

Ascenture

Fall 2014 Volume 1: Issue 1

PROGRESSIVE BUSINESS MAGAZINE PUBLISHED BY THE WHITBY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



THE NEW DURHAM

Rebranding a Region:
How dLAB and Spark Centre lead innovation in business

The Art of Transition:
Creating the new
Durham Region

Brain Gain:
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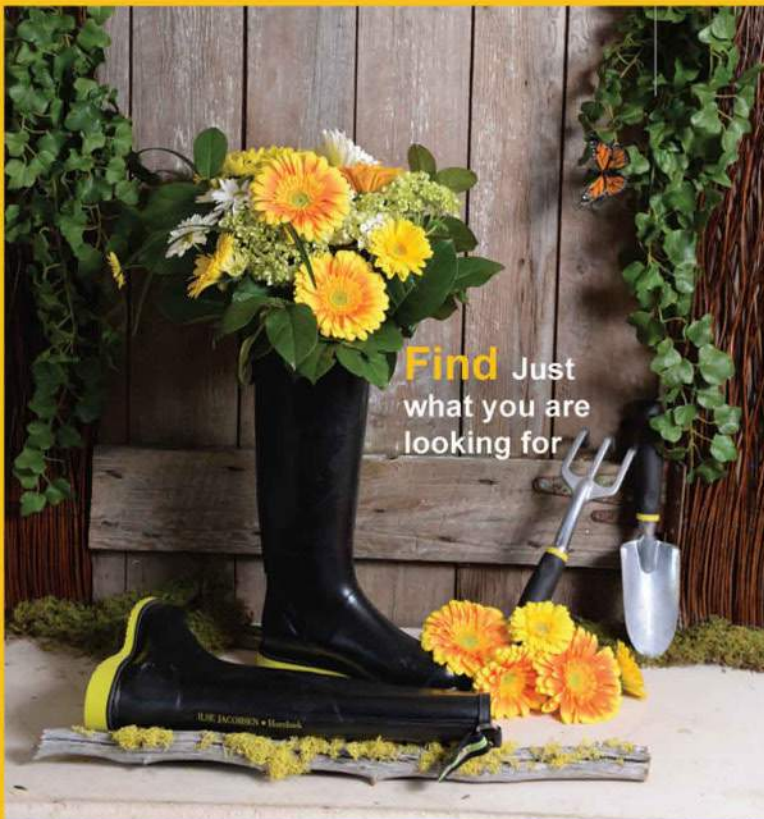
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ASCENTURE

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Volume 1 / Issue 1

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WHO WILL YOU
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Letter From the Publisher

Whitby Chamber of Commerce

We are excited to present the first issue of *Ascenture Magazine*. *Ascenture Magazine* challenges, educates, entertains, and inspires readers with insightful and progressive articles to take your business to the next level. Durham is poised for explosive economic growth and we at the Whitby Chamber of Commerce want to be sure you are in a position to take advantage of these exciting developments.

In this issue, we explore the importance of providing a culturally rich and creatively innovative community that draws and retains talent internationally. Innovative ideas like the Art of Transition and dLAB are transforming the face of Durham Region, and we're learning from other Ontario regions on how to rebrand our image to effectively communicate this to the world.

This is an exciting time for Durham; it's a time for development, for innovation, for transformation, and evolution. It's time to shift Durham out of the bedroom community and foster a thriving 'ecosystem' that thrives off its home-grown talent. It's time to shift Durham in the eyes of the world as a place to live, a place of which to be proud, a place that is moving beyond its automotive history.

Through *Ascenture Magazine*, we aim to inspire you to take action, to get involved, and to be a driving force behind what makes Durham great. In the words of dLAB visionary Marvin Green, "Everybody in Durham knows Durham's great, but that's not the point. We need to help sell Durham to the world." ▲



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Brain Gain:

Profit from attracting and retaining local talent

Situated at the eastern gateway of the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA), Durham Region offers prime access to Canada's largest market of over five million people. It is the only GTHA region that has a rich history and small-town heritage combined with some of the most leading-edge institutions the province has to offer, many of which developed within the past decade.

