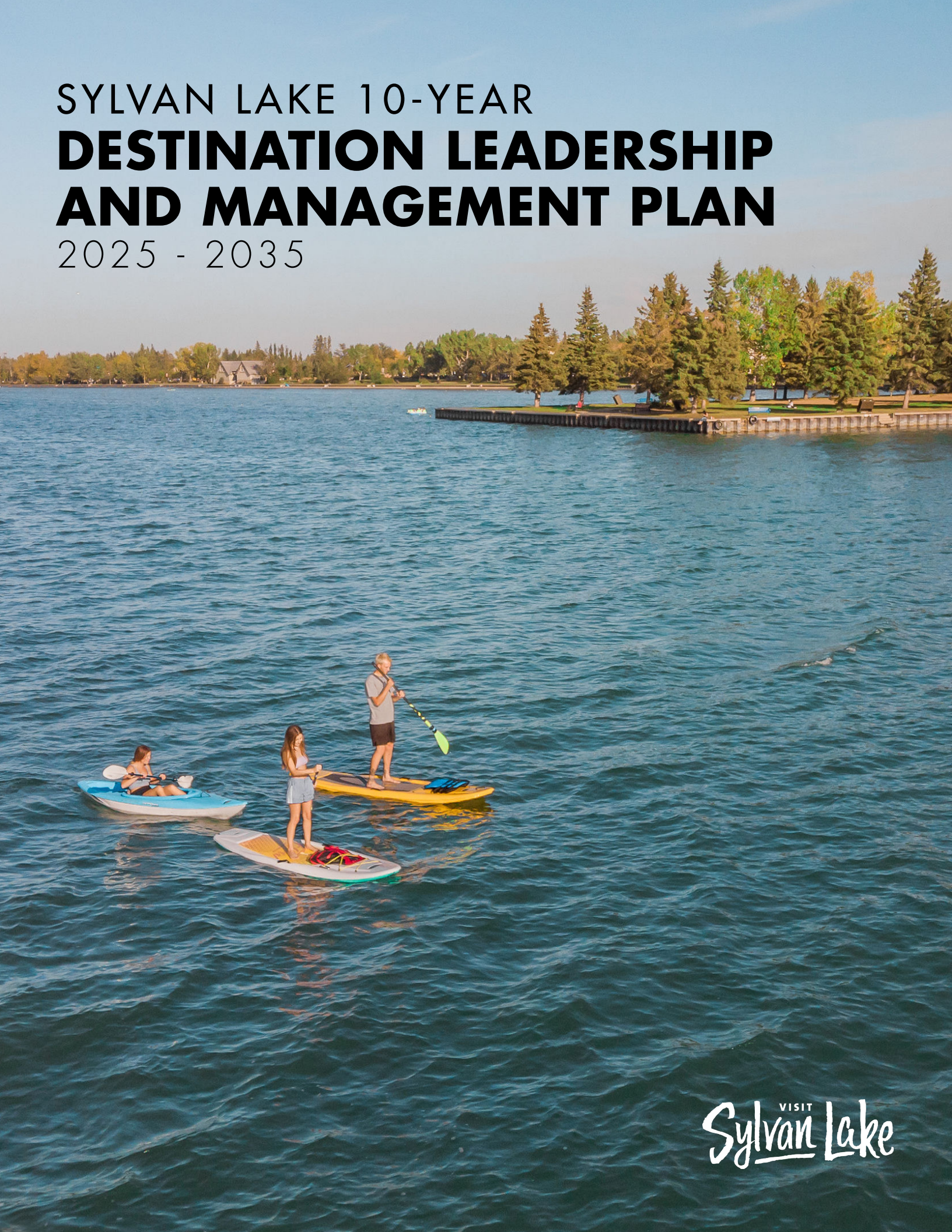
SYLVAN LAKE 10-YEAR

DESTINATION LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

2025 - 2035



VISIT Sylvan Lake

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> "More than just a job or an economic opportunity, Indigenous tourism has the power to help revitalize culture and language, support Indigenous entrepreneurs, communities and nations and, for travellers, inspire new perspectives, new ways of thinking about the world, and new opportunities for reconciliation."
>
> - Brenda Holder, Board Chair, Indigenous Tourism Alberta (as stated in the ITA Action Plan 2023-24) -

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Town of Sylvan Lake acknowledges its location on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional meeting grounds, gathering place and travelling route to the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, Dene and Nakota Sioux. We respect the histories, languages and cultures of First Nations, Metis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.

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Thanks to your participation, this Plan represents the community's voice and experience in pursuit of a shared outcome: one where tourism enhances local pride in place and quality of life, and is an integral part of local development initiatives.

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Executive Summary

OVERVIEW

The Sylvan Lake Destination Leadership and Management Plan ("DLMP," "Plan," "Report") presents a forward-thinking, 10-year strategic roadmap for tourism development in Sylvan Lake. Designed in response to evolving tourism trends and best practices, as well as local community aspirations, the Plan aims to redefine Sylvan Lake's approach to tourism investments and growth. The DLMP integrates destination leadership and regenerative tourism frameworks, placing community well-being at the centre. Its defined ambition is:

The Sylvan Lake DLMP is dedicated to harnessing tourism as a means of sustainable, equitable community development, enhancing Sylvan Lake as an inclusive place to live, work, create, invest and visit. The Plan places community collaboration, participation and leadership at its core, positioning tourism as a key local economic driver while preserving the town's distinctive local character and natural environment.

The Strategy and Implementation Plan presented provides direction for the destination to excel as a "Local Host" while building the capacities required to become a competitive, trendsetting "Regional Host." It further steers Sylvan Lake's tourism administration to more robustly tap into inter- and intra-provincial visitor markets, sowing the seeds to position Sylvan Lake as a "National Host." A comprehensive "Destination Readiness" framework defines customized benchmarks for each level of host, supporting the Town in tracking its evolution through the DLMP implementation period.

[DEFINE]

LEVELS OF DESTINATION HOST

Local host:
The destination offers attractions and experiences that cater to the community's assets, both in high season and shoulder season, and is fully equipped to draw visitors from drive-market communities.

Regional host:
The destination has advanced to the level of being fully prepared to host visitors from across the region and beyond, for short and long stays year-round.

Inter- and intra-provincial (national) host:
The destination has achieved readiness to accommodate visitors from across the province, and the country more broadly.

Global host:
The destination is fully equipped to host international visitors and tourists. It boasts landmark attractions and/or unique experiences that attract global audiences.

Further, the Plan establishes actionable directions for Sylvan Lake's tourism administration across short-term (1-2 years), mid-term (3-5 years), and long-term (6-10 years) phases, focused on enhancing Sylvan Lake's tourism readiness and building a sustainable, equitable and locally-managed visitor economy.

The Report adopts the term "community rights holder" to refer to local community "stakeholders" including residents, local business owners, and local & grassroots groups. This aligns with a shift away from the term "stakeholder." The term "interested party/parties (parties)" refers to non-community entities connected to Sylvan Lake's tourism development, primarily from a visitor economy perspective.

The town's10-year vision for tourism growth is solidly informed by, and aligns with, the shared priorities and visions for tourism development at the national, provincial and regional levels, including:

- Community well-being, prosperity, safety, and quality of life;
- Community building, environmental sustainability, and cultural integrity;
- Growth and diversification of tourism benefits;
- Promotion and support of anti-racism, inclusivity and equity; and
- Enriching and enhancing visitor experiences.

It is further inspired by the four pillars of the United Nations World Tourism Organization's "AlUla Framework for Inclusive Community Development Through Tourism" (Empower, Safeguard, Prosper, Collaborate) and the four Ps of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): People, Planet, Prosperity and Partnership.

The Process

The DLMP was developed in three overlapping phases, including:

1. Research and Engagement
2. Analysis and Visioning
3. Plan Development

Phase 1: Research and Engagement

In this initial phase, the project team reviewed key documents from municipal, provincial, federal and international bodies, to shape the understanding of tourism trends and best practices on multiple levels. Particular attention was dedicated to reviewing municipal strategies, bylaws and reports to establish:

- Situational context about past and current tourism & tourism-adjacent priorities and investments, tourism assets, community sentiment, tourism management and development;
- Organizational capacity related to destination development, marketing activity, community development and visitor management; and
- Marketing, storytelling and other relevant areas adjacent to destination management.

Engagement included various interviews, workshops, community events and a survey. These activities helped baseline the Plan's tourism challenges and opportunities. All in-person engagement events focused on local perspectives and more than 70 per cent of survey respondents identified as residents of Sylvan Lake. Key insights that emerged include:

- There is an ever-present tension between Sylvan Lake residents and visitors.
- Access to key assets, as well as public safety, are key concerns amongst locals.
- A resounding sentiment amongst residents is that tourism disrupts local quality of life, especially in the summer season when visitors take over the lakefront.
- Business owners are seeking support in attracting these same visitors away from the beach and into their storefronts.
- Parking, traffic congestion, litter and public intoxication are all key challenges perceived by locals, especially during the summer season.
- There is a consensus that the town is in need of strategic beautification efforts and harmonized aesthetics that embody the "lake town vibe."

Phase 2: Analysis and Visioning

Key themes from Phase 1 Research and Engagement activities were synthesized, and then reported back to the community to test the validity of findings, and to identify any gaps in findings. It was determined that a combination of factors position Sylvan Lake to become the gem of Central Alberta, and a hub to neighbouring communities and experiences. These factors include:

- the town's ideal location in the heart of the region;
- the lake as a key natural attraction;
- access to an urban centre, steps from the key natural attraction;
- a healthy ecosystem;
- direct connections to nature and outdoor experiences; and
- vibrant festivals and events.

Considering any of these points singularly does not uniquely position Sylvan Lake for tourism success, though with the right leadership and management, the combined impact has the potential to establish Sylvan Lake as a hub for regional exploration within the next 10 years.

Phase 3: Plan Development

Informed by research, community engagement and the analysis and visioning that followed, a draft DLMP was written. Following review and input by internal and external individuals, the final version was prepared and presented.

Defining a Vision

Through Phase 1 and 2 initiatives, a specific vision for the DLMP emerged, to "Connect, inspire and be the force of good with and in the community." As follows:

In the heart of Central Alberta, Sylvan Lake emerges as a premier, **year-round destination for one-day and multi-day visits**, welcoming visitors of **all** ages, abilities, and origins from across the province and beyond. Visitors seek to experience the town's **unique blend of local lake town charm and vibrant culture**.

Harnessing its unique qualities and strategic location, Sylvan Lake continues to grow as the **magnet attraction for experiencing Central Alberta**'s local charms and tastes in one cohesive experience. It stands as a leader and trendsetter for tourism initiatives in the region.

Sylvan Lake's tourism leadership—Visit Sylvan Lake—has leveraged tourism as a catalyst for **sustainable community economic development** and has set a data-driven tourism development model. The Town incubates open **innovations and collaborations**, placing **community quality of life** and **leadership**, **environmental stewardship**, and **equitable sharing** of tourism's benefits at the forefront of tourism decision-making.

Tourism operations have established a **strong local industry**, collaborating **closely with the Town** administration to boost visitation and **public, private and community partnership and investment**. Offering **authentic and iconic experiences**, they provide unique ways to connect visitors to the lake and the natural surroundings that sustain the community, to places that define its charm, and to people and stories that **differentiate** Sylvan Lake as a place to visit and as a community to belong to. Sylvan Lake flourishes as an inclusive community for living, visiting, working, investing, creating, and playing.

Introducing Planning Themes

The DLMP establishes three Planning Themes to bring this vision to life, each addressing specific challenges and opportunities within Sylvan Lake's tourism ecosystem. Specifically:

- **Places and Connections** addresses the critical infrastructure and spatial dynamics that are foundational to Sylvan Lake as a place to live, work and visit.

- **Visitors and Experiences** turns to the dynamic interplay between visitors and places. It follows 'Places and Connections' to highlight what can be done with space, infrastructure and storytelling to enhance the local tourism narrative and the quality of interactions people can have with the town, as both locals and visitors.

- **Community, Collaboration and Sustainability** shifts the focus to the community-centric essence of this plan, capitalizing on the assets and collaborative efforts laid out in the preceding themes. It emphasizes the importance of community leadership, collaboration and organizational capacity in cultivating a resilient and vibrant destination. It is rounded out by exploring paths for environmental and financial sustainability in the evolution of the Town's tourism sector.

PLACES & CONNECTIONS (PC)

This Planning Theme considers:

- Preparing and enhancing physical spaces for enhanced connectivity and visitor experiences.
- The value of attractive and harmonized public spaces.
- The social and economic function of the place, such as a sense of belonging and emotional attachment, and opportunities and barriers for learning, sharing, innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Leveraging placemaking and the interconnections of public art, beautification, activation and wayfinding to improve the sense of place and visitor experience.

Gaps:

- There is limited publicly-owned infrastructure available for watercraft, and no public boat launch within town limits.
- The Visit Sylvan Lake brand has not been physically operationalized throughout the town.
- Downtown lacks a visible and palpable identity, which impedes its success as a tourism asset.
- There is a lack of harmonized aesthetics that embodies and demonstrates a unique sense of place.
- There is a gap in place-based activations (programming, placemaking) that echo the charm, heritage, stories and people.
- Parking spaces are not well distributed.
- There is a lack of designated parking for RVs, buses, boat trailers, etc.
- There are limitations to the use and appeal of existing infrastructure (Pogadl Park, Pocket Park, Centennial Park, Sylvan Lake Park/Baby Beach, Lakefront Park, Lighthouse Park, Festival St., library parking lot).
- There is a lack of attractive, inclusive and interactive heritage designations and storytelling initiatives/ installations around town.
- Public art and installations in Sylvan Lake lack strategic thought and interactivity.
- There is a lack of place-based initiatives/installations that showcase local Indigenous culture and perspective.
- There is a lack of comprehensive wayfinding and signage that connects major assets and attractions throughout the town.
- Town infrastructure lacks walkability and cyclability.
- There is no uniquely dedicated and active year-round Visitors Centre.
- There is a lack of visitor information infrastructure.
- Major attractions and visitor services do not adhere to comprehensive accessibility standards.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1:
Destination Development and Placemaking

Embrace placemaking as a comprehensive framework for approaching public art, beautification, activation and wayfinding as interconnected solutions to Sylvan Lake's destination development, further supported by design, planning and policy interventions.

Recommendations include:

- Maintain the visual, emotional and perceptual connections to the lake for the whole town.
- Invest in the enhancements of infrastructure, amenities and facilities connected to the lake experience.
- Use placemaking to enhance the infrastructure of underutilized or unused open public spaces, Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPs) and vacant lots for recreational experience development (in particular, iconic events).
- Invest in adding, redistributing and refining wayfinding infrastructure to enhance visibility and create connections between parking, walkable routes, town attractions and supporting services.
- Use placemaking to reflect and promote the local stories, history and legacy throughout the town, while creating visitor attractions.
- Customize a community-centric Placemaking Framework for Public Art.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2:
Downtown Revitalization

Invest in downtown revitalization to improve attractiveness and create a harmonious & engaging experience throughout.

Recommendations include:

- Invest in harmonising the visual and architectural aesthetics to reflect the essence of the Visit Sylvan Lake brand: a small, connected and vibrant lakeside community.
- Invest in the improvements and enhancements of downtown infrastructure, amenities and facilities.
- Enable activation strategies to encourage business piloting, and starting small and adaptive (incrementalism).
- Implement measures that encourage the use of vacant spaces and the adaptive reuse and repurposing of retail & commercial spaces downtown.
- Define a regional/provincial campaign to attract prospective entrepreneurs.

VISITORS & EXPERIENCES (VE)

This Planning Theme considers:

- Conflicts and risks that arise between visitors and the community.
- Activating physical spaces and place-based programs to create visitor experiences.
- The role of local entrepreneurship and a creative spirit as a driving force for community-centric tourism development.
- Strategies for cultivating an effective entrepreneurial ecosystem in Sylvan Lake, with a focus on fostering grassroots initiatives and local business development catering to the visitor economy.
- Maximizing the positive impact of visitation through community-centric visitor management and sustainable product development.
- Creating new experiences by fostering local grassroots entrepreneurship.
- Opportunities for experience development, from a local and regional perspective.
- Thoughtfully connecting with guests, attracting new visitors and influencing visitor behaviour through storytelling.

Gaps:

- The town lacks authentic Indigenous experiences.
- There is limited reach to high-value visitors seeking to connect with the community and enjoy responsible recreational experiences.
- There is a lack of diverse, Town-facilitated one-day and multiple-day paid visitor experiences and tourism products for exploring Sylvan Lake.
- There is no iconic experience to establish Sylvan Lake as a gem in Central Alberta.
- There is a gap in strategic distribution of visitor-facing products and experiences throughout the town and throughout the year.
- Public and private recreational assets (infrastructure and experiences) are not strategically utilized to diversify and enrich offerings for high-value visitors and year-round activation.
- There is a lack of evidence of Town partnerships with community rights holders, including business owners and grassroots organizations, in creating visitor experiences & products.
- Emerging and existing entrepreneurs do not have a clear development pathway that speaks to sector specific needs (including non-profits, grassroots), nor is there a comprehensive Town-led support system for entrepreneurs to start and/or grow their visitor-related businesses.
- There is a gap in business diversification downtown and a gap in overall market preparedness, impacting the overall destination appeal and visitor experience.
- There are gaps in policy and affordability to support entrepreneurial and grassroots activities.
- There are gaps in data that can inform labour projections and support workforce development, particularly as it relates to hospitality-related retail businesses.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3:
Visitor Management

Leverage placemaking, downtown revitalization and program-based activations for effective visitor management.

Recommendations include:

- Implement creative solutions to peak-season parking challenges and future high-demand periods.
- Implement shuttle connections to, from and within Sylvan Lake.
- Improve interpretation of wayfinding, placemaking and visitor information assets.
- Enhance Visitor Information hubs.
- Enhance accessible experiences and connections.
- Enhance accessibility in tourism businesses and service.
- Use festivals and events to encourage visitor traffic beyond the lakefront and downtown.
- Use wayfinding and placemaking to influence visitor behaviour.
- Use community programming to influence visitor behaviour.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1:
Product Diversification and Expansion

Invest in ongoing Town-led, co-led and Town-enabled tourism product diversification and expansion, increasing year-round visitor spending and enhancing the visitor experience.

Recommendations include:

- Build VSL's foundational capacity for creating and enabling community-centric, high-value tourism products.
  - Expand VSL's capacity for product development.
  - Expand capacity for non-weather-dependent products and experiences, to enhance local tourism sector resiliency and sustainability.
- Enable visitor experience offerings of tourism and hospitality industry, focusing on high-value market, shoulder season activation and partnerships within Sylvan Lake.
  - Invest in supporting local recreational facilities and venues to attract small-scale business events, meetings and retreats.
  - Enhance Town capacity for supporting, co-facilitating and co-investment in events with external organizers, utilizing Sylvan Lake private and public recreational facilities, amenities and services.
  - Invest in establishing Sylvan Lake as a host or co-host for sport, leisure and cultural events, focusing on shoulder season opportunities.
  - Invest in facilitating Indigenous land-based experiences, using Sylvan Lake's natural assets and recreational infrastructure.
- Invest in creating a tourism product and event portfolio for VSL, focusing on high-value markets.
  - Invest in VSL-led packaged experiences, in collaboration with local industry and grassroots community groups, activating underutilized town assets.
  - Activate the town's assets (public and private) via VSL-led events, festivals and tournaments in different seasons, targeting high-value markets.
  - Invest and co-invest in creating an iconic festival (series) that positions Sylvan Lake as the gem of Central Alberta.
  - Pilot a VSL leadership structure for community events.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2:
Entrepreneurship & Business Support

Establish a multi-faceted tourism entrepreneurship support system, using a community-centric approach, to enable high-quality, year-round visitor experiences within the local industry.

Recommendations include:

- Launch a pilot of the Tourism Partnership Accelerator (TPA), as the evolution of the existing Tourism Partnership Program (TPP) and an amalgamation of various Town-led business support initiatives (i.e., TEDI, TPP, the Façade Improvement Grant and the Recreation Culture & Tourism Micro Grant).
- Establish the 'Capacity Building for Product Development' component of the TPA that accommodates availability and varying stages of market preparedness.
- Establish the 'Testing and Piloting' component of the TPA.
- Integrate VSL online channels (i.e., website, social media) as part of the TPA.
- Conduct regular evaluations of the TPA's performance to understand impacts on visitor experience development.
- Enhance, advance and refine the TPA program.

Marketing & Storytelling (M) Gaps:

- The purpose of VSL marketing and communication channels, and Town of Sylvan Lake marketing and communication channels, should be further distinguished
- There is a fractured approach to marketing and promotion.
- There is a limited view of marketing as a promotional activity, which misses key components such as program- and place-based activations.
- There is limited budget and capacity for effective destination marketing.
- There is no dedicated events marketing strategy.
- There is a lack of collaborative marketing and sales opportunities between the Town and local & regional partners.
- There is a lack of trip planning tools available via Sylvan Lake channels.
- There is a lack of calls to action within marketing activities.
- There is a lack of cohesion in the customer journey that connects all points of visitor interactions.
- The Municipality views VSL as a "communications channel," rather than recognizing and enabling Visit Sylvan Lake's growth potential, ability to influence visitor consumer behaviour, ability to showcase local and authentic sense of place and culture, and future potential for revenue generation.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1:
Marketing

Invest in expanding VSL organic and paid marketing efforts, to increase regional brand awareness, influence visitor behaviour, enhance community buy-in to tourism efforts, and attract high-value visitors to Sylvan Lake year-round.

Recommendations include:

- Invest in enhancing the Visit Sylvan Lake web platform.
- Invest in enhancing VSL's e-mail marketing and communications capabilities, to strengthen year-round engagement and personalize messaging to unique audience segments and prospective partners.
- Develop a robust VSL Content Calendar, mapping-out content needs (photos, videos, text) for organic marketing activities on each VSL marketing platform (website, social media, B2B email newsletter, B2C email newsletter, Visitors' Guide).
- Develop theme-based itineraries that facilitate collaboration and partnership among local tourism and hospitality businesses.
- Invest in ongoing capture of polished and refined photo and video assets, featuring the lake town vibe throughout the seasons, and the diversity of the community & visitors.
- Develop organic campaigns and initiatives to encourage locals and visitors to share user-generated content (UGC).
- Develop an annual Campaign Calendar to schedule, manage and develop VSL marketing campaigns.
- Invest in developing VSL-branded tourism marketing campaigns, including organic and paid elements, focused on engaging and attracting the following market segments:
  - High-value travellers;
  - Small scale business events, meetings and retreats organizers;
  - Sport and recreation clubs and organizations;
  - and others, as value becomes apparent.
- Invest in developing VSL-branded marketing assets, campaigns and initiatives dedicated to influencing and managing visitor behaviour, and promoting responsible travel & tourism.
- Invest in developing VSL-branded marketing assets, campaigns and initiatives targeting entrepreneurship and local business development.
- Develop organic and paid in-destination campaigns and initiatives to enhance community cultural connection, community stewardship and local understanding of & involvement in the tourism sector.
- Develop funnels for co-operative marketing investments from local and regional partners.
- Expand VSL's capacity for tourism marketing.
- Define a regional/provincial campaign to attract prospective entrepreneurs.

COMMUNITY, COLLABORATION & SUSTAINABILITY (CCS)

This Planning Theme considers:

- Community perceptions of the value creation (positive impact) and value destruction (negative impact) roles of tourism.
- The community's impact and integration in tourism, from a cultural standpoint, including community identity, shared values and the intended outcomes valued by community rights holders.
- The role of community collaboration and partnership in tourism development, and support required from the Town.
- Socio-economic constructs needed to nurture community leadership and grassroots initiatives.
- Solutions to address gaps in organizational capacity for destination leadership and management, for effective implementation of this DLMP.
- Revenue-generation opportunities to support the effective implementation of this DLMP.
- Environmental protection and preservation for sustainable tourism development.

Gaps:

- There is an opportunity to enhance information-sharing channels, whereby the Town can provide the community with updates about tourism-related initiatives, opportunities and investments.
- There is a gap in accessible and inclusive engagement channels for community rights holders and visitors to participate actively in the conversation in tourism-related decision-making.
- Knowledge, funding and communications barriers prevent community participation & investment in tourism-related initiatives.
- There are no PPCP strategies currently in place for capital pooling and investment in destination development.
- There is limited VSL staff capacity to effectively lead and carry out the DLMP implementation plan and actively leverage strategic partnership opportunities.
- The current organizational structure disconnects tourism-related initiatives from one another; there is a lack of intradepartmental collaboration at the Town level to maximize the impacts of community-centric tourism and destination development initiatives.
- Tourism initiatives are being led by non-tourism departments with limited involvement from the tourism department.
- There is a gap in preparedness within the Town and among tourism experiences and services to address the needs of an ever-more culturally diverse visitor base.
- A lack of physical infrastructure, resources and tools–including funding–hinders the successful implementation of the DLMP.
- Current policies and bylaws do not effectively facilitate community-centric practice in tourism development.
- There are no systems in place for ongoing tourism-related data collection.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1:
Community Impact and Integration

Enable mechanisms to utilize tourism for building capacities in participatory decision-making, co-investment, partnerships, project building, community cultural exchange, and environmental stewardship.

Recommendations include:

- Create accessible, inclusive and interactive information-sharing channels for updates about tourism-related initiatives, opportunities and investments.
- Create accessible and inclusive engagement channels for community rights holders and visitors to participate in tourism-related decision-making.
- Implement strategies to reduce barriers to participation, encourage active engagement and lower the risk of partnership and investment in tourism-related initiatives.
- Identify and implement community-centric strategies to encourage PPCP for capital pooling and investment in destination development.
- Invest in community-centric visitor management, and environmental & cultural stewardship.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2:
Destination Leadership & Management

Establish regulations, structure, processes and resources for effective destination leadership and management, specifically regarding: organizational capacity; revenue; funding & co-investment models; bylaws and policies; collaboration; sustainability; and metrics & reporting.

Recommendations include:

- Invest in reenvisioning organizational roles and responsibilities and collaboration, and expanding the tourism team to lead community-centric tourism and destination development.
- Invest in securing infrastructure, resources and tools for the tourism administration entity to implement the DLMP.
- Adopt and/or refine policies related to the physical development of the town, to support the implementation of the DLMP.
- Implement policy and practice to support the development of a multifunctional lakefront recreational zone (including Centennial Park, Sylvan Lake Park, Lighthouse Park and Lakefront Park), that prioritizes community appeal.
- Implement policy and practice to facilitate a community-centric approach in tourism development.
- Create diverse revenue streams for tourism development investments.
- Utilize strategic partnerships with key tourism players at local and regional levels to realize the DLMP's vision for Sylvan Lake, to be a destination leader in Central Alberta.
- Enhance existing policies, regulations and practices to manage and monitor the environmental impact of tourism development at a local level.
- Enhance capacity to lead regional collaboration for implementing the Sylvan Lake Cumulative Effects Management System (CEMS) framework and for environmental initiatives focused on tourism impact management.
- Develop guidelines and initiatives for environmentally sensitive practice & messaging in tourism product development and marketing.
- Implement a context-specific Tourism Impact Measurement Framework (TIM) aligned with DLMP priorities to understand, measure and monitor tourism economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts and to inform respective tourism decision-making.

Measuring Success

To determine the economic impact of implementing the DLMP, a thorough Economic Impact Projections analysis was conducted, which suggest the following:

An estimated 966,000 visitors will have visited Sylvan Lake by the end of 2024, expected to grow to 1.3 million by 2034. **Initially**, growth is largely attributable to **day trippers**. In the **later years** of the Plan (2030-3034), the destination will be more attractive to **overnight visitors**, so while day trip visitors continue to increase steadily on an annual basis, the overnight visitor segment will begin to grow at a more rapid rate.

	2024	From 2025 - 2034 (cumulative)
Destination Development and Placemaking	$44.9 million	$606 million
FTEs supported by tourism economic activity	608	8,435
Collective earnings - direct labour income (tourism)	$26.4 million	$368 million
Municipal taxes generated by tourism economic activity	$1.3 million	$18 million

Metrics & Reporting

Success of this DLMP and efforts recommended within is measured in three parts:

- **Part 1: Tourism Impact Measurement Framework (TIM)** seeks to monitor and report on the big picture, including the overall socio-economic value of the local tourism economy. The TIM provides a structured approach for the Town of Sylvan Lake's tourism administration. Its key impact areas included economic impact, entrepreneurship & small business development, visitor satisfaction, community satisfaction and environmental impact.
- **Part 2: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Guidelines** provides a basis for the Town of Sylvan Lake's tourism administration (VSL) to measure and monitor intermediate outcomes of implementing DLMP recommendations, actions and project deliverable. It focuses on the immediate feedback of VSL's progress regarding implementing the DLMP. Measurement areas include:
    - Future Planning, Evaluation, and Reporting of DLMP Progress
    - Evaluating VSL Industry Partnership Initiatives
    - Evaluating VSL Events and Tourism Products
    - Evaluating VSL-Led/Co-Led Pilot Projects for Place Enhancement
    - Evaluating Tourism Partnership Accelerator (TPA)
    - Evaluating Impacts of Marketing and Communications
- **Part 3: Evaluating Evolution From 'Local Host' to 'Regional Host'** refers to the robust and customized 'Destination Readiness Criteria for Tourism' to determine the Town's progress in evolving from a 'Local Host' to a 'Regional Host'. This component provides an understanding of the impacts of the DLMP from a Destination Readiness perspective.

Section 1:

Setting The Stage

1.1 INTRODUCTION:
INNOVATION THROUGH COMMUNITY

This Destination Leadership and Management Plan ("DLMP," "Plan," "Report") is a comprehensive, 10-year strategic plan for tourism development and investment in the Sylvan Lake community. It intends to cultivate a thriving and purposeful tourism sector that leverages tourism for the whole community's benefit.

The DLMP is being released at a time when global issues continue to significantly impact tourism development at a hyper-local level. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change and an expanding awareness of systemic inequity has exposed foundational inadequacies in the traditional tourism system. This timing has accelerated the need and awareness for destinations to effectively manage visitors and lead tourism development in a way that places community needs at the core of tourism design. As a growing destination, Sylvan Lake is optimally positioned to implement innovative tourism practices that build on the community's strengths while enhancing the destination as a key provincial asset.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The global pandemic rocked the tourism sector, leading to business closures, lay-offs and entire communities losing their primary economic driver as tourism halted.

At the height of the crisis in 2020, almost 900,000 jobs were lost in Canada, representing 43 per cent of all tourism employment.[1] Employment in the Indigenous tourism sector declined 68 per cent.[2] In 2021, tourism employment over the first 10 months of the year remained 21 per cent below 2019 pre-pandemic levels—a loss of 360,000 jobs—while overall employment in Canada had recovered to pre-pandemic levels. In 2022, tourism continued to lag behind other sectors in recovering its workforce. As the sector re-opened for 2022, more than 172,000 jobs remained unfilled,[3] creating major labour shortages. These effects were felt throughout Central Alberta and by operators in Sylvan Lake. Throughout 2020 and 2021, varying degrees of lockdowns and closures continued to impact any significant economic benefits seen through tourism, as some travellers were more cautious with their behaviour. In other cases, money-spending opportunities were hindered due to those venues being closed, operating on reduced hours or exercising capacity limitations. At the same time, destinations with attractive outdoor experiences witnessed a surge in visitors.

In light of travel restrictions and lockdowns, Canadians explored their proverbial backyard, visiting parks, trails and beaches close to home. Google Trends showed searches for the word "staycation" peaked in Canada in 2022,[4] and the number of Canadians searching for domestic flights compared to international flights was up to three times as high as pre-pandemic levels at various points.[5] In Sylvan Lake, an observed and industry-reported increase in outdoor tourism activities was evident, particularly in the beach area, which has continued in the years following the pandemic.

An August 2023 report by TD Economics shows that "domestic tourism activity fell by less than international tourism during the initial lockdowns and subsequently recovered faster."[6] Though the study shows "the pace of recovery is easing as the sector faces headwinds from higher interest rates, a slowing jobs market, and a broader cyclical slowdown in the U.S. and abroad," it also shows that "domestic tourism spending has pulled up to approximately 90 per cent of its pre-pandemic level."[7] There is an opportunity to leverage this ongoing heightened interest in domestic travel while strengthening the town's regional, national and international positioning.

SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES

Simultaneously, systemic inequities were brought to the forefront of social conversation in the early 2020s, in part due to the recognition that those deemed "essential workers" largely represented low-income, racialized communities—many of whom the tourism sector relies upon, such as food service workers, people in retail and transportation personnel—in addition to delivery drivers, cleaners, cashiers, long-term care and personal support workers, taxi drivers and employees manufacturing and transportation.[8] National and international news headlines put a spotlight on racism and oppression, particularly against Black, Indigenous and racialized folks, as well as 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. With this radical cultural awakening, the tourism sector was among the global industries presented with an opportunity to confront its own biases and contributions to racist and oppressive practices. According to the 2021 Census, 33.9 per cent of people employed in tourism in Canada identified as "visible minorities," and the average income of visible minority workers was 21.9 per cent less than non-visible minority workers in the sector.[9]

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) remain vital considerations in relation to building a healthy and strong tourism labour force, as well as in creating experiences and marketing programs that appeal to a broad profile of visitors. Further, economic decisions at a policy level determine who benefits from tourism development and who gets left behind. Integrating DEI principles into tourism decision-making enhances the equitable disbursement of economic opportunities and contributes to the social fabric, promoting understanding, tolerance and harmony.

> The sector is not just a leading source of employment. It also promotes territorial cohesion and socioeconomic inclusion for the most vulnerable. Tourism helps communities hold onto their unique natural and cultural heritage, supporting conservation, safeguarding endangered species, and keeping traditions and flavours alive.[14]
>
> - World Tourism Organization -

CLIMATE CHANGE

The frequency of environmental disasters is changing how people live, travel and spend their discretionary income. While globally, annual mean temperatures have risen more than a degree since 1880, the warming has been more drastic in Canada. In particular, Alberta and Saskatchewan have warmed by 1.9 degrees Celsius since the mid-20th century, and are expected to see shorter, warmer winters on average, while summers get hotter with more severe heat waves. As temperatures change, precipitation is expected to increase overall, but how and when it falls will vary. Weather events previously deemed "once-in-a-decade" could increase by 20 per cent. While climate models indicate an overall increase in precipitation, future droughts and soil moisture deficits are projected to be more frequent and intense across the southern Canadian Prairies during summer months.[10]

As Alberta warms and dries, the annual number of large wildfires, area burned, and fire sizes have already significantly increased in recent years, as has the likelihood, area and number of extreme short-interval burns. The increasing fire activity in the province has implications for forest ecology and habitat availability, as the disruption of the fire is likely to alter forest recovery.[11]

Implications of climate change extend to tourism activity, considering the impact of seasonality and natural assets on planning and product development. Further, the environment is important in community safety and stability for investment and viability.

THE TOURISM SHIFT

All of these factors have accelerated an evolution of best practices in tourism development—an evolution that was already building, but for which the necessity was exposed and made more widely apparent in the wake of the 2020 pandemic. Frameworks that centre on the well-being of people and communities are now the North Star for tourism development, such as **community-based tourism** (CBT)—"tourism activities and services which have been developed by local community members"[12] and **regenerative tourism**—"the idea that tourism should leave a place better than it was before."[13] In essence, there has been a hard and fast awakening to the importance of community well-being, pride of place, quality of life, social capital and stewardship as cornerstones of tourism development. This represents a seismic shift in priorities away from visitor needs as the primary concern of tourism growth and development, and towards a model of tourism that is in service to community.

By embracing the recommendations in this DLMP, Sylvan Lake positions itself amongst the ranks of leading destinations in Canada and across the globe that have made an intentional commitment to positive collective impact by embracing community-based tourism and regenerative practice. **Now is an ideal time for the Town to step ahead of the curve by demonstrating leadership and being a part of this exciting shift, by leveraging the tourism sector to pursue socio-cultural, environmental, and economic health & well-being across the community.** In demonstrating the benefits of sustainable, community-oriented tourism, Sylvan Lake is the ideal case study of how decentring visitor-based sales and marketing-oriented perspectives leads to a sustainable tourism sector where community and tourism work harmoniously together.

[EMPHASIS]

UNDERSTANDING **COMMUNITY-BASED & REGENERATIVE TOURISM**

Community-based tourism (CBT):

Community-based tourism centres around the active involvement of local communities in planning, developing, and managing tourism activities and destinations. This approach aims to create a symbiotic relationship between travellers and the communities they visit, with both parties benefiting from the experience.

In CBT, residents play a fundamental role in shaping the local tourism industry. They collaborate with external parties, such as tour operators and government agencies, to showcase their unique cultural, natural and historical assets to visitors. This approach is distinctly different from conventional mass tourism, where decisions are generally made by outside entities without much consideration of the needs and aspirations of the local community.

One of the primary objectives of CBT is to empower locals economically and socially. By actively participating in tourism initiatives, these communities generate income, create jobs and improve their overall quality of life. Additionally, CBT encourages the preservation of traditional customs, cultural heritage and the natural environment, as these are among the key attractions for visitors.

CBT experiences allow visitors to immerse themselves in the local life, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the host community's culture and environment. Community-based tourism emphasizes sustainable practices, aiming to minimize negative impacts on the environment and the local culture. This encompasses responsible management of resources, waste reduction and promoting ethical tourism behaviours among visitors.

Regenerative tourism:

Regenerative tourism seeks to make travellers responsible stewards of the planet and communities. It encourages people to be conscious of the consequences of their actions while travelling, and to actively contribute to improving the destinations they explore. This concept acknowledges that tourism has both positive and negative impacts on the environment, culture and communities, and seeks to maximize the positive effects while minimizing the negative ones. Key aspects include:

Environmental stewardship: Regenerative tourism strongly emphasizes protecting and rejuvenating the natural environment. Travellers engage in activities such as reforestation, wildlife conservation, and habitat restoration. They aim to leave a place in better ecological condition than they found it.

Cultural respect and engagement: Travellers immerse themselves in the local culture, respecting traditions and supporting the livelihoods of the communities they visit. This may involve participating in cultural events, supporting local artisans, or learning about the destination's history.

Community empowerment: Regenerative tourism seeks to benefit local communities economically and socially. Travellers may contribute to community-led projects, invest in local businesses, or engage in volunteer work that directly benefits the people who call the destination home.

Sustainable practices: To reduce their environmental footprint, visitors should choose eco-friendly and active transportation options, stay in accommodations with strong sustainability practices, and reduce waste and energy consumption.

Education and awareness: Travellers actively seek to learn about the places they visit, including the environmental and cultural issues they may encounter. They also share their knowledge with others, promoting responsible and regenerative tourism practices.

Long-term thinking: Regenerative tourism takes a holistic and long-term approach, considering the lasting impacts of tourism activities and striving to ensure that future generations access and enjoy the same experiences.

Through CBT and regenerative tourism, the community is recognized as both the primary resource for tourism (which necessitates its sustainable development and protection), and as the leader in adopting tourism development goals that have a lasting positive impact.

[DEFINE]

COMMUNITY RIGHTS HOLDERS VS. INTERESTED PARTIES

In the Sylvan Lake DLMP, the following definitions apply:

Community rights holder(s):
Refers to local community "stakeholders" including residents, local business owners, local groups, grassroots groups, and the municipal organization.

Interested party/parties:
Refers to non-community entities connected to Sylvan Lake's tourism development, primarily from a visitor economy perspective.

These are further explored in Section 2.2: Mapping Community Rights Holders & Interested Parties.

Community is the greatest asset to—and the most critical player in—tourism development anywhere in the world, encompassing people, local culture and the way of life, natural resources and the intangible sense of place. As such, a community-first perspective is paramount because, if left unchecked, tourism growth can harm or destroy the assets upon which it depends for survival. This includes the destruction of environment, culture, heritage, sense of place and community enjoyment; the loss of economic impact through leakage; the emergence of user conflicts; intense seasonality; increased crime; and inauthentic commercialization. There is no shortage of examples where unmanaged tourism has led to these detrimental impacts on communities.

On the other hand, as a driver for community development, tourism supports the evolution of a place in the best interest of the people who live and work there. For even the most vulnerable populations, it is a force for economic prosperity, social change, and environmental sustainability and justice. Tourism's impacts and influence span various priorities in a way no other sector can compare. To mobilize the sector as a sustainable, positive and beneficial resource, the community must be at the forefront of tourism design.

Harnessing the power of tourism is a strategic choice and a compelling necessity in Sylvan Lake, considering tourism's inherent place within the town's social, cultural and economic fabric.

1.2 **WHY TOURISM**

Tourism's uniqueness when compared to other sectors is a major asset to Sylvan Lake's socio-cultural, environmental and economic goals. Its broad reach and ability to celebrate, preserve and derive economic benefit from place and people encourages the community to thrive and become richer, while also creating more opportunities to share the destination with visitors.

As a versatile sector, tourism is typically understood as consisting of five major subsectors: accommodations, food and beverage services, recreation and entertainment, transportation, and travel services. These subsectors vary by a destination's unique assets and positioning, and the nature of its visitor market. Each of these pieces intersects to create far-reaching, deep-rooted and equally interconnected impacts on the communities in which it exists.

Sylvan Lake possesses the inherent characteristics of a true destination. Its natural assets, existing built infrastructure and strong community spirit mean that tourism itself is a unique community asset, as a differentiator and competitive advantage. Maximizing tourism's positive benefits has the potential to strengthen the community and way of life because of the following traits:

Tourism is human-centric.

Tourism is inherently human-centric, revolving around the experiences and interactions of people. Unlike many industries that produce tangible products, tourism is about celebrating people, past and present, and sharing that with visitors. These connections forged between visitors and the destinations they visit is profound for several reasons:

Promotes cultural exchange: Transcending borders, tourism brings together people from diverse backgrounds, languages and cultures. This fosters cultural exchange and understanding, breaking down stereotypes and promoting global harmony. It further provides a path to lasting, meaningful reconciliation and building stronger connections with Indigenous Peoples, communities and cultures.[15]

Cultivates community cohesion and pride: When residents invest in and actively promote their local culture, businesses, festivals and natural attractions, a strong sense of community identity emerges. This pride is reflected in the warmth and enthusiasm with which locals welcome visitors, creating an inclusive atmosphere that encourages return visits and positive word-of-mouth.

Fosters personal connections: Travel experiences involve meaningful interactions with local residents, tour guides and fellow visitors. It provides locals with an opportunity to showcase the local culture. Tourism brings people together, promoting social cohesion, empowering community members and fostering community spirit.

Tourism embraces authenticity.

Travel is not merely about visiting a place; it's about discovering the stories, experiences and people that set each destination apart from the next. Travellers want to see unique and novel places, thereby rejecting the assimilation of places and people into becoming the same as others. These narratives add depth and meaning to the visitor experience and thereby foster increasing richness in the development of the local community and culture:

Leans into unique characteristics of place: A successful tourism sector relies on the unique character and sense of place, as a core driver for visitation. Activating, enhancing and celebrating these differentiators—rather than trying to fit into a mould of how things "ought to be done"—is inherent to providing authentic experiences.

Celebrates places, people and culture: Every destination has a story to tell, rooted in its residents, entrepreneurs and natural environment. These stories come to life through attractions, experiences and local ambassadors.

Creates memorable moments: Stories told through tourism experiences create lasting memories. Visitors return home with photographs and narratives to share with family and friends, adding a layer of richness to their lives, and inspiring their friends and family to consider the same experience, too.

Preserves cultural connections: As communities embrace tourism, there is a renewed interest in protecting and showcasing unique traditions and pristine environments, creating cases to invest in greater preservation of these important assets. This leads to establishing cultural centres, historical sites and conservation programs, providing channels for a destination to showcase who and what it is, while ensuring that these assets are safeguarded for future generations.

