



The Town of The Blue Mountains

Destination Strategy
2025-2030

May 2025



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Acknowledgements

The Town acknowledges that the lands and waters known today as The Town of The Blue Mountains have been the home to many nations since time immemorial. Today the Town is within the boundary of Treaty 18: Lake Simcoe-Nottawasaga Purchase of 1818 signed by the Crown and certain Anishinaabe peoples. We recognize the land and waters as the traditional and ancestral territory of the Anishinaabek, including Saugeen Ojibway Nation; the Haudenosaunee; and the Wendat-Wyandot-Wyandotte.

This strategy underpins the importance of fostering collaboration with Indigenous communities and Indigenous tourism organizations and businesses. This means establishing and growing relationships and communications with Saugeen First Nation, and Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, and becoming a member of Indigenous Tourism Ontario. Through these actions and continued engagement, the Town strives to become better neighbours and work together, through and beyond tourism, to continue to steward these lands, waters, and living things and tell the stories of this place for both visitors and residents for many generations to come.

As the Town's first destination strategy, significant effort was made to ensure that the recommendations reflect the needs of the industry and community through incorporating stakeholder-driven and community-based feedback. It would not have been possible without the continued participation, engagement, and support from a variety of tourism industry members and residents.

Finally, the Town would also like to thank the internal project team, including Tim Hendry, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Allan Gibbons, Manager of Communications & Customer Service at The Town of The Blue Mountains, as well as Patti Kendall, President of the Blue Mountain Village Association, and Stacy Manning, Board Chair at the Blue Mountain Village Association for providing important insights, perspectives, and direction.

The development of The Town of The Blue Mountains Destination Strategy was facilitated by the team at Bannikin, a tourism research, strategy, and development consultancy, and allies in the pursuit of tourism that contributes to flourishing peoples and places. The Bannikin team was made up of Camilo Montoya-Guevara, Caroline Morrow, and James Arteaga, as well as collaborator Cathy Kirkpatrick.

Image credits and sourcing are included at the end of the report on page 108.



Letter from the Partners

Tourism in The Blue Mountains is a strong and resilient industry. Its success is attributed to the amazing destination built over time and through the first-class visitor experience delivered by local attractions, operators, restaurants, small businesses, and accommodation providers.

Through the consideration of a Municipal Accommodation Tax, the Town and the Blue Mountain Village Association (BMVA) saw an opportunity to strategically align and co-develop a joint destination strategy and action plan with the goal of sustainably managing, investing in and growing the community's tourism potential.

To formalize the partnership, the Town and BMVA entered into a strategic partnership agreement that formalized BMVA as the Town's official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO). This partnership aligns with the Municipal Accommodation Tax legislation, ensuring that funds derived from this tax are utilized with precision and purpose to bolster our destination's tourism positioning and infrastructure.

The development of the destination strategy is a critical step in guiding the use of these funds. The Strategy sets a robust framework for destination development and management, for which the Town holds lead responsibility, focusing on:

- Investing and managing tourism infrastructure
- Providing collaborative leadership
- Ensuring sustainable environmental practices
- Securing adequate funding and resourcing
- Creating supportive land-use policies
- Fostering our workforce
- Attracting tourism investment and supporting tourism businesses
- Building awareness and comprehensive communication

In alignment, the BMVA will lead community-wide tourism marketing and product development. The newly formed Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) division will be responsible for:

- Strategizing marketing efforts to enhance visitation
- Developing tourism products and building industry capacity
- Forming strategic partnerships and representing industry interests
- Connecting and coordinating with tourism operators
- Upholding transparency, accountability, and cohesive branding

This collaborative and comprehensive approach helps foster a collaborative environment that encourages innovation, supports local businesses, and enriches the experiences of both residents and visitors.

This joint strategy positions the Town and DMO to work closely with businesses, community members, and stakeholders for a tourism landscape that benefits all, creating memorable, world-class experiences synonymous with The Blue Mountains.

We look forward to continuing this exciting journey together.

Sincerely,

Tim Hendry

Director of Strategic Initiatives
Town of The Blue Mountains



Patti Kendall

President
Blue Mountain Village Association



Executive Summary



This report presents the Town's first formal tourism strategy, and is set to guide destination development, management, and marketing in The Blue Mountains over the next five years.

Tourism is a vibrant and essential pillar of The Blue Mountains economy, employing more than 1,780 people across 164 tourism-related businesses.

Residents and industry members alike are proud of the town's strong legacy of hospitality and consider The Blue Mountains to be a true four-season destination, with diverse seasonal activities available. The rich history of charming villages, unique shops, trail network, arts scene and the availability of high-quality food and drink are defining elements of the visitor experience in The Blue Mountains. The destination's unique blend of built environment and natural surroundings attracts visitors seeking both active pursuits and relaxation. What's more, each community within The Town of The Blue Mountains maintains a distinct character while sharing a laid-back, nature-centric vibe.

The strategy development process included extensive community engagement activities with residents and a wide variety of tourism ecosystem actors, including tourism industry members, neighbouring municipalities, and representatives from partner organizations. Mayor, Council, the Economic Development Advisory Committee, and Town service area managers were also consulted and informed. Time and again, an emphasis on prioritizing sustainable tourism development was shared with those engaged.

Tourism does not exist in a vacuum. It is directly connected to and relies upon a strong natural environment and a thriving sociocultural context. In the end, great places to live, make great places to visit. Investing in tourism infrastructure that improves the lives of residents as well as visitors is the strategic thing to do. Similarly, considering visitor numbers across the year in relation to the carrying capacity of The Blue Mountains is foundational to future destination development, management, and marketing decisions.

Building off this understanding, four strategic pillars, along with related objectives, have been developed to guide the strategy. Each pillar includes recommended actions that were developed with the environmental, social, and economic contexts in mind.

Pillars

1. Connected and Empowered Destination Network



- Objective A1 - Strengthen the Town's role and capacity as a destination management leader
- Objective A2 - Grow knowledge and understanding of destination opportunities and challenges
- Objective A3 - Foster new relationships and formalize existing partnerships to expand capacity

2. Accessible and Quality Destination Experience



- Objective B1 – Enhance the sense of place and invest in tourism infrastructure
- Objective B2 - Align and enhance the destination's tourism services

3. Cohesive and Inspirational Destination Identity



- Objective C1 - Bring to life an inclusive, distinctive, and compelling place brand
- Objective C2 - Mindfully market and promote the entire destination

4. Compelling and Diversified Destination Offering



- Objective D1 - Guide the development of a diversified and four-season tourism offering.

These pillars and objectives came out of the collective insights, perspectives, and knowledge gathered through active participation and feedback from tourism industry members and community residents from August 2024 to April 2025.



In setting a strategic foundation for tourism, The Blue Mountains Destination Strategy outlines actions for the Town and the Blue Mountain Village Association, serving as the Town's official Destination Marketing Organization. The two organizations will work in tandem to strategically drive tourism benefits for the whole destination over the next five years. Equally, the strategy recognizes the importance of taking a regional perspective and working with partners, including neighbouring municipalities.

In implementing this destination strategy, the Town of The Blue Mountains and the new Destination Marketing Organization will work collectively with tourism businesses and community members so that economic activity through tourism continues to benefit local businesses, provides opportunities for community pride and participation, and supports the natural environments that tourism in The Blue Mountains relies upon.

Strong, creative, and meaningful collaborations with industry and partner organizations will be key to successful implementation and a thriving future for tourism.

Part 1: Introduction



The strategy document is divided into four main (4) sections:



Introduction:

Provides important background and context, while recognizing past work in destination development, management, and marketing.



Tourism Landscape:

Presents learnings from residents, industry, and partner engagements while identifying key strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities for the destination.



Strategy and Action Plan:

Lays out the strategic foundation and direction guiding Town and DMO actions towards an inspiring future for tourism in The Blue Mountains.



Conclusion:

Envisions a connected and thriving destination, where collaboration and innovation drive success.

There is also a glossary with key terms and abbreviations at the end of this document, on page 104.

Background and Context

Destination Canada defines a **destination** as a place that offers a unique combination of attractions, amenities, and experiences that appeal to visitors. The Blue Mountains is a destination where tourists and residents can engage in a wide range of activities, enjoy local culture, and access services that enhance their travel experience.

Destination Development and Management

Over the past few years, the Town of The Blue Mountains and partners have led and contributed to diverse strategies and plans, directly about or related to destination development and management in The Blue Mountains. This includes working with partners like Grey County, Regional Tourism Organization 7, Grey Sauble Conservation Authority, and other regional bodies. Specifically, some of this work includes the implementation of the Municipal Accommodation Tax, the co-development of the Beaver Valley Sustainable Tourism Strategy, and various economic development, sustainability, transportation, parks and trails, and leisure activities action plans, strategies, and master plans. Being a tourism community means that there are many connections to tourism! Staying up to date on the work of partner organizations is key to the successful implementation of this destination strategy.



Destination Development:

The concerted effort to evolve and develop tourism products and services that meet the needs and expectations of a range of visitors. Development is undertaken so that the destination remains competitive, while maintaining the accessibility and enjoyment of residents. It includes strategic planning, investment in infrastructure, research and knowledge sharing, and the development of attractions and amenities (i.e. product development) to improve the overall visitor experience.



Destination Management:

The coordinated management and maintenance of all the elements that make up a tourism destination. This strategic approach links various elements such as promotion, visitor services, training, and business support to ensure the competitiveness and sustainability of the destination. A key element of successful destination management is avoiding overtourism and making sure tourism supports resident well-being.

Destination Marketing

Up to now, destination marketing for The Blue Mountains has been largely driven by Blue Mountain Resort (BMR), Blue Mountain Village Association (BMVA) and key tourism operators such as Scandinave Spa and Scenic Caves. BMR and BMVA have leveraged dedicated funding along with their sales and marketing expertise to execute comprehensive four-season marketing plans and products, including the creation of the successful Apple Pie Trail. They collaborated with provincial and national entities for broader sales and business event attraction. Marketing efforts

have been supported by tourism businesses, as well as the regional organizations, including Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7), and Grey County.

The destination has also benefited from the work led by local business associations in Thornbury and Clarksburg. The Thornbury BIA and Clarksburg Village Association are active in the staging and marketing of events within their communities that animate and celebrate local businesses. Marketing supports for these areas are limited by funding and available resources and largely driven by the commitment, experience, and passion of volunteers and engaged business owners. As a municipality, the Town of The Blue Mountains has provided general tourism support through the Economic Development office and the “Explore Blue” brand and website. The Town has also supported tourism operators, event organizers and visitors through key business support partnerships with the South Georgian Bay Small Business Enterprise Centre and RTO7 and is active in event promotion, such as the Open Fields farm tour.

There are also provincial and national organizations to continue to work and align with, including Destination Ontario, the provincial marketing organization and Canada’s national marketing organization Destination Canada.



Destination Marketing:

The strategic promotion, marketing, and positioning of a place as a destination. This work is usually led by Destination Marketing Organizations in collaboration with local businesses along with provincial and national marketing organizations. Within the context of The Blue Mountains, successful marketing means targeting visitors that share values with the host destination and attracting visitors in off-peak times. Marketing activities include things like having a reliable website, sharing stories on social media, attending trade shows, and inviting journalists to experience the destination. Market research also informs the development of tourism products and enhancements to the visitor experience.



Why Now?

The tourism sector has been a vibrant and essential pillar of the Town's local economy. As noted in the Economic Development Strategy 2021-2025 (2021), "The Blue Mountains is recognized as Ontario's four-season tourism and recreation destination [and] was built on a strong history of agriculture and tourism...". Importantly, this dynamic sector continues to lead the way with accommodations, food services, arts, entertainment, and recreation remaining the most important economic drivers of The Blue Mountains.

According to the Town's Sector Profile Report (2023), the tourism sector is a powerhouse, employing over 1,780 people across 164 tourism-related

businesses. From 2012 – 2022, the number of tourism businesses increased by an astonishing 245%, growing from 67 to 164, with most being small businesses. In 2022 alone, the tourism sector drove more than \$170 million in annual sales driven by over three (3) million domestic and international visitors. This achievement underscores the sector's vital role in the local economy and its potential for future growth and development.

The Town understood the need to develop its first destination strategy to address mounting pressures and to realize possible benefits from tourism for The Blue Mountains community. This strategy will ensure that the



tourism sector continues to develop as one of the most important economic sectors for the community and that The Blue Mountains continues to be an exceptional place to visit, live, work, and play.

