Trades & Transport	1,550

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is a standardized framework used to classify businesses and industries. Here's a breakdown of the sectors you mentioned and what they typically include:

- 1. Arts and Sports (NAICS 71):** Includes performing arts, spectator sports, heritage institutions and recreational industries.
- 2. Business and Finance (NAICS 52):** Encompasses financial institutions, insurance companies and investment services.
- 3. Education, Law, and Government (NAICS 61, 91):** Covers educational services, public administration and legal services.
- 4. Health (NAICS 62):** Covers healthcare services like hospitals, clinics, nursing care facilities and social assistance services.
- 5. Management (NAICS 55):** Focuses on the management of companies and enterprises, including holding companies.
- 6. Manufacturing (NAICS 31-33):** Encompasses industries involved in producing goods, from food and textiles to machinery and electronics.
- 7. Natural Resources (NAICS 11, 21):** Covers agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction.
- 8. Sales and Services (NAICS 44-45, 72):** Includes retail trade, accommodation and food services.
- 9. Sciences (NAICS 54):** Focuses on professional, scientific and technical services, including research and development.
- 10. Trades and Transport (NAICS 48-49):** Includes transportation services like trucking and warehousing and trade industries such as wholesale and retail.



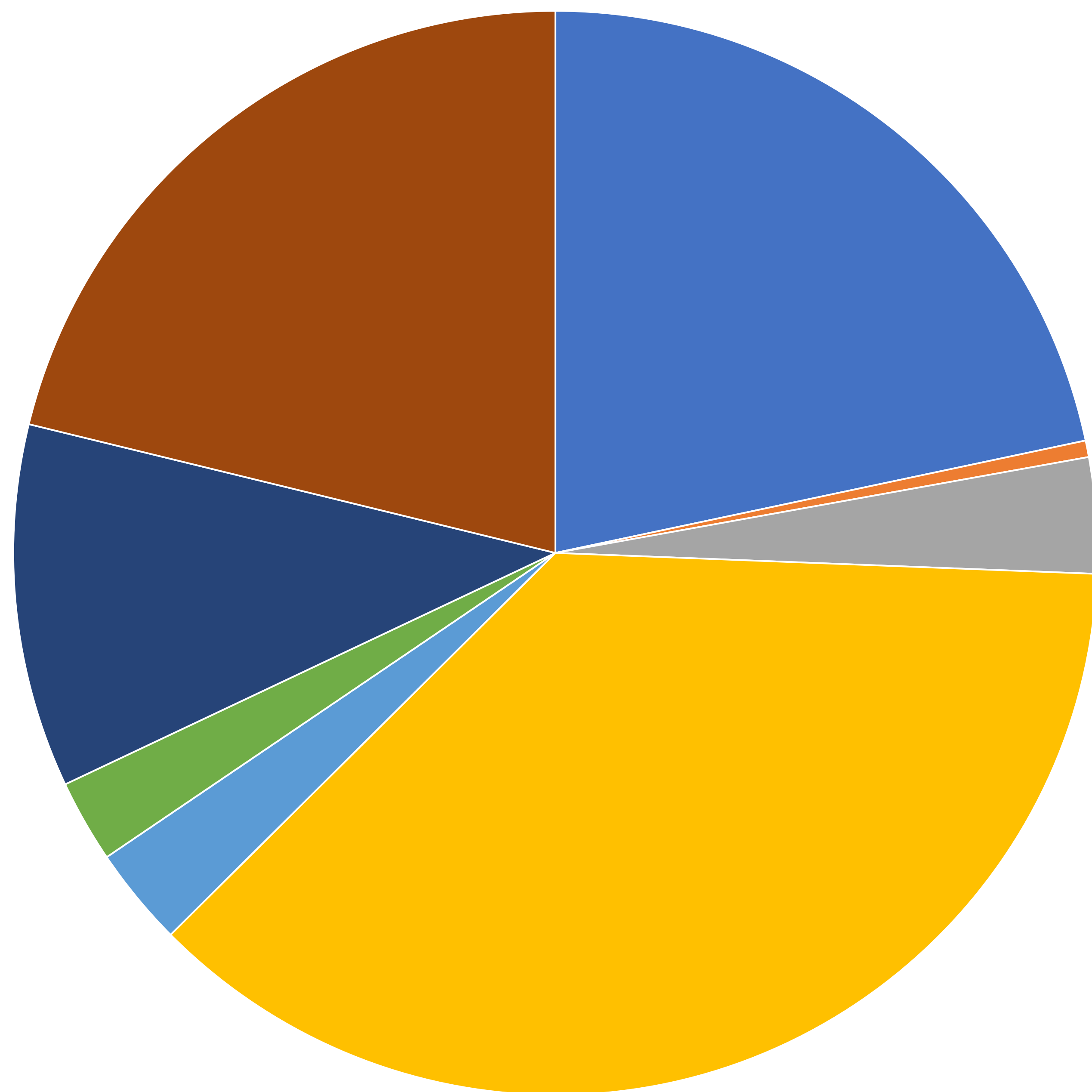
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Agriculture in Mississippi Mills