Cultivates education and interpretation: Tourism product development provides a platform for education and interpretation, creating a sense of pride and identity for the community, and attracting the development of fun social & recreational activities that benefit both residents and visitors.

Tourism supports sustainable development.

One of tourism's unique strengths can be an emphasis on sustainability: working to be a force for good without depleting resources or harming communities. Because tourism relies on communities as the primary resource, it promotes the protection of local natural and cultural assets:

Fosters environmental responsibility: Sustainable tourism practices prioritize preserving natural resources and ecosystems. This includes efforts to reduce waste, conserve energy, protect wildlife and minimize the carbon footprint of tourism activities. To preserve the natural beauty, destinations implement measures to minimize environmental impact such as responsible waste management, energy-efficient infrastructure and protecting fragile ecosystems.

Supports community well-being: Sustainable tourism considers the well-being of local communities, aiming to minimize negative social impacts while maximizing positive contributions. This involves fair wages, community engagement and responsible tourism development.

Drives long-term viability: Sustainability equals long-term viability, which means that destinations continue to be attractive while preserving the assets that draw people to visit in the first place.

Tourism enhances resident connection & success.

Leveraging community assets and entrepreneurship creates a resilient ecosystem that benefits both visitors and locals. Sustainable tourism fosters a symbiotic relationship with local communities, reinvesting revenue, inspiring grassroots initiatives and promoting factors that contribute to an enhanced quality of life.

Improves local quality of life: Revenue generated from tourism can be reinvested in community projects that enhance resident quality of life, such as maintaining public spaces, organizing local events and programs, supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs, funding beautification efforts and improving infrastructure.

Creates possibilities for grassroots entrepreneurship: Leaning on community entrepreneurs and available resources/assets, grassroots approaches provide avenues for low-capital investment and low-risk start-ups for experience development, which is especially unique to this sector. The diverse subsectors offer various levels of investment and risk with growth potential not connected to financial markets, opening doors for start-ups and new players.

Strengthens community resilience: By fostering collaboration among residents, businesses, and organizations, tourism creates a supportive network that enables communities to overcome challenges and thrive in the face of adversity.

Tourism is adaptable.

Tourism's adaptability is another unique aspect that sets it apart from many other industries:

Caters to trends: Tourism swiftly adapts to shifting visitor values and preferences. For example, the rise of eco-tourism and wellness tourism reflects evolving consumer interests. Destinations respond by developing offerings that align with these trends.

Adjusts to challenges: Tourism has demonstrated resilience in the face of unforeseen challenges such as economic downturns, natural disasters and global crises. Destinations work to adjust their strategies and offerings to continue attracting visitors even in challenging times by reprioritizing their key areas of focus.

Responds to different interests: Tourism offers a high degree of customization, allowing visitors to tailor their experiences to their individual interests. This adaptability helps the sector appeal to various tastes and needs.

[FYI!]

Studies show that for every $1 generated in direct travel and tourism gross domestic product (GDP), $2 to $3 are generated on an indirect and/or induced basis.[17]

Tourism is an engine for economic growth.

Tourism is a powerful catalyst for economic growth and development in communities. It injects new capital, stimulates business expansion and job creation, attracts investment, and generates revenue streams. By leveraging local assets and partnerships, tourism fosters sustainable economic opportunities.

Increases local spending: Visitor expenditures on accommodation, dining, transportation and retail create a ripple effect, stimulating local businesses to expand, create new employment opportunities and improve offerings, which leads to increased revenue and attracting new ventures.

Positively impacts other sectors: Tourism enables an economic multiplier effect, where the positive impact extends to other industries like agriculture, food production, and local arts & crafts, thereby diversifying the economy.

Creates new revenue channels: Tourism development creates direct revenue streams for businesses through visitor services, sales, advertising, sponsorships and merchandise. It also generates tax revenue for municipalities, providing stability and insulating communities from global economic shifts.

Attracts new investment: As outside entrepreneurs, industries and private equity groups see the potential and success of the tourism sector, they are attracted to make their own investments. This influx of capital expands the local tax base and contributes to overall community development.

Creates employment opportunities: Tourism provides wider access to employment opportunities for a wide range of people, such as first-time workers, youth and semi-retirees.[16] Tourism employs a high percentage of women, youth, and other equity-seeking community members, including those with limited education, and/or language barriers.

[EMPHASIS]

WHAT DOES **"GRASSROOTS APPROACH"** MEAN IN THE DLMP CONTEXT?

A **grassroots approach**, in the context of this DLMP, refers to a community-driven approach to destination leadership and management. It emphasizes the active participation and initiative of community members in driving changes and improvements, irrespective of external support from the Town or other official entities.

Collaboration among community rights holders is a fundamental aspect of this approach. These rights holders collectively develop and test ideas that aim to enhance their lives by capitalizing on their own assets in experience development and the visitor economy. They acknowledge the potential benefits that tourism can bring to the community and work together to leverage their unique resources.

A grassroots approach recognizes that the collective wisdom and creativity of community members can lead to sustainable, authentic and community-centered tourism experiences.

Through active involvement of diverse voices and perspectives, this approach fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among community members. This involvement encompasses various aspects and phases of destination development and management, including sharing feedback, generating ideas, co-creating experiences, operating tourism initiatives, and taking leadership and stewardship roles.

1.3 DEFINING **DESTINATION LEADERSHIP** AND **MANAGEMENT**

What does "destination leadership and management" actually mean? Understanding each concept separately allows for clarity around the integrated approach.

Destination leadership:

Destination leadership refers to a strategic and collaborative process of destination governance that integrates a *human*-centric and *humanity*-centric lens into both the organization (i.e., structure) and operation (i.e., processes) of destination management. It is about understanding and tapping into the emotional, creative and ethical dimensions that characterize a place. This kind of leadership transcends the traditional structural and procedural frameworks or destination management. It emphasizes mobilization, inspiration and empowerment of people first by building on the community's collective, enduring values and establishing a clear, long-term, strategic vision and direction.

A destination leader's role extends beyond managing tourism-related conversations, merging tourism into a broader responsibility that impacts the local quality of life and places within the community.

Destination management:

Destination management refers to the process of coordinating and managing operations, processes, resources and institutions that directly contribute to the quality and quantity of visitor experiences in a destination. It includes planning for tourism success, particularly for strengthening and promoting the image and awareness of a destination and the services available. It also means addressing tourism challenges, including the negative impacts of tourism on the community.

In essence, destination management envisions the future of tourism in any given place, assessing its potential successes, risks, and challenges in the short- and long-term. However, it generally focuses on wins and challenges rather than integrating tourism into the broader context of community development, sustainability and well-being.

A Destination Management Organization (DMO)—which may vary in form, function, governance and size—takes a leading role in managing and developing tourism within a destination. Generally, a DMO may not be part of broader conversations that impact the local quality of life and places within the community which are typically a government priority.

[DEFINE]

HUMAN-CENTRIC VS. HUMANITY-CENTRIC

Human-centric:

A human-centric lens in tourism development places the human experience at the centre of tourism development and planning. It considers how tourism activities, services and destination development can be tailored to meet individuals' and communities' needs, preferences and well-being. This emphasizes culturally sensitive, socially responsible and environmentally sustainable practices. It involves understanding and respecting local communities, fostering positive interactions between visitors and locals, and ensuring that tourism benefits the well-being of the people involved.

Humanity-centric:

A humanity-centric lens in tourism development takes a broader perspective by considering the overall impact of tourism on humanity as a whole. It addresses issues such as socio-economic development, cultural preservation and environmental conservation from a global perspective. This lens goes beyond the immediate interactions between tourists and local communities to encompass a more holistic view, considering tourism's contributions to humanity's well-being and progress. This may involve initiatives that support international cooperation, cultural exchange and the sustainable development goals.

ADOPTING AN INTEGRATED MODEL: **WHY DOES IT MATTER?**

Integrating destination management with destination leadership involves several critical shifts from the conventional approach to destination governance:

1. A shift from outward-facing to inward-facing efforts:
The adoption of a destination leadership approach requires moving away from solely outward-facing, sales and marketing-centric efforts that focus on tourism success and challenges. Instead, it turns inward to community-centric efforts. This paradigm shift leverages tourism as a long-term strategy to enhance local quality of life, recognizing opportunities to harness tourism for the whole community's benefit.

2. A shift from an operational to a visionary perspective:
Embracing destination leadership means moving beyond the technical and procedural aspects of managing tourism and the destination—a traditional approach representing a visitor-centric perspective. It involves adopting a collective vision and enduring values with the community, considering the present and ideal future states. This shift brings together diverse players—from local residents and business owners to government entities and visitors—to ensure tourism allows the community to thrive in the long term.

3. A shift from the growth of tourism to *community* growth *through* tourism:
The essence of adopting a destination leadership approach is to enable tourism to contribute to a destination's long-term viability and vibrancy. Unlike the conventional destination management perspective, which focuses on the long-term success of visitation and visitor satisfaction, the shift to destination leadership advocates using tourism as a strategy for the community's sustainable development. It asks, "What does the community want and need from visitors?" rather than "What do visitors want and need?." This then explores how the community can tap into the visitor economy to their own benefit, which involves investing time, resources, and assets to make a meaningful difference to communities.

DESTINATION LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN SYLVAN LAKE

How does this integrated approach manifest in the context of Sylvan Lake? Recognizing the importance of such a shift in destination governance, this integrated approach is the foundation upon which the DLMP has been developed:

- This Plan is rooted in a **community-informed vision** aimed at achieving success, growth and sustainability through tourism. It ensures that tourism contributes positively to the community, nurturing its culture and environment for future generations.
- It weaves in the key ideas of **regenerative tourism** and aims to enrich the town's social, economic and environmental fabric. It also integrates the key concepts of **community-based tourism**, which places the people who live in Sylvan Lake at the heart of tourism-based decision-making.
- The Plan also highlights the importance of **raising awareness, fostering appreciation and building capacity** for the community's active participation in building and supporting the tourism industry as a vibrant, essential component of the local economy.
- It's also about integrating **emotions, values and inspiration**. With its human-centric and humanity-centric principles, this Plan embraces inclusive and equitable practice. It advocates for a place where: tourism positively impacts everyone; local businesses flourish; the environment is protected; and visitors get to experience the true essence of a community that is created and nurtured by residents.
- This vision is guided by leadership that is as concerned with tomorrow as it is with today. The Plan emphasizes the **long-term viability** and development of both the community and the municipal organization responsible for destination governance.
- It makes the case that **increased public and private sector investment** in the tourism leadership and management entity positions Sylvan Lake to compete more effectively in a highly competitive market.
- Rooted in this leadership approach, the Plan acknowledges the **significant role** of the Town's tourism entity in **communicating the essence of Sylvan Lake** to attract investors and future residents and to garner regional and provincial awareness and appreciation. It also underscores the entity's role in **strengthening and coordinating various aspects of community development**—such as local economy development, infrastructure enhancement and cultural preservation—that directly and indirectly impact and are impacted by tourism.

[EMPHASIS]

DESTINATION MARKETING, DEVELOPMENT, MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP: **WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?**

Traditional **destination marketing** primarily focuses on promotional activities that highlight the unique attributes of a destination, thereby stimulating the desire to visit. It's a practice centred on attraction, leveraging a location's aesthetic and cultural assets to capture potential visitors' interest.

Destination development is about the physical management of visitor volume, experience quality and atmosphere. It involves enhancing a destination's offerings by creating and improving attractions, services and infrastructure.

Destination management takes it a step further by involving a more operational perspective, ensuring that the influx of visitors results in positive experiences. It's the behind-the-scenes work, including optimizing infrastructure, managing visitor flows, and working so that the local community and the environment are not negatively impacted by tourism.

Destination leadership represents the next level and encompasses a more comprehensive and integrated approach to stewardship. It involves bringing interested parties together—including local businesses, government/public entities, the community at large and even visitors—to help the destination thrive in the long term. It goes beyond merely mitigating the risks of tourism to harnessing tourism for the greater good.

1.4 **ABOUT THIS REPORT**

OVERVIEW

The Town of Sylvan Lake's Destination Leadership and Management Plan (DLMP) guides the Town's long-term strategic planning and investment in tourism over the next 10 years.

The vision and recommendations consider the needs of all players and the resources required for community-based, regenerative tourism development. The DLMP comprehensively analyzes existing assets and efforts and identifies opportunities and specific strategies for tourism growth, leadership and management.

The ambition

The Sylvan Lake DLMP is dedicated to harnessing tourism as a means of sustainable, equitable community development, enhancing Sylvan Lake as an inclusive place to live, work, create, invest and visit. The Plan places community collaboration, participation and leadership at its core, positioning tourism as a key local economic driver while preserving the town's distinctive local character and natural environment.

The purpose

The Sylvan Lake DLMP:

- Establishes actionable directions for Sylvan Lake's tourism administration across short-term (1-2 years), mid-term (3-5 years), and long-term (6-10 years) phases, focused on enhancing Sylvan Lake's tourism readiness and building a sustainable, equitable and locally managed visitor economy;
- Provides direction for Sylvan Lake to excel as a prime "Local Host" while building the capacities required to become a competitive, trendsetting "Regional Host"; and
- Steers Sylvan Lake's tourism administration to more robustly tap into inter- and intra-provincial visitor markets, sowing the seeds to position Sylvan Lake as a "National Host."

[EMPHASIS]

DEFINING FOUR **LEVELS OF "HOST"**

Local host:
The destination offers attractions and experiences that cater to the community's assets, both in high season and shoulder season, and is fully equipped to draw visitors from drive-market communities. While the focus is on one-day trips and short visits, the destination has infrastructure for longer stays, such as weekend getaways. It also has established foundational capacities to participate in regional tourism development and marketing initiatives.

Regional host:
The destination has advanced to the level of being fully prepared to host visitors from across the region and beyond, for short and long stays year-round. It acts as a prominent regional leader in tourism and marketing initiatives, and has initiated province-wide marketing efforts. As a regional leader, it collaborates with DMOs, tour operators and/or other travel intermediaries operating across the region and within other regions within the province.

The inter- and intra-provincial (national) host:
The destination has achieved readiness to accommodate visitors from across the province, and the country more broadly. Its marketing efforts are primarily geared towards a national audience. Partnerships are well-established at the provincial level, with strong evidence of collaboration with national tourism development and destination marketing organizations. It maintains strong strategic relationships with tourism operators across the country.

Global host:
The destination is fully equipped to host international visitors and tourists. It boasts landmark attractions and/or unique experiences that attract global audiences. It has successfully established a national brand that highlights its unique tourism experiences and offerings. The Global Host collaborates with international distribution channels (the travel trade) to ensure seamless access and memorable experiences for global travellers.

Objectives

The Sylvan Lake DLMP's core tenets are community-led and public-private-community partnership (PPCP) models, working towards inclusive community development through tourism.

Designed with the community, for the community, the Plan prioritizes the voice and experience of the community in pursuit of a shared outcome; one where tourism enhances local pride in place and quality of life, and is an integral part of local development initiatives. The DLMP's objectives include:

- Aligning with Provincial and Federal tourism goals and vision for the next 10 years;
- Identifying what the town needs to be ready for higher-value tourism markets at national and international levels;
- Analyzing the current visitor segments, and identifying ideal target audiences to grow and diversify Sylvan Lake's tourism markets;
- Determining opportunities for community-led tourism development, including through PPCP models;
- Identifying roles and responsibilities of the Town's tourism administration for destination readiness and local tourism growth, aligned with the defined tourism growth vision, and considering organizational capacity gaps and requirements to handle expected tourism growth;
- Evaluating existing and prospective tourism product expansion and diversification opportunities to drive increased visitor spending;
- Destination development and placemaking planning, to facilitate the movement of visitors throughout, and their connection to, the community;
- Planning for the revitalization of tourism as a core consideration for the downtown;
- Determining the role that industry plays in creating a strong, thriving tourism sector;
- Strategizing for the physical management of visitor volume and behavioural impacts, to enhance visitor experience and limit negative impacts on the community and local environment;
- Identifying a marketing strategy and brand-building opportunities, to connect and influence visitor purchasing decisions;
- Recommending a practical, regular schedule and process for tourism impact assessment, visitor metrics, market research and environmental impact measurements; and
- Creating economic impact projections with a 10-year view in mind, and based on specific recommendations.

[DEFINE]

WHAT IS A **COMMUNITY RIGHTS HOLDER?**

This report has adopted the term "community rights holder" to refer to local community "stakeholders" including residents, local business owners, and local & grassroots groups. This aligns with a shift away from the term "stakeholder."

Why?

"When land acquisition was happening, "stakeholder" referred to the allotment of land to settlers. Settlers were given wooden stakes to claim their plot of land before any treaty or land negotiations with Indigenous Peoples. It is more appropriate to refer to Indigenous Peoples as partners rather than stakeholders. Indigenous Peoples are not stakeholders; they are Aboriginal rights holders whose rights are protected under the Constitution of Canada."[18]

This discussion has expanded to consider equity-centric language in general. The term "stakeholder" has historically "favoured economic interest groups, lacks recognition of history, and neglects minority rights. Rights holders are individuals or social groups having particular entitlements in relation to specific duty-bearers."

Language evolves, words evolve and societal awareness evolves. This small shift works toward providing a more inclusive Strategic Plan, that will be just as relevant in the future as it is today.

STRATEGIC PATHWAYS:
THE PROCESS

The DLMP was developed in three overlapping phases, including:

1. Research and Engagement
2. Analysis and Visioning
3. Plan Development

Phase 1: Research and Engagement

In this initial phase, the project team reviewed key documents from municipal, provincial, federal and international bodies to shape the understanding of tourism trends and best practices on multiple levels. Particular attention was dedicated to reviewing Sylvan Lake municipal strategies, bylaws and reports to establish:

1. Situational context about past and current tourism and tourism-adjacent priorities and investments, tourism assets, community sentiment, tourism management and development;
2. Organizational capacity related to destination development, marketing activities, community development and visitor management; and
3. Marketing, storytelling, and other relevant areas adjacent to destination management.

Engagement included various interviews, workshops, community events and a survey. These activities helped baseline the Plan's tourism challenges and opportunities. All in-person engagement events focused on local perspectives and more than 70 per cent of survey respondents identified as residents of Sylvan Lake. Further perspectives were gleaned from past and prospective visitors. *(See Section 2: Community Insights, for more details on the engagement process that informed this Report.)*

Additionally, participant and non-participant observations were made throughout the project process. Through participant observation, project team members were immersed in the day-to-day life of residents, starting informal conversations in normal daily situations without taking a formal role of researcher or consultant—going to bars, sitting at cafés, window shopping downtown, purchasing from local retailers, attending local festivals, and the like. In non-participant observation, the consulting team engaged within the context of a visitor. They observed how people interact with and use visitor-oriented spaces throughout town; how business owners have activated their spaces to attract visitors; how local services function from a visitor experience perspective; how colours, patterns, smells and sounds bring a sense of place and connection—or alienation—to visitors; and how satisfying experiences are with accommodators, retailers and restaurateurs.

Finally, academic sources and institutions were reviewed for relevant research and best practices on tourism innovation and future trends. Case study research explored the work of other destinations, with a focus on effective and successful tourism revenue models, public-private-community partnership models, tourism-related community impact and integration, placemaking, and visitor management. This work inspires ideas and examples to guide Sylvan Lake through studied, real-world examples.

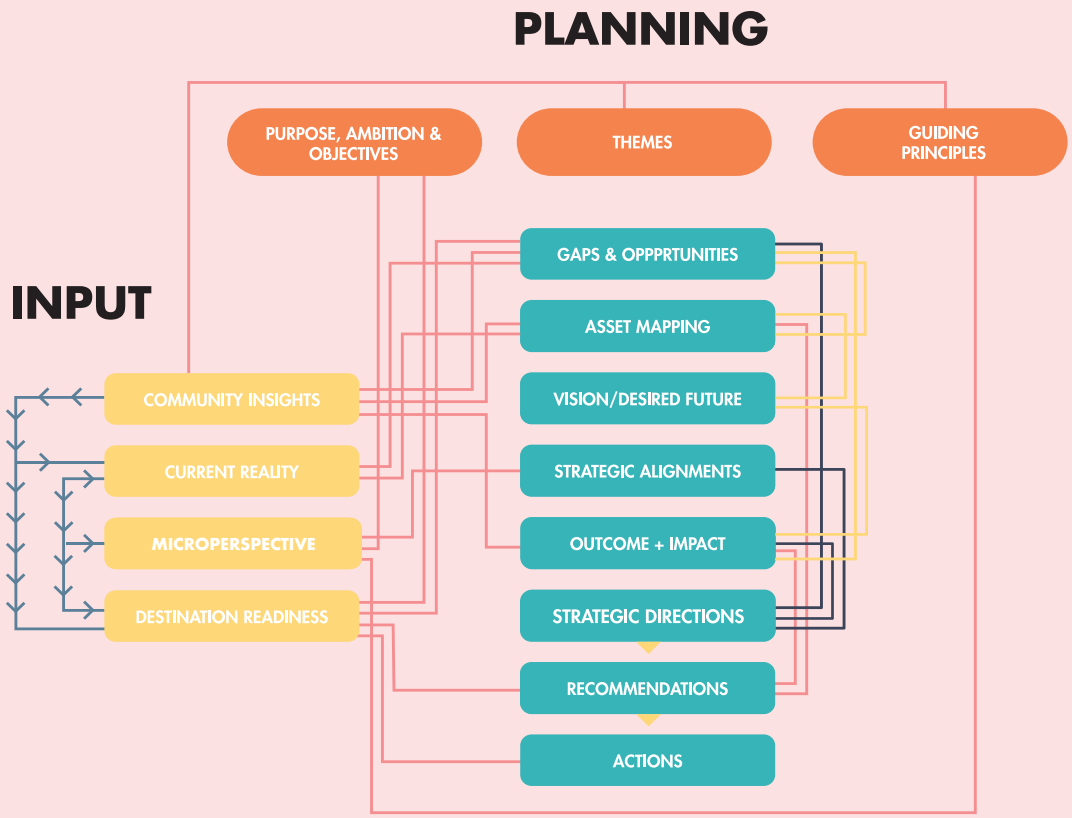
Phase 2: Analysis and Visioning

Key themes from Phase 1: Research and Engagement activities were synthesized, then reported back to the community to test the validity of findings and identify any gaps in findings. From this analysis, a vision for tourism in Sylvan Lake emerged that highlighted relevant opportunities for enhanced local practice and assets.

Phase 3: Plan Development

Informed by research, community engagement and the analysis & visioning that followed, a draft DLMP was written. Following review and input by internal and external individuals, the final version was prepared and presented, to be adopted by the Municipality.

Figure 1: Strategic Pathways - The Process



STRATEGIC PATHWAYS:
THE APPROACH

As evident in the Plan's structure, the Sylvan Lake DLMP report begins by establishing its **'why'**—setting the tone, reviewing the context, and presenting primary analysis and synthesis. It then progresses to its **'what'** and **'how,'** detailing the vision, goals, and strategic directions. To clearly articulate the 'what' and **'how,'** the framework presented is grounded in three **Planning Themes:**

- Places and Connections
- Visitors and Experiences
- Community, Collaboration and Sustainability

These Planning Themes represent the strategic areas of the DLMP, each of which are interlinked. A Plan is like a quilt: every area exists in a harmonious relationship with all other pieces. However, what makes it come together and tell a unique story are the patterns that emerge from the composition. In this analogy, Planning Themes are the patterns that allow for a meaningful, interconnected narrative between closely related planning areas, weaving a cohesive story throughout the Report.

How did planning themes emerge?

The Planning Themes emerged from the first-hand data collected and synthesized during Phases 1 and 2 of its development process. They are further inspired by the four pillars of the United Nations World Tourism Organization's "AlUla Framework for Inclusive Community Development Through Tourism" (Empower, Safeguard, Prosper, Collaborate) and the four Ps of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): People, Planet, Prosperity and Partnership.

Why this order?

The sequence of Planning Themes is deliberate and reflects the foundational role that every theme plays in the overall strategy. Concurrently, many actions and strategies are interdependent; active prioritization will be affected by the availability of resources, receptivity, timing, macroenvironmental factors and so forth at the time of implementation.

Places and Connections is presented first as it addresses the critical infrastructure and spatial dynamics that are foundational to Sylvan Lake as a place to live, work and visit.

Visitors and Experiences turns to the dynamic interplay between visitors and places. It follows 'Places and Connections' to highlight what can be done with space, infrastructure and storytelling to enhance the local tourism narrative and the quality of interactions people can have with the town, as both locals and visitors.

Community, Collaboration and Sustainability shifts the focus to the community-centric essence of this plan, capitalizing on the assets and collaborative efforts laid out in the preceding themes. It emphasizes the importance of community leadership, collaboration and organizational capacity in cultivating a resilient and vibrant destination. It is rounded out by exploring paths for environmental and financial sustainability in the evolution of the town's tourism sector.

[EMPHASIS]

THE INTERCONNECTIVITY OF **PLANNING THEMES**

It is essential to recognize that the DLMP's Planning Themes are inherently interconnected. The strategic recommendations and actions proposed within each Theme are mutually dependent on maximizing the impact and outcomes. For instance, numerous strategies and actionable steps proposed under 'Places and Connections' can be realized through strategies outlined in 'Community, Collaboration and Sustainability.' Conversely, certain strategies within 'Community, Collaboration and Sustainability' hinge upon the foundational preparations and considerations proposed in 'Places and Connections.'

Figure 2: Interconnectivity of Planning Themes

Similarly, the recommendations and actions within 'Visitors and Experiences' are predicated upon the capacities developed through the recommendations of the preceding Theme, notably 'Places and Connections,' and the theme to follow, 'Community, Collaboration and Sustainability.'

How do planning themes represent planning areas and actions?

PLANNING THEME	SPEAKS TO	CONSIDERS
Places & Connections	• Destination Development and Placemaking • Downtown Revitalization • Visitor Management (Through Destination Development and Placemaking)	• Preparing and enhancing physical spaces for enhanced connectivity and visitor experiences. • The value of attractive and harmonized public spaces. • The social and economic function of the place, such as a sense of belonging and emotional attachment, and opportunities and barriers for learning, sharing, innovation and entrepreneurship. • Leveraging placemaking and the interconnections of public art, beautification, activation and wayfinding to improve the sense of place and visitor experience.
Visitors & Experiences	• Entrepreneurship and Business Support • Labour • Visitor Management, Impacts and Experience Quality • Product Development, Expansion and Diversification • Marketing & Storytelling	• Conflicts and risks that arise between visitors & the community. • Activating physical spaces and place-based programs to create visitor experiences. • The role of local entrepreneurship and a creative spirit as a driving force for community-centric tourism development. • Strategies for cultivating an effective entrepreneurial ecosystem in Sylvan Lake, with a focus on fostering grassroots initiatives and local business development catering to the visitor economy. • Maximizing the positive impact of visitation through community-centric visitor management and sustainable product development. • Creating new experiences by fostering local grassroots entrepreneurship. • Opportunities for experience development from local and regional perspectives. • Thoughtfully connecting with guests, attracting new visitors and influencing visitor behaviour through storytelling.
Community, Collaboration & Sustainability	• Community Impact and Integration • Environmental Impacts and Consideration • Organizational Capacity and Growth • Metrics and Reporting	• Community perceptions of tourism's role in value creation (positive impact) and value destruction (negative impact). • The community's impact and integration in tourism from a cultural standpoint, including community identity, shared values and the intended outcomes valued by community rights holders. • The role of community collaboration and partnership in tourism development, and support required from the Town. • Socio-economic constructs needed to nurture community leadership and grassroots initiatives. • Solutions to address gaps in organizational capacity for destination leadership and management, for effective implementation of this DLMP. • Revenue-generation opportunities to support the effective implementation of this DLMP. • Environmental protection and preservation for sustainable tourism development.

How to read these sections

While Sections 1-4 of the DLMP work to provide situational context and background information, Sections 5-7 are each dedicated to a **Planning Theme ('Theme(s)')**. Each Theme section begins by reviewing Sylvan Lake's "current reality" as it relates to the Theme—what has or is being done in town and by the municipal administration, and what gaps exist. From there, **Strategic Directions** are presented, to organize the **Recommendations** for each Theme. Context and perspectives are provided for each direction, from which point, find Recommendations—each of which directly connects to visions articulated in Section 4—supported by specific **Actions**.

Readers will notice that Recommendations and Actions often refer to others presented within other Themes, demonstrating the inherent connections in this work and intersections between the Themes.

An **Implementation Plan** follows, supported by a **Projects and Quick Wins** document, to capture the full scope of resources required to carry out the DLMP. While projects within the Implementation Plan speak to continuous efforts with long-term outcomes, capacity building and other groundwork for destination leadership & management, the projects identified within the Projects and Quick Wins section are focused on testing/piloting recommendations, leading to shorter term outcomes.

STRATEGIC PATHWAYS:
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As the Town of Sylvan Lake carries out this 10-year DLMP, there will be times when challenges ought to be overcome, or new priorities set as the tourism landscape and community evolve. Tied to the DLMP's Ambition and Purpose, six guiding principles are integrated throughout. These are informed by insights from community rights holders, interested parties and the integrated approach to destination leadership and management. These guiding principles present a decision-making reference for the Town in tourism development efforts moving forward, navigating said challenges and priority-setting. They are:

1. Collaboration and Participation

Develop and commit to implementing structures, processes and partnerships that allow for open and transparent dialogue and participation in tourism planning and initiatives on an ongoing basis, and that foster relationship building between the Municipality, residents, community organizations and local Indigenous Peoples.

2. Sustainability and Responsibility

Take actions that have positive, lasting impacts on residents, business owners and visitors, and which are supported by necessary resources to be as effective as possible. Prioritize the conservation and protection of local natural and cultural resources.

3. Leadership and Innovation

Position Sylvan Lake as a provincial leader in tourism development, a hub for Central Alberta visitation and a top provincial tourism destination by building on the strengths of pride of place, community-based practice and care for the people who live and work in the town.

4. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility

Champion diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in tourism planning and implementation so Sylvan Lake is fully enjoyed and appreciated by all residents and visitors regardless of race, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, language spoken or age.

5. Truth and Reconciliation

Connect with local Indigenous leaders and Knowledge Keepers to support community-led tourism initiatives that promote cultural preservation and celebration of Indigenous culture, stories, traditions and ways of life.

6. Flexibility and Forward-Focus

Take the necessary steps to develop a long-term path toward destination leadership focused on prioritizing the possibilities of community development while measuring and evaluating activity to allow for necessary and beneficial iterations of the 10-year strategy.

1.5 READING **THE PLAN**

This section provides insight and direction for navigating the DLMP, and in particular, Sections 5 through 8.

Numbering recommendations and actions

Recommendations and actions have been labelled based on short forms for:

1. the Themes in which they are located; and
2. the Strategic Directions in which they are under, as follows:

Places and Connections (PC)

- Destination Development and Placemaking (PC-DDP)
- Downtown Revitalization (PC-DR)
- Visitor Management (PC-VM)

Visitors & Experiences (VE)

- Product Diversification & Expansion (VE-PDE)
- Entrepreneurship (VE-E)
- Marketing (VE-M)

Community, Collaboration and Sustainability (CCS)

- Community Impact and Integration (CCS-CCI)
- Destination Leadership and Management (CCS-DLM)

As an example, let's take the recommendations within the 'Places and Connections' Theme, in the 'Destination Development and Placemaking' direction:

- Recommendation 1 is labelled: PC-DDP-1.
    - The first Action within Recommendation 1 is labelled PC-DDP-1.1.
    - The second Action within Recommendation 1 is labelled PC-DDP-1.2
- Recommendation 2 is labelled: PC-DDP-2.
    - The first Action within Recommendation 2 is labelled PC-DDP-2.1.
    - The second Action within Recommendation 2 is labelled PC-DDP-2.2

...and so on, and so forth.

Alongside each Recommendation/Action, Priority, Collaborators, and Impact/Justification are noted based on the following legend:

Priority

This category indicates a suggested timeframe in which each Action is implemented:

1 - Within 2 years
2 - Within 2 - 4 years
3 - Within 5 - 7 years
4 - Within 8 - 10 years
5 - 10+ years

In cases where priorities may require more time, you may see two numbers (i.e., Priority 1-2 = within 1-4 years.) The "Priority" must be the guiding number, in case resources (or lack thereof) do not allow the Town to work within stringent timeframes.

Impact/Justification

This category indicates the Outcome & Impact Statement(s) (OIS) the Recommendation/Action addresses, as articulated in Section 4: Becoming a Destination.

Collaborators

This category indicates parties responsible for, or involved in, implementing each associated Action within the Municipal Administration or a third party, if noted. These include (in alphabetical order):

COLLABORATOR	EXPLANATION (if not immediately apparent)
CEMS municipal partners	The eight municipalities of the Sylvan Lake Watershed, including the five Summer Villages on the shore of Sylvan Lake (Norglenwold, Half Moon Bay, Sunbreaker Cove, Birchcliff, and Jarvis Bay), the Town of Sylvan Lake, Lacombe County and Red Deer County.
CATA	Central Alberta Tourism Alliance
Chamber of Commerce	Sylvan Lake's local Chamber of Commerce
Community Animators	A tourism ambassador program, as recommended in Section 7 (CCS-CII-5.2)
Community partners/Grassroots groups	Includes, but is not limited to, Sylvan Lake Community Partners Association and creative, grassroots non-profits
DMO/municipal partners	Refers specifically to official tourism and/or municipal bodies in proximity to Sylvan Lake, including Lacombe Regional Tourism and Red Deer Tourism.
External organizers	Refers to the activation of a Collaborator (potentially from any of the categories listed here) as a project organizer.

COLLABORATOR (con't)	EXPLANATION (if not immediately apparent)
Indigenous leaders, rights holders and/or Knowledge Keepers	Refers to the activation of a Collaborator (potentially from any of the categories listed here) as a project organizer.
Industry partners	Refers to a combination of any or all DMO/municipal partners, local businesses/ tourism operations, regional businesses/tourism operations, Community partners/ Grassroots groups, etc.
ITA	Indigenous Tourism Alberta
Lacombe Regional Tourism	DMO for Lacombe region
Local businesses/tourism operations	
Neighbouring municipalities/ communities	Refers to neighbouring municipalities/ communities, beyond official destination management organizations (DMO) in the area
Private investors/partners	
Provincial Government	Refers to the Provincial entity, outside of tourism-specific responsibilities
Red Deer County	
Regional businesses/tourism operations	
Sylvan Lake News	The local Sylvan Lake media source/platform.
Sylvan Lake SPARC	The Strengthening Positive Assets and Resiliency in Community) Coalition, which offers youth development training and community engagement activities.
TDC	Tourism Development Committee
Third-party support	A contractor, consultant, or other entity outside of the Town administration, apart from those otherwise identified here
Tourism Red Deer	DMO for Red Deer & area
TPA participants	Businesses, tourism operators and community partners/grassroots groups participating in the Tourism Partnership Accelerator, as recommended in Section 6 (VE-EBS-1).
Travel Alberta	The Province's DMO
TOSL	The Town of Sylvan Lake; refers to the inclusion of various departments as relevant from across the Municipal organization, including Corporate Services, Planning and Development; Public Works, Parks and Protective Services, Economic Development, Recreation, and Family & Community Support Services (FCSS).
VSL	The Visit Sylvan Lake team, within the Town administration, including Culture, Tourism, and Events
Working Group	An internal team at the Town with cross-departmental representation and led by VSL (as recommended in Section 7).

Section 2:

Community Insights

2.1 **ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW**

Community participation is essential to sustainable, regenerative tourism planning, given how insights gathered from residents, business owners, local community leaders, Town representatives and Council members are foundational to final outcomes.

In building the DLMP "with the community, for the community," it was important to connect with people through dynamic, informative and sometimes informal activities that were equally about community building *and* information gathering. The engagement process was guided by the principle of "meeting people where they're at;" this means removing the bureaucratic veil that often prevents communities from engaging with their local government, and rather, prioritizing connections on a human-to-human level, knowing that community involvement:

- enhances the trust and confidence of locals in the tourism sector;
- provides residents with a range of opportunities to participate effectively in tourism development activities, mobilizing them to make decisions that affect their lives;
- improves plans and service delivery, and promotes a sense of community ownership in pursuing common goals;
- helps to identify and collectively work toward sustainable goals that improve the community in the long term;
- upholds the local culture, traditions and knowledge of the local people, while uncovering opportunities for growth and progress;
- influences the equitable distribution of economic gains made through tourism investments; and
- fosters effective communication amongst locals and with decision-makers.

While traditional engagement tactics such as interviews and workshops were utilized, the activities took a community-centred focus. Interviews were approached as conversations, providing safe and comfortable environments for people to share openly and honestly. Workshops allowed participants to craft and use crayons while sharing perspectives on Sylvan Lake as it is and imaginations for what it could be in 10 years. An event was hosted specially for frontline tourism and hospitality workers at a local venue, whereby participants had complimentary access to axe throwing before leading insightful conversations while enjoying dinner provided by a local restaurateur. Further, the community and visitors were engaged informally at major local events and festivals, with further data collection conducted via a survey, customized with skip logic to appeal to various perspectives.

[EMPHASIS]

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

The following groups were engaged for the purposes of DLMP development:

- Full-time and seasonal residents
- Community groups
- Commercial land owners
- Business owners and entrepreneurs
- Experience providers, including restaurateurs, accommodators and retailers
- Tourism and hospitality workers
- Sylvan Lake Mayor and Council
- The Town of Sylvan Lake municipal team
- Central Alberta Tourism Alliance (CATA)
- Travel Alberta
- Indigenous Tourism Alberta
- Tourism Industry Association of Alberta
- Past and prospective visitors

Approaches included:

- 37 one-on-one or group interviews
- Three workshops—one with Council, one with Economic Development and Tourism Committee members, and one with the Town team—which engaged 41 people
- One industry night for tourism and hospitality workers, which welcomed 14 attendees;
- One public survey, with different survey branches designed to reach residents, business owners, commercial property owners, and past and prospective visitors, with a total of 705 responses (70% of responses from full-time and seasonal residents!); and
- 25-30 intercept Interviews with visitors and residents at two large events – the Ice Dragon Boat Race (Feb. 11, 2023) and Winterfest (Feb. 18, 2023).

Overall, more than 827 people were engaged to inform the DLMP over an eight-week period, which is equivalent to roughly five per cent of the resident population. This high response rate within such a brief timeframe (due to project deadlines) illustrates how much the community cares about tourism.

Social media posts on the Town's corporate and Visit Sylvan Lake accounts promoted engagement opportunities, complemented by posters placed around town and advertisements printed in the Sylvan Lake News. A webpage dedicated to DLMP project updates was hosted on VisitSylvanLake.ca.

Once the initial engagement was completed and findings were synthesized, Community Visioning Sessions offered community rights holders the opportunity to hear what key themes emerged from engagement activities.

This direct feedback loop—which is considered one of the most effective methods for validating the community's desires and identifying gaps within initial findings—helps the research and planning process to:

- ensure challenges described and solutions being considered remain relevant to the evolving needs and preferences of the people they aim to serve;
- reduce the risk of assumptions being made about what the community needs and/or wants;
- allow for co-creation of solutions, leading to more inclusive and effective outcomes;
- promote a sense of ownership and empowerment within the community;
- identify potential issues, flaws, or misunderstandings early in the design process, and mitigate potential negative impacts;
- enables the design process to be adaptive and responsive to unforeseen challenges and opportunities;
- empower individuals and the community as a whole;
- foster a sense of agency, enabling people to have a voice in shaping their own futures and influencing the outcomes that directly affect them; and
- provide everyone involved with a better understanding of the proposed solutions, making it more likely that they will be embraced and effectively implemented.

During the Community Visioning Sessions, participants had the chance to provide further feedback and direction, ask questions, engage in discussion, and share insight to further inform the DLMP. While many participants from initial activities took part in the Visioning Sessions, these secondary activities also welcomed new voices into the process. For those who couldn't or didn't partake, passive feedback opportunities were made available online, with a project page outlining key findings posted on the Visit Sylvan Lake website.

2.2 MAPPING **COMMUNITY RIGHTS HOLDERS** & **INTERESTED PARTIES**

COMMUNITY RIGHTS HOLDERS

Who are community rights holders in Sylvan Lake within a tourism context? Consider the following:

Residents

Residents are the primary beneficiaries of local tourism development, and also, those most negatively impacted by mismanaged tourism development and lack of destination leadership. With a community-centered approach, the local population's rights and well-being are protected, driving tourism decisions that, in turn, lead to a higher quality of life, improved infrastructure and services, and new opportunities for employment and/or entrepreneurship in a sustainable way. Their stories, culture and the way they interact with the town define the tourism opportunity. While not every resident will engage directly in tourism, they collectively shape the visitor experience, setting a tone that may be welcoming and warm or hostile and uninviting. Residents lead or guide experience development, are conduits for visitors to connect with the local culture, and act as community ambassadors. Therefore, understanding the local vision for how tourism benefits the community, and what tourism activities help or hinder community advancement, is essential to defining a participative, co-creative relationship that embraces tourism in the interests of all.

Community groups

Within Sylvan Lake, community groups provide experiences, preserve local history and stories, protect natural assets, and facilitate opportunities for connection. Primary local examples include the Chamber of Commerce, Sylvan Lake Theatre, the Farmers' Market and Sylvan Lake Archives, amongst others. Their work is directly informed and supported by the interests of residents and businesses. The networks and leadership of community groups help determine buy-in to tourism initiatives and have the power to sway decisions and investments that enhance the town as a destination and a place to live.

Indigenous partners

Indigenous communities play a vital role in shaping and enriching the tourism landscape in Canada, and working with Indigenous Partners in a participatory way supports the mandate of Truth and Reconciliation. In Sylvan Lake, Indigenous community members are working to offer visitors a meaningful and respectful connection to the area. Further, Sylvan Lake has access to the expertise, networks and resources of Indigenous Tourism Alberta and the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada. In a responsible tourism framework, Indigenous partners are acknowledged and actively engaged in decision-making processes. Collaborative initiatives work towards tourism development in a way that respects and benefits Indigenous Peoples—promoting cultural preservation, economic empowerment and mutual understanding. Collaboration with Indigenous community members and organizations, and adopting Indigenous worldviews within tourism development decision-making, fosters a deeper appreciation for the local culture, creating a more inclusive and authentic destination for both residents and visitors alike.

Local tourism operators

Tourism operators are businesses and initiatives that serve visitor needs and rely on visitor spending (though residents may be their primary revenue source). This local network, which is the foundation of the local tourism industry of Sylvan Lake, includes experience providers, accommodators, restaurateurs, retailers, gas stations, transportation services, and the like. Industry representatives include business owners, managers and frontline workers, who provide the services and experiences upon which tourism functions. The quality of industry assets and services directly impacts the quality of visitor experiences.

Commercial land and building owners

Commercial land owners have the power to determine the look and feel of the town, based on their investments in maintenance and beautification, as well as their discretion when selecting tenants. Further, commercial land and building owners are subject to zoning bylaws set by the municipality and have the power to work collaboratively to influence the physical space, in particular for commercial areas that are of primary use by visitors. The functional use, look, and feel of place affects the facilitation of visitors, visitor spending, and availability of services.

Town of Sylvan Lake Municipal Administration

The local municipal team, and specifically those within the tourism department, are responsible for identifying and carrying out tourism development priorities, operationalizing the tourism brand and marketing, and determining how budgets are invested. Visit Sylvan Lake (VSL) is the Town's tourism brand (which is applied in this document to refer to the tourism *team* as well). Beyond the tourism department, many roles within the municipal organization are not directly related to tourism, though their contributions have a significant and definitive impact on the development of the destination and its potential for alignment with the tourism industry and visitor needs and interests (i.e., Planning and Development, Parks, Public Works, Emergency Services, Municipal Enforcement, etc.).

