

Whitby Tourism Strategy Action Plan Updates



January 2024

OBJECTIVE 1: CHARACTER

Elevate Whitby through destination development.

GOAL 1: Differentiate Whitby as a Unique Destination within Ontario				
Item #	Action	Timing	Accomplishments	Status
1.1.1	Develop the tourism profiles including identifying the attractions, insights, partners, travel characteristics and market segments for each of Whitby's six key tourism industry sectors (Nautical Tourism, Sports Tourism, Family Tourism, Culinary Tourism, Wellness Tourism, and Cultural Tourism).	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Descriptions of each of the six key tourism sectors completed. -Identifies the user profiles for each sector and what the visitor is looking for and who they are. 	In Progress - updates in 2024.
1.1.2	Collaborate with private sector tourism businesses twice a year to help promote and market tourism products and offerings to differentiate Whitby as a destination in Ontario.	2023/ 2024/ 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Collaborated with Town Brewery to host the first Destination Development Networking Event. -Provided 5 Paddles Brewery with canvas bags featuring the @explorewhitby branding on them for the Royal Winter Fair. -Thermea Spa Village and other business partners continue to donate prizes for Instagram contests. -Hosted launch of 2023 Whitby Food Guide at The Springwood. 	Complete for 2023 – will continue to collaborate with private sector tourism businesses in 2024.

GOAL 2: Use Quality Research to Drive Tourism Development

Item #	Action	Timing	Accomplishments	Status
1.2.1	Develop tourism metrics through visitor data provided by Central Counties Tourism, Destination Ontario, and other resources to determine opportunities for expanding and measuring future market growth and how Whitby markets itself.	2023	-Six Geofence Dataset Reports acquired from Central Counties Tourism for 2022 and 2023 for comparative purposes (Waterfront/Marina; Downtown Whitby; and Whitby Entertainment Centrum). -Data will help with 2024 marketing and understanding who visits Whitby.	Complete and Ongoing
1.2.2	Complete a tourism asset gap analysis to determine what opportunities for products/experiences and infrastructure (conference centre, hotels etc.) can be enhanced or developed by existing businesses/operators.	2025		2025 Project
1.2.3	Partner in a First Impressions Community Exchange (FICE) program https://www.ontario.ca/page/first-impressions-community-exchange-program to discover how well Whitby serves its visitors.	2025		2025 Project

GOAL 3: Build Capacity for Community Tourism

Item #	Action	Timing	Accomplishments	Status
1.3.1	Establish an annual Tourism Operating budget	2022	-Secured \$20,000 annual operating budget in 2023	Complete - Secure
	to support initiatives identified in the Tourism Strategy.	2023		budget increase for 2024
1.3.2	Secure a full-time culture and tourism-focused staff person to support the implementation of the Tourism Strategy and the Culture Plan.	2022	-Full time staff (Culture and Tourism Coordinator) hired in August 2022.	Complete
1.3.3	Consult the Investment and Development Office [IDO] and seek out opportunities for collaboration, partnerships, and/or financial support and grants.	2023	-Attended the “Meet the Tourism Investment Dragons” event in October 2023 hosted through IDO (Investment and Development Office, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport) to promote a hotel investment at Whitby’s waterfront to 10 potential developers/hoteliers. -Partnered with Culinary Tourism Alliance and participated in the <u>Great Taste of Ontario (GTOO) Passport</u> which resulted in Globe and Mail advertisement for Whitby’s food scene.	Complete for 2023 and ongoing future project
1.3.4	Establish an informal, external Tourism Coalition consisting of tourism operators and key stakeholders to leverage the skills, resources, and	2024		2024 Project

	expertise for tourism development.			
1.3.5	Enhance cycle and trail tourism infrastructure (rest stops/signage and maps) on Whitby's Waterfront.	2023/ 2024		In Progress for 2024
1.3.6	Invest in existing or temporary infrastructure to support a temporary or seasonal Visitor Centre service location (or pop up location) including directional signage.	2025		2025 Project
1.3.7	Utilize the current Wayfinding and Signage Plan to design tourism wayfinding signage for Whitby.	2025		2025 Project
1.3.8	Invest and establish well signed, publicly accessible washroom in Downtown Whitby.	2025		2025 Project

GOAL 4: Grow Local Economic Development for the Tourism Sector

Item #	Action	Timing	Accomplishments	Status
1.4.1	Work with post-secondary institutions for potential placement student partnerships in tourism, marketing, photography, graphic design, horticulture, project management.	2023/ 2024/ 2025	-Durham College Tourism Destination Marketing student intern hired and worked with Creative Communities from January to April 2023. -Main focus was research for the Whitby Food Guide.	Complete – 2023

OBJECTIVE 2: CONNECTIVITY

Collaborate and connect with businesses, organizations, and residents to develop tourism offerings, products, and packages.

