



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

for the **Town of
Wasaga Beach**

May 2021

Prepared by:



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



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Economic Development Strategy



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intro

1. INTRODUCTION

The Town of Wasaga Beach is coming into its own. The conditions are favourable and the town has all the attributes in place for success. From humble beginnings as a community of seasonal cottages with a population of 500, the Town of Wasaga Beach has seen significant residential growth in the past fifteen years, growing to a population of over 23,000 full-time residents and an additional 7,000 cottagers in the summer months.

Located in Simcoe County, on the southern end of Georgian Bay, the Town of Wasaga Beach is bordered by 14 km of pristine beaches that make up the longest freshwater beach in the world. With the scenic Nottawasaga River flowing through the town, and a dramatic sand dune system surrounded by acres of parkland known as Wasaga Beach Provincial Park, the town has long been known as a prominent tourism destination in Canada, attracting over 1.6 million people annually. Positioned between the Town of Collingwood and the City of Barrie it is located in the middle of Ontario's ski country and is readily accessible to The Blue Mountains, Oro-Medonte and the Barrie area. Its beauty is second to none boasting spectacular sunsets setting over the magnificent landscape.

The South Georgian Bay Region provides excellent advantages for business to grow and prosper. Simcoe County's strength in the manufacturing sector can be advantageous to business in the Town of Wasaga Beach, as well as a burgeoning technology sector emerging in nearby Barrie and Collingwood. The Town of Wasaga Beach is surrounded by a long-standing agricultural community that provides an opportunity to tap into agri-tourism and supporting the local food movement.

Access to market is key to economic success. Only 40 km west of Highway 400, it is approximately 1.5 hours north of downtown Toronto, and easily accessible to a population of over 6 million in the Greater Toronto Area. The town is well serviced by air, with direct access south on Airport Road to Toronto Pearson International Airport (1.5-hour drive). It is also within a 15-minute drive to both the Collingwood Regional Airport and Edenville Aerodrome and only 45 minutes to Lake Simcoe Regional Airport.

Due to its historic reliance on seasonal cottagers and its attraction of day visitors going to 'the beach', the town has struggled to break out of its dependence on tourism and grow into a complete community. The town has also seen economic setbacks including a major fire that destroyed 90% of the buildings in the Beach One area in 2007. The town is still very young having only been incorporated in 1974.



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With 70% of the residents leaving town to work, and 50% of the town's year-round population being over the age of 55 years¹, the Town recognizes the need to diversify its economic base and transition into a viable year-round four-season economy that will attract young adults, entrepreneurs, new businesses, and young families. The Town of Wasaga Beach is working towards balancing its employment growth with its significant residential growth to make it a more complete community. It will be guided by a long-term strategy aimed at attracting investment, new jobs, non-residential assessment, and increased economic investment.

In the next three to five years, the Town of Wasaga Beach will see the completion of a new twin pad arena and library, a redeveloped waterfront, residential developments bringing over 7,000 additional residents to town, a new public school and the opening of a new casino. With new water and sewer infrastructure in place, the town has the capacity to grow its population to 38,000.

Exciting but cautionary times are ahead. This unprecedented growth will place increased demands on community assets but will also bring a new vibrancy to the community. Ultimately, the Town of Wasaga Beach will become an ideal blend of small-town living, with a diverse business community and exceptional four-season outdoor recreational amenities. Life at 'The Beach' will be simply sensational.

The Vision for Wasaga Beach

Wasaga Beach is a thriving community that is fully serviced, respectful of its history and culture, and rich with residential, educational and commercial opportunities. Our neighbourhood is developed in harmony around an environment that provides our residents, businesses and visitors with a full range of entertainment, culture and public services. We promote a safe, healthy lifestyle that strives to meet high community standards, business success and harmonious relationships².

¹ Town of Wasaga Beach Socio-Economic Profile 2020

² Official Plan of the Town of Wasaga Beach, Office Consolidation January 2020



1.1. Purpose of The Wasaga Beach Economic Development Strategy

The Town of Wasaga Beach has not had an Economic Development Strategy in the past and realized the need to be strategic in order to better balance their residential and business mix. This uniquely Wasaga Beach Economic Development Strategy will be used by the Town to help to create a robust year-round economy while creating an environment favourable for retaining current business and attracting new and diverse investment. The intent is to increase local employment, attract working-age residents and build a sustainable and complete community.

This comprehensive Economic Development Strategy provides the Town with a clear set of attainable actions to guide future economic development initiatives. It will assist the Town's Economic Development Office with a more focused approach to economic development and will facilitate connections between existing community strengths and community needs, as well as act as an outline for economic development activities and will help to influence the preparation of future budget submissions.

This strategy identifies priority actions for the Town of Wasaga Beach and includes:

- The identification of key areas of focus that will sustainably and successfully generate investment and employment, and enhance the viability of existing business and jobs; aims to attract new investment and businesses, and encourages job growth.
- Immediate, short and long-term action items identifying innovative projects, programs, and activities necessary to draw on the strengths, competitive advantages and priority opportunities of the Town of Wasaga Beach, as well as address any challenges.

With this new Economic Development Strategy, there will be a need to assess and track success. As metrics are an essential component to recognizing success, it is suggested that updates be reported to Council regularly to keep them informed of the progress of the Strategy.

2. TOP 5 PRIORITY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The following top 5 priorities have been extracted from the larger list of actions found in the following pages. These strategic actions are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. These five priorities are proposed to be the first actions completed over the first year of the strategy.

