ONE, TOGETHER

TOURISM SIMCOE COUNTY'S

2023-2026
DESTINATION
STEWARDSHIP PLAN

experience SIMCOE COUNTY

experience
SIMCOE COUNTY

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We are Tourism Simcoe County, and **ONE, TOGETHER** is more than our destination stewardship plan for the next few years.

It is a step change in our perspective on both the destination and our responsibility to everyone and everything that brings it to life. It is the outcome of a process that involved reflection on what we look like now, consideration of what we should become, and discussion around the steps that we need to take, with others, towards our vision of Simcoe County flourishing as a destination.

We are indebted to the many individuals and organizations that participated in the research and development of One, Together, including industry members, residents, our municipal and tourism partners, and others. We have worked to incorporate your insight, input, and feedback into our plan. We are very excited about collaborating with you on the initiatives identified within the plan.

We are so grateful to our team, including Kathryn Stephenson, Brittany Black, Brendan Matheson, Brianne Harris, and Gayle McKay. The time and effort that you put into the development of this plan, and the energy that you will be contributing to its implementation, are what have and will make all the difference.

We are also very appreciative of the team at Bannikin Travel & Tourism, including Trevor Jonas Benson, Camilo Montoya-Guevara, James Arteaga, and Antony Upward. You challenged us to step into the future, have the important conversations, and work back from an inspiring vision. Thank you.

ONE,
TOGETHER

SIMCOE COUNTY

Simcoe County is located on the traditional territory and treaty lands of the Anishinaabeg peoples, specifically the Three Fires Confederacy, comprised of the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Pottawatomi Nations, and with the enduring presence of the Chippewa Tri-Council, comprised of Beausoleil First Nation, the Chippewas of Rama First Nation, and the Chippewas of Georgina Island. These lands have also been the traditional territories of the Wendat Nation, who today live in Wendake, located just outside of Quebec City, as well as home to many citizens of the Métis Nation of Ontario, including the historic Métis Community of Georgian Bay, as well as the Georgian Bay, Barrie South, and Moon River Métis Councils. As aspiring destination stewards, we acknowledge that the place we call home and want to share with others, has been stewarded by Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. We look forward to honouring this past and present by working more closely together towards a flourishing future for all.

Key Terms and Resources

FLOURISHING: according to positive psychologists, flourishing is the highest level of potential that humans can reach. While appreciating that both organizations and enterprises can be legal persons, humans are not only the reason why they exist but also represent a stake or interest in their existence; therefore, the best possible purpose for all organizations and enterprises is to create the possibility for all their stakeholders to flourish, argues Antony Upward. More specifically, choosing flourishing means "creating the possibility for human and all other life to flourish on our planet for generations to come, enhancing the integrity, beauty, and regenerative capacity of living communities" (Adapted from Prof. John Ehrenfeld, MIT and Michelle Holliday). To better understand the "why" behind choosing flourishing as your purpose, **click here**.

THE FLOURISHING BUSINESS CANVAS: a collaboration tool that provides a common language in a useful visual framework to enable you to work with your stakeholders to collaboratively sketch, prototype, design, improve, understand, share, measure, diagnose, simulate and most importantly, tell stories about your enterprise's business model. Business models created using the Flourishing Business Canvas describe how an enterprise defines and achieves its goals over time. These models include all the necessary and sufficient factors to enable any business models to be described, from those that only consider financial profitability, to those that fully integrate social benefits, environmental regeneration, and financial viability. To learn more about the Flourishing Business Canvas, **click here**.

DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP: the first of its seven values, the County of Simcoe describes stewardship as being "Responsible Guardians for a Sustainable Future." Within the context of tourism and more specifically destinations, the World Travel & Tourism Council defines stewardship as follows: "as an approach to destination governance that seeks to balance and meet the economic, environmental, and social/cultural needs of a destination; whilst operating within a legitimate governance model with active participation from the public and private sectors, as well as the local community." To learn more about achieving destination stewardship through scenarios and a governance diagnostics framework, **click here**.

FUTURE-FIT SOCIETY: the science-based Future-Fit Business Benchmark defines 23 break-even goals, based on eight system conditions or sustainability principles. These are goals that organizations must meet for them to contribute to the possibility for a flourishing or future-fit society, environment, and economy. Tourism Simcoe County is planning to pursue seven of these break-even goals as its contribution towards creating the possibility for Simcoe County to flourish in the future. To learn more about a future-fit society, **click here**, and to learn more about break-even goals, **click here**.

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

By 2035 Simcoe County is flourishing as a destination because its stewards are co-creating social, environmental, and economic benefits for all.

This is our vision. We understand that by the time we get close to realizing, it will have evolved. For now, it is our inspiration, reminding us daily of our new purpose and its connection to the strategic direction that we have chosen to pursue, revisit, and course-correct every few years.

DEFINING SUCCESS

Related to our vision are five goals that underline what future success looks like for us:

Tourism Simcoe County is recognized for leading destination stewardship

Tourism is the outcome of collaboration between all the tourism stakeholders in Simcoe County

Year-round, diverse, and high-quality sustainable tourism products and experiences can be enjoyed across the County by all

Simcoe County has a clearly defined, recognized, and respected brand and marketing strategy that attracts those who are keen to join with us in the stewardship of the County

Research informs both the sustainable development of tourism and stewardship of the destination

On the one hand, our vision and the goals associated with it, reflect a future business model for Tourism Simcoe County that is responsive to the needs of a breadth and diversity of stakeholders, including individuals, businesses, and organizations. On the other hand, they point to the reality of our success being contingent upon the success of those who have a vested interest in our work: residents, who we see as resident-caretakers in the future; visitors, who we see as guests (even temporary residents) in the future; and businesses, who we see as drivers of social, environmental and economic benefits in the future.

Our vision and goals also remind us that our future is bright only if we can establish, cultivate, and maintain positive working relationships with those who share our vision. *This is why* we are choosing to focus on the co-creation of value with our stakeholders, including many who we aim to co-create agreements with to steward the destination in partnership.

What most excites us about our future business model, though, is that it takes more seriously our relationship with society and the environment in which we operate. For example, we know that the resources tourism relies upon come from somewhere, and without these, the possibility for a flourishing tourism sector in the Simcoe County could not exist. So, our vision demands that we take account of both the natural materials that go towards resourcing our tourism activities as well as the services provided to us by our precious ecosystems. *This is why* we are choosing to measure not only the economic costs and benefits associated with our activities but also the environmental and social ones.

In pursuit of our vision, we are also confident that we can contribute to realizing broader outcomes. *This is why* we choosing to recognize that Simcoe County can only flourish as a tourism destination when all life within it flourishes, and that tourism has an important role to play in enabling this wider possibility.

Last, we understand that realizing these broader and regenerative outcomes requires several "Future-Fit" system conditions or sustainability principles for flourishing societies, environments, and economies to be met. *This is why*, towards realizing the possibility for a flourishing Simcoe County, we have identified and are choosing to focus on pursuing seven break-even goals towards:

Natural resources are managed to respect the welfare of ecosystems, people and animals

Products do not harm people or the environment

Community health is safeguarded

Operational waste is eliminated

Product communications are honest, ethical, and promote responsible use

Product concerns are actively solicited, impartially judged, and transparently addressed

Business is conducted ethically

WHERE WE ARE COMING FROM

BACKGROUND CONTEXTS

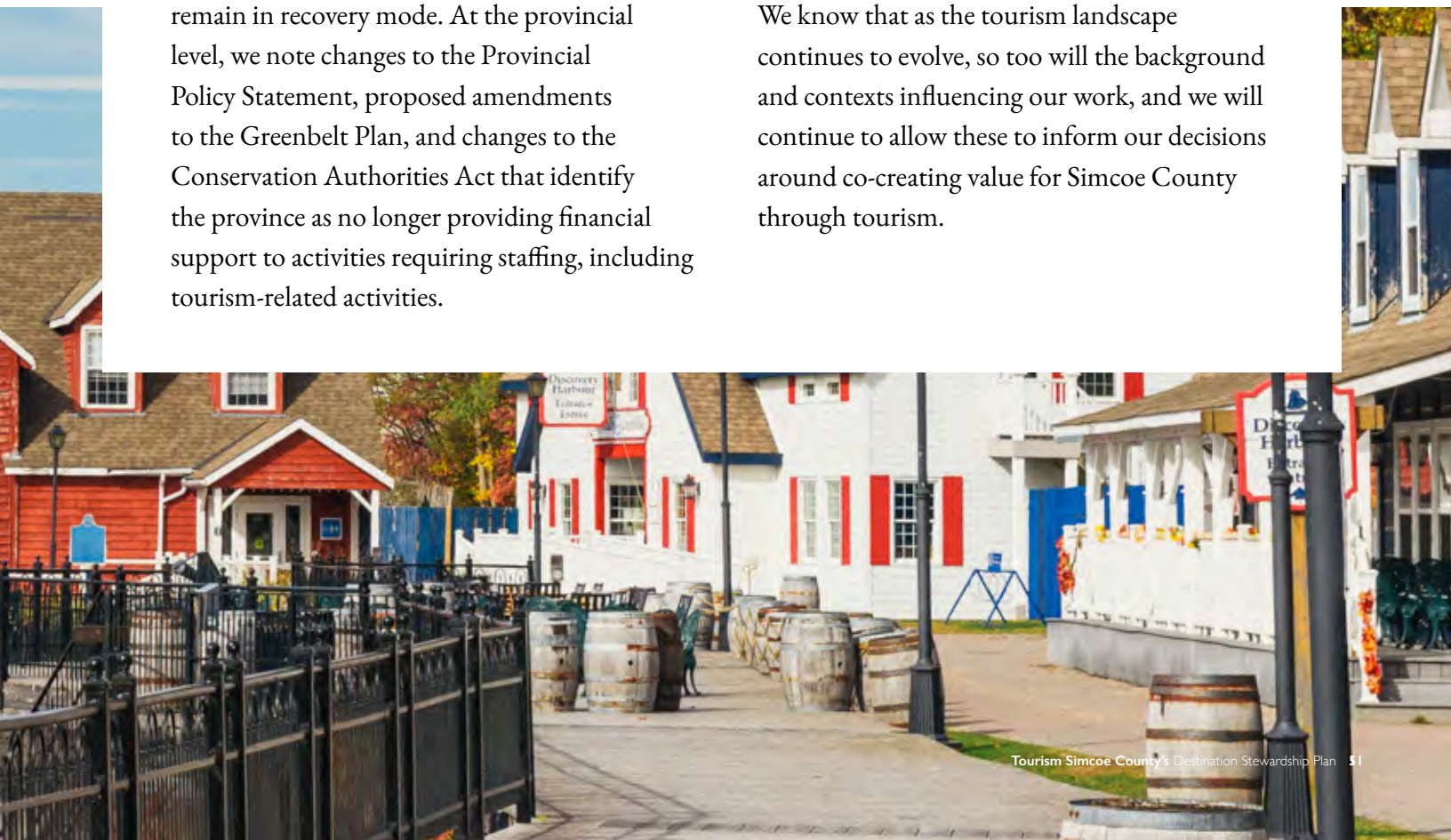
We built our destination stewardship plan, and its 2023-2026 implementation initiatives, upon a foundation of previous work and ongoing efforts.

