

FUTURE-FOCUS: CARLETON PLACE TOURISM'S

3-YEAR DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

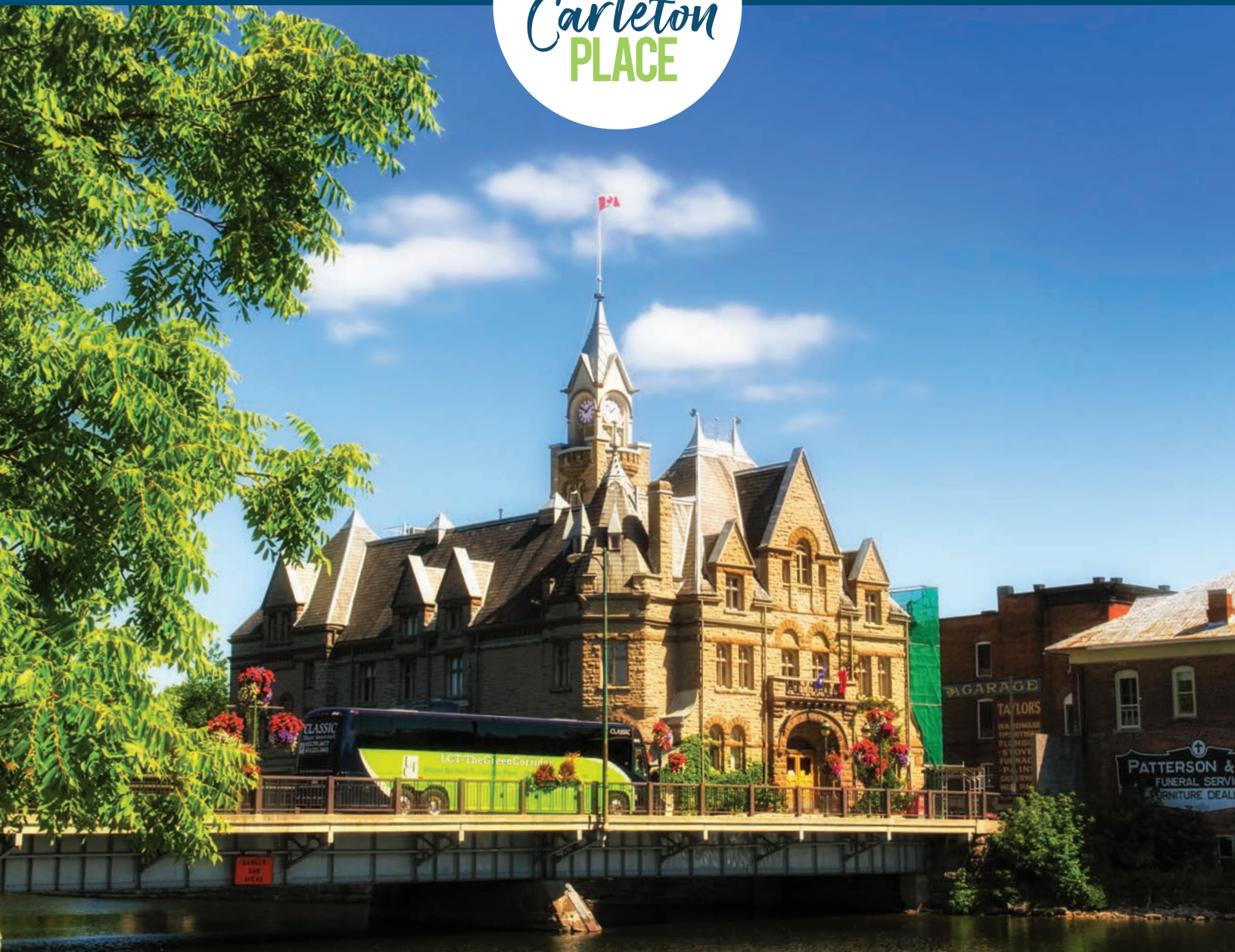




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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Town of Carleton Place is situated on the traditional, unceded Territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg People. This land is also part of the Métis Nation of Ontario's Region 6, specifically represented by the Ottawa Region Métis Council. We acknowledge and express gratitude for the Anishinaabe and Métis people who have accommodated, hosted, and guided visitors on their land for hundreds of years and whose continued connection to and stewardship of the land supports all prosperity here.

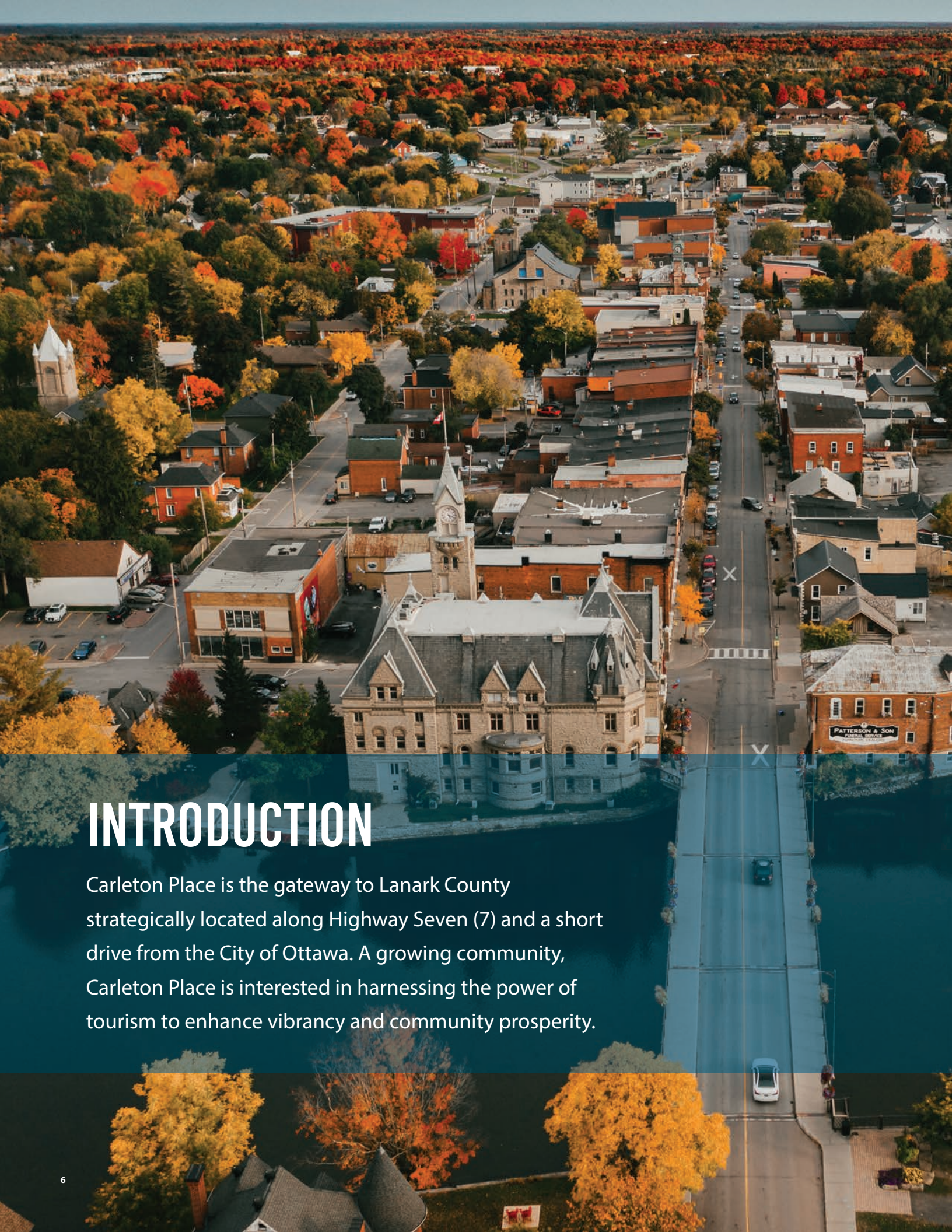
Carleton Place Tourism's 3-Year Destination Development Action Plan is the outcome of a participatory research process that engaged with many stakeholders in Carleton Place. Thank you to all those business owners and operators, as well as existing and potential partners who contributed their time, experiences, and perspectives across the development of this action plan. This project would not have been possible without their generosity of time and spirit.

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INTRODUCTION

Carleton Place is the gateway to Lanark County strategically located along Highway Seven (7) and a short drive from the City of Ottawa. A growing community, Carleton Place is interested in harnessing the power of tourism to enhance vibrancy and community prosperity.

With decreased leadership of tourism at the County level and limited organizational resources, Carleton Place Tourism (CPT), managed by the Carleton Place Chamber of Commerce, identified the need to partake in strategic planning to identify opportunities to grow tourism in Carleton Place. While this project is the first specific tourism strategy prepared for Carleton Place, tourism has been a focus within Municipal strategic plans. For example, the 2018 Town of Carleton Place Marketing Strategy includes messaging and tactics geared towards building awareness and welcoming visitors.

In late August 2022, the Carleton Place & District Chamber of Commerce began to work on a three (3)-year Carleton Place Tourism Destination Development Action Plan, in collaboration with Bannikin Travel & Tourism. CPT formed a steering committee comprised of seven (7) representatives from various organizations connected to the tourism industry in Carleton Place.

The project goal was to collect feedback and information that would allow CPT to identify strategic initiatives and resource allocations to grow their presence as a visitor destination, and to put this information towards a highly actionable strategy to guide Carleton Place into its desired future state over the next three years. The following were the project objectives identified to guide the research process:

- 1 To contextualize Carleton Place within the larger tourism landscape;
- 2 To identify the potential of Carleton Place's existing tourism assets;
- 3 To identify Carleton Place's potential sense of place;
- 4 To engage tourism stakeholders and gather their input on the baseline tourism situation in Carleton Place, and their vision for the future;
- 5 To gain clarity on the current positioning and promotion of the destination; and opportunities for the future.

These project objectives informed the development of a research and engagement plan that was designed to answer one main question, "What does Carleton Place Tourism need to do over the next three years to develop towards their desired future state as a tourism destination?" This question is supported by supplementary research questions that were connected to specific methods, tools, and data sources.



VISION

This Destination Development Action Plan is an opportunity for Carleton Place Tourism to establish a strategic and cohesive direction towards a thriving tourism industry in the town. The future of Carleton Place as a destination is one that offers visitors and residents alike a homey, charming and friendly welcome. Visitors seek out Carleton Place for its specific experiences, celebrating Carleton Place and the surrounding region's heritage, small town charm and the outdoors. Tourism in Carleton Place will contribute to the town's economy throughout the years, inspiring conscientious visitors who appreciate the town and the community, and add to its vibrancy.

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

Research began with a background document review that compiled, summarized, and analyzed 10 key documents related to tourism in Carleton Place. These included past plans, strategies, guides, and other relevant resources. The research also involved a one-day in-market research trip in early September 2022 to better understand the visitor experience in the destination.

Through October, two virtual Focus Groups that engaged Industry and Partners respectively were conducted. The Industry Focus Group engaged seven (7) members of the tourism industry and focused on discussing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges for tourism development in Carleton Place. The Partner Focus Group engaged fifteen (15) representatives and focused on discussing strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities, but also organizational alignments and resource sharing for

the future. Both Focus Groups used live discussion and an online guided group survey to collect information.

Research activities also included desk research focusing on identifying key tourism assets in Carleton Place and relevant macro-factor trends, analyzing current marketing materials and marketing positioning, and conducting research into three (3) best practice destinations, all with current tourism development strategies or plans in place to guide their operations. The more established the destination, the more niche these plans tended to be, ranging from more simple destination strategies to detailed action plans.

Finally, The Steering Committee was engaged in September and November to receive project updates and provide input into key research activities and outputs.



TOURISM IN CARLETON PLACE NOW

As the gateway to Lanark County, Carleton Place is strategically located along Highway Seven (7) a short 30-minute drive from the City of Ottawa. With unique assets, excellent access to the outdoors, and a charming "small-town" feel, Carleton Place is well positioned to grow as a place for visitors and residents. The following sections summarize key themes and takeaways from the research process and identifies significant opportunities noted for Carleton Place as a tourism destination.

