



# Township of Muskoka Lakes Strategic Plan

**2021 - 2024**

# INTRODUCTION



**6,500**

Year-round population of The Township of Muskoka Lakes which increases in the summer months by

**27,000**

The close proximity of the Township of Muskoka Lakes to the urban populations of Ontario and northern United States has contributed to its historic and contemporary role as an iconic cottaging, recreation and tourism destination. The Township's small communities, waterfront and rural areas provide an attractive lifestyle to its residents.

In the face of global change, the Township understands the need to take a leadership role in protecting the features that make our community unique so that future generations can also enjoy the Muskoka experience.

Consultation with a variety of community members revealed the following clear themes, which have been the basis for setting the strategic goals and initiatives for the Township:

- The Township of Muskoka Lakes is known for its natural beauty and must protect its environment from overdevelopment;
- There are opportunities to build a year-round economy that intertwines the natural beauty with the economy, through things like eco-tourism, research, and building a true knowledge economy;
- There is a need to address a significant and noticeable social and economic divide between the year-round and seasonal populations;
- There is a need for the Township to proactively advocate and secure broadband infrastructure to connect its residents and businesses.

The Strategic Plan contains a series of goals to protect that which is cherished, support business retention and expansion, as well as continuously improve the services and programs that meet the evolving needs and priorities of our community."

## A message from Phil Harding, Mayor of the Township of Muskoka Lakes



Photo credit - Pure Muskoka

The natural and cultural wonders of the Township of Muskoka Lakes have made it a globally recognized place to visit, live and play. With a vision focused on protecting and enhancing these features for future generations, the strategic plan becomes the catalyst for setting direction and inspiring higher performance.

As your Mayor, I would like to thank all the community members and groups, staff and Council for your engagement in, and commitment to, the process of developing this Strategic Plan. Your passion about our community and its future is truly inspiring.

Our community has confirmed a strong vision, to which our Council and staff team are committed. The following strategic plan goals create a shared understanding of the work involved to successfully deliver against this vision and guide future budget priorities:

- Preserve, protect, and promote the natural and cultural environment;
- Strengthen and diversify Muskoka Lakes' economy;

- Enhance and sustain public services and infrastructure; and
- Strengthen key relationships across all municipal and government sectors.

Intended to bridge this term of Council with the next, this living document is our commitment to ensuring Muskoka Lakes remains a place where generations live and gather in a breathtaking natural environment, enjoying recreation, history, and small-town character.

It is our privilege to serve the community.

Sincerely,

**Phil Harding, Mayor**

# OUR VISION



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***“Where generations live and gather in a breathtaking natural environment, enjoying recreation, history, and small-town character. These will be protected and enhanced for future generations, while encouraging thriving communities.”***

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# OUR MISSION



Photo credit - Pure Muskoka

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***“The Township of Muskoka Lakes Council, residents, volunteers, and staff will be excellent stewards of the environment, set clear and respectful expectations of each other, and work together to achieve our shared vision.”***

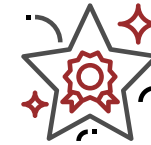
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# OUR VALUES

Muskoka Lakes is a special place that is knitted together through a shared set of values that guides how our local government works, how we treat each other, and how we work together to build our community. The values we share are:



**Respect** through transparent and accountable governance and administrative processes, open and meaningful community engagement, and inclusion of community perspectives in decisions and actions.



**Excellence** in environmental stewardship, responsible governance, and customer service delivery.



**Leadership** that brings the community together on decisions and actions that will move the Township forward.



**Resilience** in our ability to adapt to change in a manner that is true to our natural environment and community culture and traditions.



**Sustainability** in our decisions and actions that protect and enhance services to people, environment, culture, history, and economy.

These values will underpin all of our shared actions in realizing our vision for the Township of Muskoka Lakes.

# STRATEGIC GOALS

Preserve and Protect the Natural  
and Cultural Environment



**Pursuing Four  
Strategic Goals  
to Achieve our Vision**

Strengthen Key  
Relationships



Strengthen and  
Diversify  
Muskoka Lakes'  
Economy



Enhance and Sustain Public  
Services and Infrastructure



# STRATEGIC GOALS



## ***Preserve and Protect the Natural and Cultural Environment***

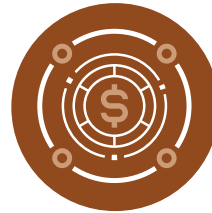
***To Preserve and Protect the Natural and Cultural Environment, the Township will:***

- Continue to preserve and protect the natural features of the Muskoka watershed found within the Township, including water quality.
- Preserve, protect, and promote the heritage and cultural features that make Muskoka Lakes unique.
- Leverage local and regional relationships to strengthen our response to climate change, and ensure that Muskoka Lakes remains adaptable and resilient in its effects.
- Communicate, market, and promote the use and preservation of our natural environment, including creating dynamic downtowns that highlight the natural environment and highlighting access to the waterfront.
- Enhance the clarity of understanding and enforceability of septic management policies, practices, and infrastructure, and support these through greater education of, and communication, to users.