- 1. Develop and implement a systematic and reoccurring business visitation program to understand current business needs, act on their behalf to help address their needs by providing ongoing support.**
 - a) Contact businesses each week. This would allow the Economic Development Department to reach businesses throughout the community on an ongoing basis.
 - b) Put metrics in place aimed to track and demonstrate measurable results of the business visitation program.
 - c) Obtain budget approval from Council for 2022 should the program continue.
- 2. Continue to go through the town branding process in 2021 to create one strong vision and one Wasaga Beach brand/logo that will be phased into 2022.**
 - a) Confirm the direction from Council to develop the strategy.
 - b) Implementation for program Budget allocation approved by Council.
 - c) Once the one brand/logo has been determined, use it extensively to communicate the new brand for Wasaga Beach.
 - d) Develop a marketing program for the "new" Wasaga Beach vision/brand to help to attract new businesses and support existing businesses.
 - e) Develop a 'proud to be from Wasaga Beach' program.
- 3. Develop and implement a shop/support local campaign to support local businesses.**
 - a) Review and evaluate completed campaigns in order to bring recommendations forward to Council for future consideration.
 - b) In response to COVID-19, a budget was reallocated to the shop local campaign in order to place local businesses front and centre. Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, a review and evaluation of the program should be completed. Following, the level of need for this campaign to continue should be determined.



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- c) Obtain budget approval from Council for 2022 should the program be continued.
- 4. **Provide clear communications and positive messaging to support successes.**
 - a) Establish regular quarterly updates to Council on the progress of the economic development strategy to keep Council informed on the progress and keep the strategy moving forward.
 - b) Provide historical information to the public about developments that have taken place; and continue to provide updates to ensure the public and other stakeholders continue to be well informed through monthly reports, newsletters, and social media.
 - c) Attend community events and open houses quarterly.
- 5. **Continue to build relationships that encourage positive community building and strengthen community cohesiveness.**
 - a) Create a 'Milestone recognition' program to recognize businesses celebrating milestones.
 - b) Continue to work closely with regional economic partners (i.e. Simcoe County Economic Development, South Georgian Bay Business Development Centre, etc.) and establish opportunities whereby Wasaga Beach can take advantage of their expertise and programs that would benefit business in the Town of Wasaga Beach.
 - c) Work together and maintain partnerships between the Town of Wasaga Beach, the Wasaga Beach Chamber of Commerce, Wasaga Beach Woman's Business Association, business owners, commercial property owners, etc. and continue to create strong ties between these associations to support local businesses.
 - d) Work with Georgian College to find a permanent location for the Georgian College courses that are currently being offered in Wasaga Beach.

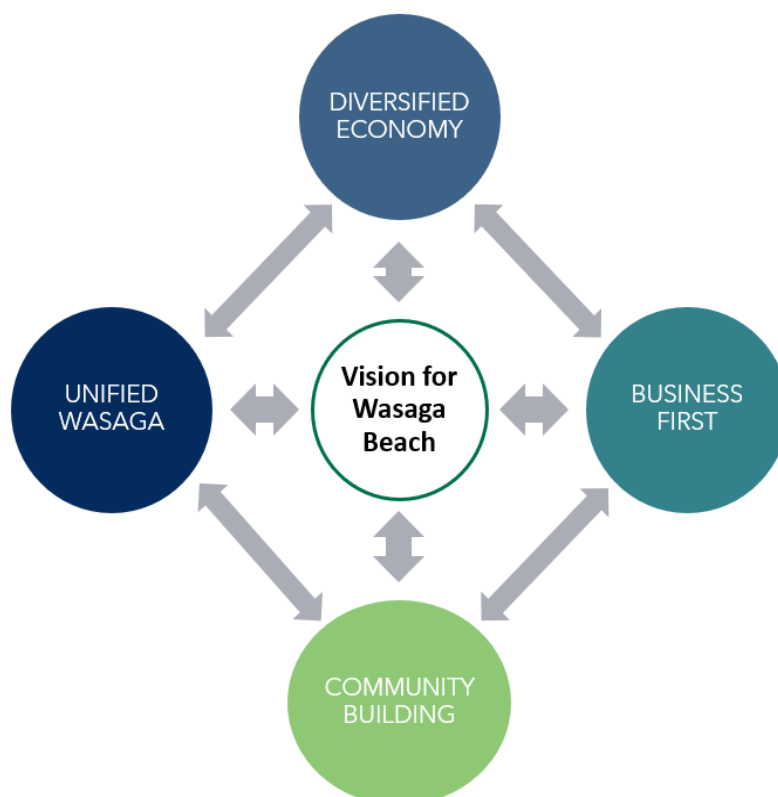


3. TOWN OF WASAGA BEACH THEMES AND STRATEGIC ACTIONS

During the consultation process for the Town of Wasaga Beach Economic Development Strategy four distinct, yet connected themes emerged as the most prominent areas of focus. These themes, along with the actions, support the vision for the Town of Wasaga Beach and were based on a comprehensive understanding of the Town of Wasaga Beach, its economy, businesses and stakeholders, as well as their collective aspirations.

The four strategic themes:

- CONTINUE TO BUILD A STRONG DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY...through business retention, expansion, and attraction.
- READY FOR BUSINESS INVESTMENT...with a 'business first' attitude.
- CONTINUE TO UNIFY WASAGA BEACH... to support Wasaga Beach's community economic development, its brand and its evolution.
- BUILDING THE COMMUNITY... with continuity, consistency, communication, and collaboration.



3.1. Theme 1: CONTINUE TO BUILD A STRONG DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY...through business retention, expansion, and attraction.



Economic diversification is defined as a process whereby an economy shifts from one or two major industries to one that is comprised of multiple industries, creating a more resilient economy and reducing risk during economic downturns. Strengthening the existing business community along with attracting new business, will bring about a more sustainable economy. The shift from a tourism based economy to a service

based economy started in the early 2000s. The Town is now experiencing a second wave of expansion.

Business Retention and Expansion: Most investment comes from those businesses which already exist in the community, either because of business diversification and/or expansion. Building relationships and partnerships with the existing business community will help to identify and capitalize on investment opportunities, not to mention provide a feeling of inclusiveness and support for the local businesses.

Business Attraction: Generally, business attraction is a more costly initiative, especially for smaller communities with limited budgets, as it is strategically reaching out to potential businesses outside of the community. Nevertheless, it is a valuable program component to building and diversifying the local economy and involves working closely with County and Provincial levels of government that are often the catalysts for investment attraction.

