

2017 - 2022

Economic Development Strategy



TOWNSHIP OF
MUSKOKA
Lakes

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Introduction

The Economic Development Strategy is intended to clarify the Township's role in Economic Development and identify available Economic Development resources. This strategy is an outcome of an objective in the 2015-2018 Township of Muskoka Lakes Strategic Plan, and provides a more focused approach to Economic Development in Muskoka Lakes. The strategy will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

Economic Development involves building a common vision for economic growth and prosperity in the Township. A strategy will identify strengths and assets to leverage, and confirm community and Economic Development priorities for the Township of Muskoka Lakes. Effective Economic Development requires synchronized and intentional program planning, not just an on-going cycle of ad hoc projects and initiatives. The document lays out a five-year work plan to help the Economic Development staff prioritize economic development activities to maximize the Township's economic potential. The items listed in the following pages are not inclusive and are subject to change based on circumstance and opportunity. The partnerships identified in the strategy are suggested, and no agreements between partners, as it relates to the strategy, are currently in place.



Previous Plans & Research

The Economic Development Strategy was developed from background research conducted by the Township Economic Development Intern and the Agriculture and Rural Economic Development Advisor from the Ontario Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Rural Affairs. This background research included a close review of previous plans, local economic research and other relevant background information, including:

- Business Retention and Expansion Report 2006
- Township of Muskoka Lakes Economic Development Strategy 2008
- First Impressions Community Exchange Program 2015
- Township of Muskoka Lakes Strategic Plan 2015-2018

Labour force data was collected from the Ontario Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Rural Affairs to help identify priority growth areas and design performance measures. Muskoka Lakes economic development stakeholders were consulted as part of the planning process through round table discussions. The information collected and discussed, helped to establish and prioritize local Economic Development goals and objectives and the role of Economic Development in the municipality.



Local Economic Development

The role of Economic Development for the Township of Muskoka Lakes involves generating prosperous conditions for economic growth and enhancing the well-being of the community. Economic Development will focus on improving the current conditions that exist throughout the municipality in an effort to create a more sustainable year round economy. The strategy draws on recommendations from the 2015-2018 Township of Muskoka Lakes Strategic Plan, including developing a year round economic strategy that includes tourism and executing a brand strategy to showcase the Township's unique and iconic nature.

Muskoka Lakes is dependent upon the service, retail and construction industries that play a key role in supporting permanent and seasonal residents as well as tourists. These industries make up the largest share of employment in the area and, as a result, are of primary focus for this strategy.

Muskoka Lakes Labour Force

Labour Force	Total	Male	Female
Total population 15 years and over	5,495	2,785	2,710
In the labour force	3,605	1,950	1,655
Employed	3,475	1,900	1,575
Unemployed	130	50	80
Not in the labour force	1,890	830	1,055
Participation rate	65.6	70.0	61.1
Employment rate	63.2	68.2	58.1
Unemployment rate	3.6	2.6	4.8

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

Muskoka Lakes Industry Workforce

Industry	Total	Percentage	Male	Female
Total experienced labour force 15 years and over	3,595		1,945	1,645
Agriculture and other resource-based industries	90	3%	55	40
Construction	635	18%	535	105
Manufacturing	230	6%	135	90
Wholesale trade	65	2%	45	20
Retail trade	520	14%	200	315
Finance and real estate	185	5%	90	100
Health care and social services	290	8%	35	250
Educational services	170	5%	30	140
Business services	625	17%	425	200
Other services	775	22%	400	375

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census

Strategic Goal 1

IMPROVE MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO DRIVE ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.

Having the right municipal infrastructure to facilitate economic development is essential to the Township's economy. The municipality will work to maintain and upgrade key infrastructure areas to ensure it is positioned to support a competitive business environment. Key areas of focus are broadband internet, downtowns, and affordable housing.

Objective	Lead/Support	Timing	Action Plan	Metrics
Work with respective departments to improve internet infrastructure.	Support	On-going	Connect with IT Committee to remain current on the status of the initiative, and determine the role of the Economic Development staff person to support this key initiative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percent of internet coverage and speeds. - Costs and reliability of internet.
	Support	On-going	Ensure Township is advocating to higher levels of government in regards to the critical need for high-speed internet infrastructure.	
Develop downtowns into year round community hubs.	Lead	Long	Leverage previous streetscape plans to develop and implement a downtown vision for Bala and Port Carling, including a gap analysis assessment. Identify other settlement areas to be enhanced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in visitors/tourists. - Business/resident satisfaction. - Number of businesses open in off-season.
	Support	Short	Assist with beautification (Banners, Benches, Flowers, Gateway signage and features) throughout the Township.	
	Lead	Med	Assess desired downtown branding and promotional materials in partnership with community stakeholders.	
	Lead	Med	Map out capital plan required to develop and install key beautification infrastructure.	
	Support	Med	Work with partners to develop actions to draw visitors to the downtowns in low seasons.	
	Lead	Med	Work with new and existing businesses to expand their operating season.	
Create awareness and support uptake of attainable housing rebate policy.	Support	Short	Promote the attainable housing rebate policy to local and external developers to maximize interest. Provide assistance to those looking to access the rebate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uptake of attainable housing rebate.