# STRATEGIC GOALS



## ***Strengthen and Diversify Muskoka Lakes' Economy***

***To Strengthen and Diversify Muskoka Lakes' Economy,  
the Township will:***

- Prioritize the implementation of the economic development strategy, including the housing, workforce, broadband, and transportation enablers of economic development.
- Set an economic development vision, and establish criteria to assess and prioritize desired types of economic growth for the Township, particularly light industrial, commercial, knowledge-based and year-round amenities and activities.
- Leverage existing Township infrastructure to foster accessible and affordable community hubs that support a thriving community, with a focus on year-round amenities, cultural attractions, and ancillary services that contribute positively to a high quality of life.

# STRATEGIC GOALS



## *Enhance and Sustain Public Services and Infrastructure*



*Photo credit - Robert Taylor*

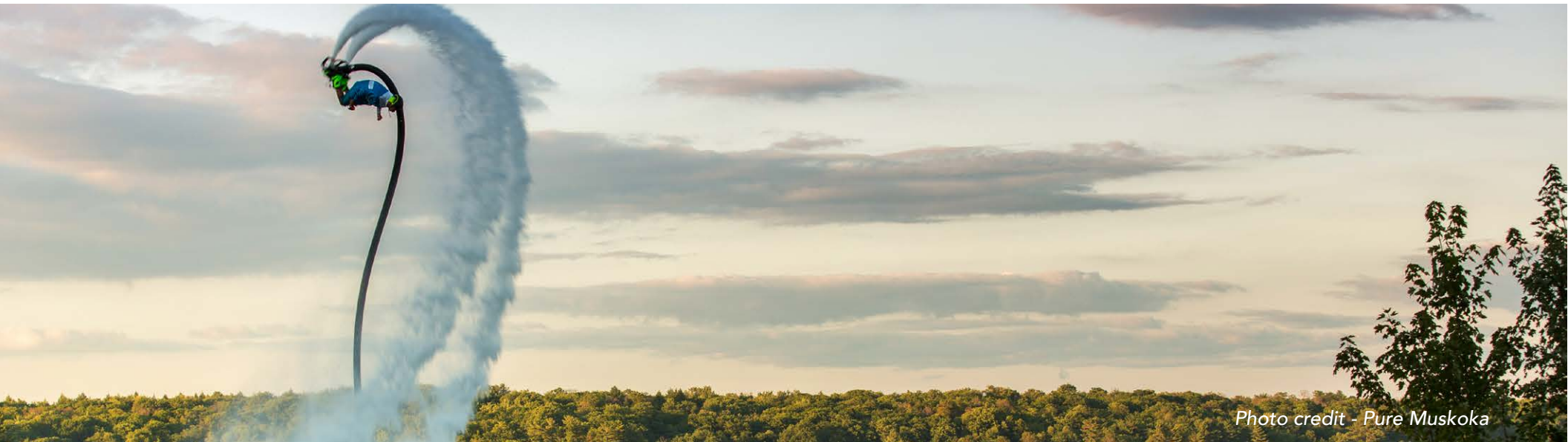
### ***To Enhance and Sustain Public Services and Infrastructure, the Township will:***

- Develop and implement an actionable recreation and trails master plan that improves community and visitor usage of the Township's infrastructure and natural features.
- Develop and implement a transportation master plan that identifies opportunities to maintain and enhance the Township's vital multi-modal transportation infrastructure.
- Maintain a focus on organizational excellence, accountability, and responsibility, strengthen staff engagement, and support staff with training necessary to effectively deliver services to residents.
- Assess the Township's current service delivery models and identify opportunities for modernization, digitization, and enhanced customer service engagement.

# STRATEGIC GOALS



## *Strengthen Key Relationships*



*Photo credit - Pure Muskoka*

### **To Strengthen Key Relationships, the Township will:**

- Conduct a thorough review of the Township's existing Municipal, Provincial, Federal and Indigenous government relationships that includes an assessment of influence (on the Township), financial impact (e.g. how designations affect funding opportunities), and opportunities for increased collaboration.
- Improve communications activities between the Township and other governments to facilitate better working relationships and information-sharing in support of legislated mandates and strategic priorities.
- Identify specific measures that, if achieved, will improve the Township's governance, fiscal, and programmatic relationship with the District.

# HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER



*Building upon an already strong foundation, the Strategic Plan provides direction for further plans and strategies that will enable the Township of Muskoka Lakes to work with the community to achieve our Vision.*



Township of Muskoka Lakes

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**HOURS OF OPERATION:**

Monday - Friday 8:15am - 4:00pm

[www.muskokalakes.ca](http://www.muskokalakes.ca)