ACTIONS:

1. Develop and implement a shop/support local campaign to support local businesses.
 - a) Review and evaluate completed campaigns in order to bring recommendations forward to Council for future consideration.
 - b) In response to COVID-19, a budget was reallocated to the shop local campaign in order to place local businesses front and centre. Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, a review and evaluation of the program should be completed. Following, the level of need for this campaign to continue should be determined.



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- c) Obtain budget approval from Council for 2022 should the program be continued.
2. Work with building owners with vacant properties to create and keep current a commercial vacancy inventory.
3. Develop and implement a systematic and reoccurring business visitation program to understand current business needs, act on their behalf to help address their needs by providing ongoing support.
 - a) Contact businesses each week. This would allow the Economic Development Department to reach businesses through the community on an ongoing basis.
 - b) Put metrics in place aimed to track and demonstrate measurable results of the business visitation program.
 - c) Obtain budget approval from Council for 2022 should the program continue.
4. Work with the Simcoe County Economic Development Office on implementing their Economic Development Strategy (Goal 5.2 Simcoe County will be recognized as a premier destination for investment in Ontario), for investment attraction. Ensure that Simcoe County Economic Development staff have all the pertinent information required to help to direct appropriate investment to Wasaga Beach.
5. With current interest in Wasaga Beach from entrepreneurs, it is the opportune time to encourage, support, and embrace entrepreneurship:
 - a) Work with the South Georgian Bay Small Business Enterprise Centre to increase in-person and/or virtual business support servicing for an entrepreneurial program in Wasaga Beach.
 - b) Explore the potential partnerships required for creating a business case or determining the feasibility of creating an incubator space in the town.
6. Create a partnership with the Wasaga Beach Provincial Park to explore the opportunities to bring four-season educational activities to the municipally-owned lands adjacent to the beach for visitors and residents, while providing compatible economic opportunities for business startups (e.g. low environmental impact equipment rentals (kayak, paddleboard), etc.).
7. When required, put a mitigation plan in place, to minimize the impact of ongoing construction on the local businesses and community. Working with key departments in the Town, and engaging the business community in developing the plan, this mitigation plan could include marketing and communications to keep businesses, property owners, residents, and visitors informed; temporary



signage; convenient parking options; promotion of the businesses in the area that are affected; and/or economic measures (e.g. free parking) that might be advantageous to support businesses during the disruption.

8. Create sector profiles for the following target sectors, both existing and the four sectors that are identified in the Socio-Economic Profile. The sector profiles will provide comprehensive information on each of the following sectors as well as a value proposition for the Town of Wasaga Beach:

- Professional, scientific and technical services;
- Health and wellness;
- Information and cultural industries;
- Craft and small-scale manufacturing;
- Four season tourism; and
- Hospitality and restaurants.



3.2. Theme 2: READY FOR BUSINESS INVESTMENT...with a 'business first' attitude.



Investment readiness is about being prepared for investors with key community information available, infrastructure and policies in place, with locations (land and buildings) for new businesses to open and existing businesses to grow. It is a process of creating a secure and cost-effective environment for an investor to expand, start or relocate a business. This means ensuring economic development and community foundations are in place for investment opportunities to be realized and to continue to have a 'business first' approach.

ACTIONS:

1. Become investment-ready.
 - a) Undertake an Investment Readiness Coaching and Training exercise for elected officials, municipal staff and any other relevant stakeholders, to enhance their knowledge and understand the necessary steps required to be investment-ready.
2. Continue to have a 'Business First' approach.
 - a) Establish and define the role and responsibilities of the economic development office and how it will support a 'Business First' approach. Along with this, also establish opportunities in other departments in the Town that will help to support the economic development office and the 'Business First' approach.
 - b) Ensure that there are ongoing resources (human and financial) in place to support the Economic Development Strategy.
 - c) Continue to communicate with the business community on a regularly scheduled basis to keep them informed of the roles and responsibilities of the economic development office and relevant information that would be of interest to the business community. Develop an economic development statement that is included in the communications that succinctly explains the role and responsibilities of the economic development office.
 - d) Continue to communicate with Council on the roles and responsibilities of economic development and present updates to Council on a timely and regular basis.
3. Continue to streamline the process for industrial/commercial development approvals.



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- a) Evaluate the existing development approvals process to determine if there are areas that can be improved or enhanced to better service industrial/commercial developments.
 - b) If needed, develop an improved process for industrial/commercial development approvals to streamline and guide investors through the development process (e.g. a business concierge program).
 - c) Create information packages along with a communications plan to get the word out to the development community about the ease of doing business in the Town of Wasaga Beach.
4. Ensure that employment lands are in place for future business investment.
 - a) Develop a vision and policy goals for the employment lands in Wasaga Beach.
 - b) Through development policies, make every effort to protect existing primary employment lands and, where possible, ensure that there are sufficient primary employment lands available for new business growth.
 - c) Create and maintain an up-to-date inventory of available vacant employment lands and available commercial/industrial buildings.
 - d) Reinforce the need for primary employment lands to provide the opportunity to bring diversified employment growth to the community.
 - e) Invest in infrastructure in identified primary employment lands, and ensure that these properties are as close to shovel-ready as possible.
5. Continue to work towards ensuring that all residents, businesses, and visitors in Wasaga Beach are able to connect to high-speed internet.
6. Continue to respond to the pandemic with an enhanced COVID recovery program.
 - a) Continue to add to, promote and encourage participation in the COVID recovery program initiatives (e.g. Digital Main Street program, Open Patios, shop local programming, etc.).
 - b) Continue to be the conduit between various levels of government on the extensive programs available to the businesses and continue to communicate the COVID recovery program to the business community.
7. Complete a 'value proposition' with key points for investment attraction, to be used to attract a first-class four-season accommodation. Provide this information to the private sector to support the attraction of an accommodation services operator.

3.3. Theme 3: CONTINUE TO UNIFY WASAGA BEACH... to support Wasaga Beach's community economic development, its brand and its evolution.



It is about solidarity and a clear unified vision for the future.