The Town of The Blue Mountains is responsible for overseeing and implementing policy and by-laws and for investing in infrastructure to support the community. As a result, the Town has led various projects to support destination development, management, and marketing for many years in partnership and collaboration with various organizations. Ensuring alignment between this strategy and past work is essential to its efficient

and informed implementation across all Town departments.

In addition, the introduction of Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) in 2025 promises to be a pivotal source of funds to support tourism. The use of the funds will provide an opportunity for long-term strategic planning and strategy execution in support of tourism operators, local businesses, and the quality of life of residents throughout the community.

For more information on relevant past work carried out by the Town and partners, please see “**Tourism Today**” on pages 30-46.

Approach

In partnership with the BMVA, the Town identified the goal to co-create an industry and community-informed destination strategy, outlining two main areas:

- 1 The Town's role and strategies for destination development and management.**
- 2 The destination marketing organization's role and strategies for destination marketing.**

To achieve this goal, five (5) project objectives were identified.

- To identify and engage local and regional tourism organizations and businesses, tourism and municipal partners, residents, Council members, and others as identified across the research process and toward understanding the Town's tourism ecosystem.
- To baseline the current context of tourism products, services, and tourism supportive infrastructure toward identifying a sustainable and strategic direction for destination development, management, and tourism marketing that responds to identified challenges/needs and opportunities.
- To understand and prioritize the sustainability of the environment, society, and the tourism economy and four-season hosting capacity of the destination when exploring the future of destination development and tourism marketing.
- To identify tourism development and marketing solutions/initiatives that mobilize resources to enhance the built and natural environment, elevate the experience of the Town of The Blue Mountains as a place to visit, support the well-being of the community, and ultimately aiming to increase the quality of life for residents.
- To explore and provide considerations for the positioning of the Town's tourism brand with a focus on promoting the entire municipality, while building on well-established brands (e.g., Blue Mountain Resort, Blue Mountain Village, Thornbury, etc.).

Based on the project goal and the related objectives, Bannikin developed and implemented a unique methodology that was adaptive and flexible to the current and changing needs of the community, industry, and partners. Importantly, a *Research, Engagement, and Communications Plan* was developed at the start of the project to support the planning and implementation of the methodology.



Quick Methodology Review

In partnership with the BMVA, the Town identified the goal to co-create an industry and community-informed destination strategy that:



The Goal



Project Methodology

A unique, adaptive approach shaped by ongoing research, engagement, and communication planning - designed to align with community and industry needs.

Desk Research

A number of secondary research activities were carried out as part of the research and development of the Destination Strategy. Reviewed over 30 background and contextual documents.

Background document and marketing materials review:

Tourism ecosystem mapping:

Identified and mapped The Town of The Blue Mountains tourism ecosystem actors*.

Infrastructure and key services scan:

Scanned and identified available tourism-related infrastructure and tourism services provided by the Town and other key partners.

Tourism product and asset review:

Reviewed existing local and regional tourism products, services, experiences, and events.

Target audience and market

research: Reviewed existing visitor data and forecasts to define the Town's target markets and audiences.

Best practice research: Researched four (4) comparable destinations to understand how they approach destination development, management, investment, marketing, and MAT revenue management and investment.



Tourism Ecosystem Actors: The various public, private, and civic actors who are connected and engaged, either indirectly or directly, within the tourism ecosystem. Examples include government bodies, businesses, not-for-profit and community-led groups, local organizations and initiatives, etc.



Community Engagement

Many resident, business, and partner engagement activities were conducted to help create the Destination Strategy.

Destination visit: Conducted a 2-day in-person destination research tour to better understand the local tourism landscape, including key tourism assets, wayfinding, current and planned infrastructure, business and destination storytelling, and delivery of tourism services.

Tourism business roundtables: Facilitated three (3) 1.5-hour in-person and virtual roundtables with over 26 tourism businesses to gather input and feedback from the industry on the future of tourism.

Community open house and

community roundtables: Facilitated one (1) 3 hour in-person community open house and one (1) 1.5-hour virtual community roundtable to gather perceptions from over 27 community members on tourism and to build both understanding and buy-in for the project.

Economic development advisory committee round table: Facilitated two (2) 1.5-hour virtual roundtable sessions with the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) members.

Key informant interviews:



Interviewed 25 key informants related to destination development, management, and tourism marketing, including Town Council, business representatives, local and regional partners, government and tourism agency representatives, First Nations and Indigenous tourism industry organization representatives, among others.

Council update: Presented to Town Council on the completed and upcoming research and engagement activities.

Industry partners and community partners focus groups: Facilitated one (1) virtual industry partners focus group, and one (1) virtual community partners focus group to share key findings, gather input and feedback on

the preliminary strategic direction, and explore alignments between current and future work led by participating partners.

Town management meeting:

Presented to managers at The Town of The Blue Mountains to share key findings, gather input and feedback on the preliminary strategic direction, and explore alignments between current and future work led by different service areas at the Town.

Strategy open house: Facilitated one (1) in-person 1.5-hour open house to share the strategic direction, and gather input and feedback from community, industry, and partners.



Part 2: Tourism Landscape

Through the development of this Strategy, several key research activities were conducted. Whether from direct engagements like the tourism industry roundtable talks, the community open house, and the Economic Development Advisory Committee sessions, to the desk-research and investigation into best practices and comparable tourism destinations or a scan of the destination's tourism infrastructure, products, and assets, many learnings related to destination development, management, and marketing were identified.

Tourism Ecosystem Map

The Town of The Blue Mountains is home to a wide range of tourism ecosystem actors directly or indirectly related to tourism. Ecosystem actors include various public, private, and civic actors who are connected and engaged, either indirectly or directly, with the tourism, including government bodies, businesses, not-for-profit and community-led groups, local organizations and initiatives, etc.

In different ways, these actors have a clear interest and investment in continuing to contribute to the direction of tourism in The Blue Mountains.

Exploring opportunities for collaboration is an important part of this Strategy. To help understand the complex and interconnected nature of the local tourism landscape, a tourism ecosystem map was created

to visualize the Town's tourism landscape as a system of actors who are connected and engaged, either indirectly or directly with tourism.

For example, several municipal bodies like Grey County, the Municipality of Grey Highlands, and the Municipality of Meaford manage key tourism assets like conservation areas, forests, and trail systems in and around The Blue Mountains. Other municipalities like the Town of Collingwood are important collaborators whose tourism image and infrastructure are closely connected to The Blue Mountains. Several businesses (e.g. Blue Mountain Resort) and not-for-profit groups (e.g. Friends of Bruce Trail, Grey Sauble Conservation Authority) are also involved in the management of tourism infrastructure and services. There are also organizations whose work involves representing tourism businesses, developing tourism products, and/or sharing information

with visitors, like the Thornbury BIA, the Clarksburg Village Association, the Blue Mountains Public Library and Museum. Finally, community-led groups, like the Beaver Valley Destination Stewardship Council or the Arts Council, help shape the image of the destination, build awareness and buy-in among residents, and drive important land and community stewardship initiatives that benefit tourism.

The tourism ecosystem map paints a simplified image of a very complex tourism ecosystem. It seeks to account for a wide variety of organizations and actors across the public, private, and civic spheres. The map organizes actors into four quadrants to roughly show their level of interest and influence in the future of tourism in The Blue Mountains. Definitions of key terms are provided in "How to Read the Map" section on the following page.

Note: The ecosystem map is a living guide and does not account for all who are interested in or influence tourism in The Blue Mountains. If you know of a group or organization that would benefit from supporting this strategy, please refer to the "Get Involved" section at the end of the tourism report for information on how to get involved.

How to Read the Map

A legend is included with the map.

A tourism actor is identified as an organization or group active in destination development, management and/or marketing through their mandate and activities. Different levels of actors are identified by different colour labels, as follows:

- **Local actors** by green labels (i.e., based in and focused on The Town of The Blue Mountains)
- **Regional actors** by blue labels (i.e., based in and focused on the surrounding region, including county)
- **Provincial actors** by orange labels (i.e., based in and focused on Ontario)
- **National actors** by yellow labels (i.e., national scope and mandate)

The map places tourism actors along three scopes (i.e., rings) and four areas (i.e., quadrants).

The **three scopes** are represented by three consecutive rings emanating from the centre of the map.

- **The first scope** includes “primary actors” who are directly involved in tourism development,

management, or marketing in and immediately around The Blue Mountains and who will likely play a key role in supporting and informing implementation of the destination strategy.

- **The second scope** includes “secondary actors” who are involved in tourism or tourism-adjacent activity such as but not limited to land management, conservation, community-engagement and mobilization, economic development, among others, locally and regionally and who are important partners or asset managers whose work can be connected to the strategic direction set out for tourism through this strategy.
- **The third scope** includes “tertiary actors” who are involved in tourism support, research, planning, advocacy, legislation, etc., and whose work may influence but will likely not be directly connected to the destination strategy.

The ecosystem map is divided into **four areas**, which correspond to probable levels of interest and potential levels of influence that the

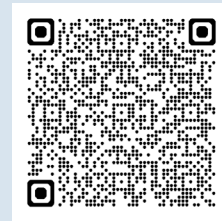
actors hold over tourism matters tourism, and the potential approach to engaging with them moving forward:

- **Interest** refers to the amount of desired contact or information, and potential need to collaborate for the

success of the destination strategy.

- **Influence** refers to the decision-making power and the degree to which each actor is likely to affect the future of the destination strategy.

Note: This map is non-exhaustive and is a living document that will continue to evolve across the implementation of the destination strategy as new relationships are established and existing ones strengthened.



Tourism Today

Assets and Products

The Blue Mountains is home to a variety of tourism assets, with a focus on wellness, food and drink, and outdoor activities. Visitors can experience these across the year, making The Blue Mountains a true four-season destination. Assets include the Blue Mountain Resort and Village, Scandinave Spa, the Apple Pie Trail, the Bruce Trail and other hiking assets, plus the small-town charm and dining experiences of Thornbury and Clarksburg.

Despite tourism being available year-round, there is an opportunity to grow and enhance tourism offerings where capacity exists, such as

during shoulder seasons and across weekdays and evenings. At the same time, there is the opportunity to develop new tourism products using these assets to fill gaps. Specifically, The Blue Mountains has five (5) clusters of assets with the potential to be leveraged in the development of new tourism products related to agritourism, cultural tourism, sports tourism, trail-based tourism, as well as meetings, festivals, and events.

Blue Mountains has diverse agritourism assets, including orchards, wineries, cideries, and farm markets. The potential exists to grow and develop this sub-sector of food

“

A unique feature is the significant Escarpment (50% of our municipality is part of the escarpment). When that escarpment weaves its way into our town is right there with Georgian Bay. It is why people choose to come here to visit and live. – **Tourism Community Member**

”

tourism to become a stronger attractor for visitors. Similarly, there are many cultural assets like the Sheffield Park Black History Museum, the Craighleith Heritage Depot, the Blue Mountain Film Festival, and The Gallery at L.E. Shore. However, cultural tourism is currently not a strong component of The Blue Mountains visitor experience.

The Blue Mountains is home to trails that connect with larger regional networks like the Georgian Trail and Bruce Trail. However, there is no specific trail-based product that encourages visitors to use and experience the trails and everything along the way. The Blue Mountains' reputation as a four-season destination is connected to the variety of sports and outdoor activities, from skiing to paddling, as well as fields,

courts, and an arena, these assets can be positioned and leveraged to grow sports tourism. Relatedly, meetings, festivals, and events are not defining elements of The Blue Mountains visitor experience despite there being many festivals and events with the potential to attract visitors, and many others that could be established in The Blue Mountains.

Importantly, there is a strong interest in growing regional tourism, which means working with neighbouring municipalities including Collingwood, Meaford, Clearview, Grey Highlands, Grey County, and Simcoe County to develop new tourism products like trail products and regional itineraries, while ensuring funding and support is available.