According to Statistic Canada's agricultural data there are 203 farms operating in Mississippi Mills



Cattle Ranching and Farming (75) (Mississippi Mills Largest Farming Category)

Includes all types of cattle farming, such as raising cattle for beef, dairy, or other purposes. Covers beef cattle ranching, dairy cattle production, and mixed operations.

Beef Cattle Ranching and Farming, including Feedlots (63)

Focuses on raising cattle for beef production, including feedlot operations where cattle are fattened before slaughter. May also involve raising cattle for dairy herd replacements.

Dairy Cattle and Milk Production (12)

Exclusively for operations focused on milking dairy cattle and producing milk or dairy products. Does not include beef cattle or feedlot operations.

TOTAL NUMBER OF FARMS	203
Oilseed and grain farming	44
Soybean farming	24
Oilseed (except soybean) farming	0
Dry pea and bean farming	0
Wheat farming	0
Corn farming	6
Other grain farming	14
Vegetable and melon farming	1
Potato farming	0
Other vegetable (except potato) and melon farming	1
Greenhouse, nursery and floriculture production	7
Mushroom production	0
Cannabis grown under cover	0
Other food crops grown under cover	1
Nursery and tree production	6
Floriculture production	0
Other crop farming	43
Tobacco farming	0
Hay farming	25
Fruit and vegetable combination farming	0
Maple syrup and products production	11
All other miscellaneous crop farming	7
Cattle ranching and farming	75
Beef cattle ranching and farming, including feedlots	63
Dairy cattle and milk production	12
Poultry and egg production	6
Chicken egg production	4
Broiler and other meat-type chicken production	0
Turkey production	0
Poultry hatcheries	0
Combination poultry and egg production	1
All other poultry production	1
Sheep and goat farming	5
Sheep farming	4
Goat farming	1
Other animal production	22
Apiculture	3
Horse and other equine production	14
Fur-bearing animal and rabbit production	0
Animal combination farming	5
All other miscellaneous animal production	0

This Census of Agriculture data was collected in 2021 and released throughout 2022 and 2023.



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About the Local Agricultural Industry

Agriculture in Mississippi Mills is a cornerstone of the local economy and community, with several notable aspects based on available data:

- 1. Farm Diversity:** The municipality hosts a variety of farms, including crop production (like hay, grains and oilseeds) and livestock farming (such as cattle, dairy and poultry). This diversity supports both local food systems and broader agricultural markets.
- 2. Land Use:** Agricultural land is primarily used for crops, hay and pasture, reflecting the rural character of the area. Efforts like the Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) helped to identify prime agricultural areas for sustainable development.
- 3. Economic Challenges:** Issues such as a shortage of meat processing facilities and skilled labour impact the agricultural sector.
- 4. Direct Sales:** Some farms engage in direct sales to consumers, fostering local food systems and strengthening community ties.
- 5. Sustainability:** Programs promoting renewable energy and succession planning for farms could highlight the municipality's focus on long-term agricultural sustainability.