ENGAGING VISITORS & ACTIVATING TOURISM ASSETS

Through the research process, the natural landscape, access to the Mississippi lake and river, extensive trail networks, and the historic downtown were identified as extraordinary aspects of Carleton Place. Access to outdoor amenities (i.e., trails including the Ottawa Valley Recreational Trail (OVRT), river, lake, etc.) and the thriving weddings and special events industry were also identified as significant assets. Having access to these assets is a significant opportunity for tourism in Carleton Place since nature-based and agri-tourism, including weddings and special events, are poised to grow in Ontario. Industry and partner perspectives on culinary tourism as an asset diverged slightly. Industry felt that the culinary scene in Carleton Place was a significant attraction for visitors while partners had differing points of view on the strength of the culinary offering as a primary draw to Carleton Place (although specific businesses were consistently noted as outstanding). Across research activities, consensus emerged on which specific tourism assets and/or experiences in Carleton Place were unique and significant. These prominent assets are identified in table A below.

KEY TOURISM ASSETS IN CARLETON PLACE

- + Boulton House
- + Black Tartan Kitchen
- + Braumeister Brewing Co.
- + Canadian CoOperative Wool Growers
- + Carleton Place & Beckwith Heritage Museum
- + Carleton Place Canoe Club
- + Stalwart Brewing Co.
- + Murals Throughout Carleton Place
- + Parks and Trails (e.g., Carleton Junction Pump Track, OVRT, Riverwalk Trail)
- + The Good Food Co.
- + The Grand Hotel
- + The Mississippi River & Lake
- + The Queens Crafters & Antique Market
- + Train Museum

Heritage was also mentioned by industry and partners as a key strength and a reason someone may choose to visit Carleton Place. Heritage was indeed a prominent theme when in-market and was communicated through product/experience and marketing collateral. Specifically, the impression is that Carleton Place has significant train heritage, military heritage, and textile heritage. Interestingly, as stakeholders in the destination noted, these industries do not have a strong contemporary presence in Carleton Place so it can be challenging for visitors to connect with these themes. Lack of activation was also observed as a challenge for other key assets identified including the Mississippi River, the waterfront, the Canadian Co-Operative Wool Growers, and the Carleton Place Canoe Club.

Overall, more strategic activation in Carleton Place will make it easier and more compelling for visitors to connect with the Town's rich heritage (e.g., festivals, concerts, and special events, etc.). This can be achieved by supporting key assets and organizations with development of engaging visitor facing experiences.

In addition, Focus Group participants mentioned the retail mix in Carleton Place as an area for improvement, especially given the retail mix of competitive communities nearby (e.g., Manotick, Perth, etc.) that were perceived as more appealing for visitors. There were also no operating tour providers in the town or surrounding area at the time of research and few planned festivals and events. Industry noted this lack of activation as a particularly missed opportunity for Carleton Place.

There are opportunities for Carleton Place Tourism to support business development and to support programming and events for visitors in partnership with the Town of Carleton Place Community Programmer. Working with the Town of Carleton Place Community Programmer to support, develop, and execute festivals and events is another opportunity to enhance programming and vibrancy.



SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

There are two (2) primary ways to enter Carleton Place as a visitor, coming Northeast or Southwest on Highway Seven (7) or arriving via Highway fifteen (15) from Smiths Falls. In-market visitor research found a notable lack of signage directing people to Carleton Place from these main thruways. This was also a challenge noted in focus groups conducted. Specifically, industry and partners noted that the lack of signage on the busy routes made it difficult to discover Carleton Place and entice potential visitors “off the highway” and into the destination.

Within the destination there was temporary construction signage erected by the Business Improvement Association (BIA) to help orient visitors in the town and direct them downtown. Signage to direct visitors towards parking lots was limited and there was no observed signage directing visitors towards the downtown or other places (apart from signage towards the museum) from the Ottawa Valley Recreational Trail (OVRT). Finally, signage directing visitors towards key visitor places (e.g., towards Mississippi Riverwalk Trail from Downtown) was scarce making it somewhat challenging to navigate within the destination by foot and bike. There is an opportunity to enhance the visitor experience through improved flagship signage and wayfinding signage throughout the destination.

LOCAL PRIDE AND AMBASSADORSHIP

While in-market, people were friendly and welcoming, but it was clear they did not see their community as a particularly desirable place for visitors. Some people communicated the perception that there was “nothing to do” or suggested visiting other communities nearby (e.g., Perth, Almonte, etc.). This indicated that locals may not feel confident in what Carleton Place offers its visitors. This conclusion is supported by Focus Group participants who said that many locals, especially new residents, are not aware of the types of businesses and experiences that Carleton Place offers. For this reason, they identified residents as a primary future opportunity for tourism. There are opportunities to engage more strongly with locals to enhance pride and ambassadorship to strengthen the sense of place in Carleton Place.

CURRENT AND POTENTIAL VISITORS

Based on the experiences and understandings of local stakeholders, it was identified that current visitors to Carleton Place tend to be day trippers from Ottawa and its suburbs between ages 30-60. In summer, there are many cottagers and seasonal residents in the area. It was noted that many visitors to Carleton Place come to attend special events like weddings. Focus Group members also said that visitors come to enjoy the trails, including cyclists, hikers, and snowmobilers, attend local sporting events, and to visit friends and family. There is an opportunity to collect more information about visitors to Carleton Place to better understand who they are and why they come.

Overwhelmingly, Focus Group members believed that there were two markets with the most future potential for Carleton Place as a visitor destination. The first was people living within a 30-minute to 1-hour drive coming for a day trip. The second potential visitor market noted was permanent and seasonal residents (mentioned above). These viewpoints aligned with supporting research and understanding. There are opportunities to engage with local markets and to focus more specifically on niche travellers with interests that align with what Carleton Place offers.

MARKETING & POSITIONING APPROACH

CHANNELS AND COLLATERAL

The Town of Carleton Place launched a branding campaign in 2008 called “Meet me on the Mississippi,” but it was not widely embraced by the community. The 2018 marketing strategy suggests emphasis be on the “Meet Me” aspect and focus on the emotions generated from experiences that people can have in Carleton Place. The strategic marketing approaches outlined in this branding document directly related to tourism include messaging through content-marketing, storytelling and promoting experiences; including the culinary scene; getting businesses market ready; and developing partnerships with OHTO and Lanark County Tourism.

Information for visitors to Carleton Place is available online through a variety of channels including CPT through the Chamber, the Town of Carleton Place, OHTO, and Lanark County Tourism websites that are helpful for planning purposes but can be improved.

This approach has developed out of necessity but having so much information in different places is not an efficient and effective way to communicate with visitors. Best practice destinations reviewed, for example, had specific visitor facing websites to communicate clearly with visitors and display relevant materials and messages. Consolidating visitor information onto one tourism specific platform will increase clarity for visitors and enhance the ability to curate content for relevant markets that follows a consistent voice. CPT also manages a Facebook (639 followers) and Instagram page (661 followers) where they share updates and information with visitors. In person, visitors can learn about Carleton Place at the visitor centre and some businesses around the destination have marketing collateral on hand (e.g., Sip & Savour Tour brochure at the Good Food co.). The Carleton Place guide is also distributed at visitor centres throughout Southwestern Ontario.



Visitors can learn and gather information about Carleton Place through a variety of material, in physical and digital format, specifically, maps, brochures, pamphlets, suggested itineraries and guides available at physical locations in Carleton Place and online. Best practice destinations used a similar variety of visitor-facing collateral, including downloadable visitor maps; however, these maps also connected destinations to the larger tourism region. Best practice destinations also worked closely with partners (e.g., other DMOs, Regional Tourism Organizations, niche tourism organizations, etc.) to amplify and support their marketing and collateral distribution. There is an opportunity to use visitor facing material to connect Carleton

Place to the wider tourism region more strongly and grow strategic partnerships that amplify messaging. Marketing collateral related to Carleton Place tended to be general and Focus Group members noted that a more targeted and proactive approach would be beneficial in the future. Industry specifically mentioned the need for more tourism marketing of Carleton Place and support for their own marketing efforts in the form of grants and other opportunities for exposure. More active storytelling and visitor targeting is an opportunity to create more engaging and proactive marketing material. Support for marketing activities and group marketing can help local businesses amplify their messages and draw people to Carleton Place.



KEY MESSAGING

Key messages communicated through the marketing material available are the Mississippi River & Lake, heritage, outdoor assets, and the culinary scene. In some cases (i.e., Carleton Place Guide), a clear message communicated was that Carleton Place is a good place to live and it seemed that Carleton Place was using their engagement with visitors to attract new residents. Content on social media channels showcased imagery and messaging around outdoor landscapes and some events in and around Carleton Place. Marketing materials were provided in English only. There is limited communication regarding winter-based activities through marketing material although snowmobiling, for example, was mentioned in Focus Groups as a popular winter activity for visitors in the area. Overall, there was room for improvement in the consistency and curation of key messaging being communicated through tourism collateral. Best practice destinations tended to focus on communicating a few key messages to specific target markets in favour of a more general, mass marketing approach. Curating content for visitors with specific interests and showcasing a diversity of experiences that highlight a few key messages will increase relevancy to visitors and call them more strongly to visit Carleton Place.

INDUSTRY COMMUNICATIONS

Some best practice destinations also had industry facing communication channels (e.g., Website page, blog posts, staff contact information for specific kinds of support, etc.) in addition to visitor facing. These channels focused on sharing industry-focused resources and materials. Currently, no tourism industry specific communication channels or materials are available in Carleton Place. This was noted in the Industry Focus Group as an area for improvement as they expressed confusion with the role and responsibilities of various stakeholders related to tourism in Carleton Place. Increasing industry specific communications can promote destination cohesion and development through strong relationships and partnerships among industry. There is an opportunity for stronger engagement and relationship building with tourism industry in Carleton Place.



TOURISM IN CARLETON PLACE MOVING FORWARD

With a proven track record of leading tourism in Carleton Place to date, Carleton Place Tourism is in a great position to continue to lead Carleton Place's tourism industry growth through strategic development and implementation, with support from strategic partners. With attention and care, tourism represents a strong growth opportunity for Carleton Place.

Six pillars of action were identified for Carleton Place Tourism and strategic partners to work within for the next 3 years, including Partnerships & Collaboration; Data Collection & Infrastructure Development; Growing Local Pride; Tourism Product & Experience Development; Marketing & Communications; and Resources & Funding. These pillars of action answer the overall guiding question of this destination development action plan, "What does Carleton Place Tourism need to do over the next three years to develop towards their desired future state as a tourism destination?" Below is a detailed description of each pillar of action along with their corresponding strategic actions.



PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

A foundational pillar for the growth and development of Carleton Place as a tourism destination is for Carleton Place Tourism to continue to grow existing and develop new partnerships and collaborations with regional partners.

CARLETON PLACE TOURISM WILL WORK TOWARDS THIS PILLAR OF ACTION THROUGH TWO (2) SPECIFIC ACTIONS.

- 1 Grow existing and develop new regional partnerships; and
- 2 Support industry collaboration.

Carleton Place Tourism will grow existing and develop new regional partnerships by clearly identifying existing and potential regional partners. Specifically, identifying how their work and priorities align with Carleton Place Tourism, identifying available resources to share in reaching mutually beneficial action, and formalizing these partnerships through memorandums of understanding that outline the roles and responsibilities each partner will play. As Carleton Place Tourism works to identify and formalize partnerships, it will also ensure there are regular and ongoing communications with these regional partners to benefit from mutual opportunities and work to address mutual challenges. This could be done through regular working group meetings, emails, and other means.

Additionally, Carleton Place Tourism will support collaborations among industry members. Specifically, Carleton Place Tourism will develop a comprehensive database of industry members in Carleton Place, while also considering key industry members in the surrounding area. This will provide a clear understanding of the industry makeup and tourism assets in Carleton Place. Additionally, Carleton Place Tourism will ensure regular and ongoing industry networking events to support the growth of industry partnerships and collaborations for tourism product and experience development, tourism packaging, and industry cross-promotion.

THROUGH THESE ACTIONS, CARLETON PLACE TOURISM WILL BE ABLE TO HAVE:

- 1 A clear understanding of Carleton Place Tourism's regional partners' mutual alignments and priority areas of work
- 2 Increased formalization of partnerships and collaborations
- 3 Increased regular and ongoing communications with regional partners
- 4 A clear understanding of the industry makeup and tourism assets in Carleton Place
- 5 Increased number of industry partnerships and collaborations

DATA COLLECTION & INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

An important component for future planning and development of Carleton Place as a tourism destination is for Carleton Place Tourism to gather data and advise on infrastructure development in Carleton Place.

CARLETON PLACE TOURISM WILL WORK TOWARDS THIS PILLAR OF ACTION THROUGH FOUR (4) SPECIFIC ACTIONS:

- 1 Work with partners to develop a visitor data collection system;
- 2 Work with partners to improve signage and wayfinding in Carleton Place;
- 3 Work with partners to improve multi-use and cycling trails and pathways in Carleton Place; and
- 4 Work with partners to improve parks and open spaces in Carleton Place.

Carleton Place Tourism will work with partners, such as industry and partner organizations to develop a visitor data collection system that will provide regular and on-going insight into visitor segments and visitation trends in Carleton Place. This can include a regular and ongoing visitor survey, monthly reports on accommodation bed rates, and visitor trends research.

Through this, Carleton Place Tourism will have a better understanding of current visitor segments and trends, as well as related offering gaps that will inform future actions.

Additionally, Carleton Place Tourism will also work with partners, such as the Town of Carleton Place, to improve multi-use and cycling trails and pathways in Carleton Place to increase regional tourism opportunities. This will include liaising between the partner leading the initiative and tourism stakeholders, such as niche tourism industry organizations, to gather their specific trail and pathway needs and gaps.

Similarly, Carleton Place Tourism will work with partners, such as Carleton Place's BIA and the Town of Carleton Place, to improve flagship signage and wayfinding throughout Carleton Place, especially along the multi-use and cycling trails and pathways, and major trafficked areas. This can include liaising between the partner leading the initiative and tourism stakeholders to gather their specific signage and wayfinding needs and gaps.

Related, Carleton Place Tourism will work with partners, such as the Town of Carleton Place, to improve parks and open spaces in Carleton Place, especially along the waterways. This can also include liaising between the partner leading the initiative and tourism stakeholders, such as industry members, to gather their specific parks and open space needs and gaps.

THROUGH THESE ACTIONS, CARLETON PLACE TOURISM WILL BE ABLE TO HAVE:

- 1 A clear understanding of the visitor segments and visitation trends in Carleton Place
- 2 A clear understanding of where to go and what to do in Carleton Place among visitors
- 3 Increased quantity and quality of active transportation routes in Carleton Place
- 4 Increased access and engaging parks and open spaces, especially along the waterways
- 5 Increased alignment with partners' visitor data collection, signage and wayfinding, multi-use and cycling trails and pathways, and parks and open spaces initiatives



GROWING LOCAL PRIDE

At the base of any destination are its residents who open their community for others to learn about and experience all they have to offer. As a result, a key component for the future of Carleton Place as a destination is ensuring residents both have and share their local pride with themselves and with others coming to their community.

CARLETON PLACE TOURISM WILL WORK TOWARDS THIS PILLAR OF ACTION THROUGH ONE (1) SPECIFIC ACTION:

- 1 Develop a local ambassadorship program.

Carleton Place Tourism will develop a local ambassadorship program that will increase the opportunities residents have to learn about and experience existing tourism offerings in Carleton Place. This can include developing a variety of resident engagement methods and tools, including developing a marketing campaign targeting residents, offering regular walking tourism that integrate tourism assets and local businesses, developing new resident welcome packages that provide information on existing tourism offerings in Carleton Place, and a resident sentiment survey to gauge awareness of and interest in tourism development on a regular and ongoing basis.

THROUGH THIS ACTION, CARLETON PLACE TOURISM WILL BE ABLE TO HAVE:

- 1 Increased number of opportunities for residents to learn about and experience tourism offerings in Carleton Place;
- 2 Increased awareness of tourism offerings in Carleton Place;
- 3 Increased pride of place among residents in Carleton Place; and
- 4 Increased awareness of resident sentiment towards tourism development.



TOURISM PRODUCT & EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Carleton Place is home to many unique assets, such as parks, trails, waterways, cultural spaces, historic buildings, and food & beverage to name a few. These assets have a strong connection to the past and present of the community. However, many offer an opportunity to increase their potential to be visitor attractors through the development of new tourism products and experiences, including activations of these assets.

CARLETON PLACE TOURISM WILL WORK TOWARDS THIS PILLAR OF ACTION THROUGH THREE (3) SPECIFIC ACTIONS:

- 1 Work with partners and industry to activate existing tourism assets in Carleton Place
- 2 Work with industry and partners to develop tourism products and experiences; and
- 3 Work with industry to develop packages.

Carleton Place Tourism will work with partners, such as the Town of Carleton Place, and industry members, such as food and beverage operators, artisans, and artists, to activate existing tourism assets, including but not limited to parks, trails, waterways, cultural spaces, and historic buildings and structures, to increase the number of opportunities residents and visitors have to interact with and learn about the history, heritage, and culture of Carleton Place. This can be done by developing and programming activities, festivals, events, and interventions at key tourism assets, such as the Canadian Co-operative Wool Growers, the Carleton Place & Beckwith Heritage Museum, the Mississippi River and Lake, or the Train Museum to name a few.

Carleton Place Tourism will also work with industry, such as niche tourism industry members, and partners, such as Carleton's BIA, the Town of

Carleton Place, or the Ontario Highlands Tourism Organization, to develop tourism products and experiences. This can be done by supporting industry in planning, designing, and implementing products and experiences, such as winter trail and snowmobile, food and beverage, and cultural experiences.

Finally, Carleton Place Tourism will work with partners, such as neighbouring municipalities, and industry to develop tourism packages that focus on target markets, including niche markets, such as residents, Ottawa residents, guests of special events (e.g., weddings, etc.), cyclists, boaters, or snowmobilers. This can be done by developing packages around specific themes limited by certain periods of time, including half-day, one-day, or weekend-long packages.

THROUGH THIS ACTION, CARLETON PLACE TOURISM WILL BE ABLE TO HAVE:

- 1 Increased number of opportunities for residents and visitors to interact with tourism offerings in Carleton Place
- 2 Increased opportunities to grow resident and visitor understanding of Carleton Place's history, heritage, and culture; and
- 3 Increased collaboration among industry and partners.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

A key component for the growth and development of Carleton Place as a tourism destination is to have strong marketing that is proactive and strategically targeted to visitors, as well as strong communications with industry, and residents.

CARLETON PLACE WILL WORK TOWARDS THIS PILLAR OF ACTION THROUGH SIX (6) SPECIFIC ACTION:

- 1 Work with partners and industry to develop niche markets;
- 2 Develop visitor-facing marketing collateral;
- 3 Develop theme-based itineraries;
- 4 Strengthen communications with residents;
- 5 Strengthen communications with industry; and
- 6 Develop a marketing and communications plan for Carleton Place Tourism.

Carleton Place Tourism will work with partners, such as Ottawa Tourism, neighbouring municipalities, and industry, including niche tourism industries, to develop niche markets, including cyclists, snowmobilers, wedding venue attendees, and boaters. This can be done by developing marketing materials for these niche markets, such as a webpage, guides, and incentives/promotions for tourism activities. Additionally, this can be done by developing marketing partnerships with regional partners, such as Ottawa Tourism, neighbouring municipalities, and niche tourism industries to target these market segments.

Carleton Place Tourism will also develop visitor-facing marketing collateral that tells the unique stories of Carleton Place in a cohesive manner and increases awareness of tourism assets in Carleton Place. This will be done by developing marketing collateral focused on visitors interested in the use of trails and waterways, visiting small town, attending weddings in the area, doing outdoor activities, or tasting food and beverage from the area. Marketing collateral will also be focused on niche markets including cyclists, snowmobilers, and boaters. Additionally, this will be done by developing a consolidated visitor-facing website that clearly tells the story of Carleton Place in a cohesive manner, while also curating content for visitors' specific interests, and showcasing unique products and experiences available in Carleton Place.

Carleton Place Tourism will also develop theme-based itineraries that build awareness of the offerings in Carleton Place, and offer opportunities for residents and visitors to experience these offerings. This will be done by developing itineraries for niche markets that integrate a diversity of tourism assets, including food and beverage; history, heritage, and culture; and the outdoors.

Additionally, Carleton Place Tourism will strengthen communications with residents to develop a clear understanding among residents about the role, responsibilities and achievements of Carleton Place Tourism in tourism development. Additionally, it will increase awareness of the tourism assets available in Carleton Place, and increase engagement from residents in tourism development. This will be done by developing a resident sentiment survey that will be conducted on a regular and on-going basis to gather feedback and insight on residents' perceptions of tourism development in their community. This will also be done by having regular and on-going communications with residents through a website, newsletter, Facebook group, or townhalls to share relevant news, and grow buy-in for tourism development initiatives.

Similarly, Carleton Place Tourism will strengthen communications with industry to develop a clear understanding among industry about its roles and responsibilities in tourism development, as well as increase understanding of industry opportunities and concerns, and awareness of resources and

opportunities available to industry. This will be done by developing an information sheet and corresponding communications, outlining Carleton Place Tourism's roles and responsibilities in tourism development. This will also be done by forming an industry working group to share industry opportunities and concerns, such as perceived challenging municipal procedures and process. Carleton Place Tourism will also develop a regular and on-going industry survey for tourism businesses to gather insight on the make up on the tourism industry, as well as feedback and insight on challenges and concerns being faced. Finally, this will be done by having regular and on-going communications with industry through a website, monthly emails, newsletter, Facebook group, or townhall to share relevant information on resources and opportunities available for industry.

Finally, Carleton Place Tourism will develop a marketing and communications plan for Carleton Place Tourism that aligns with the messaging of Carleton Place by other partners, such as Carleton Place's BIA, and the Town of Carleton Place. It will also provide direction, targets, and success indicators for Carleton Place Tourism in the future and will increase the impact of marketing efforts through strategic and targeted marketing. Below are current marketing approach guidelines based on key insights from the research that should be built upon when developing Carleton Place Tourism's marketing and communications plan.

THROUGH THIS ACTION, CARLETON PLACE TOURISM WILL BE ABLE TO HAVE:

- 1 Increased the number of opportunities for residents and visitors to experience tourism offerings in Carleton Place
- 2 Increased niche market visitors in Carleton Place
- 3 Increased awareness of tourism assets in Carleton Place
- 4 Increased understanding of Carleton Place's story
- 5 Clear understanding of Carleton Place Tourism's role in tourism among residents and industry
- 6 Increased understanding of resident concerns about tourism development
- 7 Increased buy-in from residents in tourism development
- 8 Increased understanding of industry opportunities and concerns
- 9 Increased awareness among industry of resources and opportunities available

MARKETING APPROACH GUIDELINES

TARGET MARKETS

- 1 Ottawa and within 30 minutes from Carleton Place
- 2 Locals/Residents
- 3 Special events guests (E.g. weddings)

APPLICATIONS

Consider these target markets when creating itineraries and packages. For example, consider starting and ending suggested itineraries in locations that work with the target markets' place of residence, and that would appeal to them based on what they don't have at home.

Consider these target markets in marketing and messages. For example, welcoming visitors from Ottawa or nearby specifically in communications, such as "Coming from Ottawa? These are all the things we recommend in Carleton Place that you can't do at home!"

Consider these target markets when building materials and tools for visitors to plan their trip. For example, having a webpage specifically for wedding guests and parties highlighting the businesses and services that cater to this important market for Carleton Place.

MESSAGING

- 1 Trails and waterways
- 2 Small town charm (incl. amazing local businesses and stories)
- 3 Heritage
- 4 Weddings and special events

APPLICATIONS

Focus messaging and information sharing on Carleton Place's marketing channels on these aspects of Carleton Place. For example, rather than saying Carleton Place has something for everyone, highlight Carleton Place's specific strengths, keeping messaging focused and specific.

CHANNELS

- 1 Dedicated Carleton Place visitor-facing website
- 2 Partner websites
- 3 Dedicated Carleton Place social media channels
- 4 Itineraries
- 5 Trail map
- 6 Destination visitor guide

APPLICATIONS

With limited resources, Carleton Place Tourism must focus marketing on those channels that require only limited spend. As well, ensuring there is only one website that is for visitors is crucial in helping visitors have an easy time locating up to date information about the town as a destination. Finally, finding simple solutions to keeping partners updated with relevant information about Carleton Place to share on their websites and other platforms will extend the reach further. For example, creating a program such as regular group partner memos will allow Carleton Place Tourism to market wider with limited resources.

RESOURCES & FUNDING

Many of the strategic actions mentioned previously are pendant on resources and funding. As a result, there is a need to gather the needed resources and funding.

CARLETON PLACE TOURISM WILL WORK TOWARDS THIS PILLAR OF ACTION THROUGH TWO (2) SPECIFIC ACTIONS:

- 1 Work with partners to identify and apply for funding for Carleton Place Tourism; and
- 2 Work with partners to grow human resource capacity in Carleton Place Tourism.

Carleton Place Tourism will gather adequate resources to pursue Carleton Place Tourism's vision and mandate by working with partners to develop a comprehensive database of annual funding opportunities, including but not limited to local, regional, provincial, and federal governments. It will also apply to these funding opportunities, in collaboration with partners when needed, that align with this 3-year destination development action plan. Finally, Carleton Place Tourism will work with partners to increase its human resource capacity.

THROUGH THIS ACTION, CARLETON PLACE TOURISM WILL BE ABLE TO HAVE:

- 1 Adequate resources to pursue Carleton Place Tourism's vision and mandate





MOVING AHEAD

With Carleton Place Tourism’s leadership, and by leveraging strategic partners, the town and community of Carleton Place has a great opportunity to develop tourism as an economic growth sector and a tool to enhance what already makes Carleton Place a great place to live.

This Destination Development Action Plan notes several areas of focus, all designed to be actionable and to build towards the goal of developing Carleton Place as a destination of choice in the region. They are designed to answer the question posed in the beginning of this process –

“What does Carleton Place Tourism need to do over the next three years to develop towards their desired future state as a tourism destination?” Through targeted resourcing and focus, and collaborative partnership, Carleton Place can seize the opportunities available. Now is the time to meet this moment and together the town as a destination, and the entire region, will be stronger!

APPENDIX

SWOC SUMMARY

STRENGTHS

Small Town Charm & Downtown Character: “Small-town” charm and feel, described by some as bucolic. Carleton Place has a charming downtown with heritage.

Natural Environment: Natural environment surrounding the Town, particularly the Mississippi River and Lake. Good parks, outdoor spaces, and local sports facilities.

Special Events: Thriving wedding and special events industry, including unique wedding boutiques, wedding venues and related businesses.

Proud Stakeholders: A small but engaged group of industry stakeholders in Carleton Place who believe in the future of the destination.

Proximity to Ottawa: Close to the large source market of Ottawa and its suburbs which has a collective population of over one million (1,000,000).

Growing Population: New residents and opportunities coming to Carleton Place as a result of population growth.

Highway Seven (7): Strategic location along Highway 7, a busy highway with plenty of traffic.

Attractions: Many attractions with potential in Carleton Place including the Carleton Place & Beckwith Heritage Museum, Canadian Cooperative Wool Growers, Mississippi River, OVRT, Breweries/restaurants, wedding (venues, vendors), local parks and public spaces including murals, Main Street shops/shopping. Black Tartan, Boulton House, Stalwart brewery, Braumeister Brewery.

OVRT Connection to Surrounding Area: The OVRT connecting Carleton Place to Almonte, and Ottawa.

WEAKNESSES

Unique & Relevant Businesses: Limited retail mix in downtown, many box stores, and a need for tourism-complementary businesses such as canoe/kayak rentals and unique retail shops.

Underdeveloped Waterfront: Lack of significant or meaningful development of public spaces along the waterfront that would encourage people to visit Carleton Place to access the water.

Unclear Roles and Responsibilities: Industry noted a lack of clarity regarding who was responsible for marketing and promoting tourism. The Chamber, the BIA, and the Municipality were all mentioned as actors who were involved in some way, but businesses were unclear on who was responsible and accountable for this work.

Communication: Industry engaged noted a lack of efficient or meaningful ways to regularly communicate with tourism leaders and stakeholders.

Challenges Navigating Municipal Procedures: Industry noted difficulties navigating relationships and bureaucracy at the Municipal level. Some felt there were processes and procedures in place that were needlessly difficult or confusing (e.g., making minor property changes or repairs, by-law enforcement) which made them feel unsupported or discouraged from pursuing opportunities.

Limited Resources: Lack of resources and limited human resource capacity to champion tourism in the destination.

Limited Experiences: “7 Wonders of Carleton Place” are outdated and not easy to engage with; and overall limited things to do and reasons to come.

Marketing: Lack of proactive, targeted marketing. Social media imagery and messaging focusing on outdoors primarily when there are other themes that could be highlighted.

Transportation Options: Options mainly geared towards vehicles.

Transportation Infrastructure: Lack of infrastructure to support different kinds of transportation in the destination (e.g., biking and bike racks, docks, spaces for snowmobiles, etc.).

Sense of Place: The feeling of place is not strong in marketing collateral, online or in-person.

Accommodation Options: Notable lack of accommodation and unique accommodation in the destination (i.e., absence of B&B style accommodation).

Tourism Ambassadorship: Overall, a friendly visitor experience but it was clear that many did not see Carleton Place as a place for visitors. OVRT Connection to Surrounding Area: the OVRT connecting Carleton Place to Almonte, and Ottawa.

OPPORTUNITIES

Activating Attractions: Activating built attractions (i.e. wool growers, CP Canoe Club) as places for visitors.

Activating festivals, events, and local spaces: Increasing the town's vibrancy by activating local spaces and heritage through special events. Make use of public and private venues through live music performances.

Year-round outdoor adventure: Carleton Place has potential as a gateway to outdoor adventure experiences. With proximity to the OVRT and surrounding trail networks, the town is well positioned to cater to cycling, hiking, riding, skiing, and snowmobiling visitors.

Showcasing Carleton Place's Heritage: Sharing more contemporary heritage (i.e., invention of black box, Hardy Boys, Sam Bat, etc.).

Route- and Theme-Based Experiences: Unique, theme- and route-based experiences are gaining in popularity. Connecting experiences with the overall region could tie in communities, better distribute visitors, increase visitation, and partnerships.