Infrastructure and Services

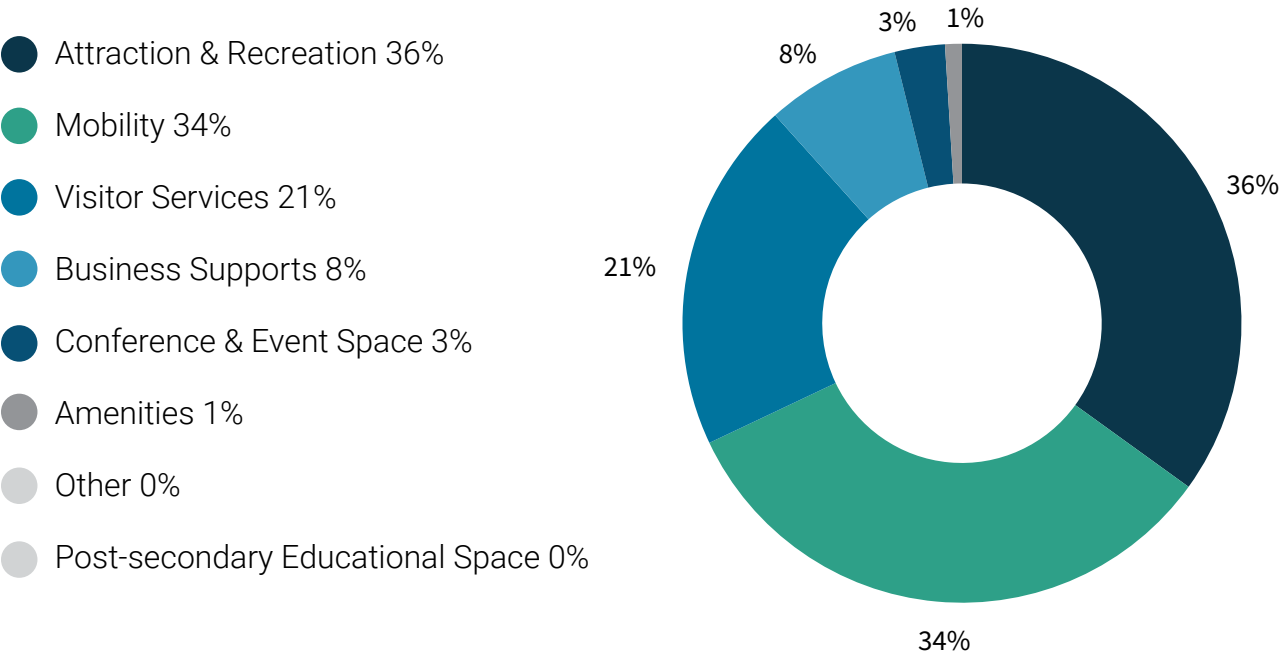
Tourism infrastructure and services in The Blue Mountains are managed by a variety of ecosystem actors (e.g., neighbouring municipalities, private owners, not-for-profit groups, provincial organizations like Ontario Parks, etc.) often across jurisdictional boundaries. Below is a list of different tourism-related infrastructure and service types, as well as examples to provide context. Note: although all these services and infrastructure types were reviewed as part of the research to support this strategy, not all are relevant to The Blue Mountains.

- **Accommodation:** hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, commercial rental units, short-term accommodations, and campgrounds.
- **Amenities:** public washrooms, workforce housing.
- **Attractions and recreation:** cultural sites (e.g., museums, landmarks, etc.), entertainment venues (e.g., theme parks, music venues, casinos, theatres, spas, outdoor centres, etc.), neighbourhoods/communities, natural sites (e.g., beaches, parks, etc.), golf courses, ski clubs, community centres, libraries, sports venues/fields, and tour operators.
- **Business supports:** general supports and tourism-focused supports.
- **Conference and event spaces:** including conference centres, gathering and performance venues, meeting places.
- **Post-secondary educational spaces:** including colleges, universities, and specialized trade schools.
- **Transportation and mobility:** stand-alone parking, on-street parking, sidewalks, trail/routes, bikes/e-bikes/scooter rentals, car rentals, taxis/ride-shares, transit systems, gas stations, airports, train stations, bus stations, harbours/marinas, boat repair stations, and bike repair stations.
- **Visitor Services:** visitor centres, information platforms (e.g., kiosks, booths, boards, etc.), apps/passes, public health (e.g., hospitals, clinics, paramedics, etc.), public safety (e.g., fire stations, police stations, life guard stations, etc.), public utilities (e.g., water supplies, hydro supplies, waste management, etc.), public maintenance (e.g., roads, sidewalks, etc.), and telecommunications.

Current Make-up of Tourism Infrastructure and Services

Excluding accommodations, the Town of The Blue Mountains has around 191 infrastructure and services elements directly or indirectly connected to tourism development and management. The breakdown of tourism-related infrastructure and services is presented in chart 1 below:

Chart 1: Breakdown of tourism infrastructure and services based on type.



Considerations On Tourism Infrastructure and Services

Although the Town has the infrastructure and services to service its current visitor-demand, it faces strains based on increasing visitor numbers and limited public transportation options, information sharing, wayfinding, and health and safety infrastructure and services, which currently differ depending on where someone is in the destination.



Transportation and mobility, including the diversity of options and level of connection is an

important area for infrastructure and service improvement. Although about a third of the tourism infrastructure and services identified relate to mobility and transportation (e.g., parking, trails/routes/sidewalks, cycling infrastructure, transportation rentals, transit systems, transit hubs, and gas stations) there is inconsistent development or access to these across the destination. For example, some tourism hubs like Craigeleith and to a lesser extent Clarksburg lack adequate sidewalks and pedestrian-focused infrastructure (e.g., crosswalks, wide sidewalks, lighting, etc.). Similarly, highly visited outdoor assets like Pretty River Park lack public parking and the beaches lack infrastructure that supports mobility accessibility.

There are different ways to get to The Blue Mountains from major urban areas like Toronto without using a personal vehicle, including the Flixbus that leaves Toronto and drops visitors off at the Blue Mountain Village and Thornbury or private airport transfer services from Toronto Pearson Airport to the South Georgian Bay area. However, these services are sometimes seasonal, with limited schedules, meaning most visitors currently travel to the destination using personal vehicles. Relatedly, there is information about transportation to The Blue Mountains that may be outdated, yet still available. Additionally, purpose-designed cycling infrastructure is not consistent or continuously linked enough for someone to cycle safely between tourism hubs, such as from Blue Mountain Village to Craigeleith to Thornbury and onto Clarksburg.



Information-sharing infrastructure and services, are present across the destination.

These include physical and digital information platforms like kiosks, booths, boards, and digital applications, as well as visitor centres, and interpretive signage. There is a higher level of information-sharing infrastructure and services in the Blue Mountain Village than other tourism hubs like Craighleith, Thornbury, and Clarksburg. The Village is also home to an activity centre that provides information primarily for events and activities within the Village as well as the Apple Pie Trail. At the same time, the Town, local tourism businesses outside the village, and other tourism ecosystem actors such as the Blue Mountains Chamber of Commerce, Thornbury Business Improvement Area, Clarksburg Village Association, and many large and small local businesses share information about the destination through channels

like their individual websites, event calendars, or physical bulletin boards. However, the information is inconsistent.

Relatedly, historical and information based interpretive signage exists but lacks consistency across the destination. Organizations like the Blue Mountains Library and Archives have been leading efforts to update and revamp interpretive signage connected to the spaces they manage. They have also been working with First Nations representatives to update and enrich the information. It is important to note although there is some mention of Indigenous peoples in some information-sharing infrastructure and services, overall, there is room to improve communications around historical and current connection of Indigenous peoples to the lands and waters of The Blue Mountains, including connections to Saugeen Ojibway Nation.



Wayfinding infrastructure

(including directional, gateway, and welcome

signage) exists for some attractions and communities via wayfinding signage on major roads and highways, sidewalks, trails, or at their entrances. However, across The Blue Mountains, the look, feel, and position of wayfinding is inconsistent. For example, many businesses, particularly along highways, have wayfinding and welcome signs that are too small or close to their entrances to encourage visitors to stop. Relatedly, outdoor spaces (e.g. local parks and beaches, conservation areas, provincial parks, and management areas) may have an information point or map. However, information is not consistently available across all outdoor spaces and, in some cases, is not located at key entry points. Additionally, there are locations in the destination that have a variety of directional and interpretive signage with different designs, and different names for the same assets (e.g., Georgian Trail, Great Lakes Trail, etc.) that may confuse a visitor.



Key amenities and infrastructure,

particularly workforce housing, access to

public washrooms, and other public space infrastructure are important for tourism. As noted during industry engagements, a lack of workforce housing in The Blue Mountains aggravates workforce shortages experienced by tourism businesses. This will continue to be a major challenge for the tourism industry unless solutions are implemented. With tourism being the biggest area of economic activity and the biggest employer locally, building a healthy tourism sector calls for prioritizing the exploration and implementation of solutions to achieve attainable housing for tourism workers.

Although most businesses in The Blue Mountains have washroom access for customers, public washroom access across the destination requires attention, particularly for outdoor assets and tourism hubs. For instance, some outdoor spaces have portable washroom facilities like Kolapore Uplands, Metcalfe Rock Provincial Park, Lions Park, Bayview Park,

Northwinds Beach, Nipissing Ridge Tennis Court area, and outdoor areas managed by the Blue Mountain Village Association. However, most of these washrooms are only open seasonally, which can reduce how long visitors stay at specific attractions during different periods of the year. The presence of portable washrooms across different assets also influences the destination's image. An important place to start is recognizing

and development of the industry, there is a need to invest in public space infrastructure, including waste and waste diversion like garbage, recycling, and biodegradable cans; cycling like bike racks/parking, and repair stations; pedestrianization of tourism hubs like new and/or wider sidewalks/multiuse paths, pedestrian lighting, and crosswalks; accessibility and health like water-filling stations/fountains, resting areas, shading,

“

We need to provide housing that is suitably matched to getting people to the jobs needed for the tourism industry” – **Tourism Community Member**

”

that these portable washrooms are maintained and managed by different groups, therefore, it is important to align information and communicate public access.

Additionally, to ensure a quality visitor experience is maintained and to ensure the continued growth

accessible indoor and outdoor spaces; and beautification and place making like street banners, public gardens, landscape maintenance, building façade maintenance, etc.

Community Perspectives

Throughout the engagement activities related to the development of the destination strategy, the community recognized the key role that the Town needs to play in destination development and management. These areas of focus reflect the research into infrastructure and service and include:

- **Workforce housing support:** including encouraging purpose-built attainable workforce housing.
- **Transportation and crowd management:** including improving the connectivity of the destination and the surrounding region, ensuring the appropriate infrastructure is available, and encouraging the movement of visitors from highly concentrated locations to other parts of the destination.
- **Parking space management:** including optimizing existing parking areas through functionality and signage and constructing additional parking in certain areas of the destination.
- **Environmental conservation and stewardship:** including recognizing the environment, are the main assets of the Blue Mountains, and they have a carrying capacity limit.
- **Public space amenities improvements:** including adding new, retrofitting existing, or extending the service of existing public washrooms, adding garbage and recycling bins, as well as water filling stations, and increasing access to the waterfront (i.e., Georgian Bay).

“

It's important that if we are marketing a specific area we need to make sure it has the capacity to host an increased number of visitors...if we put out marketing, we need to make sure we did our homework and engaged the people that manage the land to see what issues may arise with increased visitors. – **Tourism Community Member**

”

- **Gateway and wayfinding signage improvements:** including adding new and improving existing gateway signage, community signage, and wayfinding signage.
- **Workforce development and retention support:** including addressing the significant workforce shortage and supporting workforce retention efforts.
- **Reducing bureaucratic red tape:** including simplifying the permitting processes and bylaws that impact operations, innovation, enhancement, and diversification of local businesses (i.e., business signage, and agritourism development).
- **Business attraction and expansion support:** including attracting and supporting businesses interested in expanding their services and products year-round and/or extending their operating hours, as well as communicating with businesses about existing opportunities, resources and supports available.

Particularly when engaging with Saugeen First Nation, Cape Crocker Park owned by the Chippewas of

Nawash Unceded First Nation, and Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO), key areas of work for Indigenous tourism development and inclusion include:

- **Relationship-building:** including reaching out to the two (2) First Nations to begin developing a relationship around destination development and management.
- **Storytelling:** including working with community members to develop interpretive signage, public art pieces, etc. throughout the destination to share the historical and current connection with the lands and waters of The Blue Mountains.
- **Product and experience positioning:** including working with local Indigenous tourism businesses, entrepreneurs, etc. to showcase cultural programming, products and offerings in The Blue Mountains.
- **Partnership development:** including with Indigenous tourism industry organizations like Indigenous Tourism Ontario and Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada.