Number of Farms by Total Farm Area

Under 10.00 acres	9
10.00 to 69.99 acres	45
70.00 to 129.99 acres	42
130.00 to 179.99 acres	23
180.00 to 239.99 acres	19
240.00 to 399.99 acres	28
400.00 to 559.99 acres	19
560.00 to 759.99 acres	6
760.00 to 1,119.99 acres	8
1,120.00 to 1,599.99 acres	3
1,600.00 to 2,239.99 acres	1





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Agriculture's Impact: Big Industry, Smaller Workforce in Mississippi Mills

Agriculture is a significant industry for the municipality by comparison, labour force numbers are relatively low.

- 1. Automation and Technology:** Modern agricultural practices often rely on machinery and technology, reducing the need for a large workforce compared to traditional methods.
- 2. Part-Time and Seasonal Work:** Many agricultural jobs in Mississippi Mills are seasonal or part-time, which might not be fully captured in labour force statistics.
- 3. Small-Scale Farming:** Mississippi Mills has a mix of small-scale farms, which may employ fewer workers compared to large commercial operations.
- 4. Demographic Trends:** An aging population and fewer younger workers entering the agricultural sector can contribute to lower labour force numbers.
- 5. Economic Diversification:** While agriculture is important, other industries like construction, trades and services may employ a larger share of the workforce, overshadowing agriculture in labour statistics.

These factors combined explain why the labour force numbers for agriculture seem lower despite its importance to the local economy.

Benefits of Encouraging Agri-Tourism

Agri-tourism merges agriculture and tourism, offering visitors immersive experiences on farms, ranches and vineyards. It plays a crucial role in supporting rural economies by:

- **Diversifying Income:** Provides supplementary income for farmers through activities like farm stays, crop-picking and seasonal events.
- **Promoting Sustainability:** Encourages eco-friendly practices and educates visitors on sustainable agriculture.
- **Strengthening Local Economies:** Stimulates surrounding businesses such as restaurants, hotels and shops, creating jobs and reducing migration to cities.





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Cultivating the Future: Sustainable Agriculture in Mississippi Mills

Based on available data and survey results, here are some potential actions that could be used to cultivate a supportive environment for agricultural businesses, ensuring the future prosperity and sustainability of agriculture in the municipality.

1. Promote Farm Diversity

- Support various types of farming and farm land use to strengthen local food systems.

2. Optimize Land Use

- Encourage sustainable land practices to protect agricultural areas.

3. Address Economic Challenges

- Advocate for local processing facilities and skilled labour training.

4. Enhance Local Sales

- Promote direct sales from farms to consumers.
- Develop Local MM Brand for Agri Product.

5. Foster Sustainability

- Encourage renewable energy use and succession planning on farms.

6. Improve Infrastructure

- Explore enhanced internet and streamline municipal services.

7. Support Innovation

- Advocate for agricultural technology and research.





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Niche Food Manufacturing

Mississippi Mills is home to a thriving community of niche food manufacturers who have made significant contributions to the local economy and beyond.

Among these are **Hummingbird Chocolate**, renowned for its award-winning bean-to-bar chocolate; **Dairy Distillery**, which transforms unused milk sugar into the innovative Vodkow vodka; and **Healthy Food Technologies (HFT)**, famous for their low-fat doughnuts. **Equator Coffee Roasters** brings fair trade, organic coffee to the region, while local maple producers continue the tradition of crafting high-quality maple syrup. The craft beer scene is vibrant with breweries like **Cartwright Springs** and **Base Camp**.

The region also has hops production and processing facilities, essential for brewing. These businesses not only highlight the diversity and innovation within Mississippi Mills but also underscore the area's commitment to quality, sustainability and community engagement.



Benefits of Niche Food Manufacturing

1. Economic Diversification

- **Job Creation:** Niche food manufacturing can create specialized jobs, contributing to local employment and economic stability.
- **Revenue Generation:** These businesses can generate significant revenue by catering to specific market demands, boosting the local economy.

2. Support for Local Agriculture

- **Utilization of Local Produce:** Niche food manufacturers often use locally sourced ingredients, supporting local farmers and reducing transportation costs.
- **Strengthening Supply Chains:** By creating a direct link between local agriculture and food manufacturing, the supply chain becomes more resilient and efficient.

3. Innovation and Sustainability

- **Product Innovation:** Niche manufacturers can introduce unique and innovative products, attracting consumers looking for specialty items.
- **Sustainable Practices:** These businesses can adopt sustainable practices, such as organic production and eco-friendly packaging, aligning with consumer preferences for environmentally responsible products.

4. Community Engagement

- **Local Identity:** Niche food manufacturing can enhance the community's identity by promoting local flavors and traditions.
- **Educational Opportunities:** These businesses can offer educational programs and workshops, fostering community engagement and awareness about local food production.

5. Tourism and Marketing

- **Agri-Tourism:** Niche food manufacturers can attract tourists interested in local food experiences, boosting tourism and related businesses.
- **Branding and Marketing:** Unique products can enhance the region's brand, making Mississippi Mills a destination for high-quality, specialty foods.

By focusing on niche food manufacturing, Mississippi Mills can leverage its agricultural strengths, promote sustainability and enhance economic resilience.



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Construction Sector

The construction and trades industry in Mississippi Mills is a vital part of the local economy. It encompasses a wide range of professions, including carpentry, plumbing, electrical work, masonry, welding, HVAC and more. This industry offers numerous career paths with competitive pay and benefits, making it an attractive option for both new entrants and those seeking career changes.



Economic Contributions

Job Creation: The construction industry provides numerous employment opportunities, ranging from skilled trades to professional services like engineering and architecture.

Local Businesses: Increased construction activities stimulate demand for building materials, equipment and services, benefiting local suppliers and retailers.

Infrastructure Development: Investments in infrastructure projects, such as roads, bridges and public buildings, enhance community facilities and attract further investment.

Professional Services: The construction industry significantly contributes to job creation in professional services, including engineering, architecture, surveying and project management.

Sustainable Growth: The construction industry contributes to economic stability by providing consistent employment and supporting other sectors.

Overall, the construction industry is a cornerstone of economic development in the municipality, fostering growth, creating jobs and supporting a wide range of related industries.



Primary and Secondary

Economic Impacts

The construction industry in Mississippi Mills serves as a vital economic engine, not only by directly creating jobs in skilled trades and professional services like engineering and architecture but also by stimulating secondary employment in support industries.

This sector's demand for materials, equipment and logistics services boosts local manufacturing, transportation and retail businesses. The ripple effect of construction activities enhances economic resilience, fosters sustainable growth and improves community infrastructure, making the region more attractive for further investment and development.

Overall, the construction industry's primary and secondary economic impacts significantly contribute to the local economy's vitality and stability.



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Healthcare Sector Trends

The healthcare sector in Mississippi Mills is experiencing significant growth, driven by an aging population and increasing demand for healthcare services. Job availability in this sector is robust, with positions ranging from personal support workers and registered nurses to healthcare recruitment specialists. The specific percentage of employers in the healthcare sector in Mississippi Mills isn't readily available from public sources. However, healthcare is a significant part of the local economy, with several key large employers including Almonte General Hospital, Fairview Manor and a large variety of support services home care services available.

Labour Statistics

Employment Trends: The healthcare sector in Mississippi Mills is part of the broader trend in Ontario, where healthcare and social assistance jobs have been growing steadily

Job Seekers: There is a consistent interest in healthcare jobs, with many positions being actively sought after by job seekers

High Demand: The demand for healthcare professionals remains high, driven by the aging population and the need for comprehensive healthcare services



Healthcare Staffing Shortages

Mississippi Mills is facing significant healthcare staffing shortages, particularly in roles such as registered nurses, personal support workers and primary care providers.