*(Legend: Short = 1 Year, Med = 1-3 Years, Long = 3+ Years)

Strategic Goal 2

IMPROVE THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT FOR TOWNSHIP OF MUSKOKA LAKES BUSINESSES WITH A FOCUS ON SUPPORTING THE SERVICE, RETAIL AND CONSTRUCTION SECTORS.

One of the key functions of any municipal economic development role is to ensure existing businesses across all industry sectors are supported and well positioned to maintain and grow their employment opportunities. An environment that facilitates support for existing business can also play a role in attracting new business, as the municipality's desirability as a place to do business increases.

Objective	Lead/Support	Timing	Action Plan	Metrics
Explore the feasibility of developing a Community Improvement Plan (CIP). If feasible, create and implement a CIP.	Lead	Short	Connect with Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to discuss the process and feasibility of creating a CIP for the Township of Muskoka Lakes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CIP created. - Uptake of incentives.
	Lead	Med	If feasible, work to develop CIP.	
	Lead	Long	Implement incentive program and CIP.	
Identify, deliver and promote local training and education resources to improve business development opportunities in Muskoka Lakes.	Lead/Support	Short	Work with regional stakeholders to develop an inventory of training and supports available to the Township of Muskoka Lakes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of participants attending training and education resources. - Number of businesses accessing educational resources. - Business satisfaction.
	Lead/Support	Short	Partner with local organizations, where it makes sense, to identify training needs and facilitate the delivery of training opportunities to the Muskoka Lakes Business community.	
Understand and explore opportunities to address local workforce challenges.	Support	Short	Work with partners to assess the nature of workforce challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to labour becomes less of a barrier for business community.
	Support	Med	Partake in any local and regional initiatives to support workforce development.	
Work with Planning & Building Departments to evaluate Township Official Plan and	Lead	Short	Work with staff to review and identify changes to be addressed.	Complete a review and make appropriate changes.

related By-laws to ensure consistency with Economic Development goals and objectives.				
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*(Legend: Short = 1 Year, Med = 1-3 Years, Long = 3+ Years)

Strategic Goal 3

DEVELOP AND ENHANCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING TOOLS.

Enhancing the municipality's communication tools will improve awareness on opportunities in the Township and enhance its relationship with the business community. Improved economic development marketing will better enable the township to attract visitors and new investment.

Objective	Lead/Support	Timing	Action Plan	Metrics
Build Muskoka Lakes brand awareness through marketing and communications.	Lead	Short	Review current brand awareness and marketing materials with partners. Assess effectiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased traffic to, and engagement with marketing and communication channels. - Increased brand recognition.
	Lead	Med	Select top 3 marketing and communications channels to build brand awareness and develop associated materials and strategy.	
	Lead/Support	Med	Leverage Venture Muskoka website to highlight local investment opportunities.	
Develop and implement business communication tools.	Lead	Short	Develop an inventory of business contacts in the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business satisfaction. - Engagement through new communication tool (s).
	Lead	Med	Develop a minimum of one communication tool to connect with the businesses.	
	Support	Med	Work with partners to communicate about service disruptions (i.e. road closure), and where required, support the implementation tactics for the business community.	
	Lead	Med	Establish a baseline measurement for all relevant performance measures.	
Develop creative new tools to market Muskoka Lakes events and businesses for tourists and residents.	Lead	Short	Identify and assess best practice tools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in event attendance when tools are piloted. - Increase in business patronage when tools are piloted.
	Lead	Med	Pilot new tools on an annual schedule. Repeat successful tools.	

*(Legend: Short = 1 Year, Med = 1-3 Years, Long = 3+ Years)

Strategic Goal 4

EXPAND AND ENHANCE TOWNSHIP INVOLVEMENT IN TOURISM INDUSTRY TO INCREASE VISITATION FROM SEASONAL RESIDENTS AND TOURISTS YEAR ROUND.

Seasonal residents and tourists were identified as key contributors to the local economy, and their presence and participation is important to drive activity in other sectors (i.e. construction). As other regions invest and innovate in the tourism sector, it is essential for the Township to enhance their support for the tourism sector to remain competitive. This includes support for product development, experience development, and marketing to increase visitation from seasonal residents and tourists year round.

Objective	Lead/Support	Timing	Action Plan	Metrics
Work in partnership with local and regional tourism stakeholders, leveraging on promotion, marketing and funding opportunities to increase year round tourism.	Lead	Short	Host tourism stakeholder discussions to determine roles and how the Township can leverage/partner with them to promote TML tourism, as well as identify gaps in Muskoka Lakes tourism promotion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased awareness of TML as a tourism destination. - Increase in visitation (by season).
	Lead	Med	Work with stakeholders to develop an action plan to address gaps, for a more coordinated approach to tourism.	
	Lead	Short	Partake in discussions with RTO12 regarding potential airport passenger service expansion.	
Support year round tourism product growth and development to improve local visitor experiences.	Lead	Short	Attend Tourism Excellence North (TEN) broker training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of enhanced tourism products. - Number of year round products available.
	Lead	Short	Complete a TEN community assessment.	
	Lead	Med	Identify a minimum of 5 tourism assets to undertake TEN related experience development training.	
	Lead	Med	Review best practices in extending a tourism season.	
	Lead	Long	Select at least one best practice to implement and monitor on an annual basis.	

*(Legend: Short = 1 Year, Med = 1-3 Years, Long = 3+ Years)