



**Town of Parry Sound
Strategic Action Plan
2023 - 2026**



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Acknowledgements

The strategic action planning process was guided by Karen Jones Consulting Inc. and received engagement and support from the Town of Parry Sound Council, staff, organizations, business owners, and members of the community. The strategic framework reflects the thoughtful input and insightful recommendations of those who dedicated their time and effort to this initiative.





Background

Located on Hwy 400 approximately 2 hours north of Toronto and 2 hours south of Sudbury, Parry Sound hugs the shores of the world's largest freshwater archipelago, known as the 30,000 Islands. The town is rich in arts, culture and heritage and features many scenic landscapes, events and attractions that appeal to local residents and visitors alike.

In 2020, the Town of Parry Sound developed its 10-year Partnering for the Future Strategic Plan 2020-2030. The Strategic Plan provides a roadmap to help guide priorities, goals and actions that support the Town in continuing to meet the needs of the community. The development of the Plan reflected input provided from residents, businesses members, groups, organizations, Council and Town leadership.

In order to ensure the Strategic Plan remains relevant, realistic and achievable, the Town of Parry Sound embarked on a review and planning process to create an action plan that builds on the existing Strategic Plan to ensure continuity in direction and to maintain focus. Engagement with community stakeholders was conducted to gain insight into the current challenges and opportunities that are unique to the community.

This report outlines the key findings obtained from the engagement process, provides updates to existing priority goals and actions, and identifies additional strategic initiatives that are reflective of the current landscape and needs of the community.

Strategic Action Planning Process

The strategic plan was developed through a grassroots approach that included engagement with key community stakeholders. The engagement process included:

- Members of Council telephone interviews
- Staff members focus group session
- Community focus group session
- Business focus group session
- Business and community-wide survey

A collaborative approach was instrumental in creating a plan that reflects the strengths, challenges and opportunities as they relate to the Town of Parry Sound.



Survey Highlights

An online survey was developed and distributed through Survey Monkey to gain a thorough understanding of current opportunities, challenges and perceptions of the organization as observed by various stakeholders.

A total of 274 respondents completed the survey. The information below presents some of the key findings gathered throughout the survey process.



Respondents

- 70%** Permanent resident of Parry Sound
- 19%** Resident from outside Parry Sound
- 7%** Seasonal resident of Parry Sound
- 4%** Owner of a business operating in Parry Sound



Length of Residence

- 61%** Over 10 years
- 18%** 2-5 years
- 16%** 5-10 years
- 5%** Less than 1 year

Reasons for Living in Parry Sound



- Family and friends
- Grew up in Parry Sound
- Work in Parry Sound
- Natural environment / Beauty
- Sense of community
- Small town atmosphere
- Recreation and leisure opportunities
- Proximity to Georgian Bay
- Waterfront
- Walkability and green space
- Slower pace lifestyle
- Proximity to Toronto
- French school
- More tranquil lifestyle
- Remote working opportunities
- Proximity of First Nation

