

If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact 1-800-372-1102 ext. 2564



The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

To: Planning and Economic Development Committee
From: Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development
Report: #2024-EDT-12
Date: September 3, 2024

Subject:

Durham Tourism Five Year Action Plan, the Regional Tourism Plan

Recommendation:

That the Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends to Regional Council:

That the Durham Tourism Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028 be endorsed.

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Durham Tourism Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028 (Regional Tourism Plan), included as Attachment #1, and to recommend that it be endorsed.

1.2 This report will be accompanied by a staff presentation by Jacquie Severs, Manager of Marketing and Tourism, to the Planning and Economic Development Committee.

2. Background

2.1 The Regional Tourism Plan is a five year action plan to guide the tourism activities of the Region of Durham's Economic Development and Tourism Division (Durham Tourism), and outlines how projects and programs will be implemented to support achieving the overall vision of [Ready Set Future: A PLACE Blueprint for Durham](#), 2023-2027 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy and Action Plan.

- 2.2 The Tourism section of Economic Development and Tourism (Durham Tourism) is the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for Durham Region. Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) represent the voice of a destination to potential visitors. This can involve attracting visitors, partnering with operators to develop tourism products, providing amenities, working with partners to circulate information to tourists, and ensuring economic competitiveness of the sector. As DMO, Durham Tourism has the lead role in promoting Durham Region as a place to visit.
- 2.3 Durham Tourism has been Durham Region's DMO since 1987. Durham Tourism works collaboratively with Destination Ontario, Central Counties Tourism, Area Municipal teams, local tourism organizations, businesses, operators, and many others.
- 2.4 Working in cooperation with our Area Municipalities, Durham Tourism attracts visitors, supports tourism businesses, engages with key groups such as agri-tourism operators, champions and facilitate Rural Economic Development (RED) projects, leads tourism sector business retention and expansion (BR+E) initiatives, cultivates the film, television and music industries, hosts multisport games, and orchestrates a wide array of sector-specific initiatives designed to strengthen our tourism offering and create jobs.
- 2.5 The Regional Tourism Plan incorporates Ready Set Future actions, while also taking a deeper look at the Durham Tourism value proposition and brand; the landscape of tourism; and target audiences to be developed, nurtured, and attracted to Durham.
- 2.6 The collaboration, consultation and research involved in completing the Regional Tourism Plan included:
 - a. A year-long consultation with more than 80 community partners as part of the development of Ready Set Future
 - b. Information gathered at the consultations to redevelop the Durham Tourism brand (completed and approved in 2020)
 - c. A 2021 Durham Tourism Industry Survey
 - d. A 2023 Central Counties Tourism (CCT) Industry Survey and consultative process with CCT on early iterations of this plan including research and feedback
 - e. A review of the community tourism plans for Durham's area municipalities

- f. Circulation to area municipal economic development and tourism staff, north Durham Tourism Advisory Committees, Oshawa Tourism, CCT, and the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation
- 2.7 In addition, the Regional Tourism Plan development included industry research to develop a broad picture of local, national, and global trends impacting tourism to identify areas of opportunity. These include reports such as: StatsCan National Travel Survey (2019), Sport Tourism Canada data (2021), Durham Hotel Accommodations Reports, State of the Ontario Tourism Industry (2022), Ontario Arts and Culture Tourism (2023), Destination Ontario Market Report (2023), and others.

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 3.1 The following reports and decisions relate to the Tourism Plan:
- a. [#2022-EDT-15](#): Ready Set Future – Durham Region Five Year Economic Development and Tourism Strategy
 - b. #2024-EDT-13: Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) and the forming of Tourism Municipal Services Corporations. The collection of MATs by Area Municipalities was considered during the creation of this Regional Tourism Plan. Increased Area Municipal spending on tourism infrastructure and promotions, through their respective community tourism plans, will act to support and strengthen outcomes of the Regional Tourism Plan.

4. Durham Tourism Action Plan

- 4.1 The Regional Tourism Plan considers the current situation and future aspirations for Durham Region. It also explores the Durham Tourism brand vision, messaging, positioning, and values. The Tourism Plan also includes a high-level review of the Durham Tourism brand personality.
- 4.2 The Tourism Plan vision is that Durham Region is known as the most authentic and memorable nearby destination for residents of the Greater Toronto Area.
- 4.3 To achieve this vision, the Tourism Plan identifies five goals:
1. Urban Excitement and Country Charm: Build the Durham Tourism brand by promoting attractions and experiences that align with brand principles.

2. **Strengthen Quality of Place:** Undertake activities that improve Durham's quality of place metrics and prioritize experiences that instill fond memories and deepen connections to local community.
 3. **Champion inclusive tourism:** Pursue tourism initiatives which are diverse, accessible, and inclusive.
 4. **Drive prosperity through local love:** Prioritize activities with high potential to drive spending to locally-owned and operated businesses and increase overnight stays.
 5. **Achieve broader economic development goals:** Leverage tourism industry development activities to attract a talented workforce, retain new graduates, and improve investment readiness.
- 4.4 Action items and tactics are associated with each goal detailing specific activities which will help Durham achieve its vision as a tourism destination. Each action item includes a forecasted date for starting work on that action.
- 4.5 The new Regional Tourism Plan was developed entirely in-house.

5. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 5.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:
- a. **Goal 1: Environmental Sustainability**
 - 1.5 Expand sustainable and active transportation.
 - b. **Goal 2: Community Vitality**
 - 2.4 Support a high quality of life for all through human services delivery.
 - 2.5 Build a healthy, inclusive, age-friendly community where everyone feels a sense of belonging.
 - c. **Goal 3: Economic Prosperity**
 - 3.1 Position Durham Region as the location of choice for business.
 - 3.2 Leverage Durham's prime geography, social infrastructure, and strong partnerships to foster economic growth.
 - 3.4 Capitalize on Durham's strengths in key economic sectors to attract high quality jobs.
 - 3.5 Provide a supportive environment for agriculture and agri-food industries.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The Regional Tourism Plan identifies goal areas, tactics, and actions that will be undertaken or supported by Economic Development and Tourism staff over the next five years to strengthen our tourism sector and increase economic impact of visitors to the tourism economy. The Tourism Plan is guided by, and founded on, Ready Set Future: A PLACE Blueprint for Durham, 2023-2027 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy and Action Plan.

7. Attachments

Attachment #1: Durham Tourism Strategic Action Plan 2024-2028

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP, PLE
Commissioner of Planning and
Economic Development

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer

2024-2028

Durham Tourism Strategic Action Plan



An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. The scene is dominated by vibrant green fields, some of which are divided into smaller plots. A prominent road or path runs diagonally across the middle of the frame. In the lower-left quadrant, there is a cluster of buildings, possibly a farm or a small industrial site, with a parking lot. A small pond is visible in the lower-left corner. The background shows a vast expanse of land with more fields and a large body of water, possibly a lake or a wide river, under a clear blue sky with light, wispy clouds.

Acknowledgement

Durham Region is located on the traditional lands of the Mississauga Peoples. While the Region has started its journey to develop meaningful relationships and work toward reconciliation with local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, we recognize and acknowledge that a more comprehensive approach to reconciliation is needed to address systemic inequities and racism; and to better support, celebrate and deliver services to Indigenous Peoples in the region. We give this acknowledgement to show respect to the First Peoples who inhabited this land and to remind ourselves of the importance of strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities and of our continuing commitment to do better.

This strategy endeavours to support the creation of economic opportunities for people of diverse backgrounds, identities, abilities, lifestyles and life stages; and aims to create an inclusive prosperous future for everyone.

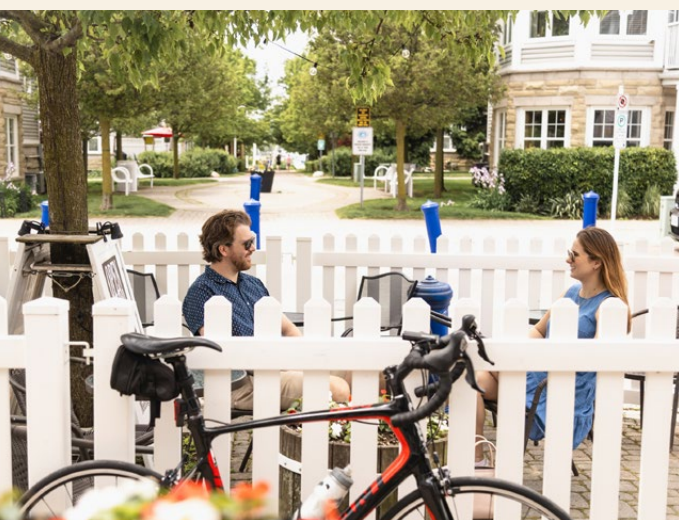


Table of Contents

- 2** Acknowledgement
- 4** Introduction
- 5** A Collaborative Approach to Tourism Development
- 7** Executive summary
- 10** Regional tourism industry and partners
- 12** Visitor types
- 13** Business categories
- 14** Key geographic audiences
- 15** Travel trends and data
- 16** Key survey insights
- 19** Key tourism segments of focus
- 26** Visitors from the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA)
- 28** Key marketing audience demographics
- 32** Sport tourism
- 34** Rural tourism
- 38** Durham Tourism's brand identity
- 42** SOAR Analysis
- 44** 2024-2028 Durham Tourism Strategic Action Plan



Introduction

Ready Set Future: A PLACE Blueprint for Durham, Durham Region’s Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan (2023–2027) was approved by council in December 2022. The strategy is bold and ambitious; and sets out a vision for the region three decades into the future—aspirations for a talented workforce, vibrant downtowns, a reputation for business innovation, and a distinct creative identity. It contains a Five-Year Action Plan.

As an outcome of that strategy development, a series of Action Plans are being developed to implement Ready Set Future and communicate more detailed plans for specific areas of focus.

Ready Set Future: A PLACE Blueprint for Durham 2023–2027

The vision statement of Ready Set Future is:

Durham’s distinct cultural identity—and its vibrant and diverse downtowns—will be magnets for talent and investment, and the region’s innovation community will be known for solving global challenges.

Ready Set Future lays out a PLACE (People, Location, Acceleration, Creativity, Enablers) blueprint for achieving this vision, which sets a vision for the next 30 years:

People: Durham is a leader in Ontario for workforce skill and education attainment.

Location: Intensification and renewal in Durham’s urban cores, and vibrant and diverse downtowns.

Acceleration: Durham’s innovators are solving global challenges.

Creativity: Durham has a distinct identity for arts, cultural and creative industries.

Enablers: Collaboration, a resourcing plan and performance metrics will unlock the potential of this strategy.

Ready Set Future, The PLACE Blueprint and its defined priority clusters are central influences within this Plan.

A Collaborative Approach to Tourism Development

Durham Tourism, as the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for Durham Region, has proudly fostered collaborative endeavors with local partners for more than four decades to support and grow the local tourism economy. Our commitment to a shared vision has been instrumental in nurturing a robust and dynamic tourism economy in the region.

Durham Tourism assumes the lead in championing Durham Region as an enticing destination. In our role as the DMO, we offer support to agri-tourism operators; champion and facilitate Rural Economic Development (RED) projects; spearhead tourism sector business retention and expansion (BR+E) initiatives; cultivate the film, television, and music industries; host multisport games; and, orchestrate an array of sector-specific activities.

Central Counties Tourism (CCT) compliments our efforts by providing strategic insights and invaluable research on the tourism industry—encompassing hotel occupancy, visitor flows, and other critical data. CCT is not just a partner but a collaborator, actively supporting ambassador programs and delivering training for tourism operators to enhance the community's overall tourism readiness. The 'partnership program,' administered by CCT, serves as a crucial conduit for directing project funding to tourism operators—an important component of the comprehensive approach to tourism delivery in Durham Region.

Local area municipal tourism teams play a vital role by crafting locally-specific promotional materials and campaigns. They foster a vibrant local cultural scene through a rich tapestry of arts and cultural programming, including festivals and events that showcase the distinct charm of each area.

To fortify these collaborative efforts, Durham Tourism organizes the Durham Tourism Municipal Leadership team. This team—comprising members from Durham Tourism, Central Counties Tourism, Oshawa Tourism, and representatives from all local area municipalities—serves as a nexus for shared insights, strategic planning, and unified action.

In the broader Durham Region community, our collaborative relationships include groups such as Durham Farm Fresh, local Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, Business Improvement Areas, event producers, tourism businesses and destinations, cultural organizations, and many others. This collaborative network actively drives visitation and awareness—bolstering our region's tourism offerings and reinforcing its standing as an appealing and dynamic destination. Together, we embrace a collective commitment to realizing the full potential of tourism, making Durham Region a standout destination on the global stage.



The Durham Tourism Five Year Action Plan incorporates these Ready Set Future actions, while also taking a deeper look at the Durham Tourism value proposition and brand; the landscape of tourism in a post-pandemic world; and target audiences to be developed, nurtured and attracted to Durham. The plan also outlines a defined action-oriented strategy to achieve the broader goals of economic development and tourism activities.



Executive summary

Durham Tourism will promote tourism and support tourism industries in alignment with the following five goals:

1. **Urban excitement and country charm:** Build the Durham Tourism brand by promoting attractions and experiences that align with brand principles.

2. **Strengthen quality of place:** Undertake activities that improve Durham's quality of place metrics and prioritize experiences that instill fond memories and deepen connections to local community.

3. **Champion inclusive tourism:** Pursue tourism initiatives which are diverse, accessible and inclusive.

4. **Drive prosperity through local love:** Prioritize activities with high potential to drive spending to locally owned and operated businesses and increase overnight stays.

5. **Achieve broader economic development goals:** Leverage tourism industry development activities to attract a talented workforce, retain new graduates, and improve investment readiness.

Leveraging data, community input, macro trends, tourism industry insights, and local data, Durham Tourism is launching a new and targeted focus of their work, for the years ahead. The plan strengthens and nurtures our tourism assets, attracts visitors, while helping to deeply define Durham's place brand identity.

Tourism is the heartbeat of our communities

Businesses—like restaurants, destination shops, those offering outdoor adventures, and live music venues—help to strengthen Durham’s cultural identity. Further, it is a combination of factors—such as the vibrancy in our downtowns; the success of rural agri-tourism operators; and welcoming, authentic experiences—that communicate our place identity to visitors. Together, this tapestry of businesses, destinations, and places make up the brand promise for Durham Tourism: Urban Excitement and Country Charm.

In Canada, the tourism industry is a significant contributor to the economy and job creation. In 2019, Tourism accounted for 2.1 million total jobs in Canada. In 2019, Ontario hosted 144 million annual visitors, generating over \$34 billion in new spending that represented 4.3 per cent of GDP. Tourism employs the largest percentage of young people in Ontario (23 per cent) aged 15 to 24 and creates year-round jobs in our communities. In 2019, Durham Region welcomed 3.6 million annual visitors, which generated a total of \$321 million in new visitor spending.

This plan sets out promotional activities designed to attract more visitor spending. This in turn, creates jobs in our communities and strengthens tourism operators. However, the plan will achieve broader goals, which include strengthening the region’s overall Quality of Place; enhancing the vibrancy of our urban and rural downtowns; and ensuring that Durham is both magnetic and memorable.

These inward-looking activities are designed to ensure that visitors have a memorable experience that they will share—either online or by word of mouth. They are designed to encourage the residents of Durham to be its proud advocates, and built around activities that support the place brand identity of Durham Region; enabling experiences that contribute to quality of life and community pride.

Supporting our communities from within—ensuring a healthy heartbeat—while also attracting visitors will create a stronger tourism industry, better experiences for visitors, and a bold place brand with which to attract investment.

Using tourism to build Quality of Place

Durham is a four-season destination that offers 14 downtown and main street communities, eight cities and towns, dozens of hamlets and small communities, and picturesque rural areas. Among these areas are neighbourhoods and communities ready to be celebrated and visited. Supporting thriving communities, local businesses, and downtown areas will help make Durham a better place to live and visit. Supporting programming in downtown areas will be a priority.

While attracting visitors to Durham is an essential component of our economy—and offers support for local business—Durham Tourism can help strengthen our region’s creative identity and sense of place. This is achieved by supporting, nurturing, and undertaking projects that create a sense of interconnectedness and community pride. Examples such as local public art projects, placemaking initiatives, supporting homegrown festivals and events, participating in or leading campaigns to build resident pride, and continued support to activities that align with Durham Tourism’s brand principles.

Tourism is a key contributor to economic development across Durham Region. Durham Tourism’s actions include activities that strongly position and communicate Durham Region as a welcoming and attractive place; a place where visiting, living, working, and/or building a business, is a positive experience worthy of consideration.



**“An attractive sense of place is integral to a place brand. We are attracted to, and spend more time in attractive, distinctive, and engaging locations.”
Bill Baker, Place Branding for Small Cities, Regions and Downtowns**



Regional tourism industry and partners

Destination Canada

Destination Canada provides intelligence, tools and resources that help the Canadian tourism industry reach domestic and international markets.

Destination Ontario

Destination Ontario is the lead tourism marketing organization for Ontario, Canada. Destination Ontario markets Ontario to travel consumers within Ontario, Canada and around the world.

Central Counties Tourism

Central Counties Tourism is an independent, non-profit Regional Tourism Organization (RTO) established within the Ontario regional framework. This organization plays a lead role in the continued development of a dynamic, competitive and rewarding tourism industry across the Central Counties region. A geographic area that includes the regional municipalities of York and Durham, as well as the Headwaters area which is made up of Caledon, Dufferin County, Erin, Mono, Orangeville, and Shelburne.

Tourism Industry Association of Canada

The Tourism Industry Association of Canada is responsible for representing tourism interests at the national level, and its advocacy work involves promoting and supporting policies, programs and activities that will benefit sector growth and development.

Sport Tourism Canada

Sport Tourism Canada is an organization founded through a partnership with the Canadian Tourism Commission, with the goal to increase Canada's capacity to attract and host sport tourism events.

Durham Tourism

Durham Tourism represents eight local area municipalities to promote, support, and grow the region's tourism industries. Durham Tourism builds, promotes, and strengthens: Durham's quality of place, inclusive tourism, spending to local businesses, and the creation of memorable experiences.

Tourism Industry Association of Ontario

The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) is recognized as the voice of the tourism industry in Ontario. TIAO advocates for the importance of tourism, as an economic driver and job creator, to serve the interests of Ontario’s diverse tourism industry and business community. TIAO collectively represents 200,000 businesses and 400,000 employees, to take on pressing policy issues that impact the Ontario tourism industry.

Indigenous Tourism Ontario

Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO) is Ontario’s first and only dedicated Indigenous tourism organization; focuses on uniting communities, Indigenous organizations and industry leaders to support the growth of Indigenous tourism in Ontario.

Culinary Tourism Alliance

The Culinary Tourism Alliance works with communities to grow food tourism by leveraging the history, heritage and culture behind food and drink unique to each destination.

Conservation Authorities

Five conservation authorities in Durham—the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority, Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority, Kawartha Conservation, Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority—host more than 300 kilometres of trails.

Local Municipalities

Durham Region is made up of eight local municipalities, including the cities of Oshawa and Pickering; the towns of Ajax and Whitby; the Municipality of Clarington; and the townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge. Durham Tourism works closely with local municipal partners to promote their various tourism strengths, and partner in the delivery of their respective community tourism plans or cultural plans.

Other Groups

Other partners within the industry include (but are not limited to) the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, Greenbelt Foundation, Ontario By Bike, and local groups and associations.

Visitor types

Tourism-related businesses rely on many different visitor types to make them profitable. For most of them in Durham Region, it is local and regional residents who keep them afloat and non-residents who make them profitable.

Local residents:

People travelling within a municipality and spending money within the region.

Visiting friends and relatives (VFR):

Non-residents who visit their friends and family; spend money in Durham.

Group travel:

Tour bus operations and other group tours.

Sport tourism:

Large regional, provincial national and international events.

Meetings:

Business traveller economy.

Leisure travellers:

Independent visitors who choose Durham Region to spend time and money.

Business categories

Tourism is not one industry. It is made up of businesses from many different sectors along with community assets that, collectively, motivate visitation. They are the same businesses and assets that convince a person to set up their business and lay down their roots in a community. These include:

Agri-tourism

Indigenous tourism

Museums and heritage

Arts and culture

Accommodations and meeting venues

Outdoor nature

Food and beverage

Education and tourism services

Festivals and events

Sports and recreation

Downtowns and specialty retail

Outdoor power

Attractions

Key geographic audiences

Durham Region is a large geographic area. Residents in the lakeshore communities of Ajax, Pickering, Whitby, Oshawa and Clarington are potential tourists in the northern Durham communities of Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge—and vice versa.

Within Durham Region there is a population of nearly 750,000 residents that spend tourism dollars in neighbouring communities, especially at major tourism draws in other parts of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). Meanwhile, Durham Region’s post-secondary students number 30,000 annually. Many of these students are temporary residents who do not have much knowledge of the region off-campus.

These groups are important audiences to focus on as potential customers for local business and tourism operators. These customers travel less distance than is traditionally considered tourism (40 kilometres is considered industry standard definition of a tourist). However, maintaining a higher percentage of their “staycation” spending, within Durham, helps strengthen our economy and operators; helps deepen connections between students and the community; and helps to further strengthen Durham Region’s Quality of Place and identity.



Quality of Place elements make a community distinctive in ways that are desirable, attractive, and in turn, make it competitive for investment. Quality of Place can significantly impact whether highly trained or educated workers choose to move to the region, or to stay after completing post-secondary graduation.





Travel trends and data

Domestic tourism spending has been more resilient in the face of pandemic travel restrictions. After reaching 92 per cent of 2019 levels in 2022, domestic tourism spending fully recovered. It started to expand again in 2023. The domestic market is expected to continue to expand through a mild recession and reach 129 per cent of 2019 levels by 2030. (Source: Destination Canada Fall Tourism Outlook, November 2022 and Annual Outlook, December 2023)

According to Destination Ontario's most recent ad tracking study in Ontario, travelling in Ontario continues to lead the marketing for short getaways. About 85 per cent plan to take overnight trips in Ontario in the next 12 months; with 90 per cent thinking of Ontario when asked about short getaways. (Source: Destination Ontario Market 2023 Spring Summer Ad Tracking Evaluation, May 2023)

Despite countless interruptions—and the grip of rising prices and interest rates on household budgets—spending on travel has remained exceptionally strong; rising almost 30 per cent above pre-pandemic levels according to tracking of RBC data. Newcomers likely brought with them more demand for domestic tourism—either their own, or that of visiting friends and family. (Source: RBC Proof Point: Canadians' post-pandemic travel fever holds steady, from May 2023)

Key survey insights

In late 2021, Durham Tourism undertook an industry survey and noted key insights that informed our strategic approach:

What opportunities exist to grow tourism in your sector?

The top two answers are as follows:

64%

said developing new tourism products, packages or offerings

59%

said improve brand awareness of Durham Region

What age group of visitor are you looking to increase or grow?

The top two answers are as follows:

**Ages
25-34**

**Ages
55+**

In a fall 2023 Central Counties Tourism survey, of all Durham municipal teams, the top 10 priority segments for tourism growth were:

Festivals and events

Tourism Routes

Arts, culture, heritage

Downtowns and retail

Sport tourism

Family activities

Agri-tourism/rural

Culinary tourism

Outdoor adventure

Cycling





Key tourism segments of focus

There are six key tourism segments of focus listed below; a list that includes all 10 of the top-listed priorities identified by the eight local area municipalities. These six segments also align with our brand principles, “Urban Excitement and Country Charm.” Putting significant focus into these six areas will help strengthen our messaging and define our strategic projects.



“The average arts and culture trip has nearly triple the economic impact of non-arts and culture trips.”
– Ontario Arts and Culture Tourism Profile, August 2023



Creative industries

Creative-industries tourism includes live music events and festivals, film tourism, live theatre events, arts and culture events, and other experiences.

- Cultural tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry, accounting for about 40 per cent of tourism worldwide. (State of the Ontario Tourism Industry Report, 2022)
- Durham is a major cultural centre and live music tour stop between Toronto and Montreal. This is a strategic opportunity to strengthen and grow this position, which will enhance quality of place and quality of life.
- The film sector has grown 250 per cent over the past 10 years in Durham Region; with recently hosted productions, such as *The Handmaids Tale*, *Reacher*, *Umbrella Academy*, *Schitts Creek*, and many other noteworthy productions that attract tourists to their filming locations.

Culinary tourism

Culinary tourism may include restaurants, food and drink festivals, food and beverage producers, and other culinary experiences.

- Culinary travellers spend 30 per cent more a day on average than non-culinary travellers; outlining that food and drink experiences make them more likely to return to a destination. (Source: Invest Ontario)
- Research shows that as many as 93 per cent of leisure travellers choose a destination based on their expectation around its food and drink. (Source: World Food Travel Association)
- Durham has a growing diverse population and increasing number of noteworthy international cuisine options. Durham also has a thriving foodie community that demonstrates it is seeking authentic, locally owned and independent restaurants of quality. There is a strategic opportunity to foster this demand and growing community.





Downtowns

Downtown and main street areas are places where people come together; for a common purpose, for the arts, to experience culture, to meet for business, and to visit institutions. They are critical to the livability of our larger urban and suburban communities. Durham Region is home to 14 downtown and main street areas.

- Downtowns contribute to the overall quality of place of a community and contribute to broader economic development goals through visitor, investment and resident attraction.
- The 2019 visitor impact to downtowns in Durham Region, using the Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model evaluation, totals more than \$680 million
- Durham's distinct cultural identity, and its vibrant and diverse downtowns will be magnets for talent and investment. It is a strategic opportunity to focus on these areas, which are of key importance to our community's sense of place and community pride across the region.

Agri-tourism

Agri-tourism may include diversified farm activities, such as on-farm sales, recreation, events, farmers markets, and other experiences.

- Agri-food is an area of strategic focus in Durham Region. As noted in the plan “Growing Agri-Food Durham,” there is a notable increase in interest in value-added agriculture and agri-tourism across the region—from both producers and consumers.
- Some studies have shown that approximately 64 to 81 per cent of farms that implemented agri-tourism operations saw their profits rise by an average of 56 to 68 per cent. (Invest Burlington Agri-tourism Guide, 2020)
- Agri-tourism supports additional income and job opportunities, especially in our rural communities. As destinations they help to lengthen the tourism season, preserve rural land, buildings and heritage, encourages retention of family farms, and provides opportunities for cultural exchange.



**“Engaging the senses
allows us to form
deep relationships
with places.”**

**Bill Baker, Place
Branding for Small
Cities, Regions and
Downtowns**





Outdoor tourism

Outdoor and nature-based tourism of focus in Durham Region involves cycling, hiking, on-water activities like paddling, sailing and fishing, golf, skiing, and other activities.

- In 2016, nearly seven in 10 Canadians participated in outdoor or nature-based activities, with hiking being the most popular activity. (State of the Ontario Tourism Industry Report, 2022)
- Durham is home to the Trail Capital of Canada, in Uxbridge, and is home to more than 350 kilometres of recreational trails, 10 conservation areas, three lakefronts, three ski hills, and one provincial park (with another recently announced).

Sport tourism

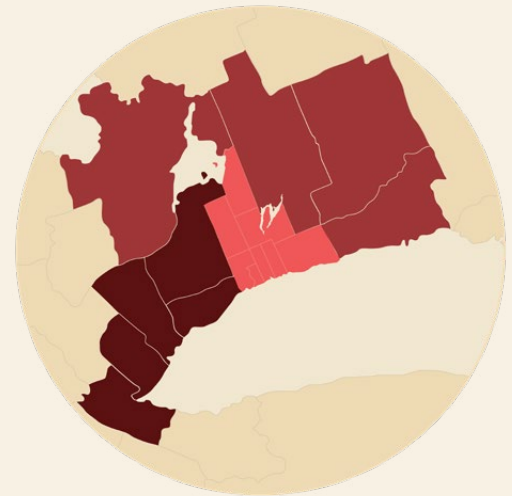
Sport tourism may include multi-sport games, tournaments, community sport events, and other experiences.

- In 2019, the sport tourism industry generated \$7.4 billion in spending by domestic and international visitors in Canada, including \$2.45 billion in Ontario. (Sport Tourism Canada, 2021)
- The 2023 Ontario Parasport Games, hosted in Durham Region, had an estimated local economic impact of more than \$700,000.



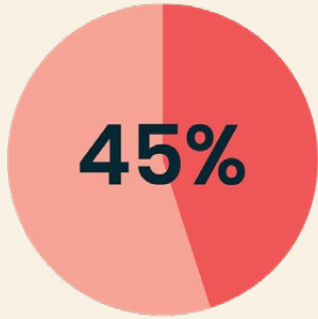
Visitors from the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA)

With post-pandemic recovery, regional tourism, and the staycation visitor in mind, tourists from the GTHA are a significant area of focus in this strategy. Durham Region is situated on the eastern side of the GTHA, which includes the City of Toronto and other regional municipalities (Halton, Peel, York and Durham). Residents of the GTHA offer a target market of more than six million people and is the second largest financial centre in North America. Other regional tourists residing in communities—such as those to the north and east of Durham Region—represent a secondary market as part of this strategy.



- Durham Region
- Primary Regional Tourism Market
- Secondary Regional Tourism Market





of visitors to Durham originated from the GTHA



Almost 6.4 million visitors travelled to our downtown areas in 2019



Consumers are 90 per cent more likely to purchase based on recommendations of a friend

Using StatsCan National Travel Survey (CD 2019) and Durham Hotel accommodators reports (2019), it is stated that 45 per cent of visitors to Durham Region originated from the Greater Toronto Area. About 22 per cent of visitors had a household income above \$150,000 annually.

In the Durham Tourism Industry survey completed in 2021, survey respondents estimated 59 per cent of their visitors came from outside Durham Region, specifically travelling in from the GTHA. Analysis—using mobile-movement data—captured from location-enabled mobile devices, such as cell phones—indicates a significant number of visitors to the 14 main streets and downtowns of Durham Region. In 2019, almost 6.4 million visitors travelled more than 40 kilometres to our downtown areas.

Tourism promotion strategies can draw on best practices from the marketing industry in general. It can cost nearly five times more to attract a new customer than to retain an existing one. Word of mouth marketing impressions result in five times more sales than paid media impressions. Plus, consumers are 90 per cent more likely to purchase based on recommendations of a friend.

With these marketing considerations in mind, efforts to increase the number of visits from other areas of the GTHA, increasing the length of stay, and increasing visitor spending, can significantly impact the success of our tourism promotion efforts.

With such a significant market opportunity, immediately to the west of Durham Region, the five-year strategic focus of our visitor attraction marketing will be to: strengthen Durham's place brand identity; increase awareness of Durham as a destination; boost visits; experience more overnight stays; and encounter more spending from GTHA residents.

Key marketing audience demographics

The key demographics outlined below are the segments which Durham Tourism has defined, and within which visitor growth is desired.

The first is **Family travellers**. This group is the strongest existing segment of visitors to Durham Region, made up of visitor types such as local and regional residents, VFR, sport tourism, and leisure travellers. Family travellers remains an audience of significant focus for all activities in this action plan.

Family travellers are in “family mode” and often taken part in family friendly activities. Their children are likely to participate in team sports and sports tournaments. They tend to be welcoming of diversity and experiencing other cultures; especially exposing their children to new experiences. They have a need for easy, near-by escapes that provide the feeling of a vacation from the usual, and love experiences that can be shared on social media. They spend time shopping on digital platforms, and support small local entrepreneurs when possible. These families want to live in vibrant communities that feel safe, have pleasant downtowns, and interesting restaurants. Health is of high value to Family travellers.



The focus of this action plan is to appeal to these three demographics.

This will be achieved through supporting and enabling the development of new tourism products and promoting existing offerings that appeal to these three demographics, while also creating marketing strategies and using communication tactics that suit these audiences.





When it comes to activities, they are especially interested in outdoor or sport activities (such as skiing, hiking and cycling trails), family friendly culinary experiences (such as maple and apple festivals), unusual culinary experiences, and agri-tourism.

Since the Family travellers segment is so large, Durham Tourism will further refine its focus in specific campaigns to a subset group. This consists of those with parents in the younger working-age demographics (ages 25 to 34) with STEM skills and educations (science, technology, engineering, math, and trades/technical). The purpose is to showcase the region's wonderful quality of life assets to this talented workforce, as the region's economy would benefit from attracting them into our local businesses.



The following two groups were developed based on feedback received from local businesses related to age demographics, inbound travellers, and spending (via Industry Survey). These groups also align with talent attraction and retention goals, as well as increasing Quality of Place goals as outlined in Ready Set Future. These travellers may be local or regional residents, as well as VFR, group travel, sport tourism, or leisure travellers.

Date days and nights visitors may be younger (no children yet, ages 25 to 34) or older (none or adult children, age 55+) who are looking for date days/nights and overnight stays. They are pursuing experiences that satisfy their sense of individuality. They like a wide variety of activities, but are compelled by concerts, theatre, culinary, outdoor sport, and “experiences”. These couples use the internet the most for recipes and to book their tickets/plans in advance. They seek out brands that offer a feeling of authenticity and higher quality, be they local brands or international brands. In terms of outdoor activities, they like to garden, value beauty and history, and are interested in the historical museum and arts and culture spaces, as they have more time to deeply engage with these venues.

Post-secondary adventurers are an audience identified specifically within Durham's three post-secondary schools, but may include students with a connection to Durham who are attending post-secondary schools outside the region. The goal in connecting with these students is deepening their roots off-campus. By taking them off-campus to engage with local adventure, we will deepen their understanding of Durham and connection to the community. This may include weekending and nightlife, social media-worthy adventures and locations, affordable foodie experiences, sport tourism and events, and outdoor adventure appeals. By strengthening these bonds with the local community, Durham Tourism can increase the likelihood that these new graduates will choose to live in Durham post-graduation, strengthening the region's skilled and educated workforce.





Sport tourism

In Durham Region sport tourism is facilitated by Sport Durham, a portfolio within Durham Tourism.

In 2019 alone, sporting events and tournaments brought more than \$10 million in visitor spending to Durham Region. This region is a two-time host of the Ontario Paraspport Games (2019 and 2023) and partnered with Skate Canada to bring the 2023 Canadian Tire National Skating Championships to Oshawa's Tribute Communities Centre. The region is a growing multi-sport host destination, and offers a strategic focus on, and knowledge of, accessible and inclusive sport hosting.

Sport tourism is a vital and growing revenue source for businesses that are also enjoyed by local residents and other visitors. Leveraging these visitors to increase their spending off the "field of play" is a way to generate future interest in visitation for leisure travel.



Sport events also keep overnight accommodators busy, especially on weekends, which supports their ability to accommodate weekday business travellers and events. Hosting sport events, such as tournaments is a catalyst for visitation. It introduces Durham Region as an amazing place to visit, and to perhaps live.

Durham Region is in a prime position to support and co-ordinate local, regional, provincial, national and international tournaments and events across a spectrum of sports disciplines. Sport Durham's focus on increasing awareness and participation in accessible, inclusive sport is a key differentiator to our community as a host.

Sport Durham's brand statements:

Our love of sport runs deep.

This statement speaks to the authentic and engaged sport community of Durham Region.

We bring our A-game.

This statement speaks to the passion and professionalism with which Durham hosts sports events.

Sport for good.

This is a broad statement that speaks to the legacy created by our sport tourism activities.

Sport Durham sets out to:

1

Strengthen Quality of Place

Host sport events that engage, inspire and connect the community, and result in sport and social legacies.

2

Champion inclusive tourism

Support the development and growth of inclusive and accessible sport opportunities, infrastructure and participation, through sport hosting activities and legacy initiatives.

3

Be memorable

Enable and grow community sport hosting capacity and ensure memorable experiences for athletes while visiting Durham Region.

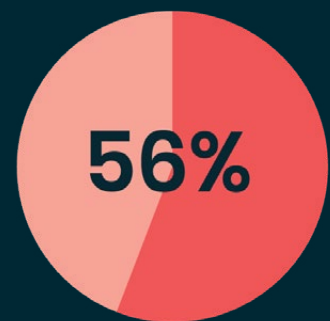




Rural tourism

The three northern Townships of Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge within the Region of Durham have been identified as “north Durham”. Covering approximately half of the total land area of the region, north Durham is home to about eight per cent of Durham Region’s population, with modest population growth expected. However, according to Statistics Canada, 56 per cent of tourism jobs in Canada are in rural areas. In rural areas, tourism is a key component in increasing diversification of the economy.

North Durham’s rural character, villages and natural landscape distinguishes it from the rest of the region. While the townships of Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock are unique from one another in many ways, they also share many similarities. The Growing North Durham (GND) Plan addresses these municipalities with a co-ordinated north Durham approach to economic development.

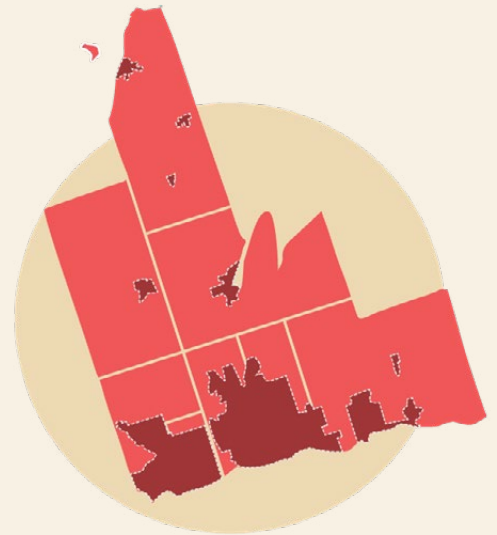


of tourism jobs
in Canada are in
rural areas

Additionally, other areas of Durham Region are rural, such as Clarington and north Pickering. These areas share similar opportunities and aspirations for rural tourism. Projects led by Durham Tourism focused on north Durham may also, if appropriate, include rural areas in other parts of the region.

The GND plan identified arts and culture, proximity to the GTHA, and quality of life as the key value proposition themes for north Durham. Rural Durham Region exemplifies country charm. Beyond its quaint downtowns, assets include agri-tourism destinations, food and beverage producers, outdoor adventure, and arts and cultural experiences.

Durham Tourism’s service delivery in rural Durham will entail co-ordinated promotion for inbound visitors to north Durham, supporting tourism industry businesses to grow and succeed, and development of new tourism products suited to rural Durham.



- Rural area
- Urban area



We will continue to support the development and interconnectedness of rural Durham to foster its potential as a weekend destination from the GTHA.



Key actions in our strategy that specifically support tourism in rural Durham include:

Tourism wayfinding and rural recreational cycling route creation and promotion.

Activities that support the ongoing revitalization work in downtowns.

Enabling opportunities for on-farm diversification and agri-tourism.

Fostering collaboration and encouraging multi-product experience development.

Supporting events, placemaking, and activities that deepen a sense of place.

Attract, showcase and support rural tourism businesses.

Explore and partner to promote Indigenous tourism opportunities.

Act as a connector between tourism businesses and support organizations.

Host or support tourism readiness workshops.

Attracting and encouraging accommodation development.

Leveraging tourism assets and infrastructure for sport visitors.

Attracting visitors to the tourism assets in north and rural Durham through regular annual marketing and communications campaigns.



Local food in Durham Region



Durham has an abundance of high-quality food being grown in the region. Products include beef, lamb, honey, cider, fresh fruit and vegetables. There are more than 200 farms in the region reporting direct-to-consumer sales, as well as many offering on-farm events and activities.

Regionally, we work closely with Durham Farm Fresh and its members in promoting Durham's locally grown food. This is a key activity across Regional Economic Development and Tourism.

Local food is both nourishing to our communities and helps to express our individuality. Apple-picking and cideries, local farmers' markets, farm-to-fork restaurants and pumpkin festivals are all examples of how much we love our local food.



Durham Tourism's brand identity

Durham Tourism's brand identity is inextricably linked to Durham's (the place's) brand identity. As a result, the marketing of Durham Region as a place to visit must be authentic to the true visitor experience, as well as align with the experience when visiting tourism businesses.

Building the brand identity "Urban Excitement and Country Charm" for Durham Tourism was the result of a rebranding process completed in 2020. "Urban Excitement and Country Charm" is not a slogan or tagline; rather it captures the essence and authentic representation of the Durham experience. This essence is communicated in various ways through the breadth of our marketing activities.

Identifying our brand identity was completed in a process with extensive community feedback and input. This Plan is the first created following that activity; setting out activities that will strengthen how our brand identity is communicated, in an authentic way. And it will strengthen perceptions of Durham Region and create curiosity and interest in visiting it.

Brand vision

Durham Region is recognized as a place that offers urban excitement and country charm. Durham Region is a creative, welcoming, authentic and connected destination. Through this brand promise of Durham Tourism, we will foster a stronger sense of place for Durham Region.

Brand positioning

Durham Region offers urban excitement and country charm. Durham is a place offering authentic experiences. In one trip, visitors can spend an afternoon on a scenic country bike ride, stopping into quaint small-town cafes along the way. That same evening, they can head to an urban downtown to see live music and experience fine dining.

Within one visit, visitors can connect with nature and each other. Some sample ways that we communicate this concept is through branded promises that speak to both urban excitement and country charm. These can be swapped and adjusted for the audience, season or need.

From rock concerts to starry nights.

From arcade games to cycling trails.

From luxury spas to pumpkin patches.

From fine art to apple picking.

From authentic takeout to waterfront views.

From urban bistros to farmers' markets.

Brand values

Urban Excitement

Durham Region's urban areas, especially those in the lakeshore communities, offer modern restaurants, dense downtowns, and exciting events. Our urban excitement is best captured by the energy of roaring crowds, lively nightlife, and contemporary arts and culture experiences.

Country Charm

Durham Region's rural areas, especially those in our northern communities, offer quaint downtowns, on-farm markets, and inspiring outdoor adventure. Our country charm is best captured by the wide-open spaces of our trails, apple picking in the fall, and lakefront activities.

Inclusive

Durham Tourism will help to foster an interconnected quality of place by working with the communities we serve to embrace diversity and champion inclusion. All who travel to Durham should feel welcomed.

Collaboration

Durham Tourism's brand promise requires us to work closely with our local area municipal partners, business owners, tourism assets, community organizations and many others to ensure Durham is magnetic to visitors and residents.

Memorable

Events and experiences worth remembering are typically special and unusual, evoke strong positive emotions, and play on the senses. Durham Tourism will create, nurture, and promote experiences that instill fond memories and deepen connections to local community.

Brand personality

Durham Tourism’s brand voice is rooted in being collaborative and memorable. The brand will avoid sounding like a corporation and strive to sound like a person: an unpretentious, approachable, and fun tone.

Durham Tourism will strive to be perceived as positive and upbeat; capturing the fun that visitors will have in our destinations. Examples include using puns, replying to comments in a personal way, and writing stories or hiring writers to write from a personal point of view. Language and vocabulary used will be that which is common among Canadian residents aged 25 to 34.

Images used by Durham Tourism may be self-produced or user generated content, with permission. Images consistently portray the diverse community of Durham Region and consider inclusivity in content graphics and images. All content will be designed to meet accessibility requirements.

“Have you ever seen such brew-ty?”

“We hope you find this list of apple treats very a-peel-ing.”



SOAR Analysis

Strengths

- Location within the GTHA and proximity to its population of 6.7 million.
- Access to three lakefronts.
- Four season destination.
- Access to hundreds of kilometres of trails for hiking, cycling and other activities; Trail Capital of Canada.
- Fourteen (14) downtown and main street areas across the region.
- Existing arts and culture assets.
- Film industry with potential for growth.
- Live music industry and assets.
- Culinary and other urban excitement experiences.
- Agri-tourism assets and on-farm experiences.
- Excellent sports facilities for all; accessible and inclusive sport programming and strong sport culture.
- Family friendly attractions.

Opportunities

- About 30,000 students annually enrolled in post-secondary.
- Opportunity to strengthen sport hosting capacity.
- Opportunity to build reputation as culinary destination; stronger awareness of agri-tourism assets.
- Stronger more inter-connected creative industries.
- Opportunity to attract more mid-range or boutique hotels and motels in wider geographic area, and larger hotels to support sport event hosting and other group travel.
- Increased north-south travel and local spending by Durham residents.

Aspirations

- Durham has a strong Quality of Place and is seen as a great weekend or overnight destination by residents in other areas of the GTHA.
- Durham has a distinct identity for arts, culture and creative industries.
- Durham is known as a premier destination for cycling and hiking trails.
- Increased positive reputation for our culinary sector due to a wide diversity in offerings.
- Urban and rural downtowns to become more vibrant, walkable, livable communities with thriving locally owned businesses.
- Growing creative industries.
- Inclusive tourism offerings.
- Stronger emotional ties to place for residents and visitors; through events, culinary, music, outdoor adventure, and wellness activities.

Results

- Increased visitor spending at locally owned and operated businesses.
- Increased overnight stays; growing audience of weekend visitors.
- Improved graduate retention and talent attraction.
- Improved Quality of Place.
- Increased sport events hosted that align with our tourism values and goals.
- Increased sport event hosting legacy initiatives.

2024-2028

Durham Tourism Strategic Action Plan

Vision

Durham Region is known as the most authentic and memorable nearby destination for residents of the Greater Toronto Area.

Mission

Durham Tourism will strengthen awareness of Durham Region as a desirable destination for visitors, repeat guests, and tourism businesses. We will undertake activities that support, promote, and enable tourism experiences, offerings, and businesses. These actions will enhance Durham's brand identity, increase local spending, build an interconnected quality of place, and achieve broader economic development goals for the regional economy.

Equity statement

Durham Tourism honours the value and dignity of all individuals. Through our activities we will foster an environment that respects and champions diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility so that all who travel to Durham feel welcome.

Goals

1. **Urban excitement and country charm:** Build the Durham Tourism brand by promoting attractions and experiences that align with brand principles.
2. **Strengthen quality of place:** Undertake activities that improve Durham's quality of place metrics and prioritize experiences that instill fond memories and deepen connections to local community.
3. **Champion inclusive tourism:** Pursue tourism initiatives which are diverse, accessible and inclusive.
4. **Drive prosperity through local love:** Prioritize activities with high potential to drive spending to locally owned and operated businesses and increase overnight stays.
5. **Achieve broader economic development goals:** Leverage tourism industry development activities to attract a talented workforce, retain new graduates, and improve investment readiness.

Goal 1

Urban excitement and country charm:

Build the Durham Tourism brand by promoting attractions and experiences that align with brand principles.

1.1 Promote the economic value of tourism through programs that improve tourism readiness and through tourism ambassador programs.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Host and/or support Durham-focused tourism and sport-tourism readiness workshops that focus on improving the visitor experience.• Support community-specific add-ons to CCT's Tourism Ambassador program.	2026

1.2 Redevelop the Durham Tourism website to effectively promote Durham's tourism value proposition and support the tourism industry to the Region's key target segments.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reimagine and redesign the Durham Tourism website to effectively communicate the brand promise.• Develop and execute a yearly content calendar to keep website content fresh.• Evaluate and refine the event calendar alignment project with support from partners.• Assess and activate appropriate opportunities for new tools within the website, such as on-site buy now buttons, itinerary planners, sport event calendars, business directory and other new methods of making the website highly functional to business and visitors.	2025

1.3 Promote Durham as a weekend destination for visitors from the GTHA through a targeted annual marketing plan built on the brand promise of urban excitement and country charm.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new brand assets that effectively communicate Durham’s tourism brand, by highlighting memorable experiences that authentically represent Durham Region. • Use data to inform tactics that target desired audiences. • Develop the supply of itineraries and routes that are designed for target markets and promote them to increase demand. • Continue to build the social community of Durham Tourism by producing regular, engaging and inspiring social media content across several channels, including Instagram, e-news, Facebook and other platforms. 	<p>Immediate and ongoing</p>

1.4 Develop a modern and bold concept for the Durham Tourism Discovery Guide that uses striking photography to convey Durham’s scenic urban and rural destinations, visually immersing readers in Durham’s experiential offerings.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a four-season guide with a long shelf life that drives year-round visitation. • Identify distribution channels that ensure the guide gets into the GTHA key markets, identified by the strategy. • Bolster community pride by using authentic local visual storytelling that is representative of community diversity. 	<p>Immediate and ongoing</p>

Partners and enablers: Central Counties Tourism, area municipalities, tourism industry business community, and marketing partnerships.

Goal 2

Strengthen quality of place:

Undertake activities that improve Durham's quality of place metrics and prioritize experiences that instill fond memories and deepen connections to local community.

2.1 Explore the creation of a fund that supports the region's diverse arts and cultural industries including creative and culinary businesses, events, festivals and placemaking.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Undertake a jurisdictional review to understand possibilities and peer approaches to arts and culture funds.Identify potential funding sources and outline potential application frameworks.	2026

2.2 Enable growth in the film industry through a refreshed region-wide film sector strategy.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensure film tourism is a section of the film sector action plan.Identify opportunities to increase film tourism through routes and itineraries.	2024

2.3 Enable growth in the music industry through the development of a strategy to become a music region.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Gather feedback and community input on a report that looks at the current status of the music industry in Durham Region.Undertake possible actions as recommended in a report.	2024

2.4 Establish a process to consider sponsorship opportunities for events that enhance the region’s Quality of Place.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earmark funds specific to partnerships dedicated to enhancing Quality of Place. • Create an intake program and strategic framework that Quality of Place partnerships are reviewed against. 	<p>Immediate and 2026</p>

2.5 Explore the potential for establishing a festival incubator.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a database of festival organizers. • Establish a festival organizer networking group to share best practices, connect organizers with municipal partners and other community members. • Undertake a jurisdictional review to see what peer tourism organizations do to support the growth and maturity of local festivals and festival incubator best practices. 	<p>2025</p>

2.6 Host sport events that engage, inspire and connect the community, creating sport and social legacies.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion the economic importance of sporting events and sport tourism’s contribution to the vibrancy of a community to municipalities and other partners. • Foster collaboration with municipal, post-secondary partners and local sport community partners to develop bids and host impactful sport events. • Support major sport events through sport hosting funding. 	<p>Ongoing</p>

2.7 Support the development of and promote events and experiences that enhance Quality of Place.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborate to enable and support the growth of events and experiences that enhance Quality of Place.• Collaborate to create programs and campaigns that support the growth of Durham’s culinary tourism sector.• Promote events that align with the brand values of urban excitement and country charm, enhance resident experience, encourage visitation.• Collaborate to encourage and support events in Durham Region’s 14 Downtowns.	2024

Partners and enablers: area municipalities, Film Durham, Durham College, music and film industry organizations and companies, and the tourism industry.



Goal 3

Champion inclusive tourism:

Pursue tourism initiatives which are diverse, accessible, and inclusive.

3.1 Promote the region's tourism offering to diverse local audiences including translation of promotional materials.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a network of community influencers and contributors who represent diverse audiences, and work with them to motivate residents and visitors to explore Durham Region.• Undertake research to determine prevalent languages by area for featured experiences and marketing materials.	2025

3.2 Ensure the region's diverse community voices are reflected in all Durham Tourism content, including blog posts, social media and promotional materials to better represent our residents.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure content focused on tourism operators and experiences reflect the diversity of our community, business owners, and the interests of visitors.• Ensure video and photography assets accurately reflect the diversity of our communities and those in our target demographics.	Immediate and ongoing

3.3 Support the growth of inclusive and accessible sport opportunities, infrastructure, and participation, including the exploration of a sport event hosting grant program.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through Sport Durham, educate and inspire municipal, post-secondary and other community partners about growing inclusive sport in the community. • Identify, evaluate and communicate inclusive sport hosting opportunities and collaborate with partners on bidding and hosting inclusive sport events with legacy benefits. • Share best-practice municipal and regional investments in infrastructure and sports legacy initiatives with municipalities and other partners. • Implement 2019 and 2023 Ontario Parasport Games legacy initiatives. 	2024

3.4 Promote the region’s tourism attractions to international students studying at the region’s post-secondary institutions via projects designed to deepen off-campus community connections.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement day trip itineraries built upon Durham Region Transit (DRT) routes. • Through partnership, market Durham Tourism to student audiences, for example through on campus events or tourism information materials supplied to students. • Develop partnerships and relationships between tourism operators and student groups to create custom group visit opportunities. 	Immediate and ongoing

3.5 Explore and partner to promote Indigenous Tourism opportunities.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner to understand Indigenous community tourism priorities.• Support the development of Indigenous-led tourism experiences.• Support the ongoing success of Indigenous-led tourism experiences through promotion, marketing and communications.	Immediate and ongoing

Partners and enablers: Central Counties Tourism, local area municipalities, Sport Tourism Canada, post-secondary institutions, and the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation.



Goal 4

Drive prosperity through local love:

Prioritize activities with high potential to drive spending to locally owned and operated businesses, and increase overnight stays.

4.1 Promote tourism products that attract weekend visitors from the GTHA, particularly those visitors with high spending potential.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop itineraries that provide two days of activities that match the interest of each of our defined target markets.• Develop and implement a yearly marketing and communications plan, that uses digital strategies to target potential visitors by geography, demographic and interests.	Immediate and ongoing

4.2 Promote the importance of tourism within our local community and encourage resident spending locally.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working with municipal partners, develop and deploy a series of stories from business owners on the importance of non-residents to their business success.• Strategically focus on growing resident engagement with Durham Tourism communication channels.• Develop resident contests or content that promotes being a tourist in your own region.	Immediate and ongoing

4.3 Develop and promote regional tourism products that drive spillover spending opportunities and increased overnight stays.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to develop visitor-ready themed routes and itineraries that encourage overnight stays. • Explore new tools and technologies that encourage tourism spending, trip planning or advance purchases at tourism operators. • Develop content and marketing campaigns that can be used in targeted messaging specific to each target demographic that includes information about overnight stays. 	2025

4.4 Explore developing a strategy to encourage a diverse range of options for rural overnight accommodations (such as luxury short-term rentals, bed and breakfasts).

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the possibilities to increase short-term rental properties being officially recognized by the Region or local municipalities. • Develop an inventory of premier short-term rentals available in the region that can be promoted. • Facilitate or partner to host meetings between short term rental owners and area visitor attractions to develop new overnight experiences. 	2027

4.5 Develop and deliver a Rural Cycle Tourism Program to map and sign beautiful recreational cycle loops.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with others to determine cycle tourism routes. Encourage and support businesses to become Bike Friendly certified through the Ontario by Bike network. Enhance and develop new tools, routes, maps, and roadside/trail signage. Explore opportunities for enhanced tourism wayfinding across north and rural Durham that complements the rural cycling program. 	2024

4.6 Promote locally owned, micro-manufacturing, and creative industry startups.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop relationships with micro-manufacturers that suit tourism stops. Increase communications with and facilitate networking between micro-manufacturers, makers hubs, and other destinations that suit tourism visitation. Create routes that include micro-manufacturers as stops for tourists. 	2028

Partners and enablers: area municipalities, Film Durham, Durham College, music and film industry organizations and companies, and the tourism industry.

Goal 5

Achieve broader economic development goals.

Leverage tourism industry development activities to attract a talented workforce, retain new graduates, and improve investment readiness.

5.1 Build and strengthen agri-tourism.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore, and produce campaigns and events that encourage visitation to farms.• Collaborate with the Durham Farm Fresh Marketing Association to build awareness of Durham’s local food producers and promote awareness of membership benefits.• Measure the success of events and campaigns and seek opportunities for continuous improvement through feedback, surveys, and other metrics.• Seek additional partnerships to increase awareness of events, including media partners.	Immediate and ongoing

5.2 Undertake and support activities that instill pride of place and create awareness of memorable communities.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure Durham Tourism activations are memorable and engaging.• Support and collaborate with groups to support public art projects and policies, arts and culture events, and diverse community events that create awareness of Durham.• Foster, promote, and collaborate with the culinary community to support the growth of the sector and build its reputation in the GTHA.	2024

5.3 Build upon the success of the Downtowns of Durham project.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evolve the Downtowns of Durham project to become a home for good news stories about downtown Durham communities. • Continue to engage partners in content development. • Continue to promote the project with an annual marketing and communications plan and editorial calendar to ensure ongoing engagement. 	<p>Immediate and ongoing</p>

5.4 Attract a wider range of mid-tier and boutique hotels/accommodation, and hotels to support sport hosting and other group travel, across Durham.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in tandem with other economic development strategies where tourism intersects. • Invest in or gather visitor research to demonstrate the growing need for overnight accommodations. • Collaborate with business development team to attract hotel investors. 	<p>2026</p>

5.5 Establish a “Welcome to Durham” protocol for new residents and businesses that includes services and different experiences within Durham.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in tandem with other economic development strategies where tourism intersects. • Work with attractions and restaurants to provide added value promotions for new residents. • Collaborate with Regional teams that support newcomers with Tourism content. • Partner to create a Durham Relocation Guide. 	<p>2025-2026</p>

5.6 Enhance the economic and social vibrancy of north Durham’s downtowns.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work in tandem with other economic development strategies where tourism intersects.• Support local festivals and placemaking initiatives, especially as they relate to downtown areas.• Actively participate in downtown committees and working groups.• Promote to residents the entertainment and recreational value of their community.	Immediate and ongoing

5.7 Enable and grow sport hosting capacity and ensure memorable experiences for athletes visiting Durham Region.

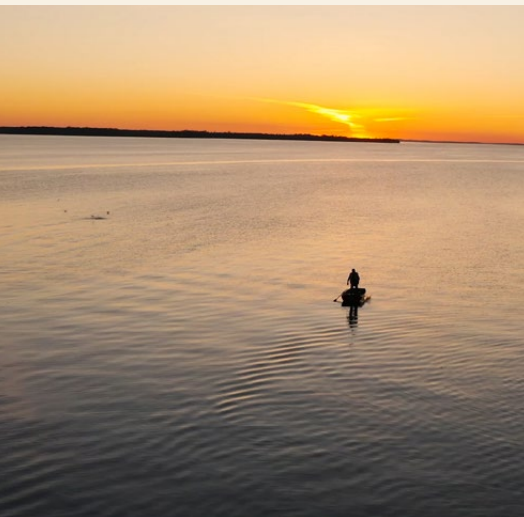
Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create promotional materials that encourage sport visitors to shop, eat and explore at locally owned businesses.• Explore the development and maintenance of a regional sport tourism event calendar that can be referenced by local businesses.• Support networking, training, and facilitate marketing the benefits of sport hosting to interested partners.• Explore the formalization of a sport event hosting fund.	Immediate and ongoing

5.8 Prioritize and improve tourism readiness across the tourism ecosystem.

Tactics	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support educational experiences, workshops, networking and seminars that strengthen Durham’s tourism industry workforce.• Develop materials that support educating operators, including information about Durham Tourism’s support offerings.• Participate in the development of community tourism plans, and lead meetings with municipal tourism leaders to inform marketing plans and common themes.	Immediate and ongoing

Partners and enablers: Durham Farm Fresh, Central Counties Tourism, local area municipalities, Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), and the tourism industry business community.







**Durham
Tourism**

DurhamTourism.ca



Durham Region, Ontario, Canada

If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact
Economic Development and Tourism at 905-668-4113 ext. 2619.