'We're all in this together' approach shows a community with strength, unity, and pride. Investors and business owners prefer to invest in supportive communities with clear guidelines and timelines.

Creative activities, cultural facilities, and an attractive physical appearance contribute to local economic growth, foster a positive town image, and enhance urban quality of life.

These key elements of the community support labour force attraction, tourism attraction, investment attraction, and business retention and expansion. By solidifying a common vision, identity, and image, the Town of Wasaga Beach can better communicate and market its community.

ACTIONS:

1. Continue to go through the town branding process in 2021 to create one strong vision and one Wasaga Beach brand/logo that will be phased into 2022.
 - a) Confirm the direction from Council to develop the strategy.
 - b) Implementation for program budget allocation approved by Council.
 - c) Once the one brand/logo has been determined, use it extensively to communicate the new brand for Wasaga Beach.
 - d) Develop a marketing program for the "new" Wasaga Beach vision/brand to help to attract new businesses and support existing businesses.
 - e) Develop a 'proud to be from Wasaga Beach' program.
2. Improve the physical appearance of Wasaga Beach.
 - a) Building off the Wasaga Beach vision, develop a street beautification program with a consistent theme (i.e. benches, signage, bike racks, landscaping, banners, public art, etc.) with accompanying ongoing financial resources to invest in the upgrading of the commercial neighbourhoods to help support local businesses in the areas.
 - b) Establish a redevelopment plan for Mosley Street and implement the plan.



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- c) Instill community pride through a community beautification contest and/or participation in a program such as "Communities in Bloom".
 - d) Evaluate the grant portion of the façade improvement program and determine if there is a need to increase the financial incentive and if so increase it accordingly to have greater participation in the program.
- 3. Continue the process to establish one commercial location that is considered the centre of the community where residents and visitors can gather and celebrate.
 - a) Continue to develop the downtown or central hub and the beachfront in line with the vision of the Wasaga Beach Downtown Development Master Plan.
 - b) Build a program that would see Festival Square being used throughout the whole year.
 - c) Create a marketing plan to attract new business investment to the new Wasaga Beach Downtown.
- 4. Examine the feasibility of establishing Wasaga Beach as a creative community by working with the Wasaga Society for the Arts and other cultural partners to:
 - a) Undertake an inventory of the creative skills and assets in the community.
 - b) Develop new spaces to showcase creativity in the community (e.g. art gallery, temporary outdoor locations, storefronts, music venues, etc.).
 - c) Explore different ways to showcase the creative community (e.g. Pocket Concerts, beach installations, etc.).
 - d) Cultivate social capital to support the creative community (e.g. creating educational opportunities around the arts, building diverse relationships regionally within the creative community, developing social media networks, etc.).
 - e) Develop a feasibility study on the creative sector with Simcoe County.
- 5. Integrate and build links between the commercial neighbourhoods to improve access to and linkages between businesses.
 - a) Work with the planning department to establish physical connections (i.e. walking paths, roadways, bike paths, etc.) between the commercial neighbourhoods.
 - b) Work with the businesses to build business connections and synergies between the commercial neighbourhoods.
 - c) Build virtual connections through social media to promote businesses in town.



3.4. Theme 4: BUILDING THE COMMUNITY... with continuity, consistency, communication, and collaboration.



The ongoing building of critical community infrastructure to support economic development (i.e. housing, transportation, tourism asset development, etc.) will ensure long-term stability for the Town of Wasaga Beach. Additionally, there have recently been several strategies and reports completed by the Town of Wasaga Beach.

Commitment to and support of these existing plans provides strong direction to the Town of Wasaga Beach that will take place beyond the current term of Council. This long-term planning reduces the risk of uncertainty for investors as they understand what plans are in place to support their investment.

Collaboration is the new leadership. When willing partners collaborate it builds the characteristics of civic community and provides the ability to deal with current and future issues in constructive ways.

ACTIONS:

1. Building continuity and consistency in the strategic planning process.
 - a) Review and prioritize actions from the existing strategies and documents that support the economic development strategy and implement those actions (Youth Strategy, Age-Friendly Community Plan, Special Event Strategy, Transit Study, Downtown Development Master Plan, Tourism Workforce Attainable Housing Strategy, Tourism Destination Master Plan, Home Business Brochure, Community Hub Economic Analysis, Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, Wayfinding Strategy, Official Plan Review, etc.).
 - b) Communicate the results as they are completed.
2. Provide clear communications and positive messaging to support successes.
 - a) Establish regular quarterly updates to Council on the progress of the economic development strategy to keep Council informed on the progress and keep the strategy moving forward.
 - b) Provide historical information to the public about developments that have taken place; and continue to provide updates to ensure the public and other stakeholders continue to be well informed through monthly reports, newsletters, and social media.
 - c) Attend community events and open houses quarterly.

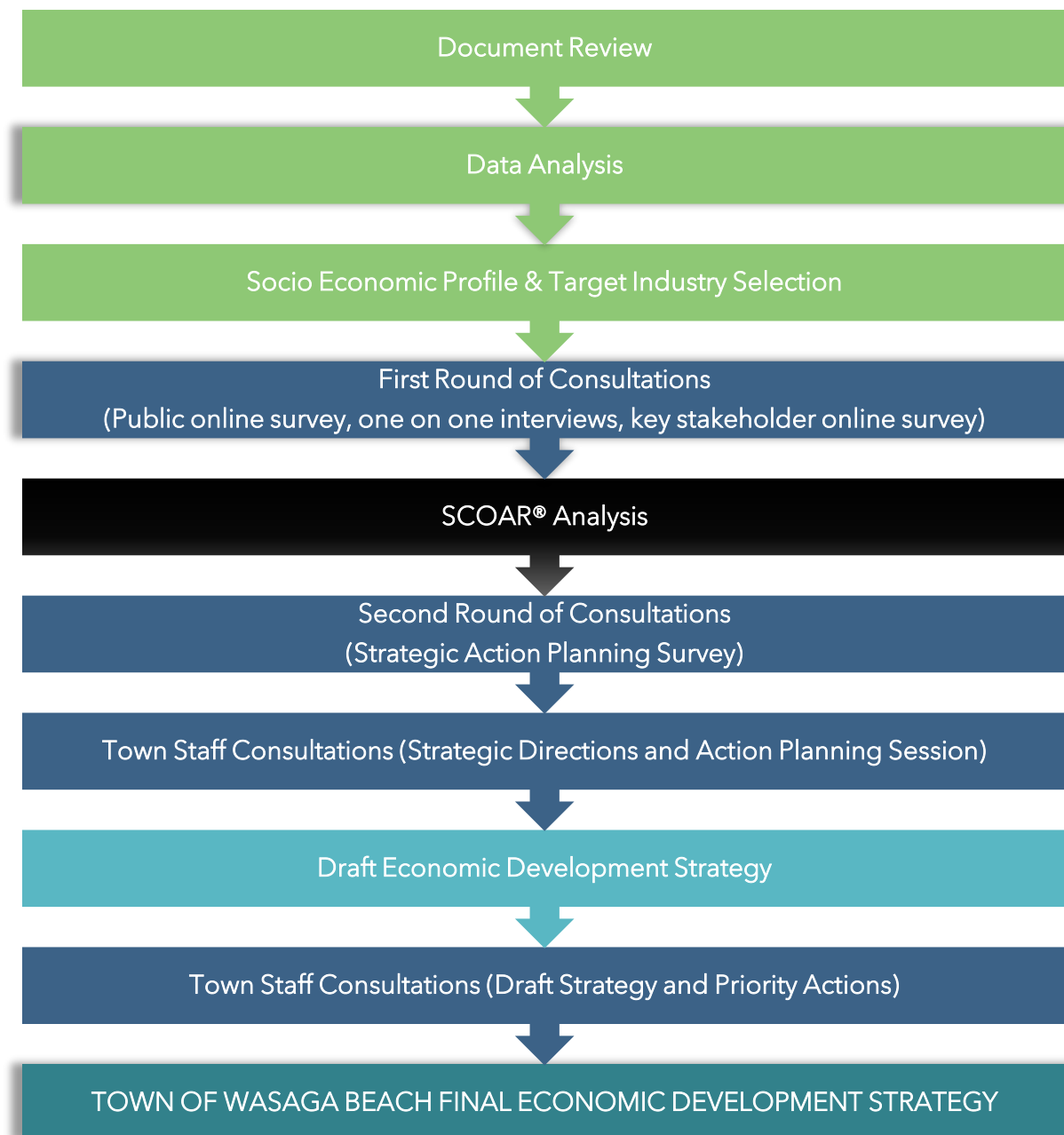
3. Continue to build relationships that encourage positive community building and strengthen community cohesiveness.
 - a) Create a 'Milestone recognition' program to recognize businesses celebrating milestones.
 - b) Continue to work closely with regional economic partners (i.e. Simcoe County Economic Development, South Georgian Bay Business Development Centre, etc.) and establish opportunities whereby Wasaga Beach can take advantage of their expertise and programs that would benefit business in the Town of Wasaga Beach.
 - c) Work together and maintain partnerships between the Town of Wasaga Beach, the Wasaga Beach Chamber of Commerce, Wasaga Beach Woman's Business Association, business owners, commercial property owners, etc. and continue to create strong ties between these associations to support local businesses.
 - d) Work with Georgian College to find a permanent location for the Georgian College courses that are currently being offered in Wasaga Beach.



4. PROCESS FOLLOWED



The process followed to develop the Town of Wasaga Beach Economic Development Strategy was comprised of a document review and web searches, followed by a statistical analysis of the Town of Wasaga Beach's economy and demographics that yielded a current socio-economic report. As well, a comprehensive consultation process was completed to better understand the community.



4.1. Document Review

The following documents were reviewed:

- Socio-Economic Profile of the Town of Wasaga Beach (2020)
- Parks and Trails Master Plan - October 2020 - draft
- Active Transportation Plan (2008) and Active Transportation Wayfinding Master Plan (2010)
- Parks, Facilities and Recreation Master Plan (2012)
- Age-Friendly Community Plan (2016)
- Youth Strategy Services Report (2019)
- Wasaga Beach OP Growth Management Discussion Paper (2017)
- Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2018 - 2022)
- Tourism Destination Management Plan (2018)
- Wasaga Beach Community Hub Economic Analysis (2018)
- Wasaga Beach Downtown Development Master Plan (2017)
- Official Plan of the Town of Wasaga Beach Office Consolidation (2020)
- Downtown Community Improvement Plan (2017)
- Active and Proposed Developments (2020)
- Business Licensing Bylaw Consolidated - amended 2020
- South Georgian Bay Tourism Industry Workforce Housing Research and Business Case (2018)
- Special Event Strategy (2011)
- Wasaga Beach Tourism Brand Guidelines (2019)
- Wasaga Beach Transit Study and Operations Review Final Draft Report (2018)
- Socio-Economic Profile of the Town of Wasaga Beach





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4.2. Socio-Economic Profile & Target Industry Selection

Town of Wasaga Beach Economic **SNAPSHOT**



20,488	23,182	13%	54	12%	55%	32%
Estimated Population 2015	Estimated Population 2019	2015-19 Estimated Population Growth	Median Age	Aged 0-14	Aged 15-64	Aged 65+

Educational Attainment

For the population aged 25-64



Top 6 Major Fields of Study



Business,
management,
marketing and
related support
services



Health
professions and
related programs



Engineering
technologies and
engineering-
related fields



Mechanic
and repair
technologies/
technicians



Construction
Trades



Education

Household & Earnings



Average
Household Income

\$74,297

Average Annual
Home Sale Prices

\$494,980

2006	2016
MEDIAN EARNINGS \$42,326	MEDIAN EARNINGS \$49,108

Persons aged 15+ with earnings who worked full year, full time



Increased Median
Earnings by
16%
between
2006-2016

23%
of Wasaga Beach's
population spends
30% or more
of household total
income on shelter costs

Sources:

1. Statistics Canada: 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016 Census of Population
2. Statistics Canada: Table 17-10-0135-01 Population estimates, July 1, by census metropolitan area and census agglomeration, 2016 boundaries
3. Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey, annual estimates, 2015 - 2019
4. Wasaga Beach Real Estate Trends - Zolo Realty® 2020



Town of Wasaga Beach Economic **SNAPSHOT**



Labour Force & Local Economy

Top 5 Employment Industries



11%
Retail Trade



9%
Accommodation &
Food services



9%
Public
Administration



8%
Health Care &
Social Assistance



8%
Manufacturing

Top 5 Employment Occupations



26%
Sales & Service



20%
Trades, Transport
& Equipment
Operators



13%
Business, Finance
& Administration



11%
Management



9%
Education, Law & Social,
Community &
Government

Labour Force Status:

48.4%

Participation Rate

44.2%

Employment Rate

8.5%

Unemployment Rate

Entrepreneurship

Tax Filers with Self-Employment Income

Female



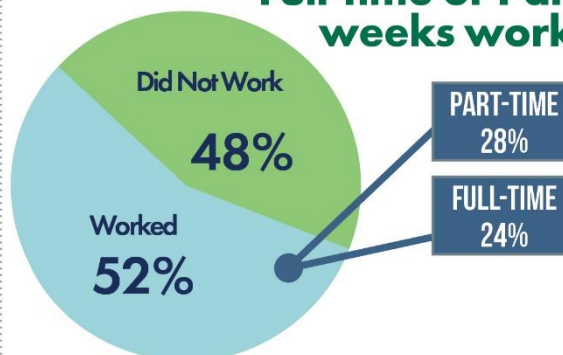
Wasaga Beach
Ontario

Male



Wasaga Beach
Ontario

Full-time or Part-time weeks worked



Sources:

1. Statistics Canada: 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016 Census of Population
2. Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0135-01 Population estimates, July 1, by census metropolitan area and census agglomeration, 2016 boundaries
3. Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey, annual estimates, 2015 - 2019
4. Wasaga Beach Real Estate Trends - Zolo Realty © 2020

Target Sectors

Given the strengths and weaknesses of the community, labour force and local economy juxtaposed with the surrounding economy and its strengths, the following are potential target industries for investment attraction to help the community diversify outside of tourism-related industries.

- ✓ Professional, scientific and technical services
- ✓ Information and cultural industries
- ✓ Craft and Small-Scale Manufacturing
- ✓ Health and Wellness

4.3. Strategy Consultation Process



Approximately 200 stakeholders were consulted and provided input throughout this process. The consultations consisted of confidential one-on-one interviews, an online survey open to the public, and two online surveys with targeted stakeholders reviewing key themes and proposed actions.

Interviews & Community Online Surveys

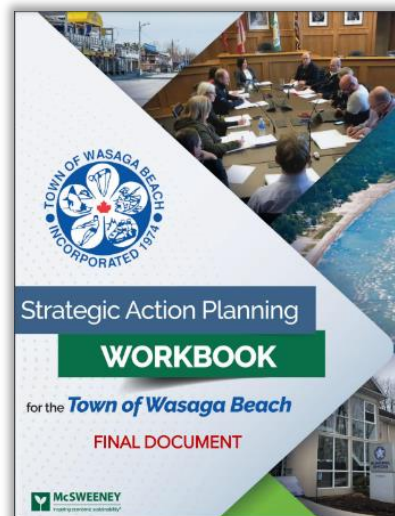
Thirty-one, one-on-one interviews were conducted with economic development stakeholders from the Town of Wasaga Beach staff, Mayor and Council, business owners, regional organizations, business organizations, and other key community stakeholders.

To ensure public participation in the Strategy, an online survey was posted and available on the 'Let's Talk Wasaga Beach' website. There was an impressive number of responses with 147 people participating in the online survey.

The same six open-ended questions were used to guide both the one-on-one interviews and the online survey. These questions probed into the major strengths and challenges of doing business in the Town of Wasaga Beach and looked forward to defining future opportunities, aspirations and results. Participants provided feedback on the questions.

Targeted Stakeholder Strategic Action Planning Online Survey

Due to the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Strategic Action Planning Session was conducted virtually. A Strategic Action Planning Session Workbook was completed outlining the four themes and the key stakeholders that participated were asked to review the workbook and respond to the online survey asking for their input on potential actions that could be undertaken by the Town to move the economy forward. There were 23 responses.



Strategic Directions and Action Planning Session

Upon completion of the Strategic Action Planning Online Survey, a draft set of strategic economic development directions and actions were prepared and provided to the Economic Development staff, CAO and Communications staff for review. To ensure that the actions aligned with the aspirations and vision of the Town of Wasaga Beach, a virtual strategic planning session was held with these key Town staff. Collaboratively, McSweeney and Associates and Town staff set agreed-upon strategic actions that are doable and realistic for the Town of Wasaga Beach for the next five years.

4.4. What was Heard through the Consultation Process

Once the consultations were completed, a comprehensive SCOAR® (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) Analysis was prepared by analyzing the current statistics and data, a document review, plus feedback from elected officials, staff, stakeholders and residents engaged in the consultation.



Economic Development Strategy

Town of Wasaga Beach

The outcome of the consultations revealed that the aspirations of the Town of Wasaga Beach include:

- ✓ Attracting investors to Wasaga Beach that are diverse and unique and fill the missing gaps.
- ✓ Supporting and retaining local businesses.
- ✓ Having a cohesive community with a common vision that works together, supports each other and where everyone contributes to its success.
- ✓ Increasing the number of tourism businesses that support a four-season tourism destination.
- ✓ Having a diversified economy that brings year-round employment, reduces the number of residents leaving town to work and supports the residents' needs.
- ✓ Having a 'downtown' or central area that is modern, pedestrian-friendly, culturally based and maintains the beach vibe as per the Wasaga Beach Downtown Development Master Plan.
- ✓ Maintaining the existing natural amenities and remain an environmentally sustainable community.
- ✓ Having a diverse housing stock that provides permanent housing for all residents.
- ✓ Having a clean, modern and redeveloped waterfront with additional venues for non-beach days.

The vision for the future of the Town of Wasaga Beach as derived from the consultations is to:

- ✓ Be a strong, positive and cohesive community with a common vision.
- ✓ Be a thriving, safe beach community with a modern downtown and revitalized waterfront.
- ✓ Be a four-season, complete community that supports the local residents as well as seasonal visitors.
- ✓ Have the reputation for being a community that is investment ready and supports and embraces the local business community.
- ✓ Continue to show strong leadership and implement decisions that move the town forward.
- ✓ Have new investments that are diverse and unique to the community.



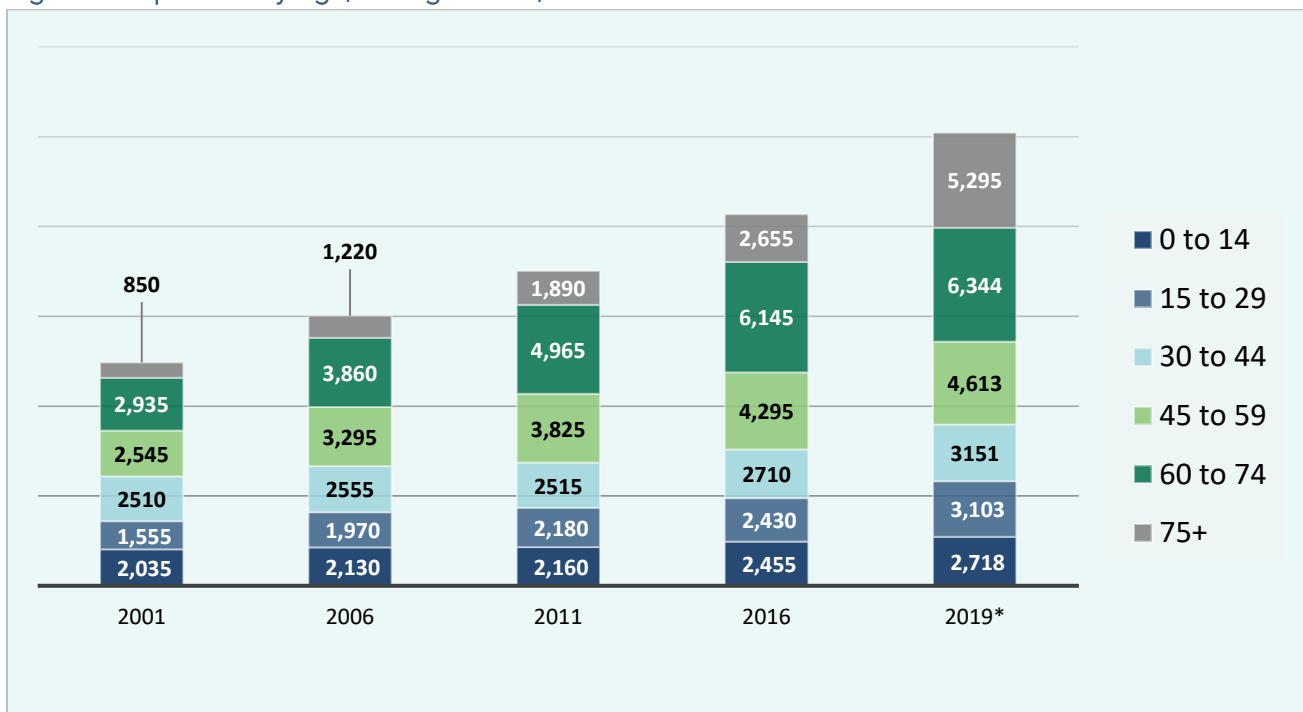
5. A SNAPSHOT OF THE TOWN OF WASAGA BEACH

5.1. A Glimpse of the Town of Wasaga Beach by the Numbers

A Growing Population

Wasaga Beach has had a fast-growing population for the past 20 years. Historically, persons nearing or beyond the retirement age chose to move to Wasaga. More recently, since 2016, the population of young adults (ages 15 to 29) and mature adults (ages 30 to 44) has started growing faster. The main factor propelling population growth over the past 15 years has been migration from within Ontario.

Figure 1: Population by Age, Wasaga Beach, 2001 -2019



Source: McSweeney & Associates from Statistics Canada Census data 2006, 2011 and 2016, and Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0135-01 Population estimates, July 1, by census metropolitan area and census agglomeration, 2016 boundaries for 2019

An Affordable Community Faces Rental Market Challenges

Overall, residents face similar levels of housing affordability, when compared to the provincial standards. However, renters in Wasaga Beach face worse levels of housing affordability, compared to Simcoe County and Ontario. Wasaga Beach also has a lower level of diversity in existing dwelling structures, compared to Simcoe County and Ontario, which poses a challenge to renters and employers, as this is a critical piece of infrastructure needed to sustain a diverse workforce.



Economic Development Strategy

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As can be seen from Table 1, tenants in Wasaga Beach face higher average and median monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings, and a higher percentage of Wasaga Beach tenants spend 30% or more of their income on shelter costs, compared to Simcoe County and Ontario.

Table 1: Shelter Costs and Housing Affordability

Description	Wasaga Beach	Simcoe County	Ontario
Total Owners Households	7,820	142,910	3,557,485
% of owner households with a mortgage	51.4	64.8	61
% of owner households spending 30% or more of its income on shelter costs	18.4	19.6	19.8
Median monthly shelter costs for owned dwellings (\$)	870	1,342	1,299
Average monthly shelter costs for owned dwellings (\$)	1,066	1,400	1,463
Total Tenant Households	1,185	38,570	1,554,940
% of tenant households in subsidized housing	4.2	12	15
% of tenant households spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs	51.3	48.7	45.7
Median monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings (\$)	1,183	1,082	1,045
Average monthly shelter costs for rented dwellings (\$)	1,117	1,127	1,109

Source: Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016230.

