Data-Smart City Solutions In Action

Economic Development

Powering new investment: How it took 120 minutes to attract a $400 million project

The growth of most communities relies on courting outside businesses. This can be a daunting task for economic development corporations because they need to tell the right story to prospective businesses to entice investment. The CIU supports economic development by quickly providing the most accurate locational information requirements outside investors need to buy into a community. These data-driven stories inform businesses on key land conditions and specific criteria to accommodate business requirements.

The Challenge

Ontario’s Feed-in Tariff (FIT) program was developed in 2009 to encourage and promote the greater use of renewable energy sources like solar, wind and bioenergy. The province’s commitment to procuring renewable energy incentivized the development of large power generating facilities. Pod Generating Group, a developer of renewable energy projects looking to capitalize on Ontario’s green economy, sent out requests for information to several Ontario municipalities searching for specific details on land use for new, utility-scale ground solar projects.

The criteria for suitable land was extensive with utility connection points, proximity to municipal grid infrastructure, plot size, soil type, degree of slope, and clarity of sight to the southern horizon all as part of the geographic and locational requirements for the project. Securing Pod Generating’s project in Sault Ste. Marie would mean a nearly $400 million investment into the community.
The Solution

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Benefits

Using multi-enterprise, data Acorn delivered viable land options to Pod Generating within a matter of hours. The efficient delivery of accurate information helped Sault Ste. Marie secure multiple renewable energy projects totalling an overall investment of nearly $400 million into the community while creating jobs for residents.

“When you’re able to quickly respond to inquiries about economic development opportunities, it communicates to investors that this is a community where businesses grow. There is less red tape, less bureaucracy, and a sense that moving projects forward is seamless. It creates a reputation that the City and the Economic Development Corporation make things happen in an expedited manner.”

– Daniel Hollingsworth,
Executive Director, Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation