



Committee of the Whole Report

Report Number: ED2021-009
Meeting Date: April 6, 2021
Title: Destination Development Plan
Description: New 5 Year Tourism Strategy for Kawartha Lakes
Author and Title: Laurie McCarthy, Economic Development Officer – Tourism

Recommendations:

That Report ED2021-009, **Destination Development Plan** be received;

That the Destination Development Plan as outlined in Appendix A be approved; and

That this recommendation be brought forward to Council for consideration at the next Regular Council Meeting.

(Acting) Department Head: _____

Financial/Legal/HR/Other: _____

Chief Administrative Officer: _____

Background:

The 2020 Kawartha Lakes Corporate Strategic Plan identifies the priority of A Vibrant and Growing Economy, the goal to Enhance Tourism, and the objective to refresh and execute a Destination Development Plan for Kawartha Lakes.

This report addresses the direction to complete the Destination Development Plan.

Rationale:

1. The Destination Development Plan

Destination development happens when industry and government work together to enhance the quality of visitors' experiences by ensuring tourism products, services, amenities and practices meet and exceed expectations over the long term.

Tourism has two primary economic drivers – supply and demand. Creative marketing efforts strive to generate short-term demand for a destination and create immediate urgency for people to want to visit. Destination development focuses on the supply side of tourism by creating a compelling visitor experience to attract new visitors, entice repeat visitation, encourage extended length of stay, and increase visitor spending.

The Kawartha Lakes Destination Development Plan (Plan) was created to enhance tourism in Kawartha Lakes over the next 5 years and beyond. The Plan was developed as part of the Kawartha Lakes tourism program to support and guide the coordinated efforts of City staff and tourism stakeholders to build upon the sector's significant contribution to the local economy.

The Destination Development Plan identifies areas with greatest potential to augment Kawartha Lakes' natural assets and differentiate the municipality from competing destinations thus increasing the contribution of the tourism sector to the local economy. The Plan is focused on increasing the spend-per-tourist on an individual trip basis and the overall contribution to the economy as part of a sustainable and diversified economic development strategy.

2. Methodology

The work in creating the Destination Development Plan began in 2019 through collaboration with the consulting firms of KWL Advisory and Mellor Murray Consulting, alongside the Destination Development Plan Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee consisted of City Staff representing internal departments that would be impacted by the Destination Development Plan. The steering committee members included the Managers of the Economic Development; Planning; Communications, Advertising and Marketing; and Parks, Recreation and Culture Divisions as well as the Economic Development Officers for Tourism and Culture. The steering committee contributed their expertise to reviewing and discussing the key findings in the report, and helped develop the goals, objectives and strategies contained in the plan.

The Destination Development Plan is the result of the detailed process of gathering, synthesizing, and validating information with stakeholders about the current status and future direction of the tourism industry in Kawartha Lakes. The strategy development process was built on comprehensive research, strategic option analysis and a consultative framework.

The planning approach to the development of the Destination Development Plan consisted of two phases:

Phase One:

Phase one included a review of previous strategies and other relevant documents, development of a visitor profile, comprehensive stakeholder engagement, and asset identification and analysis.

Phase Two:

Phase two included a review of best practices in four comparator communities, an analysis of the City's tourism asset strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) and the crafting of the Destination Development Plan aimed at enhancing the City's tourism product offering and optimizing the economic impact of the tourism sector.

3. COVID-19 Considerations:

The Destination Development Plan, including all research, stakeholder consultation and strategy development was completed throughout 2019 and during the beginning of 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The impacts of COVID-19 are expected to have long term implications on the tourism industry that will influence how the recommendations and action items detailed in the Destination Development Plan are implemented. The changes within the tourism industry over the past year as a result of the pandemic have been assessed, and the final Destination Development Plan has been prepared with the impacts of COVID-19 in mind. Ultimately, the strategic priorities, goals and actions in the Destination Development Plan will support the economic recovery efforts of the Kawartha Lakes tourism economy.

4. Strategic Priorities, Goals and Objectives

The Destination Development Plan culminates with two overriding goals, five strategic priorities and 56 specific actions to achieve the goals and objectives.