What's interesting is that despite this development, Durham Region continues to grow at a significantly lower rate than the other three regions bordering the City of Toronto. On average, Durham is growing at a rate of 10% every five years whereas Peel is 15%, Halton 14% and York 20%. Toronto has hovered around 4%. What's even more compelling is that Durham has the highest median individual income at \$55,000 and, has the lowest median cost of housing at \$300,600.

As Durham households have the highest percentage of disposable income and the three other regions work to meet the needs of their rapidly expanding communities, Durham is ripe for a population boom. Durham and its businesses are already looking to these regions for examples on how to create an attractive environment that attracts and retains local talent.

ESTABLISHED COMPANIES MUST STAY RELEVANT

Celebrating 50 years in Whitby, steel manufacturer Gerdau favours Whitby primarily for its business incentives and its infrastructure. "We're well situated with rail and highway links close by and even shipping capacity if we are exporting products," says Alan Lamb Vice-President and General Manager of Whitby operations.

The 110 year-old Brazilian-owned company is the leading producer of

long steel in the Americas and one of the world's largest suppliers of specialty long steel. Formerly Lake Ontario Steel, the Whitby location underwent several changes in ownership over the years until Gerdau bought out the remaining shares of Gerdau Ameristeel in 2010.

Gerdau is not only committed to growing as a business, but also as a member of the local community, which is evident through its involvement in the Whitby Chamber of Commerce. Lamb shares Gerdau's dedication to developing Whitby, "We can take a history lesson from [Mississauga]. Companies moved to Mississauga in part because of the infrastructure available and the supports for business."

With a strong commitment to hiring locally, more than sixty per cent of the Whitby location's approximately 600 employees live within

	City of Hamilton	City of Mississauga	Region of Peel	Halton Region	York Region	Region of Durham	City of Toronto
Population (000s)	509.6	708.7	1,289.0	59.0	1,024.2	601.6	2,576.0
Median HHI (\$000s)	60.30	75.60	77.60	119.40	89.10	81.10	58.40
Median income (\$000s)	29.40	29.80	29.40	35.80	31.34	55.20	27.40
Median housing (\$000s)	275.60	401.20	399.80	458.10	500.25	300.60	401.40
Median Rental/mo	750.00	1,062.00	1,073.00	906.00	1,098.00	927.00	1,001.00

*Source: Statistics Canada National Household Survey 2011

“I wouldn’t move back to Toronto, no. I don’t think I would have the same opportunity to own my own business.”

—Daniel Bresca, Farm & Wild

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Durham. The company feels fortunate to be able to draw on academically strong local post-secondary institutions for talent. Gerdau is frequently involved in on-campus job fairs and has a management associate program in which recent graduates learn about the steel business before taking on additional responsibility.

SOMETIMES BUSINESS IS PERSONAL

There are benefits for both employers and employees to hire locally. Without the hour-long commute, stress

levels decrease, employees are more laid-back, they have more free time, they’re happier, healthier and more satisfied with life. This means fewer sick days, greater dedica-

tion to the company, and an increased desire for the company to invest in its employees. Staff can stay the extra hour if necessary without feeling anxious over missing the train or worrying about missing their kid’s little league game. Employers are more connected to the community and more likely to be flexible with family needs. Companies often forget to mention the personal benefits employees gain from working locally, but it can be just as valuable to new hires as financial compensation.

Daniel Bresca, owner of catering company Farm & Wild, initially commuted to work as a chef in Toronto. After being laid-off, he decided to stay in Whitby to go into business for himself. “It was a big step starting my own business, because most of my career in the past had been behind the scenes working as a chef in larger kitchens,” says Bresca.

His decision to establish in Whitby

was personal. He and his ex-wife moved to Whitby due to more affordable housing and wanting to raise their son with a better quality of life. He has lived here now twelve years. With plans to open a small Whitby cafe, Bresca definitely sees his future in Durham. “I wouldn’t move back to Toronto, no. I don’t think I would have the same opportunity to own my own business.”