Brand and Channels

Place branding involves strategically developing, communicating, and promoting the image of a place to influence public perception, community pride, and to strengthen its competitive identity.

Fortunately, The Blue Mountains benefits from a strong, “Muskoka-like” brand perception amongst Ontario travellers, recognized for four-season activities, outdoor recreation, and a relaxing natural setting (RTO9 consumer perception research, 2021). A key activity of the Destination Marketing Organization will be to establish a unified destination brand to leverage and expand this positive image, clarifying a singular

place name and ensuring consistent messaging across all channels. This will amplify all marketing efforts. The brand development will incorporate a buy-in and feedback process involving industry and visitors via brand research and surveys. A multi-year implementation plan will be put in place to ensure brand adoption through clear communication, development of brand tools and ongoing partner familiarization and support.

A successful content marketing program is the cornerstone for many destinations, and ongoing investment will be needed to generate fresh, impactful content that creates

compelling place narratives and showcases unique experiences across the region.

Developing a dedicated social media strategy to incorporate content from across the destination represents a significant opportunity to spotlight little-known experiences and operators. A yearly action plan will be required for social media management including content, planning, distribution, monitoring and performance reporting. Social channels can also be a powerful customer-service tool for destinations, providing real-time planning assistance, traveller tips, and links to operators and bookings.

The DMO will need to build a strong digital foundation for marketing that aligns with and supports brand-building and promotional marketing efforts. A user-focused approach will be applied to plan earned, owned, and paid channels to influence inspiration, planning, and conversion. This will include:

- Incorporate content from across the community to align with a broader content strategy

- Create engaging, visually appealing content for social channel distribution as a primary focus
- Prioritization of social media platforms is needed; based on audience, objectives, available time and resources
- Consider dedicated resources for social media management including content development, planning, distribution, monitoring and performance reporting/tracking
- Social channels can be a powerful customer-service tool for the destination, providing real-time trip planning assistance, FAQs, traveller tips and links to operators and booking as conversion from social channels is growing; consumers are becoming more accustomed to in-app purchases
- Ongoing SEO (search engine optimization) strategy to optimize traffic, website performance and social channel engagement.

Some relevant good practices related to brand development and marketing include:



Whistler, BC:

Deepening brand resonance by celebrating and sharing unique culture and heritage, creating values-based content with increased focus on sustainability, reconciliation, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the passion of locals to tell Whistler's story.



Stowe, Vermont:

Recently underwent a powerful branding exercise that pulls everyone in the destination together to share a brand narrative with information about trails and other assets, celebrates local businesses.



Vail, Colorado:

Currently in the process of re-imagining the structure to manage tourism development and marketing including a brand development process and building campaign messaging around the various attributes of the place including local business owners and residents.

Target Markets and Audiences

In 2025, Ontario's tourism sector continues to show a resilient recovery trajectory, building on the post-pandemic rebound. However, the industry faces key challenges, including inflationary pressures, changing visitor spending behaviours, and the need to address seasonal imbalances in tourism activity. These challenges will continue to evolve, making it very important for marketing planning and execution to be agile and reflective of the ever-changing economic and tourism landscape and travel trends.

Traveller Insights

Traveller insights presented by Destination Ontario and RT07, including visitor trends and behaviours, are particularly relevant to The Blue Mountains context and should inform marketing efforts, including:



Quick getaways and day trips: The duration of Ontario trips is relatively short with 92% of travellers will spend one week or less on their next Ontario trip and 54% planning a quick 1–3-day

getaway that is “easy to get to by car”. Domestic travel represents the bulk of travel spending and intraregional tourism is on the rise across the globe – travellers are choosing experiences close to home.



Visiting friends and relatives: Visiting friends and relatives is both a trip motivator and key activity for travel in the region, followed by outdoor or sport activities, visiting a restaurant or bar, shopping, and visiting a beach. Local and regional residents are crucial to the wellbeing of tourism businesses, serving as both customers and hosts. As such, they require a dedicated local marketing effort.



Repeat visitors: The Blue Mountains enjoys a strong base of repeat visitors, necessitating a marketing strategy that in part focuses on experience and activity promotion to encourage more overnight and extended stays, giving visitors something new to do.



Families: 50% of travellers choose to travel with family. They generally prefer relaxed and scenic destinations, with beaches and small towns or countryside as top choices indicating a preference for more laid-back and family-friendly environments. Multi-generational trips, including both parents/in-laws and children, are a popular growing segment in family travel.



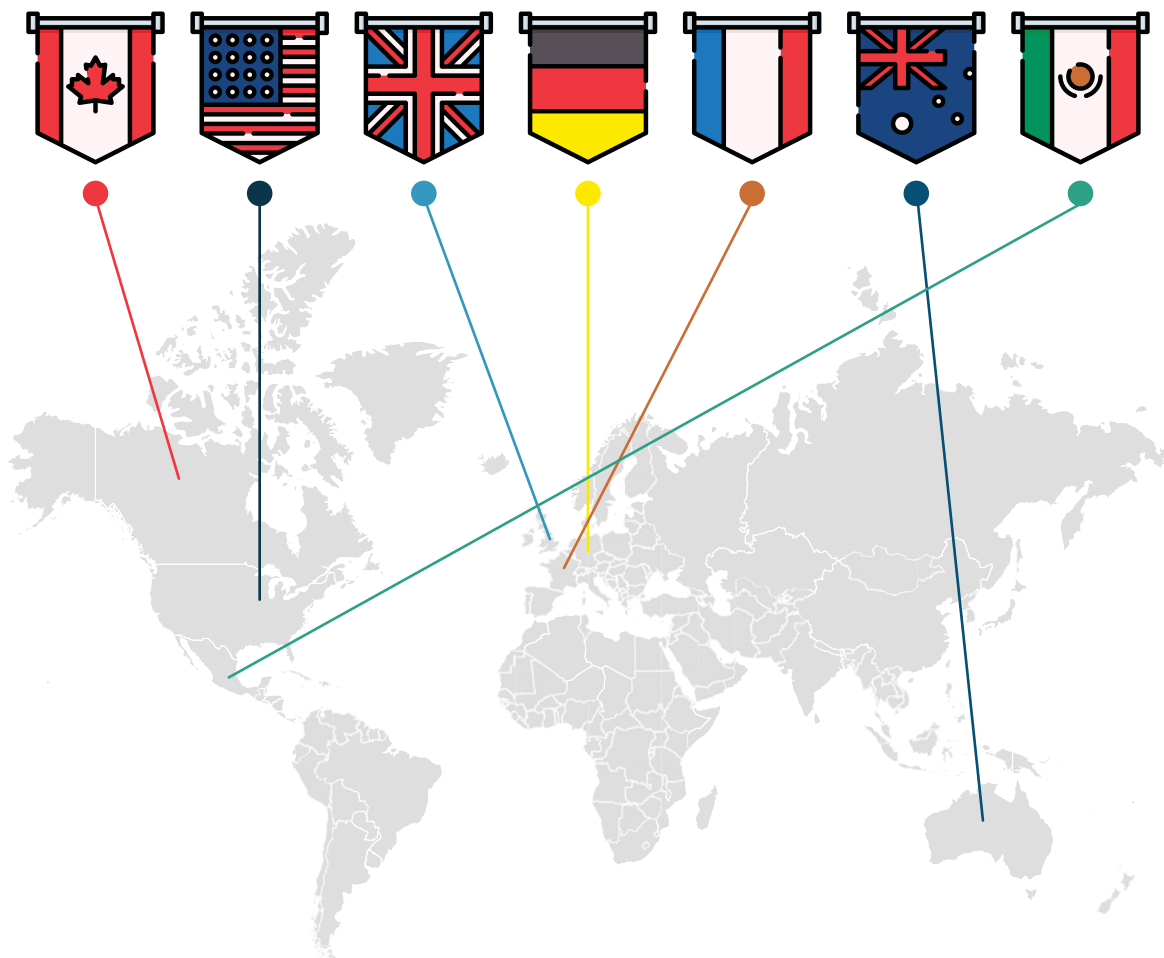
Nature and wellness: This segment is expected to experience robust growth globally. When planning a vacation, 79% of people prioritize accessible nature and outdoor activities, while 75% value a variety of healthy food options. Other must-haves include peace and quiet at 60% and access to spa treatments at 59%.



Source Markets

Ontario and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), specifically, are primary markets, with high-yield international markets requiring sustained long-term investment in partnership with Destination Ontario. The primary geographic source markets identified for The Blue Mountains through BMVA Mobilescapes, RT07 Regional Insights, and Destination Ontario data are dominated by the GTA, followed by regional markets including Collingwood and Southwestern Ontario and U.S. border states. Other Canadian markets represent a small percentage of overall tourist visits.

The primary international markets for Ontario include the U.S., UK, Germany, France, Australia and Mexico. Destination Ontario has identified Mexico as a unique opportunity market for The Blue Mountains as this audience is specifically seeking Canadian winter experiences. Experiences in the destination would be well paired with the urban experience of Toronto- an opportunity for new international tour operator product development.



Target Audiences

For The Blue Mountains, the primary target audiences are families, friend groups and older couples across various socioeconomic groups. PRIZM segmentation indicates a high level of cultural diversity, which should be reflected in marketing imagery and media selection. Blue Mountain Resort attracts more families, while Thornbury attracts more older singles and couples, which is not surprising based on the types of activities and experiences that are driving visits to both places.

The Town and BMVA use data through Environics PRIZM segmentation (2023) to identify three key audiences and markets:

- **Family Memory Builders (35-55 kids travel with family):** This is a segment driven by families with children <18. They want a playful vacation that is centred on building family memories and strengthening the bonds. Activities such as theme

parks allow the family to have fun and build lasting memories.

- **Outgoing Mature Couples (55+ grown kids, nearly empty nesters):** Skewing strongly toward seniors and those in retirement, these travellers are driven by a desire to maintain their vitality and connection with the world. They are not particularly adventurous, rather, they want to maintain their vitality often by interacting with new people (travellers and locals alike). It is important to them to feel competent and vital.
- **Friends Forever (25-54):** Include individuals who place high importance on relationships, social connectivity, and community.

Audiences and markets across seasons should be reviewed frequently, as visitor data is captured over time, and as partners release new audience segmentation research and travel forecasts.

Note: Destination Canada released its Traveller Segmentation Program in late 2024 that provides insight into visitor behaviours, preferences, and profiles across domestic and select international markets. The “Purpose Driven Families”, “Simplicity Lovers” and “Outdoor Explorers” segments are particularly relevant to The Blue Mountains. This tool can become helpful in prioritizing audiences and seasonal marketing efforts moving forward.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenge

To guide the development of this strategy, a comprehensive analysis was conducted to review the internal strengths and weaknesses and the external opportunities and challenges for destination development, marketing, and management.

Strengths

The following strengths were identified through a review of internal attributes and resources.

- **Ontario's largest and internationally recognized four-season resort destination:**

The Blue Mountain Resort is internationally recognized as a four-season resort in Ontario offering a broad variety of visitor experiences on the mountain and within Blue Mountain Village.

- **Proximity to urban centres:** The Blue Mountains is located in proximity to key visitor markets in Canada and the U.S. including the Greater Toronto Area and the country's largest international airport, Pearson International.

- **Developed tourism infrastructure:** The Blue Mountains has developed tourism infrastructure, along with the processes and resources to maintain existing infrastructure, as well as strong relationships with regional organizations including Grey County, RT07 and the GCSA. There are also many

active tourism-adjacent projects underway within the municipality.

- **Resident appeal and attraction:**

Tourism has been and continues to be an important tool for attracting new residents looking to live in a community with a quality and range of infrastructure, services, amenities, and activities available. The range of amenities and services related to tourism also build on the quality of life for residents.

- **Accommodation concentration:**

The Blue Mountains has the largest concentration and variety of accommodation types in the South Georgian Bay region. From hotels to short-term rentals to lodges and cabins, accommodation infrastructure is established and strong.

- **Diversity of assets and activities:**

The Blue Mountains is home to distinct areas and communities that have their own histories, reputations, sense of place, and offer different visitor experiences.