- These shortages are primarily driven by the aging population, which increases the demand for healthcare services while simultaneously leading to a higher rate of retirements among healthcare professionals.
- Additionally, the rural nature of Mississippi Mills makes it challenging to attract and retain healthcare workers, who often prefer urban settings with more amenities.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these issues, causing burnout and stress among existing staff, further reducing the workforce.
- As a result, local healthcare facilities are struggling to maintain adequate staffing levels, impacting the quality and accessibility of care for residents.





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Themes and Potential Actions to Support the Local Healthcare Sector

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Workforce Development

- Collaborate with educational institutions to create community-specific courses.
- Partner in the development of strategies to attract and retain healthcare workers.

Community Engagement

- Launch public awareness campaigns to educate residents about available healthcare services and encourage utilization.

Support Industry

- Foster partnerships between healthcare providers, local businesses and government agencies to create a supportive network for healthcare services.

Economic Impact

- Highlight the potential for job creation within the healthcare sector, emphasizing the variety of roles available and the importance of healthcare to the local economy
- Promote healthcare as a key component of economic resilience, ensuring the community can withstand economic fluctuations and maintain essential services

Aging Population

- Advocate for expand services for the aging population, including home care and assisted living
- Implement community health programs focused on preventive care and chronic disease management to improve the overall health of the aging population



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Business Support Organization Landscape

Mississippi Mills lacks a formal Business Improvement Area (BIA) organization with the disbandment of the Almonte BIA in 1999 and no official re-establishment since. Informal groups such as the Pakenham Business and Tourism Association (PBTA) and the Destination Almonte Association support local businesses. PBTA fosters community engagement in Pakenham, while Destination Almonte collaborates on events and promotion of Almonte as a tourist destination, despite lacking formal governance.

While these informal groups contribute to the local economy, the lack of a formal BIA means no dedicated funding or municipal partnership for business initiatives. This presents an opportunity for Mississippi Mills to explore re-establishing a BIA.

The Mississippi Mills Chamber of Commerce disbanded in 2015 after unsuccessful efforts to strengthen its operations through strategic planning. With too few members to sustain paid staff, it struggled to demonstrate value and recruit new members. This further underscores the absence of a structured organization for coordinated business improvement efforts.



The Carleton Place & District Chamber of Commerce, with approximately 30 Mississippi Mills members, is working to expand its influence further, to benefit both communities. Mississippi Mills businesses gain access to networking, advocacy and support programs, while the Chamber strengthens its membership and advocacy capacity. Promoting Chamber benefits to Mississippi Mills businesses could enhance regional economic resilience and cooperation.

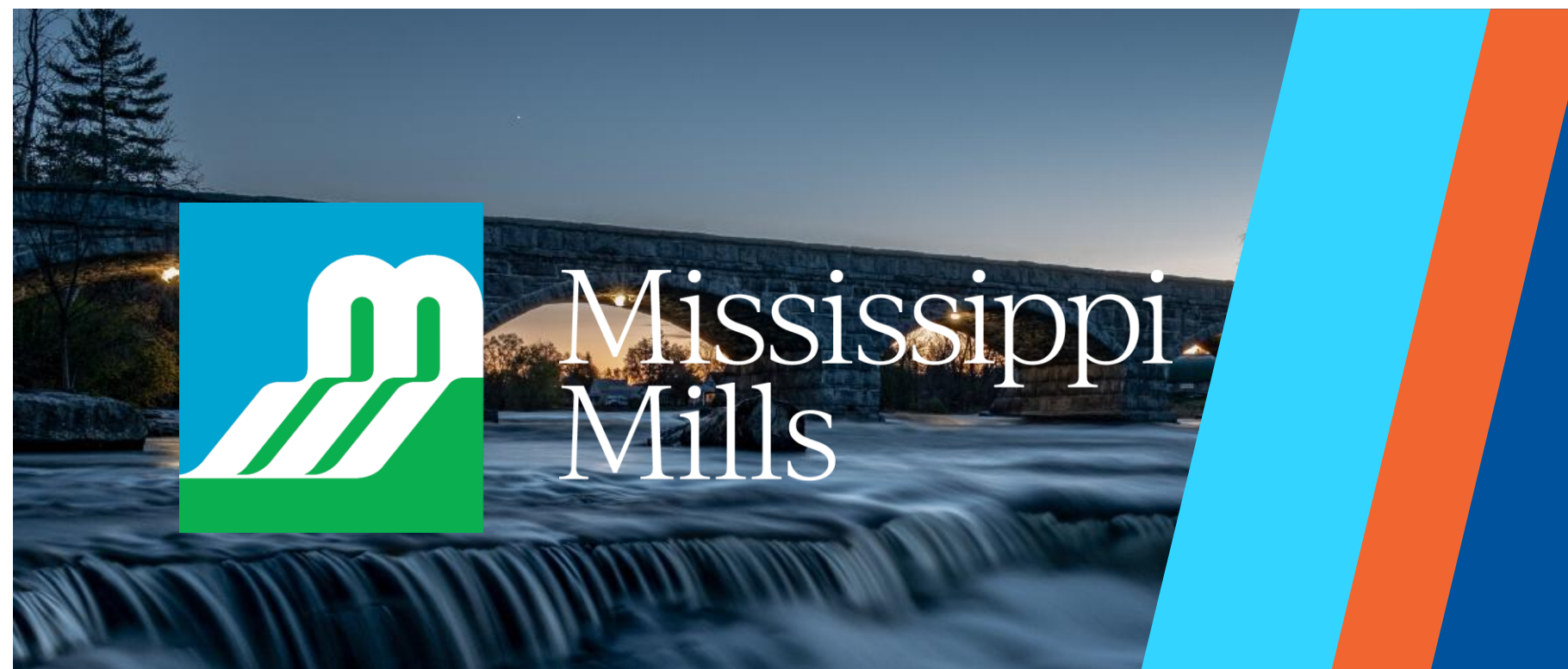
Important Yet Distinct Roles

A **Chamber of Commerce** and a **Business Improvement Area (BIA)** serve distinct but complementary roles within a rural municipality.

A **Chamber of Commerce** is a broad, membership-based organization representing businesses of all types across the municipality. Its role is to advocate for the collective interests of the business community, provide networking opportunities, and offer services such as training programs, marketing support, and policy advocacy. Chambers often work to attract investment and foster economic growth on a regional scale, making them particularly beneficial for rural areas seeking to strengthen ties with nearby urban centres. Their wide-ranging focus supports diverse sectors, from agriculture to retail, creating a unified voice for businesses.

A **BIA**, is a more localized entity focused on a specific geographic area, such as a downtown core or commercial district. Its primary aim is to beautify, promote, and enhance the designated area to drive traffic, sales and community engagement. BIAs are funded through a levy on local businesses within the area and often concentrate on events, streetscaping, and tourism initiatives to make the area a hub of activity. For rural municipalities, a BIA can revitalize town centres, attract visitors and encourage local spending, complementing the broader advocacy work of the Chamber of Commerce.

Together, these organizations contribute to a thriving business environment by addressing both macro-level economic growth and micro-level community revitalization. Let me know if you'd like further details or insights!



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HOW WE PROSPER

Importance of a Strong Sense of Place to Rural Economic Development

A strong sense of place in a rural community is not only valuable for its cultural and social cohesion but also serves as a powerful driver of economic development and opportunity. When a community embraces its identity through public art, local events, cultural activities, and a deep appreciation of its people and history, it creates an inviting atmosphere that attracts businesses looking for authenticity and connection.

In Mississippi Mills, the sense of place shaped by Almonte’s artistic vibrancy, Pakenham’s recreational charm, and the rural area’s natural landscapes become magnets for both businesses and visitors, reinforcing economic resilience while maintaining the community’s distinct values and identity. **It's an ecosystem where cultural appreciation translates directly into economic growth and opportunity.**

Businesses are drawn to communities with a well-defined sense of place because it fosters engagement, loyalty, and a thriving customer base. Local shops, restaurants and tourism-focused enterprises benefit from the pride residents and visitors take in

experiencing the area’s unique character. For example, events celebrating local culture or history not only strengthen community ties but also draw tourism dollars, further supporting small businesses.

Moreover, a community that values its heritage while welcoming new people and ideas create fertile ground for innovation and entrepreneurship. **New businesses and investors are more likely to choose such a community as their location, knowing they can contribute to and benefit from an active and interconnected local economy.** This bolsters job creation, diversifies the economic landscape, and supports long-term prosperity.

Themes that focus on economic development while fostering a sense of place, making the community more attractive to businesses and residents alike:

Cultural Heritage and Identity

- Leveraging Local History
- Supporting Local Artisan

Community Engagement and Participation

- Inclusive Economic Planning
- Public-Private Partnerships

Public Spaces and Infrastructure

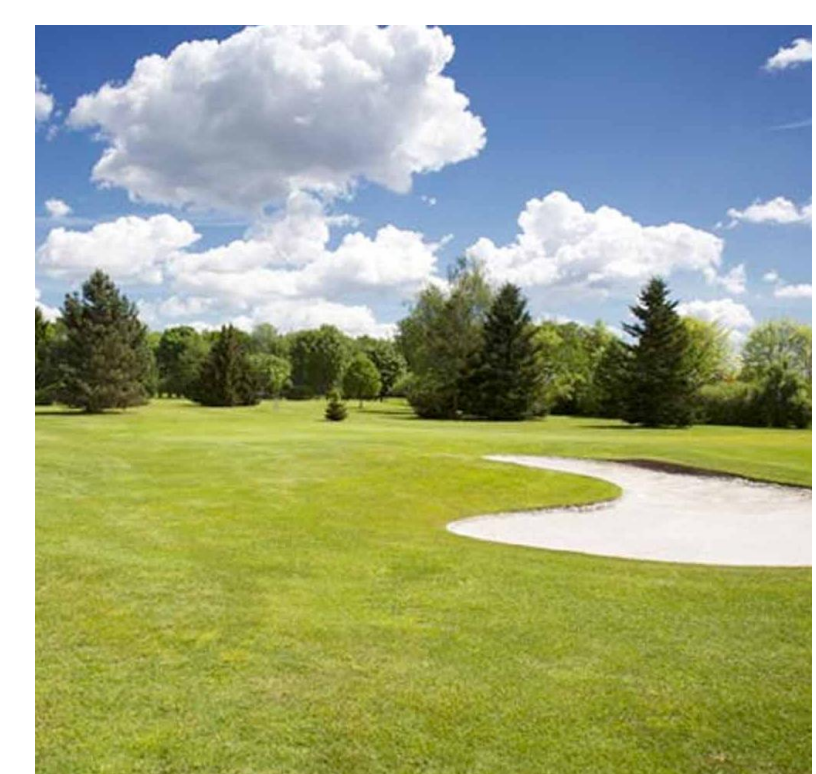
- Developing Attractive Public Spaces
- Improving Infrastructure

Sustainable Development

- Eco-Friendly Business Practices
- Local Food Movement

Economic Diversification

- Supporting Small Businesses
- Promoting Tourism





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Tourism & Culture: Driving Economic Growth

Tourism and cultural promotion play a significant role in driving economic growth and enriching the community of Mississippi Mills.

By leveraging its unique blend of heritage, natural beauty and recreational opportunities, the Municipality can attract visitors, stimulate local businesses and provide meaningful employment. Recreational activities, including cycling, kayaking and trail exploration, are a cornerstone of Mississippi Mills' appeal. Promoting these activities supports the local economy by attracting visitors who spend money on rentals, guided tours and related services. Employment opportunities arise in areas like outdoor instruction, equipment maintenance and eco-tourism ventures.

The combined efforts to promote tourism and culture strengthen Mississippi Mills' economic resilience. These initiatives not only drive revenue but also encourage entrepreneurship, develop a robust job market, and create a network of interconnected businesses. By enhancing its cultural and recreational identity, Mississippi Mills continues to foster pride among residents while drawing visitors who contribute to its prosperity. It's a virtuous cycle of growth rooted in heritage and community.



The Unique Charm and Impact of Tourism & Culture

Almonte's historic downtown and vibrant arts scene create a welcoming atmosphere that attracts tourists. Festivals, galleries and boutique shops celebrate local culture and drive the economy by creating jobs in retail, hospitality, and event management. Promoting Almonte as an artistic hub enhances its reputation and brings long-term financial benefits.

Pakenham's recreational assets, like skiing at Mount Pakenham, fishing and the iconic Five Span Bridge, make it a hotspot for outdoor enthusiasts. Promoting these attractions boosts tourism and supports local businesses such as inns, restaurants and equipment rentals. This fosters community identity and creates tourism-based employment opportunities.

The rural charm of **Ramsay**, with its picturesque villages, gorgeous landscapes, hiking trails and agri-tourism, offers visitors a taste of country life. Farms, farmgate stands and bed-and-breakfasts benefit from tourism, boosting the rural economy and reinforcing cultural heritage. This encourages further investment and job creation.

The Vital Role of Artists

Artists enrich rural economies by fostering creativity, cultural identity and community engagement. Mississippi Mills is a vibrant hub for working artists, evident through seasonal art tours and organizations like the Almonte Area Artists Association and the Almonte Potters Guild. These events and groups showcase the incredible talent within the community, attracting visitors and boosting local businesses. Art galleries in Almonte further provide spaces for artists to exhibit their work and for residents and tourists to appreciate and purchase unique pieces. This artistic presence enhances the cultural landscape and contributes significantly to the economic vitality of Mississippi Mills.



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Future Considerations: Using Culture to Drive Economic Growth in Mississippi Mills

Mississippi Mills has a wealth of opportunities stemming from its vibrant cultural heritage, recreational assets and scenic rural landscapes. Existing informal groups and community efforts showcase strong grassroots engagement and enthusiasm for supporting local businesses.

However, challenges such as the absence of formal governance structures, limited resources and seasonal fluctuations highlight the need for a more coordinated approach. By building on its strengths and addressing these weaknesses, Mississippi Mills can craft targeted strategies to enhance tourism, economic growth and regional collaboration, as outlined in the themes and opportunities to the right.

The following broad themes offer a foundation for building sustainable tourism and cultural strategies for Mississippi Mills.

- **Unified Promotion:** Highlight cultural, recreational and rural attractions to establish a cohesive regional identity that appeals to visitors.
- **Collaborative Efforts:** Strengthen partnerships between local groups and regional organizations to amplify impact.
- **Infrastructure Enhancements:** Invest in visitor-friendly amenities to improve accessibility and experiences.
- **Year-Round Engagement:** Develop diverse events and activities to attract visitors throughout the year.
- **Supporting Rural and Recreational Assets:** Leverage agritourism and outdoor activities as key economic drivers.
- **Regional Networking:** Promote stronger ties with neighboring business networks to expand advocacy and growth opportunities.





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NEXT STEPS: Stakeholder Groups

Three Key Questions

These questions will provide valuable insights to shape our comprehensive **Economic Development Strategic Plan.**

1. *What are the biggest challenges your business faces in this community?*

This is help identify common obstacles and areas where the municipality can provide support or make improvements.

2. *What opportunities do you see for growth and development in the local economy?*

Help us understand the potential for expansion to further guide strategic investments and initiatives and foster economic growth.

3. *What resources or services would be most beneficial to help your business thrive?*

Hearing business needs and preferences, will allow the municipality to tailor support programs and policies effectively.

We're looking for business owners from the following sectors to attend a two-hour stakeholder session.

- Manufacturing
- Agriculture
- Construction/Trades
- Healthcare and Related Services
- Tourism, Culture & Recreation
- Retail
- Large Employers
- Professionals

Are you interested in being attending a 2-hour stakeholder session in May 2025?