PROGRESSIVE ENTREPRENEURS ATTRACT TOP TALENT

With 71% of Durham’s businesses having 10 employees or less, it’s a region thriving with entrepreneurial spirit. The Durham Region’s Economic Development Centre is focusing on five core industries: agriculture, manufacturing, digital technology, smart energy, and film. This focus is attracting new and exciting young progressive businesses that appeal to smart, ambitious graduates who may otherwise not give Durham a second look.

When technology company Mojility was looking to hire in 2011, University of Western Ontario graduate Erin Guillemette took the job.

Currently President at the Junior Chamber International Durham, she is also on the Board of Directors at the Whitby Chamber of Commerce. It was through her involvement in the community that Guillemette built her professional network and was motivated to establish her career in Whitby.

It wasn’t until she took on the role of Project Manager at award-winning 360incentives that she felt comfortable with the knowledge that she can build her career in Durham. Before securing the offer, Guillemette was searching for work in Toronto. Even though moving to Toronto wasn’t a consideration, commuting still meant a drastic life change. “I really wasn’t interested in commuting. I was hoping to stay; I’ve built my life here.” ▲

Eight creative approaches to attracting and retaining local talent

Finding, attracting and keeping local talent has proven difficult for many companies in the Durham Region. Primarily, it's due to the prevalent assumption that there are no jobs in Durham especially for executives. The money, the advancement opportunities, the benefits and intellectual challenges aren't here, so executives automatically default to Toronto. This is changing, but companies need to make it known that they have something greater to offer... and they do.

1. Change your mindset. Stop thinking you won't find suitable talent in Durham. With three post-secondary institutions and proximity to Toronto, talent is abundant. Durham is awakening from its tradition as a Toronto bedroom community; it just needs to know what opportunities are available.
2. Avoid "Toronto envy". Instead, emphasize the advantages of working for your company such as flexible hours, lieu time, vacation time, parking, or healthcare packages.
3. Promote Durham's higher quality of life. Not enough companies highlight Durham's benefits such as lower housing prices, no commute, green spaces, or its stress-free environment.
4. Raise your company profile. When more people are aware of your company, hiring is easier, but when your business is perceived as a desirable place to work, it expands and elevates your talent pool.
5. Connect with local post-secondary institutions. Forging a relationship with local academic institutions keeps your company top of mind with placement officers.
6. Provide creative schedules. Offering part-time work, flexible hours, lieu time or project-based employment, it may be a way to attract new talent.
7. Use creative hiring strategies. When a local car dealership needed courtesy drivers, they hired retirees looking for part-time work. When an oil company was looking to hire, they offered flexible hours to stay-at-home moms and found they took better care of their machinery.
8. Always be recruiting. Even if you aren't actively hiring, develop a database of prospective candidates to contact when you are ready. Use networking events or online resources to keep tabs on potential new hires. ▲

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dLAB Producers Avenue

Rebranding a Region

How dLAB and Spark Centre lead innovation in business

When a community is built on a single industry, it's not only vulnerable to economic recession it also becomes victim to its identity. Southern Ontario cities were primarily founded on manufacturing, but over the last twenty years, following Government restrictions, technological advancements and the 2008 recession, even seemingly enduring manufacturers like General Motors have proven to be susceptible to change. If these communities don't diversify, they could end up an industrial wasteland like Detroit following the 2010 GM bailout.

The key to building a thriving community is rebranding.

Traditionally known as the "Hammer" for its long-standing roots in the steel

industry, Hamilton has spent the past thirty years working on changing its image. "Hamilton's revitalization began in the early 80's when the economy began to diversify. We needed to invest in other industries. Hamilton is now ranked the most diversified economy in all of Canada, which took 30 years' worth of work," says Michael Marini Coordinator, Marketing in the City of Hamilton.

The solution is to bridge the gap between industry and local post-secondary institutions with the objective of funneling top talent directly into the workforce. Among Hamilton's primary areas of focus within their economic development strategy is uniting career-oriented young professionals, leaders and organizations in an online networking association called the Hamilton Hive.

"The Hamilton Hive is really successful for us in terms of creating a bridge between early career starters and the student population," says Marini. "This is a new Hamilton; a city with momentum; a city with opportunities where the cool kids want to work and play; this is your Hamilton; build it, promote it, love it," the Hamilton Hive website professes.

The City of Waterloo's biggest hurdle was arguably finding its core identity. Primarily known for its universities, the city banded together with its sister city Kitchener and nearby Cambridge to form what is now best known as the 'technology triangle'.

Communitech, Waterloo's Regional Innovation Centre operates as an incubator for technology start-ups, its intent is to foster a thriving technological hub. Initiated by keen tech entrepreneurs in the Kitchener/Waterloo

area, the facilities include such innovative and aspirational young companies as Google, RIM, and Desire to Learn. It shows not only how the contained environment creates a self-sustaining business 'ecosystem', but also how the culture and operating standards of these outstanding companies rub off on every other business sharing the space.

These are essential to Communitech's success in putting a stop to the brain drain. Chris Plunkett, Director of Media Relations at Communitech sites three key elements required in rebranding the region, "Providing jobs, finding out what other advantages are in the community and marketing the strengths of the community."

As a result, Communitech has rejuvenated Kitchener's downtown, brought attention and excitement to the community as well as to both universities and the local college. Less than seven years in the making, Communitech's success proves that with the right alliances and leadership, a similar type of organization can exist in the Durham Region and it is already in development. This past winter, the Chamber's own Kevin Rowland and Chamber Vice President, Andrea Kennedy visited Communitech on a group tour organized and initiated by Spark Centre.

Spark Centre connects entrepreneurs and start-ups focusing on technology, innovation and invention to a network of mentors and advisors to help them grow. Spark Centre's biggest impact has been economic growth and local job creation, but in order to keep businesses in the Durham Region, Spark Centre's goal is to reach the same level as Communitech. In order to fully realize this potential, it is essential to change the perception of Durham Region.

"A lot of people still think Oshawa and the Durham Region as a whole is a General Motors town, but automotive is not our number one employer anymore; education is our number one employer," says Cindy Symons-Milroy, Director of Economic Development Strategy for the City of Oshawa. "Everything [the City of Oshawa] does within marketing highlights the message that we are an educationally-focused community."

According to Statistics Canada's 2011 National Home Survey, the majority of those jobs were within elementary and secondary institutions. Regardless, Oshawa's education-based messaging is just the first step in making this transition; bigger developments are in the works.

The three post-secondary institutions play a significant role in the region's economic expansion, not necessarily for their educators, but for their students. "Potential investors are always interested in these world-renowned [post-secondary institutions] recognized for their research, leading-edge thinking, market-based academic programs and one-of-a-kind learning

opportunities," says Kathy Weiss Director of Economic Development and Tourism for the Regional Municipality of Durham.

Developing businesses that attract highly talented professionals and linking those businesses with local post-secondary institutions are what has built a strong, vibrant economy in both Hamilton and Waterloo. In Durham, one such initiative aiming to make this link is dLAB (Durham Learning and Business District).

Privately-funded by the Toronto development firm River Oaks Group, dLAB is a co-venture between Durham College and UOIT, which according to its website is designed to "encourage interaction and innovation between the academic and business communities," with the purpose of driving innovation and creating economic opportunity.

Already developing along the Oshawa-Whitby border adjacent to the 401, the vision for dLAB is to use sustainable design and planning to expand this multi-faceted business and academic ecosystem, similar in nature to Communitech or Toronto's Distillery District. "We need a post-automotive economy in Durham," says River Oaks Group owner Marvin Green, visionary developer behind dLAB. "Not that we replicate Communitech, what we

"There's a hunger for something different."

Automotive is not our number one employer anymore





dLAB Site Plan

need in Durham is a Durham vision. [Durham graduates are] not the same people as the graduates in Waterloo.”

The idea for dLAB came out of a meeting between Marvin Green and Peter LeBel, Commissioner, Community and Marketing Services of the Town of Whitby. The two men, who have been friends for a number of years, saw an opportunity to do something with Green’s property tied into business and learning, with the three institutions, the 401, and the Go train in the area. Within two years, they were able to bring the concept together with full approval.