- **Travel trend alignments:** The Blue Mountains experiences align with current travel trends, including wellness, nature, outdoor activities, and family travellers.
- **Resourced partnership:** The Town of The Blue Mountains and the BMVA partnership on destination development, management, and marketing as well as collaborative relationships with RT07 and neighbouring municipalities.
- **Destination reputation:** Ontario consumer perception research affirms that there is a strong brand position for The Blue Mountains - similar to that of Muskoka – and is seen as a place that offers four-season activities and unique offerings.
- **Established and returning target markets:** The Blue Mountains benefits from a large percentage of repeat visitors, including regional residents. Primary target audiences are families, friend groups and older couples across various socioeconomic groups. Ontario and GTA travellers represent the largest source markets for visitors to The Blue Mountains, while the US and Mexico are key international markets.
- **Sustained marketing funding and alignment:** The MAT collection program provides an opportunity to strengthen existing marketing efforts and implement new initiatives over time.
- **Marketing expertise:** There are skilled and experienced marketing leaders at the new DMO division of the BMVA who will continue to utilize customer segmentation, marketing technology, best practices for digital marketing and content development.
- **Well-established and emerging regional experiences and products:** Including the Apple Pie Trail, the Blue Mountain Film Festival, Open Fields, etc.

Weaknesses

The following weaknesses were identified through a review of internal attributes and resources.

- **Decreasing infrastructure capacity:** There is a need to improve and increase infrastructure and related capacity to service residents and visitors (incl. water and wastewater capacity, information and wayfinding, accessibility and pedestrian connections, public washrooms, parking, etc.)
- **Limited connections to cultural tourism offerings and information:** Although The Blue Mountains has many cultural assets that tell local stories and showcase diverse histories of the community, like the Craigleith Heritage Depot, the Sheffield Park Black History Museum, or the Blue Mountains Film Festival, to name but a few, it is also recognized that cultural tourism is not yet a clear component of the visitor experience, which could be expanded to enhance

the experience for existing visitor types and appeal to new culturally-minded visitors.

- **Limited transportation options:** Like smaller, rural communities in Canada, there are limited ways to get to and move around The Blue Mountains without a vehicle. Exploring and piloting solutions will be key to the town's sustainable future as a place to live and visit.
- **Lack of accommodations spread:** Although there is a variety of accommodation options, most are concentrated in certain areas, with a lack of options outside the Blue Mountain Village and Craigleith area.
- **Negative and resistant attitudes toward tourism:** Despite tourism being the town's largest economic driver and employer, it is recognized that tourism also poses challenges and informs resident concerns and perceptions about overtourism and impacts on liveability, as well as the health and viability of natural spaces and diverse ecosystems.

- **Opportunity for future development and/or expansion of events:** further development of existing events and the introduction of new events and experiences over time will help to grow tourism across four seasons.
- **Awareness of experiences in the region:** Visitors to Blue Mountain Resort may not be aware of other activities and experiences available in Thornbury, Clarksburg and surrounding areas. There is an opportunity to grow the length of stay and overall visitor spending through more inter-destination and regional travel activities.
- **Lack of regional marketing coordination:** There is no overarching regional destination story being consistently shared between The Blue Mountains and the larger South Georgian Bay area. There is also visitor confusion around Collingwood vs. The Blue Mountains offerings. A strategy is needed to promote and connect regional experiences and events with improved trip planning information, especially for out-of-province domestic and international travellers.

Opportunities

The following weaknesses were identified through a review of internal attributes and resources.

- **Tourism infrastructure investment:** Continue to invest in tourism infrastructure to ensure a quality visitor experience is maintained and to ensure the continued growth and development of the tourism industry.
- **Relationship-based and collaborative tourism growth:** Focus on continued relationship- and trust-building between the Town, DMO, asset managers (e.g., conservation authorities), and different tourism businesses active in the Town. Keep in mind and share the value of collaboration locally, regionally, and beyond.
- **Niche tourism development:** There is room to build on ongoing efforts (e.g., cultural tourism mapping) and to round-out the types of tourism assets and experiences available via expanded focus on cultural tourism, agritourism, and sports

tourism development. Within this, culinary assets have potential to add to the visitor experience all year, especially if these change seasonally and have clear connections to place.

- **Increasing and improving sense and experience of a connected destination:** Expanding existing and developing new tourism products that connect the destination and encourage visitors to move around (e.g., itineraries or activations across multiple locations), as well as improving the infrastructure and wayfinding that supports non-vehicular movement.
- **Recognizing and celebrating internal differences while tying into shared destination identity:** The Blue Mountains is made up of several communities and areas that act as sub-destinations. These should be recognized and represented as parts of the whole with explicit connections to a shared overall destination identity.

- **Relationship-building with Saugeen Ojibway Nation:** Establish respectful relationships with Saugeen Ojibway Nation (Saugeen First Nation and Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation) to strengthen future collaborations in tourism development, management, and marketing.
- **Business and entrepreneurial support:** Support businesses and entrepreneurs that are focused on diversifying the destination's tourism offering.
- **Tourism awareness-building and appreciation:** Building awareness about the benefits and needs of tourism and its impact on other economic sectors in the destination among residents and industry, including sharing positive stories about tourism in the destination.
- **The waterfront as a visible and featured part of the destination:** Increase public access to the waterfront, including ensuring residents and visitors know where to go to enjoy it. Explore the opportunity to increase the number of slips available at the marina.
- **Stewardship approach to development:** Strengthen conservation/stewardship efforts in the destination, including the opportunity to attract eco-conscious visitors.

Challenges

The following challenges were identified through the review of external factors that can cause trouble for the destination and act as barriers.

- **Tourism-based pressures on services and infrastructure:** Population-swells across peak seasons put pressure on services and infrastructure, affordability, and available housing.
- **Climate change and its impacts on seasonal tourism, specifically winter tourism:** Unreliable winter weather and changing seasons threaten winter tourism products and activities.
- **Complex organizational landscape:** Many organizations working directly within or adjacent to tourism, with a variety of direction-setting documents for tourism across the region.
- **Added processes and pressures from changing accommodations legislation and regulatory landscape:** With the implementation of a MAT, the regulations and policies that businesses need to align with are changing and will require time for adjustment for businesses and Town.
- **Challenging economic climate and changing spending patterns:** Current economic climate due to continued recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, increased inflation, ongoing tariffs, and changing visitor spending behaviours.

- **Lack of brand awareness and differentiation between sub-destinations:** Visitors to Blue Mountain Resort may not be aware of/and or interested in other activities “off resort” (and vice-versa) Awareness-building is not supported by centralized destination marketing efforts.
- **Perceptions of local competition and unbalanced marketing efforts:** There are sensitivities with the relationship between BMR and surrounding businesses – big player vs. small independent businesses – and a perception that marketing activities may be competitive to one another.
- **Lack of clarity around roles and expectations for confirmed DMO:** Industry calling for a defined road map including clear commitments for mutually beneficial collaboration and establishing clarity in roles.
- **Unaffordability and impacts on workforce attraction and retention:** Lack of affordability (including residential and commercial spaces) that discourages young adults and families from remaining in the destination and impacts attraction and retention of new and existing businesses, entrepreneurs, and workers.



Part 3: Strategy and Action Plan



The Foundation

For this destination strategy to be future-oriented and relevant, it needs to be grounded on an ambitious, informed, and inspiring vision. The Town of The Blue Mountains has led work to align the community around a shared vision for the community and destination. The strategy is aligned with and builds upon the following strategic components:



Future Story Community Vision

The vision statement included in the Town's Future Story - Our Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, presents an inspiring future for the town as a place to live, and as such as a place to visit. The vision aligns with the Town's definition of sustainability and its six primary systems for systemic sustainable change in The Blue Mountains. It is a solid and future-focused vision that serves as the foundation of this destination strategy.

The Blue Mountains' communities are world-renowned as stewards of a healthy environment and as champions of well-being, sociocultural diversity, innovation, and regeneration to become the best place to live, work, and play for future generations.

The Blue Mountains is a community that:

- Supports the protection of our natural and rural resources
 - Supports sustainability principles
 - Values its heritage
 - Supports the protection of community character
-

Corporate Strategic Plan

Work to benefit from the opportunities presented by tourism needs to be guided by established values that reflect what the community believes in, as represented by the Town Values. Although, the Corporate Strategic plan is being updated in 2025, the revision will consider the components of the destination strategy. Likewise, the direction set by the destination strategy will remain adaptable to reflect the future strategic direction of the Town.

The governing principles that guide the Town's work daily, include:

- **Excellence:** Providing conscientious service to the community and to each other
 - **Integrity:** Being honest, consistent and fair in all we do
 - **Accountability:** Ensuring responsible and transparent governance
 - **Inclusivity:** Respecting and engaging every voice
 - **Stewardship:** Honouring the past, caring for the present, leading towards a sustainable future
-

Economic Development Strategy

Lastly, knowing that tourism is the Town's largest economic and employment sector, the strategic pillars outlined in the destination strategy are aligned with and build on the goals set by the Town's Economic Development Strategy.

- **Financial and Economic Prosperity:** To create an innovative and resilient local economy and diversified workforce and foster an environment where entrepreneurs can thrive.
- **Community Well-being:** To foster the development of a sustainable community and support long term residency through strengthened quality of life factors and social well-being.
- **Environmental Resiliency:** To protect and preserve the natural environment for future generations through sustainable development and businesses practices.

Building upon the Foundation

There are important initial actions that need to be prioritized to ensure the Town and DMO move forward in a collaborative and strategic direction. This includes alignment between resources and supports needed to continue to develop, manage, and market tourism and coordination through dedicated tourism staff and financial resources.

Through the collective effort of co-developing this Strategy, foundational actions were identified to set up for implementation by growing capacity to co-create value within key areas of work and to ensure that this strategy is adequately resourced and actioned.



Foundational actions include but are not limited to:

- **Co-develop a destination management and marketing communications and engagement plan:** For the first and second year of destination strategy implementation, a shared plan confirming the format and frequency of collaboration meetings between the Town and the DMO is needed. This will ensure alignment and consistency in key messages and support progress reporting, including, using the Town and DMO's communication channels (e.g. Town's Spotlight series) to share key information about tourism with residents.
- **Continue creating and formalizing the structure and governance of the Destination Marketing Organization** that grows out of the BMVA expertise. This includes establishing and sharing a clear mission and vision for the DMO that aligns with the MOU and the strategic foundation of this strategy.
- **Confirm dedicated personnel and teams focused on Destination Development, Management, and Marketing.** This initial action includes confirming how existing Town and BMVA staff and tools will be requisitioned to support tourism initiatives.
- **Continue to seek and secure resources to fund destination development and marketing** via Town or DMO-led funding applications. Continued efforts to resource the development and innovation of tourism are important to ensure the Town and DMO are maximizing available resources to stay competitive.
- **Continue to update and maintain tourism legacy resources and materials** such as the tourism contact database and tourism ecosystem map. Eventually, lead and support the preparation of strategic action implementation plans, acquiring or identifying additional skills and expertise required to move forward in destination strategy implementation.

Further Context

The need for dedicated human resources to champion destination development and marketing.

The Town: will need to add a dedicated tourism staff position. This way, the Town will have a dedicated tourism portfolio and internal access to the destination development and management skills required to implement the destination strategy. Importantly, the team member will champion strategy implementation internally by communicating and coordinating across Town departments, as well as externally with local and regional partners, representing the Town on regional and provincial bodies and initiatives. The staff person will work closely with the DMO on shared implementation initiatives.

At The DMO: a destination marketing coordinator or manager working exclusively on the strategy implementation is needed. This work will happen in collaboration with the BMVA President to maximize the use of MAT funds for tourism marketing. The DMO staff member will also work closely with the destination's tourism businesses to grow the tourism network and capacity for destination marketing beyond the BMVA. Having a dedicated staffer (and point-person) is an important step for ensuring a destination-wide approach to marketing The Blue Mountains.

Key Areas of Work

Strategy implementation will be led by The Town of the Blue Mountains and the Blue Mountain Village Association (BMVA), serving as the Town's official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), in alignment with Municipal Accommodation Tax legislation. Collaboration and open communications with a wide range of partners will also be essential to success, including industry, tourism organizations, residents, etc.

More specifically, The Town of The Blue Mountains is responsible for leading destination development and management efforts the DMO will lead Town-wide destination

marketing and product development efforts (which can be considered a sub-set of destination development). The Town and the DMO will also work closely together on a variety of shared strategic initiatives in support of tourism development, operator support, research and data collection, product development, funding and investment attraction and destination marketing. Importantly, this collaborative work includes cultivating new and strengthening existing relationships with tourism businesses and prioritizing collaboration with partners to ensure inclusive and sustainable growth.

Key areas of work for the Town and the DMO are outlined below:

The Town will lead tourism destination development and management efforts, including:

Tourism infrastructure management and investment

Collaborative leadership

Environmental conservation and sustainability

Funding and resourcing

Tourism-supportive land-use policies and by-laws

Workforce attraction, retention, and development

Business attraction and expansion

Communications and awareness building

The DMO will lead tourism destination marketing efforts and product development, including:

Tourism marketing aimed at increasing visitation where capacity exists

Tourism product development and industry capacity building

Developing strategic partnerships and advocating for the industry

Communicating, coordinating, and connecting tourism operators

Ensuring transparency, accountability, and representation

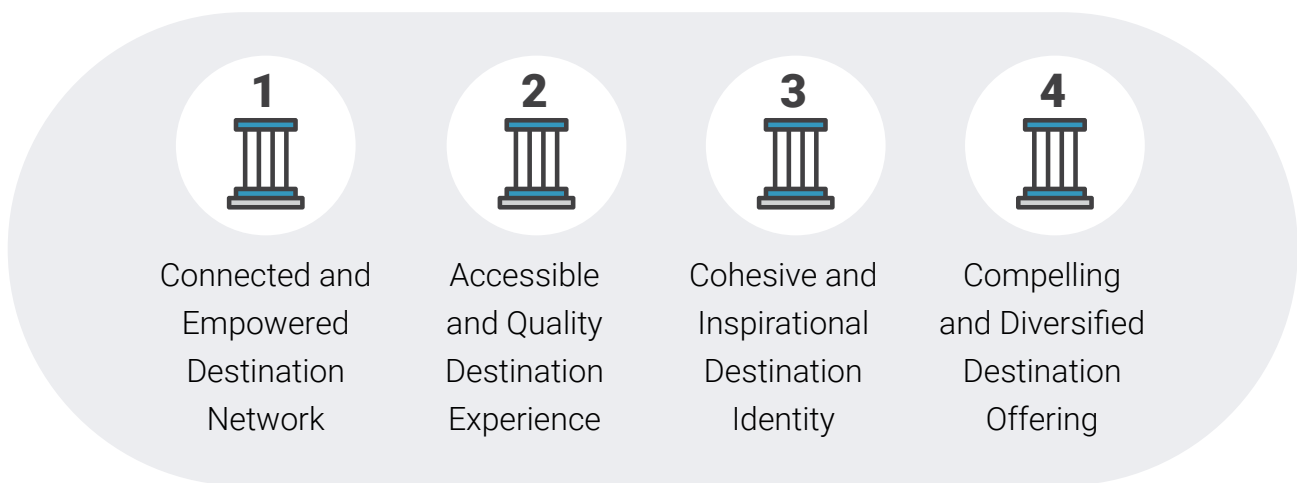
Establishing a cohesive brand and destination narrative

Shared Actions

Several actions in the strategy have been identified as “shared.” This means that the actions are connected to the areas of work identified for the Town and the DMO. So, the Town and the DMO will work closely and work with industry and partners to advance these actions.

Pillars, Objectives, and Actions

Four strategic pillars have been developed to guide the work of The Town of The Blue Mountains and the Destination Marketing Organization in support of the local tourism industry. Each pillar and the components within it were developed with the environmental, social, and economic contexts in mind to steward The Blue Mountains as a great place to live, work, and visit.



Each strategic pillar has its own anticipated outcomes that speak to the achievable results, as well as its own objectives that indicate the quantifiable aims of each pillar. The objectives are broken down into strategic actions, which indicate what planned activities will be completed. As these planned activities are completed, the Town and the DMO will be realizing the anticipated outcomes.

The strategic actions are then broken down into key projects that give an idea as to how each strategic action will come to life, as it is not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive. Key projects may change based on implementation progress and available resources, but they provide a clearer picture of the exciting and important work ahead. Additionally, each strategic action is accompanied by a priority level to guide implementation. These will help prioritize resourcing, collaboration, and alignment of the strategy. The priority levels are:

- **High Priority:** implementation required for other actions or high-impact potential.
- **Medium Priority:** implementation beneficial for other actions.
- **Low Priority:** implementation not required for other actions and could take place as a stand-alone initiative.

The “Mapping Out Success” section below includes further details, including the planned timeline for action implementation and identified measures of success for each strategic action.





Pillar 1: Connected and Empowered Destination Network

The first pillar recognizes the need to further clarify organization-specific roles and responsibilities among industry partners, as well as actively fostering destination-wide relationship building, connections and awareness.

Given that this strategy is the Town's first dedicated destination strategy, the goal of the first pillar is to strengthen the Town's role and capacity as a destination management leader. The actions identify a need to further clarify and share the Town's role and emerging opportunities to support the tourism industry and the broader community.

Next is the objective to grow knowledge and understanding of destination opportunities and challenges so that the Town and

DMO can collaborate as destination leads to support and grow a network of capable, informed, and engaged partners for destination development, management, and marketing. The related actions aim to support, increase, and strengthen connections, and grow the required skills and capacity among tourism partners in the destination and surrounding area.

Through engagements, the objective to foster new relationships and formalize existing partnerships to expand the Town's capacity was made clear. This includes focusing on growing capacity key areas of need like gap-filling product design and development, destination brand mobilization, understanding visitor markets, and exceeding visitor expectations.

Anticipated Outcomes

By implementing the actions within this pillar, the following important outcomes are anticipated:

- Enhanced capacity and related resources to act as a recognized and collaborative destination manager.
- Coordinated local and regional efforts to grow public awareness of the value tourism brings to The Blue Mountains as well as the work underway to maximize these benefits and minimize negative impacts.
- Enhanced understanding and capacity to pursue strategic growth of key areas of opportunity, such as agritourism, cultural tourism, and sports tourism.
- Clarity and access to a range of resources and supports for tourism development, management, and marketing through existing and new partnerships and collaborations.



A1 Objectives and Actions

Objective A1: To strengthen Town role and capacity as a destination management leader.

Action A1.1: Revise by-laws to support tourism and agritourism innovation and encourage sector diversification		
Key Projects: • Review of business signage by-laws • Review of land use by-laws that limit agritourism diversification • Aligned with Town’s Wayfinding and Gateway Project		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
High	Town	2025–2026

Action A1.2: Revise Town decision-making processes to ensure that potential impacts to tourism are considered before decisions are made		
Key Projects: • Enrich staff report template with tourism-focused questions • Confirm key messages and coordinate communications among Town departments • Continue to align with key municipal documents (e.g., Official Plan)		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	Town	2025–2026

Action A1.3: Identify and support industry and community-led destination stewardship and development initiatives		
Key Projects: • Co-identify existing product/ experiences for enhancement • Establish a destination stewardship fund for local community groups and businesses (Town-led) • Establish a destination development fund for local tourism initiatives (DMO-led)		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	Shared	2027–2029

Action A1.4: Establish a workforce housing reserve fund and continue to explore solutions to support attainable housing development		
Key Projects: • Build up funds to support future workforce housing solutions and required research • Explore solutions through private sector investment • Leverage information and resources from relevant organizations to inform direction (e.g.,TIAO, TourismHRCanada)		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	Town	2025–Onwards

A2 Objectives and Actions

Objective A2: To grow knowledge and understanding of destination opportunities and challenges.

Action A2.1: Conduct a carrying capacity study for the destination		
Key Projects: • Gather asset managers to explore and confirm shared investment • Design and implement a whole destination or area-specific carrying capacity research • Leverage information and resources from relevant organizations to inform direction (e.g., Destination Stewardship Center)		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Lower	Town	2030
Action A2.2: Create dedicated initiatives for niche tourism opportunities: agritourism, cultural tourism, sports tourism.		
Key Projects: • Work with Blue Mountains Public Library and other partners for cultural tourism • Work with agritourism industry and potentially DMO Advisory Committee for agritourism • Align with review of Town policies and bylaws and partners' plans		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	Town	2028

Action A2.3: Develop and implement a shared framework for the monitoring and evaluation of destination development and marketing		
Key Projects: • Collaborate with partners to identify existing measurements and contributions for destination sustainability • Develop a best-practice informed monitoring and evaluations (M&E) framework to measure implementation progress and evaluate tourism's role in quality of life and environmental health (e.g., biodiversity health, water quality, economic production, etc.)		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
High	Shared	2025–Onwards

Action A2.4: Develop and implement tourism sentiment and experience surveys to engage visitors and residents		
Key Projects: • Add tourism-related questions to the Town's resident satisfaction survey • Design a visitor satisfaction survey • Align with the M&E framework		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	Shared	2026–Onwards

Action A2.4: Report back on the role of tourism and implementation progress		
Key Projects:	• Leverage Business Spotlight program to highlight strategy insights and tourism stats • Prepare the initial Role of Tourism Report for publishing at the end of 2027 and consider complementary public-facing dashboard to demonstrate strategy implementation progress and M&E tracking • Implement a Town-led resident-facing communications campaign	
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	Shared	2028–Onwards

A3 Objectives and Actions

Objective A3: To foster new relationships and formalize existing partnerships to expand capacity

Action A3.1: Establish a Destination Advisory Committee		
Key Projects: • Evolve the role of the Municipal Accommodation Tax Advisory Committee to an action-oriented and recommendations-focused group of local experts aligned with the terms of the agreement between the Town and DMO • Explore opportunities to form a Town led Destination Advisory Committee that accounts for focused community and stakeholder representation		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
High	Shared	2025

Action A3.2: Formalize partnership with South Georgian Municipalities for destination development, management, and marketing		
Key Projects: • Meet quarterly with Collingwood, Meaford, Grey Highlands, Clearview, Grey County, Simcoe County, and RT07 • Focus on finding synergies and opportunities to collaborate and share resources, coordinate activities/ events to avoid overlap within the region, share challenges/concerns related to tourism and identify joint solutions		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	Town	2027–Onwards

Action A3.3: Foster collaboration with Indigenous communities and Indigenous tourism organizations and businesses		
Key Projects:	• Explore collaborations with Saugeen First Nation's Economic Developer, Cape Crocker Park's Manager, and Saugeen Ojibway Nation Environmental Office for interpretive signage, product development, and industry support	
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	Shared	2026–Onwards

Action A3.4: Host and support tourism networking and capacity building activations		
Key Projects:	• Formalize partnerships for resource sharing and industry capacity-development support with Blue Mountains Chamber of Commerce, RT07, Four County Labour Market Planning Board, Grey County business supports, Collingwood's Small Business Enterprise Centre, Community • Organize bi-annual or quarterly tourism update meetings/ networking nights, and opportunities for local exploration and collaboration (e.g., local FAM tours) • Co-host a yearly Tourism Mini Conference/Symposium	
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	Shared	2027–Onwards

Action A3.5: Advocate for industry interests and showcase wins		
Key Projects:	• Membership at key representative organizations TIAO and TIAC • Consider other affiliations and resources: Rainbow Registered Business certification through CGLCC, GSTC certification (for business) or similar • Pursue awards from TIAO, TIAC, EDCO, among others, to celebrate success and position the destination	
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	Shared	2028–Onwards





Pillar 2: An Accessible and Quality Destination Experience

The second strategic pillar involves the infrastructure maintenance, development, and services for the Town and the DMO to ensure the consistency of an accessible and quality visitor experience.

The strategic direction starts with the opportunity to boost The Blue Mountains sense of place and related tourism infrastructure. As a community where tourism activity has been taking place and growing across several decades, and where the visitor-economy is the largest economic driver, Town tourism-related infrastructure, such as wayfinding and interpretive signage, public washrooms, boat docks and public parking, roads and paths, or public

amenities, among others are important to residents and relied upon by visitors and residents. As such work to align their management, maintenance, and development is a focus of the strategy.

Next is the objective to align and enhance the destination's tourism services, which includes work to ensure successful and navigable visitor journeys, improved and increased mobility options, and boosting infrastructure that safely connects the whole town for different types of visitors to explore. Actions related to this objective require larger and long-term investments, as well as further understanding of the need for and use of potential different transportation options.

