

Subject: Tourism Strategy and Action Plan (2021 – 2026)

Department: Community Services

Division: Economic Development

Report #: CMS-2021-001

Meeting Date: 2021-01-11

Recommendations

That report CMS-2021-001, dated January 11, 2021 regarding the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan (2021- 2026) be received;

And that the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan prepared by Bannikin Travel and Tourism Ltd. be adopted;

And that Council direct the Economic Development and Culture office to begin implementation of the Strategy as part of its annual operating work plan;

And that staff report annually on the implementation progress of the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan.

Background and Analysis

As part of the 2020 budgeting process, Council approved up to \$50,000 to undertake a new Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for the Town of Orangeville. Despite the onset of a global pandemic in early 2020, the project moved forward and following a competitive Request for Proposals process, the firm Bannikin Travel and Tourism Ltd. was selected to complete the Tourism Strategy.

The project consisted of three phases. First, market and industry analyses were completed which included the review of relevant reports and background information, an analysis of current demand generators and comparative communities, and an assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the Town as a visitor destination.

The second phase of the project included community and stakeholder engagement in order to gauge public, business and stakeholder impressions of the Town's tourism

environment and to explore future opportunities. One-to-one interviews were conducted with 41 local tourism stakeholders and Town representatives, a public information session and a stakeholder workshop were delivered, a stakeholder survey was completed, and two site visits were conducted by the consultant.

The final phase of the project was the development of the plan. Throughout the process, the Business and Economic Development Advisory Committee (BEDAC) was engaged and key community stakeholders were provided with opportunities for input.

The Town of Orangeville Tourism Strategy and Action Plan (**Attachment 1**) provides a summary of the analysis completed, examines the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, and identifies key themes and strategic priorities to guide the Town's tourism and cultural development over the next several years. An action plan with more than 70 key recommendations, timelines for completion and budgetary considerations is included, providing staff with a clear and realistic work plan for the upcoming five years. Some highlights of the full report are summarized below.

Vision

"To support community pride and engagement, economic success and local collaboration through sustainable tourism development, with creativity, inclusion and entrepreneurship at the core of all activities".

Target Markets

With consideration to the demographics of Orangeville's visiting population, along with the Town's reputation for theatre and the arts, cuisine, attractive architecture, and natural resources, opportunities to establish and grow key consumer markets were identified. Socially conscious travellers comprised of upscale, middle and older aged couples and families, diverse and equity-seeking groups, and young families were identified as representing significant opportunities for the Town's tourism development. Profiles for these target markets, particularly with respect to day-trippers and weekend visitors were created and defined for use in directing marketing efforts.

Foundational Tourism Drivers

The assets and characteristics inherent to Orangeville's tourism development to date provided a base for further development of tourism drivers, activities and promotional efforts. Key drivers to build and expand upon were identified within the plan and included public and performing arts, trails and outdoor experiences, the historic downtown and architecture, culinary offerings, and festivals and events. Actions identified within the plan have been designed to build and expand on these key tourism drivers and when implemented, will help to cement the Town's vision and reputation for unique public and performing art experiences, diverse outdoor activities, and culinary offerings.

Strategic Priorities

Four strategic priority areas emerged through completion of the plan - Administration and Operations, Branding and Promotions, Tourism Assets and Experience

Development, and Infrastructure and Investments. Actions identified for implementation are categorized within the plan according to these strategic priorities and with key markets and foundational drivers front of mind.

Next Steps/Implementation in 2021

A full roster of tourism and cultural activities and initiatives are undertaken by the EDC office throughout the year. Key recommendations for immediate implementation in 2021, supported by a detailed action plan, include but are not limited to:

Administration and operations – Creation of a full-time Tourism & Culture position dedicated to the implementation of the Tourism Strategy and ongoing initiatives related to the Municipal Cultural Plan. This position will be responsible for product development, marketing, brand implementation, and facilitation of collaborative efforts with stakeholders, businesses and relevant organizations required to elevate tourism in Orangeville, support the recovery of this hard-hit sector, and promote Orangeville as a destination of choice. The capacity of the EDC office to move quickly and thoroughly to implement the plan is directly impacted by the amount of resources that can be dedicated to these efforts. The addition of a full-time position has been added to the 2021 operating budget for Council consideration.

Branding and promotions – Work is required to effectively promote the Town of Orangeville as a destination of choice – particularly in highlighting the Town's artistic and cultural offerings. The creation of an Orangeville tourism brand will reflect the Town's unique competitive identity and assets and guide expectations of what travellers will see, do, and experience when visiting. This is achieved through the engagement of a brand development and design agency that will be tasked with creating key messages and visual assets to be used to influence audience perceptions. Key deliverables will include a tourism-focused tagline, marketing and ad templates, communication materials and related design recommendations that complement and build on the Town's existing corporate branding. Branding unifies messaging to attract targeted visitors and new investment to the Town while also promoting civic pride by residents. Funding of \$20,000 for completion of this project has been included in the 2021 Capital budget. Costs for completion of the branding exercise could be reduced should the County of Dufferin offer funding under the Economic Development Fund in 2021.

Tourism assets and experience development – Creating new and enhancing existing products and assets will attract high-spending visitors to the community and simulate economic activity within it. Priority areas for 2021 will include the continued upkeep and expansion of public art pieces and the creation and expansion of tourism itineraries. Development of an annual Activities and Event plan will also be undertaken as pandemic restrictions enable and may include delivery of arts and culinary-based workshops to appeal to both day and weekend visitors.

Infrastructure and investment – Initial tasks required to elevate the visitor experience and targeted for completion in 2021 will include way-finding sign improvements and removal of the community event signage. The expansion of business hours for retailers

in the downtown core to include select evenings and Sundays during peak visitor times will be pursued, should pandemic restrictions allow. Collaborating with the BIA to create activities and initiatives will increase visitor traffic in the downtown core and encourage expanded/adjusted retail business hours. Costs associated with tasks related to these improvements would be addressed within the EDC existing operating budget.

Strategic Alignment

Orangeville Forward – Strategic Plan

Priority Area: Economic Vitality

Objective: Stimulate tourism and cultural development

Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan

Theme: Economic Development and Culture

Strategy: Further establish Orangeville's identity through the preservation and expansion of tourism, culture and heritage

Notice Provisions

N/A

Financial Impact

None at this time. Total project costs were completed on time and under the allotted capital budget of \$50,000. Additionally, staff were successful in obtaining a grant of \$30,000 from the County of Dufferin 2019 Economic Development fund, further reducing capital budget costs to the Town.

Respectfully submitted,

Ray Osmond,
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Attachment(s): 1. Town of Orangeville Tourism Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2026)