Curated Experiences: Curating current tourism assets in different ways that cater to different interests and are more creative than lists of different types of activities (i.e., tourist routes, winter fun, Mississippi River, trails, creative, explorer, festive, wedded, timeless, etc.).

Local and Regional Partnerships: Developing or further developing partnerships with key stakeholder organizations that have an impact on tourism development (i.e., municipality, BIA, regional organizations, etc.).

Partnership Marketing Funding: Given Destination Ontario's mandate to partner with regional organizations in the tourism industry in Ontario, and to market both domestically and internationally, there could be opportunities for Carleton Place, Ottawa Tourism and/or Lanark County, to access partnership marketing dollars.

Indigenous Focus: Developing a partnership with ITO even if Indigenous experiences, representatives and businesses are not currently a strong factor in Carleton Place as a place for visitors.

OVRT Connection to Surrounding Area: The OVRT connecting Carleton Place to Almonte, and Ottawa.

Developing an accessible and vibrant waterfront: Creating more ways to engage with the river and access the Mississippi Lake.

OPPORTUNITIES

Downtown Docks: Providing more ways for people to access Carleton Place as visitors in the spring, summer, and early fall months by building docks and berths on the Mississippi River where people can dock for the day to enjoy the downtown.

Engage with new residents: Engaging with new residents and educating them on all that is available to do and see.

Visiting Friends & Relatives: Building awareness and packages among residents to share with their visitors.

Proximity to Ottawa: Partnerships to leverage Ottawa visitation.

Responsible Tourism: The Ontario Highlands Tourism Organization (RTO13) is developing the destination through the lens of responsible tourism, which is an approach that aims to harmonize prosperity and preservation, rebuilding a resilient future for communities, and being mindful of Indigenous Peoples who are first caretakers of the land.

Leveraging Rural Tourism: Ottawa Tourism is prioritizing its surrounding rural places, such as Carleton Place.

Inclusive Tourism: The pandemic shined the spotlight on inequality in all areas, including tourism. Fostering a welcoming environment for all and celebrating diversity and inclusivity.

Industry Facing Communications: Developing industry-facing content including a webpage, blog, or contact information of key person/staff that can support industry in specific areas (i.e., Public Relations, Permitting Support, Product Development Support, etc.).

Industry Facing Resources: Providing industry with marketing materials and support, including access to image banks and other materials that can support small businesses in marketing.

Celebrating Tourism Industry Members: Highlighting businesses that are members of CPT in visitor-facing materials, as well as encourage other businesses to become members.

Connection to Surrounding Area: The OVRT connecting Carleton Place to Almonte, and Ottawa.

CHALLENGES

Signage & wayfinding: There is limited signage and wayfinding especially on Highway 7, making it difficult for visitors to identify and navigate Carleton Place as a visitor destination.

Changing Traveller Demands: The fluctuating interest in international travel, which increased once borders opened, has impacted domestic travel. The proposed economic downturn could continue this fluctuating trend, but in what way is unclear.

Lack of Indigenous Experiences: One in three visitors to Canada are interested in Indigenous tourism experiences. Carleton Place may not be able to deliver on this demand.

Not focusing on Responsible and Conscientious Travel: Not taking a responsible tourism development approach could limit meeting evolving consumer demands and conscientiousness.

Potential Recession: The potential global recession could have an impact on traveller spending and the health of the tourism industry.

Limited Transit Options to Carleton Place: There is a lack of alternative ways to get to Carleton Place.

Health and Safety Concerns: COVID-19 and other health concerns could prevent people from travelling.

ACTION PLAN SYNOPSIS

Pillar:	Partnerships & Collaboration
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow existing and develop new regional partnerships and; Support industry collaboration.
Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear understanding of Carleton Place Tourism's regional partners' mutual alignments and priority areas of work Increased formalization of partnerships and collaborations Increased regular and ongoing communications with regional partners A clear understanding of the industry makeup and tourism assets in Carleton Place Increased number of industry partnerships and collaborations
Pillar:	Data Collection & Infrastructure Development
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to develop a visitor data collection system; Work with partners to improve signage and wayfinding in Carleton Place; Work with partners to improve multi-use and cycling trails and pathways in Carleton Place and; Work with partners to improve parks and open spaces in Carleton Place.
Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear understanding of the visitor segments and visitation trends in Carleton Place A clear understanding of where to go and what to do in Carleton Place among visitors Increased quantity and quality of active transportation routes in Carleton Place Increased access and engaging parks and open spaces, especially along the waterways Increased alignment with partners' visitor data collection, signage and wayfinding, multi-use and cycling trails and pathways, and parks and open spaces initiatives
Pillar:	Growing Local Pride
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a local ambassadorship program.
Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of opportunities for residents to learn about and experience tourism offerings in Carleton Place; Increased awareness of tourism offerings in Carleton Place; Increased pride of place among residents in Carleton Place; and Increased awareness of resident sentiment towards tourism development.

ACTION PLAN SYNOPSIS

Pillar:	Tourism Product & Experience Development
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners and industry to activate existing tourism assets in Carleton Place; Work with industry and partners to develop tourism products and experiences and; Work with industry to develop packages.
Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of opportunities for residents and visitors to interact with tourism offerings in Carleton Place; Increased opportunities to grow resident and visitor understanding of Carleton Place's history, heritage, and culture; Increased collaboration among industry and partners.
Pillar:	Marketing & Communications
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners and industry to develop niche markets; Develop visitor-facing marketing collateral; Develop theme-based itineraries; Strengthen communications with residents; Strengthen communications with industry and; Develop a marketing and communications plan for Carleton Place Tourism.
Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clear understanding of the visitor segments and visitation trends in Carleton Place A clear understanding of where to go and what to do in Carleton Place among visitors Increased quantity and quality of active transportation routes in Carleton Place Increased access and engaging parks and open spaces, especially along the waterways Increased alignment with partners' visitor data collection, signage and wayfinding, multi-use and cycling trails and pathways, and parks and open spaces initiatives
Pillar:	Resources & Funding
Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to identify and apply for funding for Carleton Place Tourism and; Work with partners to grow human resource capacity in Carleton Place Tourism.
Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate resources to pursue Carleton Place Tourism's vision and mandate and priority areas of work.



FUTURE-FOCUS: CARLETON PLACE TOURISM'S

3-YEAR DESTINATION
DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN