



2026-2031

TOWN OF MIDLAND

TOURISM STRATEGY



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BIA

Business Improvement Area

MAT

Municipal Accommodation Tax

TSC

Tourism Simcoe County

RT07

Regional Tourism Organization 7
(BruceGreySimcoe)

The Town

The Town of Midland

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Town of Midland acknowledges it has been home to many peoples who have stewarded the lands, waters, and living things since time immemorial.

The Town of Midland acknowledges it has been home to many peoples who have stewarded the lands, waters, and living things since time immemorial. They have contributed to Midland's uniqueness as both a place to live and a place to visit. More specifically, this land is part of the Huron-Wendat Confederacy's homeland, whose connection to this place is highlighted by two key regional tourism assets, Saint-Marie Among the Hurons and the Huronia Museum.

Additionally, this is the traditional territory of the Petun and Haudenosaunee, as well as the Anishinaabek who still reside in the region today at Beausoleil First Nation, Rama First Nation, and Georgina Island First Nation, also known as the Chippewa Tri-Council. The Anishinaabek know these lands as their traditional harvesting grounds and relate to them through oral history passed down for generations. This land is also within Treaty 5: Penetanguishene Purchase (1798), and Treaty 16: Lake Simcoe Purchase (1815), and is recognized as the home of many Métis Nation of Ontario citizens, as well as a large and diverse community of Indigenous peoples.

The Town of Midland looks forward to continuing to deepen relationships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples through tourism development, management, and marketing in the spirit of reconciliation, including collaboratively exploring opportunities for true partnership. Specifically, this tourism strategy identifies three actions that directly identify First Nations as well as Indigenous groups, organizations, and communities as key collaborators moving forward.

The Town would like to extend a big thank you to everyone who participated in the engagement activities that informed this tourism strategy, including residents, the tourism industry, and representatives of partner organizations. Your input was invaluable to setting a strong vision and direction for the future of tourism in Midland and North Simcoe.

Heartfelt thanks are also due to the Tourism Simcoe County team, who will be working in collaboration with the Town to lead the implementation of Midland's Tourism Strategy. In particular, thank you to Brendan Matheson, Program Supervisor for your active involvement across the strategy development process.

Finally, the Town would also like to thank internal team members Karen Mealing, Manager, Culture and Tourism and Steve Farquharson, Executive Director of Community and Growth for leading this work on behalf of the Town of Midland.

This project was funded by the Town of Midland, Regional Tourism Organization 7, and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming.



The Midland Tourism Strategy development process was facilitated by Bannikin, an Ontario-based tourism consultancy. The Bannikin team included Caroline Morrow, James Arteaga, Camilo Montoya-Guevara, and Trevor Jonas Benson.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Midland has developed an action-oriented and community-informed tourism strategy to set the direction for tourism in Midland and guide the use of Municipal Accommodation Tax funds. The tourism strategy outlines the work for the Town of Midland and Tourism Simcoe County as it relates to tourism development, management, and communications in Midland over the next five years.

The tourism strategy development process launched in September 2025 and concluded in March 2026 and involved widespread community engagement. The final strategy document supports movement towards an inspiring future while being realistic and reflecting the priorities of Midland's tourism businesses, organizations, Council, partners, and residents. Collaboration and partnership are essential to bringing this strategy to life.

TOURISM VISION

Midland's tourism vision is the guiding light for tourism development, management, and communications in Midland:

It's 2035 and tourism is a year-round driver of economic, social, and environmental vitality in Midland, making it easy for residents and visitors to enjoy exceptional natural and cultural assets, including a vibrant downtown.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

At the foundation of Midland's tourism efforts are six guiding principles that can be read into the overarching strategic direction for tourism development, management, and communications, as well as each strategy and the corresponding actions. The guiding principles reflect the tourism priorities identified by our community members, and include:



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The Strategy Framework is organized around three pillars, made up of seven areas of opportunity and related goals. These are further broken into 15 strategies and 29 actions.



PILLAR A: MANAGEMENT

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY #1: COLLABORATION AT THE TOWN

1.1 Foster shared responsibility, collaboration, and efficiency in tourism and tourism-adjacent work.

1.1.1 Build ownership and familiarize Town Council and staff with their roles in and connections to the Tourism Strategy.

1.1.2 Advocate for continued and diversified resourcing of Tourism Strategy.

1.2 Ensure tourism increases the wealth and wellbeing of Midland residents.

1.2.1 Plan and activate tourism so that it connects to community wellbeing and supports local initiatives.

1.2.2 Ensure all short-term roofed accommodations participate in MAT collection and remittance.

1.3 Attract new tourism businesses and encourage existing ones to expand their offer.

1.3.1 Develop a regional tourism business retention, expansion, and investment attraction strategy.

1.3.2 Enable Economic Development to prioritize tourism sector attraction and investment.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY #2: COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS

2.1 Formalize tourism roles and collaboration structures to avoid duplication.

2.1.1 Form a North Simcoe tourism working group (Town, County, Chamber, Route 93, BIA, RTO7, etc.).

2.2 Mobilize neighbouring municipalities and key tourism assets for increased tourism collaboration.

2.2.1 Align and formalize tourism-based collaborations with the Town of Penetanguishene and other neighbouring municipalities and First Nations.

2.2.2 Align and formalize tourism relationship and collaborations with key regional tourism assets.

2.3 Grow relationships with Indigenous organizations and communities with connections to Midland and surrounding area.

2.3.1 Invite co-planning for implementation of key product development and storytelling strategies with Indigenous groups and communities.

2.3.2 Align and formalize tourism relationships with Indigenous-led organizations.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY #3: RESEARCH, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

3.1 Develop systems for ongoing collection and sharing of information needed for sustainable tourism decision-making.

3.1.1 Share data and research on tourism's impact and contributions to Midland across economic, social, and environmental indicators.

3.1.2 Develop and share tools/resources to help tourism actors participate in the collection and use of tourism data in decision-making.

3.2 Design and launch a system for the ongoing engagement and participation of residents and industry in tourism matters.

3.2.1 Develop ongoing tourism-related resident-engagement processes and related tools.

3.2.2 Engage with tourism industry regularly and share relevant news and resources





PILLAR B: DEVELOPMENT

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY #4: NETWORKING, TRAINING, AND SUPPORT

4.1 4.1 Connect tourism industry members for consistent networking, capacity development, and collaboration.

4.1.1 Plan and share tourism networking and capacity building sessions and resources.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY #5: NEW AND ENHANCED PRODUCT

5.1 Invest in infrastructure and programming to revitalize and activate key tourism assets.

5.1.1 Work with partners on placemaking and beautification initiatives to grow destination sense of place.

5.1.2 Activate existing tourism assets through facility improvements and year-round programming.

5.1.3 Improve visitor connection to and enjoyment of Georgian Bay and Little Lake.

5.2 Support the development of Midland/Heart of Georgian Bay experiences.

5.2.1 Accompany, support, and fund the creation of new bookable tourism experiences.

5.2.2 Develop signature, regionally branded multiday cycling experiences and routes.





PILLAR C: COMMUNICATION

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY #6: MARKETING

6.1 Position Midland as the hub for exploring the Heart of Georgian Bay.

6.1.1 Develop local and regional marketing materials, campaigns, and resources that illustrate connection of Midland to regional tourism assets.

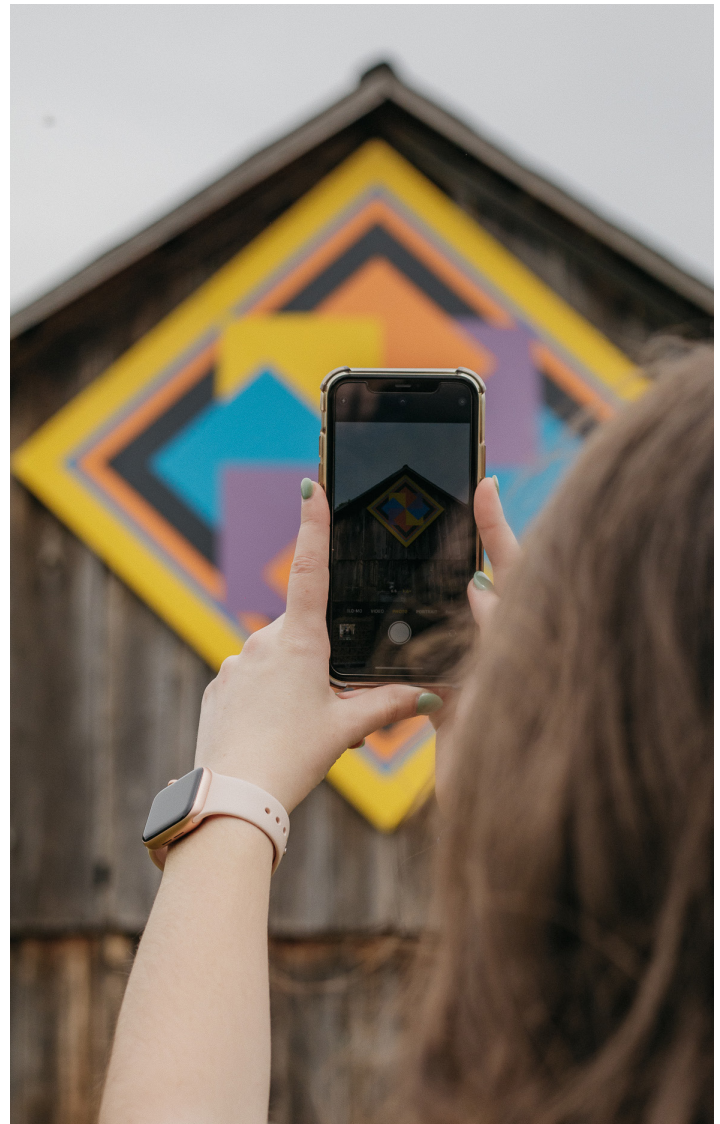
6.1.2 Align Midland destination brand and marketing with Simcoe County while celebrating points of differentiation.

6.2 Make it easier for visitors to choose and plan their trips to Midland.

6.2.1 Confirm, align, and update Midland's visitor-facing communication channels.

6.2.2 Pursue sport tourism and small meetings/events opportunities.

6.2.3 Directly connect with cottagers to make Midland an integral part of their cottage experience.



AREA OF OPPORTUNITY #7: N-DESTINATION INFORMATION

7.1 Strengthen visitor welcome and access to real-time information.

7.1.1 Improve gateway and interpretive signage and information throughout the destination, including along trails

7.1.2 Set up targeted visitor welcome and information points.

7.2 Empower residents as destination ambassadors.

7.2.1 Develop and iterate a resident ambassador program.





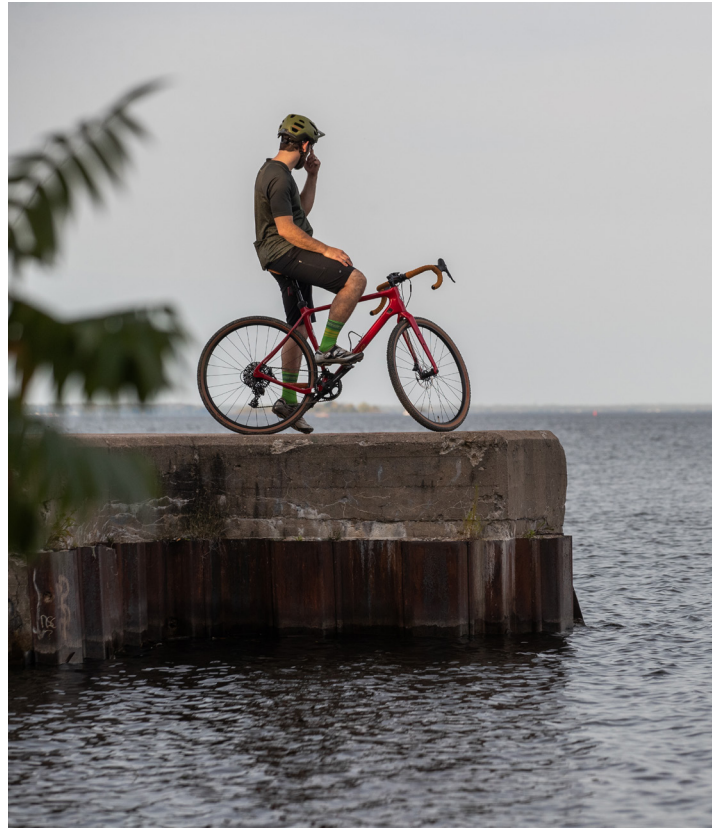
INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

CONTEXT

To set the direction for destination development, management, and communications in Midland over the next 5-years and to guide the use of the Municipal Accommodation Tax funds, the Town of Midland has developed an action-oriented tourism strategy. The strategy will support movement towards an inspiring future while being realistic, actionable, and reflecting the priorities of the Midland's tourism businesses, Council, partners, and residents.

The tourism strategy development process involved widespread community engagement with residents, tourism businesses, partner organizations, and other interest groups. The project launched in early-September 2025 and concluded in late-March 2026.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Five objectives were set to guide the strategy development process, namely:

To establish a strong understanding of the current state and context of tourism in Midland

To meaningfully engage and encourage connections amongst diverse tourism interest groups, while growing awareness and appreciation for tourism

To co-create an inspiring vision for tourism in Midland and identify related, achievable actions that the Town and partners can take over the next five years and beyond

To identify opportunities and priorities for year-round product experience development

To build internal capacity that will help to bring the tourism strategy to life through immediate, collaborative action guided by a detailed implementation plan and monitoring and evaluation plan

WHAT IS THE MUNICIPAL ACCOMMODATION TAX (MAT)?

In October 2023, the Town of Midland approved By-law 2023-56, establishing a mandatory municipal accommodation tax (MAT) to be paid by overnight visitors staying in Midland and collected by the hotels and motels where they stayed. MAT implementation was rolled out in stages over three years. Starting in February 2024, the MAT was set at 2.5%, in 2025 at 3.5%, and from 2026 and onwards the MAT will be 4%.

METHODOLOGY

The tourism strategy development process applied a community-based, participatory research approach using primary and secondary research methods. Desk research activities included a background document review, tourism asset review, visitor impressions research, along with visitation data and a trends review. These methods were complemented by community engagements activities including key informant interviews, a community tourism survey geared to residents and tourism industry members, industry focus groups (x2), a community organization focus group, and a community open house. In addition, while the research team was in-market, participant observation research was undertaken to explore the visitor offering and experiences available on-the-ground in and around Midland. The results of these research activities informed the development of a draft tourism strategic framework which was shared with representatives from partner organizations during an online session to pressure test strategic direction and further explore collaboration opportunities. Feedback from partners was collected in conversation as well as through an online survey that informed the evolution of the strategic approach.

HOW IS THE MAT STRUCTURED AND WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

The Town entered into an agreement with Tourism Simcoe County and Ontario Resorts, Hotels, and Motels Association to facilitate the implementation of the MAT and the use of its funds. 50% of the total funds collected is directed to the County as Midland's "tourism entity" as defined under Regulation 435/17 for marketing and destination development. This distributed share of the funds is used exclusively for tourism marketing and promoting the Town of Midland. The other 50% of MAT funds is retained by the Town of Midland. The Town directs its share to tourism and cultural programs and activities as well as tourism and cultural infrastructure. A MAT committee that meets twice a year has been established, which includes representation from area accommodations and attractions. A member of Council, as well as Town and County Tourism Staff are ex officio members.



ALIGNMENTS

Midland's tourism development, management, and communications efforts do not live in a vacuum. They are reinforced by the policy and legislative context set out by other levels of government.

Midland has been and is included in broader tourism strategies launched by other bodies, such as Tourism Simcoe County's 2023-2026 Destination Stewardship Plan. Tourism in Midland is also influenced by the direction and priorities set by Regional Tourism Organization 7 in its 2024-2029 Action Plan, as well as by the work of Destination Ontario and Destination Canada.

Beyond the regional plans, Midland's Tourism Strategy sits within the context of the Town of Midland's other plans and policies, including but not limited to the Town of Midland's:



This tourism strategy works within the broader parameters and priorities of the Town of Midland, reinforcing and supporting these where possible through tourism. At the same time, the successful implementation of Midland's Tourism Strategy relies on the meaningful integration of tourism across all current and future plans and policies.





Discovery
Harbour
Entrance
Entrée



TOURISM TODAY

OVERVIEW

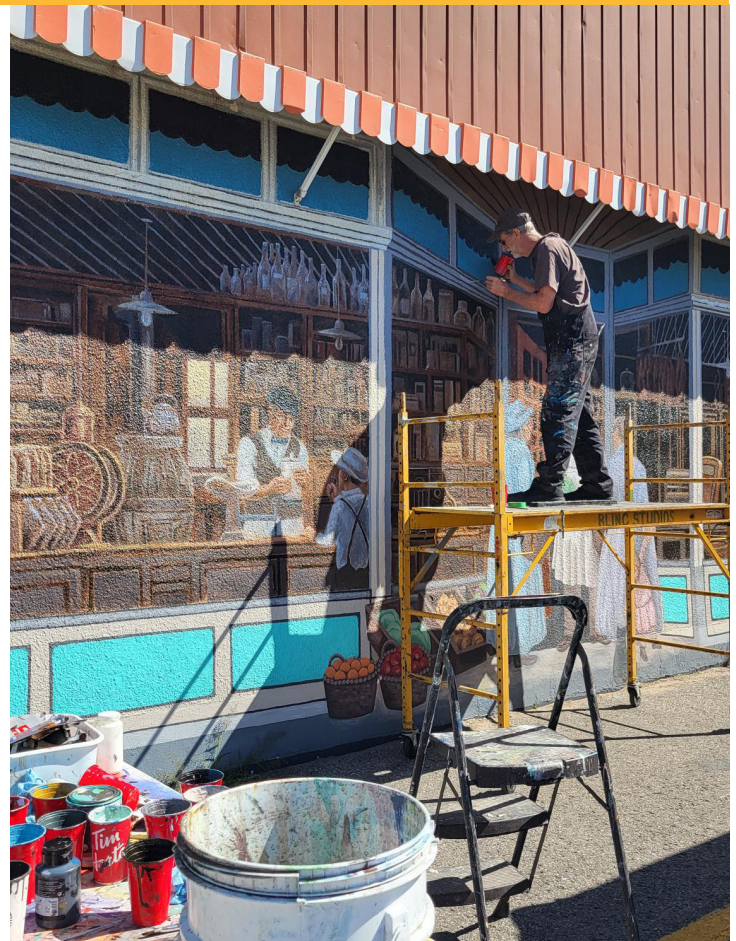
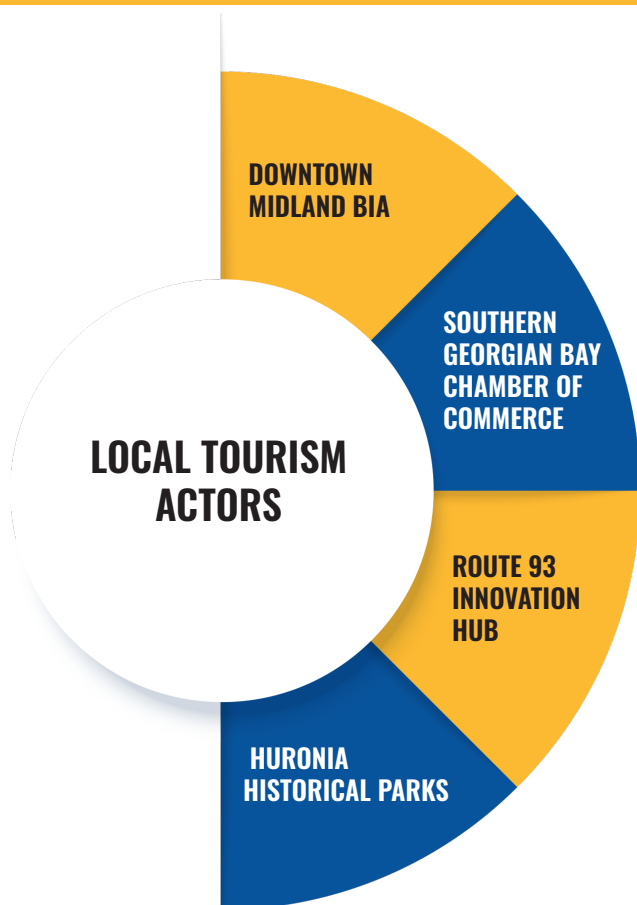
Midland's tourism ecosystem is made up of many different organizations that contribute to tourism development, management, communications and marketing.

Driving the development and implementation of this strategy are two key tourism ecosystem actors, the Town of Midland and Tourism Simcoe County. As noted in the introduction, Tourism Simcoe County is Midland's "eligible tourism entity" and responsible for several tourism marketing and destination development activities, including promotion of the Heart of Georgian Bay.

Importantly, many other local, regional, provincial, and national organizations are key players influencing tourism in Midland. At the local level, these include the Downtown Midland BIA, Southern Georgian Bay Chamber of Commerce, Route 93 Innovation Hub, and Huronia Historical Parks. At the regional and provincial level, there are Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7) and Destination Ontario. At the national level, Destination Canada provides intelligence, tools and resources and marketing campaigns to help the Canadian tourism industry reach domestic and international markets.

WHAT IS THE "HEART OF GEORGIAN BAY"?

Destination brand promoted by Tourism Simcoe County that celebrates a geographic area represented by the Towns of Midland and Penetanguishene and the Townships of Tay and Tiny.



DESTINATION OFFER

From Ontario's Best Butter Tart Festival to Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons to Midland Harbour to Martyrs' Shrine, Midland and the surrounding area are home to a variety of tourism assets that offer a unique and place-based visitor experience.

At the same time, there are opportunities to build on existing strengths through investment into tourism assets, services, and infrastructure to elevate Midland as a prime Ontario destination.

TOURISM ASSETS

Midland is a regional tourism hub. Within Midland, visitors can access 45 out of the 90 tourism asset types identified as part of the strategy development process. The tourism assets identified include a mix of...

1. accommodation
2. culture & entertainment
3. food & beverage
4. infrastructure & services
5. meeting & conventions
6. nature-based
7. sports
8. wellness tourism assets

Beyond the local offer, visitors to Midland have access to tourism assets and key services and infrastructure like visitor information centres, marinas, car rentals, gas stations, pharmacies, and a medical centre elsewhere across North Simcoe. Naturally, Midland's existing tourism assets are key strengths in our destination, such as the robust accommodation base, food and beverage offerings, and nature and outdoor assets. More specifically, Midland has many different accommodation types, meaning that visitors have several options based on their needs and preferences. We boast bed & breakfasts to campgrounds to hotels, motels, and short-term rentals.

Midland's cultural and entertainment assets connect visitors to the destination's stories via arts schools, festivals and events, built heritage sites, retail shops, museums, art galleries, music venues, several performing arts groups, and the performing arts centre, among others.

Midland also has food and beverage assets such as farmers' markets, on-farm retailers and other agritourism businesses, restaurants, bars, cafes, retailers, food-focused festivals and events, breweries, coffee roasters, and more.

MIDLAND'S VALUE PROPOSITION IN TRIP PLANNING

Across digital channels there are several signature tourism assets that collectively help shape Midland's value proposition as a tourism destination. This means they are key sites, attractions, or events that visitors are already aware of or acting as strong motivators for their visits. They include Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons, Martyrs' Shrine, Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, Midland Cultural Centre, Huronia Museum & Ouendat Village, Little Lake Park, Midland Murals, Midland Harbour, Awenda Provincial Park, and Ontario's Best Butter Tart Festival.



When it comes nature-based assets, our destination has municipal parks, trails, tour operators, as well as access to regional assets like the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre.

Our destination also has several assets that could be better integrated into tourism. For example, although some wellness offerings like yoga studios and spas are available, they are limited in relation to positioning and connectivity to the other key assets.

Midland is also home to a cluster of sports assets that offer visitors and residents opportunities to be active. These include but are not limited the sports retailers, arena and recreation centre, sports fields and diamonds, and golf courses. Similarly, Midland also has some venues for meetings and conventions that can hold hundreds of people. That said, these types of assets can be better leveraged and positioned as tourism assets – a key opportunity this tourism strategy incorporates.

Building off Midland's many tourism assets, many of our current tourism assets are primarily available in the summer during daytime hours on weekends. This points to added opportunities to grow the existing offer, especially during the winter and shoulder seasons as well as during evenings and weekdays.

Other types of assets with growth potential include resort-like accommodations, tour operators, wellness or nature-based festivals and experience-based businesses; as well as key infrastructure gaps like regular bus connections, ride-share options, bike rentals to enjoy the trail system and kayak, canoe, and paddle board rentals to experience Georgian Bay and Little Lake.



VISITOR EXPERIENCE

A destination needs to offer a compelling visitor experience that reinforces a sense of destination identity and gives visitors reasons to come back. The visitor experience begins the moment a prospective visitor learns about a destination and extends to trip planning, in-person visit, as well as post-visitation through reminiscing and ideally booking a future visit or providing recommendations to other visitors. Below are key insights related to Midland's online and in-person visitor experience.



ONLINE: TRIP PLANNING

- Midland is positioned as a hub for visiting Georgian Bay on Generative AI summaries. Intentional visitors who already know they want to visit Georgian Bay, will likely see Midland recommended as a base, offering services and amenities.
- Midland is unlikely to be suggested as a destination via Generative AI summaries for prospective visitors looking for trip inspiration but who don't have a set destination in mind. Generative AI is growing as a trip planning tool and there is an opportunity to improve Midland's digital footprint and AI searchability as a recommended destination.
- Midland appears in some results for traditional Google searches but is unlikely to emerge as a top destination via general searches. Many of the high-ranking search results appear in listicle and blog formats. Notably, user-generated responses to Reddit inquiries like "What are some cool places in Ontario for a 2- or 3-day trip?" mention Midland, highlighting the value of engaging with similar platforms and responding directly to prospective visitor inquiries.
- Easy trip planning. There is more than enough information available online for intentional visitors to research and develop a 2-day itinerary to Midland. However, this becomes more difficult outside of the summer season and mid-week.



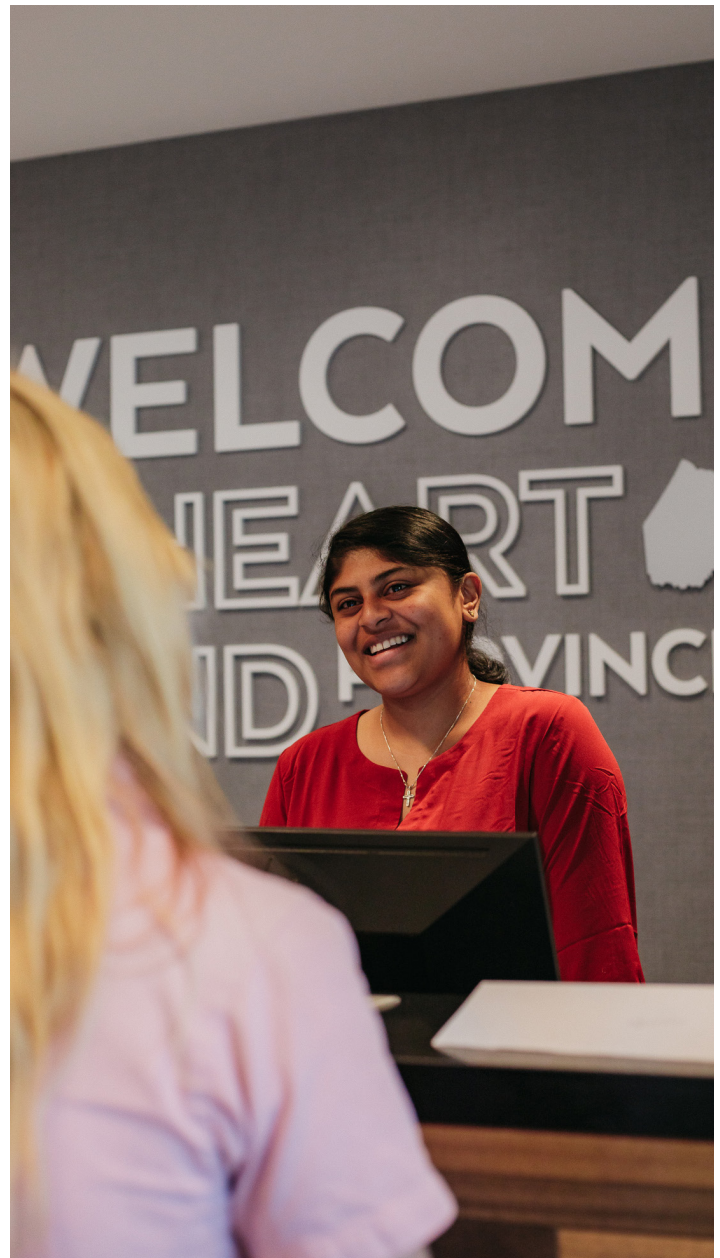
IN-PERSON: VISIT

- Enhancing gateway, wayfinding, and interpretive signage would add to the visitor experience and help visitors make the most out of their trip to Midland. When done right, the development of gateway signage provides an opportunity for placemaking and community positioning. For wayfinding signage, there are opportunities for improvement along multi-modal trails and onsite at key assets. For interpretive signage, there is an opportunity to collaborate with nearby Anishinaabek First Nations and the Wendat Nation to develop signs that explain how different First Nations have moved through and called the area home, while emphasizing contemporary Indigenous stories to complement the historical narratives available at key attractions.
- Midland has friendly and knowledgeable frontline staff who are happy to share stories with visitors. However, there is an opportunity to work with hospitality staff so that they can easily and naturally offer recommendations and cross-promotion of things to do, before waiting for visitors to ask for this information. Additionally, there is an opportunity to create a welcoming environment for visitors by having a well-located visitor information centre that is accessible and connects visitors to personalized activities. Partnership and cross-promotion with neighbouring destinations can increase the effectiveness of these efforts by moving visitors around the region.
- Midland is developing a vibrant downtown with several initiatives like the Town's mural program and the BIA's outdoor music helping to bring the neighbourhood to life. At the same time, there is an opportunity to better animate the destination through year-round activations and placemaking. For instance, showcasing local artisans or making better use of waterfront views can complement enhanced programming and experiences offered. Similarly, there is an opportunity to better use assets such as the Midland Cultural Centre and Huronia Museum, as well as extend business hours, especially in the summer. tourism initiatives that genuinely support vulnerable community members by working with the existing social infrastructure, including community organizations that already have relationships and provide supports.



POST-TRIP: REMINISCENCE

- Across the in-person experience, few businesses or organizations gathered contact information or established links via social media that would have facilitated continued connection with the visitor post-trip. Improving this follow-up and work to foster repeat visitation is an area of growth.



VISITOR MARKETS

WHO IS A “VISITOR”?

Someone who travels more than 40km one-way for leisure or business or stays overnight.

Midland is visited by approximately 110,000 visitors per year, the majority being same-day visitors who mostly visit during the summer months, so from May to August, with July and August being peak months. These visitors are a mix of family-oriented and culturally engaged travellers who bring a range of travel behaviours and accommodation preferences.

The top origin markets for travellers to Midland include local travellers from Orillia and Collingwood, regional visitors from Barrie, Muskoka and the Kawarthas, as well as larger urban markets like visitors from the Greater Toronto Area and to a lesser extent Ottawa. To a lesser extent visitor markets also include those from Parry Sound and Sudbury.

Using Environics personas, Midland has six (6) main target groups:

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| COUNTRYSIDE FAMILIES Middle-aged rural families AVERAGE SPEND \$1,558/TRIP | EXPLORING COUNTRY COUPLES Older couples/singles, rural AVERAGE SPEND \$1,704/TRIP | AFFLUENT ESTABLISHED FAMILIES Wealthy urban families AVERAGE SPEND \$1,662/TRIP | SUBURBAN FAMILIES Middle-income suburban families AVERAGE SPEND \$1,635/TRIP | YOUNGER URBAN SINGLES & COUPLES Young, diverse urban travellers AVERAGE SPEND \$1,700/TRIP | URBAN DIVERSE FAMILIES Multicultural urban families AVERAGE SPEND \$1,529/TRIP |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|



Although most target groups are family travellers from urban or suburban settings, each group has unique demographic characteristics. For example, Countryside Families (TG1) and Suburban Families (TG4) are typically middle-aged, living in rural or suburban areas, and married with children. Urban Diverse Families (TG6) are multicultural urban families with moderate income, while Affluent Established Families (TG3) represent wealthy urban families, also often married with older children. Exploring Country Couples (TG2) are older couples or singles residing in rural settings. Younger Urban Singles & Couples (TG5) are young, diverse, and urban, usually without children.

Income levels vary significantly across the segments. Affluent Established Families stand out as the most financially well-off, with an average yearly household income of \$264,000.00, followed by Countryside Families at \$154,000.00, noting a gap in household income of over \$100,000.00 between these two groups. These high-income groups are followed by Suburban Families and Urban Diverse Families whose average yearly household income sits at \$129,000.00, Younger Urban Singles & Couples at \$120,000.00, and Exploring Country Couples at \$115,000.00.

The top value types among target groups are work fulfilment, attraction to nature, and cultural assimilation/diversity. Overall, this suggests that travellers to Midland are experience-driven, value nature, culture and meaningful leisure. They are also socially aware, with interests in sustainability and diversity. Travellers are family-oriented or community-minded, with Exploring Country Couples, Countryside Families and Suburban Families leaning more towards social conservatism:

- Countryside Families and Exploring Country Couples are guided by national pride, financial caution, nature, escape, and traditionalism.
- Affluent Established Families value health, legacy, and personal control.
- Suburban Families emphasize work fulfilment, ecological concern, and confidence in big business.
- Younger Urban Singles & Couples and Urban Diverse Families are progressive, valuing cultural assimilation, emotional control, brand apathy, and work fulfilment.



Values inform leisure preferences, which reflect each group's lifestyle. Countryside Families, Exploring Country Couples, Affluent Established Families, and Suburban Families engage in light outdoor activities such as visiting parks and gardening. Meanwhile, Younger Urban Singles & Couples and Urban Diverse Families engage in more attractions- and cultural-based activities like planning to visit events, bars, or seeking outings like going to the movies.

- Countryside Families and Suburban Families favour parks, fairs, gardening, and swimming, emphasizing outdoor and family-friendly activities.
- Affluent Established Families prefer bars, parks, and gardening aligning with the outdoors and pointing to an interest in non-child focused activities.
- Exploring Country Couples enjoy reading, gardening, and fairs.
- Younger Urban Singles & Couples are drawn to cultural events, bars, and attractions, highlighting a taste for more cultural experiences and a range of nightlife attractions.
- Urban Diverse Families leisure time is focused on auditoriums, movies, and home exercise indicating a more home-based and suburban range of leisure activities.

TRAVEL TRENDS

Tourism development, management, and communication is stronger when it is based on and truly reflects the destination. This means leaning into innate points of differentiation rather than attempting to replicate the offerings of other destinations. At the same time, visitor behaviours, preferences, and travel trends shift. Staying on top of what visitors are looking for can help with strategic planning and product development. Some of the travel trends that are relevant to Midland and inform this tourism strategy include:

DARK SKY AND SILENT TRAVEL:

The need to feel connected without an internet connection is on the rise. Connecting with the great beyond, and related phenomena, like solar and lunar eclipses, is pulling people away from their desks, homes, and cities, and instead bringing them to settings offering peace, quiet, and perspective. At the same time, as wellness travel continues to trend, it is expanding to include silent experiences, ranging from quiet travel and silent retreats to silent walks, tours, and dedicated spaces free of noise pollution.

SHOULDER SEASON AND COOLCATION TRAVEL:

Amidst climate and environmental changes, the idea of travelling to a crowded destination at the height of the summer heat is losing its appeal. Knowing that destinations are successfully extending into their shoulder seasons, many people are choosing to visit when temperatures are more bearable, and they can have more meaningful experiences. Meanwhile others are prioritizing more temperate destinations altogether.

EXPERIENTIAL AND PURPOSE-DRIVEN TRAVEL:

There is a strong interest in travel opportunities that go beyond sightseeing and instead focus on engaging with a destination's communities in a meaningful way by connecting with local cultures, developing new skills, and supporting community-led projects.

SKIP-GEN AND MULTIGENERATIONAL TRAVEL:

The global ratio of living grandparents to grandchildren is at its highest. Older retired generations are seeking to create shared memories with their grandchildren while providing their own adult children with childcare so they can have their own vacation or simply take a break. At the same time, multi-generational and group-based travel is on the rise with families and friends seeking to strengthen bonds and reconnect by sharing experiences through holidays.

INCREASED USE OF AI AND SMART TECHNOLOGY:

The use of artificial intelligence and new technologies in the travel industry are increasing. These trends are supporting travellers with itinerary development and organizations and businesses in a destination with improved avenues for customer service supports, operational efficiency, wayfinding, and data collection. As the use of AI and related technologies like chatbots, language translations, and booking systems increase, travellers will look for products and services that integrate these supports into the visitor experience.

PRIORITIZING SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL:

There is still an interest among visitors in prioritizing sustainability in their travels. Finding opportunities to improve the sustainability of travel to a destination and communicating this with visitors is key, while also ensuring that the efforts to improve sustainability are genuine and can be demonstrated through concrete changes and initiatives.

COST-CONSCIOUS TRAVEL:

With the uncertainty of the economy and the increase in costs, travellers are prioritizing value and affordability. Visitors are looking for shorter trips and budget-friendly destinations to visit. Interestingly, despite many having a strong desire to choose sustainable travel options, many also find it unreachable given their travel budgets. Destination are catering to this by offering tourism products and experiences at tiered prices, as well as offering packages and discounted promotions.

SOFT TRAVEL:

As part of wellness tourism, soft travellers look to get away for self-discovery or mental health. They look for destinations that encourage simplicity or spontaneity, as well as a getaway from everyday life to soothe themselves and explore at their own pace. This can include avoiding pre-planning, disconnecting from personal phones, and letting the travel journey flow at its pace.

PRODUCTS AND EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

There are already many things a visitor can book and do both in Midland and in the surrounding area. That said, part of fostering an exciting and attractive destination involves looking for new products and experience opportunities. This also means leveraging existing offerings and finding opportunities to improve or enhance them. Toward this, Midland can continue to connect to regional assets and plug into their programming and events to foster a cohesive regional visitor experience. There are a variety of ways this can take shape, for instance it could mean developing branded satellite or pop-up activities in Midland or encouraging tourism businesses to leverage regional activities in their marketing and offerings.

As Midland continues to grow as a four-season destination, it is important to encourage products and experiences offered during the winter, shoulder seasons, as well as mid-week to extend the season. This means working with partners to attract new businesses and entrepreneurs that can provide these products and experiences.

What follows are examples of potential new bookable experiences that can be developed to celebrate and showcase Midland's arts, culture, and natural assets. Bookable experiences can also be used to make Midland more appealing to organized tour companies whether they offer group or independent trips by bus, cruise, bike or other means. These examples are provided for inspirational purposes to illustrate how Midland's tourism assets can be leveraged to better connect with visitors and are directly aligned with four specific actions identified in this tourism strategy:

- 5.1.2: Activate existing tourism assets through facility improvements and year-round programming.**
- 5.1.3: Improve visitor connection to and enjoyment of Georgian Bay and Little Lake.**
- 5.2.1: Accompany, support, and fund the creation of new bookable tourism experiences.**
- 5.2.2: Develop signature, regionallybranded multiday cycling experiences and routes.**

Midland | PENETANGUISHENE | TAY | TINY
experience
THE HEART OF
GEORGIAN BAY

ARTS & CULTURE EXPERIENCES

As a destination, Midland is well-positioned to develop a variety of bookable arts and culture experiences that showcase artistic talent and share stories related to Midland's culture and heritage. These experiences can include workshops, classes, or walking, hiking, cycling, paddling, or cruise tours. Most of these experiences can also integrate food and beverage, such as a snack made by a local business or a stop at a food and beverage operator.

Below are specific examples of bookable experience options that could be developed by Midland's tourism community, including its businesses and community organizations, among other partners.



Bookable Experience Ideas

Interactive Food Workshop (2hrs-3hrs): Year-round workshops with chefs that showcase local and regional ingredients, as well as the people behind Midland's food and beverage sector. Participants learn how to make different locally significant or family dishes.

"Scenic Views of Georgian Bay" Guided Cycling Tour or Bikes & Brews (2.5hrs-3hrs): Bookable guided cycling tour around Midland and Georgian Bay available from summer thought to fall. It can provide equipment rental or bring-your-own equipment options and stops at different scenic and significant locations where stories about the area are shared by a guide. As part of the guided tour, participants are provided a meal from a local food and beverage establishment to either take for a picnic stop at one of the locations or enjoy on-site at the end of the tour. There is room to play with the focus of the tour. For example, the tour could be planned as a "Martyrs' to Mural" tour focused on attracting visitors from Martyrs' Shrine to visit Downtown Midland and have a meal at a local food and beverage establishment.

Guided Painting Tour (1.5hrs-3hrs): Year-round bookable guided painting experience that takes participants to different locations that inspired well-known paintings such as those from the Group of Seven and Frank Johnson, while having a chance to paint outdoors or in a cozy location depending on the time of year and conditions. This guided painting tour can also include a meal component.

Four-season Photography Walk (1.5hrs-2hrs): Year-round bookable experience led by local photographers to showcase views and vistas in Midland, share how they change throughout the year, and allow participants to learn more about photography technique and technology. In the winter, it can take place while snowshoeing along different trails.

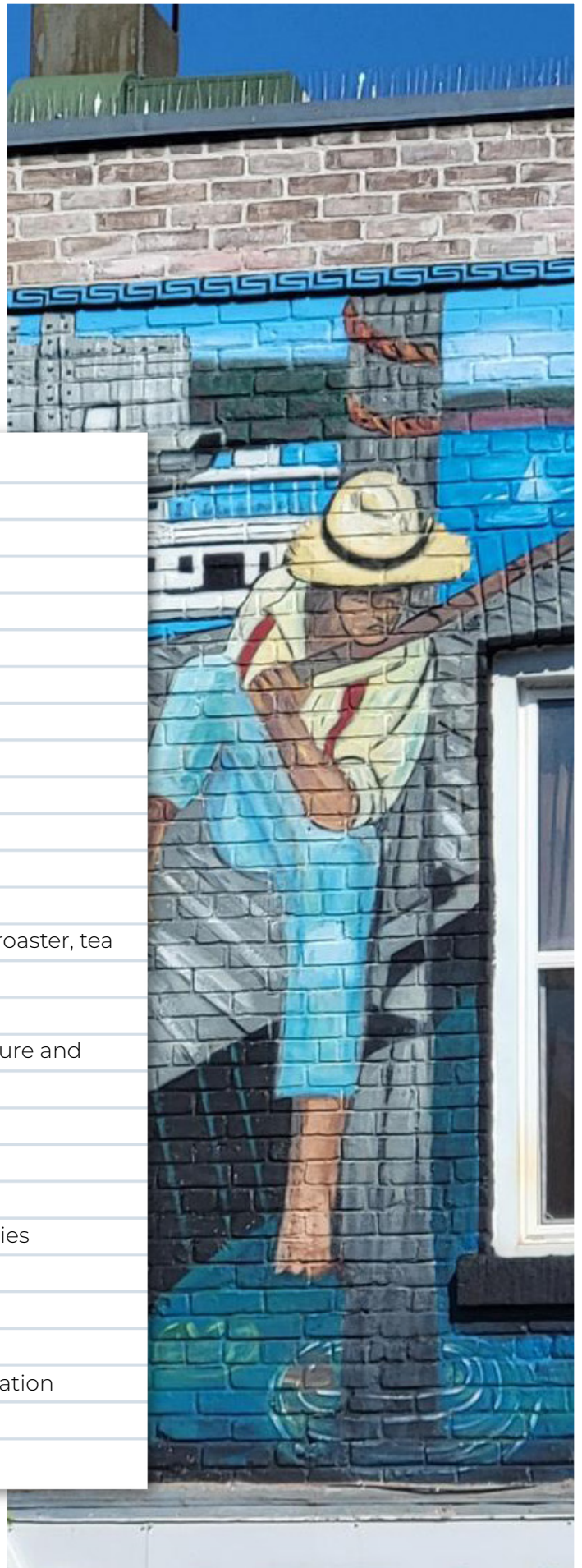
Relevant Target Markets: Younger Urban Singles & Couples are drawn to cultural events, bars, and attractions, highlighting a taste for more cultural experiences and a range of nightlife attractions. Urban Diverse Families are interested in auditoriums, movies, and home exercise, indicating a more home-based and suburban range of leisure activities.

Available Assets/Infrastructure: Midland and the surrounding area is home to many assets that would support these bookable experiences.

These include:



- multi-use walking and cycling trails
- parks and beaches
- sports retailers
- farmers' market and food and beverage retailers
- restaurants, bars, cafes, breweries, coffee roaster, tea make
- tour operator focused on showcasing nature and the environment
- marina
- museums, cultural centres, and art galleries
- landmarks and built heritage
- culture and entertainment-related education centres



NATURE-BASED EXPERIENCES

As a destination, Midland is well-positioned to develop a variety of bookable nature-based experiences that showcase its unique waterways and landscapes, views and vistas, and flora and fauna. Much like the proposed arts and culture experiences, these could include workshops, classes, tours, and programs, which means these experiences can also integrate food and beverage components.



Glow in the Dark Paddle Tour (1.5hrs-2hrs): Summer to fall bookable tour that is offered at night using lit up kayaks to paddle around Little Lake.

“Water and Wellness” Classes (1.5hrs-2hrs): Summer bookable classes that offer yoga along the waterfront and stand-up paddle yoga around Little Lake.

Georgian Bay “Paddle and Picnic” Guided Tour (3hrs-4hrs): Spring to fall bookable tours offering a half-day outdoor experience that includes a mix of paddling, hiking or walking, and a meal at a picturesque location or at a food and beverage operator. This can include a route from Wye Heritage Marina to Midland Marina with a return shuttle.

Guided Fishing Experience (2hrs-4hrs): Year-round small group fishing experiences that provide the chance for participants to fish on Georgian Bay either on a boat, on ice, or along the shore. Depending on regulations and required equipment, this could include a meal made from the fish caught as part of the experience.

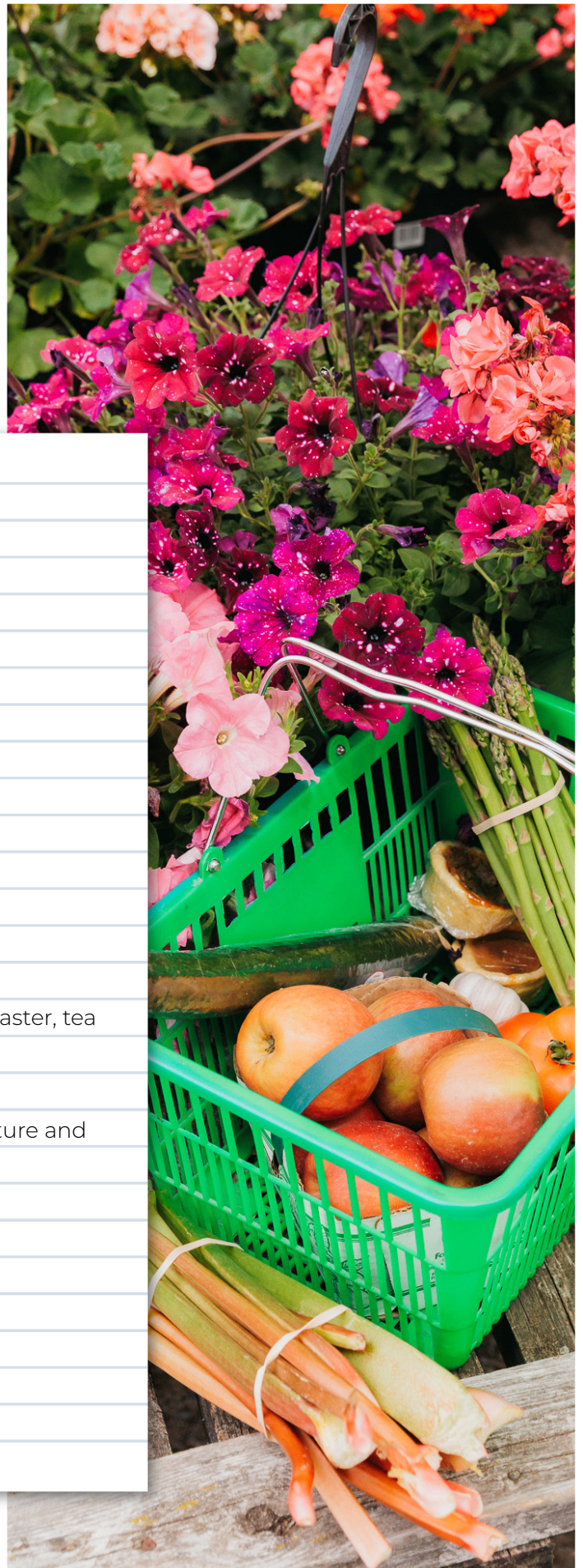
Relevant Target Markets: Countryside Families and Suburban Families favour parks, fairs, gardening, and swimming, emphasizing outdoor and family-friendly activities. Affluent Established Families prefer bars, parks, and gardening, aligning with the outdoors and pointing to an interest in non-child-focused activities.

Available Assets/Infrastructure: Midland and the surrounding area is home to many assets that would support these bookable experiences:

These include:



- multi-use walking and cycling trails
- parks and beaches
- sports retailers
- farmers' market
- food and beverage retailers
- restaurants, bars, cafes, brewery, coffee roaster, tea maker
- tour operator focused on showcasing nature and the environment
- marina and boat launches
- spa and yoga facilities





STRATEGIC DIRECTION

This section sets out a path forward for tourism in Midland. Broadly speaking, the tourism strategy guides the work of both the Town of Midland and Tourism Simcoe County as it relates to three overarching pillars namely tourism development, management, and communication, which includes marketing, in the destination over the next five years.

Collaboration with residents, visitors, tourism industry members, and diverse partner organizations is essential to bringing this strategy to life.



TOURISM VISION

The tourism vision is the guiding light for tourism development, management, and communications in Midland. It is the north star that all tourism and related initiatives are working towards in the destination. To make space for an inspiring and aspirational vision, it is set beyond the 5-year implementation timeline of the plan. The following vision statement was co-produced with Midland's residents, tourism industry members, community organizations, and other stakeholders:

It's 2035 and tourism is a year-round driver of economic, social, and environmental vitality in Midland, making it easy for residents and visitors to enjoy exceptional natural and cultural assets, including a vibrant downtown.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

At the foundation of Midland's tourism efforts are six guiding principles that are weaved across the overarching strategic direction for tourism development, management, and communication, as well as each corresponding strategy and action. The guiding principles reflect the tourism priorities identified by our community members, and include:

1. COLLABORATION:

The success of tourism is based on strong and diverse partnerships.

2. SUSTAINABILITY:

Tourism relies on and supports Midland's economic, social, and environmental resilience and wellbeing.

3. AUTHENTICITY:

Tourism reflects Midland's unique identities and heritage. It maintains the character and charm that the community values, while fostering room for innovation, evolution, and diverse storytelling.

4. ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY:

Midland welcomes diverse visitors of all ages, abilities, cultural backgrounds, orientations, among others.

5. COMMUNITY-BASED:

Tourism is guided by community priorities and fosters local pride. It supports the amenities, infrastructure, services, activations, and other aspects that make Midland a great place to live and visit.

6. DATA-INFORMED:

Tourism decisions are backed by data and reviewed through ongoing monitoring and evaluation.



TOURISM VISION

A Strategy Framework has been developed to clearly outline how the Town of Midland, Tourism Simcoe County, and the partners will work towards the tourism vision.

The Strategy Framework is organized around three pillars, tourism management, development, and communication. Within each of these pill





PILLAR A: MANAGEMENT

For Midland, tourism management includes all the foundational activities that establish the systems needed for effective tourism governance and informed decision making.

Tourism management allows for the responsible and efficient use of resources through strategic collaborations, data collection, and monitoring.

This pillar is made up of three areas of opportunity, which as “Collaboration at the Town”, “Collaboration with Partners” and “Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation.”



AREA OF OPPORTUNITY #1: COLLABORATION AT THE TOWN

This area of opportunity is about ensuring that links and impacts to tourism are considered across municipal departments. It's an area to focus energy and resources since it will contribute to ensuring that tourism is recognized as a shared responsibility across Town departments.

Tourism does not exist in a vacuum. Instead, it connects to housing, economic development, parks and recreation, transportation planning, etc. By growing awareness internally around tourism's reach and potential, the Town can better leverage the opportunities it provides as a contributor to the community's economic, sociocultural, and environmental wellbeing.

To work towards Collaboration at the Town, three strategies and six actions have been identified, as outlined in the table below.

| STRATEGIES | ACTIONS |
|---|--|
| 1.1 Foster shared responsibility, collaboration, and efficiency in tourism and tourism-adjacent work. | 1.1.1 Build ownership and familiarize Town Council and staff with their roles and connections in the Tourism Strategy. |
| | 1.1.2 Advocate for continued and diversified resourcing of Tourism Strategy. |
| 1.2 Ensure tourism increases the wealth and wellbeing of Midland residents. | 1.2.1 Plan and activate tourism so that it connects to community wellbeing and supports local initiatives. |
| | 1.2.2 Ensure all short-term roofed accommodations participate in MAT collection and remittance. |
| 1.3 Attract new tourism businesses and encourage existing ones to expand their offer. | 1.3.1 Develop a regional tourism business retention, expansion, and investment attraction strategy. |
| | 1.3.2 Enable Economic Development to prioritize tourism sector attraction and investment. |



AREA OF OPPORTUNITY #2: COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS

The second area of opportunity is about ensuring that the distribution of tourism development, management, and marketing efforts is both effective and efficient so that it benefits Midland and neighbouring destinations. It will make it possible to better collaborate with partners, harnessing everyone's knowledge and capacities to build a better place to live, visit, and work.

Many organizations are involved in growing tourism in and around Midland, and several areas of overlap exist between these organizations. Through aligned collaborations, gaps can be filled and the unnecessary duplication of efforts avoided. As a hub destination, having stronger partnerships with neighbouring municipalities and tourism assets means Midland will be able to improve its visitor experience. Importantly, efforts to explore partnership development must prioritize meaningful relationship building with Indigenous organizations and communities with connections to Midland and the surrounding area.

To work towards Collaboration with Partners, three strategies and five actions have been identified, as outlined in the table below.

| STRATEGIES | ACTIONS |
|--|--|
| 2.1 Formalize tourism roles and collaboration structures to avoid duplication. | 2.1.1 Form a North Simcoe tourism working group (Town, County, Chamber, Route 93, BIA, RTO7, etc.) |
| 2.2 Mobilize neighbouring municipalities and key tourism assets for increased tourism collaboration. | 2.2.1 Align and formalize tourism-based collaborations with the Town of Penetanguishene and other neighbouring municipalities and First Nations. |
| | 2.2.2 Align and formalize tourism relationship and collaborations with key regional tourism assets. |
| 2.3 Grow relationships with Indigenous organizations and communities with connections to Midland and surrounding area. | 2.3.1 Invite co-planning for implementation of key product development and storytelling strategies with Indigenous groups and communities. |
| | 2.3.2 Align and formalize tourism relationships with Indigenous-led organizations. |



AREA OF OPPORTUNITY #3: RESEARCH, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This area of opportunity is about ensuring that the right data is available to make informed decisions around destination development, management, and marketing. It's an important area upon which to focus energy and resources because measurement is an essential aspect of management.

Without the correct systems in place to track tourism's impact and contributions to Midland across economic, social, and environmental indicators, making smart adjustments to the Town's tourism initiatives becomes a lot less attainable. Importantly, these data collection activities need to facilitate feedback from Midland's residents and tourism community.

To work towards Research, Monitoring and Evaluation, two strategies and four actions have been identified, as outlined in the table below.

| STRATEGIES | ACTIONS |
|--|---|
| <p>3.1 Develop systems for ongoing collection and sharing of information needed for sustainable tourism decision-making.</p> | <p>3.1.1 Share data and research on tourism's impact and contributions to Midland across economic, social, and environmental indicators.</p> |
| | <p>3.1.2 Develop and share tools/resources to help tourism actors participate in the collection and use of tourism data in decision-making.</p> |
| <p>3.2 Design and launch a system for the ongoing engagement and participation of residents and industry in tourism matters.</p> | <p>3.2.1 Develop ongoing tourism-related resident-engagement processes and related tools.</p> |
| | <p>3.2.2 Engage with the tourism industry regularly and share relevant news and resources.</p> |





PILLAR B: DEVELOPMENT

For Midland, tourism development is about working from a strong foundation to continuously improve how the destination sustainably serves visitors, industry, and residents.

Tourism development means ensuring that the networks and supports are in place to harness the power of tourism, while working collaboratively to continue improving Midland's visitor experience so that it is compelling and authentically reflects Midland.

This pillar is made up of two areas of opportunity, including "Networking, Training, and Support" and "New and Enhanced Product."



AREA OF OPPORTUNITY #4: NETWORKING, TRAINING, AND SUPPORT

This area of opportunity is about ensuring that tourism businesses and related organizations are connected and have the financial and technical support they need to contribute to tourism.

Tourism product development relies on a robust, connected, and informed network of tourism industry members working towards shared goals. Empowering the tourism industry to work in parallel with the Town, Tourism Simcoe County, and other partners can in turn support the long-term resilience of tourism.

To work towards Networking, Training, and Support, one strategy and one action have been identified, as outlined in the table below.

| STRATEGIES | ACTIONS |
|--|---|
| 4.1 Connect tourism industry members for consistent networking, capacity development, and collaboration. | 4.1.1 Plan and share tourism networking and capacity building sessions and resources. |



AREA OF OPPORTUNITY #5: NEW AND ENHANCED PRODUCT

This area of opportunity is about ensuring that no matter the time of year or day, it's easy for visitors to have a meaningful and memorable experience in Midland. It's an important area because meeting and exceeding visitor expectations is directly related to whether they plan a return trip or recommend Midland as a destination to others.

As it relates to the in-destination visitor experience, offering high-quality visitor infrastructure, programming, and bookable experiences all play a role in helping travellers meaningfully connect to the spots and places across Midland during their visit.

To work towards New and Enhanced Product, two strategies and five actions have been identified, as outlined in the chart below.

| STRATEGIES | ACTIONS |
|---|--|
| 5.1 Invest in infrastructure and programming to revitalize and activate key tourism assets. | 5.1.1 Work with partners on placemaking and beautification initiatives to grow destination sense of place. |
| | 5.1.2 Activate existing tourism assets through facility improvements and year-round programming. |
| | 5.1.3 Improve visitor connection to and enjoyment of Georgian Bay and Little Lake. |
| 5.2 Support the development of Midland/Heart of Georgian Bay experiences. | 5.2.1 Accompany, support, and fund the creation of new bookable tourism experiences. |
| | 5.2.2 Develop signature, regionally branded multiday cycling experiences and routes. |





PILLAR C: COMMUNICATION

For Midland, tourism communication is about speaking directly to visitors to give them the information they need online to help them book and in-person so they can make the most of their trip to Midland.

This Pillar is made up of two areas of opportunity, including Marketing and In-destination Information.

Note: Actions related to communicating with residents and industry are included in the Management Pillar since they are internal to the destination.



AREA OF OPPORTUNITY #6: MARKETING

This area of opportunity is about ensuring that Midland is top of mind amongst potential visitors as the ideal base for exploring Georgian Bay.

There is room to improve Midland's positioning to prospective visitors, especially those who are not actively planning a trip to Midland, including through new digital channels and tools. Related to this, Midland has the potential to more firmly lean into its destination hub status to both benefit from and contribute to regional tourism.

Midland can work to slowly grow into new markets that will maximize the use of its existing asset base, including small event spaces.

To work towards Marketing, two strategies and five actions have been identified, as outlined in the chart below.

| STRATEGIES | ACTIONS |
|---|---|
| <p>6.1 Position Midland as the hub for exploring the Heart of Georgian Bay.</p> | <p>6.1.1 Develop local and regional marketing materials, campaigns, and resources that illustrate connection of Midland to regional tourism assets.</p> |
| | <p>6.1.2 Align Midland's destination brand and marketing with Simcoe County while celebrating points of differentiation.</p> |
| <p>6.2 Make it easier for visitors to choose and plan their trips to Midland.</p> | <p>6.2.1 Confirm, align, and update Midland's visitor-facing communication channels.</p> |
| | <p>6.2.2 Pursue sport tourism and small meetings/ events opportunities.</p> |
| | <p>6.2.3 Directly connect with cottagers to make Midland an integral part of their cottage experience.</p> |



AREA OF OPPORTUNITY #7: IN-DESTINATION INFORMATION

This area of opportunity is about ensuring that all visitors to Midland have the information they need to connect with what makes the destination special.

It's an important area upon which to focus energy and resources because not all visitors pre-plan their trips; with many enjoy receiving recommendations from locals and leaning about hidden gems across their visit.

Since Midland has many stories to share that visitors do not always have access to, helping visitors connect with these pieces of heritage and identity will make for a richer visitor experience.

To work towards In-destination Information, two strategies and three actions have been identified, as outlined in the table below.

| STRATEGIES | ACTIONS |
|---|--|
| 7.1 Strengthen visitor welcome and access to real-time information. | 7.1.1 Improve gateway and interpretive signage and information throughout the destination, including along trails. |
| | 7.1.2 Set up targeted visitor welcome and information points. |
| 7.2 Empower residents as destination ambassadors. | 7.2.1 Develop and iterate a resident ambassador program. |



IMPLEMENTATION

The Town of Midland's Tourism Strategy is the starting point for many exciting and important developments. For these to materialize, coordinated, collaborative, and forward-thinking momentum needs to be established and upheld across the network of businesses, organizations, and partner organizations that bring tourism in Midland to life.

Fortunately, this tourism strategy was developed with close collaboration between the Town of Midland, Tourism Simcoe County, tourism businesses, and other key partners who contributed their experience, perspectives, and ideas across the process. Through implementation of the strategy, this collaborative foundation will continue to be built up.

What follows is a description of the components that have been planned as part of preparing to implement the 15 tourism strategies and 29 corresponding actions across the next 5 years. These include details on the timeline, metrics of success, resource needs, and co-ownership and collaboration through partnership.



TIMELINES

A key part of implementation planning is mapping out strategic actions across the next 5 years. The "timeline" column in the implementation tables indicates when a strategic action is due to start.

As part of timeline planning, it's important to recognize that these initial timelines are flexible and will likely evolve based on events and developments, including how the implementation of related actions unfolds and any related capacity changes, along with new priorities and opportunities. Toward this, the timeline is presented as ranges rather than specific dates to factor in the needed adaptability:

- **Immediate, within 12 months: 4 actions are high priority, easy to action or have the resources ready and capacity required for their implementation.**
- **Short, within 12-24 months: 10 actions are high priority and relate to coordinating efforts or aligning with partners for the implementation of future actions.**
- **Medium, within 24-36 months: 8 actions rely on the implementation of other actions or confirmation of key resources and capacity before they can be actioned.**
- **Long, within 36-60 months: 7 actions that necessitate further planning, larger investment, or build off the implementation and progress of other actions.**

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Each of the 29 strategic actions have corresponding measures of success that the Town will use across its monitoring and reporting efforts.

Importantly, the measures have been identified with an eye on the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental aspects of sustainability. They are not only focused on economic and quantitative measures but also point to key outcomes and diverse metrics that account for social and environmental wellbeing and benefits. For instance, some of the measures related to management like “improvement in resident sentiment score over time” and “% of community awareness of tourism impacts” keep a pulse on changes in resident regard for and understanding of tourism’s impacts to assess its contribution to community wellbeing and social prosperity. Meanwhile, measures like “# and type of environmental improvements (greening, waste reduction)” and “visitor satisfaction with public spaces” can provide insights on the ties between environmental quality and the enjoyment of tourism activity by visitors. Other types of measures like “% of staff who complete/participate in tourism-related familiarization(s)” or “% change impact on downtown/waterfront foot traffic” help to better understand the shifts in familiarity and activation of tourism across key groups like Town staff or visitors.



BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

Existing resources like Town staff time and Municipal Accommodation Tax revenue, are essential resources that are already in place to help implement this tourism strategy. That said, and since tourism connects to so many other areas of the Town and partner organizations’ work, there is a need to leverage additional resource streams including across Town departments and from other organizations.

To ensure its resilience and activation, the Tourism Strategy requires a diverse range of funding sources and resourcing solutions to be successful. In other words, the resourcing of the Tourism Strategy’s actions should not be limited to one budget line as tourism relies on and contributes to several areas of work.

COLLABORATION

Lastly, the implementation table includes details on who between the Town of Midland and Tourism Simcoe County is leading the implementation of each action.

Mobilizing additional local and regional partners is essential to the successful implementation of the tourism strategy. Midland is home to many engaged and enthusiastic champions of tourism who are eager to support sustainable destination management, development, and marketing and so the opportunity stands to build more relationships and align efforts.

Many current and potential tourism partners were engaged in the development of this strategy. As part of this process and based on information shared, organizations that expressed interest in supporting the implementation of specific actions are included in an internal version of the implementation planning framework





PILLAR A: IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

| STRATEGIES | ACTIONS | LEAD ORG. | TIMELINE |
|--|--|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1.1 Foster shared responsibility, collaboration, and efficiency in tourism and tourism-adjacent work. | 1.1.1 Build ownership and familiarize Town Council and staff with their roles and connections in the Tourism Strategy. | Town of Midland | Immediate, within 12 months |
| | 1.1.2 Advocate for continued and diversified resourcing of Tourism Strategy. | Town and County Co-led | Immediate, within 12 months |
| 1.2 Ensure tourism increases the wealth and wellbeing of Midland residents. | 1.2.1 Plan and activate tourism so that it connects to community wellbeing and supports local initiatives. | Town of Midland | Medium, within 24-36 months |
| | 1.2.2 Ensure all short-term roofed accommodations participate in MAT collection and remittance. | Town of Midland | Immediate, within 12 months |
| 1.3 Attract new tourism businesses and encourage existing ones to expand their offer. | 1.3.1 Develop a regional tourism business retention, expansion, and investment attraction strategy. | Town and County Co-led | Medium, within 24-36 months |
| | 1.3.2 Enable Economic Development to prioritize tourism sector attraction and investment. | Town of Midland | Medium, within 24-36 months |
| 2.1 Formalize tourism roles and collaboration structures to avoid duplication | 2.1.1 Form a North Simcoe tourism working group. | Town of Midland | Short, within 12-24 months |
| 2.2 Mobilize neighbouring municipalities and key tourism assets for increased tourism collaboration. | 2.2.1 Align and formalize tourism-based collaborations with the Town of Penetanguishene and other neighbouring municipalities and First Nations. | Town of Midland | Short, within 12-24 months |
| | 2.2.2 Align and formalize tourism relationship and collaborations with key regional tourism assets. | Town of Midland | Short, within 12-24 months |
| 2.3 Grow relationships with Indigenous organizations and communities with connections to Midland and surrounding area. | 2.3.1 Invite co-planning for implementation of key product development and storytelling strategies with Indigenous groups and communities. | Town of Midland | Immediate, within 12 months |
| | 2.3.2 Align and formalize tourism relationships with Indigenous-led organizations. | Town of Midland | Medium, within 24-36 months |

| | | | |
|---|--|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 3.1 Develop systems for ongoing collection and sharing of information needed for sustainable tourism decision-making. | 3.1.1 Share data and research on tourism's impact and contributions to Midland across economic, social, and environmental indicators. | Town and County Co-led | Medium, within 24-36 months |
| | 3.1.2 Develop and share tools/resources to help tourism actors participate in the collection and use of tourism data in decision-making. | Town and County Co-led | Long, within 36-60 months |
| 3.2 Design and launch a system for the ongoing engagement and participation of residents and industry in tourism matters. | 3.2.1 Develop ongoing tourism-related resident-engagement processes and related tools. | Town of Midland | Long, within 36-60 months |
| | 3.2.2 Engage with tourism industry regularly and share relevant news and resources. | Town of Midland | Short, within 12-24 months |



PILLAR B: IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

| STRATEGIES | ACTIONS | LEAD ORG. | TIMELINE |
|--|--|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 4.1 Connect tourism industry members for consistent networking, capacity development, and collaboration. | 4.1.1 Plan and share tourism networking and capacity building sessions and resources. | Town and County Co-led | Short, within 12-24 months |
| 5.1 Invest in infrastructure and programming to revitalize and activate key tourism assets. | 5.1.1 Work with partners on placemaking and beautification initiatives to grow destination sense of place. | Town of Midland | Long, within 36-60 months |
| | 5.1.2 Activate existing tourism assets through facility improvements and year-round programming. | Town and County Co-led | Medium, within 24-36 months |
| | 5.1.3 Improve visitor connection to and enjoyment of Georgian Bay and Little Lake. | Town and County Co-led | Long, within 36-60 months |
| 5.2 Support the development of Midland/Heart of Georgian Bay experiences. | 5.2.1 Accompany, support, and fund the creation of new bookable tourism experiences. | Town and County Co-led | Medium, within 24-36 months |
| | 5.2.2 Develop signature, regionallybranded multiday cycling experiences and routes. | Town and County Co-led | Short, within 12-24 months |



PILLAR C: IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

| STRATEGIES | ACTIONS | LEAD ORG. | TIMELINE |
|--|---|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 6.1 Position Midland as the hub for exploring the Heart of Georgian Bay. | 6.1.1 Develop local and regional marketing materials, campaigns, and resources that illustrate connection of Midland to regional. | Town and County Co-led | Short, within 12-24 months |
| | 6.1.2 Align Midland destination brand and marketing with Simcoe County while celebrating points of differentiation. | Town and County Co-led | Short, within 12-24 months |
| 6.2 Make it easier for visitors to choose and plan their trips to Midland. | 6.2.1 Confirm, align, and update Midland's visitor-facing communication channels. | Town of Midland | Medium, within 24-36 months |
| | 6.2.2 Prepare to host sport and small meetings/events tourism opportunities. | Town of Midland | Long, within 36-60 months |
| | 6.2.3 Directly connect with cottagers to make Midland an integral part of their cottage experience. | Town and County Co-led | Short, within 12-24 months |
| 7.1 Strengthen visitor welcome and access to real-time information. | 7.1.1 Improve gateway and interpretive signage and information throughout the destination, including along trails. | Town and County Co-led | Long, within 36-60 months |
| | 7.1.2 Set up targeted visitor welcome and information points. | Town of Midland | Medium, within 24-36 months |
| 7.2 Empower residents as destination ambassadors. | 7.2.1 Develop and iterate a resident ambassador program. | Town and County Co-led | Long, within 36-60 months |





THE WAY FORWARD

When the Town of Midland introduced the Municipal Accommodation Tax in 2024 it was with the anticipation that it would benefit the prosperity of the community through tourism and cultural development.

To align with the implementation of the MAT, the Town recognized the need to allocate the funds in a strategic and thoughtful manner. The creation of this actionable and realistic five-year Tourism Strategy is timely and is positioning Midland to become a year-round tourism destination of choice. The Tourism Strategy will direct and inspire both the Town and Tourism Simcoe County, keeping our tourism partnership in alignment.

We thank the residents, and tourism partners and organizations who participated in this process. Thank you for sharing the vision for tourism growth and for your enthusiasm for potential collaborations. Thank you to Regional Tourism Organization 7 for their support of this project and we thank Bannikin for listening to, and guiding, our community throughout this process and delivering a plan that is positioning Midland for success.

The Town and Tourism Simcoe County are eager to embark on the next steps in this journey and to see where these new projects and activities will lead tourism within the next five years and beyond.

Yours in Tourism,

Bill Gordon, Mayor
Town of Midland

Basil Clarke, Warden
County of Simcoe



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BEYOND TRAVEL & TOURISM