Goals are the desired results the destination wants to achieve while objectives are the strategic actions the destination must take to attain the identified goals. The overriding goals in the Destination Development Plan are to:

- **Increase visitor spending**
- **Increase tourism activity outside the summer season**

Strategic priorities are the items which must be addressed to ensure Kawartha Lakes achieves the established goals and thrives as a tourism destination with increased visitor spending and greater off-season tourist activity. The strategic priorities for Kawartha Lakes' Destination Development Plan are as follows:

- **Asset development** – building the breadth and depth of tourism assets to encourage greater duration and spend of targeted visitor segments
- **Sustainability** – making environmental and economically sustainability cornerstones of Kawartha Lakes' tourism sector
- **Tourism Development Capacity** – providing the human and financial resources to drive Kawartha Lakes' Destination Development Plan.

The strategic objectives outlined to guide the actions and achieve the desired goals are:

- 1. Establish Kawartha Lakes as a leader in outdoor experiences**
- 2. Build culinary, local culture and accommodation infrastructure**
- 3. Bundle Kawartha Lakes' offerings to expand draw and duration**
- 4. Become a leader in sustainable tourism practices**
- 5. Allocate the resources to implement the Destination Development Plan**

There are 56 specific actions recommended to achieve these five strategic objectives over the next 5 years. These actions are meant to highlight the priorities and as such tactical implementation will be addressed through implementation planning.

5. Implementation and Reporting

Through destination development, we envision Kawartha Lakes as a thriving tourism destination leading industry standards while offering remarkable products and experiences that are authentic, driven by visitor demand, and exceed expectations. This vision has been developed into a strategy that will guide the growth of the Kawartha Lakes tourism sector in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner over the next 5 years.

Delivering the actions and achieving the objectives in the Destination Development Plan will require contribution from multiple City departments including staff in the Communications, Advertising and Marketing; Parks, Recreation and Culture; and Economic Development divisions. Implementation will also involve collaboration with tourism sector organizations and businesses.

Reporting on the Destination Development Plan at regular intervals will be important for measuring the impact of actions undertaken as well as revisiting the current objectives to reflect the evolution of the sector over time. It is proposed that Council receive an annual review of activities undertaken.

Other Alternatives Considered:

The Destination Development Plan provides Council with a guide to support the continued growth and development of the tourism sector in Kawartha Lakes. As an alternative to current recommendations, Council could decide to adopt the plan in part, however it is recommended that the plan be adopted in its entirety.

Alignment to Strategic Priorities

The Destination Development Plan was created with regard to the Kawartha Lakes Corporate Strategic Plan and directly supports;

Goal 3: A Vibrant and Growing Economy and the goal to Enhance Tourism through the refresh and execution of a Destination Development Plan.

The Destination Development Plan also supports the goals and objectives outlined in the Kawartha Lakes Economic Development Strategy and aligns with other relevant department plans.

Financial/Operation Impacts:

The Tourism Development Plan is a five-year strategy. As such, it contains actions with a financial impact to the City. Similar to the structure of the Corporate Strategic Plan, there are some action items that will be led and delivered by the municipality, there are other action items where the municipality with partner, facilitate and advocate to other organizations for delivery.

Implementation work undertaken in 2021 will be completed within the approved 2021 operating budget.

Other actions will be evaluated and brought forward to Council for consideration over the life cycle of the Destination Development Plan, brought forward during the annual budget cycle.

The action items in the Plan have been created to allow for flexibility in implementation and can be scaled depending on the resources that are available within the existing operating budget as well as through grant funding. Some of these action items inform and give strategic consideration to other corporate projects and initiatives. The primary aim is to fit the majority of these actions into the operating budget, any projects that require additional funds will be brought to Council as a request for additional funding.

External funds will be sourced through various funding sources including the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries and the Regional Tourism Organization RTO8 to support the financial impacts of the actions within the plan wherever possible.

Consultations:

Chief Administrative Officer and Senior Management Team

Manager of Economic Development

Manager of Planning

Manager of Communications, Marketing and Advertising

Manager of Parks, Recreation and Culture

Economic Development Officers – Tourism, Culture, Community and Agriculture

The Destination Development Plan was informed by the numerous businesses, associations and related organizations who regularly interact with visitors to Kawartha Lakes. The stakeholder consultation included one-on-one interviews, focus group sessions and an online survey.

In total there were over 120 interactions with stakeholders via interviews, three focus groups and an online survey.

Attachments:

Appendix A: Destination Development Plan



Appendix A 2021
Destination Develop

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