Anticipated Outcomes

By implementing the actions within this pillar, the following important outcomes are anticipated:

- Ensured consistent, accessible, and relevant wayfinding and signage across the destination, including interpretive and informational signage.
- Enhanced understanding and further strategic action to ensure a consistent and connected visitor experience dispersed across tourism hubs and outdoor assets.
- Improved mobility and connectivity infrastructure and services to and within the destination.

B1 Objectives and Actions

Objective B1: To boost our sense of place and tourism infrastructure

Action B1.1: Streamline wayfinding and interpretive signage updates		
Key Projects:	• Develop interpretive signage with Blue Mountains Library, Indigenous representatives, community groups, and local experts • Standardize visitor information at outdoor assets, including health and safety, cell service availability, trail maps, appropriate activities, parking, and nearby tourism assets • Act as a connector between businesses and RT07 wayfinding supports, ensuring well-placed signage with distance information and asset location • Align with Parks & Open Spaces Master Plan and the Gateway & Wayfinding Project	
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
High	Shared	2025–Onwards

Action B1.2: Assess visitor experience infrastructure requirements and enhancements in tourism hubs and incorporate the recommendations into the Town's capital infrastructure plans		
Key Projects:	• Consider all types of accessibility (incl. physical and cognitive across visitor experience assessment) • Improve pedestrian infrastructure in Clarksburg and Craigleith • Identify and improve infrastructure at outdoor assets particularly at conservation area and park entrances • Develop downtown plans for specific areas as extensions of the broader DDMS, potentially through the OMAFRA FICE program or similar	
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Lower	Town	2029

Action B1.3: Enhance and develop connectivity and mobility infrastructure between major trails, the waterfront, and tourism hubs		
Key Projects:	• Enhance access through levelled trails, accessible kayak/canoe launches, mobi mats, and enhanced lookout points • Improve sidewalks and lighting from BMV to Craigleith Heritage Depot-Northwind Beach via HWY 19 • Improve cycling access and bike parking from Thornbury/Clarksburg to Victoria Corners • Enhance pedestrian/cycling linkages and related infrastructure between key trails like the Bruce Trail and Georgian Trail to nearby asset clusters • Align with Parks & Open Spaces Master Plan and the Gateway & Wayfinding Project	
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	Town	2027–Onwards

B2 Objectives and Actions

Objective B2: To align and enhance our destination's tourism services.

Action B2.1: Establish centralized and aligned digital visitor information channels		
Key Projects: • Establish official DMO channels and destination visitor-facing website • Develop visitor invitation with guidelines or code-of-conduct as part of channels to inform visitors about welcomed and beneficial behaviour ahead of visit		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
High	DMO	2026–2027

Action B2.2: Ensure consistency and access to visitor information services		
Key Projects: • Install information display boards/kiosks across the destination • Pilot seasonal and mobile tourism information hubs/booths at asset hubs, key outdoor assets, and gateways • Support information centres, businesses, assets, and attractions in having up-to-date visitor information		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	Shared	2026–Onwards

Action B2.3: Increase and enhance the reach and frequency of transportation and mobility options		
Key Projects: • Share information on transportation options within the Town and support marketing to encourage use • Conduct a feasibility study to explore the best transit options for the destination in the long term • Attract investment and explore partnerships with Colltrans, Grey Transit, Linx, or BMR to provide shuttle services for specific events or routes		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	Town	2029–2030

Action B2.4: Assess and adopt a destination-wide digital visitation planning, information sharing, and dispersal tool		
Key Projects: • Explore and confirm best-fit tool for platforms leveraging real-time data to create or suggest activities and itineraries for visitors (e.g., SmartGuides, The Place Experience, etc.) • Coordinate locally within Municipal boundaries with key organizations (BMR, GSCA, Niagara Escarpment Commission) • Explore collaboration with neighbouring destinations (e.g., Collingwood) after strengthening local coordination		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	Shared	2026–Onwards



Pillar 3: Cohesive and Inspirational Destination Identity

The third pillar gathers and aligns the work of the DMO to ensure the entire destination is represented in marketing efforts by one tourism brand.

The first objective is to bring to life an inclusive, distinctive, and compelling place brand that then supports boosting brand awareness for The Blue Mountains as a distinct destination connected to a network of regional destinations. Knowing that this strategy marks the beginning of a dedicated destination marketing approach for the destination, the development of a unified and overarching destination brand will help clearly position the community as a tourism leader by maximizing reach, recognition, and impact.

The second objective is to mindfully market and promote the entire destination so that marketing efforts are aligned with the destination strategy and the community's vision

for a sustainable future. Place brand development will be supported through channels that promote all areas of The Blue Mountains and that stakeholders can proudly stand behind, and support.

Anticipated Outcomes

By implementing the actions within this pillar, the following important outcomes are anticipated:

- A streamlined and established destination brand, supported and celebrated by industry, residents, and partners in adopting it.
- Established marketing plan and related key channels (incl. a visitor-facing destination information website) to guide and support the DMO's work in destination marketing.
- Enhanced understanding of primary and secondary markets and the tactics and approaches to diversify our destination's positioning.

C1 Objectives and Actions

Objective C1: To bring to life an inclusive, distinctive, and compelling place brand

Action C1.1: Create and launch a streamlined destination brand and narrative		
Key Projects: • Undertake research to inform brand narrative, and sub-brand alignment • Develop logo, design guidelines, destination narrative (incl. sub-themes like nature/outdoors, culture, heritage and key messages) • Collaborate with local creative/artist community to develop marketing materials		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
High	DMO	2026–2027

Action C1.1: Support destination partners in adopting and activating the shared destination brand		
Key Projects: • Support industry and partners in adopting the destination brand • Develop and launch collaterals to build ambassadorship among residents and industry through destination brand		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	DMO	2027–Onwards

C2 Objectives and Actions

Objective C2: To mindfully market and promote the entire destination

Action C2.1: Develop, execute, and innovate annual marketing plans to showcase the whole destination		
Key Projects: • Develop and execute an annual “digital-first” content work plan • Prioritize sustainability and welcomed visitor behaviour through communications • Participate in and host FAMs, industry trade shows, and events		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
High	DMO	2026–Onwards

Action C2.2: Conduct market research to strategically innovate and evolve marketing		
Key Projects: • Further research existing and emerging target markets • Familiarize research among industry		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	DMO	2027–Onwards

Action C2.3: Create itineraries that highlight and connect outdoor/ adventure with arts, culture, food and beverage, and agritourism

- Key Projects:**
- Create local itineraries for domestic and international visitor attraction
 - Explore shared itineraries with local organizations like Arts Council and BMPL
 - Explore regional itinerary collaborations with neighbouring municipalities/DMOs

Priority:

Responsibility:

Timeline:

Lower

DMO

2027





Pillar 4: Compelling and Diversified Destination Offering

The fourth strategic pillar outlines the path forward to identify, encourage, and support the development and enhancement of the destination and visitor experience offering.

As it stands, there are several key tourism assets and experiences that draw visitors to the destination. In alignment with the third strategic pillar, this pillar's strategic actions highlight priorities to boost the already established offering and reputation through the enhancement of existing and the development of new tourism experiences, events, and activations.

As destination leaders, the Town and DMO recognize the importance of

building a diversified, four-season tourism offering. The strategic actions also outline how the leads can support and guide destination partners in increasing, improving, and diversifying the tourism experiences and products in the destination year-round, but especially in the spring and off-peak times with a focus on agritourism, arts and culture, events and festivals, and cultural tourism offerings. Through alignment of the strategic actions, partners will contribute to creating a stronger sense of place and growing the destination's reputation through diversified tourism products that span across The Blue Mountains.

Anticipated Outcomes

By implementing the actions within this pillar, the following important outcomes are anticipated:

- Identified existing and new, gap-filling tourism products and opportunities, and provided support to guide and encourage their development.
- Established collaborations to enrich the local and regional destination offering.
- Enhanced understanding of the innovation opportunities for exciting, sustainable, and diversified experiences and products across the destination.

D1 Objectives and Actions

Objective D1: To guide the development of a diversified and four-season tourism offering.

Action D1.1: Identify gap-filling tourism product development and enhancement opportunities to co-develop with industry and partners		
Key Projects: • Enhance and position high-potential existing tourism products as destination-wide signature experiences • Identify new, gap-filling tourism products and opportunities for industry and partners		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
High	DMO	2027–2028

Action D1.2: Co-develop a region-wide and multi-modal trail-based signature product		
Key Projects: • Connect and activate the Bruce Trail or Georgian Trail with local businesses and multisensory experiences • Determine partner interest (especially Collingwood, RT07) in collaborating and investing in a regional product		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Lower	Shared	2029–Onwards

Action D1.3: Attract tourism investments and initiatives that focus on key opportunities		
Key Projects: • Support and evolve events that connect with tourism priorities • Attract new events, investments, and initiatives		
Priority:	Responsibility:	Timeline:
Medium	Shared	2029–Onwards



Mapping Out Success

The following table highlights the planned implementation timeline and measures of success for each strategic action. This Strategy will require attention, flexibility, and adaptability. The components within this section are a key resource to guide the path forward, along with the measurement of success. Importantly, the measures of success are starting points for the development of the planned monitoring and evaluation framework for collective progress tracking.

2025 Start

A3.1 – Action:	Establish a Destination Advisory Committee	<u>2025</u>
Measure of Success # of actions/ initiatives directly informed and supported by the committee (tracked by committee Chair and reported on through annual or biannual reports).		
A1.1 – Action:	Revise by-laws to support tourism and agritourism innovation and encourage sector diversification	<u>2025</u>
Measure of Success # and type of regulations and policies identified, revised, and/or connected. % increase in sector diversification initiatives supported by revised by-laws.		

A1.2 – Action:	Revise Town decision-making processes to ensure that potential impacts to tourism are considered before decisions are made	<u>2025</u> 2026
Measure of Success - Revised staff report with section to account for tourism-implications. % increase of staff reports that show connections to tourism (Council meetings). # of Town plans and strategies that include direct acknowledgement of tourism and articulated connections/alignments with DDMS.		
A1.4 – Action:	Establish a workforce housing reserve fund and continue to explore solutions to support attainable housing development	<u>2025</u> 2030
Measure of Success \$ of workforce housing reserve funds accumulated. # of attainable housing units supported through reserve fund. % increase in workforce housing availability.		
A2.3 – Action:	Develop and implement a shared framework for the monitoring and evaluation of destination development and marketing	<u>2025</u> 2030
Measure of Success - Established M&E framework and reporting system. # and type of KPIs and measurement tools confirmed as part of M&E framework.		

B1.1 – Action:	Streamline wayfinding and interpretive signage updates	<u>2025</u> <u>2030</u>
Measure of Success • Updated and redesigned interpretive and wayfinding signage. • Level of alignment among outdoor asset owners/manager on visitor information. • % increase of new or enhanced physical visitor information signs at outdoor assets. • # and type of stories or messages incorporated into wayfinding and interpretive signage.		

2026 Start

C1.1 – Action:	Create and launch a streamlined destination brand and narrative.	<u>2026</u> <u>2027</u>
Measure of Success • Buy-in/feedback process confirmed including with residents, industry, and visitors (brand research; surveys). • Place brand name is a criteria for grant applications from local operators/organizations. • Brand collaterals planned and developed (e.g., logo, tagline, etc.). • Brand approach is established. • # and type of brand launch initiatives and communications. • Level of buy-in among industry and community for destination brand.		

B2.1 – Action:	Establish centralized and aligned digital visitor information channels	<u>2026</u> <u>2027</u>
Measure of Success • Communication channels established and launched. • # and type (demographics) of channel visitors. • Level of audience engagement (tracking tools and reporting).		

C2.1 – Action:	Develop, execute, and innovate annual marketing plans to showcase the whole destination	<u>2026</u> <u>2030</u>
Measure of Success • Development of marketing plan for destination awareness and promotional support. • \$ invested in marketing support tracked YoY. • # of pieces of content created • #of content creators engaged • # of impressions delivered through content deployment		

A2.4 – Action:	Develop and implement tourism sentiment and experience surveys to engage visitors and residents	<u>2026</u> 2030
Measure of Success • # and type of survey respondents (survey). • # and type of learnings and insight identified and applied to destination development, management, and marketing actions/ approaches (survey analysis). • Level of satisfaction among residents and visitors about the value and experiences of tourism in the destination (scale-based and sentiment in written responses). • # of impressions delivered through content deployment		
A3.3 – Action:	Foster collaboration with Indigenous communities and Indigenous tourism organizations and businesses	<u>2026</u> 2030
Measure of Success • Established relationships and communications with Saugeen First Nation and Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation (and/or Cape Croker Park). • MOU with Saugeen Ojibway Nation Environmental Office around tourism. • DMO membership with Indigenous Tourism Ontario. • % increase in projects/ programs explored/ delivered in collaboration with Indigenous bodies.		