Strong Supply of Technical/Midlevel– College Derived Skills

The following can be concluded about the town's postsecondary education levels:

- Employers in Wasaga Beach have access to 4,725 residents who have postsecondary education, and over 140,000 postsecondary graduates that reside within Simcoe County.
- A College diploma is the most common type of postsecondary in the region (within the municipality and the County).
- Wasaga Beach has a larger percentage share of postsecondary graduates with knowledge in engineering technologies and engineering-related fields, mechanic and repair technicians, construction trades, and precision production, compared to Simcoe County and Ontario.



Economic Development Strategy

Town of Wasaga Beach

A Growing Economy will have Growing Infrastructure Needs

- Wasaga Beach had 1,604 businesses as of June 2020. Of these, 436 (27%) had employees. This would indicate that there are many small start-up/home-based businesses in Wasaga Beach (approximately 73%).
- The total business count in Wasaga Beach grew by 247 between 2015 and 2020 (18% growth). 87 of the businesses added had employees.
- Construction; Health care and social assistance; and Professional, scientific, and technical services added the most businesses with employees.
- Between 2015 and 2020, the local economy of Wasaga Beach grew by **646 jobs (15%) to a total of approximately 5,065**. The Wasaga Beach economy provides jobs primarily within the services sectors; however, the local economy also sustains a significant number of jobs in Construction.
- Considering the regional and provincial industry make-up, as well as current economic and health care trends, there is an opportunity for Wasaga to tap into the growing knowledge economy, creative industries, niche manufacturing, and the health and wellness cluster.

Table 2: Employment by sector, Wasaga Beach, Simcoe County and Ontario, 2020

Description	Wasaga Beach	Simcoe County	Ontario
Retail trade	798	30,145	824,166
Construction	769	18,775	523,814
Accommodation and food services	599	19,034	545,049
Health care and social assistance	489	27,603	876,408
Educational services	391	14,045	551,955
Professional, scientific and technical services	368	11,657	651,450
Real estate and rental and leasing	364	4,281	186,545
Public administration	269	14,081	469,897
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	215	14,527	450,678
Other services (except public administration)	188	9,879	329,263
Wholesale trade	148	8,998	391,207
Arts, entertainment and recreation	120	5,608	163,996
Transportation and warehousing	85	7,429	390,965
Finance and insurance	81	4,284	391,836
Unclassified	70	3,603	127,520
Utilities	63	1,224	53,083
Information and cultural industries	29	2,821	162,792
Manufacturing	18	22,909	718,981
Management of companies and enterprises	0	265	38,294
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	0	411	26,716
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	0	3,163	85,046
Total	5,065	224,741	7,959,660

Source: EMSI Analyst 2020.Q1



5.2. Target Sectors

Given the strengths and weaknesses of the community, labour force and local economy juxtaposed with the surrounding economy and its strengths, **the following are potential target industries for investment attraction to help the community diversify outside of tourism-related industries (although amusement and recreation attraction will continue to be beneficial to the municipality):**

Professional, scientific and technical services:

University-level education is the fastest-growing type of education locally. The rise of the service and knowledge economy is ubiquitous across Canada. Moreover, given its proximity to many education assets, Wasaga Beach is advantageously located with an opportunity to attract young professionals looking for housing affordability, entertainment, culture and recreation. To make the most of this opportunity, the Town of Wasaga Beach will need to ensure access to affordable highspeed internet, aggressive home-based business policies, and continued support and promotion of recreation, culture and lifestyle assets to attract talent. The following specific niche opportunities have been identified based on business patterns, skills and employment concentrations and trade/supply chain gaps:

- I. Management, scientific and technical consulting services
- II. Computer Systems and Design Services
- III. Advertising, public relations, and related services

Information and cultural industries:

Companies in the cultural industries develop, produce and market products and services whose value resides in their intellectual property. Ontario has the largest cultural industries sector in the country, accounting for almost half of all cultural industries' GDP in Canada³. Wasaga Beach has a recognized brand and picturesque location, making it ideal for television and film. Furthermore, Wasaga Beach also has a larger share of postsecondary graduates with communications technologies & services degrees or diplomas, relative to the province and Simcoe County. Moreover, given the large supply of engineering technologists locally and in the region, there may be an opportunity for the municipality to attract interactive media developers, or specialized in hosting activities, such as web hosting, video and audio streaming services, application hosting, or web app development. The following specific niche

³ Statistics Canada, "Provincial and Territorial Culture Satellite Account, 2010."



opportunities have been identified based on business local assets, skills and employment concentrations, and regional development trends:

- I. Motion pictures and television
- II. Interactive digital media
- III. Data processing, hosting, and related services

Craft and Small-Scale Manufacturing:

Wasaga Beach is located within one of Ontario's most productive and innovative manufacturing centres. Simcoe County and the GTA sustain one of the most productive auto manufacturing clusters in Canada. Wasaga Beach and Simcoe County have a strong supply of technical/midlevel -skills (usually requiring a college diploma or apprenticeship certificate). Manufacturing is also within the top 5 highest paying industry sectors. The following specific niche opportunities can support the tourism and retail economy, as well as the growing industries of building construction. Growth of small businesses in these industries can be supported through entrepreneurship training for residents, Maker Spaces, and the development of craft culture:

- I. Household and institutional furniture and kitchen cabinet manufacturing
- II. Clothing and apparel manufacturing
- III. Cannabis, food and beverage products manufacturing

Health and Wellness

This cluster includes traditional health care operations, as well as health-related research; personal care and support industries; and social assistance. The largest field of study for Wasaga Beach residents is Business, management, marketing, followed by health professions and related programs. This industry is important to consider as an export-oriented industry, in terms of the development and commercialization of health-related products and innovations, as well as an industry closely tied to community health, quality of life, and tourism. The health and wellness cluster is strategic since local and surrounding populations are ageing which will continue to drive demand for these services and products. The following industries have the potential to support local tourism attraction and grow the healthcare sector:

- I. Corporate Wellness Services
- II. Fitness, recreational and sports services
- III. Residential developmental handicap, mental health and substance abuse facilities