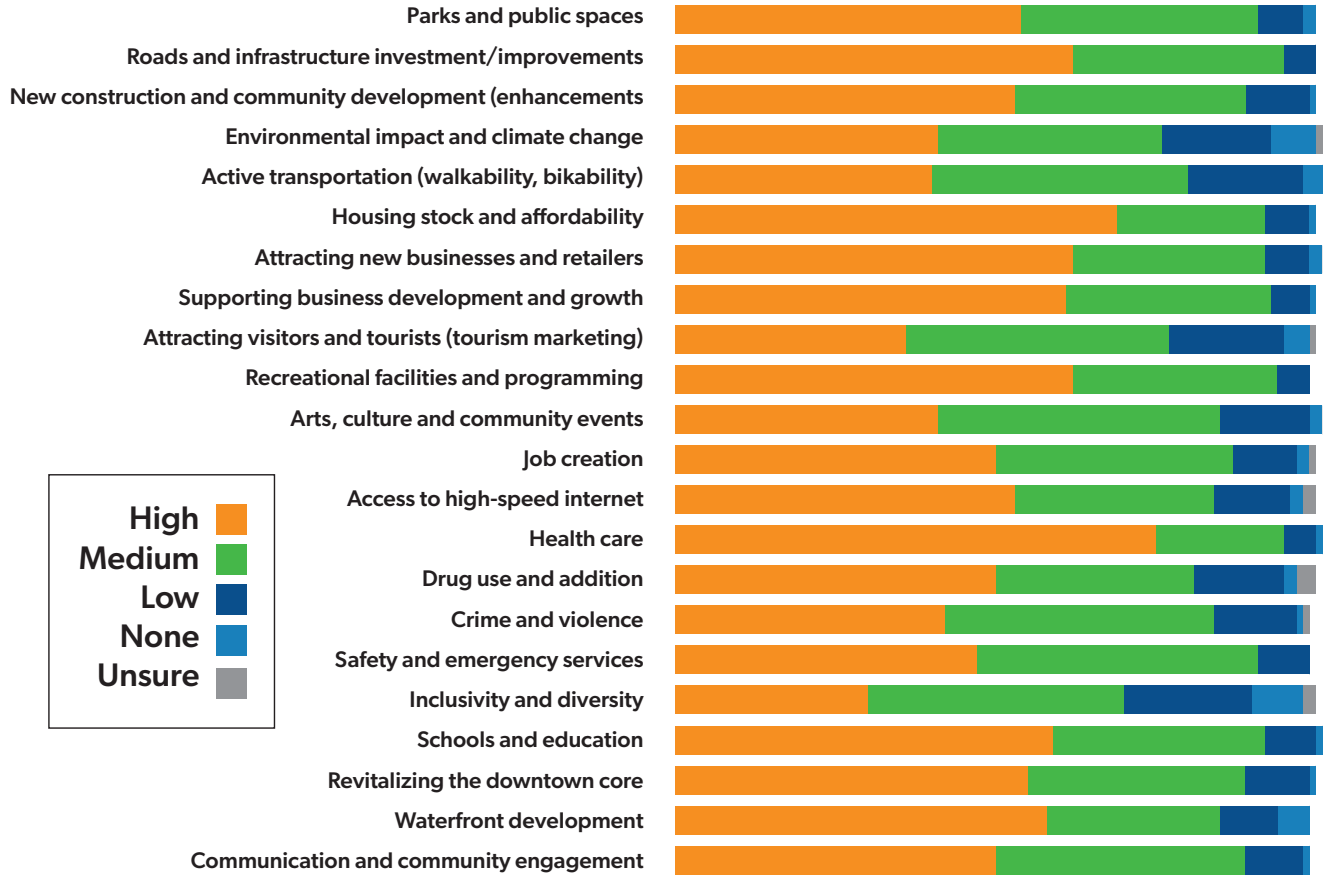
Types of Challenges



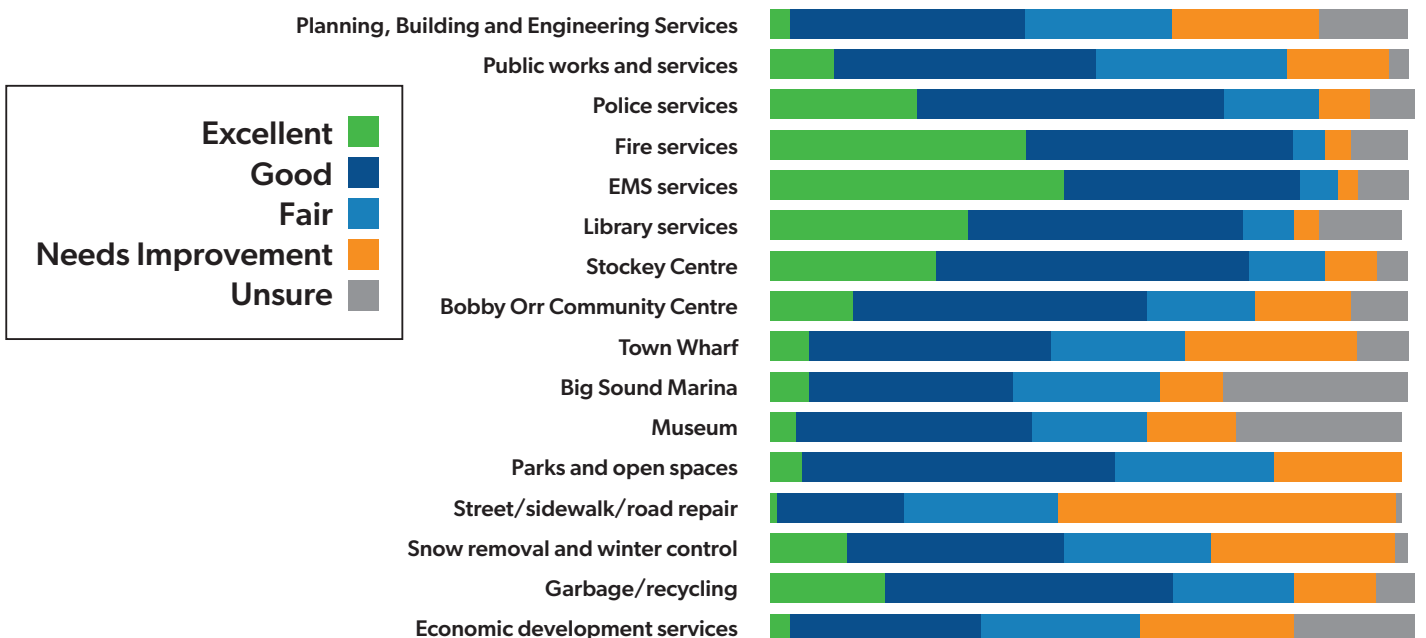
- Adequate housing
- Access to public transportation
- Healthcare / lack of doctors
- Waterfront improvements and development (attract tourists)
- Activities for youth and young families
- Environmental impacts, pollution, climate change
- Balancing growth with environment and small community feeling
- Safety of downtown
- Addiction, mental health
- Full-time, year-round employment opportunities
- Development of private land for public use
- Labour shortages
- Lack of space for industry development
- Infrastructure improvements / road maintenance
- Attracting diverse business mix / economic development
- Noise pollution / train whistle
- Taxes
- Communication



Areas of Focus Prioritized



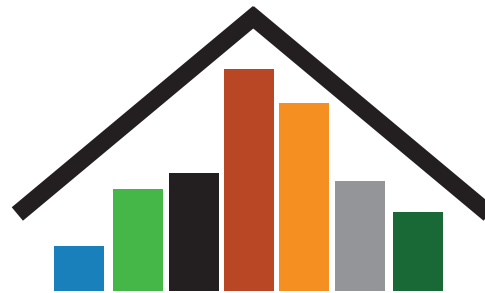
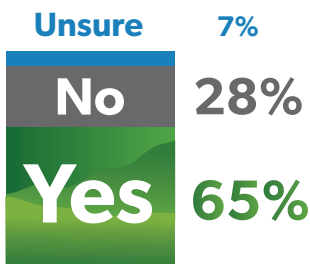
Municipal Services Satisfaction Level



Survey Highlights

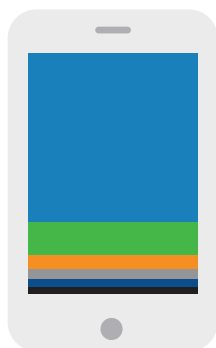


Adequate Greenspace, Parks and Natural Space



Challenges Related to Housing

- 85% Affordability
- 72% Lack of rental accommodations
- 45% Physical condition of existing housing
- 42% Housing supply for seniors
- 39% Property taxes
- 30% Lack of available land
- 17% Lack of municipal water/sewer availability



Residents Staying Connected

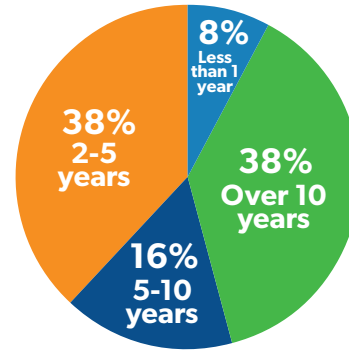
- 68% Social Media
- 13% Website
- 6% Printed materials
- 4% Emails
- 3% Media advertising
- 3% I am not connected