B2.2 – Action:	Ensure consistency and access to visitor information services	<u>2026</u> <u>2030</u>
Measure of Success • Level of awareness among visitors and residents about things to do in the destination. • # of physical information infrastructures and services at businesses and spaces across the destination/ region.		

2027 Start

A1.3 – Action:	Identify and support industry and community-led destination stewardship and development initiatives	<u>2027</u> <u>2029</u>
Measure of Success • % increase in destination development initiatives identified and supported. • # of destination stewardship initiatives identified and supported. • % increase in community engagement in destination stewardship and development.		

C2.3 – Action:	Create itineraries that highlight and connect outdoor/adventure with arts, culture, food and beverage, and agritourism	<u>2027</u> 2030
Measure of Success • # of itineraries developed annually. • # of operators/businesses incorporated into itineraries.		

D1.1 – Action:	Identify gap-filling tourism product development and enhancement opportunities to co-develop with industry and partners	<u>2027</u> 2028
Measure of Success • % increase in existing and new tourism products identified (identification and evaluation of product). • % increase in products evolved/ adopted and developed as part of destination offering (year-over-year tracking).		

B1.3 – Action:	Enhance and develop connectivity and mobility infrastructure between major trails, the waterfront, and tourism hubs	<u>2027</u> 2030
Measure of Success • % increase in physically accessible trails and waterfront access points enhanced/developed (M&E Framework). • % increase in new activities and mobility types facilitated via developments (M&E Framework). • # of visitors engaging with the waterfront as part of their experience (visitor survey).		

A3.2 – Action:	Formalize partnership with South Georgian Municipalities for destination development, management, and marketing	<u>2027</u> 2030
Measure of Success • MOU or agreement signed with South Georgian Bay municipalities. • # and type of collaborations confirmed and acted on through municipal connection and partnerships.		
A3.4 – Action:	Host and support tourism networking and capacity building activations	<u>2027</u> 2030
Measure of Success • Diversity in types and % increase in resources and supports identified through partnerships. • % increase in tourism businesses leveraging capacity-development and support services (program attendance and participation; industry feedback).		
C1.2 – Action:	Support destination partners in adopting and activating the shared destination brand	<u>2027</u> 2030
Measure of Success • # of partner downloads of brand kit and related resources. • Brand inclusion on partner marketing (i.e. Destination Ontario, RTO websites). • Brand inclusion in local/community events and marketing (i.e. event signage, merch).		

C2.2 – Action:	Conduct market research to strategically innovate and evolve marketing	<u>2027</u> <u>2030</u>
Measure of Success • % increase in data points/gaps identified to collect. • delivery of visitor data collection plan (tools, timing, etc.). • completion of annual visitor data/insights report. • audience segmentation and profiles are incorporated into media and messaging plans.		

2028 Start

A2.2 – Action:	Create dedicated initiatives for niche tourism opportunities: agritourism, cultural tourism, sports tourism.	<u>2028</u>
Measure of Success • Dedicated cultural tourism (incl. food and agritourism, music) development strategy. • Level of support among Council, industry members, and key partners for further strategic development.		

A2.5 – Action:	Report back on role of tourism and implementation progress	<u>2028</u> <u>2030</u>
Measure of Success • Yearly Role of Tourism report published. • Awareness building campaign and materials. • % change in awareness and appreciation among residents and industry about the tourism sector (survey analysis).		

A3.5 – Action:	Advocate for industry interests and showcase wins	<u>2028</u> <u>2030</u>
Measure of Success • % increase in official affiliations with tourism industry organizations offering resources and good practices. • # of relevant profile building and recognition opportunities identified (news articles, industry recognitions, etc.). • % increase in successful applications and recognitions (awards, certifications, tourism advocacy initiatives, etc.).		



2029 Start

D1.3 – Action:	Attract tourism investments and initiatives that focus on key opportunities	<u>2029</u> <u>2030</u>
Measure of Success • % increase in existing events, investments, and initiatives supported. • % increase in new events, investments, and initiatives attracted.		
B1.2 – Action:	Assess visitor experience infrastructure requirements and enhancements in tourism hubs and incorporate the recommendations into the Town’s capital infrastructure plans	<u>2029</u>
Measure of Success • Dedicated research into area-specific visitor experience conducted. • # and type of area-specific infrastructure opportunities.		
B2.3 – Action:	Increase and enhance the reach and frequency of transportation and mobility options	<u>2029</u> <u>2030</u>
Measure of Success • \$ of investment to support transportation solutions. • # and type of transportation solutions identified, piloted, and/or confirmed (implementation tracking, feasibility study if pursued). • # of visitors, residents, and workers using transportation services (ridership data).		

D1.2 – Action:	Co-develop a region-wide and multi-modal trail-based signature product	<u>2029</u> <u>2030</u>
Measure of Success • Research and clear opportunities for the development of a trail-based regional signature product. • # and type of regional businesses/ assets included. • # of partners collaborating (relationship tracking).		

2030 Start

A2.1 – Action:	Conduct a carrying capacity study for the destination	<u>2030</u>
Measure of Success • # of partners participating in the carrying capacity study. • # and types of learnings to action to better manage capacity (study results and analysis).		

B2.4 – Action:	Assess and adopt a destination-wide digital visitation planning, information sharing, and dispersal tool	<u>2030</u>
Measure of Success • Adopted digital experience planning and real-time information platform. • Level of clarity on the best-fit tool for visitor planning and experience. • % increase in partnership collaborations.		



Part 4: Conclusion

The Town of The Blue Mountains will continue to play a key role in shaping and determining the future of tourism for the destination. At the local and regional level, the Town looks forward to helping shape tourism as an avenue for community pride and well-being, environmental stewardship and care, and fruitful economic activity that benefits local businesses across industries.

the whole destination, makes it a key player for the future of The Blue Mountains as a place to visit. The Blue Mountains DMO looks forward to boosting the profile of the destination, as well as drawing attention to its diverse tourism businesses and vibrant natural and cultural assets. This strategy maps out the DMO's role over the next five years as the lead organization for destination marketing.

This strategy confirms the Town's role and commitment over the next five years as a destination development and management leader.

The new Destination Marketing Organization, created through and funded by the Municipal Accommodation Tax, in partnership with the Blue Mountain Village Association, will be a key organization driving collective efforts to celebrate The Blue Mountains as a destination.

The DMO's work to coordinate communications and lead product development, as well as plan and execute destination marketing for

In implementing this destination strategy, the Town of The Blue Mountains and the new Destination Marketing Organization will work collectively with tourism businesses and community members so that economic activity through tourism continues to benefit local businesses, provides opportunities for community pride and participation, and supports the natural environments that tourism in The Blue Mountains relies upon.

Get involved

The future of tourism requires coordinated efforts and collective action!

Everyone - from business owners, operators, and staff to long-term residents to holiday-home owners and visitors to the destination – has a role to play in bringing this destination strategy forward. Many strategic actions call for explicit collaboration between the Town, the DMO, and tourism partners including local businesses and organizations, neighbouring destinations, community groups, regional tourism leads, and regional and provincial government bodies.

Although the strategy recognizes areas for collaboration, there is extended opportunity for creative thinking and joint implementation through the role, expertise, and networks that those connected to tourism in The Blue Mountains hold.

If you see opportunities for collaboration and would like to explore what contributions towards co-implementation can look like, please reach out to the Department of Strategic Initiatives at

SI@thebluemountains.ca.

The participatory process taken to develop this destination strategy sets a strong foundation for the network of relationships and connections within and beyond The Blue Mountains. The future for the destination is bright and collaborative.

We invite you to join The Town of The Blue Mountains and The Blue Mountains Destination Marketing Organization in that future!

Glossary



Key terms

Key terms and respective definitions are shared below to support a shared understanding of how the terms are used in this destination strategy.

Tourism Basics

Destination: A place that visitors intentionally travel to or the place on a trip where a visitor spends most of their time.

Destination Development: The concerted effort to evolve and develop tourism products and services that meet the needs and expectations of a range of visitors. Development is undertaken so that the destination remains competitive, while maintaining accessibility and enjoyment of residents. It includes strategic planning, investment in infrastructure, research and knowledge sharing, and the development of attractions and amenities (i.e. product development) to improve the overall visitor experience.

Destination Management: The coordinated management and maintenance of all the elements that make up a tourism destination.

This strategic approach links various elements such as promotion, visitor services, training, and business support to ensure the competitiveness and sustainability of the destination. A key element of successful destination management is avoiding overtourism and making sure tourism supports resident wellbeing.

Destination Marketing: The strategic promotion, marketing, and positioning of a place as a destination. This work is usually led by Destination Marketing Organizations in collaboration with local businesses along with provincial and national marketing organizations. Within the context of The Blue Mountains, successful marketing means targeting visitors that share values with the host destination and attracting visitors in off-peak times. Marketing activities include things like having a reliable website, sharing stories on social media, attending trade shows, and inviting journalists to experience the destination. Market research also informs the development of tourism products

and enhancements to the visitor experience.

Tourism: Activities associated with and enjoyed by visitors. Tourism is made up of industries from several sectors, each with its own subsectors. It is connected to many aspects of a community, including its society, culture, economy, and environment.

Tourist (or visitor): Someone who takes an overnight out-of-town trip, or who takes an out-of-town same-day trip of 40 kilometres or more away from their home.

Key players

Tourism Ecosystem Actors: The various public, private, and civic actors who are connected and engaged, either indirectly or directly, within the tourism ecosystem. Examples include government bodies, businesses, not-for-profit and community-led groups, local organizations and initiatives, etc.

Destination partners: As a subset of tourism ecosystem actors, this refers to actors directly and indirectly connected to tourism in the municipal boundaries of The Town of The Blue Mountains. These include the BMVA, Blue Mountain Resort, neighbouring municipalities, First Nations, tourism

organizations, land management organizations, post-secondary institutions, public libraries and museums, business improvement areas and village associations, industry support organizations, etc.

Types of tourism mentioned in the report

Adventure and Outdoor Tourism:

Travel experiences that emphasize interactions with the natural environment, including geographic features and landscapes. These interactions can include physical activities, cultural exchanges, and interactions and engagements with nature. Examples include hiking, cycling, paddling, climbing, skiing, wildlife viewing, etc.

Agritourism: A subset of culinary tourism or rural tourism. Experiences showcase the unique processes, peoples, and places involved in farming and production (e.g. purchasing at a farm gate or farmers' market, touring a farm, participating in workshop or tasting. etc.

Culinary Tourism: Travel experiences that focus on enjoying unique and memorable food and beverage that reflect the history, heritage, and culture of a destination. These

experiences can include local dining, food and beverage festivals, farmers' markets, farm gates, cooking classes/ workshops, etc.

Cultural Tourism: Travel experiences that emphasize learning, discovering, and experiencing tangible and intangible cultural products, practices, traditions, and value systems of a destination. These experiences can include live music, arts and crafts, literature, history/heritage, film, food and beverage, cultural festivals, etc.

Sustainable tourism: tourism that is responsive to the needs of tourism ecosystem actors now and in the future, creating a net positive impact for the local economy, society, and environment.

Sports tourism: tourism where the either observes as a spectator or actively participates in a sporting event. It can involve commercial or non-commercial competitive activities.

Abbreviations

BMR: Blue Mountain Resort

BMVA: The Blue Mountain Village Association is a non-profit, membership-based organization.

DMO: A destination marketing organization is an organization promoting a specific geographic area as a visitor destination.

MAT: The Municipal Accommodation Tax is a tax applied by Ontario municipalities to visitors on overnight

stays of less than 30 consecutive days at a transient accommodation.

RT07: Regional Tourism Organization 7: BruceGreySimcoe.

The Town: This refers to The Town of The Blue Mountains.

Note: Across this report, The Blue Mountains Destination Strategy is also referred to as the "destination strategy".

Destination Strategy

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The Town of The Blue Mountains Destination Strategy 2025-2030

May 2025