GOAL 1: Develop Visitor Readiness				
Item #	Action	Timing	Accomplishments	Status
2.1.1	Develop a digital Whitby Food Guide and related culinary experiences within Whitby, including food tours (walking, cycling, or driving).	2022/ 2023/ 2024	-Food Guide (First Edition) completed in 2022 (3,200 views on webpage). -Food Guide (Second Edition) completed in 2023 (over 11,000 views since late May). -Publication won top Marketing Canada Award from Economic Developers Association of Canada.	Complete. Food Tours planned for 2024.
2.1.2	Work on destination development and create tourism itineraries with a focus on the six key tourism sectors for Whitby.	2023/ 2024/ 2025	Winter itineraries posted in December 2022.	In Progress – 2024 Itineraries to be posted in January.
2.1.3	Host Whitby Tourism Ambassador training sessions, offered through Central Counties Tourism. https://centralcounties.ca/central-counties-tourism-ambassador-program/	Ongoing	-Downtown Whitby Steering Committee and staff participated in Tourism Ambassador Training Program. -Promoted through business to business (b2b) channels and newsletter.	Ongoing

Item#	Action	Timing	Accomplishments	Status
2.1.4	Invest in helping local businesses and stakeholders become “tourism ready” through online resources, training and workshops including the use of the <i>Safe Travels</i> stamp. https://www.tiaontario.ca/c/pages/safetravelstamp And the Green Step Sustainable Tourism certification program. https://www.tiaontario.ca/c/pages/sustainabletourism2030	2023/ Ongoing	-Promoted online resources, training, and workshops to business database through the business to business (b2b) newsletter. -Currently 591 businesses on the email list. -Topics included a feature business article; information on Town Tourism products; website launch; Destination Development; upcoming grants; training sessions on items such as the Safe Travels stamp as well as upcoming conferences.	Complete
2.1.5	Host two stakeholder education workshops a year on destination development for Whitby tourism businesses and attractions on creating tourism packages.	2023/ 2024/ 2025	-Hosted the first Destination Development Networking event at Town Brewery in April 2023. Over 100 attendees represented tourism attractions, restaurants, municipalities, events, and businesses.	Hosted one event in 2023
2.1.6	Identify and support seasonal opportunities where stakeholder-led packaged products can be distributed at local tournaments (pilot with Ontario Lacrosse Festival on a ‘Family Fun Package’ or ‘Explore Downtown Between Games’).	2024	-QR Code window clings and Food Guide cards distributed to arenas and community centres.	Ongoing

GOAL 2: Engage Industry Partners in Community Tourism Economic Development

Item#	Action	Timing	Accomplishments	Status
2.2.1	Create a digital newsletter to communicate tourism information and resources to tourism attractions and business owners utilizing Constant Contact.	2023	<p>-Launched two business to business (b2b) newsletters (June and October) featuring articles/resources and links to 591 businesses, attractions, food and beverage, and accommodations.</p> <p>-55% open rate for the newsletter.</p> <p>-Created an up-to-date tourism stakeholder contact list (currently 591 contacts).</p>	Complete
2.2.2	Partner with Whitby Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Whitby BIA for business networking events with a tourism focus.	2023	<p>-The BIA Chair and the Executive Director of the Whitby Chamber of Commerce have attended the Destination Development Networking event and the Food Guide Launch event and shared resources through their social media channels. Both the BIA and Chamber follow @explorewhitby and post regularly.</p>	Complete
2.2.3	Partner with the Downtown Whitby BIA, Whitby Chamber of Commerce, and other tourism partners	2023	<p>-Whitby is a member of the Tourism Association Industry of Ontario (TIAO), Central Counties Tourism, Culinary Tourism Alliance</p>	Complete

Item#	Action	Timing	Accomplishments	Status
2.2.3 (cont'd)	to promote Central Counties Tourism business to business (b2b) resources with 'The Landing Pad' https://whitbybia.org/the-landing-pad/ to their memberships and other monthly tourism industry updates.		(CTA) and the Durham Tourism Leadership Team. -Tourism staff in partnership with Economic Development hosted a tourism booth at Canadian National Exhibition (CNE).	Complete
2.2.4	Partner with Sport Durham to develop an inventory of existing regional sports tourism events and develop a strategy on how Whitby Tourism could support sporting events, and benefit stakeholders.	2024		2024 Project

OBJECTIVE 3: CONTENT AND COMMUNICATION

Develop marketing assets to generate authentic Whitby stories; increase Whitby's unique tourism offerings; and create a network of tourism partners that support collaboration, coordination, and information sharing.

GOAL 1: Develop Digital Content and Optimize Communication with Residents and Visitors				
Item #	Action	Timing	Accomplishment	Status
3.1.1	Invest in Whitby's photos and video assets to capture high-resolution imagery including the four seasons and diverse market	2022 - 2025	-Contracted photographer and videographer to grow Whitby's image bank	Complete

Item #	Action	Timing	Accomplishments	Status
3.1.1 (cont'd)	segments.		<p>and tourism video promotions.</p> <p>-Over 500 new images/ three teaser videos and collection of b-roll that have been used to build out Whitby's tourism website and social media.</p> <p>-Two new tourism teaser videos were created for 2024 season:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaser 1 • Teaser 2 <p>-Creation of Events Teaser video.</p>	
3.1.2	Develop and launch a dedicated tourism microsite.	2023	<p>-Launched Whitby's new tourism website www.whitby.ca/tourism. Website has seen 2,698 visits since end of May 2023.</p> <p>-Launched Whitby's tourism brand "Discover Something New to Enjoy" (Attachment 3).</p>	Complete - updates made to the website regularly.
3.1.3	Raise the profile of Whitby with media through press release distribution, travel writers, travel bloggers, and influencers by leveraging our partnerships to generate local content for outlets.	Ongoing	<p>-Awards submission to Economic Developers Association of Canada (EDAC) receiving the Top Marketing Canada Award for the Whitby Food Guide.</p>	Complete and Ongoing

Item #	Action	Timing	Accomplishments	Status
3.1.3 (cont'd)			<p>-Partnership with Culinary Tourism Alliance to highlight Whitby's Food Scene through the Great Taste of Ontario Passport program and profile for Whitby featured on their website. Article in the Globe and Mail and in their online newsletter.</p> <p>-Worked with Central Counties Tourism to promote food scene through press release distribution and content provided to hire influencers creating stories on the York, Durham, and Headwaters area.</p>	Complete and Ongoing
3.1.4	Develop and outsource Tourism Destination Marketing Plan for Whitby including a framework that can be adapted annually or as needed.	2023	Promotions created including design of various marketing assets such as postcards, signage, shopping bags and bookmarks to promote the 'Discover Something New to Enjoy' Whitby brand.	In Progress – move to 2024
3.1.5	Host a FAM Tour (Familiarization Tour) inviting media and travel trade professionals to Whitby to provide a sampling of what Whitby offers as a destination.	2024		2024 Project

Goal 2: Develop an Audience of Visitors

Item #	Action	Timing	Accomplishment	Status
3.2.1	Create a database of email addresses for consumer communication of tourism e-blasts, blogs, stories, and newsletters.	2022	-Collection of Visitor/Tourist and local emails to help with promotion of tourism in Whitby.	In Progress
3.2.2	Enhance Whitby's online social presence #explorewhitby and develop a Social Media Strategy for tourism promotion.	2023	-Launched @explorewhitby and social media content calendar. As of December 11, there are 733 followers and 133 posts. Staff post at least six to eight posts weekly to support all tourism projects and initiatives.	Complete. Social Media Strategy and 2024 content calendar in progress.
3.2.3	Develop, launch, and distribute a QR Code sticker for tourism businesses, accommodations, restaurants, and attractions linked to the Whitby tourism microsite.	2022	-QR window clings for both Food Guide and Tourism site distributed through Town facilities, local restaurants and tourism attractions and businesses (total of 105 window clings distributed).	Ongoing