A variety of existing plans and policies are particularly relevant. For instance, Goal 4 of the *County of Simcoe 10-year Economic Development Strategic Plan* (2011) seeks to "foster growth in regional tourism and cultural industries," noting that "the County will be recognized provincially and nationally for its thriving tourism and cultural industries, with communities that offer a diverse range of rural, recreational and cultural experiences." Our regional tourism organization's (RTO7) strategic plan, entitled "A Fresh View of the Future" (2015), also identifies four key areas of activity and related goals for tourism development in the Bruce, Grey and Simcoe County region. These include marketing, product and experience development, workforce development, and investment attraction.

Many projects and programs undertaken over the last few years are relevant to us. Some of the more recent ones include the "RTO7 Agri-culinary Experience Development [Plan]" (2017); RTO7's "T3 Accelerator: Tourism Professional Development Program" (2017); "Simcoe County: A Natural Playground for Music – A three-year regional music strategy for Barrie and Simcoe County." (2018); and the "County of Simcoe Tourism, Culture and Sport Enhancement Fund" (2022).

In addition to the past plans, policies, and programs influencing our strategic direction, we considered what is happening around us. To start, we recognize and greatly appreciate that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect most tourism stakeholders, many of whom remain in recovery mode. At the provincial level, we note changes to the Provincial Policy Statement, proposed amendments to the Greenbelt Plan, and changes to the Conservation Authorities Act that identify the province as no longer providing financial support to activities requiring staffing, including tourism-related activities.

Within our region and all local communities that make it up, we are aware of population growth, and the associated demographic shifts in the population. More specifically, we know that as our populations grow and increase in diversity, we will need to work to reach newcomers and communicate messages about all aspects of tourism in the County that are reflective of all our residents. Related to this are the changes to our industrial landscape, including the number of new businesses opened in different pockets of the county, and simultaneously the need to focus on succession planning as the owners and operators of existing businesses in the county continue to age into retirement. Of course, we also recognize the potentially negative impacts associated with increased visitation to Simcoe County.
We know that as the tourism landscape continues to evolve, so too will the background and contexts influencing our work, and we will continue to allow these to inform our decisions around co-creating value for Simcoe County through tourism.



WHERE WE ARE COMING FROM

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal that we set for ourselves at the onset of the project to develop this plan was to produce something that would guide our work in the years to come. More specifically, we wanted a document that would situate our role and responsibilities within a future where the place we call home is flourishing, and that clearly articulate how we would be working towards this vision.

With this goal in mind, we identified five objectives to guide the development of our strategic direction and implementation plan:

1. To contextualize Tourism Simcoe County's current business model
2. To identify and meaningfully engage Tourism Simcoe County's stakeholders
3. To consult a breadth and diversity of tourism stakeholders in the region
4. To design an inspiring vision for Tourism Simcoe County
5. To determine the steps that Tourism Simcoe County must take to move towards its inspiring vision

Goals 2 and 3 were and remain particularly important to us, because we know that consultation and engagement set the contextual consensus framework for working with stakeholders to implement our strategic plan.

METHODOLOGY

The project began with a review of 24 background and contextual documents. This was followed by a design exercise, where an innovative management and storytelling tool called the Flourishing Business Canvas was used to visualize our responses to necessary and sufficient questions about our current business model. Next, we identified key stakeholders to engage and developed a plan to guide the research process. In the end, 45 industry members and 117 residents were surveyed, 25 key informants were consulted, and 11 tourism organizations and 18 municipal representatives were engaged. Over three days in July, a team member from Bannikin also participated in touristic activities across Simcoe County to have a real sense of the visitor experience during the summer season. At the same time, research into five comparators to Tourism Simcoe County was conducted, including two in competitor destinations, and one destination management/ marketing organization that inspires us. The insights garnered through the research served as the foundation for future thinking and strategy sessions as a team.

WHERE WE ARE COMING FROM

OUR CURRENT BUSINESS MODEL

Our current business model serves as the baseline from which we seek to move forward and towards our vision. Through four vital perspectives—People, Outcomes, Process, and Value—we are able to describe the who, what, how, where, when, and why, we exist now.

OUTCOMES

At the moment, our success is defined within the context of our destination management and marketing work, which is almost exclusively focussed on the visitor experience. More specifically, our current business model has us working to towards five specific objectives:

+ Enhancing the visitor experience through well-designed tourism products and experiences that meet current and future demand,
+ Developing research-based marketing strategies to drive visitation,
+ Facilitating and support the attraction, development, and retention of a tourism workforce to enhance the visitor experience,
+ Increasing investment in the tourism industry to enhance the visitor experience, and
+ Supporting tourism stakeholders in Simcoe County through financial and human resources, in order to enhance the visitor experience.

We have measures in place to determine whether we are meeting our objectives and can fulfill our goals. Among these, the number of visitors to Simcoe County is the most obvious indicator of the benefits associated with our work. However, over the past years, we have only really been accounting for the economic costs associated with our activities, and these can be grouped into the following areas (but not limited to): human resources; travel and travel-related costs; marketing and advertising; product and experience development; funding program and program supplies and materials.

PEOPLE

People include anyone and anything that is interested in the fact that we exist, who have needs that we are working to satisfy but also recognize that we may hinder. Stakeholders include anybody who touches, tastes, and feels tourism in the area. Our current stakeholders range from our own team to our tourism partners, visitors to municipalities, accommodation providers to event operators, and industry associations to local media outlets. All stakeholders play an important role for us. For example, visitors, residents, and individuals working in tourism are the customers, hosts, and service/experience providers, respectively. Aside from the roles and responsibilities that stakeholders bring to our work, we also know that they bring specific needs, such as a need for industry knowledge, expertise, and connections. We seek to address these needs by establishing relationships with our stakeholders that will result in the co-creation of value with them. Currently, we use several communication channels to establish and foster our relationships with our stakeholders, including visitor information centres, our website, events, print material, social and broadcast media, meetings, and email.

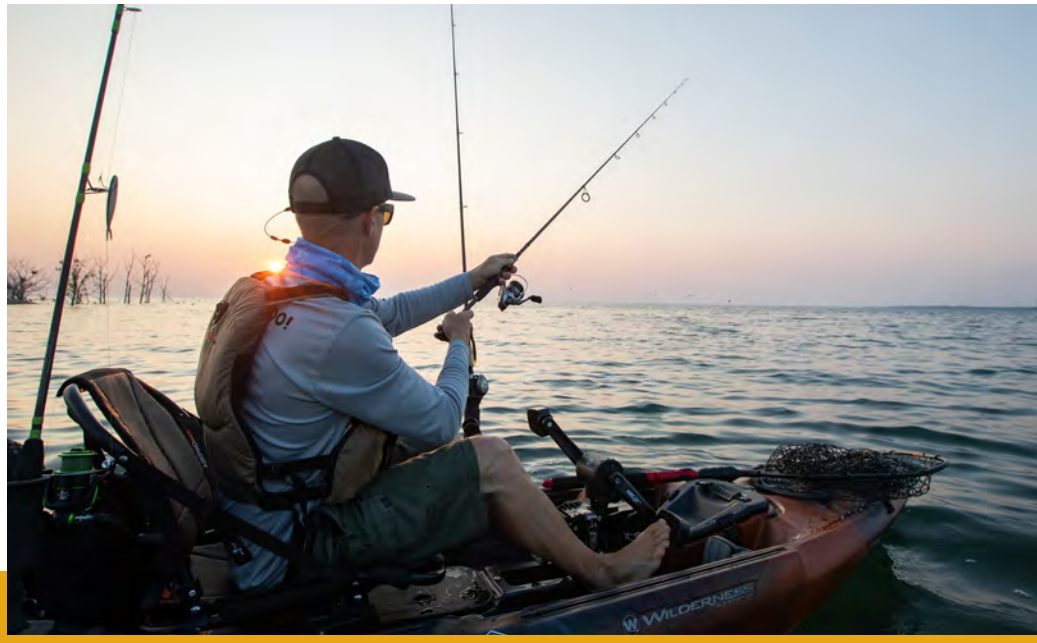
PROCESS

All our activities fall within five pillars of action that align with our objectives: 1) product/experience development; 2) marketing and social media; 3) workforce development; 4) investment attraction; and 5) stakeholder and regional support. Some key resources that facilitate our work include: our team's time, energy, and effort; the experience and expertise we have and that is provided by partners within the County of Simcoe and beyond. Similarly, funds that we leverage from sources like RTO7 are important, and so too are the connections, contacts, and content that we receive from destination marketing/management organizations. Outdoor recreation and agritourism, along with arts, cultural, and heritage tourism, are the focus of our product and experience development efforts, and because of this we are aware and recognize the importance of the natural environment surrounding our work.

VALUE

While we hadn't been using the language of value co-creation, we recognize that what we are doing through our activities now is co-creating value with our stakeholders in response to the needs of others. For instance, our product, experience, and workforce development activities provide information, intelligence, and additional opportunities and supports to tourism businesses and their employees. They in-turn contribute information about their offerings and needs to us.

We have also become aware of the fact that aspects of our work may have potentially negative impacts on others. For example, there may be increased competition between the destinations that make up Simcoe County and the businesses working to attract and service visitors. Over-tourism situations may arise. Residents may feel increased pressure to share their home, and media may receive similar or conflicting tourism stories because of the number of actors involved in promoting destinations within Simcoe County.



HOW STAKEHOLDERS PERCEIVE US

While we see ourselves in one way, we certainly don't presume that stakeholders perceive us the same; therefore, we asked. What we heard is that our stakeholders value our staff, recognizing them as a major strength of ours. In fact, they describe our staff as talented, creative, experienced, well-connected, and respected by others. Our position within the County and how this informs our relationship with our member municipalities and their economic development offices, is another strength that stakeholders identified for us. Along with the budget that we can allocate to developing and marketing tourism products, and our facility to distribute funds to tourism-related initiatives, stakeholders see value in our networks, both within and outside of the County. Last, our stakeholders see value in the product and experience development expertise and supports that we provide. Areas that were brought to our attention for improvement include our lack of connection with cross-industry issues affecting tourism in the County, specifically workforce development, investment attraction, municipal legislation, and infrastructure. We noted a perceived lack of connection between Tourism Simcoe County, its member municipalities, and tourism organizations. We also heard that there is a need for us to build the case for tourism development across the County. Finally, our stakeholders shared their lack of clarity around our role and responsibilities in relation to product and experience development. We appreciate everything that stakeholders shared with us, and we look forward to working towards bridging any gaps between how we see ourselves and our stakeholder perceptions.

CONTEXTS INFORMING OUR DIRECTION

LOCAL PERSPECTIVES ON TOURISM

Stakeholders clearly understand the importance of tourism for our community's future, and they see much value in our visitor economy. They know tourism supports business retention, expansion, and attraction, and they see tourism as a job creator. However, stakeholders have concerns about the impact that visitors can have on our environment and the communities that make up the destination, from increasing waste and putting pressure on infrastructure to causing overcrowding and reducing access to local spaces. They also voiced concern about tourism's impact on affordable housing and its disturbance of local ways of life.

Three features that stakeholders identified as distinguishing Simcoe County from other destinations:

+ A diversity of natural features and environments, such as farmlands, forests, parks, and scenic habitats.
+ A significant number of waterways, including lakes, bays, rivers, streams, and marshes.
+ Year-round tourism products and experiences throughout the County.

EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING TOURISM

We know that neither destination development, management, nor marketing takes place in a vacuum, and neither will our stewardship activities.

As a result, we engaged in important conversations with individuals whom we knew would provide us with both intimate knowledge of and foresight into the macro factors that will affect our work in the future. These include Simcoe County's political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental changes, developments, and innovations.

In our exploration of the political macro factors in Simcoe County, we found community sentiment towards tourism, specifically resident pushback as a growing concern. Some community members seemed to have lost trust in tourism development based on their personal experiences. However, to work towards this macro factor, work could be done toward building our community's understanding of tourism's benefits. This could be done through research and data sharing that could demystify their perceptions of tourism, while also growing our local ambassadorship.

As we investigated the economic macro factors, investment in new and existing infrastructure, including communication and transportation services, was a main area of focus. This was because of the recognized need to easily move and communicate around the county to live, work and play. Considering this, there could be work done around building consensus among our 16 municipalities to standardize infrastructure needs that impact tourism development, including communications and transportation.

Looking at the social macro factors in Simcoe County, we learned anti-racism and anti-oppression were essential areas to address and work towards. As the demographic landscape changes in the county, it is essential to develop a community that is welcoming to a breadth and diversity of both new residents and visitors. To work towards this, there could be work done on developing and retaining strong relationships with diverse communities in the county, including Indigenous communities. This could be done through the formation of working groups as well as leveraging existing county advisory committees. Additionally, work could be done in growing internal capacity on anti-racism and anti-oppression, including truth and reconciliation.

In our look at the technological macro factors, a necessity identified was the need to use new technologies to better understand the wants and desires of visitors. By having a better understanding, we could provide better solutions and recommendations for visitors, while also elevating their experiences. At the same time, we could better market the County and its assets to key visitor segments. This could be done by leveraging our partner's existing analytics programs to make data-informed initiatives and share the insight with our stakeholders on a regular and ongoing basis.

As we considered the legal macro factors in Simcoe County, we found the need to regulate short-term rental (STR) accommodations as the main area of concern. We learned visitors are interested in STRs because of their unique locations, amenities, and availability; however, we noted that they seem to cause tension within the accommodation industry since they are not held to the same standard as others. As a result of this, the implementation of a municipal accommodations tax throughout our 16 municipalities could address these tensions, while also generating additional revenue for tourism development in the county.

Finally, when discussing the environmental macro factors in Simcoe County, climate change was the overarching concern. However, within climate change, the use of waterways, including beaches and other waterfronts, was a key area of focus. As we mentioned in the local perspectives on tourism, stakeholders see access to a significant number of waterways as a major asset for our community. Yet, as climate change continues to transform our local ecosystems, our waterways will be heavily impacted, including shore erosions, water qualities, and fluctuating water levels. However, there could be more collaboration to build consciousness around the impacts our residents and visitors have on the ecosystems, as well as financial support to our community's environmental organizations already working towards mitigating climate change impacts and ecological restoration.

OUR PLAN FOR MOVING FORWARD

Our vision is that by 2035 Simcoe County is flourishing as a destination because its stewards are co-creating social, environmental, and economic benefits for all.

This is not just a statement for us. It is a destination in its own right, and one that all tourism stakeholders can adopt. A place that we all want to get to in the future, and that serves to inform the steps we choose to take in the near-term.

ALIGNMENTS

Our vision for the destination aligns with the County of Simcoe's vision of working together to build vibrant, healthy, sustainable communities. It is also underpinned by the County of Simcoe's values, which we know all tourism stakeholders share.

1. Stewardship
2. Leadership
3. Integrity
4. Innovation
5. Respect
6. Accountability
7. Co-operation

Informed by our vision, the principles and pillars guiding TSC's strategic direction and implementation we will be working on over the next few years, all integrate with and support the County of Simcoe's six strategic directions.

1. Growth Related Service Delivery
2. Strengthened Social, Health and Educational Opportunities
3. Economic & Destination Development
4. Environmental Sustainability
5. A Culture of Workplace and Operational Excellence
6. Responsive and Effective Governance

PILLARS AND PRINCIPLES

We understand and appreciate that our stakeholders have diverse needs. We also recognize that for Tourism Simcoe County to stay useful and relevant, maximizing our potential to co-create value with our stakeholders, we need to focus our attention on our stakeholders' needs.

Examples of stakeholder needs:

+ Both residents and visitors to our destination need safety, memorable experiences to enjoy, and a sense of belonging, just to name a few.
+ Businesses operating in the visitor economy as well as local and other media outlets need increased exposure and traffic on their websites.
+ Community-based and not-for-profit organizations need to build awareness around their work and share important information with their stakeholders.
+ Various levels of government, including local municipalities, First Nation councils, and the provincial government need information to be shared in a timely manner. They also need to see outcomes associated with the collaborative efforts we lead.

We have grouped our work to respond to the needs of our stakeholders into five pillars. Each of these pillars is supported by a 2026 goal. In addition, we see organizational change and resource management as underpinning all the pillars, and we have identified a 2026 goal for this area of our work too.

PILLAR	2026 GOAL
Leadership and representation	Tourism Simcoe County is leading efforts towards and are recognized for our destination stewardship
Partnership and collaboration	The foundation has been poured for TSC to establish and foster strong working relationships with its stakeholders
Product Development and Innovation	New and existing products/experiences are more meaningful and more competitive
Marketing and Promotion	A strong destination brand and marketing strategy is being implemented
Research and Learning	Information, tools, and resources are readily available for TSC and its stakeholders to make informed decisions
Organizational Change Management	Tourism Simcoe County has a clearly defined role, responsibilities, budget, and resources, and these are clearly understood by its stakeholders

FIVE PRINCIPLES WILL GUIDE ALL OUR ACTION BETWEEN NOW AND 2026.

1 LEAD BY EXAMPLE:

Going beyond communicating the need for change by acting upon our commitment to sustaining the possibility for Simcoe County to flourish as a destination

2 EMPOWER DESTINATION STEWARDS:

Recognizing the potential within all our stakeholders to co-create value with us, and providing them with the information, opportunities, and resources to do so

3 FACILITATE MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS:

Establishing the channels and processes needed to foster and maintain effective working relationship with our all stakeholders in the destination

4 ACCOUNT FOR THE WHOLE TOURISM ECOSYSTEM:

Wholly committing to the co-creation of value by approaching all our work in an inclusive and participatory manner

5 OPERATIONALIZE EXCELLENCE:

Supporting systems change by implementing good practices that will serve as the foundation for all our work

INITIATIVES AND OUTCOMES

We have identified 38 initiatives to implement over the next few years, with many carrying on into and beyond 2026. The outcomes we anticipate are only steps along our path towards realizing a future where Simcoe County is flourishing as a destination along with all of its stakeholders.

LEADERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION

	INITIATIVE	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME
1	Baseline the operational impact of Tourism Simcoe County and determine specific actions that will support its contribution to future-fit society	Increased capacity to make informed decisions around needed operational changes
	Develop and share Tourism Simcoe County "statement of commitment to destination stewardship" with all tourism stakeholders	Increased clarity around and stakeholder support for Tourism Simcoe County
2	Build awareness amongst industry around their role and responsibilities within an ecosystem that includes diverse stakeholders and needs	Increased industry awareness and understanding of their responsibilities
3	Design and deliver industry familiarization tours for frontline staff	Increased awareness amongst frontline staff of innovations and opportunities to support positive change
4	Creatively visualize for tourism stakeholders the entire destination ecosystem	Clarity around the breadth and diversity of actors, products, and services that make up the destination
5	Build "high value creation" criteria into all funding applications	New standards for industry to meet in support of a flourishing destination

PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

	INITIATIVE	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME
1	Co-create "terms of collaboration" with tourism and municipal partner organizations	Shared formal commitment to collaborate with tourism and municipal partners
2	Building upon "statement of commitment" prepare a letter of intention campaign to mobilize all industry partners around destination stewardship	Expressed commitment from industry partners to support destination stewardship
3	Schedule, coordinate, and conduct in-person meetings with visitor-facing businesses on a regular and ongoing basis	More meaningful one-on-one relationships with industry
	Schedule, coordinate, and conduct in-person meetings with tourism and municipal partners organizations on a regular and ongoing basis	More meaningful one-on-one relationships with representatives from tourism and municipal partner organizations
4	Evolve existing stakeholder database into a comprehensive database that includes not only contacts but also resources and opportunities	Increased clarity around known and prospective tourism assets, resources, and associated opportunities
	Develop communications plan to establish, foster, and maintain strong relationships with tourism stakeholders	Stronger and more meaningful connection between destination stakeholders and Tourism Simcoe County
5	Activate memorandum of understanding with Indigenous Tourism Ontario	Implementable actions and outcomes to be proud of
	Dedicate more resources towards fostering relationship with First Nations	Increased capacity to collaborate with First Nation partners

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

	INITIATIVE	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME
1	Determine where existing products can be layered with and/or enriched by arts, cultural, and heritage value	Increased clarity around opportunities to improve existing products
	While continuing to focus on accessible outdoor experiences, develop a new Simcoe County waterways tourism product	New tourism product that plays to a key driver of visitor demand
2	Create good practices checklist and criteria for industry to develop experiences that create not only economic benefits but also social and environmental ones	Increased number of multisensory and meaningful experiences
	Enrol select businesses in professional development programs that focus on high-value experience development, responsible management, and destination stewardship	Increased industry capacity to develop high-value experiences
3	Implement Tourism Simcoe County product partnership tours	Increased awareness of and connection to the experiences that can be found in Simcoe
4	Create system for industry to self-assess whether their new and existing experiences are maximizing their positive contributions and potential to meet diverse stakeholder needs	Increased industry awareness of and commitment to implementing changes needed to ensure their experiences can be marketed as good for the destination
5	Work with Economic Development to ensure that “Made In Simcoe County” products are prominently featured in tourism product	Increased integration between existing products and programs

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

	INITIATIVE	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME
1	Perform an opportunities scan towards improving wayfinding and the development of informational/ interpretive signage within the County	Increased awareness of specific places and spaces to share visitor-facing information
2	Prepare calls to action and good practices for industry to "market beyond their products and services"	Increased industry capacity to include intangible value in their marketing of products/services
	Co-develop key messages with industry and partners to ensure the marketing and promotion of Simcoe County is both consistent and values driven	Increased stakeholder support for key messaging associated with destination marketing
3	Refresh/evolve the "Experience Simcoe County" brand into one that reflects focus on stewardship and resonates with all stakeholders	Stronger tourism brand to market and promote with increased buy-in from stakeholders
4	Co-create a destination marketing plan to guide the efforts of Tourism Simcoe County and its stakeholders	Clear direction and one inclusive plan for marketing destination Simcoe County
5	Prioritize the promotion of "high value creation" tourism products, experiences, and stories	Increased number of "high value creation" experiences are being marketing and promoted

RESEARCH AND LEARNING

	INITIATIVE	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME
1	Conduct year-over-year research into trends and shifts that industry can respond to	Increased intelligence around trends and shifts, and industry awareness of the same
	Collect, compile, and publicly share information about issues identified by tourism stakeholders and solutions/ responses provided by Tourism Simcoe County	Clarity amongst stakeholders of key tourism issues and Tourism Simcoe County's response to these
2	Research and develop and/or share tools for tourism stakeholders to measure their environmental, social, and economic impact	Increased awareness amongst tourism stakeholders of their impact and opportunities to improve this
3	Work with key industry groups, starting with accommodation providers, to collect qualitative data from visitors	Stronger and working partnerships with key industry groups
4	Conduct year-over-year market research into visitation and visitor segments, packaging/sharing insights as part of process	Increased internal intelligence around the visitor and external awareness of the same
5	Enrol select staff in professional development programs that focus on high-impact product development, responsible management, and destination stewardship	Increased capacity amongst Tourism Simcoe County staff to steward destination Simcoe County into the future

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

	INITIATIVE	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME
1	Incorporate select future-fit break-even goals into activity monitoring and reporting	Increased alignment between destination stewardship activities and its vision
2	Establish clear channels and processes for supporting Economic Development with business attraction, retention/ expansion, and workforce development	Increased synergy between County departments
3	Evolve tourism partners group into a Regional Tourism Working Group that has initiative-based task forces	Established collective of invested tourism stakeholders that can be consulted on a regular and ongoing basis
4	Assign liaison responsibilities to Tourism Simcoe County staff for specific stakeholder groups	Dedicated staff-stakeholder liaison
5	Perform an internal resource-needs assessment to ensure that there is a match between available resources and the needs associated with implementing destination stewardship activities	Clarity around resources that are available and resources that are needed to implement destination stewardship activities

STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

2035 VISION

By 2035 Simcoe County is flourishing as a destination because its stewards are co-creating social, environmental, and economic benefits for all.

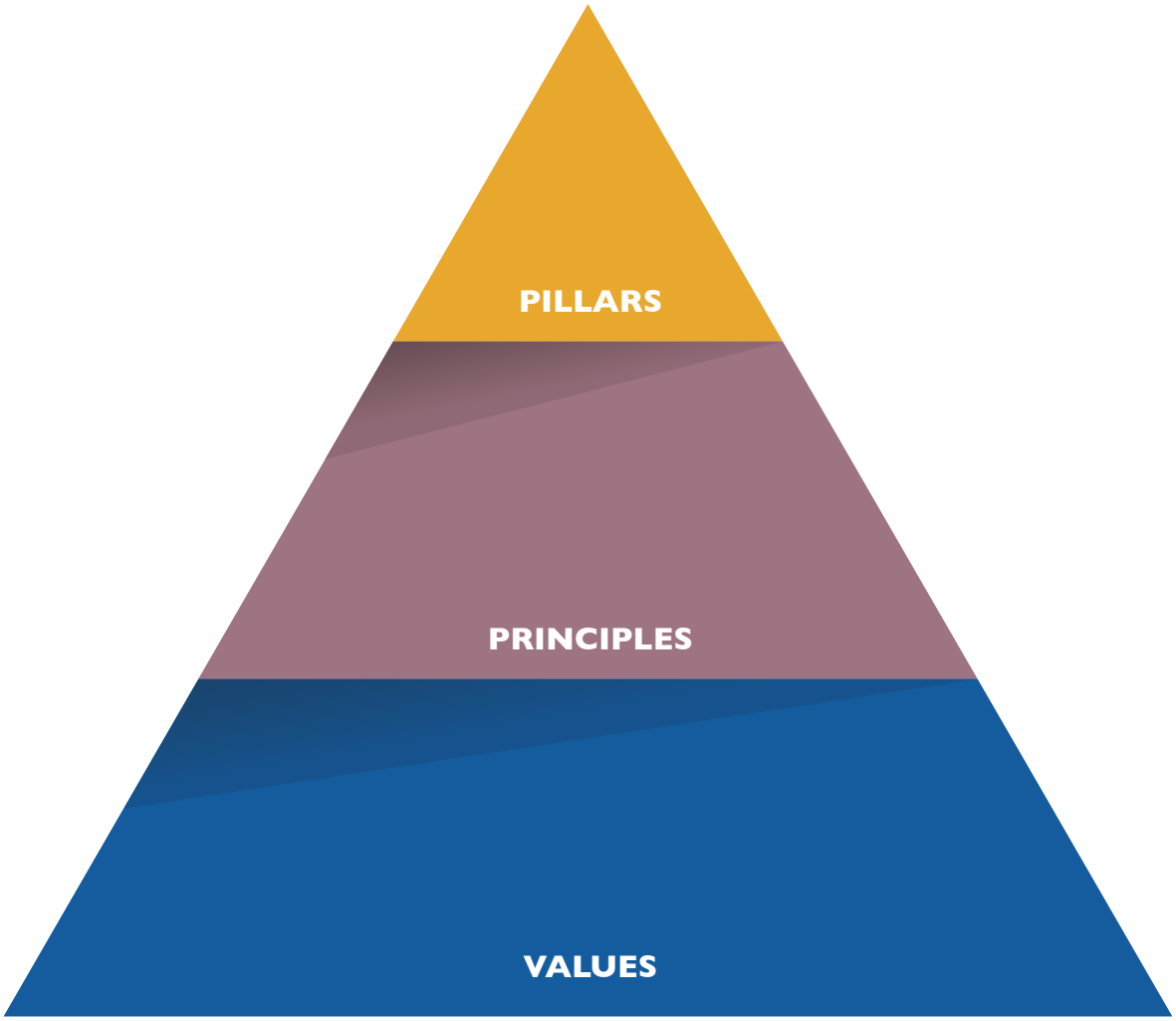
2026 GOALS

+ Tourism Simcoe County is leading efforts towards and are recognized for our destination stewardship
+ The foundation has been poured for TSC to establish and foster strong working relationships with its stakeholders
+ New and existing products/experiences are more meaningful and more competitive
+ A strong destination brand and marketing strategy is being implemented
+ Information, tools, and resources are readily available for TSC and its stakeholders to make informed decisions

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Organizational change and resource management Tourism Simcoe County has a clearly defined role, responsibilities, budget, and resources, and these are clearly understood by its stakeholders.

INITIATIVES



VALUES

+ Stewardship
+ Leadership
+ Integrity
+ Innovation
+ Respect
+ Accountability
+ Co-operation

PRINCIPLES

+ Lead by example
+ Empower destination stewards
+ Facilitate meaningful connections
+ Account for the whole tourism ecosystem
+ Operationalize excellence

PILLARS

+ Leadership and representation
+ Partnership and collaboration
+ Product Development and Innovation
+ Marketing and Promotion
+ Research and Learning

JOIN US ON THE JOURNEY

Put simply, ONE, TOGETHER is as much about a vision of the future where we are flourishing as ONE, as it is about the journey towards this that we need to take TOGETHER.

This journey requires us to open our minds to the possibly that our tourism ecosystem contains enough energy, effort, and resources to create the positive and permanent systems change. It also requires us to recognize that we are all co-creating value, for stakeholders in our businesses, our organizations, and the destination at large. We believe in synergy, and we know that collaboration is the key to unlocking what we can do together. Join us!

+ Seek to make a meaningful connection with a business or organization that is working in tourism, or simply connect with someone who is visiting Simcoe County.
+ Seek opportunities to participate in conversations about our destination, our home, and identify steps that you can take as a destination steward.
+ Visit our website, where you will find important tourism information, and if you're an industry partner, you can find resources **here**.
+ Reach out to us, to hear more about what we are working on, share your perspective, and explore how we work more closely together.

CONTACT

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experience
SIMCOE COUNTY