“The big idea about dLAB is that it brings together various disciplines to exchange ideas. The buildings are designed to be close to the street level, which will be animated with cafes, brew pubs, shops intended to foster interaction either accidentally or through formal exchange,” says Green.

What’s particularly exciting about this idea is that this fulfills a growing need for people working in industrial

areas as they crave human interaction. “We work in a business park or industrial area and we’re lonely. When we step out for a coffee, there’s no one out there, it’s kind of nasty; it’s just a parking lot,” cites Green as an example of his conversations with business owners. “There’s a hunger for something different. The way we’ve developed our towns and cities in the past 75 years or so—it’s mostly about auto-dominated landscape, which impacted the way people live and get around. Many of us are questioning whether this is the way we really want to live. I grew up in the suburbs [Oshawa] and I’m doing something about it,” says Green.

“We’re looking to attract knowledge-based professional companies such as architectural firms, engineering design, business services to the nuclear or automotive industries. This leads to wealth invested in the community and opportunities for youth,” says LeBel.

This burgeoning trend for developing corporate and educational ecosystems

has proven to establish thriving businesses that in turn feed the local community, but also foster innovation through interaction. “This is definitely where things are headed internationally and domestically,” says LeBel, “It has been proven successful in many locations.”

It is this approach that is going to take Durham Region away from the fate of cities like Detroit toward developing the kind of community that will soon be known for its leading-edge technological, educational, environmental and creative advancements.

“Everybody in Durham knows Durham’s great, but that’s not the point,” says Marvin Green. “We need to help sell Durham to the world.” In this area, Durham Region has some work to do.

To borrow from the Hamilton Hive mantra, this is a new Durham Region; a community with momentum, ripe with opportunity; it’s where the cool kids want to work and play; this is your home; build it, promote it, love it. ▲

MEMBER FAVES

Whitby Chamber members list their favourite Whitby boutique or restaurant.

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10 things you didn't know about Durham

Durham is cultivating a community rich with world-renowned arts, health, legal, academic, and athletic facilities. It features leading edge technology and architecture and proudly preserves its natural and historical heritage. Guaranteed, there are a great many things you didn't know about this diverse community, here are just a few of them:

1 Durham's **Lakeridge Health Education and Research Network (LHEARN)** is a \$7 million, 25,000-square-foot, multi-purpose facility housing state-of-the-art tools and resources providing training in the latest medical advancements to more than 1,600 health care practitioners and students each year.

2 Durham Tourism is actively developing the region into a top provincial **culinary destination**, hosting top chefs, local produce and the progressive field-to-fork Durham College Centre for Food.

3 **Abilities Centre**, recognized as an International Centre of Excellence for its fully accessible design and inclusive environment, world-class partnerships and signature programming, our multi-award winning facility includes three regulation basketball courts, library, running track, games room, fitness and arts training. It is also host to the 2015 Parapan Am Games.

4 Over 60 organizations from multiple sectors feed content into the **Durham Immigration Portal** designed to welcome, support, attract and retain skilled newcomers, entrepreneurs, businesses and other new Canadians to our Region.

5 UOIT's **Automotive Centre of Excellence (A.C.E.)** is the first testing and research centre of its kind in Canada featuring the largest and most sophisticated climatic wind tunnels on the planet.

6 Designed by world-renowned Canadian architect Arthur Erickson, at 36,000 square feet and featuring a permanent collection of over 4000 works, the **Robert McLaughlin Gallery** is the largest gallery in Durham Region.

7 Explore Durham Region's varied landscape along more than **350 kilometres of scenic walking trails** stretching along the lakefront throughout the heart of Durham's urban centres into the forests and marshlands.

8 Featuring 33 courtrooms in 450,000 square feet, the six-storey multi-award winning **Durham Consolidated Courthouse** is the first most energy-efficient building in Ontario, the most technologically advanced and the first in Canada to receive the 2011 RAIC Building Award of Excellence Green-Building Award.

9 Between 2009 and 2016, Durham-based **General Motors of Canada** is investing a total of \$850 million in research and development in Canada.

10 **The Town of Whitby** has sanctioned an area adjacent to the 407 for commercial use to entice corporations in developing satellite offices, attracting Toronto professionals east.

The Art of Transition: Creating the new Durham Region



AOT - Awards 2013

Business professionals often discard the relevance of art in business however no innovation can come without creativity. Arts and culture draw tourists, attract sophisticated residents, and foster a thriving local industry, which in turn creates a vibrant region full of self-expression that sparks conversation, engagement and a proud sense of community.

Ideally situated between Toronto and the countryside, Durham offers both creative inspiration and financial opportunity for artists. With the highest concentration of working artists in Ontario, Durham Region is poised for excellence creatively, socially and economically. When industry supports culture, the entire community thrives.

Durham's industrial counterpart to the west, Hamilton has managed to cultivate a lively arts scene in its

downtown core. In the mid-2000s, a collection of art galleries along James Street North coordinated their openings on the second Friday of each month, establishing the Art Crawl. It naturally evolved into a major event featuring performance artists, ultimately revitalizing the area as new galleries, cafes and other businesses

No innovation can come without creativity

opened. The annual Supercrawl is a massive four-day event that shuts down James Street and attracts crowds of over 100,000 people. Beyond tourism, arts and culture has rejuvenated Hamilton's downtown, appealing to new residents who previously dismissed the city as a place to live.

Durham has several similar grassroots initiatives: the Uxbridge Studio Tour, a self-guided tour of local artist studios and Oshawa Space Invaders, an annual art crawl run by a collection of local artists who 'invade' Oshawa's vacant downtown spaces for a week-long September festival.

Grassroots initiatives are a great start, but as Hamilton has demonstrated, it's not until events such as these elevate to a professional level that they attract significant attention from tourists, sponsors, and permanent residents. Understanding the significance of the arts in revitalizing an industrial community, Durham must get serious about the arts.

The transition has already begun. Leading American urban studies theorist, author, and professor and head

When industry supports culture, the entire community thrives

of the Martin Prosperity Institute at the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, Richard Florida explored what Durham Region could achieve economically by connecting innovative thinkers and the creative class with business. The Art of Transition was born. Created in 2009 as a one-time symposium for creative minds, it now unites innovative thinkers from every facet of the economy to brainstorm ideas for evolving Durham Region's growing creative economy. The annual Durham Art of Transition Creative Awards is the follow-up initiative, which celebrates the creative community in Durham to showcase talented artists.

The Awards event features eleven categories expanded this year to include a larger portion of the population: literacy, culinary, festival & events, music, lifetime innovator (Spark Centre), and cultural champion in business. "[This event] moved from connecting people to celebrating [them]; that's what the awards are; putting them on a pedestal. When you look at the winners, they're receiving business because of the fact we celebrated them," says Durham Region Tourism Manager and Art of Transition brainchild Kerri King.

"People were excited about the ideas we talked about, one was retaining youth and working with universities

and colleges, in the five years since then, you've seen how these students are looking for jobs in these various sectors," says King. "Jason Atkins (of 360incentives) is an advisory board member from the beginning. He was one of three employees and now he's over 100 employees. It's neat to see the growth that's happened over the past five years with people we've been involved with. They were supportive visionaries in the Art of Transition. It takes business leaders like Jason to support and challenge us to get it where it needs to be to help build our economy."

Durham is a blossoming creative force that's starting to show its true colours through art, architecture, music and technology. The fastest growing creative industries in Durham are design, advertising, motion pictures, video production, printing and independent artists. Only by pouring focus and funds toward harnessing local creative minds with the aim of raising our cultural standards can we reach this region's full potential.

King expressed interest in forming strategic alliances with the Region's arts organizations much like they did with Spark Centre. She also urges the community to get involved by nominating local artists and, "Helping put the word out, all around the world that this is the kind of talent Durham has." Contact Kerri King at Durham Region 905-668-7711 to get involved. ▲

Understanding the significance of the arts in revitalizing an industrial community, Durham must get serious about the arts.

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