Business Survey Highlights



Years in Operations



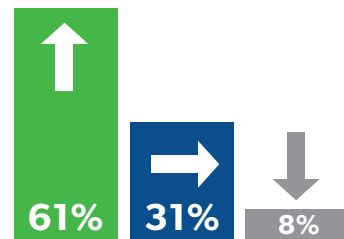
Full-Time Employees

83% 1-5 employees
8% 5-25 employees
8% 50-100 employees

Part-Time Employees

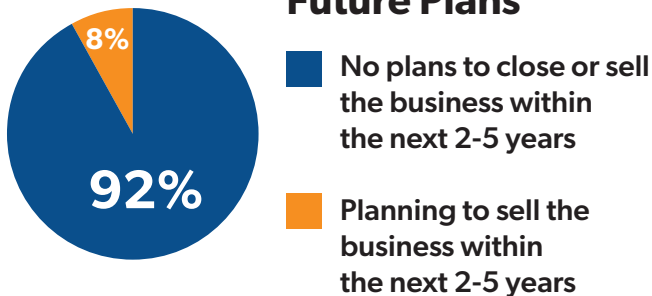
46% 1-5 employees
23% 5-25 employees
31% None

Current Business Situation



Experiencing Growth
Steady
In Decline

Future Plans

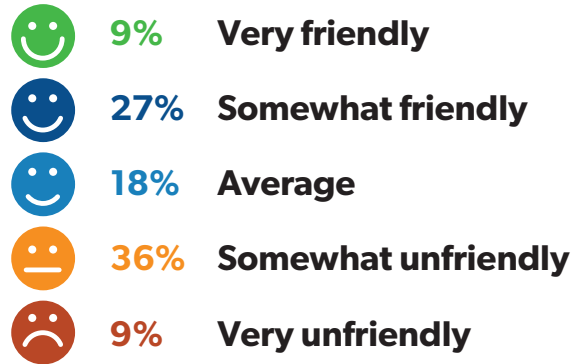


Succession Plan in Place

69% No
31% Yes



Business Friendly Perception



Space Requirements



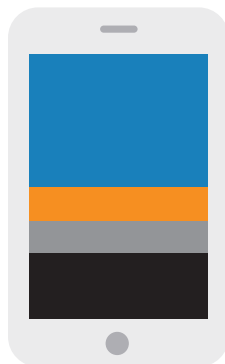
Types of Business Challenges

- Rent costs
- Seasonality
- Taxes
- Labour challenges
- Access to technology
- Building upkeep/maintenance
- Aging population
- Permit rules/regulations
- Accessing new customers
- Parking
- Climate change
- Lack of connection to waterfront
- Changing industry/regulatory rules

Important Factors Impacting Business Growth

(Weighted Average Rating)

1. Retaining existing or attracting new customers
2. Cost and availability of full-time employees
3. Rents and lease costs of buildings
4. Cost of utilities
5. Accessing new technologies
6. Staff training and development
7. Evaluating market opportunities
8. Financial management
9. Marketing
10. Business & property tax structure

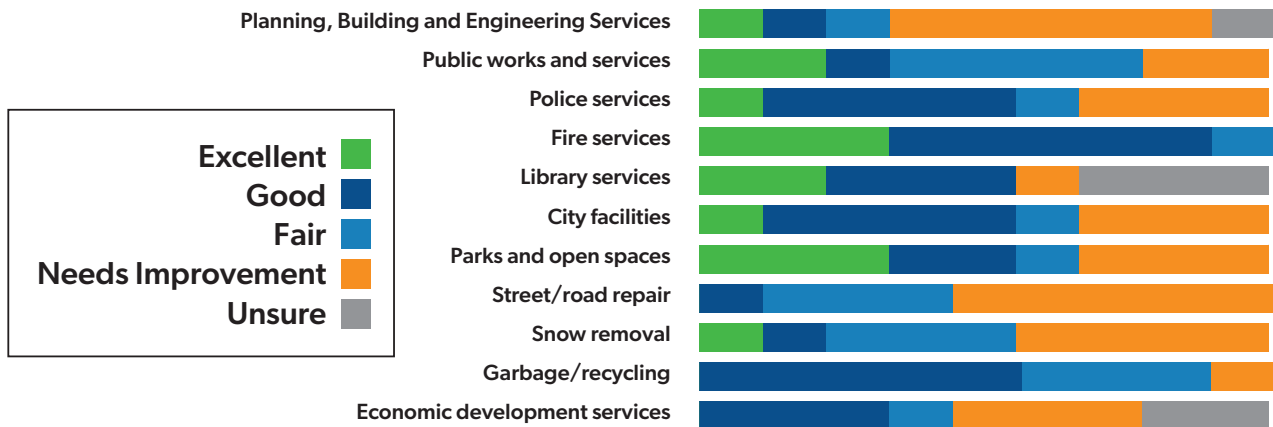


Businesses Staying Connected

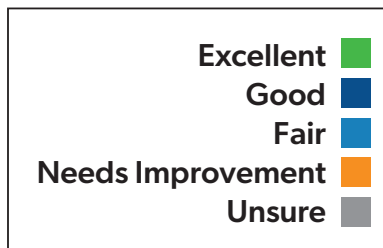
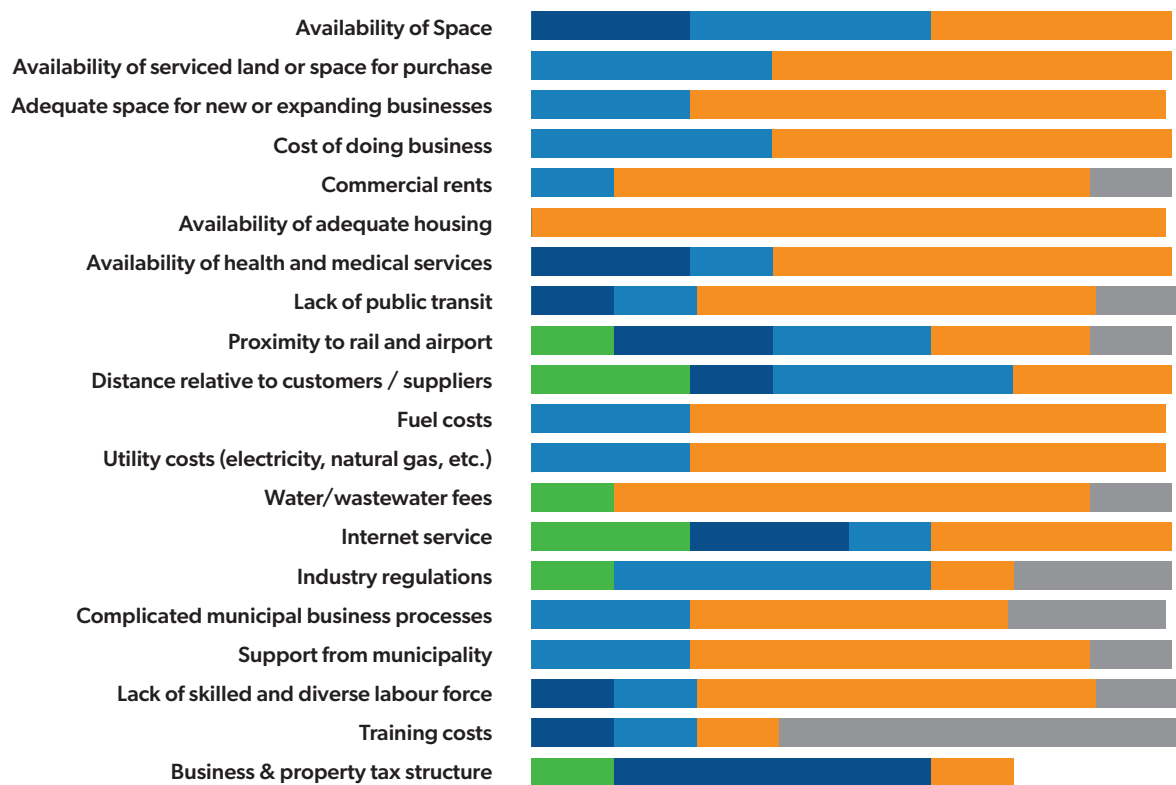
- 50% Social Media
- 13% Printed materials
- 12% Emails (please specify)
- 25% Not connected



Municipal Services Satisfaction Level



Important Factors for Doing Businesses in Parry Sound Rated



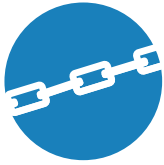


Interviews and Focus Groups

A total of three focus group sessions were conducted, along with telephone interviews with Council members. The interviews provided a wealth of insight that led to a deeper understanding of the current business landscape, community needs, specific gaps and opportunities as they related to the Town of Parry Sound. Feedback and insight obtained during the focus group sessions and interviews were instrumental in the development of the internal and external analysis and actions presented within this report.

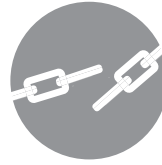


Internal & External Analysis



Strengths

- Strong sense of community pride
- Smaller, friendly community
- Balancing growth with environmental protection
- Beautiful natural landscapes and lakes yet still in close proximity to GTA
- Natural elements, attractions and events draw in visitors and tourists
- Waterfront, recreation, trails and tourism
- Arts and culture (music, theatre, film, etc.)
- Strong economic hub
- Strength of support provided to surrounding municipalities
- Ongoing development, growth and work-from-home opportunities
- Strong, active volunteer base that supports community organizations and events
- Dedicated and supportive Council, Town leadership and staff
- Adaptable and able to leverage existing resources for maximum impact
- Ability to source out and capitalize on funding opportunities and grants
- Strong communication and collaboration within municipal departments
- Community-driven Culture, Parks and Recreation Master Plan aligned with 2020-2030 Strategic Plan
- Regional economic development support



Challenges

- Impact of COVID-19 on businesses, staffing, and community
- Community understanding and expectations of municipal and departmental roles and functions
- Lack of housing inventory and affordable housing
- Lack of childcare
- Access to healthcare and medical services
- Access to higher paying employment opportunities
- Small tax base with a small geographical footprint
- Aging infrastructure
- Workforce challenges and labour shortages
- Community's resistance to change
- External communication with residents and business community
- Higher taxes compared to neighbouring communities
- Lack of cost sharing across regional municipalities
- Limited municipal staff, funding and resources
- Unrealistic service expectations resulting from population migration from larger communities
- Lack of public transportation and transportation challenges
- Challenges related to collaboration with waterfront land owned by Federal Government
- Lack of community tourism organization
- Accommodations focused on short-long term rentals vs tourism



Internal & External Analysis



Opportunities

- Identify and attract diverse business/commercial mix
- Invest in arts and cultural activities and activities for adults (20-60 years of age)
- Increase communication opportunities such as town hall sessions to bring community and businesses together
- Increase utilization of social media and website to relay information, provide updates, and promote awareness of activities
- Increase transparency by sharing goals, strategic plan updates, outcomes and impacts of initiatives and actions with community and businesses
- Strengthen newcomer programs and recruitment to support employment opportunities
- Develop a housing strategy that identifies gaps, opportunities and actions to address housing challenges
- Consider fee-for-model service (e.g. mandatory water meters) to conserve water consumption
- Develop shared initiatives and collaborate in areas such as training and programming
- Invest in and leverage technology
- Capitalize on funding programs and opportunities
- Create opportunities to utilize vacant land and attract mixed use development
- Collaborate with relevant organizations on opportunities for beautification and improvements of downtown
- Collaborate with tourism organizations and businesses to develop and leverage tourism experiences (e.g. culinary, guided tours, Indigenous culture)
- Establish a tourism destination and support the tourism sector
- Invest in professional development and training opportunities for municipal staff (e.g. Indigenous, culture)
- Review and update Official Plan, policies, and by-laws



Threats

- Changes in government or policies or funding
- Minister's Zoning Order (re-zoned 700 acres)
- Continuing potential impact of pandemic
- Rising cost of living, inflation and interest rates
- Potential economic downturn
- Youth out-migration
- Workforce challenges
- Aging population



Strategic Action Plan

The Town of Parry Sound's 10-year Partnering for the Future Strategic Plan 2020-2030 identified three core priority areas that focus on supporting **Economic Growth**, **Quality of Life** and **Organizational Excellence**. Key findings from the engagement process indicate that these three priority areas continue to be relevant and remain aligned with the municipality's mission and vision for the community and its needs. The actions developed for each of the strategic priorities identified within this Plan build on current successes and support existing initiatives identified in the 10-year Strategic Plan.

Timelines to complete action initiatives outlined in the Action Plan have been categorized as follows:

Short:	2023-2024
Medium:	2025-2027
Long:	2028-2030

Economic Growth



Parry Sound will be development ready and will strengthen and diversify its economy to provide sustainable growth, quality employment and housing that is attainable.

Goal: Partner to diversify the local economy and promote Parry Sound as a regional centre

1. Develop an Investment Attraction Strategy

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Develop an Investment Attraction Strategy to support business attraction/retention and economic growth. Identify current business mix, asset/land inventory, gaps, and opportunities for target areas such as downtown, waterfront, airport and industrial park. Develop actions to support goals, address challenges, market opportunities, and ensure accessibility. Consider tactics such as development incentives, ambassador program, orientation program, toolkits, marketing resources, and a Downtown Master Plan. Work in collaboration with municipalities in relation to shared space such as Industrial/business parks and airport. Work with agencies, realtors, organizations and stakeholders where needed to promote opportunities and assets.	Medium	Economic Development Department	WPSEDC

2. Increase Engagement and Communication with Businesses

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Increase opportunities to engage and communicate directly with businesses to ensure continuous understanding of needs and share information. Consider initiatives such as town hall sessions, annual surveys, email blasts, newsletters, etc. Identify opportunities to work with partners such as DBA and Chamber of Commerce to provide timely updates and communication to businesses.	Short	Economic Development Department	Parry Sound Area Chamber of Commerce Parry Sound Downtown Business Association

3. Continue to Support Downtown Revitalization

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Continue involvement related to beautification and improvements of the downtown area and collaborate with relevant organizations.	Short	Public Works	Parry Sound Downtown Business Association

4. Continue to Update and Align Community Improvement Plan

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Continue to update and align the Community Improvement Plan with Downtown Revitalization initiatives and goals.	Short	Planning Department	Parry Sound Downtown Business Association Façade Committee



5. Continue to Support Workforce Development Training

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Continue to support workforce development training by acting as a conduit and connector with workforce development organizations, employment agencies, and businesses to support local workforce development opportunities. Consider initiatives such as assisting businesses with accessing training subsidies and shared training opportunities.	Short	Economic Development Department	The Labour Market Group Employment Ontario Partners TBC / SBEC CBDC Canadore College

6. Strengthen Connections with Partners to Support and Strengthen Newcomer Recruitment and Programs

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Work with partners to identify opportunities, strengthen and promote newcomer programs and recruitment to support workforce development.	Medium	Economic Development Department	The Labour Market Group Employment Ontario Partners Canadore College

7. Develop a Youth Out-Migration and Engagement Strategy

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Identify opportunities to actively engage and recruit youth. For example, increase visits to high schools, engage with post secondary students and young professionals. Implement strategies to encourage employment opportunities for graduates and youth.	Short	Economic Development Department	Secondary and Post-Secondary Institutions



8. Research MAT Tax Feasibility

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Investigate feasibility of implementing a MAT tax to support tourism initiatives.	Medium	Finance Department with support from Economic Development Department	Hotel Association Partners

9. Support and Strengthen Tourism Sector

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Support the tourism sector and the development as a destination place through regional collaboration and participation in campaigns to attract visitors. Consider initiatives that support the development of experiential tourism packages (e.g. culinary, guided tours, Indigenous, culture), development of off-season packages and four-season destinations. Develop a database of short-term rental opportunities and identify initiatives to encourage extended visitor stays.	Medium	Economic Development Department	WPSEDC Explorer's Edge (RTO12) Tourism Partners

Goal: Take action to develop the waterfront

1. Review and Update Waterfront Master Plan

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Review and update the Waterfront Master Plan. Consider opportunities for upgrading and increasing assets, infrastructure, and services. Ensure the Waterfront Plan aligns with the Strategic Plan. Increase opportunities for collaboration and communication with all stakeholders.	Short	Planning Department	Community Stakeholders



Goal: Plan for future capacity

1. Continue to Invest in Infrastructure Improvements

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Continue to invest in infrastructure improvements and increase assets through new development to support economic development and community growth. Work with government partners to leverage funding opportunities to support infrastructure goals. Link actions with Municipal Asset Management Plan.	Short	Public Works/ Engineering firms with support from Finance and Planning Departments	n/a

2. Establish an Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) Reduction Strategy

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Create a strategy to reduce wastewater system inflow and infiltration (I&I) in order to increase wastewater system capacity for development and improve quality of wastewater discharge to support sustainable community growth.	Short	Wastewater Department	n/a

Goal: Support housing options across the spectrum

1. Develop a Housing Strategy

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Develop a Housing Strategy plan to identify gaps, opportunities, actions and address housing challenges. Assess community needs, inventory local and external assets, identify development and redevelopment opportunities, consider development incentives, review policies, and collaborate with community partners to create a vision and increase attainable housing options. Identify opportunities to collaborate and participate in discussions to support regional implementation of actions.	Long	Planning Department	WPSEDC



Quality of Life



Parry Sound is a great place to live, work, play, invest and grow.

Goal: Work with partners to increase recreational opportunities

1. Continue to Advance the Culture, Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Continue to advance the Culture, Parks and Recreation Master Plan and increase communication to showcase progress made to date with roll out plan until 2030.	Medium	Parks and Recreation Department	n/a
Continue to invest in and improve accessibility with walking, hiking and biking trails.			
Build a communication plan to increase promotion of assets, green space and communicate improvements.			

2. Develop a Tree Canopy Enhancement Plan

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Develop a plan to increase, enhance and protect the tree canopy.	Short	Parks and Recreation	Schools Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

Goal: Look for opportunities to be an all-inclusive community

1. Continue to Strengthen Efforts towards Truth and Reconciliation

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Continue to work collaboratively with Indigenous partners, First Nations, and organizations to identify opportunities to embrace culture, foster communication, support economic prosperity, create synergies and advance efforts to meet the Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan.	Short	CAO	Local First Nation Communities Friendship Centre



2. Enhance New Resident Program

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Continue to develop programs, initiatives and services catered to new residents to establish more opportunities to connect to the community.	Short	Finance Department/ Reception	n/a

3. Support a Regional Transportation Plan

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Provide support, participate in, and collaborate with partners in the development of a Regional Transportation Plan. Consider best practices that could be initiated into the town/region.	Medium/ Long	Public Works	WPSEDC

4. Develop a Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Continue to work with relevant stakeholders, organizations and agencies to develop a Community Safety and Well Being Plan.	Short	Development and Protective Services	n/a

Goal: Build community pride in Parry Sound

1. Support and Strengthen Community Culture and Events

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Continue to facilitate and support events, identify opportunities to increase communication, promote activities, and work with organizations and partners to create synergies, increase attendance, express culture, and support quality of life in the community.	Short	Parks and Recreation Department	n/a



2. Develop a Community Pride-of-Place Campaign

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Implement a communication campaign to showcase and recognize the unique culture and assets of the community in order to foster a sense of pride-of-place and promote strengths and quality of life to internal and external audiences. Consider incentives to encourage residents and businesses to maintain properties.	Short	Community Engagement/ Deputy Clerk	n/a

Goal: Promote post-secondary education within the community

1. Continue to Advocate for and Support Education

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Work with Canadore College to support, expand and promote education programs in high-demand fields such as construction, trades, tourism, healthcare, etc. Identify opportunities to partner with local businesses to develop experiential learning experiences for students.	Short	Economic Development Department	Canadore College WPSEDC



Organizational Excellence



The Town of Parry Sound is responsible and accountable to its residents to deliver value for taxpayer dollars.

Goal: Follow sound financial policies in service delivery now and into the future

1. Undertake an Organizational Review

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Retain a third-party consultant specializing in organizational reviews to assess positions and operations, identify challenges and gaps and make recommendations to improve efficiency, enhance work culture and support success.	Short	CAO and Administration Department	n/a
Promote existing Professional Development opportunities for staff and identify opportunities to support employee success and growth.			

2. Review and Update Official Plan, By-Laws and Policies

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Review and update the Official Plan, by-laws and relevant policies to ensure relevance and alignment with Strategic Plan.	Short	Planning Department	n/a

3. Continue to Pursue and Apply for Funding Programs and Revenue Sources

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Continue to work with regional, provincial and federal partners to capitalize on funding programs to support community investment and growth.	Short	Finance Department	n/a



Goal: Customer service and community engagement

1. Develop Framework to Increase Community Engagement

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Develop a framework and plan to ensure consistent engagement and communication opportunities for the community. Consider in-person and digital communication channels to provide timely updates, successes, strategic report cards, operating budgets, annual budgets, and other relevant information. Increase communication and provide updates on progress made.	Short	Clerk's Office	n/a

2. Conduct Continuous Improvement Review of Processes

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Continue to conduct improvement reviews of services to evaluate opportunities to streamline processes, integrate technology and innovation, improve communications, increase customer service and create efficiencies related to cost-effective and quality service delivery.	Short	Human Resources	n/a

Goal: Engaged staff

1. Continue to Engage and Communicate with Staff

Description	Timeline	Leads	Partners
Continue to create opportunities to increase engagement and communication with staff to gain insight, foster teamwork and collaboration, ensure clarity, boost productivity, acknowledge achievements, support retention, and create an inclusive and positive workplace environment.	Short	Human Resources	n/a