Sylvan Lake Town Council

As the local governing body, Sylvan Lake Town Council determines the financial and human resources available for tourism development in the short-, mid- and long-term. Their decisions shape regulatory frameworks, infrastructure enhancements, service standards and priorities that ultimately influence the local visitor experience. Their endorsement provides credibility and signifies a commitment to sustainable tourism development, creating a resilient and thriving destination in alignment with community goals.

INTERESTED PARTIES

In addition to community rights holders, other interested parties within the broader tourism landscape are essential for the success of tourism in Sylvan Lake. They include:

Regional partners and organizations

Working with neighbouring municipalities in Central Alberta, as well as the Central Alberta Tourism Alliance, strengthen the resources available for sharing Sylvan Lake's tourism narrative. This broader storytelling scope and catalogue of experiences enhance the destination's reach and appeal to visitors. Regional collaborators open opportunities for sharing best practices and insights, fostering a collective approach to tourism development that benefits the entire region. The decisions made alongside regional partners impact Sylvan Lake's position within the larger tourism landscape, influencing visitor flows and enhancing Sylvan Lake's overall appeal.

Provincial and national tourism bodies

The Tourism Industry Association of Alberta acts as an advocate "on behalf of all segments of Alberta's tourism economy for a competitive and sustainable business environment that generates substantial economic value for the province." The Tourism Industry Association of Canada carries out a similar mandate on a federal level. These organizations influence best practices in the sector and provide market data and trends analysis that local organizations wouldn't otherwise have the capacity or funds to access. They also lead opportunities for networking and connection within the sector. Finally, they advocate for policies and regulations that support the industry from their purview.

Figure 3: Parties involved in destination leadership and management[19]

Travel Alberta & the Provincial Government

The provincial government determines policies and regulations that support the growth and development of the tourism industry. Travel Alberta is the provincial body responsible for tourism marketing and management, allocating dollars to marketing initiatives, infrastructure improvements, and support for local destinations and tourism businesses. In collaboration with industry rights holders, Travel Alberta works to foster a welcoming and attractive destination for domestic and international visitors. They hold the purse strings for major funding opportunities available to tourism communities within the province. Beyond Travel Alberta and the Ministry of Tourism & Sport, many other ministries lead policy and decision-making that influences and/or impacts the tourism sector and experience, such as the use of Parks and Recreational land, the development of provincial transportation systems, and even regulatory frameworks.

Visitors

Visitor behaviours and decisions direct the impact tourism has on a community—environmentally, economically and socially. Their in-destination spending affects job creation, local business growth and the overall economic well-being of the community. Additionally, visitors' choices regarding transportation and accommodation have a significant environmental impact, affecting issues such as carbon emissions, waste generation and natural resource utilization. Their interactions with the community shape the social fabric of the area, fostering cultural exchange and understanding, though also potentially causing cultural or social disruptions where tourism is not managed effectively.

2.3 PERSPECTIVES FROM THE GROUND: **KEY INSIGHTS & TAKEAWAYS**

This DLMP is informed and motivated by the community in and around Sylvan Lake, as well as past and prospective guests. As a community-focused plan, being aware of what was gathered through engagement is critical to understanding the direction presented herein.

The following pages summarize the ideas, themes and concerns gathered from people participating in engagement activities ("participants") throughout the DLMP development process. Within this section, "participant groups" include: residents, business owners, commercial property owners, Town team members, Council, tourism representatives from Central Alberta and the province, and finally, past & prospective visitors. Note that references to findings from any specific group represent key themes identified, and do not necessarily reflect the views of all people in any given group.

Fraught With Frustration

There is an overall negative sentiment from residents towards tourism and visitors. Some acknowledge and anticipate the challenges that come with living in a tourism destination but appreciate the positive economic impact, while others have an exclusively pessimistic view. The general sense is that visitors come to the beach with everything they need—including food, games, etc.—so they do not spend money at local retailers, restaurants or experience providers. As such, residents cannot see the tangible contributions from visitation to their community's well-being. Lacking a clear understanding—or proof—of the potential benefits of tourism, residents express frustration at this perceived lack of visitor expenditure, as they observe their tax dollars being allocated to attending to visitor-created costs including excess garbage and additional safety monitoring, instead of investments into the community. Further, residents express concerns about visitors' lack of respect, care and contribution to the community. Various participants suggest that these frustrations are addressed through new policies and introducing visitor-specific fees.

> It shouldn't be on residents to foot the bill for tourism when we can't even enjoy our tourist town.
>
> *- From local resident*

Lake is Life

Participants resoundingly recognize that the lake itself is a core differentiator for Sylvan Lake and one of the town's key assets, for both residents and for visitors. The insights consider that the lake and lakefront are central to many local events, and lend to unique recreational activities not widely available otherwise in Alberta. Insight collected confirms that the lake is a primary draw for visitors who see the town as a beach destination and look to it for recreational activities such as kayaking, paddle boarding and fishing, among others. Residents recognize the lake's social, cultural, economic and environmental importance, and as such, feel a need to protect it.

> We moved to Sylvan Lake for the lake. As a kid growing up in Edmonton, we came to Sylvan lots in the summer times. And so it had great memories for me.
>
> *- From local resident & business owner*

The Beach For All

Residents and visitor groups say that the town's primary sand beach is narrow, and there is limited space for people to comfortably enjoy it. While visitors shared similar insight, residents were particularly vocal about how the beach and surrounding greenspace become crowded due to structural set-ups and cooking devices such as big tents and barbecue grills, which impede the enjoyment of other users.

Crowding is a deterrent for residents, who generally said they avoid the beach area during peak days and times from July to August—or leave town altogether—due to the high volume of visitors.

Insight from locals shows that litter is a major concern in the beach area and that there are regularly rowdy and intoxicated patrons throughout the downtown area, which also deter residents from going out at certain times of the year. As such, there is a desire for new approaches to enforcement and visitor management.

> If I want to spend time with my kids at the lake, I have to do it during weekdays, because weekends are too busy.
>
> *- From local resident & business owner*

Looking Beyond the Beach

Local business leaders share that, beyond the waterfront and beach areas, there is a lack of awareness and visibility for what visitors can do in Sylvan Lake. Others, especially residents, say that there are limited things to do in Sylvan outside of the beach and local events.

Additionally, some pointed to a tension between businesses in the downtown core and those further afield, as those beyond the downtown core do not see the same visitor traffic, nor the same attention from Town initiatives. Participants see an opportunity for the development of experiences, amenities and attractions that encourage visitors to venture beyond the beach and Lakeshore Drive.

> Right now, people think of tourism as just down by the lake. And I think that we're missing an opportunity to shuttle visitors around to some of the other businesses and we could potentially attract more businesses related to tourism.
>
> *- From local business owner*

"Out With The Bad"

There were no calls for sweeping changes—no demands for complete face lifts or major new additions—but rather, there was a vision for a more refined and elevated version of what the town is now. "Out with the bad" was a common comment – the overcrowding in public spaces, the littering, the rowdy and intoxicated party goers, and "keep the good" – the people, the lake, the festivals and events, the recreational opportunities, and the entrepreneurial spirit.

Operationalize the 'Vibe'

Residents and business owners say that Sylvan Lake has a "vibe" that they associate with major tourism destinations, and see the potential for Sylvan Lake to embody the energy and essence they know from hubs like Kelowna and Banff. Insight from Town participants pointed to an opportunity to implement the 2022 Destination Positioning Strategy, which identifies the "lake town vibe" as the primary emotional component of the unique sense of place, comprised of small-town feel, casual ease, inviting friendliness, simple socializing, plenty of recreational opportunities, and ongoing excitement.

> There's a vibe starting to come around but I think to fill some of those spaces with some of that, downtown needs to be elevated from what's there now, like in Banff or Canmore—bars, shopping, Beavertails, coffee shops.
>
> *- From local resident and business owner*

Animating the Core

Participants from all groups share concerns over the aesthetics and upkeep of Sylvan Lake's downtown, and a desire to beautify, activate and animate the downtown beyond the busy summer waterfront. Some identify a need for more beautification incentives, while others point to ongoing entertainment such as buskers, as a solution.

> It would be a huge accomplishment to have our downtown core as a place where businesses could be successful 12 months of the year. The commercial development of the east side of town has hurt the downtown core.
>
> *- From local resident*

Sharing the Sylvan Story

There is an overall positive view of Visit Sylvan Lake's marketing efforts, particularly on social media. Business owners point to how VSL is constantly sharing content about how people can or are using the town, and say that they would like to see more opportunities to be included in these marketing initiatives. Residents agree that more personal storytelling and sharing perspectives of people from the community would benefit VSL's online channels. Some residents point to a need to diversify marketing platforms upon which the Town relies, noting that "not everyone has social media."

More Than a Party Place

Local business owners express concern over legacy perceptions of Sylvan Lake as a summertime party town, which they fear hinders the town's appeal to new audiences. Various participant groups say that promoting the accessibility and diversity of activities within the town would help to shift perception amongst prospective visitors, and lead to greater economic impact. Simultaneously, other participants say that Sylvan Lake remains a destination for party-goers. They feel that the prevalence of bars and restaurants along Lakeshore Drive perpetuates rowdy behaviour and public intoxication, which ultimately impacts their feeling of safety in the downtown in the summer months.

> I think for a lot of (local) people, it goes back to this: They've got this beautiful, picturesque town, and they get swarmed on their weekends, and they can't get parking because someone's blocked their driveway, and they go down to the beach, and there are massive tents (there). It becomes this big party town.
>
> *- From local resident and business owner*

Create Trail Connections and Pedestrian Flow

Sylvan Lake is home to a substantial network of trails, however—as was similarly noted in the Town's Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan—participants identified that trails are not well marked. There is a desire for increased connections and additional foot and cycling traffic along trails and paths downtown. Additionally, there is a sense that creating enhanced connections also supports visitor flow throughout the town, helping to alleviate traffic congestion and parking challenges while equitably disbursing the benefits of visitor spending beyond lakefront businesses. Some participants noted a gap in accessibility, particularly to the lake, lakefront and trails, for people with disabilities.

> Sylvan has many great parks and trails, however, they are not all connected. Ensuring adequate trails/sidewalks/bike paths in new and existing developments would be great.
>
> *- From local resident*

Downtown Upkeep & Access to Space

Participants see an opportunity to enhance the quality of retail options in the downtown area, improve the tenant mix, and integrate niche experiences along 50 St. and Lakeshore Dr. Local entrepreneurs say that limited commercial spaces available in the downtown area drive up both demand and prices, creating affordability challenges. Participants from various groups say there is monopolistic infrastructure ownership, relating this to the challenge. A consistent area of frustration is the issue of derelict or deteriorating commercial buildings, and the apparent lack of interest from property owners to invest in the upkeep and beautification of their buildings. Business owners say they cannot justify allocating funds to doing the work themselves, given that they are renting.

There is an appreciation for the Town's beautification efforts, such as seasonal decorating, to mitigate this greater challenge.

> Aesthetically, because these (properties) are all privately-owned buildings, it would be really nice if we could have a theme (that) we all agree on. But I know the owner of our building is not going to spend money to upgrade the outside to make it more attractive, and we certainly wouldn't do it. The Town is helping facilitate (the beautification), which does make a difference for storefronts down here.
>
> *- From local business owner*

Events Benefit Residents and Visitors

The Town's regular events are valued by residents and visitors alike. In fact, survey respondents who identify as "Past or prospective visitors" reference local events as a key attraction. Participants acknowledge and praise the Town's work in developing and hosting events.

Residents share that they look forward to the events—particularly those that take place through the winter—and feel connected to their community through event activities. Many residents feel that events enhance local quality of life, and are a contributing factor to the appeal of Sylvan Lake as a place to live.

Municipal administration says that events often require large investments of time and money and that return on investment needs to be measured through the resulting economic impact on the community. Though the significant value in the social capital of these expenditures is appreciated, there is an understanding that financial impacts are important to consider.

> The Dragon Boat event: this is what people are looking for—things that are authentic to place and authentic to the culture of the community. If you've got something that people identify with, they will come. You can build on experiences like that.
>
> *- Sylvan Lake visitor and provincial tourism expert*

Desire for Outdoor Activities

Beyond infrastructure considerations, the Sylvan Lake community sees an opportunity to better position the town's natural outdoor assets—including the lake, trails and parks—as beneficial attractions for locals and visitors. Residents and Town representatives express the need for more visibility and usability of trails, suggesting improvements in signage and connecting trail experiences within the town with those in the surrounding area. Participants also highlight the significant potential to leverage the lake and other outdoor community assets, to create a more diverse range of outdoor experiences.

> There are a lot of opportunities that could be all about the great outdoors.
>
> *- From local resident and business owner*

Magnify Arts and Culture

Many participants point to their excitement about an expanding, volunteer-led theatre scene in the town, and suggest there is a need for greater investment in local art in all its forms—performance, music, visual, etc.—and culture development. Ideas include investing in local musicians and performers for a summer concert series.

Additionally, participants suggest that the existing murals and other public art exhibits are appreciated. There is a desire to see art installations expanded more broadly throughout the town, evolving from "a mural" to "an experience," with more interactivity and engagement.

Participants concur that prioritizing investment in the development of local art, creativity and cultural endeavours across the entire town will generate opportunities to prominently feature artists, and cultural & creative entrepreneurs.

> Theatre is growing in Sylvan Lake which is very enriching for a culturally-growing town. We need further support for the arts and entertainment, to attract the money-spending kind of tourists. More annual events like Jazz at the Lake, dinner theatre, plays and big musical events would attract crowds who would come for the whole package: sun, fun and culture.
>
> *- From local resident*

Tourism Development Relies on Community Development

The Town's departments recognize the importance of integrating tourism into community development strategies, acknowledging the correlation between the two. There is a shared intention to foster synergies to achieve greater community impact. Residents speak to the same desire, echoing that tourism should yield direct benefits for the community as a whole, such as creating jobs and business opportunities, improving and enhancing the town's infrastructure and public spaces, preserving the small town vibe and the conservation of the lake itself.

> (One priority is) doing tourism for the community, as opposed to for tourists.
>
> *- From local resident*

Embrace Indigenous Ways of Thinking and Doing

Indigenous tourism leaders locally and from the provincial level say that Sylvan Lake is an ideal place for nature-based Indigenous tourism experiences. They say the lake and surrounding greenspace lend to land-based or water-based learning, recreational activities, ceremonies, guided walks and other recreational activities, all of which directly connect to Indigenous teachings and worldviews.

Participants from across the community frequently reference the work of Powwow Times, a local Indigenous-owned business bringing Indigenous experiences to the forefront of Sylvan Lake's culture and tourism offerings. There is a recognition that the limited number of operators and their individual capacity are a constraint to the availability of Indigenous tourism experiences in town. Overall, it is evident from local and regional tourism entrepreneurs, as well as residents, that there is an appetite for more Indigenous practices, traditions, culture and teachings to be represented through means beyond events and activities, such as through public art, interpretive signage, and greater experience development.

> There are stories through this area that are not being told, and also people that were here before Sylvan Lake was a town. And we explained that to Town Council...Definitely, there's an opportunity there for teaching and learning, and for tourism as well.
>
> *- From local resident*

Go Grassroots

Local businesses and residents express a desire to collaborate in the development of tourism initiatives. Some identify an opportunity to empower community members to take initiative in implementing changes in their community, without municipal support or funding. Ideas shared through engagement included pop-ups, business partnerships and collaborations, wayfinding and more. Collaboration among community rights holders to develop and test out ideas related to improving their lives through tourism is a highlight. Participants identify a lack of consistent capacity-building programs as a barrier to developing leadership skills and support programs aimed at developing leadership skills and support programs to incubate grassroots initiatives.

> A lot of people come and stay on the beach but don't spend money. You need to have things that are close by that people will spend money on. Decide: What is the niche going to be downtown? What are we going to have here?
>
> *- From neighbouring community tourism representative*

Summer Village Interactions With Sylvan Lake

Summer Village residents feel overlooked and undervalued in Sylvan Lake. One major concern is the difficulty in finding a parking spot, and when they do, they have to pay for it. Though the money itself is not the issue, they see it as a clear message: "You are not one of us." These frustrations influence their spending habits, with many choosing instead to take their business to nearby towns where parking is less of a hassle. Participants see closer collaboration with and appeal to the Summer Villages as an opportunity to transform this challenge into a boon for local businesses, opening them up to a pool of customers who are "low-hanging fruit." They suggest diversifying access to downtown areas, such as introducing public docks and shuttle buses. Another idea is for the Town to extend free parking privileges to Summer Village residents to encourage spending in the town.

Bridge Gaps in Communication and Collaboration

Local entrepreneurs share that there are gaps in communication and collaboration between businesses, the municipality and other organizations. They suggest bridging these divides through fostering and facilitating open dialogue, to understand and address the needs of businesses, residents and visitors. One idea shared is including a cross-section of business owners, residents and industry workers in a collective problem-solving conversation to discuss balancing the development of the visitor experience with protecting the local quality of life.

> (The Town) would just send out general e-mails (to share opportunities). Well, that always costs business people money and time, so sometimes maybe you need a little bit more push—whether that's a direct e-mail or a call or something like that. If something doesn't look like it's specific to me, then I might skip over it. If it's something from the Town that's just generalized, I might not go as in-depth with that.
>
> *- From local business owner*

Local Vendor Visibility, Policy and Challenges

Local business owners share their frustrations with the Third Party Signage Bylaw which, they feel, restricts their ability to promote their services in popular visitor areas like the beach and along Lakeshore Drive. While there is an understanding of the need to manage and limit signage to prevent visual clutter, business owners see the potential for signage to enhance the visitor experience and spending, by directing them to things to do and see in town. Some business owners have ideas, such as installing a large visitor experience map that highlights local vendors, operations and activities. Other suggestions involve designated billboards or pop-ups that align with Sylvan Lake's brand, offering local businesses a platform to introduce their services to passers-by.

We could make a huge map at a key location that lists all the restaurants, all the activities and all the parks in town. There are huge spaces on those bathroom walls, where you could put up a map with attractions in town. I think it would help the businesses.

- From local business owner

Market Readiness Support

While there is an opportunity to expand and develop visitor- and resident-friendly tourism products and experiences, local business owners say there is a need for market readiness support for existing tourism products, experiences, amenities and attractions. Specifically, participants suggest that small businesses would benefit from initiatives that develop their understanding of, and capacity for, product and experience development. While some small business owners acknowledge the value of collaborating with their peers in the area for these reasons, participants see it as the Town's responsibility to facilitate these connections. Others are reluctant to collaborate with neighbouring businesses, often citing capacity constraints as a limitation to pursuing and effectively building partnerships.

Visions For Mutual Support

There are expressions of desire from downtown and non-downtown business owners in Sylvan Lake for increased local support. These entrepreneurs highlight a yearning for enhanced recognition and appreciation for their niche products and services from the community. They would like local residents to choose local small businesses, valuing the distinct offerings and personal connections they provide. They expressed that this support is especially crucial during the shoulder seasons, when business from visitors typically slows down. Business owners reveal hope for a shift in consumer behaviour—moving away from the convenience of large chain stores to a more community-centric approach, where buying local for everyday needs becomes the norm.

What I would like to see is somehow that the Town promotes main street's small business and small business throughout the town, encouraging people within Sylvan Lake to support the people that are supporting them.

- From local business owner

Labour Challenges Vary

While not without some challenges, labour was not identified as a major problem at present for Sylvan tourism businesses. Business owners have varying perspectives, with about half saying it is "easy" or "somewhat easy" to find employees, while the other half say it is "somewhat" or "very difficult." Of business owners who participated in the survey, 50 per cent say that they see seasonal fluctuations in the number of staff required throughout the year, while the other 50 per cent say they have roughly the same number of staff. Specific labour-related challenges identified include difficulty finding and retaining reliable employees, and high wage expectations.

Guiding Visitors

There is a strong desire amongst participants for more maps, brochures and content to help visitors plan their visit to Sylvan Lake before they arrive and while they're in the destination. While Visit Sylvan Lake's website and social media are considered strong assets—as are the Visitors' Guide printed annually by Sylvan Lake News and the Chamber of Commerce map distributed through local restaurants, retailers and accommodations—many said it remains challenging to find simple yet comprehensive resources about what to see, do and experience throughout the town. Some note that this gap especially impacts businesses located away from the downtown area in particular, which cannot rely on foot traffic for business. One criticism shared repeatedly is how visitor information services are available through the NexSource Centre. Participants suggest that a lakefront location would be more logical and impactful where the connection can help facilitate beachfront visitors to local businesses and attractions.

> People come, set up on the beach, barbeque, don't spend money and leave garbage. How does that benefit the town?
>
> *- From local business owner*

Managing Visitor Flow

One of the most frequently recurring themes discussed by participants is parking, specifically as it relates to the downtown core during the summer months. Residents and visitors say that finding a place to park and navigating through traffic in the downtown area is a challenge. They say that visitors will park in non-parking areas, sometimes infringing on private property and blocking driveways. However, participants see opportunities for creative solutions to address the issue. One recurring suggestion is for a shuttle bus to connect motorists from nearby parking lots to the downtown area. Another is further increasing pay parking rates for visitors.

Another idea that emerged in relation to the parking challenge—and was also identified as a need of its own—is for the Town to establish a public boat dock. Some business owners believe this would provide boat owners with an alternative way to access the downtown and lakefront areas. They say that the creation of such an asset would cater to those with boats who live around the lake, and enhance accessibility to Sylvan Lake's downtown core, potentially easing parking pressures.

> A parking lot with shuttle service to the water would have retained the beauty of the waterfront, kept noise contained and still retained the atmosphere for tourists, without the wall of cars and motorcycles ruining things!
>
> *- From local resident*

Aim For Visitor Diversity

We heard the call to prioritize attracting a more diverse range of visitors with the means to spend more money while in town. Participants recognize that attracting new visitors requires collaboration, and the development of new experiences and accommodations. There were calls to take better advantage of the range of parks, recreation and sport facilities throughout the town (existing and emerging) to diversify the market.

Enhanced Places to Stay

Participants from various groups identify a gap in local accommodations that meet a certain service standard, despite a growing number of short-term rentals (STR), RV sites and campground capacity. Community members and local tourism entrepreneurs suggest a reimagining of the current motel properties—such as having unique and "Instagrammable" interior and exterior design, spa services, and swimming pools complete with swim-up bars. While acknowledging a lack of overnight visitation, residents, visitors and local tourism entrepreneurs say this is less about capacity and more about the desirability of current accommodation options.

Lack of Organizational Capacity

Town representatives and other interested parties say that the Municipality does not have the human resource capacity to initiate larger tourism development conversations beyond what is currently happening, nor to explore and activate the various levels of collaboration (i.e., with residents, entrepreneurs, regional partners, etc). This leaves a number of ideas on the table, without the people and financial backing to action them.

> We have opportunities to become an actual tourist destination if we do things right. That means accommodations, resorts, and that sort of thing, so we are seeing more tourists, and fewer people coming on day excursions.
>
> *- From local resident*

Foster Regional Ties

Local entrepreneurs, regional tourism partners and Town representatives say there is an opportunity to expand Sylvan Lake's tourism narrative by considering regional experiences, through collaboration and by positioning the town as a regional hub. Sylvan Lake's location within Central Alberta is frequently identified as an asset; there is a recognition that its tourism appeal would be strengthened or complemented by destinations and experiences within Lacombe and Red Deer Counties. Residents regularly express a desire for more connections to the region more broadly. Tourism representatives from neighbouring communities share the enthusiasm around fostering a regional tourism narrative, however, say a lack of staff capacity limits the realistic potential of this approach.

> When it comes to developing tourism collaboratively, we're talking about organizational capacity. First of all, do you have the team to put the boots on the ground? And there's a strong gap in communication between businesses and municipalities.
>
> *- From regional tourism representative*

Data-Informed Decision Making

There is an absence of hard data on the economic impact of tourism on the community, which has raised concerns about the cost of visitation versus the benefits. The perceived limited economic contribution of visitors to the town and lack of relevant and clear indicators to measure costs and benefits have resulted in a perception that the Town's tourism priorities are primarily marketing-oriented, causing potential contributions to broader community development to be overlooked and under-realized.

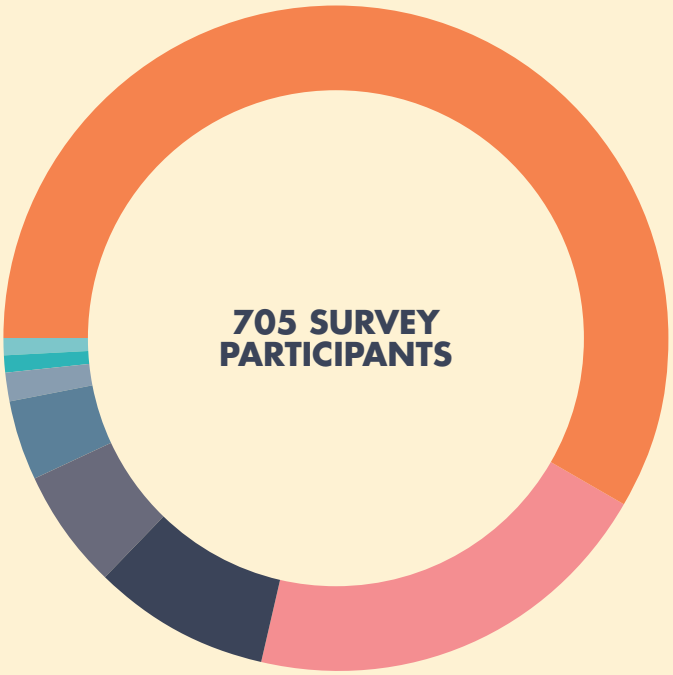
Targeting the Meetings Industry

Participants perceive Sylvan Lake as an ideal place for meetings and conferences; there is a sense that Sylvan is ideally situated to host corporate events and weddings, particularly given its proximity to both Calgary and Edmonton. However, there are reservations about the idea from various participants, given the lack of success similar sites are seeing in nearby communities at filling large-scale infrastructure consistently throughout the year.

LOOKING AT THE DATA

What does survey data collected in the DLMP development process say about the local tourism sector? Here's a snapshot of the insights gleaned!

THERE WERE A TOTAL OF 705 SURVEY PARTICIPANTS, WHO IDENTIFIED AS:

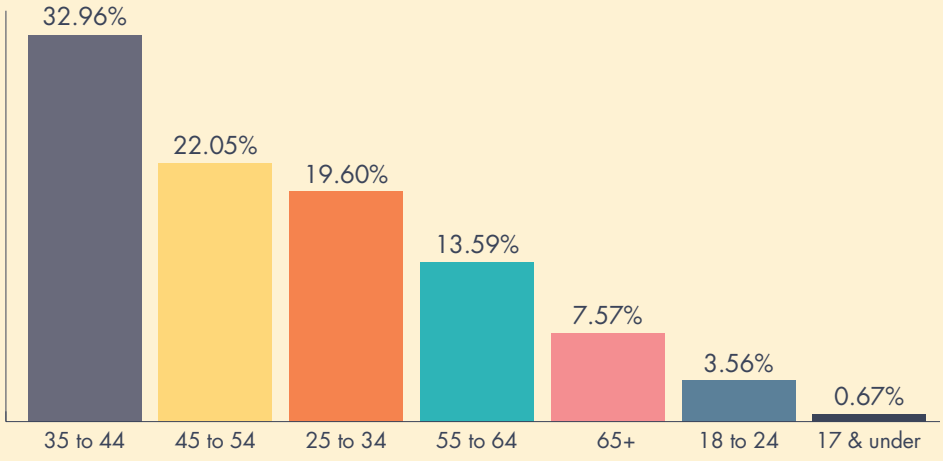


Full-time Sylvan Lake residents	58.44%
Past or prospective visitors	20.28%
Seasonal Sylvan Lake residents	8.65%
People who live near Sylvan, but not in Town	5.8%
Sylvan Lake business owner	3.97%
People who work in Sylvan Lake, but live elsewhere	1.28%
Owner of land or commercial space in Sylvan Lake	0.85%
Nearby business owners	0.71%

TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME BEFORE TAX

$150,000 or more	22.49%
$100,000 – $149,999	19.38%
$75,000 – $99,999	12.03%
$50,000 – $74,999	9.13%
$25,000 – $49,999	5.79%
0 – $24,999	3.12%

SURVEY RESPONDENTS AGES RANGE

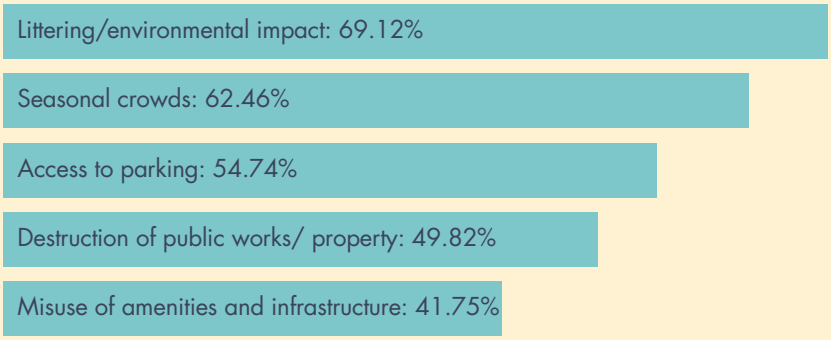


Sylvan Lake residents say...

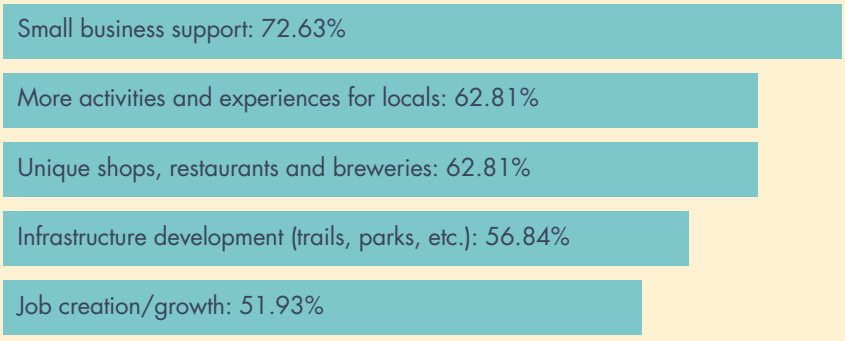
THE TOWN IS A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE,

83.16%	ACCESS TO THE LAKE
77.89%	SMALL TOWN VIBE
57.19%	LOCATION
49.12%	COMMUNITY SERVICES
46.67%	PUBLIC SPACES
42.11%	FAMILY-FRIENDLINESS
28.07%	STANDARD OF LIVING
17.89%	COST OF LIVING
11.23%	OTHER
9.12%	WORK/CAREER OPPORTUNITIES
4.56%	BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES



THE TOWN CAN BENEFIT FROM



THE TOP THREE PRIORITIES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED ON A MUNICIPAL LEVEL

1. **TOURISM MANAGEMENT AND IMPACT**
2. **COMMUNITY SAFETY AND POLICING**
3. **ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS AND CLEANLINESS**

WHERE RESIDENTS WHO ARE CURRENTLY WORKING IN TOURISM ARE EMPLOYED

40% Food and Beverage
restaurants, fast food, pubs, bars, snack shops

20% Accommodation
hotels, motels, B&Bs, camp areas

20% Recreation and Entertainment
performing art, museums, parks, spectator sports, festivals/events, attractions

13.33% Retail
stores selling merchandise, clothing, souvenirs

13.33% Travel Services
provisions of travel arrangements and/or reservations, group/guided tours, destination marketing

WOULD LIKE TO SEE DOWNTOWN SYLVAN LAKE ENHANCED WITH

- Pedestrian-friendly areas
- Improved traffic & parking measures
- Supports for local businesses
- Better waste management (garbage, recycling)
- Renewed building appearance
- More greenery

Sylvan Lake business owners say...

The untapped business opportunities for Sylvan Lake's downtown are:

- Hosting destination events, such as weddings and sports tournaments.
- Providing small buses for transportation to tourist attractions and other urban centres.
- Offering bike, scooter or e-scooter rentals.
- Developing a great shopping district and events space.
- Offering various tours around the town and Central Alberta.
- Encouraging healthy and active lifestyles and promoting fresh food options.
- Adding water slides and equipment rentals for activities near the beach.
- Providing incentives for property owners to develop innovative uses for empty and under-used spaces.
- Encouraging and supporting diverse locally-owned businesses, instead of chains.
- Emphasizing the use of local ingredients to reduce reliance on imports.
- Increasing accessible live music and organizing events for young people.
- Adding residential density in the downtown core.
- Extending operational hours for businesses during busy times.

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES THAT BUSINESSES WILL FACE (2023)

66.67%
Increasing operational costs
wages, food costs, training, insurance

37.50%
Labour Issues
recruitment, retention, high pay expectations, skills mismatch

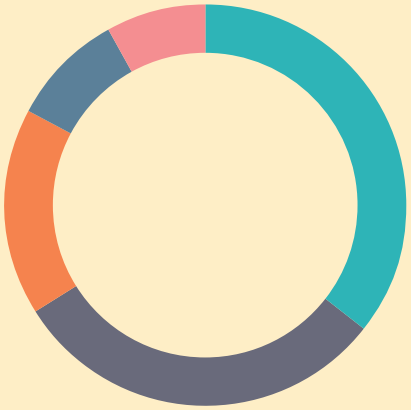
29.17%
Weak economic conditions in Canada

25%
Supply chain constraints

16.67%
Cost of travel
airfares, gas prices, room rates

Past and prospective visitors to Sylvan Lake say....

WHEN VISITING A BEACH DESTINATION IN ALBERTA OR B.C., THE MAJORITY OF THEIR TRAVEL BUDGET IS PLANNED FOR:



70.39% Food and drink
59.87% Hotels or short-term rentals
32.89% Shops and boutiques
17.76% Rentals and equipment
15.79% Transportation

FOR A WEEKEND GETAWAY, THEY HAVE AN AVERAGE TRAVEL BUDGET OF:

$0 TO $499
44.08%

$500 TO $999
43.42%

$1,000 TO $2,499
11.18%

$2,500 OR MORE
1.32%

THE EXISTING EXPERIENCES AND AMENITIES THAT INSPIRE VISITORS TO PLAN OVERNIGHT VISITS WITHIN ALBERTA ARE:

- Beach: 79.61%
- Lake activity (boating, fishing): 64.47%
- Unique experiences (brewery tour, culinary activity): 51.97%
- Trail system: 48.03%
- One-of-a-kind shops and boutiques: 46.05%

DECIDING FACTORS FOR WEEKEND EXPERIENCES DURING THE SPRING, FALL AND WINTER INCLUDE:

- Outdoor activities: 76.32%
- Special events: 51.97%
- Foodie experiences: 44.08%
- Unique experiences (brewery tour, culinary activity): 41.45%
- One-of-a-kind shops and boutiques: 36.18%

THE TRAITS AND ATTRACTIONS THAT VISITORS ENJOY THE MOST ABOUT THE TOWN ARE:

- The beach
- The lake
- Lakeside walking trail
- The vacation ambiance
- The unique restaurants and shops
- Their family ties
- The local events and festivals

THE OPPORTUNITIES THEY SEE FOR IMPROVEMENT ARE:

- ADDITIONAL ARTS AND MUSIC EVENTS AND FESTIVALS
- EXPANDED AND MORE ACCESSIBLE BEACH
- DAY RENTALS FOR ACTIVITIES
- BETTER PARKING MANAGEMENT
- MORE UNIQUE HOSPITALITY OPTIONS
- A BAN ON TENTS AND BARBECUES ON THE BEACH

Section 3:

The Present State

3.1 **OVERVIEW**

GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Sylvan Lake is a growing lakeside community with a population of more than 16,000 people. The town is located in Central Alberta between Calgary (155 kilometres south) and Edmonton (163 kilometres north), and is 20 minutes from Red Deer (24 kilometres east).

With easy access via Alberta's highway system and numerous gateways into town, Sylvan Lake has long been a favourite destination for nearby Albertans, especially in the summer months. As the only lakeside urban centre in the province, it offers a unique value proposition.

Sylvan Lake is a core player in the Central Alberta tourism ecosystem. It is a member of the Central Alberta Tourism Alliance and falls within Travel Alberta's "Olds to Lacombe Tourism Development Zone (TDZ)."

ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Key tourism indicators for the Province of Alberta, with the exception of visitor expenditures,* recovered to 2019 levels in 2022.

Sixty percent of visitation and 75 percent of tourism expenditures occurred in the province's most popular destinations, including Banff, Lake Louise, Canmore, Jasper, Calgary and Edmonton. Tourism's economic impact on the province stood at $8.6 billion in GDP, representing 94,000 jobs and $1.15 billion in tax revenue.[20]

More local data is necessary to know Sylvan Lake's exact figures and the measure of municipal revenue and local economic impact generated directly and indirectly from visitation. The Town's paid parking program, which falls under the Parks and Protective Services department, is its greatest revenue generator linked directly to tourism. Parking fees generated more than $500,000 in 2023. Estimates related to aggregate spending of its 800,000 annual out-of-town visitors and other tourism-related expenditures suggest an economic impact of about $27.2 million.

** Visitor expenditures were higher due to slight inflationary pressures likely resulting in expenditures returning to previous levels.*

TOURISM INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

Sylvan Lake's business sector includes 39 enterprises in the accommodation and food services sector (not including short-term rentals), 69 in the retail sector, and 10 in the recreation and entertainment/"information and cultural industry," according to Statistics Canada.

There are five midscale or independent hotels and motels with an estimated total of 214 rooms.[21] Additionally, AirDNA data shows 219 active short-term rental listings as of September 2024.[22] More accommodation types open in the summer months, with 388 sites available at local campgrounds.[23] There are three RV parks in Sylvan Lake and the Jarvis Bay Campground, and more campsites will be added to the local inventory at Pogadl Park Campground when development is complete. Average summer occupancy rates are between 80-85 per cent in hotels and campgrounds[24] and 72 per cent in short-term accommodation rentals.[25] From an informal visual audit, one can gather that Sylvan Lake's short-term accommodation rental (STAR) inventory is a major tourism asset, as the design and aesthetics represent some of the best consistent quality in the province. Short-term rentals provide additional accommodation options to visitors during peak visitor periods (i.e., summer, events), over and above the hotel inventory, thereby retaining economic impact locally.

Zooming out to look at the broader Central Alberta region, there are 78 properties and 4,656 rooms in total, encompassing hotels, motels, cabins, lodges and cottages.[26]

Young workers and new immigrants represent a large portion of the local tourism labour force. Many of the tourism jobs in Sylvan Lake are part-time or seasonal employment opportunities, which these groups are more willing to accept.

VISITOR PROFILES

Recent data shows that in 2023, domestic arrivals include approximately 7.9 million to Calgary, 6.7 million to Edmonton, and 9.6 million to Central Alberta. The majority of visitors to these destinations were from within the province of Alberta. For Central Alberta specifically (which includes Sylvan Lake), that number is 89 per cent.[27] The most recent visitor statistics available from a regional perspective are presented in the Olds to Lacombe: Travel Alberta Tourism Development Zone Discovery Report. The Report shows that visitors are largely domestic, with the majority of travellers coming from nearby Calgary (17.8 per cent), Edmonton (14.1 per cent), Olds (eight per cent), and Mountain View County (3.2 per cent).[28]

International visitors spend the longest time in the region, at an average of 36.7 hours. Visitors from the rest of Canada, U.S. visitors and Albertans have average lengths of stay between 28 and 30 hours.[29]

Travel Alberta has defined two target markets for the province, which they've dubbed the "Curious Adventurers" and "Hotspot Hunters." Curious Adventurers seek experiences that connect them with the landscapes, culture and people within the destinations they visit, while Hotspot Hunters chase trends and one-of-a-kind experiences.

As determined in Sylvan Lake's Destination Positioning Strategy, these two visitor profile types align with Sylvan Lake's current targets. Based on anecdotal evidence, there are a number of seasonal residents and people from Calgary, Edmonton and other nearby communities with second homes in Sylvan Lake, and the nearby Summer Villages.

The 2019 Domestic Tourism in Alberta Central Tourism Region 2019 Report shows that primary motivations for overnight visitors include visiting friends and family (45 per cent), pleasure (42 per cent), business (seven per cent), and "other" (six per cent). The top five activities include: visiting friends and relatives, dining out/going to a restaurant or bar, camping, shopping and sightseeing.[30] Based on anecdotal information gleaned from first-hand community engagement and observations, the beach and leisure opportunities, as well as major events, are the primary draws to Sylvan Lake.

As noted in the Olds to Lacombe: Travel Alberta Tourism Development Zone Discovery report (referring to the entire TDZ and not Sylvan Lake specifically): "Currently, a majority of Albertans and visitors travelling to and through the zone are stopping for a short break on their way between Edmonton & Calgary. Expanding the area's tourism product offerings in agritourism and outdoor recreation holds the potential to redefine this zone as a standalone destination for overnight visitors."[31]

TOURISM LEADERSHIP

At the time of writing this report, the Town of Sylvan Lake has one full-time position dedicated to tourism as the Tourism Marketing & Development Coordinator within the Recreation, Culture and Tourism department. Given the scope of responsibilities shouldered by one full-time team member, their role is dedicated to maintenance-oriented activities, with limited capacity for development growth activities. More broadly, the department includes events, culture, and three levels of management personnel who share responsibility for tourism, among other priority areas.

There is a general understanding throughout the administration regarding the intersecting impacts various departments have on the local tourism experience. However, there are no processes or structures in place to foster collaboration in tourism-oriented decision-making.

TOURISM PRODUCT & EXPERIENCES

With natural competitive advantages such as its central location, diversity of landscapes, natural settings and potential for strong regional connections, Sylvan Lake is ideally situated to develop experiential tourism themes around its natural assets.

As identified in the 2015 Central Alberta Destination Management Plan, the Region offers a diverse range of tourism experiences, falling within the following categories:

- Nature, adventure and ecotourism

[DEFINE]

VISITOR PROFILES

Curious Adventurers immerse themselves in the places they travel – leaving time for unplanned encounters and activities that allow them to truly know a destination. For Curious Adventurers, travel is about getting a different perspective on the world. They're energized by exploring new places and inspired to learn all they can about a destination through its landscapes, authentic culture and the people they meet. Spontaneous and open-minded, they're fueled by a sense of adventure and discovery, knowing that organic moments can provide their best experiences. They are thoughtful planners, investing time before their trip to help forge deeper connections with a place.

Hotspot Hunters live for travel – these excited, passionate travellers want to see it all, do it all and collect the stories to prove it. For Hotspot Hunters, travel is about achievement and accomplishment. They want to visit the top attractions, take part in one-of-a-kind experiences and connect with local experts. They're driven to make the most of every minute, to fill their trips with as many stories and memories as possible – and they plan accordingly, leaving little to chance and deprioritizing sleep.

- Agritourism and culinary tourism
- Cultural, heritage and arts tourism
- Indigenous tourism
- Festivals, events & sports tourism
- Business events

An asset inventory conducted in The Olds to Lacombe TDZ Report identified more than 226 tourism-related assets. As stated by Travel Alberta, products and experiences primarily serve Albertans and regional visitors, and according to the 2023 report, "The zone's current lack of market-ready and export-ready businesses could limit its economic growth and impact its ability to attract tourists and investors."[32]

The same report discusses opportunities for product development in agritourism and outdoor recreation. Central Alberta Tourism Alliance (CATA) has also identified agritourism as a primary opportunity, having invested in a dedicated Central Alberta Agritourism Development Strategy in 2023. Among other action items, it calls for CATA to, "Provide tourism experience and package development training to existing and potential new agritourism operators."[33]

Sylvan Lake's tourism experiences are largely central to the lake, with leisure experiences and events & festivals as its primary attractions. As explored further within this DLMP, there is significant potential to expand and diversify within various product categories.

Private attractions include breweries, golf courses, a farmers' market, Artist's Alley, water- and land-based equipment rentals, and visitor-centric experiences such as Aquasplash, Lakeside Go-Karts & Mini-Golf, and Wood Shed Axe Throwing.

Section 6: Visitors and Experiences explores opportunities for developing Sylvan Lake's tourism products more in-depth.

[DEFINE]

SYLVAN LAKE'S **UNIQUE POSITIONING**

A combination of factors position Sylvan Lake to become the **gem of Central Alberta**, and a hub to neighbouring communities and experiences. These factors include:

- ideal location in the heart of the region
- the lake as a key natural attraction
- access to an urban centre, steps from the key natural attraction
- a healthy ecosystem
- direct connections to nature and outdoor experiences
- vibrant festivals and events

Considering any of these points singularly does not uniquely position Sylvan Lake for tourism success, though with the right leadership and management, the combined impact has the potential to establish Sylvan Lake as a hub for regional exploration within the next 10 years.

TOURISM TRENDS

As established and defined in Section 1: Setting the Stage, community-based tourism and regenerative tourism are a major shift in tourism best practices. Other influential tourism trends of the moment include:

Socially-conscious travel:
With expanding social consciousness, consumers are keen to make values-based decisions. Many people are eager to take part in community-based tourism initiatives that aim to empower local residents and address social challenges. They are increasingly looking for opportunities to make a positive impact on the destinations they visit, aligning their travel choices with their values of social responsibility and ethical tourism practices.

Experiences over things:
There is a noticeable shift in consumer behaviour towards valuing experiences over material possessions. Travellers are increasingly prioritizing spending on experiences such as cultural activities, adventure tours, great food and immersive local experiences over buying physical goods. This trend reflects a desire for meaningful and memorable experiences that create lasting memories and personal growth.

Tempering overtourism:
Major tourism destinations around the world are implementing measures to mitigate the negative impacts of overtourism and protect their essence and assets. Some key strategies include visitor caps, as have been introduced at Cinque Terre in Italy, and Boracay Island in the Philippines; tourism taxes and fees, as have been introduced in cities like Venice, Amsterdam and Barcelona; and imposing regulations or bans on short-term accommodations.

Outdoor and nature-based activities:
The demand for outdoor and nature-based activities is on the rise, with travellers seeking destinations that offer activities like hiking, biking, wildlife viewing and water sports. The primary motivations are a desire to connect with nature, environmental awareness and escaping urban life.

Bleisure:
A significant trend in business travel and tourism is the rise of "bleisure travellers," or those who combine business and leisure trips. This trend is expected to continue growing, offering opportunities for tailored services to meet these travellers' needs

Culinary experiences:
There is an ever-expanding interest in exploring local cuisines and food experiences, particularly, those that focus on any or all pieces of the journey of farm-to-fork. Destinations that offer unique culinary experiences, such as food tours, cooking classes, and farm-to-table dining, are attracting food enthusiasts.

Wellness:
Consumers are prioritizing health and well-being during their trips. This trend includes activities like spa retreats, yoga retreats, meditation sessions and wellness-focused accommodations. Wellness experiences appeal to those who prioritize a wellness-focused lifestyle, seek self-betterment, or simply need to disconnect and unwind.

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

Locally, the Sylvan Lake Chamber of Commerce, the Tourism Partnership Program (TPP) and the Tourism Development Committee of Council (TDC) are three key partner channels important for Sylvan Lake's tourism success. Unique local community organizations, like the Sylvan Lake Theatre, the Farmer's Market and Sylvan Lake Archives, among others, also play a key role.

Regionally, Tourism Red Deer and Lacombe Regional Tourism are Destination Management Organizations (DMO) in Central Alberta. Tourism Red Deer works with the City of Red Deer and Red Deer County under a fee-for-service agreement, aiming to become a major event destination among mid-sized cities in Canada. They focus on developing the destination and promoting tourism initiatives. Similarly, Lacombe Regional Tourism promotes attractions, culture and events in Lacombe City and surrounding small towns. Sylvan Lake is not currently a paying participant in either group, however, is a member of the Central Alberta Tourism Alliance (CATA). Other CATA members include Innisfail, Red Deer, Sylvan Lake, Blackfalds, Red Deer County, Lacombe County, Rocky Mountain House and Clearwater County.

Travel Alberta is the provincial body responsible for destination marketing, currently working to double the province's tourism economy by 2035 by "capitalizing on rural Alberta's untapped potential."[34] As noted, a recent initiative saw the establishment of Tourism Development Zones throughout the province, including the Olds to Lacombe Zone in which Sylvan Lake is located. This newly defined TDZ is being guided by a multi-destination steering committee of regional industry and government representatives, including Sylvan Lake. Travel Alberta supports destinations throughout the province with funding and capacity building through its Industry Hub. The Industry Hub includes tourism investment programs; free branding support and marketing tools such as the Alberta Tourism Information Service; and learning opportunities that are intended to foster innovation and incubation for tourism start-ups and growth for existing operators.

Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA) is another meaningful provincial partner for Sylvan Lake, particularly as the town embraces a responsible tourism framework. Leaning on the guidance and relationships of ITA, there is an opportunity for Sylvan Lake to enhance its Indigenous tourism product.

LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF TOURISM

There is an ever-present tension between Sylvan Lake residents and visitors—a sentiment shared the world over in major tourism centres. A resounding sentiment amongst residents is that tourism disrupts local quality of life, especially in the summer season when visitors take over the lakefront. Access to key assets, as well as public safety, are key concerns amongst locals. Business owners are seeking support in attracting these same visitors away from the beach and into their storefronts. Parking, traffic congestion, litter and public intoxication are all key challenges that arise, especially during the summer season. Through strategic engagement and collaboration, there is an opportunity for Sylvan Lake to channel this tension and sense of ownership into community-building initiatives that support the needs of locals and visitors alike.

Further, there is a consensus that the town is in need of strategic beautification efforts and harmonized aesthetics that embody the "lake town vibe." Sylvan Lake has an abundance of public spaces that are ripe with potential for activation and tourism product development.

From an organizational level, it is imperative for the administration to embrace tourism development as a leading investment that embodies economic development responsibilities, as well as events and culture, with support from other departments such as Planning and Public Works.

[EMPHASIS]

CONNECTING **THE DOTS**

The Destination Readiness Analysis is directly connected to the Ambition of the DLMP, as outlined in Section 1: Setting the Stage, as follows:

The Sylvan Lake DLMP is dedicated to harnessing tourism as a means of sustainable, equitable community development, enhancing Sylvan Lake as an inclusive place to live, work, create, invest and visit. The Plan places community collaboration, participation and leadership at its core, positioning tourism as a key local economy driver while preserving the town's distinctive local character and natural environment.

3.2 **DESTINATION ASSESSMENT**

SYLVAN LAKE READINESS:
SUMMARY OF DESTINATION READINESS ANALYSIS

To assess Sylvan Lake's readiness as a tourism destination, a comprehensive Destination Readiness Framework (DRF-SL) has been developed to delve into destination readiness with greater detail than typical assessments. The framework is a tool that supports Sylvan Lake through every stage and aspect of destination leadership and management (see Appendix A).

The DRF-SL outlines criteria for Sylvan Lake's tourism readiness across four levels: from primary/ essential readiness, conceptualized as the 'Local Host', growing to moderate readiness, conceptualized as the 'Regional Host', thriving into the 'Inter/intra-provincial Host' representing advanced readiness, and finally, to the 'Global Host', the ultimate level of destination readiness.

The criteria are uniquely tailored for Sylvan Lake's context, based on the key principles outlined in this plan (refer to Section 1: Setting the Stage - Strategic Pathway - Guiding Principles). Each level of readiness defines specific assets, resources, capacities and strengths that Sylvan Lake must cultivate to establish a sustainable community-centric visitor economy with the envisioned market reach.

Utilizing this tool, a detailed gaps & strength analysis has been conducted, analyzing and synthesizing comprehensive first-hand and second-hand data.

SYLVAN LAKE AS A **LOCAL HOST**

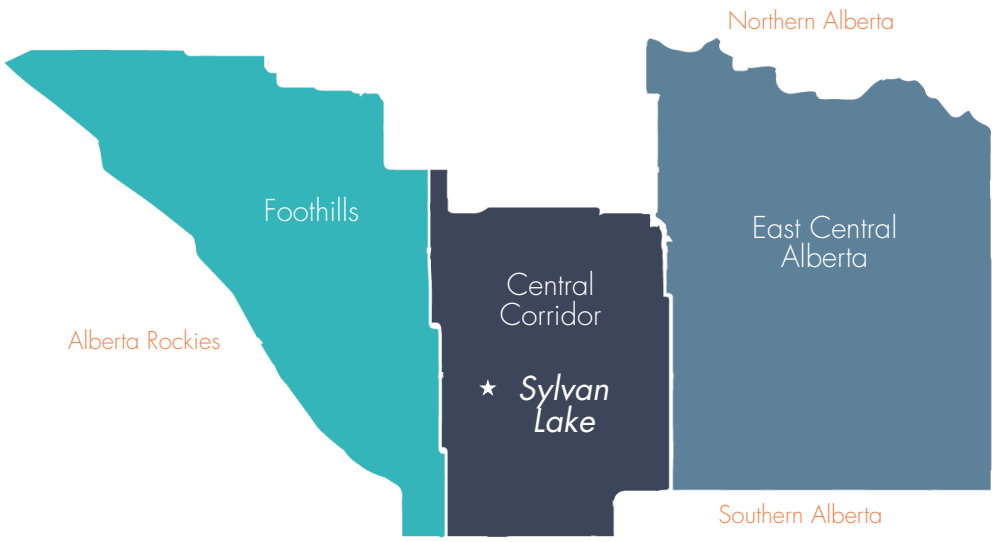
As a Local Host, Sylvan Lake should be fully prepared to engage and attract both visitors and local entrepreneurs from Sylvan Lake and the immediate vicinity, including those within day trip-reach across Alberta's Central Corridor and beyond (including Red Deer, Blackfalds, Bentley, Rimbey, Lacombe, and Innisfail).

To achieve this, Sylvan Lake exhibits robust infrastructure, positioning it competitively as a Local Host. However, the primary challenge lies in the scarcity of market-ready tourism products and visitor-related services that appeal across seasons, and in encapsulating the local lakeside town vibe year-round, thus hindering its potential to fully captivate the local visitor market. While iconic attractions like the lake and beach, coupled with seasonal events hosted by the Town, draw visitors for day trips, a significant gap exists in offerings that promote extended stays and economic benefits for local businesses, the Town and the community as a whole.

There is a gap in strong interest and buy-in for tourism from community rights holders, as well as in the capacities (organizational, capital, infrastructure, relational) necessary for attracting entrepreneurs from local communities and enhancing the local entrepreneurship ecosystem around tourism. A Local Host features a local vibe and identity, among other things. Sylvan Lake's lakefront area and downtown do present a local vibe, yet there is a marked need to amplify this distinctiveness by crafting a unique, small lakeside community atmosphere.

One key step for Sylvan Lake to excel as a premier Local Host in Central Alberta and become competitive in the region include developing market-ready products tailored for one-day trips and short visits across different seasons, with a focus on enhancing shoulder-season visits. Additionally, distinctive offerings, quality accommodations and other visitor-related services are necessary to make it a competitive getaway for weekends and longer stays. The Town's tourism leadership needs enhanced organizational capacity for visitor management, marketing, entrepreneurship support, and tourism product development and leadership. Existing infrastructure and assets, in particular the downtown and lakefront area, as well as existing recreational infrastructure, need to be leveraged to create unique opportunities for shoulder season visitation, mid-week stays, and an overall increased length of stay throughout the year.

Figure 4: Map, Central Corridor



EVOLVING TO A **REGIONAL HOST**

To become a Regional Host, Sylvan Lake faces additional challenges. This level of readiness demands the capacity to host high-quality, longer stays, which requires offering a variety of tourism experiences that keep tourists engaged and motivated to justify spending more in town, as well as prime visitor-related services. Essential to this are a variety of quality accommodations, a vibrant culinary sector, and diverse retailers with unique brands and stellar customer service year-round. These factors combined would position Sylvan Lake as a renowned destination in Central Alberta for short to long-term stays throughout the year. A notable gap exists in the readiness of Sylvan Lake's visitor-related businesses and services, including consistent business hours, storefront design and merchandising, levels and quality of customer service, and diversity of offerings.

As a Regional Host, Sylvan Lake is envisioned as a gem in Central Alberta that attracts visitors year-round from across the whole Region and major urban hubs like Edmonton and Calgary. There is a significant gap in the shoulder season's products and available activities and services, including weather-independent experiences, to draw sustainable spring and autumn visitation. Differentiation and diversification are keys to success in this envisioned scenario; Sylvan Lake needs to boast about prime services, advanced infrastructure and offerings that stand out, to become the preferred choice of prospective visitors seeking memorable experiences in Central Alberta. Despite currently attracting visitors from these areas—especially during events, festivals, and beach season—Sylvan Lake has yet to fully tap into these potential markets to bolster the local economy through tourism development.

At this level, Sylvan Lake is also positioned to act as a leader and trendsetter for tourism initiatives in Central Alberta. Evidence shows that local entrepreneurs from other communities in Central Alberta, as well as those in Calgary and Edmonton, participate as vendors in the town's events and festivals. This speaks to the potential for Sylvan Lake to become a prime "hub" in Central Alberta, where visitors and vendors spend time and money. What is lacking is a fully-realized infrastructure, and a cohesive vibe and ambiance throughout the entire town that distinguishes Sylvan Lake with a unique charm and appeal.

Transitioning to a Regional Host requires substantial enhancements and innovations in visitor-related services and infrastructure, along with a diversification of local vendors, products and services. These efforts should encourage longer stays by providing high-quality experiences. Strategic distribution of experiences, attractions and services throughout the town is important for amplifying local charm and diversifying visitor options, thereby boosting town-wide visitor spending. Leveraging underutilized assets—such as infrastructure and amenities—is a key strategy for success. Town-led events and festivals with the capacity to act as regional draws are pivotal for Sylvan Lake's advancement to a Regional Host.

Effective visitor management strategies are critical at this level to maintain experience quality and establish responsible destination stewardship. This requires a significant capacity enhancement at the Town's tourism leadership, which should usher in data-informed decisions about all aspects of tourism management and leverage investments in market readiness, niche tourism development, and workforce growth. Collaboration amongst Town departments and with other tourism stakeholders is vital for the improvement and expansion of visitor amenities and infrastructure.

The Town's tourism leadership plays a crucial role in aligning tourism investment priorities with community priorities, while building the case for product diversification and increased visitor spending, and lowering the risk of investment in tourism. At this level, Sylvan Lake should establish strategic partnerships with DMOs in Central Alberta and lay the groundwork for future collaborations with provincial organizations such as Travel Alberta and Indigenous Tourism Alberta.

Addressing these needs and gaps works to significantly enhance the organizational capacity of the Town's tourism leadership. The most effective way to actualize this is building on the strengths developed as a Local Host, including efforts made and experiences gained in leveraging cross-departmental collaborations and partnerships for infrastructure improvements and other instances of destination development. It also extends to projects developed for piloting tourism product ideas, visitor management strategies and marketing initiatives. Expanding efforts for piloting public-private-community partnerships in space activation and tourism product development is also essential for further success.

EVOLVING TO AN **INTER- AND INTRA-PROVINCIAL (NATIONAL) HOST:**

At this advanced level of readiness, Sylvan Lake is poised to become a renowned four-season destination, well-known across Alberta and beyond, for its unique small lake-town community vibe, distinctive offerings and high-quality services catering to short-term, medium-term and long-term stays.

Having capitalized on its signature local experiences and attractions, Sylvan Lake as the "National Host' has fully tapped into the high-value target markets in Edmonton and Calgary, while also attracting a significant visitor base from across Alberta. It also enjoys an expanded visitor market that spans across Canada. Seasonal visitation and temporary residences from major urban centres like Edmonton and Calgary, as well as from neighbouring provinces such as British Columbia, may suggest initial success in target market reach. Currently, community feedback and data suggest that there is an opportunity to draw more economic value from visitors and seasonal residents, particularly, seasonal, part-time residents with second homes and seasonal campground visitors whose behaviours blend those of residents and visitors—spending on fun, tourism-oriented activities, as well as on necessities like groceries and home maintenance. This represents a considerable opportunity for Sylvan Lake to better integrate this potential market segment into its visitor economy.

At this level, the visitor economy is a cornerstone of Sylvan Lake's local economy, with a proven track record of contributing to job creation, entrepreneurship and workforce development, and infrastructure enhancement. It also makes a significant contribution to the destination management and leadership budget. To maintain competitiveness at this level—and against other destinations within and outside the Province—investments in enhancing the town's overall appeal are essential, including areas beyond downtown, as well as improving connectivity, accessibility, and offering distinctive attractions, tourism products, and visitor services.

Building on the capacities developed as a Regional Host, a well-established tourism management and leadership entity with extended capacities for incubating and accelerating partnerships across multiple levels (local, regional, and provincial, private, public and community), alongside a well-recognized tourism brand are essential at this stage of readiness. This requires significant capacity enhancements for the tourism management and leadership from multiple aspects, including resources (capital, human, know-how, physical, equipment and supplies) and network (community relations, partnerships, collaborations and co-investments).

The fruit of such established capacity is evident in extensive public-private-community partnerships, particularly in the development of additional weather-protected venues and a variety of weather-independent and season-specific tourism products for year-round activation. The tourism management and leadership entity's established relationship with provincial tourism organizations like Travel Alberta, the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta (TIAA), and Indigenous Tourism Alberta, will also underscore Sylvan Lake's readiness at this level. These partnerships, characterized by joint planning, investment and marketing efforts, signal Sylvan Lake's strategic approach to tourism development. Engagement with prominent tour operators across Canada, through targeted marketing initiatives, product development and packaging, further demonstrates Sylvan Lake's progress in advanced tourism readiness.

It's important to note that fully realizing this level of readiness extends beyond the current 10-year plan. This plan aims to elevate Sylvan Lake to the level of readiness to become a distinguished destination within Central Alberta, for province-wide markets, with an eye toward expanding its reach to neighbouring provinces as its implementation nears completion. Therefore, the primary focus is on expanding the market across the province, laying the groundwork for potential opportunities beyond provincial borders through strategic testing and piloting.

GROWING TO A **GLOBAL HOST:**

Reaching the Global Host level of readiness for Sylvan Lake is not anticipated within the current 10-year planning period. As the plan draws to a close, it becomes essential to reassess the tourism strategic actions. This reevaluation will shed light on the potential for Sylvan Lake to tap into broader national and international markets, and will significantly inform future tourism planning directions.

[EMPHASIS]

A CYCLICAL JOURNEY (NOT LINEAR)

It's important to recognize that the journey from the 'Local Host' to the 'National Host' is not a linear, fixed path, but rather a dynamic process marked by continuous cycles of innovation and capacity building across various readiness levels. This journey does not adhere to distinctive boundaries between stages; it's not about merely transitioning from one level to another. Instead, it involves a flexible approach to planning, strategy development, and implementation, essential for evolving into a distinctive, community-centric destination in Central Alberta. This approach underscores the fluidity and ongoing nature of destination development, emphasizing adaptability and continuous improvement.

Section 4:

Becoming a Destination

4.1 **DIRECTION**

The key purpose of Section 4 is to set the foundation of the DLMP, presenting the 10-year tourism vision for Sylvan Lake, establishing it into target outcomes (short- to medium-term changes) and desired impacts (medium- to long-term changes). Sylvan Lake's 10-year vision for tourism and the desired outcomes are informed by a meticulous synthesis of three key analyses: community-informed insights, strategic alignment analysis, and a comprehensive destination readiness assessment using the Destination Readiness Framework (DRF) developed specifically for Sylvan Lake (see Appendix A).

The foundation of this vision is rooted in community-informed insights, which uncover **a shared picture** of the desired future, as well as priorities, pain points (gaps) and strengths as a community, to move toward that desired future.

The strategic alignment analysis adds another critical layer to identifying the overall desired future and the detailed target outcomes. This analysis highlights the congruence between **macro-scale** tourism growth priorities and Sylvan Lake's local context. The thorough evaluation of various aspects of destination readiness—using the DRF—provides a solid base to identify how this desired future can be translated into the **capacities and qualities** that the destination needs to meet. This assessment is instrumental to identifying gaps, strengths and opportunities, and reveals what must be done to achieve the level of readiness that makes Sylvan Lake the destination imagined in the 10-year vision.

Subsequent sections, including strategic directions, recommendations and actions, speak to the "how" of achieving the vision presented here, providing a comprehensive roadmap to transform Sylvan Lake into a premier, year-round community-based destination and a magnet for tourism to the region.

4.2 THE MACRO PERSPECTIVE: **STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT**

It is important to analyze Sylvan Lake's tourism development within the broader context of federal and provincial tourism visioning and directions. This macro perspective is essential for crafting a tourism development vision and strategies for Sylvan Lake that—while reflecting the unique qualities of Sylvan Lake and actions achievable at a local level—are in tune with larger dynamics.

Aligning with federal and provincial tourism priorities is strategically critical, as it helps to balance local interests with wider tourism objectives. This, in turn, increases opportunities for resource optimization—including financial resources, knowledge, skills and supplies—and enhances visibility. Moreover, this alignment positions Sylvan Lake to leverage ongoing support from the macro tourism ecosystem in fostering a sustainable visitor economy.

The Strategic Alignment Analysis (see Appendix C) highlights significant congruence and relevance between macro-scale visions for tourism growth and the scope and directions adopted by this plan, as detailed in the Plan's Ambition and Purpose (Section 1.4). In particular, the thorough review of federal, provincial and regional tourism plans reveals several strategic priorities that Sylvan Lake needs to address within its local context, to align with and benefit from the synergies and collaborative efforts across different government levels.

There are notable similarities in the strategic pillars of national, provincial and regional tourism goals, with a particular emphasis at the provincial and regional levels on adapting these pillars to the nuances of Alberta's tourism ecosystems and destinations within Central Alberta. The following summary outlines the strategic alignments related to this DLMP, and presents areas where Sylvan Lake's strategies are informed by, reflect or complement macro planning initiatives:

NATIONAL SCOPE		
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	**STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR TOURISM GROWTH**	**STRATEGIC DRIVERS***
Sustainable, Regenerative, and Responsible Tourism	• Aim for tourism development that balances economic prosperity with environmental stewardship, enhancing community quality of life. • Focus on long-term sector resilience and smart growth, integrating market demands for leisure travel with sustainability principles. • Promote positive tourism perceptions, foster a sense of pride in host communities, and ensure that tourism initiatives encourage active participation and community benefits.	• High-value markets: • The growth of interests in well-being and personal enrichment • Increased demands for leisure travel, responsible travel, nature-based and legendary experiences, • Increasing demand for authentic land-based Indigenous experiences • Visitation trends: • The rise in domestic travel, staycation, remote working, resignation and retirement • Social License to operate • Reconciliation in action • Destination differentiation • Local entrepreneurial assets • Brand Identity and resonance • Policies and regulatory frameworks • Data Analytics and Market Intelligence
Indigenous Tourism Growth	• Improve socio-economic conditions in Indigenous communities through tourism. • Prioritize Indigenous tourism growth, contributing to reconciliation and product diversification/enrichment with emphasis on Indigenous cultural diversification and differentiation.	
Adaptability, Resilience, and Market Responsiveness	• Support operators and destinations in adapting to emerging visitor trends and market dynamics. • Prioritize public-private partnerships for tourism investment and experience diversification. • Address gaps in the tourism supply chain by supporting local tourism operations and entrepreneurship. • Invest in multi-level partnerships for workforce rebuilding.	
Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity	• Focus on creating an inclusive and diverse workforce, ensuring equitable opportunities for career advancement and economic benefits. • Incorporate anti-racism and equity-focused strategies across all levels of decisions and planning.	
Technology Integration and Digital Transformation	• Aim for technology adoption for better market understanding, decision-making, connectivity and data usage. • Prioritize strategies for achieving digital maturity and responsive policy development.	
Adaptability, Resilience, and Market Responsiveness	• Prioritize enhancing organizational capacities and systems for effective destination stewardship and fostering community leadership & collaboration. • Collect and analyze visitor insights for informed tourism decision-making. • Incorporate strategic marketing strategies aimed at promoting responsible travel and educating on sustainable tourism practices for growth. • Utilize environmental metrics to monitor and manage tourism's environmental impacts effectively.	

PROVINCIAL & REGIONAL SCOPE		
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	**STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR TOURISM GROWTH**	**STRATEGIC DRIVERS***
Industry Recovery and Long-term Economic Resilience	• Enhance recovery with a focus on domestic travel. • Explore new high-value market segments and visitor trends to broaden tourism appeal. • Adopt technology to improve visitor experiences, operational efficiency, and market intelligence. • Prioritize destination development, regulatory navigation and activating plans in emerging destinations to diversify tourism's economic impact.	• High-value markets • Visitation trends • Destination differentiation • Brand Identity and resonance • Distribution and sales channels • Touchpoints • Community building • Tourism market readiness • Employment • Investment and support capital • Authentic Indigenous experiences • Community amenities and Infrastructures • Tourism innovation • Responsible tourism practices • Environmental impact assessment • Public-private-community partnership models • Tourism Development Zones • Design and activation of Places • Policies and regulations
Product Diversification and Growth	• Invest strategically in tourism products and experiences, focusing on iconic experiences for high-value responsible travelers. • Streamline processes for entrepreneurship and small business support to enable cross-sector growth, including access to capital and investment in market readiness. • Prioritize increasing year-round visitation and meeting the demand for responsible tourism through environmentally responsive and culturally authentic operations, products and services.	
Sustainable Community Economic Development	• Increase community awareness of tourism's benefits • Promote economic growth, sustainability, cultural preservation, and community building as part of a comprehensive tourism development strategy. • Increase tourism's contribution in enhancing local infrastructure and the overall local economy. • Foster positive engagement between the tourism industry, community leaders, visitors, and residents. • Integrate sustainable and environmentally responsible practices into tourism development and offerings.	
Authentic Indigenous Experiences and Cultural Preservation	• Foster Indigenous tourism for preserving and celebrating Indigenous history, stories and cultures. • Collaborate to enhance Indigenous tourism operators' capacities, and enable more authentic, market-ready Indigenous tourism experiences.	
Destination Appeal and Competitiveness	• Grow and diversify memorable experiences, and provide the right mix of places and experiences. • Prioritize connectivity and access, both physical and digital. • Simplify regulatory processes and enhance community participation in investment in tourism infrastructure. • Prioritize sustainability and competitiveness in destination-related decision-making. *continued on following page...*	

PROVINCIAL & REGIONAL SCOPE		
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	**STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR TOURISM GROWTH**	**STRATEGIC DRIVERS***
Destination Appeal and Competitiveness *(continued from previous page)*	• Engage in collaborative marketing and sales efforts to drive differentiation through unique storytelling and partnerships. • Focus on brand awareness to inspire growth in visitation.	
Strategic Partnership	• Emphasize collaborative sales and marketing efforts through local destination leadership, differentiating Alberta as a premier destination. • Strengthen regional tourism reach and appeal through cross-regional cooperation among municipal and provincial stakeholders. • As key directions for cross-regional collaboration, prioritize a collaborative destination leadership model, resource sharing, thematic tourism product development, and marketing initiatives. • Implement the Tourism Development Zone travel corridors project to foster collaborative projects.	

* Strategic drivers are tourism development factors or elements that guide the tourism destination towards alignment with identified strategic priorities for tourism growth, and can propel or influence the incorporation of identified recommendations.

4.3 **10-YEAR VISION** FOR **TOURISM GROWTH**

Through tourism, Sylvan Lake has a strong opportunity to build a local economy that centres the community's long-term quality of life, environmental stewardship and cultural integrity at its core. The following statement describes a long-term vision for tourism in Sylvan Lake. Grounded on the core of this Plan—a commitment to a community-centric approach in all aspects—this vision is informed primarily by synthesizing firsthand data collected through engaging diverse community rights holders and other key players, considering Sylvan Lake's unique strengths and challenges, and understanding how to embrace these characteristics for community-centric tourism development. Therefore, this vision presents **a shared aspiration across diverse stakeholders** on how tourism power should be harnessed toward a sustainable tomorrow in Sylvan Lake.

[EMPHASIS]

STRATEGIC **ALIGNMENT**

The Sylvan Lake 10-year vision for tourism growth is solidly informed by and aligns with the shared priorities, and visions for tourism development at the national, provincial, and regional levels, including focuses on:

- Community well-being, prosperity, safety, and quality of life.
- Community building, environmental sustainability, and cultural integrity.
- Growth and diversification of tourism benefits.
- Promotion and support of anti-racism, inclusivity, and equity.
- Enriching and enhancing visitor experiences.

For an extended analysis, refer to 'The Macro Perspective: Strategic Alignment' in this section.

10-YEAR TOURISM VISION

Connect, Inspire and Be the Force of Good With and In the Community

In the heart of Central Alberta, Sylvan Lake emerges as a premier, **year-round** destination for **one-day and multi-day visits**, welcoming visitors of **all** ages, abilities, and origins from across the province and beyond. Visitors seek to experience the town's **unique blend of local lake town charm and vibrant culture**.

Harnessing its unique qualities and strategic location, Sylvan Lake continues to grow as the **magnet attraction for experiencing Central Alberta**'s local charms and tastes in one cohesive experience. It stands as a leader and trendsetter for tourism initiatives in the region.

Sylvan Lake's tourism leadership—Visit Sylvan Lake—has leveraged tourism as a catalyst for **sustainable community economic development** and has set a data-driven tourism development model. The Town incubates open **innovations and collaborations**, placing **community quality of life** and **leadership, environmental stewardship**, and **equitable sharing** of tourism's benefits at the forefront of tourism decision-making.

Tourism operations have established **a strong local industry**, collaborating **closely with the Town administration** to boost visitation and **public, private and community partnership and investment**. Offering **authentic and iconic experiences**, they provide unique ways to connect visitors to the lake and the natural surroundings that sustain the community, to places that define its charm, and to people and stories that **differentiate** Sylvan Lake as a place to visit and as a community to belong to. Sylvan Lake flourishes as an inclusive community for living, visiting, working, investing, creating, and playing.

4.4 OUTCOME & IMPACTS STATEMENTS: **WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT IN 10 YEARS?**

The vision serves as the compass, guiding us toward the desired future state of Sylvan Lake tourism. To translate this vision into tangible progress, this section adopts an impact lens and delves deeper into all that will be different in Sylvan Lake (the outcomes) and the significant positive changes (the impacts) resulting from these outcomes. It considers Sylvan Lake's unique strengths and challenges and understands how to embrace these characteristics for tourism development.

In terms of tourism's contribution, Outcome & Impact Statements (OISs) will adopt an equity, diversity and inclusion lens as outlined by the guiding principles (see Sections 1.4 & 1.5: Strategic Pathways). Therefore, OISs aim to articulate anticipated benefits for the community at large, breaking down the desired future into tangible benefits for diverse community rights holders and other tourism key players, including residents, local community groups, tourism operators, other local business owners, the workforce, investors, landowners, the municipality/tourism administration, and regional tourism leadership stakeholders.

OISs are crafted through a synthesis of first-hand data, strategic alignment analysis and a comprehensive gap analysis using the Sylvan Lake Destination Readiness Framework (Appendix A). These statements will inform strategies and actions toward realizing the envisioned future for tourism growth as depicted in the vision statement. Accordingly, OISs also speak to ultimate outcomes within the timeframe of DLMP that will be achieved as a result of implementing the Plan.

HOW TO READ OISS

OIS #	**OIS statement**	Relevant categories in the Destination Readiness Framework for Sylvan Lake Tool (Appendix A)
Serves as a reference point in the implementation plan and presents a connection between actions and target outcomes/impacts.	Articulates a desired outcome and/or impact	

Description
A narrative walk-through detailing how the target outcome and impact is achieved. Narratives are translated into actionable recommendations and projects in the implementation plan.

[EMPHASIS]

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF **'SMALL, SLOW BIG CHANGES'**

It is important to appreciate that changes to build community-centric tourism and a resilient destination need to be slow and steady, and include many significant **'Small Big Changes.'**

As the world emerged from a pandemic, a recession took hold while the realities of climate change could not be ignored. Change has been slow. But slow change is good change. It allows the community to reset, reconnect and understand the value of taking ownership of its tourism economy.

With their own needs at the center—and a refreshed recognition of their own importance to local economic, environmental and social health and stability—a strong, resilient and adaptive foundation for growth can be established. Maintaining this momentum with a future steady, continuous flow of 'Big Small Changes' is key to success.

4.5 **OUTCOME & IMPACT STATEMENTS** (OISS)

OIS.1	**The natural appeal** of the water's edge is improved, maintaining the lake as the prime component of the town character: an iconic natural attraction, and a key reason for the uniqueness of the lake experience the town offers.	Infrastructure & Attractions Environmental Impact Management, Sustainability and Resilience

The natural appeal of the water's edge, in particular the beachfront's natural feel, is preserved and enhanced through conservation initiatives, design interventions and engaging activations. Bylaws and regulations focused on environmental sustainability and visitor impact management protect the lake's environmental integrity. Adopting sustainable development strategies and recommendations for the area has helped minimize environmental impacts from development projects. Active measures—such as preventing shoreline erosion, enhancing the natural environment's quality, and ensuring public access—do not disturb the ecological balance, reinforce this protection and have improved the naturalized interface with the water.

OIS.2	**Key visual corridors** to and from the lake are improved, and the sense of connection to the lake is extended through the whole town.	Infrastructure & Attractions Environmental Impact Management, Sustainability and Resilience

Bylaws, regulations and detailed design guidelines for new development along Lakeshore Drive and downtown maintain scenic views and visual corridors to and from the lake. This strategy is supported by well-thought-out placemaking and wayfinding initiatives that create a town-wide sense of connection to the lake.

OIS.3 Access to water is reenvisioned and enables multifunctionality while adhering to environmental sustainability.

Infrastructure & Attractions

Environmental Impact Management, Sustainability and Resilience

Different recreational functions in the lake—including swimming, non-motorized boating activities, motorized boating activities and other water-based recreational activities—are managed through well-defined and well-implemented use strategy, as well as improvements in infrastructure, programming and place activations. Access to water has been carefully reenvisioned for both recreational and commercial use, with a main focus on the integrity of the lake's natural environment.

OIS.4 Lakefront and beach hosts uses, functions and experiences that are adaptable and inherently connected to/unique to the lake experience, and are appealing during peak seasons for all.

Infrastructure & Attractions

Visitor Management, Health & Safety

Key public attractions near the lake—including Sylvan Lake Park, Centennial Park, Lakefront Park and Lighthouse Park—have seen significant reimagining and upgrades. These improvements involve rethinking how land is used, focusing on creating multifunctional areas adaptable to various activations year-round while integrating community priorities. Interactive placemaking initiatives, improved infrastructure, and adaptable design interventions have transformed these key lakeside parks into multifunctional spaces.

Conflicting uses have been reassessed, with activities that can be relocated without losing their essence moved from the beach area or reimagined to align more closely with the lake vibe. This has made room for unique experiences and functions that are inherently connected to the lake experience.

One tangible benefit of these efforts is the alleviation of overcrowding at the beach, making it more accessible and appealing during peak seasons. The introduction of deployable fixtures and furniture, as well as adaptable amenities, makes it possible to host even large-scale events in this prime recreational zone, further enhancing the lakefront's appeal and functionality for both local and non-local visitors.

OIS.5 All Lakefront uses and experiences embrace **environmentally responsible practices** and a strict commitment to minimizing ecological impact.

Infrastructure & Attractions

Environmental Impact Management, Sustainability and Resilience

A sustainable use strategy, supported by protective regulations and enhanced by guidelines and best practices for environmentally responsible practices, as well as extensive awareness-raising initiatives, inform all activation initiatives in the lakefront area. Responsible recreational activities and events have become the hallmark of the lake experience, blending fun and adventure with a deep commitment to minimizing ecological impact, including pollution, waste, noise, and disruption of natural cycles and habitats in the lake watershed ecosystem. For both residents and visitors, the beach experience transcends the sand and fosters a connection to pure, natural water in a way that is distinctively Sylvan.

OIS.6 **Downtown and lakefront streetscapes and their overall ambiance** are uplifted, engaging a diversity of foot traffic and reflecting the unique sense of place for which Sylvan Lake is renown.

Infrastructure & Attractions

Heritage, Culture, and Community Vibe

Downtown and lakefront feature a variety of place-based initiatives, (including public art and other beautification), as well as passive and active placemaking efforts. Informed by community inputs and active participation, these beautification and activation interventions are carefully designed, located and implemented to capture local stories, history and legacy of the community, and collectively reflect the town's unique charm. These improvements attract a diverse range of foot traffic while maintaining and showcasing the unique sense of place for which Sylvan Lake is known.

Motivated by the Town's incentive programs & support initiatives, and opportunities for co-investment & partnership, and further driven by the growing demand in the tourism and hospitality sectors, downtown property owners have upgraded the appearance of their buildings. These picturesque streetscapes comply with architectural and aesthetic guidelines designed to preserve Sylvan Lake's vibe and charm, while also allowing the unique style and brand of different retail outlets to shine through their storefronts.

OIS.7 There is a sense of **harmonized aesthetics** and a distinct sense of place throughout the whole town, reflecting the unique local vibe and the essence of a small, connected and vibrant lakeside community.

Infrastructure & Attractions

Heritage, Culture, and Community Vibe

Visually enhanced streetscapes, along with a sense of harmony and identity, are significantly extended beyond downtown and lakefront to include other main streets, major connectors, town entrances, and major attractions throughout Sylvan Lake.

By incorporating accessible mechanics for community input, streamlined processes, and other mechanisms for active participation, leadership, and partnership of local talents (including a community-centric framework for place-based activations), the Town has successfully brought an authentic and genuine sense of community to its beautification and enhancement efforts.

Appropriate design in new developments, beautification and refurbishment initiatives, cultural elements, placemaking (including public art), and programming—supported and informed by appropriate guidelines, policies, regulations, and incentives—have created a unified aesthetic and visual/architectural essence in the entire town that captures the charm and vibe of a small, connected and vibrant lakeside community.

OIS.8 Residents and visitors move effortlessly, enjoying easy **access to and from downtown**, services across town and **major attractions**.

Visitor-Related Facilities, Amenities, and Services

Visitor Management, Health & Safety

Parking spaces are well-distributed to serve popular attractions and recreation & entertainment facilities. During high seasons or popular events throughout the year, where all types of parking needs have been considered including private cars, RVs, boat trailers and buses.

Downtown and lakefront accommodate creative modes of transportation, such as rental scooters, electric and classic bikes, and shuttle buses, increasing foot traffic access and reach.

During the high season and major events throughout the year, these transportation options allow visitors to hop on and off across different attractions and visitor hot spots throughout the town to check-out boutique shops, culinary, and recreational & adventure experiences downtown and beyond.

During high season and major events throughout the year, transportation connections are available for visitors and local entrepreneurs from communities in Alberta's Central Corridor, Calgary and Edmonton to travel to the destination without relying on private vehicles.

OIS.9	Major **attractions, visitor experiences, visitor-related facilities** and **supporting services** in downtown and lakefront area, as well as across the town, are **clearly defined and easily navigable** from main access points to the town, key intersections and visitor hot spots.	Infrastructure & Attractions Visitor Management, Health & Safety

A well-defined and cohesive wayfinding strategy is implemented within the entire destination, guiding visitors from lakefront and downtown attractions to major parks, green spaces, CP trail, Lakeshore Drive's walkways and other key walkable and cyclable routes, as well as local businesses and attractions, recreational facilities, amenities, and critical services throughout the town. During major events, festivals and other significant seasonal recreational activities, mobile signage is strategically placed in critical locations to further enhance visitor information and support visitor navigation.

OIS.10	There is a notable enhancement in Sylvan Lake's **walkability and cyclability.**	Infrastructure & Attractions Visitor Management, Health & Safety

Visitors and residents more frequently walk or cycle along well-connected paths that link major urban and natural attractions in and around the town, enriched by natural preservation and activations that make the journey engaging and inspiring.

Lakeshore Drive's walkway and the CP Trail in particular stand out for their popularity, featuring clear signage, wayfinding, infrastructure and activation strategies that offer a pleasant experience for all, marking them as signature attractions of Sylvan Lake.

The ongoing effort to expand the network of urban and natural trails across the town further improves the visitor experience and connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists alike. During peak seasons and major events, these well-connected, well-equipped and visually-enriched walking and cycling paths extend visitors' and residents' transportation options to and from downtown, the lakefront area and event venues, reducing traffic congestion and parking challenges.

OIS.11 Sylvan Lake and its offerings are **accessible to all,** and can be experienced **safely** and seamlessly by everyone.

Visitor-Related Facilities, Amenities, and Services

Visitor Management, Health & Safety

Major tourism attractions, visitor-related amenities and local services adhere to comprehensive accessibility and safety standards. This includes appropriate design, signage, furniture & fixtures across the beachfront and downtown area, major recreational and community facilities and visitor accommodations, ensuring inclusivity for individuals of all abilities, including children, seniors and people with disabilities. Enhanced accessibility measures extend to event and festival venues, transportation for major events, and visitor information points, making every aspect of the town welcoming and effortlessly accessible.

OIS.12 Sylvan Lake sees a significantly enhanced **accommodation quality,** with every stay elevated by excellent customer service, reaching new heights of comfort and charm.

Visitor-Related Facilities, Amenities, and Services

Market Preparedness & Tourism Entrepreneurship

Accommodation establishments that have been operational for decades are reimagined and refurbished, and have implemented accessibility and quality standards expected from a trendsetter destination. They embody the essence of a lake town that feels uniquely local, welcoming and vibrant through design elements, cultural themes and programs & services.

Accommodation types and experiences cater to diverse desires and budget preferences and meet the demands of short, medium-length, and long-term stays with the right mix of campgrounds, hotels and motels, cabins and lodges, bed and breakfasts and vacation rentals.

Accommodation options provide prime customer services aligned with advanced market readiness criteria (refer to Appendix B), including alternative transportation options, local guides, local tours and offers for tourists attending seasonal events and tournaments, business retreats, and beach lovers during peak seasons.

OIS.13 There is a year-round active **visitor information hub.**

Visitor-Related Facilities, Amenities, and Services

Visitor Management, Health & Safety

The visitor information hub is located at or visible from critical access points and/or tourism hotspots, and is staffed by trained personnel. It operates beyond typical business hours, extending into evenings and weekends. This primary hub—which might be part of already existing infrastructure and/or amenities or might be shaped as an independently located space—reflects the unique vibe of the local lake town through design elements and cultural themes. It provides up-to-date information on local attractions, events, hospitality and support services and experiences, maps and other tourism-related information.

In high season and during major seasonal events, this primary hub is backed-up by multiple visitor information points strategically placed at the most popular visitor spots and attractions. Together, these primary and satellite services serve as outlets for the sale of authentic local offerings. This includes the direct sale of local products as souvenirs, and acting as intermediaries by directing & referring visitors to local offerings.

OIS.14 A variety of other **visitor management assets** are integrated throughout the town.

Visitor-Related Facilities, Amenities, and Services

Visitor Management, Health & Safety

Interpretive signage and visitor maps, strategically placed across the town, have greatly improved visibility for the town's attractions, local vendors and visitor experiences. These assets, designed with a dual focus on placemaking and visitor management, contribute to the quality of visitor experiences from multiple aspects. Adhering to carefully tailored design guidelines, these information assets embody Sylvan Lake's commitment to aesthetic coherence and accessibility.

OIS.15 A well-established **network of supporting services** elevates visitors' experiences, safety, health and security **year-round.**

Visitor-Related Facilities, Amenities, and Services

Visitor Management, Health & Safety

Essential services such as medical care, emergency response, police and safety are available year-round, with extended capacity to meet the needs of both locals and tourists. These services have extended working operations hours including weekends and during events, festivals and other major seasonal recreational activities. Other supporting services such as grocery stores, gas stations and en-route services, as well as equipment rentals, are distributed town-wide, providing services year-round with extended operating hours in high season, weekends and special events.

OIS.16 Through authentic, **Indigenous-led, place-based initiatives and experiences,** people have fostered a deep understanding of Indigenous history and perspectives and a deep connection to the water and land.

Infrastructure & Attractions

Heritage, Culture, and Community Vibe

Across the town, well-thought-out placemaking initiatives are underway, designed to enhance both community and visitor engagement with Indigenous history, stories & perspectives on connecting with the land and water. In particular, there are well-defined and located interpretive signage across major walkways and trails that educate passers by about connection to the land grounded on Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing.

These initiatives are enriched by Indigenous-led cultural programs and visitor experiences, which celebrate and deepen connections to the land and water, rooted in Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing.

OIS.17

Emerging and existing entrepreneurs have a clear development pathway and comprehensive support from the Town tourism leadership to **start and/or grow** their **visitor-related businesses.**

Destination Management and Leadership

Market Preparedness & Tourism Entrepreneurship

The Town has made significant investments in creating an inclusive enabling system for tourism entrepreneurship, extending beyond program and resource sharing. Under the leadership of the Town's tourism entity, this system creates initiatives for entrepreneurship and small business support that are tailored to the needs of local context, addressing gaps in the local tourism supply chain through a community-centric lens.

This integrated support system provides customized opportunities to accommodate varying stages of market preparedness through partnerships at local, regional and provincial levels, resource pooling, and direct investment. For emerging ideas, the focus is on reducing the risk of early-stage entry into the industry and facilitating idea testing and piloting through programming, capital support and incentives, and place-based activation.

After establishment and with sufficient evidence of success, this system extends support to established businesses for advanced market readiness, product diversification, and adaptation to emerging visitor trends and market dynamics. This support includes workforce capacity building, network expansion, access to capital, and facilitating co-investment and partnerships at local and regional levels.

OIS.18

Downtown Sylvan Lake has attracted a **diverse mix of retailers and local makers,** creating a distinctive and vibrant vibe for foot traffic.

Infrastructure & Attractions

Market Preparedness & Tourism Entrepreneurship

Supported by favourable policies and the Town's market-readiness support and incentives, and encouraged by enhanced vibe and infrastructure, a variety of small, emerging businesses have nested in downtown, utilizing spaces that encourage starting small and being adaptive. These businesses—diverse in nature, size, and the services they provide—share common ground: they enhance the downtown experience for both local and non-local visitors by offering opportunities to engage with the town's unique vibe, stories and culture.

The mix includes art galleries, boutiques, retail shops, cafes, restaurants, equipment rentals, expert guides, & a range of entertainment and recreational experiences and services catering to various interests and demographics.

Thoughtful zoning has also welcomed micro-scale makers and manufacturers, such as breweries and cheesemakers, into the downtown. These light-industry establishments, with significant visitor appeal, integrate seamlessly into the downtown experience, allowing visitors to become part of the 'maker' story during their visit and shopping experience.

OIS.19

A diverse array of **businesses beyond downtown** enhance Sylvan Lake's unique local vibe and charm **through the whole town**, with its **distinctive products and services.**

Infrastructure & Attractions

Market Preparedness & Tourism Entrepreneurship

The town-wide beautification efforts, cohesive architectural aesthetics, supportive zoning policies and incentives aimed at nurturing the tourism entrepreneurship ecosystem attract a wide range of local and community-centric entrepreneurs beyond the downtown and lakefront areas. Evidence of market demand for more locally-oriented visitor experiences has further spurred this development. These emerging operations and retailers offer distinctive products, services and experiences that echo Sylvan Lake's local vibe. They have become an integral part of Sylvan Lake's charm and distinctiveness.

OIS.20

A diverse range of local operations are **advanced market-ready,** with evidence of **collaboration and partnership** for market expansion and product diversification.

Market Preparedness & Tourism Entrepreneurship

Tourism Products and Experiences

Fueled by the Town's comprehensive entrepreneurial support system, a variety of local businesses have developed well-tested business models with established tourism products that meet advanced market readiness criteria outlined in Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness for Businesses - Advanced Market Readiness Criteria.

These local operations have expanded their capacities through collaborative efforts with other local and regional operators for collaborative product development, tourism packaging, cost-shared promotions, and place-based activation. This collaboration extends into partnership with tour operators and other travel intermediaries operating locally, regionally, or beyond the province, expanding the reach of local offerings to wider target markets.

Through this collaborative approach, local operators are strengthening their own market position and contributing to the overall growth of Sylvan Lake's tourism industry.

OIS.21

Downtown and throughout Sylvan Lake has diversified into a **rich variety of experiences,** ensuring a consistent stream of things to do year round.

Infrastructure & Attractions

Market Preparedness & Tourism Entrepreneurship

Among Sylvan Lake businesses, many have diversified their services, products, and offerings to ensure a continuous stream of visitor experiences throughout an extended season or year-round. This trend is primarily driven by the enhanced market readiness of local tourism entrepreneurs—a result of the Town's comprehensive support and incentives, along with their continued efforts in promoting co-investment and piloting new tourism ventures. These offerings present a wide array of experiences, including gastronomic experiences, responsible nature-based and outdoor recreational activities, Indigenous land-based experiences, wellness retreats, corporate getaways, and many more options that cater to varied tastes and special interest groups.

Diverse in form and format, the commonality among these offerings is that they capture the essence of a vibrant lakeside community across different seasons, aiming to engage tourists and visitors with people, local stories and legacies.

OIS.22

Sylvan Lake hosts a number of **authentic Indigenous experiences** that are key to Sylvan Lake's **brand differentiation.**

Heritage, Culture, and Community Vibe

Tourism Products and Experiences

Town tourism leadership has made special efforts to engage Indigenous rights holders in defining opportunities for collaboration and partnership in visitor experience development, informed by Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing. In particular, Town tourism leadership facilitates and supports the testing and piloting of land-based experiences led and/or owned by Indigenous entrepreneurs.

The lake and natural sites in and around Sylvan Lake are at the core of these visitor experiences, with other town facilities utilized as needed to enrich them. Indigenous-led and inspired place-based initiatives throughout the town add to the depth and uniqueness of these experiences.

OIS.23 Sylvan Lake's tourism operators enjoy an **extended market reach of high-value visitors who** are seeking an authentic **local vibe** and **community-centric & responsible recreational** experiences.

Market Reach/Market Establishment

Tourism Economic Impact

Residents of Sylvan Lake and communities in the immediate vicinity, including the Summer Villages, are year-round supporters and customers of Sylvan Lake services and experiences. Visitors from a daytrip distance across the Central Corridor of Alberta—including Red Deer, Blackfalds, Bentley, Rimbey, Lacombe, and Innisfail—also frequently visit Sylvan Lake year-round. Data-based evidence shows regular spending at local cafes and restaurants during visits to friends and families, seasonal events, and niche recreational activities.

In addition to this extended market from across Central Alberta, the local tourism industry and supporting businesses enjoy an extended visitor market from the province's major urban hubs, Edmonton and Calgary, as well as other communities across the province and beyond. These visitors—whether individuals, group tours, or families—are increasingly drawn to Sylvan Lake for multi-day or longer stays to engage in authentic, community-centric and responsible recreational experiences.

This influx of visitors has a proven track record of extended stays and increased spending, attributable to the quality and diversity of services and experiences available.

OIS.24 The local tourism sector has attracted and continues to attract a **diverse workforce** from various demographic groups for **full-time, seasonal, and part-time positions.**

Workforce and Training

Tourism Economic Impact

The growing demand for tourism outside of peak season and the growing number of new businesses in the sector have led to an expansion of more reliable employment within the thriving local tourism industry. This increased demand for labour is met without significant challenges for local business owners. Thanks to the Town's investment and collaborative efforts with local, regional, and provincial entities in workforce development—coupled with the availability of more stable employment opportunities within the local industry—an expanding number of new permanent or temporary residents have been drawn to employment in the local tourism industry. The tourism leadership has played a pivotal role in enabling this ecosystem. In addition to their key role in regional and local collaborative initiatives for tourism workforce development, VSL's targeted marketing and campaign efforts have successfully positioned Sylvan Lake as a unique place to live and work, and its local tourism Industry as an inclusive opportunity to build a future in a caring community.

With these ongoing targeted efforts, concerns regarding a shortage of qualified workforce for hotels and other hospitality services—which previously hindered longer visits, particularly during shoulder season—have been decreased significantly.

OIS.25

Tourism operators and hospitality services have a **well-trained workforces** capable of providing **high-quality customer service** and personalized experiences to visitors, and are knowledgeable about cultural sensitivity and accessibility.

Heritage, Culture, and Community Vibe

Tourism Products and Experiences

The increasing demand for well-trained staff capable of delivering premium customer service and personalized experiences to visitors is addressed through collaborative efforts and partnerships between operations, as well as local, regional and provincial tourism leadership entities.

Town tourism leadership has played a central role in initiating and leading this collaboration, pooling and activating resources for an ongoing initiative aimed at advanced training and capacity-building of the local tourism workforce. With regular needs analyses and workforce forecasts, this initiative is tailored to local needs and regional tourism demands & trends and is accessible to both local and regional industry partners.

OIS.26

Town tourism leadership actively facilitates a **diverse** range of one-day and multiple-day **paid visitor experiences and tourism products** for exploring Sylvan Lake.

Destination Management and Leadership

Tourism Products and Experiences

Through close collaboration with local food and drink providers, visitor accommodations, recreation operators and potential investors, alongside facilitation of access to space and resources, and strategic co-investment in promotion and delivery, the Town tourism leadership facilitates and/or co-leads the creation of a diverse array of one to multiple-day visitor experiences that cater to different target markets.

This collaborative effort extends to cross-departmental initiatives, including year-round organization of multiple small events in collaboration between the Town's community event coordination entity and the tourism leadership entity. These events serve as valuable pilots for larger regional-wide events, focusing on community leadership and investment, and creating revenue for the Town. Elements of these events appeal to and attract high-value visitors, effectively subsidizing the events' cost.

Through partnerships with local and regional Indigenous entrepreneurs and facilitation/provision of land, capital and supplies, Town tourism leadership supports the creation of various Indigenous-led one-day and multiple-day land-based experiences.

OIS.27 The local tourism sector has attracted and continues to attract a **diverse workforce** from various demographic groups for **full-time, seasonal, and part-time positions.**

Destination Management and Leadership

Tourism Products and Experiences

Among the standout tourism products Sylvan Lake offers, the prime seasonal festivals lead the way. Themed around specific interests such as recreation, food and drink, community and culture, and authentic Indigenous land-based experiences, these events draw visitors from across the province and beyond who are keen to experience the town's unique vibe and charm. These tourism products also encourage visitors to engage with the local natural environment, services, products and offerings.

The development of these distinctive offerings is driven by the Town's tourism leadership, which demonstrates its efforts for co-investment with local industry partners and key tourism players across Central Alberta.

Standing out in Sylvan Lake's tourism calendar is a branded festival series that brings together a wide range of agritourism and culinary tourism operators from across Central Alberta. This festival series offers travellers from across the province and beyond a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in an 'all in one' experience of Central Alberta's charm.

OIS.28 **Town-invested** and **co-invested** visitor experiences and attractions are strategically **distributed** and expanded **throughout the year and across Sylvan Lake,** contributing to **reduced seasonal dependency** and more equitable sharing of tourism's positive impacts.

Destination Management and Leadership

Tourism Economic Impact

Thanks to careful planning, piloting, investment in strategic partnerships, and the utilization of underused tourism assets and infrastructure, Sylvan Lake boasts a diversity of hotspots for festivals, events and other cornerstone visitor experiences across satellite locations throughout the town.

This strategic spread draws visitors to the downtown and lakefront area, and to other attractions and visitor-related spots across Sylvan Lake, fostering a more equitable sharing of tourism's beneficial impact. The expanded seasonal and geographic dispersion of tourism activities reduces the town's dependency on peak season and promotes year-round tourism.

OIS.29 **Public and private recreational assets** (infrastructure and experiences) are strategically utilized to **diversify and enrich offerings** for high-value visitors, and year-round activation.

Destination Management and Leadership

Visitor-Related Facilities, Amenities, and Services

With strong community interest and participation, expanded entrepreneurial capacities, and enhanced organizational capacity of the Town's tourism leadership, prime public recreational facilities, infrastructure and amenities, have been improved and utilized in the development of tourism initiatives. These initiatives range from seasonal, ticket-based regional events to weather-independent recreational and entertainment offerings, business meetings and corporate retreats, and special recreation and retreat packages targeting a diversity of visitor markets.

Strategic investments in trail infrastructure enhancement, facilitated by the Town's tourism leadership and in partnership with local and regional stakeholders, have led to the utilization of significant local trails, including the CP Trail and lakeshore walkways in various recreational experiences and itineraries.

Through partnerships with business owners, private recreational facilities are leveraged to diversify tourism offerings and visitor packages, with a focus on expanding market reach, and increasing visitation and visitor spending during shoulder seasons and mid-week periods.

OIS.30 Diverse community rights holders actively **participate in tourism decision-making**, and local input has significantly influenced the development of new visitor experiences and capital investments aligned with community priorities.

Destination Management and Leadership

Community Engagement, Leadership, and Partnership

Under the initiative of the Town tourism leadership entity, a range of accessible and culturally appropriate feedback and idea-sharing channels and tools are established. These mechanisms prioritize inclusive and ongoing participatory conversations and decision-making with community rights holders.

Through these avenues, numerous unique opportunities have emerged for sharing ideas, wisdom, knowledge and feedback among local residents (including local Indigenous residents), local tourism operators and visitor-related businesses (including Indigenous entrepreneurs), and Town tourism leadership, aimed at identifying priority investments in tourism-related initiatives. These channels also serve as the primary means for the Town to gauge community interest and sentiment toward tourism initiatives, particularly regarding pilot activations aimed at enhancing visitor experiences.

The Tourism Development Committee (TDC) is one such established mechanism. Thanks to investments by the Town tourism leadership in building capacities and fostering collaboration, this group has evolved into a critical component of tourism decision-making, particularly in the testing and piloting of community-centric tourism initiatives.

OIS.31 There are numerous **accessible pathways** and opportunities for community rights holders to **engage, build partnerships,** and co-invest with the Town in tourism development initiatives, and the outcome of these initiatives is key to **Sylvan Lake's brand differentiation.**

Destination Management and Leadership

Community Engagement, Leadership, and Partnerships

With leadership or direct input from the TDC, the Town successfully implements multiple projects, programs and mechanisms focused on enabling varying degrees of community participation, including volunteering, paid participation, service procurement, partnerships and co-investment in tourism development.

These initiatives range from incentives, subsidized spaces and supplies, accelerated and streamlined vendor procurement procedures, and other mechanisms and opportunities for cost-shared place-based and program-based activation. Recruitment of local services such as food, accommodation and entertainment as part of Town-led tourism products is also a key component of these initiatives.

These efforts have proven successful in reducing barriers to participation, lowering the entry risk, and encouraging partnerships and investment in Town tourism-related initiatives. These mechanisms evolve through years of active conversation, ideation and testing with interest groups such as grassroots art and cultural organizations, local non-profits, co-ops formed by business owners, individual tourism industry partners and artists.

Local markets, pop-ups, festivals, visitor management campaigns and cost-shared promotions are among the ideas successfully tested and established. These outcomes are distinguished for their community-led essence and components and have become one of the distinctive characteristics of what Sylvan Lake offers to visitors, entrepreneurs, industry partners, and broader community rights holders.

OIS.32 There are a number of well-established **grassroots groups** that have **diversified their revenue sources** through active engagement in **visitor-related services and experiences** and are on the pathway to financial self-sustainability.

Community Engagement, Leadership, and Partnership

Tourism Economic Impact

Thanks to the Town's comprehensive capacity-building program, support and incentives, community groups in arts, food, music and other cultural initiatives, as well as those providing community services, have capacities and strategies to diversify their funding opportunities. This includes partnership with industry partners, resource pooling and securing diverse grants and funds, thereby reducing their reliance solely on Town grants to initiate projects. By actively collaborating as partners with the Town's tourism leadership, these interest groups are actively engaged in small- to medium-sized visitor-related activations and services that directly or indirectly support tourism delivery. As a result, they have successfully diversified their revenues and have significantly reduced their financial dependence on Town support.

OIS.33 The Town tourism leadership has **enhanced its capacity for facilitating** and enabling community-centric **pathways for capital pooling and co-investment** in destination development.

Destination Management and Leadership

Community Engagement, Leadership, and Partnership

The Town tourism leadership plays a vital role in raising awareness and knowledge among Town administration, Council, TDC, business owners and broader community rights holders about community-centric models for partnership and investment. With the leadership of TDC and active input from broader community rights holders, Town tourism leadership has initiated a series of pilot investment projects focused on infrastructure enhancement, beautification and placemaking, new attraction development, and the utilization of underutilized spaces for affordable commercial space.

OIS.34 The Town tourism leadership has an **established organizational, operational, and leadership capacity** to implement DLMP recommendations and acts as the **driving force** behind the **community economic development** of Sylvan Lake through tourism.

Destination Management and Leadership

Tourism Economic Impact

The Town has made extensive investments in enhancing its organizational, operational and collaboration & partnership capacity to implement DLMP recommendations. Piloting intradepartmental collaboration models, such as cross-department working groups and interdepartmental strategic decision-making panels, are key to enabling cross-departmental conversation and collaboration at both strategic (policies and plans) and action (projects and programs) levels to incorporate DLMP priorities and recommendations.

With significant investment from the Town, the tourism leadership entity, in particular, has seen its capacity extended and plays a critical role in this organizational evolution. It brings the DLMP lens to Town decisions impacting community-centric tourism and destination development, including infrastructure development, placemaking, planning and policies, cultural programming, local economic development, community liaisoning, and sustainability practices.

This capacity building includes investments in staffing, space, training, tools and measures. Additionally, it includes enabling and facilitating diversified revenue streams for the tourism leadership entity to pilot projects and programs & initiate collaboration and partnerships to implement DLMP key priorities. The Town tourism leadership is moving towards the ability to re-invest tourism revenue in advancing its visitor-related initiatives.

OIS.35

The Town tourism leadership is recognized as Visit Sylvan Lake, the entity. Visit Sylvan Lake is a **key player** in **Central Alberta's destination brand** and a prominent regional leader in **community-centric sustainable tourism development.**

Destination Management and Leadership

Strategic Partnership

Grounded in extended operational and organizational capacity for tourism and destination development, as well as extended evidence of tourism partnership building developed through testing, piloting and networking with key tourism players across Central Alberta, and further coupled with strategic marketing and messaging, the Town tourism leadership is successful in establishing and branding itself as Visit Sylvan Lake. Its reputation is one as a leadership entity in destination development and management with successful strategic partnerships and collaborations with DMOs and other tourism administration entities across Central Alberta, and travel intermediaries operating or interested in Central Alberta as a destination. These efforts focus on product diversification and market expansion.

In particular, Visit Sylvan Lake leverages its established capacity and brand in local festival development to create strong partnership and co-investment opportunities at the regional level. Entrepreneurs and operators across the region are increasingly requesting and participating & investing in Sylvan Lake's standout seasonal events, festivals, and other packaged experiences to offer their services and products, to be part of this popular hub for 'taste, feel, and experience Central Alberta.'

This extends economic opportunities within Sylvan Lake and to neighbouring communities, encouraging further collaboration and partnership for tourism packaging and marketing, with Sylvan Lake as the leader. With such standout products with regional reach, and successful evidence of community engagement and partnership in visitor experience development and place-based activation, Sylvan Lake is recognized as a regional leader in community-centric sustainable tourism development.

OIS.36

Comprehensively-collected **local data** informs tourism development decisions and investments, with findings from studies used to **monitor tourism impacts** on community well-being and the **performance of implementing DLMP's** recommendations.

Destination Management and Leadership

Tourism Economic Impact

Through effective planning and investment by the Town, gaps in the capacity of the Town's tourism leadership (including staff, budget, infrastructure, tools, and know-how) to lead the collection of tourism impact data have been largely addressed. The Town collects necessary data at regular intervals - as recommended in DLMP- to understand, measure, and monitor tourism impacts.

The town's tourism leadership prioritizes data monitoring and collection. Shortly after launching DLMP, efforts began to collect essential tourism impact data and report on key metrics outlined in DLMP, covering economic impact, local entrepreneurship, environmental impact, and visitor and community satisfaction. This has established a solid foundation for comparison, further study, and monitoring of tourism development impacts moving forward with DLMP.

As further capacity is obtained, Town tourism leadership aims for more comprehensive tourism impact studies with more detailed metrics to understand and monitor economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts and assess the performance of implementing DLMP's recommendations and project deliverables. The findings of these analyses have extensively informed respective tourism decision-making, aligned with the priorities and targets identified in DLMP, with areas for improvement of actions identified and addressed accordingly.

OIS.37

Potentially significant environmental impacts of tourism development projects on the lake watershed ecosystem is being monitored through **cross-municipal collaboration.**

Environmental Impact Management, Sustainability and Resilience

Destination Management and Leadership

With the Town's dedicated resources and staffing, a special focus is placed on visitor-related developments that significantly impact the lake watershed ecosystem. Collaboration among all municipalities identified in the CEMS as influencing the environmental health of the lake watershed is instrumental in this effort. This collaboration has resulted in the establishment and testing of an oversight structure for shared application reviews of tourism-related development projects, particularly those with potentially significant impacts on the lake's ecosystem. It has also laid the foundation for guiding and informing such projects from the outset, including the development of 'indicators of significance' for projects, shared land use policies applicable across municipalities, and other cross-municipal initiatives as required.

The principles and guidelines outlined in the CEMS framework have been utilized to inform this process. Building on the collaboration and lessons learned, there is now greater momentum and enhanced capacity to explore the implementation of key priorities within the CEMS framework through an established and collaborative structure across these municipalities.

OIS.38

Diverse **local rights holders understand** the direct and indirect **impacts** of tourism development in their community, and actively support and **participate** in collecting data to inform tourism impact assessment.

Community Engagement, Leadership, and Partnership

Destination Management and Leadership

Town tourism leadership is transparent in sharing the outcomes of tourism impact studies with the community. Through channels and mechanisms enabled for community outreach and information sharing, key metrics data such as visitor demographics, visitor expenditure, and visitation numbers are readily accessible. Accumulated impact data, including revenue generated from tourism and other indicators of tourism development's impact on community socio-economic well-being, is shared openly with accessible and easily understandable language. This also includes an understanding of the negative impacts of visitation on the community.

Efforts in awareness-raising on the significance of data collection are ongoing, with regular updates provided to the community. By emphasizing the importance of data and its role in informed decision-making, the Town is successful in obtaining buy-in from local rights holders, particularly within the local tourism industry, for active participation in Town-led data collection efforts.

OIS.39

There are **multiple year-round Town-managed channels** that play a critical role in both visitor behaviour management and enriching the experiences of diverse visitors throughout their **entire customer journey,** from initial trip planning to their actual visit and even after they've left.

Marketing & Communication

Visitor Management, Health & Safety

Town tourism leadership has strategically invested in and collaborated closely with tourism operations and visitor-related businesses within Sylvan Lake and neighbouring municipalities to establish and manage multiple visitor information channels. These channels, which operate year-round and encompass online, offline, and in-person services, offer comprehensive and up-to-date information on local attractions, visitor experiences, services, wayfinding, safety measures, resources, regulations and visitor behaviour messaging.

Various feedback channels are also available for visitors to share their feedback and inquiries. Accessibility and inclusivity are fundamental to the customer experience design, with careful consideration given to the diverse needs of different visitor groups.

The town's tourism leadership utilizes the VSL-dedicated visitor information hub, alongside its satellite locations where applicable, VSL social media pages, and the VSL web-based platform. These dynamic channels are occasionally complemented by in-person campaigns and surveys aimed at gauging interest, increasing visibility for particular offerings, or collecting data for visitor satisfaction measurement purposes.

OIS.40

Diverse target groups consistently enjoy **exceptional customer experiences** when engaging **with Town tourism products and offerings,** whether as **visitors, vendors, or partners.**

Destination Management and Leadership

Visitor Management, Health & Safety

Town-managed visitor information channels effectively showcase town-led offerings, especially its iconic seasonal events and festivals. These channels serve as a comprehensive resource, offering detailed and up-to-date information on Town tourism products and facilitating convenient trip planning for visitors.

Other primary services that have been utilized through these channels include: dedicated resources to address inquiries, questions and concerns, providing premium customer service where applicable, dedicated online, offline, and in-person channels for ticket purchase & booking, a streamlined vendor registration for potential local and regional visitor-related business, and a straightforward process for collaboration as partners, and other services that make the customer experience for different target groups convenient.

OIS.41

The **Visit Sylvan Lake online platform** has evolved into an inclusive, user-friendly, and accessible **multifaceted interface** for visitor information, trip planning, marketing and entrepreneurship support.

Community Engagement, Leadership, and Partnership

Destination Management and Leadership

Town tourism leadership has strategically invested in advancing its digital presence, primarily focusing on the VSL web-based platform. With enhanced capabilities, the VSL web-based platform serves as a comprehensive resource for visitor information throughout the customer journey. It is also utilized to enhance market visibility, extend reach, and empower local businesses with innovative and inclusive services.

As a primary information channel for visitors, this platform also serves as a valuable source for data collection, focusing on demand and trend analysis. By prioritizing visibility and market reach, the platform extends the impact of VSL marketing initiatives. Equally important, by showcasing market-ready local tourism operations, products, and services, the platform acts as a key component of the Town's comprehensive tourism entrepreneurship support system.

The VSL online platform has also integrated ticket sales capabilities. This feature is fully operational for the Town's major tourism products, particularly events, and has become a source of revenue for maintaining the platform.

OIS.42 | **Visit Sylvan Lake** is a **recognized brand** and **entity** among **Albertans,** positioned as a unique destination in **Central Alberta.**

Marketing & Communication

Tourism Products and Experiences

Visit Sylvan Lake's branding and marketing initiatives have borne fruit, establishing Sylvan Lake as a well-known and highly regarded tourism destination among Albertans.

Through active participation in regional B2B and B2C tourism initiatives, including major tourism events and tradeshows, VSL has cultivated strong relationships with target organizations, associations, and travel intermediaries. This has facilitated the packaging and promotion of local tourism products, significantly increasing the visibility of Sylvan Lake products and extending their market reach.

With solid evidence of an engaged and ever-growing online community on the VSL web-based platform, predominantly comprised of local, regional, and inter-provincial followers, the Visit Sylvan Lake brand is recognized locally, regionally, and provincially.

OIS.43 | Local residents, operations and visitors are **aware of the environmental significance** of the **Lake and other natural assets,** and **responsible practices are** well-established, accepted and practiced among **locals and non-locals.**

Environmental Impact Management, Sustainability and Resilience

The Town's strategic investment in developing and implementing guidelines for environmentally sensitive practices in visitor experience development and place-based activation is backed up by incorporating environmentally responsible best practices in developing Town-led placemaking, beautification, infrastructure advancement, events and festivals, and other visitor-related initiatives.

The Town has also allocated resources for targeted marketing and awareness-raising campaigns, messaging and other promotional & outreach initiatives centered on encouraging visitors (local and non-local) and operators to adopt environmentally responsible practices, communicating a code of conduct and best practices, and addressing potential negative impacts on the environment and community well-being as a result of malpractices and enforcements as applicable.

The Town extensively utilizes placemaking to raise this awareness among the community and visitors in positive and interactive ways, showcasing the significance of the natural assets to the community and the whole ecosystem's well-being, enhancing the community's sense of pride and stewardship, and incentivizing best practices. Multiple opportunities are available for both community rights holders and non-local visitors to engage with or lead environmental stewardship initiatives.

OIS.44	**Sentiment and community buy-in** towards tourism is significantly improved among residents and community groups.	Tourism Economic Impact Community Engagement, Leadership, and Partnership

The tangible, positive contributions of tourism to local community development, coupled with increased access to information about tourism impacts, opportunities for active participation, and direct benefits from Town tourism-related initiatives, have led to a shift in residents' overall perception of tourism. Well-implemented tourism management initiatives outlined in the DLMP minimize the negative impacts of visitation on the daily lives of local residents.

This positive experience is nurtured through enhanced quality of facilities, amenities and public spaces, and an elevated sense of place and community identity throughout the town, resulting from place-based and program-based activations, investment and policy interventions proposed in the DLMP. The unique experiences offered by Sylvan Lake, including its charming lake town vibe, iconic festivals and events, and entrepreneurial spirit, foster a sense of community pride among Sylvan Lake residents and local businesses. Locals warmly welcome tourism, recognizing its contribution to sustainable community development.

4.6 VISITATION, VISITOR SPENDING AND THE **ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM** IN SYLVAN LAKE

This section presents an analysis of visitation and visitor spending, a projection of both from 2024 to 2034, and the resulting economic impact of tourism in Sylvan Lake. These projections consider the outcomes of the DLMP's recommendations and action items outlined in the following sections, as the Town works towards the aforementioned outcome and impact statements.

In summary:

An estimated 966,000 visitors will have visited Sylvan Lake by the end of 2024. Sylvan Lake is projected to welcome nearly 1.3 million annually by 2034, as a result of implementing the DLMP. In the first few years of implementation, the Town can expect to see a strong and steady rise in day trip visitors from various markets. In the later years of the plan (2030-3034), the destination will be more attractive to overnight visitors; while day trip visitors continue to increase steadily on an annual basis, visitor behaviour shifts due to expanding appeal and the overnight visitor segment grows at a more rapid rate.

The economic model used in this study estimates that $78.2 million dollars of visitor spending generates $44.9 million of direct GDP in Sylvan Lake in 2024. This economic activity supported the estimated employment of 608 direct full-time equivalents (FTEs) who collectively earned $26.4 million of direct labour income. Moreover, this economic activity supported the generation of at least $1.3 million in municipal taxes to Sylvan Lake. (See Table 6.)

In the 10-year period from 2025-34 (inclusive), visitor spending in Sylvan Lake is estimated to support a combined $606 million in direct GDP in the Town of Sylvan Lake's economy. This amount of economic activity is estimated to support a cumulative direct employment impact of 8,435 full-time equivalents (FTEs) over this 10-year period, collectively earning $368 million in direct labour income. Additionally, this economic activity is estimated to generate over $18 million in taxes for the Town of Sylvan Lake from 2025-2034. (See Table 3 - Addendum.) This growth is justified in the following pages.

Keep reading for the full analysis that leads to these conclusions, and for additional context.

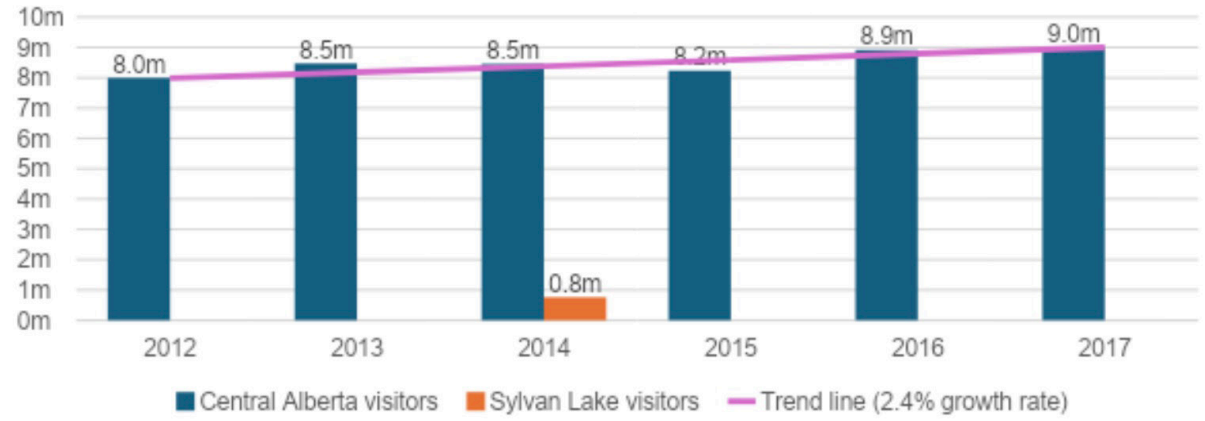
VISITATION AND VISITOR SPENDING

To conduct the following analysis of tourist visits and spending in Sylvan Lake, the project team assessed the quality of data available from a broad range of publicly available sources. This section outlines the data used to develop the basic assumptions driving baseline visitation in the visitor projections.

The first step in the analysis is to determine the current level of visitation in Sylvan Lake. An economic impact study[35] conducted in 2014 estimates that there were 761,223 visits to Sylvan Lake in 2014 based on an analysis of vehicular traffic in the town. Although the study was based on a relatively small sample, that estimate appears to hold up to scrutiny.

To put this figure in a broader context, Travel Alberta publishes its analysis of Statistics Canada's Visitor Travel Survey (VTS) and National Travel Survey (NTS), which breaks out visitation data by tourism region in Alberta. While the agency seems to have discontinued this work after a methodological change in 2019, consistent data is available covering the period from 2012 to 2017 (inclusive). The following chart shows visitation data for Alberta Central Tourism Region* with the Sylvan Lake visitor estimate illustrated in 2014.

Figure 5: Visits to Central Alberta



** All subsequent references to "Central Alberta" in this section refer to Alberta Central Tourism Region.*

As this chart shows, the 2014 impact study concluded that Sylvan Lake's share of visitation represented about 9% of visits to Central Alberta in 2014. This is a plausible share of Central Alberta's total visitors, with Sylvan Lake home to approximately 3.6% of the total population in Central Alberta.* That Sylvan Lake's visitation outperforms other destinations in Central Alberta (relative to its share of the population) can be explained by the town's unique tourism assets. To generate an estimate of visitation in 2024, this analysis uses the growth rate observed over the 2012-17 period in Central Alberta (2.4% compound annual growth from 2012 to 2017, which is also depicted on the preceding chart), yielding an estimated 966.6k total visitors to Sylvan Lake in 2024.

Although the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in significant disruptions in the tourism industry in 2020 and for a few subsequent years, a 2023 travel forecast[36] commissioned by Travel Alberta suggests that visitor spending in Alberta will have recovered to pre-pandemic levels by 2023. Although this analysis does not address visitation numbers or report on individual tourism regions in the province, the picture it paints is of a return to pre-pandemic trends by 2024, which supports the use of pre-pandemic data to establish a baseline for the present analysis.

With an initial visitation level and baseline growth rate, the next step is to determine the composition of visitors in Sylvan Lake with respect to (a) the type of visit (day/overnight), (b) visitor origin, and (c) spending behaviour. Using Travel Alberta's analysis of 2017 visitor data, the following table summarizes the assumptions used to develop the visitation and visitor spending model.

** Although Statistics Canada does not report on the Alberta Central Tourism Region, the tourism region is slightly bigger than the Central Zone Health Region, which was reported to have 460.3k inhabitants according to Statistics Canada's 2021 Census of Population.*

Table 1: Summary of assumptions used in the visitation and visitor spending model, specific to Sylvan Lake.

Type of visit	Visitor origin	Share of visitors	Share of spend	per visitor	Length of stay	Spend per visitor-night	Party size	Spend per party-visit
All segments								
Day trip	Central Alberta	30.1%	21.4%	$57.16			4.1	$234.35
Day trip	Rest of Alberta	35.4%	25.1%	$57.16			4.1	$234.35
Day trip	Rest of Canada & Intl	0.9%	0.6%	$57.16			3.0	$173.05
Overnight	Central Alberta	7.8%	11.2%	$114.99	2.6	$43.53	3.5	$401.70
Overnight	Rest of Alberta	22.2%	31.7%	$114.99	2.6	$43.53	3.5	$401.70
Overnight	Rest of Canada & Intl	3.6%	10.0%	$225.70	3.9	$58.24	2.1	$473.97
By type of visit								
Day trip	All origins	66.4%	47.1%	$57.16			4.1	$233.23
Overnight	All origins	33.6%	52.9%	$126.74	2.8	$45.71	3.3	$413.62
By visitor origin								
All types	Central Alberta	37.9%	32.5%	$69.09			4.0	$273.48
All types	Rest of Alberta	57.6%	56.8%	$79.49			3.8	$305.43
All types	Rest of Canada & Intl	4.5%	10.6%	$191.81			2.2	$429.24
All types	All origins	100.0%	100.0%	$80.56			3.8	$303.21

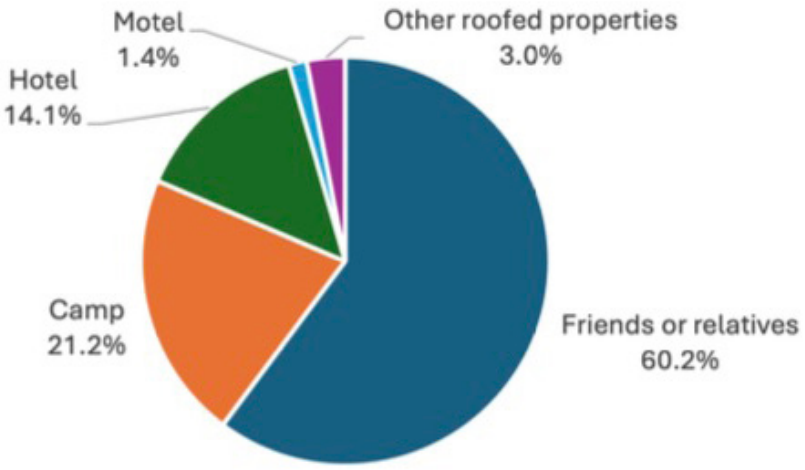
To perform an economic impact analysis, visitor spending is broken down another level, to understand precisely how this spending stimulates the economy. The following table shows the breakdown of spending per party visit in the six expenditure categories that are later used in the economic impact model.

Table 2: Visitor spending breakdown by visitor origin and type of visit (stated per party-visit)

	Central Alberta & Rest of Alberta		Rest of Canada & Intl	
Expenditure category	Day	Overnight	Day	Overnight
Private Vehicle	$108.03	$65.58	$154.78	$149.46
Food and Beverages	$85.03	$51.62	$166.25	$160.53
Accommodation	$0.00	$30.77	$0.00	$86.08
Retail and Other	$24.85	$15.09	$49.75	$48.04
Recreation and Entertainment	$14.09	$8.55	$25.40	$24.53
Public and Local Transport	$2.36	$1.43	$5.52	$5.33
Total	$234.35	$173.05	$401.70	$473.97

To put this data in context, it is important to understand a bit more about the data provided in the 2017 analysis by Travel Alberta. The following pie chart shows the breakdown of overnight visitor nights by accommodation type. As illustrated here, the majority of overnight visitor nights (60.2%) were spent with friends or relatives. The next most prevalent type of accommodation (21.2%) was camping, and the remaining three categories (representing a combined 18.5%) were at commercial roofed properties like hotels, motels, and short-term rentals.

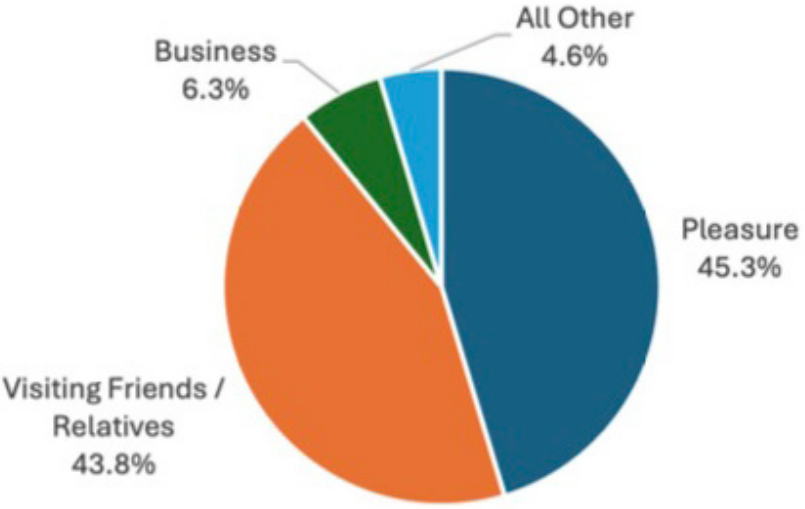
Figure 6: Breakdown of overnight visitor-nights by accommodation type



These observations are important because they explain why overnight visitors' spending, specifically on accommodation, is significantly lower than one might expect if one assumes that overnight visits are largely occurring at hotels.

In addition to that contextual information about accommodation types, the 2017 data from Travel Alberta also provides some insight into the primary purpose of trip, as illustrated in the following chart. As a share of overnight visitor nights, pleasure was the top reason for visiting Sylvan Lake, which speaks highly of the value of the town's tourism assets. As one might expect from the preceding observations, the second most prevalent purpose (by a close margin) was visiting friends and family. Overall, this data informs us that most of Sylvan Lake's visitor base consists of a fairly even split of visitors who are there for (a) recreation, and (b) their social or familial connections to the community. Likewise, a significant number of visitors are likely spending sparingly relative to their means (i.e., staying with friends or family). As such, it's reasonable to expect that they have additional money to spend, provided that there are enticing paid attractions throughout the town. These observations carry through into subsequent steps of the analysis.

Figure 7: Breakdown of overnight visitor-nights by primary purpose of trip



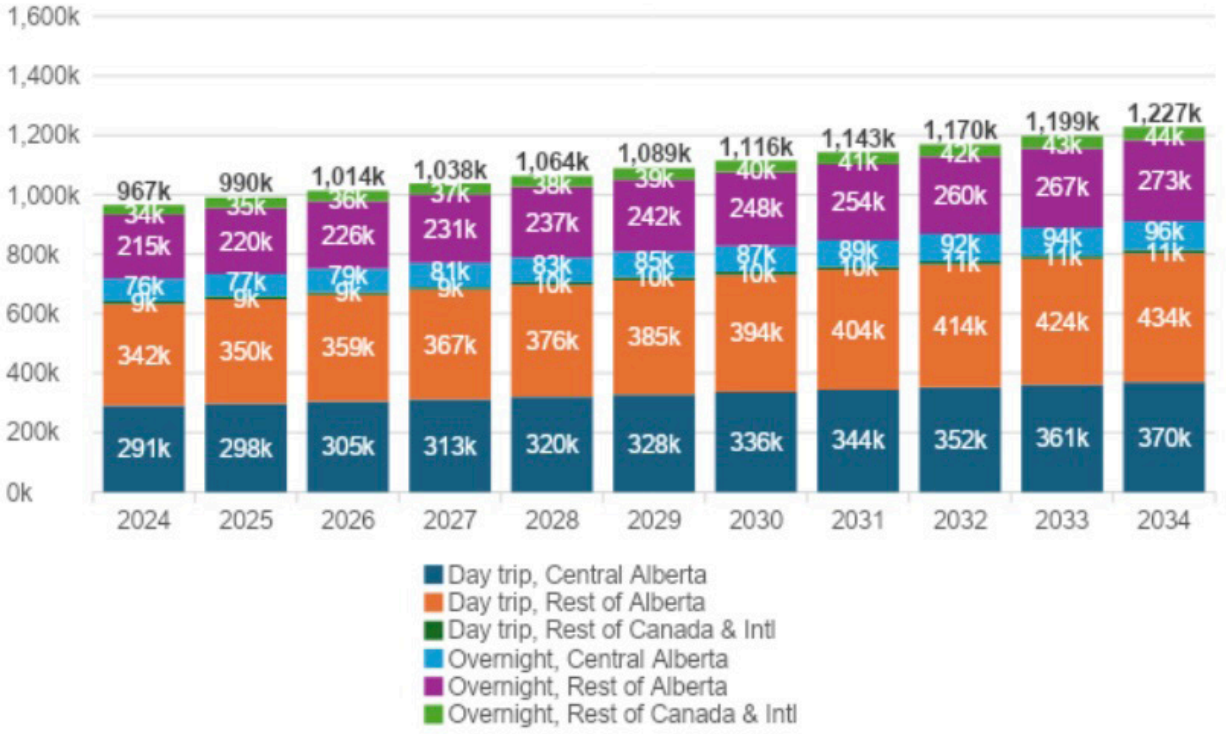
VISITATION AND VISITOR SPENDING PROJECTIONS, 2024-2034

This section is divided into four major parts: baseline visitation, incremental visitation, visitor spending, and changes in visitor spending behaviour. Together, these sections systematically articulate the assumptions used to develop the visitation and visitor spending model, which is then used as the basis for the economic impact assessment.

Baseline visitation

Based on the assumptions outlined in the previous section, the following chart shows a projection of baseline visitation expected to occur in Sylvan Lake in the period from 2024 to 2034. This projection can be considered the status quo in the town's visitation, assuming a constant level of growth (at the 2.4% compound annual growth rate) if nothing changes in the town's approach to attracting visitors. Accordingly, each of the six visitor segments grows at the same rate over the 10-year horizon.

Figure 8: Projected baseline visitation to Sylvan Lake, 2024-34



To illustrate the DLMP's effects, two types of assumptions build on this baseline: First, there is incremental growth, which drives any growth above and beyond the uniform baseline growth rate illustrated above. Second, there are changes in visitor behaviour with respect to their preference for day or overnight visits. The following subsections address each set of assumptions in turn.

Incremental visitation

The basic premise of incremental visitor growth is the idea that certain elements of the DLMP prompt increased visitation among specific segments of visitors. Overall, recommendations associated with the DLMP propose an initial phase of collaboration and consolidation of efforts among interested parties in Sylvan Lake's tourism ecosystem, to create growth and reinforce the existing roster of attractions in the town. A subsequent phase involves building on then-established assets/experiences and promoting them to broader markets, developing travel packages, and therefore driving a shift toward more overnight stays amidst more moderate visitor growth.

With respect to the first phase, the DLMP's "grow as you go" approach—rooted in community and collaboration—set a pace for it to take about five years to reach the point where initiatives generate the intended outcomes. The scope of these activities suggests that they will primarily reach markets in Alberta, so during that initial five-year period, this analysis assumes small incremental growth rates (between 0% and 2% in any given segment per year) to reflect the anticipated effects of the plan on each segment of visitors.

During the second phase, these growth rates taper off in nearby markets, and the introduction of travel packages and more paid experiences begins to ramp up growth in the "rest of Canada" and "rest of Alberta" overnight visitors (see Figure 6), as well as effecting a conversion from existing day trip to overnight visitors (see Figure 7).segment and effect a conversion from day trip to overnight visitors. The following table summarizes the incremental growth rates expected in each year for each segment of visitors.

Table 3: Incremental growth assumptions to Sylvan Lake, by type of visit and visitor origin

Type of visit	Visitor origin	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
Day trip	Central Alberta	0.00%	0.50%	1.00%	1.50%	2.00%	1.50%	1.00%	0.50%	0.00%	0.00%
Day trip	Rest of Alberta	0.00%	0.50%	1.00%	1.50%	2.00%	1.50%	1.00%	0.75%	0.50%	0.25%
Day trip	Rest of Canada & Intl	0.25%	0.50%	0.75%	1.00%	1.25%	1.50%	1.75%	2.00%	1.75%	1.50%
Overnight	Central Alberta	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.50%	1.00%	1.50%	2.00%	1.50%	1.00%	0.50%
Overnight	Rest of Alberta	0.00%	0.00%	0.25%	0.50%	0.50%	1.00%	1.00%	1.25%	1.50%	1.50%
Overnight	Rest of Canada & Intl	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.50%	1.00%	1.50%	2.00%

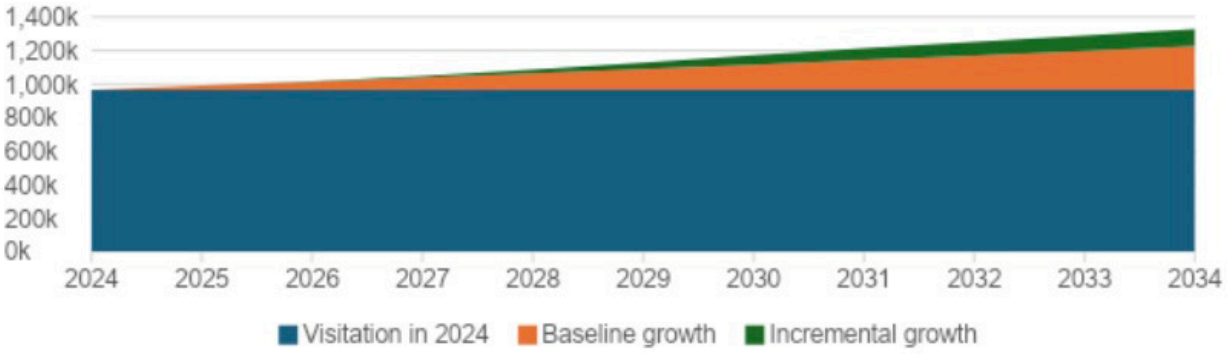
In addition to the incremental growth rates, the model considers that elements of the DLMP affect a transition from day trip to overnight visitors. To implement this behavioural change in the model, the following table summarizes the percentage of existing day trip visitors who are converted into overnight visitors in each of the later years. This assumption does not fundamentally change the number of visitors; it simply moves these visitors from the day trip side of the ledger to overnight trips.

Table 4: Incremental change from day trips to overnight trips

2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
0.000%	0.000%	0.000%	0.000%	0.150%	0.300%	0.300%	0.300%	0.300%	0.300%

To summarize these assumptions in simpler terms, the combined effect of these assumptions over the projections' 10-year horizon yields a 3.2% annual growth rate, of which 2.4% is built into the baseline growth and 0.8% is attributable to incremental growth based on these assumptions. The following chart illustrates the overall amount of projected growth driven by the baseline growth rate (2.4%) vs. incremental growth (0.8%).

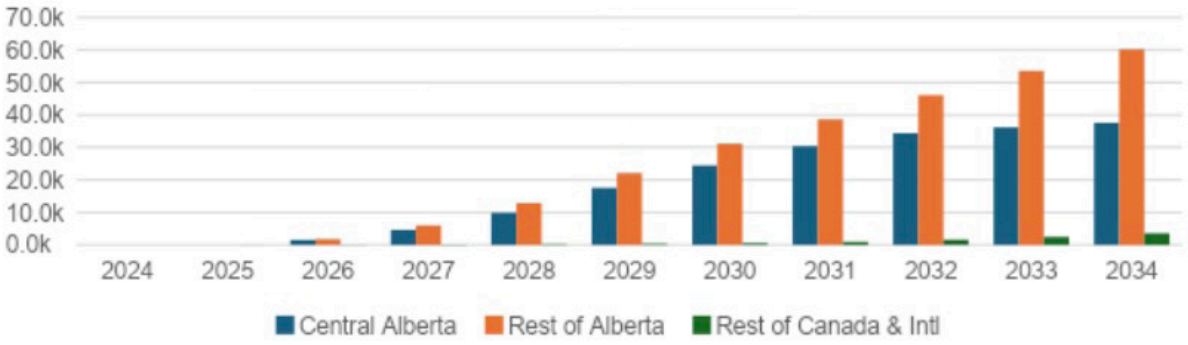
Figure 9: Breakdown of visitor growth by type of growth assumptions



Before moving forward with this discussion, it's important to emphasize that incremental growth attributed to the DLMP is structured in a way that (a) cohesively aligns with the nature of activities/ outcomes proposed in the plan, and (b) is a very conservative effect relative to the historical growth rate observed in Central Alberta. To observe the effects of these assumptions in detail, the following discussion focuses on the composition of incremental visitors (depicted as a green segment in the preceding chart).

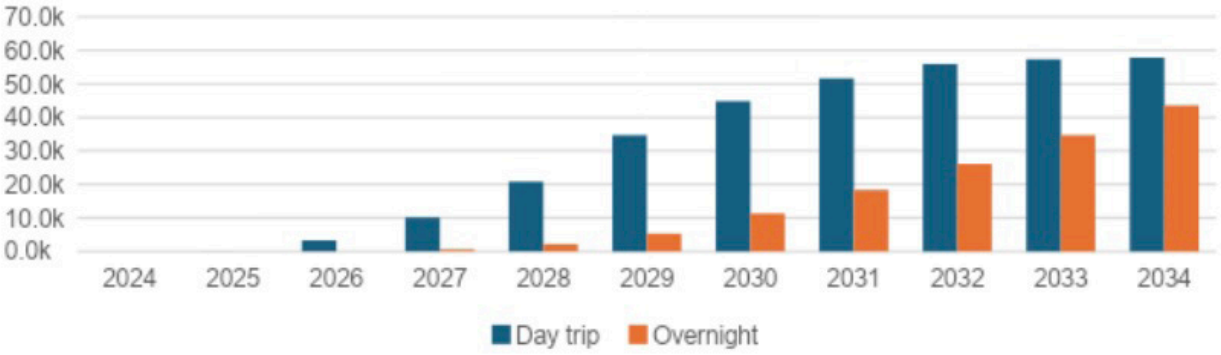
The following chart shows the number of incremental visitors by origin. As noted in previous discussion, the most striking aspect of this chart is the immediate growth in visitors from the rest of Alberta, mainly due to increased marketing investments and enhanced connections through piloting shuttles. This growth from within Alberta continues but begins to moderate as more exciting visitor experiences become available in Sylvan Lake, increasing in tandem with visits from elsewhere in Central Alberta. As the timeline advances into the second phase, there is an increase in visitation from the rest of Canada and international visitors.

Figure 10: Breakdown of incremental visitors by origin



The following chart illustrates the same data, broken out by type of visit (i.e., day trips vs. overnight trips). This chart offers a clearer view of the transition from day trips to overnights; that is, the tapering of the growth of day trips and increasing growth of overnights as the second phase of the plan's outcomes unfold.

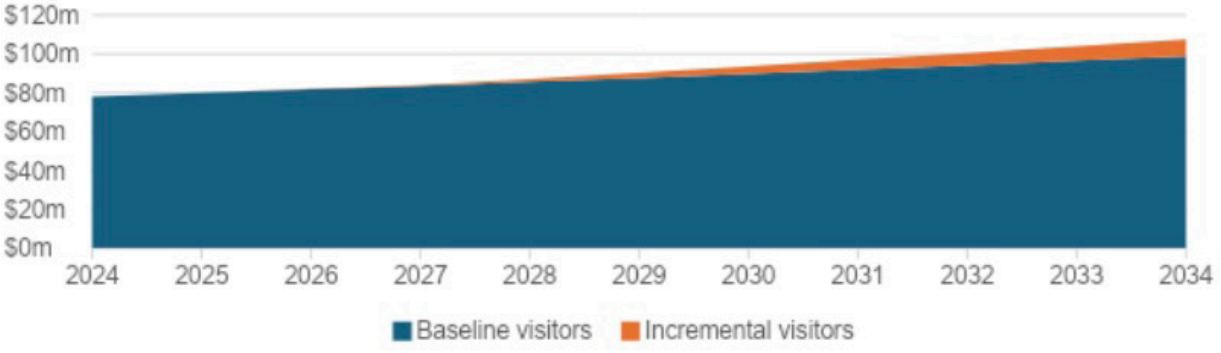
Figure 11: Breakdown of incremental visitors to Sylvan Lake, by type of visit



Visitor spending

Having established a projection of visitation (broken down into baseline and incremental growth), the next step of the analysis is to generate a visitor spending projection. The following chart summarizes the total amount of spending based on (a) the visitation projections, and (b) visitor spending assumptions laid out in Table 1 and Table 2. This chart breaks down the total amount of visitor spending into (a) the portion contributed by the baseline visitors, and (b) that contributed by incremental visitors discussed in the previous subsection of this analysis.

Figure 12: Summary of spending in Sylvan Lake by baseline and incremental visitors



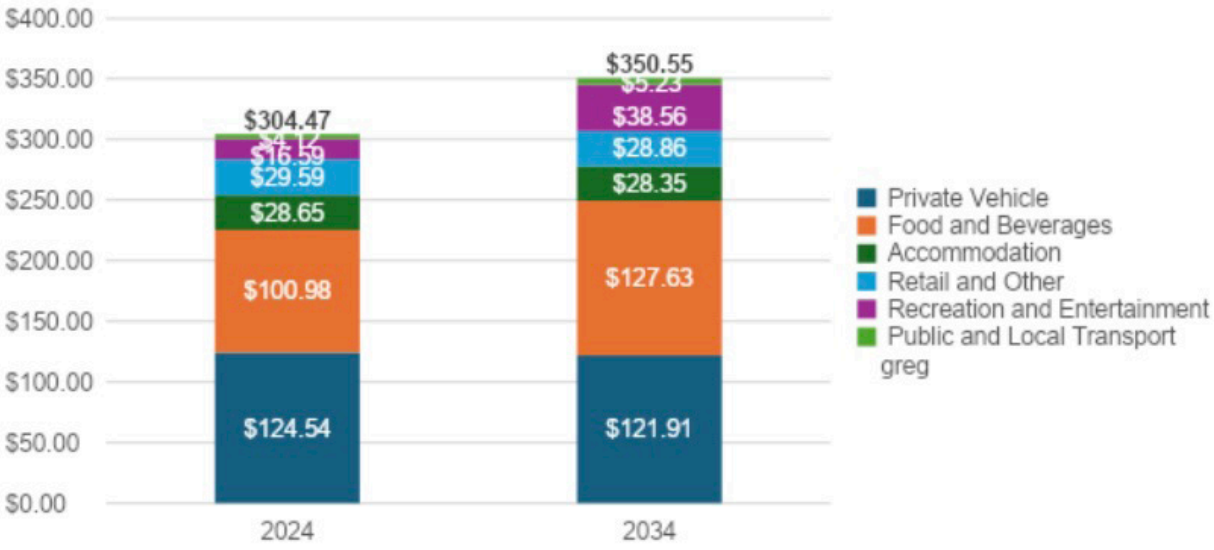
Changes in visitor spending behaviour

In addition to the DLMP's effect on visitation, it articulates recommendations that are expected to prompt increases in visitor spending. The following table outlines the assumptions used to implement these effects in the visitor spending model.

ASSUMPTION	DESCRIPTION OF IMPLEMENTATION MODEL
Parking rates increase from $3.00/hour and $30.00/day to $3.50/hour and $35.00/day	On average, all visitors pay 16.67% more for parking in the private vehicle expenditure category. At Sylvan Lake's 2023 parking revenue levels, parking represents 1.53% of visitors' total private vehicle spending, so this represents very small amounts on a per-visitor basis and seems reasonable in the bigger picture. This assumption starts in 2025 and remains constant thereafter.
Increased spending on food and beverage	On average, all visitors spend an additional $5 per day on food from local vendors (i.e., $20 for party of 4, over their whole trip). This assumption ramps in smoothly from 2025 to 2028 (25% per year), as it depends on a number of actions to occur, including new vendors, simplified approvals, new financing programs, etc.
Increase in overnight visitors' spending on experience	Better marketing and increased availability/variety of local experiences adds $60 per party for the 45.3% of overnight visitors whose primary purpose is leisure (see Figure 3). It is anticipated that it will take a significant amount of time to drive this level of change, so this assumption is smoothly phased in from 2025 to 2032 (12.5% per year). Broadly speaking, a core theme in the DLMP's recommendations is to foster the development of more events, experiences, and activations that visitors will be excited to spend money on.
Increase in day trip visitors' spending on experience	On average, day trip visitors spend an average of $5 more per person on experience because there are simply more activations around town. Whereas overnight visitors may be willing and able to spend a lot more on big-ticket experiences, this separate assumption for day trip visitors reflects the smaller-scale experiences that will appeal to this visitor segment. This assumption is smoothly phased in from 2025 to 2028 (25% per year) because these smaller experiences are expected to peak earlier in the timeline than those that would drive increased overnight spending.
Increased spending on transportation	Some combination of Sylvan Lake's shuttle service (to major centres and/or parking lots outside of the core) and e-scooter program adds an average of $1 per trip for overnight visitors in the public/local transportation category. The structure of this assumption recognizes that overnight visitors are more likely to use these kinds of services. This spending phases in over 2 years because these services have low capital requirements and are expected to launch quickly.

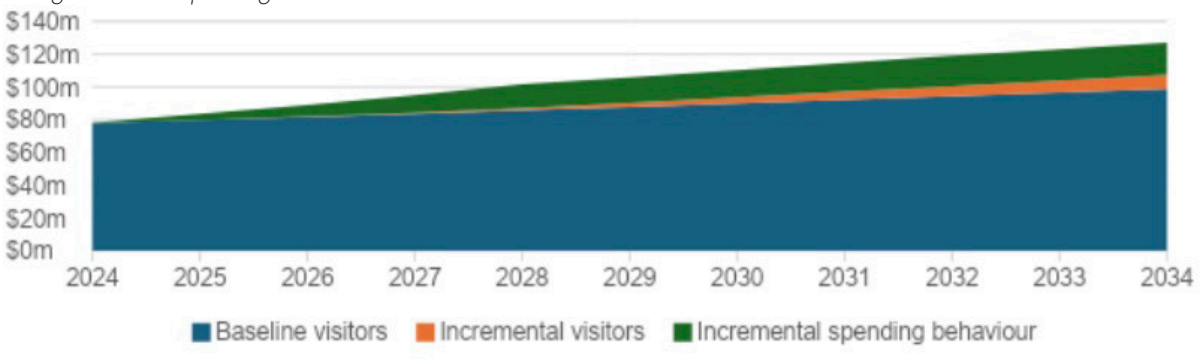
To summarize the overall effect of these assumptions, the following chart illustrates the overall average increase in per-party spending from 2024 to 2034. Note that this data is stated on a per-party basis, after the effects of incremental growth rates are applied to each individual visitor segment. As such, this illustration should be understood as a representation of how overall per-party spending changes for all visitors over the entire 10-year projection. For example, the decrease in "retail and other" spending is simply due to the increasing share of overnight visitors who spend a lower share of their total spending in this category (as opposed to an assumption that explicitly changes the amount of spending in this category, like the assumptions outlined above).

Figure 13: Comparison of overall average per-party spending in 2024 and 2034, in Sylvan Lake



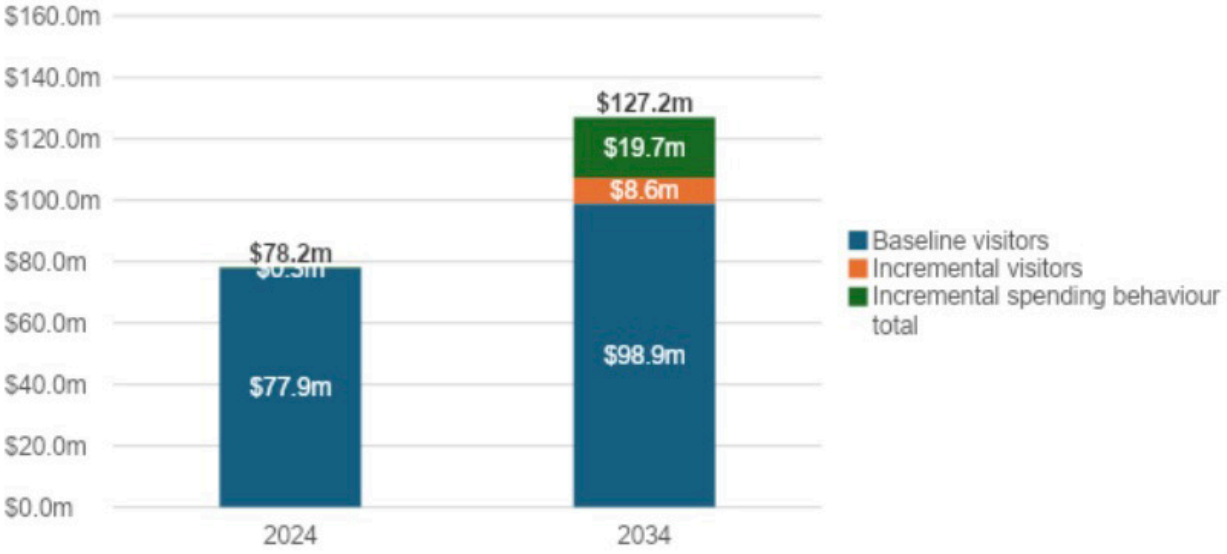
Putting all of this together, the following chart builds on the spending shown in Figure 8 to add the incremental spending due to the changes in visitor spending behaviour that have been discussed in this section (shown in green).

Figure 14: Summary of spending in Sylvan Lake by baseline visitors, incremental visitors, and incremental spending due to changes in visitor spending behaviour



The following chart isolates these results in 2024 and 2034 to highlight the overall change over the 10-year horizon. As this chart illustrates, the majority of the benefits of implementing the DLMP are from aspects of the Plan that seek to increase visitor spending. Although some DLMP recommendations are anticipated to increase visitation, the assumptions driving visitor growth proposed in this model are small relative to the level of visitor growth observed in historical trends in the region. On the other hand, this analysis of Travel Alberta's 2017 visitor data suggests that visitors likely have a lot of capacity to spend more during their trip, given the opportunity.

Figure 15: Comparison of total visitor spending in 2024 and 2034 in Sylvan Lake, broken down by baseline visitor spending, incremental visitor spending, and incremental changes in visitor spending behaviour



VISITATION AND VISITOR SPENDING PROJECTIONS, 2024-2034

This section presents the results of an economic impact assessment based on the detailed spending estimates generated by the visitation and visitor spending model described in the previous sections.

Economic Impact of Sylvan Lake Visitors in 2024

The economic impact model used in this study estimates that tourism spending of $78.2 million dollars in Sylvan Lake contributed $99.1 million in GDP to Canada's economy in 2024 (84.4 million of GDP in Alberta). This economic activity supported the employment of an estimated 1,027 full-time equivalents (FTEs), who collectively earned $53.0 million in labour income (869 FTEs earned $43.9m in Alberta). The taxes associated with this economic activity are estimated to have supported $13.0 million of federal tax and $5.4 million of provincial tax paid to the Government of Alberta in 2024.

The following table presents a detailed breakdown of the economic impact of visitor spending in Sylvan Lake in 2024. It's helpful to remember a few key points when interpreting the information presented:

- The impacts in each column are stated within the geographic scope of Alberta and Canada, respectively. For example, the 'Canada' column accounts for how the initial visitor spending in Sylvan Lake impacts the entire Canadian economy. In this context, it's important to note that the provincial taxes in this column represent an estimate of the total amount of taxes paid to all provinces; likewise, the municipal taxes represent the total amount of taxes paid to all municipalities in Canada.
- Impacts are broken out into direct, indirect and induced impacts:
    - Direct impacts represent the GDP, labour income, and employment that is supported by visitor spending at businesses in Sylvan Lake.
    - Indirect impacts represent the GDP, labour income, and employment that is supported by those Sylvan Lake businesses' transactions with their suppliers (and continues on to reflect those suppliers' purchases from their own suppliers, and so on, all at the level needed to support that initial purchase).
    - Induced impacts add households into the equation and account for the GDP, labour income, and employment supported by all of the workers who earned labour income in the direct and indirect stages of the economic model. In other words, induced impacts represent the impact of spending by the household sector that is supported by labour income.
- Employment impacts are stated in terms of full-time equivalents (FTEs), which are units of labour expressed in person-years of employment. This metric is preferred to "jobs," which counts part-time and full-time employees as one and the same.
- Tax impacts are estimated based on the total amount of economic activity, including direct, indirect and induced impacts.

Table 5: Economic impact of visitor spending in Sylvan Lake, in the Albertan and Canadian economies

			2024	
			Alberta	Canada
		Total federal tax	$10.3m	$13.0m
	Provincial	Personal income tax	$3.0m	$5.1m
		Corporate income tax	$1.2m	$1.8m
		Consumption tax	$1.2m	$4.5m
		Total provincial tax	$5.4m	$11.3m
	Municipal	Local property taxes and fees	$1.9m	$2.9m
		Total municipal tax	$1.9m	$2.9m
	Total taxes		$17.6m	$27.2m

Table 6: Economic impact of visitor spending in Sylvan Lake, in the Albertan and Canadian economies

			2024	
			Alberta	Canada
Initial expenditure			$78.2m	$78.2m
GDP	Direct		$44.9m	$44.9m
	Indirect		$15.2m	$21.2m
	Induced		$24.3m	$33.0m
	Total GDP		$84.4m	$99.1m
Labour income	Direct		$26.4m	$26.4m
	Indirect		$7.8m	$11.7m
	Induced		$9.8m	$15.0m
	Total labour income		$43.9m	$53.0m
Employment (FTEs)	Direct		608	608
	Indirect		105	170
	Induced		156	248
	Total employment		869	1,027
Taxes	Federal	Personal income tax	$6.7m	$7.6m
		Corporate income tax	$1.7m	$2.8m
		Consumption tax	$1.9m	$2.7m
		Total federal tax	$10.3m	$13.0m
	Provincial	Personal income tax	$3.0m	$5.1m
		Corporate income tax	$1.2m	$1.8m
		Consumption tax	$1.2m	$4.5m
		Total provincial tax	$5.4m	$11.3m
	Municipal	Local property taxes and fees	$1.9m	$2.9m
		Total municipal tax	$1.9m	$2.9m
	Total taxes		$17.6m	$27.2m

The economic model used in this study estimates that $78.2 million dollars of visitor spending generates $44.9 million of direct* GDP in Sylvan Lake in 2024. This economic activity supported the estimated employment of 608 direct full-time equivalents (FTEs) who collectively earned $26.4 million of direct labour income. Moreover, this economic activity supported the generation of at least $1.3 million in municipal taxes to Sylvan Lake.

** Although it is not feasible within the present work to model indirect and induced impacts in Sylvan Lake itself, direct impacts (definitionally) occur within the geographical scope of the town. As a result, this analysis reports on the direct impacts in Sylvan Lake as minimums, rather than a complete and comprehensive account of these impacts (as this analysis does with respect to economic impacts in the Albertan and Canadian economies).*

The following table summarizes the direct impacts stimulated within the geographic scope of the Sylvan Lake economy.

Table 7: Direct economic impact of visitor spending in Sylvan Lake, in the Sylvan Lake economy

	2024 Sylvan Lake
Initial expenditure	$78.2m
Direct GDP	$44.9m
Direct labour income	$26.4m
Direct employment (FTEs)	608
Direct municipal property taxes and fees	$1.3m

Projected Economic Impact of Sylvan Lake Visitors from 2025 to 2034

The following tables show the projected economic impacts over the full timeline used in the visitor spending model. They include columns for 10-year totals (2025-34) and the average annual impact for the 10-year projections. Each table addresses a different geographical scope (Canada, Alberta, and Sylvan Lake).In the 10-year period from 2025-34 (inclusive), visitor spending in Sylvan Lake is estimated to support over $1.3 billion in GDP in the Canadian economy. This amount of economic activity is estimated to support a cumulative employment impact of 14,294 full-time equivalents (FTEs) over this 10-year period, collectively earning $740 million in labour income. Additionally, this economic activity is estimated to generate nearly $180 million in taxes for the federal government.

Table 8: Economic impact of visitor spending in Sylvan Lake, in the Canadian economy

			Current year	Projection									Summary of projection	
			2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	10-yr total	Average
Initial expenditure			$78.2m	$83.7m	$89.1m	$95.1m	$101.7m	$105.8m	$110.2m	$114.6m	$119.0m	$123.1m	$127.2m	$1,069.4m	$106.9m
GDP		Direct	$44.9m	$47.9m	$50.8m	$54.0m	$57.6m	$59.9m	$62.4m	$64.8m	$67.3m	$69.6m	$71.9m	$606.1m	$60.6m
		Indirect	$21.2m	$22.8m	$24.4m	$26.2m	$28.2m	$29.3m	$30.5m	$31.8m	$33.0m	$34.1m	$35.3m	$295.7m	$29.6m
		Induced	$33.0m	$35.5m	$38.1m	$40.8m	$43.9m	$45.7m	$47.6m	$49.5m	$51.4m	$53.2m	$54.9m	$460.6m	$46.1m
		Total GDP	$99.1m	$106.2m	$113.3m	$121.0m	$129.6m	$134.9m	$140.5m	$146.1m	$151.7m	$156.9m	$162.1m	$1,362.3m	$136.2m
Labour income		Direct	$26.4m	$28.4m	$30.5m	$32.7m	$35.1m	$36.6m	$38.1m	$39.6m	$41.1m	$42.5m	$43.9m	$368.4m	$36.8m
		Indirect	$11.7m	$12.6m	$13.5m	$14.5m	$15.6m	$16.2m	$16.9m	$17.6m	$18.3m	$18.9m	$19.5m	$163.4m	$16.3m
		Induced	$15.0m	$16.1m	$17.3m	$18.5m	$19.9m	$20.7m	$21.6m	$22.4m	$23.3m	$24.1m	$24.9m	$208.8m	$20.9m
		Total labour income	$53.0m	$57.1m	$61.2m	$65.7m	$70.6m	$73.5m	$76.5m	$79.6m	$82.7m	$85.5m	$88.3m	$740.7m	$74.1m
Employment (FTEs)		Direct	608	653	699	749	804	837	871	905	940	972	1,004	8,435	843
		Indirect	170	183	197	212	228	237	247	257	268	277	286	2,391	239
		Induced	248	268	287	307	330	344	358	373	387	400	413	3,468	347
		Total employment	1,027	1,104	1,183	1,268	1,362	1,418	1,477	1,535	1,595	1,649	1,703	14,294	1,429
Taxes	Fed.	Personal income tax	$7.6m	$8.1m	$8.7m	$9.4m	$10.1m	$10.5m	$10.9m	$11.3m	$11.8m	$12.2m	$12.6m	$105.6m	$10.6m
		Corporate income tax	$2.8m	$2.9m	$3.1m	$3.3m	$3.5m	$3.7m	$3.8m	$4.0m	$4.1m	$4.3m	$4.4m	$37.3m	$3.7m
		Consumption tax	$2.7m	$2.9m	$3.1m	$3.3m	$3.5m	$3.6m	$3.8m	$3.9m	$4.1m	$4.2m	$4.4m	$36.7m	$3.7m
		Total federal tax	$13.0m	$13.9m	$14.9m	$15.9m	$17.1m	$17.8m	$18.5m	$19.3m	$20.0m	$20.7m	$21.4m	$179.6m	$18.0m
	Prov.	Personal income tax	$5.1m	$5.4m	$5.8m	$6.3m	$6.7m	$7.0m	$7.3m	$7.6m	$7.9m	$8.1m	$8.4m	$70.5m	$7.1m
		Corporate income tax	$1.8m	$1.9m	$2.0m	$2.2m	$2.3m	$2.4m	$2.5m	$2.6m	$2.7m	$2.8m	$2.9m	$24.3m	$2.4m
		Consumption tax	$4.5m	$4.8m	$5.1m	$5.5m	$5.8m	$6.1m	$6.3m	$6.6m	$6.8m	$7.1m	$7.3m	$61.4m	$6.1m
		Total provincial tax	$11.3m	$12.1m	$13.0m	$13.9m	$14.9m	$15.5m	$16.1m	$16.8m	$17.4m	$18.0m	$18.6m	$156.3m	$15.6m
	Muni.	Local property taxes and fees	$2.9m	$3.1m	$3.3m	$3.5m	$3.7m	$3.9m	$4.1m	$4.2m	$4.4m	$4.5m	$4.7m	$39.4m	$3.9m
		Total municipal tax	$2.9m	$3.1m	$3.3m	$3.5m	$3.7m	$3.9m	$4.1m	$4.2m	$4.4m	$4.5m	$4.7m	$39.4m	$3.9m
	Total taxes		$27.2m	$29.2m	$31.1m	$33.3m	$35.7m	$37.2m	$38.7m	$40.3m	$41.8m	$43.2m	$44.7m	$375.2m	$37.5m

In the 10-year period from 2025-34 (inclusive), visitor spending in Sylvan Lake is estimated to support over $1.1 billion in GDP in Alberta's economy. This amount of economic activity is estimated to support a cumulative employment impact of 12,075 full-time equivalents (FTEs) over this 10-year period, collectively earning $613 million in labour income. Additionally, this economic activity is estimated to generate nearly $75 million in taxes for the Government of Alberta.

Table 9: Economic impact of visitor spending in Sylvan Lake, in the Albertan economy

			Current year	Projection										Summary of projection	
			2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	10-yr total	Average
Initial expenditure			$78.2m	$83.7m	$89.1m	$95.1m	$101.7m	$105.8m	$110.2m	$114.6m	$119.0m	$123.1m	$127.2m	$1,069.4m	$106.9m
GDP		Direct	$44.9m	$47.9m	$50.8m	$54.0m	$57.6m	$59.9m	$62.4m	$64.8m	$67.3m	$69.6m	$71.9m	$606.1m	$60.6m
		Indirect	$15.2m	$16.3m	$17.4m	$18.6m	$20.0m	$20.8m	$21.7m	$22.6m	$23.5m	$24.3m	$25.1m	$210.2m	$21.0m
		Induced	$24.3m	$26.2m	$28.1m	$30.1m	$32.3m	$33.7m	$35.1m	$36.5m	$37.9m	$39.2m	$40.5m	$339.5m	$34.0m
		Total GDP	$84.4m	$90.3m	$96.2m	$102.7m	$109.9m	$114.4m	$119.1m	$123.9m	$128.7m	$133.0m	$137.5m	$1,155.8m	$115.6m
Labour income		Direct	$26.4m	$28.4m	$30.5m	$32.7m	$35.1m	$36.6m	$38.1m	$39.6m	$41.1m	$42.5m	$43.9m	$368.4m	$36.8m
		Indirect	$7.8m	$8.3m	$8.9m	$9.5m	$10.2m	$10.7m	$11.1m	$11.6m	$12.0m	$12.4m	$12.9m	$107.7m	$10.8m
		Induced	$9.8m	$10.6m	$11.3m	$12.2m	$13.1m	$13.6m	$14.2m	$14.7m	$15.3m	$15.8m	$16.4m	$137.2m	$13.7m
		Total labour income	$43.9m	$47.3m	$50.7m	$54.4m	$58.4m	$60.8m	$63.3m	$65.9m	$68.5m	$70.8m	$73.1m	$613.3m	$61.3m
Employment (FTEs)		Direct	608	653	699	749	804	837	871	905	940	972	1,004	8,435	843
		Indirect	105	113	121	130	139	145	152	158	164	170	175	1,466	147
		Induced	156	168	180	193	207	216	225	234	243	251	259	2,174	217
		Total employment	869	934	999	1,071	1,151	1,198	1,247	1,297	1,347	1,393	1,439	12,075	1,207
Taxes	Fed.	Personal income tax	$6.7m	$7.2m	$7.7m	$8.3m	$8.9m	$9.3m	$9.7m	$10.1m	$10.5m	$10.8m	$11.2m	$93.7m	$9.4m
		Corporate income tax	$1.7m	$1.8m	$1.9m	$2.0m	$2.1m	$2.2m	$2.3m	$2.4m	$2.5m	$2.6m	$2.6m	$22.3m	$2.2m
		Consumption tax	$1.9m	$2.0m	$2.1m	$2.3m	$2.4m	$2.5m	$2.7m	$2.8m	$2.9m	$3.0m	$3.1m	$25.7m	$2.6m
		Total federal tax	$10.3m	$11.0m	$11.8m	$12.6m	$13.5m	$14.0m	$14.6m	$15.2m	$15.8m	$16.3m	$16.9m	$141.7m	$14.2m
	Prov.	Personal income tax	$3.0m	$3.3m	$3.5m	$3.7m	$4.0m	$4.2m	$4.4m	$4.5m	$4.7m	$4.9m	$5.0m	$42.2m	$4.2m
		Corporate income tax	$1.2m	$1.3m	$1.4m	$1.5m	$1.5m	$1.6m	$1.7m	$1.7m	$1.8m	$1.9m	$1.9m	$16.3m	$1.6m
		Consumption tax	$1.2m	$1.3m	$1.3m	$1.4m	$1.5m	$1.6m	$1.7m	$1.7m	$1.8m	$1.9m	$1.9m	$16.2m	$1.6m
		Total provincial tax	$5.4m	$5.8m	$6.2m	$6.6m	$7.1m	$7.4m	$7.7m	$8.0m	$8.3m	$8.6m	$8.9m	$74.7m	$7.5m
	Muni.	Local property taxes and fees	$1.9m	$2.1m	$2.2m	$2.3m	$2.5m	$2.6m	$2.7m	$2.8m	$2.9m	$3.0m	$3.1m	$26.3m	$2.6m
		Total municipal tax	$1.9m	$2.1m	$2.2m	$2.3m	$2.5m	$2.6m	$2.7m	$2.8m	$2.9m	$3.0m	$3.1m	$26.3m	$2.6m
	Total taxes		$17.6m	$18.9m	$20.2m	$21.6m	$23.1m	$24.1m	$25.0m	$26.0m	$27.1m	$28.0m	$28.9m	$242.8m	$24.3m

In the 10-year period from 2025-34 (inclusive), visitor spending in Sylvan Lake is estimated to support $606 million in direct GDP in the Town of Sylvan Lake's economy. This amount of economic activity is estimated to support a cumulative direct employment impact of 8,435 full-time equivalents (FTEs) over this 10-year period, collectively earning $368 million in direct labour income. Additionally, this economic activity is estimated to generate over $18 million in taxes for the Town of Sylvan Lake.

Table 10: Direct economic impact of visitor spending in Sylvan Lake, in the Sylvan Lake economy

	Current year	Projection										Summary of projection	
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	10-yr total	Average
Initial expenditure	$78.2m	$83.7m	$89.1m	$95.1m	$101.7m	$105.8m	$110.2m	$114.6m	$119.0m	$123.1m	$127.2m	$1,069.4m	$106.9m
Direct GDP	$44.9m	$47.9m	$50.8m	$54.0m	$57.6m	$59.9m	$62.4m	$64.8m	$67.3m	$69.6m	$71.9m	$606.1m	$60.6m
Direct labour income	$26.4m	$28.4m	$30.5m	$32.7m	$35.1m	$36.6m	$38.1m	$39.6m	$41.1m	$42.5m	$43.9m	$368.4m	$36.8m
Direct employment (FTEs)	608	653	699	749	804	837	871	905	940	972	1,004	8,435	843
Direct municipal property taxes and fees	$1.3m	$1.4m	$1.5m	$1.6m	$1.8m	$1.8m	$1.9m	$2.0m	$2.1m	$2.1m	$2.2m	$18.4m	$1.8m

- Although it is not feasible within the present work to model indirect and induced impacts in Sylvan Lake itself, direct impacts (definitionally) occur within the geographical scope of the town. As a result, this analysis reports on the direct impacts in Sylvan Lake as minimums, rather than a complete and comprehensive account of these impacts (as this analysis does with respect to economic impacts in the Albertan and Canadian economies).
- Note that FTEs measure employment in person-years, so one employee, continuously employed on a full-time basis over the entire 10-year period would contribute 10 FTEs to this 10-year total.

ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The economic model used in this engagement is based on provincial[37] and national[38] detail-level symmetric input-output tables (IOTs) from Statistics Canada. The model uses IOTs based on 2019 data, which is in line with recommendations from Statistics Canada for modelling economic activity occurring after the Covid-19 pandemic.*

To report on employment in terms of full-time equivalents (FTEs), the model draws on additional data about compensation and hours worked, broken out by detail-level Input-Output Industry Codes (IOIC) from Table 36-10-0489-01.[39] FTEs are calculated from labour income based on average annual compensation per FTE, at the industry level, normalized to a 37.5 hour full-time work week. The model's results were compared with provincial and national multipliers published by Statistics Canada and other economic impact studies of tourism in Alberta to validate the model's general functionality and calibration specific to visitor spending.

To estimate taxes, the model uses estimates of GDP, labour income, mixed-income, and operating surplus from Table 36-10-0221-01[40], and tax revenue data for federal, provincial and municipal government from Table 36-10-0450-01.[41]

Although they were not used to produce the employment impact, jobs multipliers from Statistics Canada were used to estimate the tax impact of direct impacts in the Town of Sylvan Lake by prorating a share of the town's property tax base[42] in proportion to the number of jobs supported by tourist spending as a share of the town's workforce.[43]

The following table summarizes the mapping of tourist spending categories to detail-level input-output industry classifications (IOICs). Where one-to-many relationships occur in this table, tourist spending amounts were allocated to each IOIC category in proportion to household consumption in Alberta in 2019 (i.e., the allocation percentages sum to 100% within each tourist spending category).

** "Due to the COVID pandemic in 2020, the structure of the economy was significantly altered. The 2020 input-output multipliers and input-output models should be used for analysis of economic impacts in 2020. However, for economic impact analysis for more current periods, the 2019 input-output multipliers and input-output models may be considered as more reflective of current economic structures."*

TOURIST SPENDING CATEGORY	ALLOCATION	IOIC	IOIC TITLE
Accommodation	42%	BS721A00	RV (recreational vehicle) parks, recreational camps, and rooming and boarding houses
	58%	BS721100	Traveller accommodation
Food and Beverages	32%	BS445000	Food and beverage stores
	68%	BS722000	Food services and drinking places
Private Vehicle	100%	BS447000	Gasoline stations
Public and Local Transport	100%	BS48A000	Other transit and ground passenger transportation and scenic and sightseeing transportation
Recreation and Entertainment	60%	BS713A00	Amusement and recreation industries
	40%	BS71A000	Performing arts, spectator sports and related industries, and heritage institutions
Retail and Other	6%	BS443000	Electronics and appliance stores
	14%	BS442000	Furniture and home furnishings stores
	31%	BS452000	General merchandise stores
	23%	BS446000	Health and personal care stores
	14%	BS453A00	Miscellaneous store retailers (except cannabis)
	11%	BS451000	Sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores

4.7 **A ROADMAP** TO **SUCCESS**

To transform the above Outcome and Impact Statements into tangible realities for Sylvan Lake, a collaborative and community-based approach is essential. Within each of the subsequent Theme-based sections, strategic directions are articulated in pursuit of one or a selection of the OISs described above, each supported by specific recommendations and accompanying actions.

The overarching directions include:

- Addressing the critical infrastructure and spatial dynamics that are foundational to Sylvan Lake as a place to live, work and visit, as explored through **Section 5: Places and Connections**. This involves utilizing placemaking as a comprehensive framework for Sylvan Lake's destination development and investing in **downtown revitalization**, ultimately leaning on both initiatives for visitor management.

- Enhancing the local tourism narrative and the quality of interactions people can have with the town, as both locals and visitors, by leveraging and activating space, infrastructure and storytelling. This involves investing in strategic **product development, entrepreneurship supports and strategic marketing initiatives**, as explored through Section 6: Visitors & Experiences; and

- Establishing the processes, structures and resources required to cultivate a vibrant, sustainably-minded destination through c**ommunity leadership, collaboration and organizational capacity,** as explored in **Section 7: Community, Collaboration and Sustainability.** This involves enhancing information-sharing, **engagement and participation** in tourism initiatives amongst the community; **reimagining organizational structures**; creating **diverse revenue streams**; developing and refining **policies and processes**; fostering **strategic partnerships**; investing in **environmental protection and sustainability**; and actively **measuring success** of initiatives.

In addition to using"Visit Sylvan Lake" (VSL) to refer to the local tourism brand, the name is applied in this document to refer to the Town's tourism leadership entity, understanding that recognition as such is an ideal outcome of DLMP implementation (OIS.35).

Section 5:

Places & Connections

5.1 **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Sylvan Lake offers a unique value proposition within Alberta as the sole urban commercial hub with a rich assortment of public and commercial amenities directly adjacent to the lake. This section considers critical infrastructure and spatial dynamics fundamental to Sylvan Lake as a place to live, work and visit, as well as the dynamic interplay between local communities and visitors. Evaluating the current reality of tangible aspects of the town shape strategic directions to meet the needs of both residents and visitors in tourism growth, leadership and management. This includes transportation, parking, amenities and services, public art, destination animation and programming, routes, signage and facilities—and how these elements connect physically, thematically and/or culturally.

A review of Sylvan Lake's current tourism infrastructure explores leisure and recreational assets, the lake and lakefront, parks, indoor facilities, transportation, downtown, thoroughfares, activation initiatives, public art, festivals, stories, signage, trails and visitor services. Thirteen opportunities for improvement are identified across physical infrastructure, identity and aesthetic challenges, programming and activation, and accessibility standards, informing the following strategic directions:

Strategic Direction 1 emphasizes placemaking as a comprehensive framework for Sylvan Lake's destination development. Placemaking involves creative and collaborative approaches to enhance public spaces, fostering community engagement and reflecting local identity. Initiatives like public art, activation projects, and wayfinding improvements shape and enhance the visitor experience of a vibrant, cohesive destination that appeals to residents and visitors alike. By implementing placemaking strategies, from lakefront enhancements to downtown revitalization, the town can encourage community involvement in shaping and enhancing shared spaces, fostering a unique sense of place reflective of Sylvan Lake's diversity and heritage and boosting economic vitality and community pride.

Strategic Direction 2 focuses on downtown revitalization in Sylvan Lake to enhance attractiveness, promote economic growth and create a connected experience throughout. With an approach based on harmonizing the visual and architectural aesthetics, enhancing infrastructure and space utilization, facilitating business piloting and a regional campaign, the town stands to attract new businesses and entrepreneurs. By investing in placemaking, beautification, and business support, the town can create a vibrant hub that attracts visitors and fosters community connections. It will contribute to Sylvan Lake's overall appeal and competitiveness as a destination, and draw visitors beyond the lakefront into the urban core.

Strategic Direction 3 addresses visitor management by leveraging placemaking, downtown revitalization and program-based activations to positively influence visitor behaviour and minimize environmental and social impacts. The plan involves implementing creative parking solutions, enhancing wayfinding and visitor information, improving accessibility, and engaging interest and visitor activity downtown through events, community programming and placemaking strategies. By diversifying attractions, connecting lakefront to downtown, managing visitor flow to mitigate overcrowding, natural and cultural resources can be protected, and Sylvan Lake can ensure a sustainable and enjoyable experience for residents and visitors alike.

5.2 **THE CURRENT REALITY**

LEISURE AND RECREATIONAL ASSETS

The lake and lakefront

Sylvan Lake lake is a culturally significant asset for residents and is the foremost tourism draw because of its immediate proximity to urban amenities. It's also one of the few recreational lakes in Alberta that doesn't get blue-green algae. The lake is ideal for swimming, with crystal clear waters and without a mucky bottom. The main beach and adjacent green space—specifically, Sylvan Lake Park and Centennial Park—are considered primary real estate for beach goers in the summer months. A smaller beach near the Pier ("Baby Beach") is well-used by young families. There is a consensus amongst the community and visitors—further addressed in the Lakefront Usage Strategy (2020)—that the sand beach area is limited and requires enhancement and expansion to improve the user experience.

When it comes to the lakefront, there is a temporary field authorization in place between the Town of Sylvan Lake and the Province of Alberta, making the Town responsible for maintaining the pier and the beach area. The Town is currently working on obtaining a lease.

There are sand courts on the pier, while a playground and picnic shelters are available for rent at Centennial Park, which is also the main area for mobile vending. Well-maintained lakefront trails punctuate the waterfront experience, providing an easy-access corridor stretching from one end of the main beach area to the other, whether on foot or by bike. The boardwalk along Lakeshore Drive connects users to shops, restaurants, signature trails, picnic areas, playgrounds and open public spaces. Public toilets are available at various points along the lakeshore, though their positioning blocks views of the lake from adjacent venues.

In peak summer months and particularly on weekends, the lakefront area spanning from the pier through Centennial Park becomes overwhelmed with visitors, who often bring tents to claim broad swaths of space, as well as cooking devices. As such, locals avoid the beach during peak tourism

times despite it being the top attribute identified when asked what makes Sylvan a great place to live, work and/or play (84 per cent of local survey respondents). Consequently, there is frustration that their municipal tax dollars fund beach clean-up, by-law enforcement and other current tourism-related town investments—because it is viewed as funding visitor activities with no return benefit to the community. The perception that visitors spend very little money while in town (as they bring everything they need from home, giving little incentive to venture into local retailers and restaurants), further exacerbates this situation—a theme further explored in Section 7: Community, Collaboration and Sustainability.

Currently, the Parks and Open Spaces Bylaw permits fuel barbecues, fire pits and grills in parks but not charcoal barbecues. Policy does not limit the use of temporary structures, such as tents, in the beach area. There is an opportunity to enhance and leverage existing bylaws to influence visitor behaviour and balance the lakefront's use—and therefore appeal—as a shared resource between visitors and locals. This is addressed within the "Destination Leadership" section of Section 7: Community, Collaboration and Sustainability.

Further, the community has expressed a challenge regarding accessibility to the beach and the water for people with disabilities. Since DLMP project engagement occurred in early 2023, a wheelchair-accessible beach mat has been purchased for the lakefront, enabling beach access for wheelchairs, strollers, and canes. The Town also purchased three beach-accessible wheelchairs, two of which can float and go underwater. Ongoing accommodations for seniors and people with disabilities in public spaces are a necessary priority and a consideration to embody at all levels of strategy and planning.

Between events, mobile vending, and regular use, there is a growing and compounding pressure on the lakefront to serve an increasing amount of purposes, which threatens its viability and appeal as a destination, as well as environmental preservation. Simultaneously, the lakefront remains relatively one-dimensional, with limited dynamic appeal beyond coming to the beach and spending a day in the sun ('stop-and-flop'). The aforementioned Lakefront Usage Plan addresses this challenge, noting that the area requires investment to serve residents and visitors more fully. The plan includes actions to ensure an accessible, mixed-use lakefront, though despite focusing on improving Sylvan Lake's key asset, it remains in its infancy of implementation. Its recommendations support Sylvan Lake's overall destination development.

As for access to the lake, there is limited publicly-owned infrastructure available for watercraft and no publicly-owned boat launch within town limits. Privately-owned Marina Bay Marina is

a neighbourhood residents-only launch and unavailable to the general public. Another privately owned establishment, The Launch, offers boat launch services for a fee. To accommodate boat arrivals, free, temporary mooring is available on the west side of the Sylvan Lake pier, though the pier is minimally maintained for this use as it currently remains the property of the Government of Alberta

This gap in water access is peculiar for a lake-based destination. Enhanced public mooring, docking and launching would cater to those with boats who live around the lake while also improving overall accessibility to downtown, potentially easing parking pressures. However, exploring ways to expand water access for motorized vessels ought to be approached with caution, given that studies show high boat traffic results in higher algae growth and kick-up of sediment.[44] Any threats to the lake's water quality ultimately threaten the viability of Sylvan Lake as a tourism destination—not to mention the value it brings to current and prospective residents. Potential environmental impacts are far-reaching, as the Sylvan Lake watershed contains diverse habitats, supporting a variety of vegetation, wildlife and aquatic species, which allow for nature-based activities such as bird watching and fishing. An in-depth environmental impact analysis is required to determine the cost-benefit of such an endeavour.

In the winter months, a village of fishing shacks can be found on the frozen lake, demonstrating its ongoing position as a community gathering area and a year-round events space, despite frigid temperatures. While the annual Winterfest, BIG JIG and Ice Dragon Boat Racing events lean into lake-based activities, there is an opportunity to further leverage Sylvan Lake's unique potential as a winter destination. There is a layer of risk in relying on such programs, given the unpredictability of weather patterns or temperatures, particularly given the impacts of climate change. Unseasonably warm temperatures can render certain activities unsafe and/or impossible to move forward with, and on short notice at that.

Parks, open spaces and outdoor recreation

Sylvan Lake's outdoor assets extend beyond the main beachfront, with several parks, playgrounds and outdoor recreational areas.

There are 28 sports fields for baseball, softball, soccer and football. Tennis and basketball courts are also available in town, and the indoor curling rink can be converted for pickleball. In Sylvan Lake, there are 24 playgrounds, six of which are scheduled for replacement over the next 10 years. There is also a skate park, disc golf course and pickleball courts. Sylvan Lake's parks evolve with the seasons, supporting outdoor winter activities, including skating, hockey, cross-country skiing, tobogganing, ice fishing and snowshoeing.

As it develops, Pogadl Park is set to be a prime event space, and it is already making its mark on the community. Home of the Western Canadian Baseball League (WCBL) Sylvan Lake Gulls at Gulls Field, people from Central Alberta come for the sport and entertainment. Gulls Field's capacity exceeds 4,000, positioning it to play host to regional events. The broader 80-acre Park is under development and represents an opportunity for tourism product development (see Section 6: Visitors and Experiences).

Jarvis Bay Provincial Park is located on the shores of the lake, just outside of town. With 195 camping sites, the Park accommodates tents, trailers and RVs. A family-friendly destination, it offers two playground areas and an interconnected trail system for biking or hiking. There is no direct access to the lake from the campground, so visitors who stay there often take advantage of the amenities available in the community of Sylvan Lake.

[FYI!]

WHAT IS POGADL PARK?

Pogadl Park is a long-term project spanning several years, currently under ongoing development. When finalized, Pogadl Park will encompass:

- recreational facilities, including soccer fields, a football field and building and court sports
- overnight camping
- access to the town's existing trail system
- Town facilities on site for maintenance equipment and supplies

Outdoor event spaces suitable for multi-season activities include Lakefront Park (where the iconic local lighthouse resides), as well as Four Seasons Park, Centennial Park and Sylvan Lake Park. Leaning into the lake town vibe, spaces along the waterfront are the Town's go-to choice in both summer and winter seasons, given the space capacity and pre-existing infrastructure & services available to support large-scale festival-style events in proximity to economic impact generating businesses that can provide additional services (as further explored later within this section).

Indoor facilities

The NexSource Centre is home to various assets, including two full-size hockey arenas, an aquatic centre with a wheelchair-accessible pool, a full-sized curling rink, a lounge/restaurant plus a canteen, a seniors centre, multipurpose rooms, children's play space and a fitness centre. The multiplex facility's access, parking, washroom facilities, lighting and maintenance are all rated "Good" within the Recreation, Parks and Open Space Master Plan's Assessment Criteria.

The NexSource Centre has capacity to host small- and medium-sized events. Concerts, tournaments, indoor sport events and trade shows are among the activations currently taking place throughout the year, primarily for local and regional audiences. In addition to Town-led programming, the various areas are available for rent. Residents can access NexSource facilities by buying a pass, of which there are various options (drop-in, one-month, three-month, annual, etc.).

The Town MultiCampus is another venue with a gymnasium including bleachers, capable of being split into three standard-sized gyms. There is also a performing arts room, equipped with lighting and sound systems, as well as built-in seating. The space is shared between the Town with Ecole Mother Teresa and Fox Run Public School.

The Wellness and Community Connections Centre, located next to Four Seasons Park, has a standard-size gymnasium with a large commercial kitchen and a stage, a preschool/ kindergarten, social services and the Sylvan Lake Youth Centre.

Overall, Sylvan Lake's ongoing investment in facilities and infrastructures supports community interest groups and non-profits in furthering their cultural and community goals. As further explored in Section 6: Visitors and Experiences, these spaces are currently underutilized as tourism assets and can be strategically harnessed from a product development perspective to attract visitors for extended multi-day stays.

TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE & PARKING

Sylvan Lake is located between Calgary and Edmonton, and less than a 90-minute drive from both international airports, which served a combined 20.35 million passengers in 2022.[4546] There are several primary access points in town, the most ideal of which is Centennial St. from Highway 11. This route offers lake views on the way into town and takes visitors past downtown shops on their way to the waterfront. From Highway 11, visitors can also opt to come into town via 60th St. and Highway 20, while others might arrive via Highway 11A.

There are no public transportation options connecting Sylvan Lake locally or regionally, which leads to a dominant presence of private vehicles, which further exacerbates parking challenges. Congestion is a reported issue on Lakeshore Drive in the summer months and during major events along the lake. This is mainly due to drivers staking out the ideal parking spot despite limited availability, depending on the day.

From May 15 to September 15 annually, paid parking is initiated from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, with an on-street pay parking time limit restricted to two hours for both residents and visitors in select areas. Residents and property owners are eligible to access parking in pay zones without a fee (registration required). There is an existing gap in designated parking options for larger vehicles such as RVs, buses and those with boat trailers.

The Town manages parking fees via a digital system, Hotspot. While parking falls under the Parks and Protective Services department, tourism drives parking revenues, amounting to $515,836 in 2023. There remains an opportunity to expand economic impacts and mitigate congestion by increasing rates and reducing free parking zones available during peak tourism seasons, and directing a portion of parking revenues to support Visit Sylvan Lake initiatives.

Enhancing active transportation networks throughout the town is also an important focus area for relieving congestion pressures. In fact, the Town has implemented a requirement for developers to demonstrate trail connectivity as a part of their development approvals, meaning this network is guaranteed to continue to grow. Though there are 26 kilometres of trails, a challenge identified in DLMP engagement efforts and further noted in the Sylvan Lake Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan (SWARP), is that the lakefront trail network is poorly connected "to and through the rest of the Town."[47] The SWARP notes, "Connecting the existing infrastructure together will improve the viability of using active transportation as an alternative to the automobile. Stronger connections will also make the network safer and easier to navigate."[48] Enhancing trail connectivity and navigation enhances the appeal of parking outside of the downtown, giving visitors viable alternatives to reach their ultimate destination without the headache of traffic congestion. It also provides a new channel for local and regional product development possibilities.

Finally, with regard to transportation, the Town launched an e-scooter program in 2023, for residents and visitors. Using a Neuron app to unlock the e-scooter, users pay an initial fee of $1.15 plus 39 cents per minute of using the e-scooter.

DOWNTOWN

Note: For the purposes of this document, "Downtown" refers to the commercial and real estate centre adjacent to the beach, and runs approximately from the water to the north, 50 Ave. to the south, 46 St. to the east and 52 St. to the west. "Lakefront" refers to the area along Lakeshore Drive, from 40th St. (Centennial Park) to the east, to 53rd St. (Rotary Lighthouse Park) to the west. "Centennial St." refers to 50th St. and "Festival St." refers to 50a St.

Sylvan Lake's downtown is adjacent to the lake, representing the historical main street of commercial activity and the primary hub of tourism oriented commercial activity. The area is a prime opportunity for enhanced economic activity.

The 2022 Destination Positioning Strategy establishes that, "Sylvan Lake's unique sense of place that constitutes the essence of the destination is its "lake town vibe."[49] Yet the DLMP engagement process reveals that this vibe—or any vibe, for that matter—has yet to be fully expressed and requires tangible articulation throughout the destination for locals or visitors. Insight points to the lack of a visible and palpable identity and aspirations for Sylvan Lake to exude the same vibrancy and energy found in destinations like Banff, Whistler and Kelowna. The reality is that these communities have invested decades upon decades—and millions upon millions of dollars—in fostering their tourism development, which is what it will take for Sylvan Lake to actualize the same future.

While a "vibe" refers to the intangible spirit of a place, it is influenced by and reliant on its tangible assets.

Vacant storefronts and retail spaces needing maintenance or improved upkeep define the downtown. Further, the area lacks business and service diversity. Evidence points to an absence of motivation for owners of commercial spaces to invest in their properties—whether it be maintenance, beautification or finding tenants. Many local business owners who rent their space express frustration with the lapses in upkeep by property owners, and because the buildings are not their own, they cannot justify the investments required for storefront revitalization.

The Waterfront Redevelopment Plan addresses challenges by proposing tax incentives and redevelopment grants for initiatives such as building façades, walkways, and street furniture and landscaping. Additionally, a Façade Improvement Grant was previously available from 2016-2017

to encourage façade renovations and storefront upgrades on Centennial St. Feedback from the administration suggests that a longer period to execute the program may have contributed to further success. There is an interest in relaunching the program amongst internal tourism representatives. If that is to move forward, actively engaging commercial space owners and their tenants is a valuable exercise to determine an approach that would speak to their needs and lower the barrier of entry.

Regardless, a specific urban design direction is necessary to strengthen the area's viability and appeal. Adopting and implementing harmonized design across the downtown heightens its attractiveness to visitors and investors, enhances the intangible appeal and helps tell the local brand story, through elements such as colour, thematic materials, wayfinding and beautification strategies. Marina Merchants Mall (the service strip between the Edgewater Inn and 53rd St.) is a small but powerful local illustration of how a cohesive design elevates the destination and can manifest the local "lake town vibe" brand.

Centennial Street (50th St.)

Most of the town's murals and sculptures are located on Centennial St. and Festival St., intended to encourage visitors to venture further into the heart of Sylvan Lake, away from primary destinations generally along the waterfront.

There are physical challenges to enhancing Centennial St. and beautification efforts, such as a lack of power for lighting, extensive space between street poles (making it difficult to string lights or decor from one to another, for example) and street poles that don't have the sturdiness to accommodate decorations. These realities also limit how the town can leverage Centennial St. for events.

Festival St., which runs parallel to Centennial St., was previously developed with events in mind. It flaunts lights, banners and benches to set an inviting and "festive" tone. However, Festival St. is not currently used for any specific purpose, as the absence of retail and restaurants minimizes its value as a space for events and/or festivals. As the SWARP states regarding Centennial St., "Upgrading the street and encouraging new building development is critical to encouraging more pedestrian circulation and commercial vitality throughout the area."

The "Pocket Park" (just north of Eclectica Fashions) is a vacant piece of land off Centennial Street (and the street's only public gathering space), for which the Town has permission to use for non-vending purposes. This narrow, paved lot with high brick walls on either side was intended for community-based initiatives, though capacity limitations and other competing priorities have hindered the Town's ability to strategically develop the programming required to give it a purpose.

Further, the space has significant challenges—there is garbage at one end of the area, it is not visible from the street and capacity is limited to about 30 people. Upgrades are required to use the space effectively, such as garbage removal, ground treatment, replacement of the lights above (most of which do not work), and graffiti removal.

Centennial St. represents the ideal gateway route into town, and the 50th Street Urban Design Guidelines includes measures to maintain public access to the lake and prevent blockage of lake views. This works to preserve view corridors either to or from the lake.

Lakeshore Drive

The downtown stretch of Lakeshore Drive has a selection of restaurants and two 2-star accommodation options. A pain point for the community is a strong stake in ownership by some particular parties on Lakeshore Drive, which some perceive to limit its potential to evolve and diversify. Restaurants here generally offer the same pub food-style menus, with some exceptions.

BEYOND DOWNTOWN

Outside of Sylvan Lake's downtown area, space is primarily dedicated to industry, residential and recreational purposes. Still, visitor experiences exist—such as golf courses and RV parks, to name a few—which can be more intentionally integrated within the town's tourism product ecosystem. The Industry Zone represents opportunities for emerging entrepreneurs while the Big Box area provides support and services.

Although the Municipality has no set geographical boundaries for what constitutes the "downtown," there is a sense amongst many local entrepreneurs that the definition of "downtown" should be broadened to include businesses and services in the neighbouring blocks, so the benefits of Municipal initiatives are more widespread. The challenge then becomes finding the dollars for investments such as plants, lights, etc., to give an expanded area that "downtown treatment."

Regardless of labels, there is an opportunity to create more thoughtful connections between Sylvan Lake's downtown and relevant experiences in other corners.

[EMPHASIS]

PRESERVING VIEW CORRIDORS

The **50th Street Urban Design Guideline** places special emphasis on maintaining key views to and from the lake along 50th St. (see 2.0 General Design Guidelines: Views to the Lake). Future developments could benefit from more detailed guidelines, particularly on enhancing and maximizing view corridors to and from the lake. This is especially relevant for area-specific guidelines for high-density mixed-use areas as outlined in the Guideline. One possible approach is to make the Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) proposed in the Guideline mandatory for specific building forms, uses, heights or other features. Additional measures could also be introduced, including set of guidelines for the Planning Authority as to when VIA should be mandatory for a development, or making it mandatory for certain building height, type, forms within the 50th Street Direct Control District.

The implementation plan within the **Lakefront Usage Strategy** (2020) recommends mixed-use development of land adjacent to the lakefront, with potential amendments to the Bylaw/Policy (Lakefront Direct Control District), depending on the nature of proposed changes. This recommendation has been further emphasized and expanded in the **Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan** (SWARP - 6.1. Land Use and Urban Design – Direct Control Districts and Discretionary Uses), which proposes amending the Land Use Bylaw to re-designate all related Direct Control Districts (Lakeshore Direct Control District, Waterfront Direct Control District, and Direct Control District 1 zones) to standardized land use designations. This would provide greater certainty and flexibility for development potential, particularly for commercial and waterfront-specific land uses.

To strengthen this strategy, specific application requirements and urban design guidelines/policies could be introduced to ensure the preservation and enhancement of view corridors to and from the lake across these designated areas (or within the Waterfront Commercial Area, as proposed in SWARP). For example, the SWARP proposes that a Visual Impact Assessment be required for developments on corners north of Lakeshore Drive and within the Water's Edge Area. This requirement could be expanded and made mandatory for any development or redevelopment exceeding a certain height, use or design feature across the Lakeshore Direct Control District and Waterfront Direct Control District. A decision framework, including a guideline or checklist for the Planning Authority to inform their decision about the need for a VIA or implication of enhanced view corridor could enhance this policy.

To implement this, amendments to the Land Use Bylaw are needed, including shifting the Visual Impact Assessment requirement from a Development Officer's discretionary decision to a mandatory condition for certain development types, heights and uses, or for some certain conditions informed by a decision guideline.

ACTIVATING THE DESTINATION

Public art and installations

Sylvan Lake is increasingly investing in public art installations throughout the town as a part of a broader strategy to revitalize, animate and beautify the downtown area.

Artist Alley is a unique opportunity for local artists to showcase their work on alleyway back doors throughout Sylvan Lake's downtown (specifically, located behind the Lakeland Plaza building at 50a Street-Lakeshore Drive). The project was initiated in September 2020 and currently includes work by 10 local artists.

Among other public art and installations within steps of the waterfront are:

- 'Let Them Play', an Indigenous mural created by artist Ryan Jason Allen Willert, with collaboration from local community members, representing Indigenous healing and struggle in the community's path towards reconciliation;
- 'Varsity Hall' by Trenton Leach and Holly Elliot is a large public artwork at the end of Centennial Street in the park commemorating the dance halls for which the town was once known.
- 'Here Comes the Sun', a mural (located across the side of the old Bonavista Fine Art Gallery on Centennial St.) by local artist Jaimie Cooney featuring geometric design and bright colours.
- The 'SYLVAN LAKE' name sign on the pier by the lake serves as a backdrop for photos.

The latest mural installed by the Moon and Lotus on 50 A Ave. is part of the Town's mural project. The resources came from a grant received by the Town from the federal government in 2022.

These initiatives are strategically placed around the downtown to draw foot traffic to businesses and beautify the area. However, there is a general lack of cohesion between various pieces and an overarching narrative connecting to the local brand to distill. This limits the value and vitality they offer.

Currently, the Town pursues a selection of public art projects every year. Consideration and approval are determined by an internal committee governed by departmental perspectives rather than a neutral framework that outlines visual and thematic considerations in alignment with the local brand. Further, there is a demonstrated gap in feedback-gathering and idea-sharing with the community in this process.

Beyond the selection process, existing installations lack interactivity. This is a missed opportunity to engage people more actively in the artistic experience, through strategically designed elements that lend to photo ops or virtual reality, for example. Installations that encourage participation foster a deeper connection between residents or visitors and the artistic landscape, not to mention the social media content and organic marketing that emerges as a result. Bridging the gap between passive observation and active engagement cultivates a more vibrant and connected community.

There is also a lack of consistency in the depth or presentation of information attached to public art and installations. Interesting information is missing that would otherwise foster a more meaningful connection to the Sylvan Lake story.

Festivals and events

Festivals and events are a significant point of pride and entertainment for the local community and a significant draw for visitors within a 90-minute catchment area seeking day trip experiences.

Due to their size and scale, these Town-led activities require larger spaces with supporting infrastructure—such as parking, public toilets and proximity to local businesses. Also bearing in mind the town's central attraction—the lake—events primarily occur in Lakefront Park, Sylvan Lake Park, Centennial Park, or on the lake itself.

The missing "vibe", as previously discussed, becomes less apparent while events and festivals take place, demonstrating the impact that connecting people to place and one another can have on a community's culture.

Events and festivals are a gateway to further fostering the lake town vibe and represent an opportunity for visitor management, specifically by drawing attention and foot traffic to other areas of town.

Stories & histories

Sylvan Lake was officially founded in 1913, making it a relatively young community. This is especially relevant because,as the population continues to grow, there are fewer people in the community with strong familial or historical ties to the area.

Along Lakeshore Drive there are plaques that share stories or connections to the town's past. The branding on these displays is long outdated, and the details included lack any depth of connection to what people see in front of them. However, replacing these assets is expensive, and there is no demand from the public, so such an investment is not an immediate priority.

Beyond these plaques, limited place-based and program-based initiatives connect people to the town's history and/or foster cultural connections. There has generally been a lack of attention given to preserving the town's history, with no museum, heritage designations or historic landmarks around town. Bridging the gap between past and present is The Sylvan Lake Archives, a non-profit organization that receives an operating grant from the Municipality each year—a relationship created out of concern for the Archives disappearing. While the Archives is primarily a volunteer-based organization, the administrator is a part-time employee of the Town. The Archives' asset storage is located in the basement of the Town Hall.

As for events, 1913 Days in June connects locals to the town's 110-plus-year history.

Thinking beyond the settler colonial history, Sylvan Lake rests upon lands that have long served as traditional meeting grounds, gathering places and travel routes for various Indigenous peoples, including the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Metis, Saulteaux, and Nakota Sioux. In fact, the lake's original name—"Snake Lake"—comes from the Cree word "Kinipik," "because of the large numbers of garter snakes found along the shores, and on the sand cliffs of the north side."[50] Indigenous stories and teachings are integral to the community and land heritage, and honouring and embracing them is essential. However, no stories specific to the town's area are known. With that in mind, it remains essential to acknowledge the town's Indigenous history more broadly and the Indigenous community members who call Sylvan Lake home today.

The histories and stories of Sylvan Lake are core to its identity, and preserving such elements is especially critical as the population grows.

SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING

Downtown Sylvan Lake signage has segmented the area into five districts, with their names—Downtown, Lakeshore, Marina, Cottage and Gateway—expressed across colour-coded banners installed on light posts. These particular names were determined internally as a part of the Town of Sylvan Lake Brand development without a clear framework for decision-making and without engaging the community in naming exercises. There is a disconnect between some district names and how locals refer to various areas; for example, despite Lakeside District's official name, locals refer to it as the " lakeshore" or the "waterfront". Despite the imposed names, these banners use the municipal corporate brand (versus the more playful Visit Sylvan Lake brand), where the colours add vibrancy to the downtown. They also offer a layer of wayfinding for visitors to discover new areas, with potential to be leveraged further.

The existing signage throughout the town is primarily directional and is installed along roadways to privilege drivers. A colour-coded system, which is different from the district banners, points visitors to "municipal," "tourism," "parking" and "trails and culture" assets. The system is unrefined and confusing, and does not correspond with other signage or town maps. Without pedestrian signage—which was designed but not yet installed—the end-to-end user experience is interrupted. The absence of strategic application limits wayfinding's capability to influence traffic flow and adjust behaviours. Further, the absence of any relationship between the district banners' colours and directional signage points to a lack of cohesion.

Despite this lack of cohesion, there is clearly some understanding of how signage and wayfinding can influence the visitor experience. Various Town plans reference wayfinding and the opportunity for enhancements, such as the 2016 Visitor Friendly Assessment and Action Plan, the 2016-2019 Community Social Master Plan, the 2019 Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan and the 2023 Recreation, Parks and Open Space Master Plan. In 2023, new gateway signage was installed at the edges of the Town, welcoming visitors and announcing their destination.

With a renewed, strategic approach, there is an opportunity to express some of Sylvan Lake's identity and connect visitors throughout the town using additional wayfinding tools.

Trail networks and natural spaces

The Recreation, Parks and Open Space Master Plan highlights the limited wayfinding and interpretive signage throughout the 26-kilometre trail system and the lack of connectivity, usability and appeal as a result. This is applicable across the trail network, including the 850-metre black path (previously the "red shale path") through Sylvan Lake Park. Improving this infrastructure works to attract cyclists, hikers and other active explorers, who can be drawn into town to visit local cafés, restaurants and retailers, while addressing challenges such as overcrowding along the lakefront during peak season and events, by drawing pedestrian and vehicle traffic away from the lakefront and allows people to discover under-visited areas of the town.

Signage sparsity carries through to key usage areas (i.e., fishing sites) that are not marked or leveraged effectively for tourism activation. Additionally, signage is underutilized as a tool for visitor management. Playful signage encourages visitors to pick up their trash, for example, while maps connect the many experiences across the town together. The existing third-party signage bylaws are viewed as restrictive for local businesses attempting to engage with visitors, particularly during summer months. Exploring Town-sanctioned signage opportunities creates new channels to engage with visitors, while providing a cohesive look and feel within major tourism areas, while further fostering connections across the town.

Public art installations

As previously described, Sylvan Lake continues to expand the presence of public art throughout the town. Strategically embedding artistic elements within the urban landscape creates memorable moments while encouraging visitors to explore further. There is an opportunity to consider how public art can transform mundane signage into captivating attractions, and be used as a creative wayfinding tool.

VISITOR INFORMATION SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE

The NexSource Centre serves as the town's Visitor Information Centre, with such services available as part of a broader portfolio of responsibilities for front desk staffers. Two visitor information booths—one adjacent to Lakeshore Drive and 43rd St. and the other at the Library—have gone unused for their stated purpose since 2015. No additional visitor information services are activated during peak season or major events. Basic location-finding maps are available along the lakefront, though they do not effectively point to the various experiences available throughout the town.

PLACE-BASED VS. PROGRAM-BASED

Place-based:

Place-based activations, in the context of community development, centre on leveraging the unique qualities of a destination and enabling tangible and intangible assets in developing products and services.
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A community-centric approach to tourism—as an instance of local community development strategy—emphasizes a place-based approach to tourism development. It focuses on increasing competitiveness of the destination and its visitor-experience offerings by activating the unique physical, natural and cultural assets and attributes of the community. This occurs where 'people', 'story' and 'land' merge into the experience of a place.

Place-based activation can range from small to medium-scale initiatives, such as placemaking, and large-scale initiatives, such as new infrastructure development or revitalization projects. These initiatives involve physical settings (natural and built environment), cultural assets (community heritage, local traditions, local craftsmanship, know-how, foodways, etc.), social assets (leadership capacity, community ties, networks), and human assets (entrepreneurs, artists and artisans, craftspeople, community leaders, grassroots groups, and everyone playing a role).

A place-based activation, therefore, echoes the essence and intrinsic qualities of a defined destination to foster a connection with visitors, enhancing cultural appreciation and aligning tourism growth with the community's values, expectations, and capacities.

Program-based:

Program-based activations centre on creating a structured (often routinely- scheduled), process or activity that enables continued, regular or planned engagement of target groups, supporting a set of target outcomes or deliverables.

In the context of tourism development, program-based activations centre around creating structured initiatives—such as campaigns, community investment opportunities, and entrepreneurship support initiatives—that attract target groups (visitors, business owners, local residents, local grassroots groups, etc.). This approach allows for flexibility and adaptability. Although most program-based activations carry location-specific attributes, they are more recognized for following a structure toward certain target deliverables.

Program-based visitor experiences are well-planned activities that are duplicable or repetitive, often shaped as a series of activities or a specific itinerary. These experiences often follow a particular theme, which may be educational, recreational or cultural.

Within the context of community-centric tourism, festivals and events are where place-based and program-based activation meet, merging the strengths of both approaches.

5.3 SUMMARIZING GAPS

There is limited publicly-owned infrastructure available for watercraft, and no public boat launch within town limits.

Visit Sylvan Lake brand has not been physically operationalized throughout the town.

Downtown lacks a visible and palpable identity, which impedes its success as a tourism asset.

Parking spaces are not well distributed.

There are limitations to the use and appeal of existing infrastructure (Pogadl Park, Pocket Park, Centennial Park, Sylvan Lake Park/Baby Beach, Lakefront Park, Lighthouse Park, Festival St., library parking lot).

There is a gap in place-based activations (programming, placemaking) that echo the charm, heritage, stories and people.

There is a lack of designated parking for RVs, buses, boat trailers, etc.

There is a lack of place-based initiatives/installations that showcase local Indigenous culture and perspective.

Public art and installations in Sylvan Lake lack strategic thought and interactivity.

There is a lack of attractive, inclusive and interactive heritage designations and storytelling initiatives/installations around

There is a lack of comprehensive wayfinding and signage that connects major assets and attractions throughout the town.

There is a lack of harmonized aesthetics that embodies and demonstrates a unique sense of place.

There is no uniquely dedicated and active year-round visitors centre.

There is a lack of visitor information infrastructure.

Major attractions and visitor services do not adhere to comprehensive accessibility standards.

Town infrastructure lacks walkability and cyclability.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

Destination Development & Placemaking (DDP)

Embrace placemaking as a comprehensive framework for approaching public art, beautification, activation and wayfinding as interconnected solutions to Sylvan Lake's destination development, further supported by design, planning and policy interventions.

Placemaking refers to the planning, design and management of public spaces, taking a creative and collaborative approach. Communities are invited to shape and enhance these shared spaces, layering them with meaning, values and identity to reflect the uniqueness and diversity of the people they serve.

Placemaking is a form of strategic public investment in the economic vitality that entices people and businesses to actively choose a particular location. In place-building, private investment often follows public investments made in elements like street renovations, pedestrian-friendly areas and environments that support businesses.[51] That is to say, communities that pursue placemaking efforts are more likely to see a return on investment than those who pursue traditional methods of economic development.[52] New populations move to—and invest in—places that have their sense of community and offer experiences throughout the town or city.[53]

The placemaking process capitalizes on a community's unique assets, striving for a place to reflect, and be attractive to those who live there. When locals engage in the co-creation of physical space, articulation of community values and preservation of meaningful history, it deepens their connection to and love for their home. Collectively making a place can promote a community's health, happiness and well-being, with the added benefit of beautification and revitalization as byproducts. In addition to the economic incentive connected to placemaking as it relates to enhancing tourism product, it also enhances community pride and stewardship.

The aforementioned initiatives currently underway—such as public art, installations and signage—are elements of placemaking, though not currently considered as such in practice. There lacks an integrated, community-informed plan, shifting these investments from their respective silos to a strategic placemaking approach that connects these assets to establish a clear sense of place and spur the development of Sylvan Lake as a destination.

This gap is further exacerbated by the missing "vibe" or "essence" discussed in greater depth within Section 6: Visitors & Experiences - Marketing. Taking a community-led approach to defining, and then operationalizing, Sylvan Lake's identity includes expressions of this identity across its built form, bringing its brand positioning to life and leveraging placemaking to craft the "vibe" that residents and visitors alike agree will make this town a destination. Albertans are well-familiar with the concept of a "Mountain Town" and what physical elements distinguish it from others; placemaking for Sylvan Lake makes adapting such a concept to foster a "Lake Town."

By embracing placemaking as an interconnected approach to public art, installations and wayfinding allows the Town to manage visitor flow and direct activity beyond core tourism areas. This shapes a more balanced and connected destination while creating opportunities for non-downtown business owners to equitably benefit from the economic receipts generated by tourism, which further bolsters pride and community investment back into the development of place.

[FYI!]

A 2010 study with 43,000 responses across 26 American cities found that the most critical factors in creating emotional bonds between people and their community was "physical beauty, opportunities for socializing and a city's openness to all people." Additionally, these communities with the highest levels of attachment had the strongest economies.[55]

Strategic placemaking supports broader ongoing goals and initiatives, connecting city planning, arts and culture, people and their well-being, tourism and the town's economic health to one another. A key initiative for the Town where this will be particularly impactful is enhancing the amenities at and use of Sylvan Lake Park, Centennial Park, Lakefront Park and Lighthouse Park. Developing the positioning of these lakefront assets, largely through placemaking, establishes the beachfront as an iconic destination that is multi-seasonal, adaptable, multifunctional, interactive and accessible.

This DLMP is not the first Sylvan Lake report to emphasize the importance of placemaking; it is a theme repeated across Town reports, strategies and frameworks, demonstrating its importance to economic and tourism health, growth and success. Yet, evidence points to a lack of impetus and/or capacity to implement recommendations and a lack of community-led involvement in the process. Embracing placemaking as a cornerstone to tourism development is not a choice for sustainable, impactful and community-led tourism development; it is a necessity. The Wayfinding and Placemaking Toolkit within the DLMP offers initiatives that require minimal resources as a starting point.

Placemaking is also a core element of the broader concept of destination development, which includes the advancement of defined areas to support the evolution of desirable destinations for travellers by providing compelling experiences, quality infrastructure, and remarkable services to entice repeat visitation.[54] For effective and sustainable implementation, destination development further calls for design, planning and policy interventions. Such investments are required throughout the town to create the foundation for successful, sustainable product development (see Section 6: Visitors and Experiences).

Effective destination development and placemaking in Sylvan Lake requires a shift from being primarily lakefront-focused to encompassing the entire town footprint while maintaining connectivity to the lake. This requires broadening perspectives and approach to various activities and investments. As an example, the Mobile Vending and Busking Bylaw Schedule A (2023) recognizes Centennial Park, Sylvan Lake Park, Lighthouse Park and Lakefront Park as locations for mobile vending, though it also identifies other potential locations that are not currently being used. The linear park across from the railway is one of them, which presents a viable option that has yet to be activated fully. Thinking outside of the proverbial box fosters this shift in thinking.

This more well-rounded approach is especially vital given that the overall quality of place is one of the top factors influencing people's decisions to move to or establish a business in any given community. In fact, for emerging entrepreneurs, quality of place is significantly more important than favourable tax structures and business incentives when deciding where to locate their businesses. Developing a vibrant and strong place must be a priority, given its far-reaching positive impacts and versatility as a tool in community economic development.

Indeed, this strategic direction speaks to many elements required from a basic level of tourism readiness to drive more spending from local and regional guests, not to mention those from further afield. Placemaking solutions allow the Town to activate its unique sense of place in tactile ways that, consequently, build brand equity and enhance the overall intangible vibe while driving visitor management efforts and creating cohesion between place-based experiences.

[EMPHASIS]

ADDRESSING **BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT** WITH ARTISTS

Engaging artists in placemaking projects is crucial for creating vibrant, authentic communities. To foster meaningful collaborations, municipalities must understand and address the barriers that may prevent artists from participating, thinking outside of traditional municipal frameworks. Consider the following approaches:

- Establish systems to foster long-term relationships versus transactional exchanges by creating ongoing channels of communication (guided by artist input) and creating opportunities for recurring collaboration.
- Emphasise the impact and influence their work has on shaping the quality of life, vibrancy and cultural richness of the community.
- Empower artists in defining projects by involving them early in the planning process and giving them latitude to shape project goals and parameters.
- Employ flexible frameworks, allowing for artistic freedom and innovation within project guidelines.
- Actively seek out and support underrepresented artists in the community, and include diverse perspectives on selection committees and within the decision-making processes.
- Simplify administrative procedures—for example, by streamlining application processes, being open to various styles of submission (i.e., digital, analog).

[DEFINE]

FROM PLACEMAKING TO PLACEKEEPING: **TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION**

Urban planning practices in Canada, including placemaking and the urban design of a place's identity, are rooted in colonial town planning systems. The concept of public spaces is also rooted in Eurocentric ideologies, and often these spaces contain structures, statues or monuments that commemorate important historical figures who perpetuated colonization or are simply exclusionary and contribute to the erasure of certain groups, stories and histories.

Placekeeping is sometimes presented as an alternative approach to placemaking. Increasingly, placemaking has become code for simply 'beautification' while placekeeping includes an active approach to caring for a place and its social fabric. Indigenous communities increasingly favour the notion of placekeeping, recognizing that the place in question is already there and does not need to be made but kept, stewarded and preserved. Matthew Hickey, architect and partner at Two Row Architect, an Indigenous-owned and operated architecture firm, located on Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve, says, "Placekeeping is really about how we respect our relations—the wind, the water, the land, the animals—and thinking about how we can build in a way that respects and enhances those. Through that enhancement, we're also, ultimately, enhancing life for humanity."[56]

Whether it's positioned as placemaking or placekeeping, creating a sense of place is an opportunity to include new perspectives, surface missing histories, and preserve the cultural roots and traditional ways/teachings of local Indigenous communities is paramount. This can become a collective act that supports truth and reconciliation, working in collaboration with Indigenous leaders and community members to de-centre colonial ideologies, decolonize public realms, and encourage community-driven, self-determined change.

[CASE STUDY]

(LACE) UP! DISTRICTS: **ACTIVATING SPACES AND EMPOWERING TORONTO'S ARTISTS**

In the realm of urban life, where home represents the private sphere and work embodies structured social interactions, third places emerge as relaxed public environments where individuals can freely connect and engage. The LACE (Leisure, Arts, Culture, and Entertainment) Up! Districts idea shared by Chloe Marie-Brown in Toronto's 2024 mayoral race presents a creative and forward-thinking strategy that seeks to reclaim and activate spaces, providing equitable opportunities for artists in Toronto while fostering the creation of vibrant third places across the city.

Image Credit: https://chloebrown.ca/blog/lace-up-districts-a-third-place-strategy

This road map envisions merging various departments and organizations related to arts,culture, and entertainment into a centralized department, streamlining resources and improving access for administrators and development staff.

At its core, the idea revolves around the creation of designated districts in Toronto, each with its unique focus and purpose. These include Leisure districts, Arts districts, Culture districts, and Entertainment districts, each catering to specific aspects of the community's leisure and cultural needs.

The initiative envisions the development of mixed-use districts that integrate housing, work studios, childcare facilities, retail, and commercial spaces. By embracing affordable ownership, public-private-community partnerships, and strategic policy frameworks, the initiative aims to address the essential needs of residents of targeted districts while generating revenue for invested members and ensuring long-term affordability.

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
PC-DDP-1. Maintain the visual, emotional and perceptual connections to the lake for the whole town.			
PC-DDP-1.1. Define and pilot placemaking and wayfinding projects to bring a sense of connection to the lake throughout the town. See also Action CCS-DLM-3.1.	1 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.2, OIS.6, OIS.9
PC-DDP-2. Invest in the enhancements of infrastructure, amenities and facilities connected to the lake experience.			
PC-DDP-2.1. Determine final recommendations for the redevelopment of/improvements to Lakefront Park (see Appendix K: Feasibility Study), for year-round activation.	1	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL	OIS.3, OIS.4, OIS.26
PC-DDP-2.2. Incorporate placemaking initiatives, including public art, programming and passive recreational experiences into Centennial Park, Sylvan Lake Park, Lighthouse Park and Lakefront Park, catering to a diverse range of interests and needs.	1 Ongoing	TOSL	OIS.3, OIS.4, OIS.11
PC-DDP-2.3. Further evaluate the recommendation provided by Lakefront Usage Strategy and Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan, specifically, "Improve access to water for recreational and commercial use along the shoreline." • A dog water access point; • A safe and well-defined location for launching non-motorized boats; • A more cost-effective and publicly accessible boat launch; and • A mooring field with defined access and a day/short-term mooring be built, likely at the end of the pier. A continuation of Sylvan Lake's existing temporary field authorization with the Province covering the pier and beach area,, or securing a long-term lease, can support this strategy for those improvements suggested in the Land Use Strategy that fall outside of the Town's authority. This evaluation considers the Lake's natural integrity, as well as environmental and community impacts.	2	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL Third-party support Province of Alberta	OIS.3, OIS.4, OIS.5

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
PC-DDP-2.4. Launch and implement a phased project that reenvisions the architectural appeal, land use, water access, furniture, equipment and facilities available at Sylvan Lake Park, Centennial Park, Lakefront Park and Lighthouse Park to develop its positioning as an iconic attraction and Integrated Recreational Zone that is multiseasonal, adaptable, multifunctional, interactive and accessible, with an enhanced sense of nature. Relocate mobile vending zones into other activated spaces (see PC.DR.3.1.). Introduce specific measures to enhance and protect the natural appeal of the wilderness lakeshore area (east of Sylvan Lake Park, between 34th and 39th Sts.). Adopt strategies for activation through partnership (see CCS-CII-3.7).	3	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL Third-party support	OIS.3, OIS.4., OIS.11
PC-DDP-3. Use placemaking to enhance the infrastructure of underutilized or unused open public spaces, Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPs) and vacant lots for recreational experience development (in particular, iconic events).			
PC-DDP-3.1. Reevaluate and enhance existing Pogadl Park plans to incorporate infrastructure, signage, amenities, landscaping, and placemaking needed to make it a prime community asset for outdoor recreational events and activities.	1	TOSL	OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29
PC-DDP-3.2. Conduct a comprehensive audit of underutilized/ unused open public space, POPs, and vacant lots along Lakeshore Drive, downtown, major non-downtown attractions and recreational facilities (i.e., Pogadl Park, baseball diamonds at Four Seasons Park), and major connectors and access points to and from the town, and identify potential sites for activation.	1	Working Group (VSL lead) Third-party support	OIS.27, OIS.28
PC-DDP-3.3. Explore and define opportunities to pilot mechanisms such as community bonds and a Community Capital Fund, to: • capitalize on underutilized commercial spaces throughout the town and support emerging experience-driven businesses; • create more equitable opportunities for community ownership; and • support the upkeep of downtown storefronts and the retrofitting/ utilization of unused commercial spaces.* (See Section 5, LACE Up! Case Study)	2	VSL TDC	OIS.26, OIS.19, OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.30

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
PC-DDP-4. Enhance the visitor experience for pedestrians and cyclists throughout the town.			
PC-DDP-4.1. Invest in local trail network connectivity and accessibility, according to the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan 2023.	2	TOSL VSL	OIS.10, OIS.11
PC-DDP-4.2. Design and develop 50 Avenue as a complete street from 53 Street to Lakeshore Drive, as recommended in the Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan, to safely accommodate vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.	2	VSL TOSL	OIS.7, OIS.10, OIS.11
PC-DDP-4.3. Invest in infrastructure and placemaking enhancements for prime walkways and trails, with a focus on creating curiosity, engagement with place, and foot traffic.	3	TOSL VSL	OIS.7, OIS.10
PC-DDP-4.4. Leverage trails for placemaking and storytelling through interpretive signage (using universal design principles) or installations that offer education and traditional teachings about plants, animals, the lake, Indigenous history and Sylvan Lake's history.	3	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL	OIS.16, OIS.43
PC-DDP-5. Invest in adding, redistributing and refining wayfinding infrastructure to enhance visibility and create connections between parking, walkable routes, town attractions and supporting services.			
PC-DDP-5.1. Introduce simple, inexpensive and universally-designed ground wayfinding system (e.g., painted lines or arrows, temporary vinyl, etc.) to direct visitors to key attractions across the town, and introduce new colour and life to the streetscapes.	1	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL	OIS.3, OIS.4, OIS.26
PC-DDP-5.2. Remove and redistribute some of the existing "Downtown" district banners, installing them on existing infrastructure to extend the footprint of the downtown district with minimal cost.	1	VSL	OIS.9
PC-DDP-5.3. Invest in temporary mobile signage solutions, including design and implementation, for festivals, events, and seasonal recreational activities.	1 Ongoing	VSL TOSL	OIS.7, OIS.9

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
PC-DDP-5.4. Install additional directional signage in the downtown (Centennial St., Festival St. and Lakeshore Drive) to support visitor navigation and to highlight key areas for visitor experiences, guided by the Placemaking and Wayfinding Toolkit.	1 - 2	VSL TOSL	OIS.6, OIS.9
PC-DDP-5.5. Install additional wayfinding assets to invite, activate, define and/or guide visitors throughout the town, guided by Interpretive Design Guidelines (see PC-VM-3.1.) and the Placemaking and Wayfinding Toolkit.	3	VSL TOSL	OIS.7, OIS.9
PC-DDP-5.6. Develop a cohesive and consistent trail wayfinding system that integrates wayfinding, interpretive signage and placemaking (using universal design standards) to mark, identify and connect existing trails, guided by the Placemaking and Wayfinding Toolkit.	3	VSL TOSL	OIS.7, OIS.9
PC-DDP-5.7. Install additional gateway signs to invite and welcome visitors into town, guided by the Placemaking and Wayfinding Toolkit.	4	VSL TOSL	OIS.7, OIS.9
PC-DDP-6. Use placemaking to reflect and promote the local stories, history and legacy throughout the town, while creating visitor attractions.			
PC-DDP-6.1. Determine and implement feasible ways to add interactive elements to existing public art and installations, such as informational QR codes, photo opportunities, virtual reality experiences, and other creative ideas that encourage active engagement.	1 - 2	VSL TOSL	OIS.6
PC-DDP-6.2. Engage the Tourism Development Committee (TDC) to determine additional locations downtown (Centennial St., Festival St. and Lakeshore Drive) and pilot this strategy.	2	Working Group (VSL led) TDC	OIS.6, OIS.30
PC-DDP-6.3. Engage the Tourism Development Committee (TDC) to determine potential locations beyond the downtown and pilot this strategy.	3		OIS.7, OIS.19, OIS.30

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
PC-DDP-6.4. Invest in activations throughout the town, informed by Indigenous place-based learning and knowing.	1 Ongoing	VSL TDC Indigenous leaders, rights holders and/or Knowledge Keepers	OIS.16, OIS.30, OIS.31
PC-DDP-7. Customize a community-centric Placemaking Framework for Public Art.			
PC-DDP-7.1. Develop a Public Art Policy, through a community-informed process.	1	VSL TOSL	OIS.7, OIS.30
PC-DDP-7.2. Enhance the Public Art Evaluation Framework Draft provided in Appendix E by engaging community rights holders, to provide input regarding: • a transparent and inclusive public art selection process • visual and thematic considerations aligned with the local brand (for example, materials, colours, etc.).	1	VSL TOSL Grassroots groups (arts/creativity-focused)	
PC-DDP-7.3. Develop an Artist Outreach & Engagement Strategy, focused on relationship development, community leadership, and encouraging & enticing artist participation in local initiatives.	1	VSL	OIS.7, OIS.31
PC-DDP-7.4. Define public art projects focused on reflecting the diverse stories and community heritage of Sylvan Lake, guided by the Artists Outreach & Engagement Strategy (PC-DDP-7.3).	2 Ongoing	VSL TOSL TDC	OIS.7, OIS.31

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

Downtown Revitalization (DR)

Invest in downtown revitalization to improve attractiveness and create a harmonious & engaging experience throughout.

Downtown revitalization refers to the process of improving and renewing an urban or town centre, typically a commercial or business district, that has experienced decline or neglect. It involves attracting new businesses, improving existing buildings and infrastructure, enhancing public spaces, and promoting economic growth and development. Downtown revitalization efforts are connected to, and supported by, destination development and placemaking, but these investments in spaces and places are considered catalysts for business investment and policies that stimulate local economies.

When downtown revitalization is successful, it contributes to a destination's overall attractiveness and competitiveness. Vibrant and well maintained downtown areas with a variety of shops, restaurants, cultural amenities and events draw visitors, generating economic activity and creating jobs. A vibrant, attractive and functional centre serves as a hub of activity and community life, and a revitalized downtown is a backdrop for ongoing growth and improvement. For Sylvan Lake, this would see visitors venturing into the urban core, beyond the lakefront.

Sylvan Lake's downtown holds immense potential for transformation and prosperity, encompassing physical, social and economic aspects that elevate its attractiveness and impact—a desire widely shared amongst the community, particularly as a way to enhance its appeal to various user groups, foster connections and drive positive tourism impacts. The solution is to coordinate efforts in placemaking, planning, beautification, business support, and development. Tourism is unique in its encapsulation of all these considerations—which traditionally have fallen under various administrative departments—particularly given that the town's primary tourism assets (the lake and the beach) are adjacent to the downtown area. Activation strategies that encourage business piloting and adaptive growth are valuable to moving the needle, especially when paired with creative solutions to using existing spaces and resources.

Such investments have equally interconnected impacts. By emphasizing placemaking, the downtown mirrors the community's unique identity and cultural richness. This attracts residents and entices visitors seeking an authentic experience, driving spending at local businesses. Integrating urban planning within this vision guides the thoughtful development of spaces that align with the community's essence. This then becomes a catalyst for economic growth, attracting new and unique entrepreneurial endeavours and generating employment opportunities. Beautification initiatives, encompassing enhanced infrastructure and captivating public art installations, contribute to an aesthetically pleasing environment that attracts and captivates visitors, and instills a sense of pride and identity among the local populace.

Community-led initiatives that contribute to downtown revitalization are foundational in expanding tourism's potential in Sylvan Lake. As the Town seeks to solidify its readiness as a Regional Host, the next step is then providing incentives for small- and medium-scale private investment become necessary.

As part of the big-picture view, the perception of safety and security is a critical aspect of a destination's image, with convenient access to essential services reinforcing that sense of security. Sylvan Lake's Destination Readiness Criteria for Tourism (see Appendix A – Visitor Management, Health & Safety) highlights the importance of access to medical care and emergency response in key high-traffic visitor areas as a key indicator of destination readiness across all levels of Hosts. As Sylvan Lake expands its capacity to host regional and inter-provincial events, developing a more robust safety and risk management system becomes imperative, particularly in the downtown area and further expanded to the lakefront. Implementing health and safety measures during peak seasons and high-attendance events, including local community-level gatherings, is an essential first step. It also creates a foundation for continuous year-round improvements based on evaluations and findings.

[CASE STUDY]

LEARNING FROM OTHERS: **DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION**

There are several examples of successful Downtown Revitalization projects that inspire ways to address these issues. Many are spearheaded by community-led Heritage or Cultural Societies—volunteer or non-profit groups focused on preservation-based economic development and community revitalization. One such example is Main Street America. Supported by a nationwide network of coordinating programs and local communities, this organization has helped over 2,000 communities across the U.S. revitalize downtown districts by bringing communities together to preserve historic buildings and spaces.

A more local example is the work being done by the Lacombe and District Historical Society and its mission to collect, preserve, interpret and exhibit the history and heritage of Lacombe for the benefit of the local communities. Staff, volunteers, summer students and a board of directors work together to provide educational and cultural programs for the public. Both examples demonstrate the results that can be achieved by increasing capacity on a community and volunteer level while making meaningful changes in destination and community development.

Such efforts connect to cultural diversity by celebrating and showcasing local arts, culture, and heritage. This includes public art installations, cultural festivals and events, and preservation of historic buildings and landmarks. By promoting cultural diversity, downtown areas become more inclusive and welcoming to people from various backgrounds, and fosters an inclusive sense of community.

Other approaches to downtown revitalization go beyond built form and look to change behaviour through policy. In January of 2022, San Francisco introduced a Commercial Vacancy Tax Ordinance to address vacant storefronts in neighbourhood commercial districts. They reasoned that vacant storefronts degrade the urban environment and impact neighbouring businesses by discouraging foot traffic and compromising the character of an area. Though it's too soon to evaluate the program's success, this is only one of many examples of towns and cities that have explored such a tax to incentivize property owners and landlords to rent their spaces and curb real estate speculation, generating revenue for invested members and ensuring long-term affordability.

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
PC-DR-1. Invest in harmonising the visual and architectural aesthetics to reflect the essence of the Visit Sylvan Lake brand: a small, connected and vibrant lakeside community.			
PC-DR-1.1. Amalgamate existing and prospective tourism-oriented funding programs (i.e., TEDI, TPP, the Recreation Culture & Tourism Micro Grant, and the Façade Improvement Program) into the Tourism Accelerator Grant (see VE-EBS-1.5), to strengthen the strategic impacts of funding sources of downtown vibrancy and programming. Lean on the Entrepreneurship Focus Group for input (VE-EBS-1.4) to guide funding program parameters.	1	VSL TOSL	OIS.6, OIS.7, OIS.17, OIS.30
PC-DR-1.2. Enhance design guidelines and related bylaws about the visual integrity of street and retail frontage in downtown (Centennial St., Festival St. and Lakeshore Drive), including sidewalk interface, entrance, display windows design, and branding and signage regulations. Prioritize tourism needs within these measures.	2	Working Group (VSL lead)	OIS.6, OIS.18
PC-DR-1.3. Establish a comprehensive incentive strategy that includes co-investment (see CCS-CII-4.5), community grants, Tourism Accelerator Grant (see VE-EBS-1.5), tax credits, community benefits funds, and business loans with an extended grace period for streetscape beautification efforts.	2	Working Group	OIS.6, OIS.18, OIS.31
PC-DR-1.4. Define a streetscapes beautification project focused on Lakeshore Drive between 52nd and 44th Sts., and along Centennial St. Explore potential opportunities for PPCPs (see CCS-CII-4.2. and CCS-CII-4.5) and utilize the incentive strategy defined in PC-DR-1.3.	3 - 4	Working Group (VSL lead)	OIS.6, OIS.18, OIS.31
PC-DR-2. Invest in the improvements and enhancements of downtown infrastructure, amenities and facilities.			
PC-DR-2.1. Identify potential locations for public art and other placemaking initiatives (i.e., vacant parcels, façades, POPs, etc.), as a base for community activations.	2	VSL TOSL	OIS.6, OIS.18, OIS.31
PC-DR-2.2. Design and develop Centennial St. and Festival St. as complete streets to improve the pedestrian experience and/or convert for pedestrian-only functions on occasion.*	3	TOSL	OIS.6, OIS.10, OIS.11, OIS.26

**The Centennial Street Modernization project should align with this strategy, to support tourism development.*

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
PC-DR-2.3. Enhance the visibility of health and safety essential services and activations during peak season and events. This may include tactics such as additional staff, signage and maps, or as part of the overarching communications plans.	3	TOSL	OIS.15
PC-DR-2.4. Upgrade lighting, installations, accessibility and underground infrastructure (utilities) on Centennial St. for community-based activations.**	3	TOSL	OIS.6, OIS.11, OIS.18, OIS.26, OIS.31
PC-DR-3. Enable activation strategies to encourage business piloting, and starting small and adaptive (incrementalism).			
PC-DR-3.1. Define a business pop-up activation initiative that allows entrepreneurs to test out their business model, and start small and adaptive (incrementalism). Secure locations across downtown (Centennial St., Festival St. and Lakeshore Drive) to test the project. Evaluate the feasibility of privately-owned vacant lots, and activate where feasible, by building partnerships with owners and revisiting bylaws where necessary (see CCS-DLM-1.6 and CCS-DLM-5). Consider this an opportunity to relocate mobile vending (see PC-DDP-2.4). Negotiate the terms of use of Pocket Park, emphasising the focus on entrepreneurship versus vending.	2	VSL TDC	OIS.4 (if relocating of mobile vending gets realized), OIS.17, OIS.18, OIS.21, OIS.31
PC-DR-3.2. Market these places as part of the campaign to attract a diversity of entrepreneurs to the downtown (Centennial St., Festival St. and Lakeshore Drive).	1	VSL	
PC-DR-3.3. Invest in a Feasibility Study to build a case for diversifying commercial uses of potential spaces in more affordable and accessible ways, through co-investment. Consider a mix of affordable rental business spaces in downtown, with a focus on Centennial St., including: micro-retail spaces; affordable shared retail spaces (mixed-concept/multi retailers); a makerspace (co-working spaces and shared facilities where theme-based or particular vendors can create, network, share tools and resources, and sell their goods); and other strategies that encourage incrementalism.	2	VSL TOSL Third-party support	OIS.17, OIS.18, OIS.21, OIS.33

*** The Centennial Street Modernization project was launched during the DLMP's development.*

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
PC-DR-4. Implement measures that encourage the use of vacant spaces and the adaptive reuse and repurposing of retail & commercial spaces, downtown.			
PC-DR-4.1. Explore the implementation of a tax on vacant commercial properties.	1 - 2	TOSL	OIS.18, OIS.21
PC-DR-4.2. Introduce incentives (such as subsidizing or lowering permit fees and streamlined application processes, and redevelopment grants as proposed by the Waterfront Redevelopment Plan) for downtown property owners to convert unused properties into creative pop-up spaces, galleries or mixed-use developments.	1 Ongoing	VSL TOSL	OIS.18, OIS.21, OIS.31
PC-DR-5. Define a regional/provincial campaign to attract prospective entrepreneurs.			
PC-DR-5.1. Assess the opportunity to collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce to: define the scope and budget of the project; determine respective roles; identify success metrics; and package incentives and supports as per PC-DR-4.2 and PC-DR-1.4. (See VE-EBS-1.)	1	VSL TOSL Chamber of Commerce	OIS.17, OIS.18, OIS.31
PC-DR-5.2. Identify potential funds and resources to support the campaign through collaborations with regional and provincial organizations. Secure initial funds for testing. (See VE-M-10.)	1		
PC-DR-5.3. Launch the campaign in phases, 1. Local/ Regional and 2. Provincial. Evaluate success according to metrics. Adapt accordingly, and relaunch.	2		
PC-DR-6. Define internal strategies with relevant departments to assess tourism considerations and applications of infrastructure needs and projects.			
PC-DR-6.1. Consolidate ongoing and planned infrastructure and capital projects (including upgrades, maintenance, extensions and expansions) within the municipal boundary into a GIS-based asset management database. Use this tool to support coordinated infrastructure work and strategic alignment across different plans.	1 - 2	TOSL VSL Third-party support	OIS.34, OIS.36

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
PC-DR-6.2. Schedule regular Working Group meetings to facilitate tourism-focused coordinated infrastructure priority updates and the adoption of integrated infrastructure planning. Specifically: • Annually review priorities and update tourism-related and visitor experience infrastructure needs; • Make informed, collective decisions on addressing infrastructure capacity concerns and managing visitor growth; • Propose municipal-level strategies and actions to coordinate projects across departments aligned with infrastructure priorities, where applicable; • Initiate intermunicipal collaboration to address shared infrastructure needs and priorities, where relevant; and • Propose key inter-departmental actions to facilitate the adoption of integrated infrastructure planning. (See also PC-DR-6.3 and PC-DR-6.4.)	2 Ongoing	Working group (Planning and VSL co- lead)	OIS.34, OIS.36
PC-DR-6.3. Establish a standardized procedure for integrating visitor-related and tourism infrastructure needs into Town-wide infrastructure planning. Key steps include: • Utilize the Destination Readiness Framework's readiness criteria (Appendix A) to prioritize tourism-related infrastructure needs and growth strategy; • Incorporate data-driven forecasting models, evidence-based planning (such as pilot projects and public studies), and needs assessment inquiries (i.e., the 'Importance-Satisfaction' model) to regularly evaluate visitor-related infrastructure demands and capacity gaps; and • Implement a formula-based model that integrates both resident population and tourism growth factors into municipal infrastructure projections. Account for baseline demand (residents), peak demand (visitors), and seasonal fluctuations, for balanced and adaptive infrastructure planning.	2 - 3	VSL Third-party support	
PC-DR-6.4. Explore the possibility of developing an integrated Master Plan or Infrastructure Asset Management Plan to guide future investment and planning initiatives in Sylvan Lake for all infrastructure maintenance, upgrades and expansions. Adopt best practices in decision-making and investment planning, guided by the National Guide to Sustainable Municipal Infrastructure (InfraGuide).	4 - 5	TOSL VSL Third party support	

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

Visitor Management (VM)

Leverage placemaking, downtown revitalization and program-based activations for effective visitor management.

As previously explored, investments in placemaking and downtown revitalization foster Sylvan Lake's levelling-up as a tourism destination, with an alignment between the two addressing the dual challenge of attracting visitors and working to make their impact positive and manageable for the community. These initiatives transform the town's physical landscape and atmosphere, creating a more vibrant and appealing environment. This means charming streetscapes with unique local shops, inviting public spaces for relaxation and connection, and distinctive design features that reflect Sylvan Lake's character, translating to improved quality of life, enhanced pride of place, and economic vitality.

Further, placemaking and downtown revitalization lead to new points of interest beyond the beach, thereby influencing visitor flow and behaviour by encouraging further exploration. This dispersal of visitors helps reduce congestion in high-traffic areas and mitigates environmental pressure on the lakefront, and shares the economic impact more equitably throughout the town. The same impacts can be expected from creating diverse attractions and experiences that connect the lakefront and downtown to other areas. Whether through public art, pop-up markets, satellite events, or other solutions presented within the DLMP, creating reasons for visitors to interact with the entirety of Sylvan Lake alleviates strain on any single area and, ultimately, provides a richer experience for visitors and residents alike. Plus, this approach benefits local businesses by increasing foot traffic in areas that do not benefit from tourism activity in the same way as those closer to the lakefront and downtown.

Building awareness of existing products and services is another helpful exercise in visitor management, further spreading economic benefits more evenly across the town while creating a more immersive and satisfying experience for visitors who discover the full range of what Sylvan Lake has to offer.

The act and process of placemaking as a collaborative investment serves as an opportunity to engage residents and relieve some of the tension expressed towards visitors. By involving local community members in decision-making processes, from engagement opportunities to public art selection, residents gain a sense of ownership over the town's evolution. Local businesses and residents expressed a desire for collaboration; empowering a grassroots approach to placemaking—guided by a shared set of strategic goals and priorities—can build strong relationships and foster community ownership and pride. This collaborative approach leads to innovative solutions that balance visitor needs with local preferences (for example, multi-use spaces that serve visitors during peak seasons and residents year-round). The result is a more harmonious coexistence between tourism and local life, where residents see the benefits of tourism and visitors feel more connected to the authentic local culture.

Sylvan Lake
2
DRAGON

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
PC-VM-1. Implement creative solutions to peak-season parking challenges and future high-demand periods.*			
PC-VM-1.1. Pilot low-capital solutions (tactical urbanism) for one season, utilising 50 Avenue between 53 and 60 Street for different drop-off/pick-up and parking needs, including boat trailers, RVs and tour buses, as recommended in the Sustainable Waterfront Redevelopment Plan.	1	VSL TOSL	OIS.8
PC-VM-1.2. Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the project to determine longer-term solutions.			
PC-VM-1.3. Determine parking zones throughout the Town, considering parking lots and street parking, each with a designated parking rate based on proximity to the beach (i.e. lots near the beach are available at a premium, while those further away cost less).			
PC-VM-1.4. Explore activating underutilised lots (both public and private) as visitor parking solutions during high season. Connect to shuttle service (see PC-VM-2). Explore potential opportunities for partnership (see PC-DR-1.3, CCS-CII-4.2 and CCS-CII-4.5).	2		
PC-VM-2. Implement shuttle connections to, from and within Sylvan Lake.			
PC-VM-2.1. Using an existing town-owned bus (i.e., Care-A-Van), pilot a shuttle service that provides a scheduled hop-on, hop-off solution connecting visitors to satellite parking sites, as well as attractions and visitor hot spots across the town during high season and iconic events.	1 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.8
PC-VM-2.2. Pilot a shuttle service to connect Sylvan Lake to communities in Alberta's central corridor, including Red Deer, Blackfalds, Bentley, Rimbey, Lacombe, and Innisfail, during high season and iconic events.	2 Ongoing	VSL Third-party support	
PC-VM-2.3. Pilot a shuttle service to connect Sylvan Lake to Calgary and Edmonton during high season and iconic events.			

**All solutions provided within this bylaw are in accordance with the Traffic Safety Bylaw.*

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
PC-VM-3. Improve interpretation of wayfinding, placemaking and visitor information assets.			
PC-VM-3.1. Create Interpretive Design Guidelines to inform the visual/language/system consistency of wayfinding assets, guided by the Placemaking and Wayfinding Toolkit and informed by universal design principles.	3	VSL TOSL	OIS.7, OIS.11
PC-VM-3.2. Create a trail system map connecting existing local green spaces, featuring community-chosen names. Provide information about broader trail experiences, including local and regional assets.			OIS.9, OIS.14, OIS.29, OIS.30
PC-VM-3.3. Identify potential locations for visitor maps and trail system maps, prioritising options along the lakefront, downtown, at major intersections, access points and trailheads.		Working Group (VSL lead)	OIS.9, OIS.14
PC-VM-3.4. Embed an updated and user-friendly map of attractions within identified locations and via virtual channels. List all visitor-related services, vendors, and business owners, as well as public art installations, landmarks, and key attractions. Allocate space for local marketing content (i.e., posters).		VSL	OIS.9, OIS.14
PC-VM-4. Enhance Visitor Information hubs.			
PC-VM-4.1. Assess the opportunity to partner with the Sylvan Lake Chamber of Commerce to manage year-round visitor information services, as primary hub.	1	VSL Chamber of Commerce	OIS.13
PC-VM-4.2. Identify and activate satellite Visitor Information hubs for extended service during high season and major seasonal events. This may include the beach ambassador hut, the visitor information booth at the Library, the Nexsource Centre, and other feasible and valuable locations for visitor access.	2	VSL	
PC-VM-4.3. Evaluate the feasibility of a dedicated/ independently-located Visitor Centre, possibly in connection with the development of a Cultural Centre as in the Cultural Master Plan.	5 (Depending on timeline for Cultural Centre visioning & design)	TOSL	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
PC-VM-5. Enhance accessible experiences and connections.			
PC-VM-5.1. Develop an accessibility map (and populate existing apps with relevant and accurate information) that includes information about trail, beach, and public space accessibility, including trail, walkway or pathway surface, width/size, snow removal, curb cuts and ramps (or lack thereof) and distances to accessible washrooms, benches, water fountains, and parking. Train local staff, summer students or volunteers on accessibility standards and invest time in populating AccessNow, a crowd-sourced visitor-facing app regarding accessibility features in the community. Create a list of accessible businesses and services.	3	VSL TOSL	OIS.11, OIS.14
PC-VM-5.2. Where possible, include walking distances /estimated durations (in minutes) from parking beyond downtown (Centennial St., Festival St., and Lakeshore Drive) to key attractions, amenities, and services.		VSL	OIS.8, OIS.11
PC-VM-5.3. Invest in sight guides, rumble strips and auditory crosswalk/pedestrian crossing signals to make Sylvan Lake more accessible for individuals with visual impairments.		VSL TOSL	OIS.11, OIS.14
PC-VM-5.4. Assess accessibility (mobility, sensory and neuro-diverse); invest in improvements to make Sylvan Lake's public spaces accessible to all.		Third-party support	
PC-VM-6. Enhance accessibility in tourism businesses and service.			
PC-VM-6.1. Develop an educational program in partnership with regional tourism organizations and/or Travel Alberta. This program equips tourism businesses and visitor-related services (both existing and new) with the knowledge to better understand accessible travel needs and provide strategies to adopt and implement essential accessibility requirements, at minimum.	4	VSL CATA/Travel Alberta	OIS.11, OIS.25
PC-VM-6.2. Create an accessible tourism business recognition program and incentives, in partnership with regional DMOs and/or CATA. This recognition program highlights and rewards tourism businesses for their efforts in improving accessibility. The incentives (such as accessibility improvement grants, long-term loans, discounted permits, etc.) subsidize the cost of implementing accessibility measures. Prioritise the involvement of visitor accommodations, culinary businesses, major attractions and visitor-related services & experiences in this initiative.	4	VSL Tourism Red Deer, Lacombe Regional Tourism, and/or CATA	OIS.11, OIS.12

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
PC-VM-7. Use festivals and events to encourage visitor traffic beyond the lakefront and downtown.			
PC-VM-7.1. Identify potential open and enclosed locations for hosting medium- to large-sized satellite events. Explore partnerships with privately owned properties and operations (i.e., golf courses, camps, Hilltop Wedding Centre, etc).	2	Working Group (VSL lead)	OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS.31
PC-VM-7.2. Develop and implement a phased project to increase capacity and assets for satellite events (considering mobile furniture, infrastructure, design and cultural elements, and signage that represent the local charm/vibe, as well as services such as toilets).	2	VSL TOSL	
PC-VM-7.3. Define a pilot project to test a satellite event using various identified locations. (See Section 6: Visitors and Experiences.)	2	VSL	
PC-VM-8. Use wayfinding and placemaking to influence visitor behaviour.			
PC-VM-8.1. Determine key locations throughout the town for impactful visitor behaviour messaging.	1	Working Group (VSL lead)	OIS.14, OIS.39, OIS.43, OIS.44
PC-VM-8.2. Define phase-based projects to utilize playful placemaking for visitor behaviour messaging.	2 Ongoing		
PC-VM-9. Use community programming to influence visitor behaviour.			
PC-VM-9.1. Expand Town-led volunteer programs for the purpose of visitor behaviour management. Define a series of half-day experiences that attract non-local visitors (including activities, refreshments, etc.) while embracing themes of community values and respectful behaviour. Use local producers and makers to enrich the experience and showcase community assets.(See CCS-CII-5.2.)	4	VSL TOSL Community partner/ Grassroots groups,	OIS.31, OIS.39, OIS.43, OIS.44

Section 6:

Visitors & Experiences

6.1 **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Sylvan Lake's identity as a tourism destination relies heavily on summer visitation where there is a general tendency for visitors to come for the beach and not wander far from there, hindering their economic value to the community. While tourism has been central to Sylvan Lake's identity for decades, there are investments the Town can make that ultimately incentivize longer visitor stays and increase visitor spending.

This section dives into the realities of the visitor experience in Sylvan Lake—what there is to do, the quality of experiences, the role the Town (and VSL, specifically) plays in supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs for the sake of tourism development, and the marketing investments.

Gaps in the current landscape include limited reach to high-value visitors; a scarcity of diverse, paid visitor experiences; the lack of an iconic experience to establish Sylvan Lake as a gem in Central Alberta; a lack of active and ongoing partnerships with community partners and the local industry; and limited resources to support a strategic marketing approach.

The DLMP outlines three strategic directions to address these challenges:

Strategic Direction 1 focuses on product diversification and expansion, through investing in ongoing Town-led, co-led, and Town-enabled efforts. Recommendations: leverage existing Town assets for the sake of experience development; speak to partnership opportunities to further enhance local tourism product inventory; and seek to expand the year-round appeal of Sylvan Lake as a destination, ultimately seeking to attract increased visitor spending throughout the year and enhance the overall visitor experience.

Strategic Direction 2 aims to establish a multi-faceted tourism entrepreneurship support system using a community-centric approach. It recommends piloting an evolution of the current Tourism Partnership Program to be a Tourism Partnership Accelerator (TPA) and consider partnership with the Chamber of Commerce. This TPA includes various components that provide businesses and entrepreneurs the tools to enhance their capacity for visitor experience development, or to support VSL-led initiatives. It also seeks to enable piloting and testing, which decreases barriers and encourages the birth of new ideas and initiatives. This is set to lead to positive economic impacts, enhanced reputation and more a creative community.

Strategic Direction 3 speaks to marketing as a vital component of tourism development. The Plan recommends investing in expanding Visit Sylvan Lake's organic and paid marketing efforts to increase regional brand awareness, influence visitor behaviour, enhance community buy-in to tourism efforts, and attract high-value visitors year-round. Recommendations focus on thoughtful planning on an annual basis—including content and campaigns, as well as enhancing key marketing tools such as the VSL website and email marketing capabilities. Further, the Plan acknowledges the value of itinerary development, and seeks to expand VSL digital platforms as go-to resources for locals and visitors alike to seek-out experiences, destination-related news and plan high-value visits.

6.2 **THE CURRENT REALITY:** VISITOR EXPERIENCES & ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT

While tourism has been core to Sylvan Lake's identity for decades, local tourism product is not export-ready and lacks the ability to drive tourism revenues. In fact, local assets are generally not activated from the lens of tourism products or experiences. Shifting this approach allows the town to capitalize on the opportunities the sector presents, for the town's economic, social and environmental gain.

The lake itself and beachfront area at the centre of Sylvan Lake's tourism product ecosystem. But, despite drawing more than an estimated 800,000 visitors annually, there has been little strategic investment in incentivizing beachgoers to stay longer and spend more money. Increasing tourism revenues is essential for the Town to actualize the benefits of tourism for the community. Increasing a focus on tourism product and experience development is key to fostering revenue-generation from Sylvan Lake's visitors.

VISITOR PROFILES & BEHAVIOURS

A lack of location-specific visitor data limits the ability to understand Sylvan Lake's visitor profiles, spending, demographics, and consumer behaviours.

Travel Alberta has defined two target markets for the province, including "Curious Adventurers" and "Hotspot Hunters." Curious Adventurers are seeking experiences that connect them with the landscapes, culture and people within the destinations they visit, while Hotspot Hunters are chasing trends and one-of-a-kind experiences. (See Section 3: The Present State for more in-depth definitions.)

Without town-specific data, it is not possible to test how these profiles actually align with Sylvan Lake's real-life visitors. These insights are instrumental to effectively capturing and monetizing visitors as a useful economic resource.

Anecdotally, evidence suggests the town has strong multicultural appeal, as a diverse set of visitors make their way to Sylvan Lake for the beach, an event or a festival, and then make the relatively easy journey back to Calgary, Edmonton,or Red Deer.

Sylvan Lake's hospitality businesses in the lakefront and downtown areas express frustration that more visitors don't venture into their establishments, relative to the number of visitors the town receives. This frustration is especially felt in the summer months, when visitor spending becomes especially valuable, given the tendency for locals to avoid the downtown area due to their aversion to the crowds.

A number of factors likely influence this minimal visitor engagement with local businesses. Firstly—and as explored further throughout this section—there are few place-based experiences to draw people beyond the beach. Secondly, due to the untapped potential of VSL (which has not been fully realized as a result of limited team capacity), it is safe to assume limited awareness amongst visitors about what there is to see, do and taste beyond the beach. Thirdly, there is a cultural gap between many beach visitors and the overall offerings of the lakeshore services. Unfamiliarity and a sense of alienation—which have been recognized in destination development literature as significant factors in decreasing willingness to visit—lead visitors to either cautiously or inadvertently dismiss the opportunities available just across the street. This tendency is further enabled in the summer season given that visitors can set up structures and prepare their own food on the beach while enjoying the town's lake scenery, within their own culture and taste preferences.

To address this visitor experience gap and the challenge experienced by local businesses, there is an opportunity to diversify experiences and create a more inclusive and welcoming atmosphere. Additionally, providing information about local products and experiences guides and influences visitor behaviour, as discussed in Section 5: Places and Connections, and as further explored in the Marketing analysis and plan to follow.

Overall, providing more quality and unique visitor experiences that will entice visitors to stay longer and spend more is an exciting opportunity for the town, and especially necessary to overcome an existing perception that there isn't a lot to do there. Product development and diversification has the potential to influence shifts in the rowdy party-goer behaviour of some visitors that is also identified as a pain point for the community, and attract a more responsible, higher-spending visitor with a genuine curiosity and appreciation for Sylvan Lake.

TOWN-LED TOURISM EVENTS & EXPERIENCES

Festivals and events

Sylvan Lake's festivals and events are currently a core strategy for attracting visitors during the off-season. Investments in this area are significant for the Town, from a financial and human resources perspective, with an average of 18 organized annually, resulting in annual losses up to $57,000 in 2022 and $42,000 in 2023.* Led by the administration's Special Events Coordinator, support is required from other members of the Culture and Tourism team given the immense workload that comes with carrying-out more than one event per month, not to mention the required contributions from other departments such as Public Works., Parks, and Protective Services.

These Town-led initiatives primarily center around the lake area because of the availability of space and its proximity to supporting infrastructure (i.e., parking, public toilets, etc). While this is valuable to fostering the "lake town vibe" essence, there is an opportunity to activate other spaces—both publicly and privately-owned—around town that have historically not been used for festivals and events. Such an approach disperses visitors more broadly throughout town and deepens the value of other public spaces, for the community and visitors alike. There is also an opportunity to broaden the perspectives and considerations that inform themes and the character of the events to better appeal to a diversifying community and multicultural visitor markets.

The 2018 Tourism Festival and Event Strategy ('the Strategy') has been formative to the Town's embrace of and approach to such activities, and has been impactful in diversifying visitor experiences available during the winter months and shoulder seasons. The Strategy itself provides strong recommendations and direction, aligned with the DLMP in a vision for improving community culture and economic prosperity through events, as well as taking a regional focus to planning and attracting participants. Notably, the Strategy acknowledges a need to invest in creating winter festivals or events that are not dependent on the lake's condition, and therefore non-weather-dependent. As demonstrated by the cancellation of the 2024 Ice Dragon Boat Races, adopting such strategies is important to mitigating losses endured due to unpredictable weather patterns.

Nonetheless, while the Town's investment in events and festivals is indisputably tourism product development, it is not recognized as such within the administration, which hinders its evolution and ability to generate municipal revenue and economic impact. This is evidenced by an events coordinator whose role lives outside the Tourism portfolio, a fragmented events budget (i.e., expenses and revenues measured across three separate budgets: Special Events, Culture and Tourism), and, as previously noted, an absence of revenue-generating approaches to events and festivals (i.e., not ticketed).

** These figures were determined by calculating the total Special Events Budget actual expenses and revenue as well as the actual expenses and revenues dedicated to Special Events in the Tourism and Culture Budgets.*

Because events are not currently ticketed, they may be considered tourism assets, but without direct revenue generation from visitors, they cannot be considered a tourism product. While events run by a municipality are typically community events and therefore free to residents, there remains an opportunity to explore creative revenue-generation avenues specific to visitors to maximize the impact of these investments and to examine where to draw a line between free for residents and assigning additional value at a price point that is better aligned with visitor interests (i.e., attaching a fee for everyone for iconic events meant to draw regional attendees). The Municipality has previously tested some approaches, such as ticketing components for individual activities within an event, which did not prove logistically sound.

From a community perspective, the value that events and festivals bring to local quality of life cannot be understated, with significant positive feedback received consistently from the community about events. However, there is little to no reliable data indicating visitor statistics or spending to demonstrate the return on investment, which must be considered given the aforementioned human and financial resources poured into them. The Town has only recently begun to occasionally track where attendees are coming from, who they are and how long they are staying, though a logistically sound, formal data collection system or process has yet to be established. A strong and current baseline understanding of visitor engagement is required so tangible key performance indicators can be attached to these investments.

Evidence does point to overwhelmingly local attendance at Sylvan's events—even those meant to draw visitors. Again, limited marketing budget and resources impedes success. While they theoretically may appeal to people further afield, there is an apparent absence of awareness that stifles attendance numbers.

Jaws at the Lake and Flannel & Feast each have strong tourism potential, however, remain primarily attended by Lakers. On the other hand, the Bull Riders Canada Season Finals and Ice Dragon Boat Festival—which each receive more marketing and media attention—do attract visitors, who make up an estimated 20 per cent or more of attendees, according to Town administration estimates.

Sports, recreation and other events

The Nexsource Centre plays host annually to Bull Riders Canada, which is born from a contract between the Town and Bull Riders Canada (BRC) to host the season finals. The Municipality takes on partnership with the BRC organization in pursuit of the economic gains from playing host. Total business sales resulting from hosting the BRC event are approximately $636,000, supporting 424 jobs and resulting in 218 hotel room night bookings, according to the Destinations International Event Impact Calculator Tool made available through Travel Alberta (2022). This points to an

opportunity for the Town to consider and pursue similar opportunities that leverage existing facilities, attract visitors and have direct economic impacts, especially during the shoulder seasons.

Pogadl Park is an emerging destination within the town, and especially popular when the WCBL's Sylvan Lake Gulls are playing. As Pogadl Park's development is finalized, its potential as a tourism asset expands. This represents one of plenty of spaces throughout Sylvan Lake where new product and experiences may emerge, and to facilitate shoulder season visitation. As identified in the 2018 Festivals and Events Strategy, the majority of the 30 indoor public and privately operated venue spaces are well-suited to hosting small stage events, celebrations, and other meetings, incentives, conventions and events. It also notes that there are 15 outdoor venues in the community—including sport fields, parks and green space—that are well-suited for events and festivals–which, for interpretation and application to the DLMP, may also include tournaments and competitions. This is also true for the impressive trail network throughout the town, which to this point, has not been integrated or activated from a visitor experience perspective (see Section 5: Places and Connections).

As for winter visitation, the lake lends itself to activities such as skating and ice fishing. As climate change continues to impact seasonal trends and forecasts, overly relying on a lake frozen enough for major events and activities comes with significant though uncertain risks, including financial losses.

Town-level product development planning

The VSL team developed a Product Development Plan in 2023 to guide product diversification efforts. It aims to: shift visitor spending from low-value, one-day beach visits to high-value visitation that goes beyond the beach and lakefront; limiting the environmental impact of visitors; fostering higher social and economic benefit for the community through initiatives; and supporting entrepreneurial growth and development within the community.

For internal initiatives, they are currently in touch with Tourism Café—who helped develop Travel Alberta's SHiFT program—to provide Experience Development Training for the team to guide product development efforts, create a unified vision and reduce friction.

Other recommendations within the Plan consider opportunities to ticket major events; seeking opportunities beyond festivals and events; expanding the administration's view of tourism products (i.e., to consider public art) so tourism leadership equates to greater reach and impact; expanding the Tourism Partnership Program to include a more diverse array of participants, such as arts-based organizations, community groups and non-profits; itinerary development; and considering opportunities for iconic signature experiences.

Externally focused initiatives—meant to support private operators—include: creating a capacity-building plan for tourism operators to guide product development and diversification, offering incentives for participants; introducing an experience listing and booking system, to promote local businesses while establishing a revenue stream for the Municipality; developing purchasable vacation packages; incorporating additional advertising opportunities through Visit Sylvan Lake; developing partnerships development toolkits; and creating a VSL branded, "local-made" merchandising program.

Due to capacity constraints, these initiatives remain in the early stages of implementation though speak to significant opportunities to strengthen and diversify existing tourism assets, enhancing tourism readiness, and expanding experiences.

Regional/collaborative products and offerings

There has been limited collaboration with neighbouring communities to create connected experiences that drive exploration and visitation that connects Sylvan Lake to other experiences in Central Alberta. While there is intention, particularly evident through the work of the Central Alberta Tourism Alliance, most communities within the region do not have the capacity to mobilize tourism initiatives beyond "side of the desk" considerations.

This points to one opportunity for Sylvan Lake to take on the leadership role envisioned by the DLMP, establishing itself as a hub of curated itineraries and experience clusters that complement what the town itself has to offer. This is further explored in Section 7: Community, Collaboration and Sustainability (see CCS-DLM-8).

Still, regional plans such as the Travel Alberta Olds to Lacombe TDZ Report and the Central Alberta Agritourism Development Strategy point to agritourism as a core opportunity for the region, which presents an opportunity for Sylvan Lake to collaborate on regional development and initiatives.

Privately-led businesses, events and experiences

Beyond Town-led initiatives, local businesses and entrepreneur-led activations also represent existing or prospective visitor experiences.

As a few examples, the local farmer's market is hosted weekly on Fridays at Lakefront Park from May to September; Sylvan Lake Theatre hosts comedy shows, workshops and events at various local venues, as well as its annual Theatre Trail; and The White Frog Café hosts regular Artists Markets. Some venues can be leveraged for small events, such as Hillside Wedding Centre and local golf clubs.

Further, there are a selection of breweries and food producers in and around Sylvan Lake. Specific businesses that offer unique and entertaining ways to spend time in town include Lakeside Go-Karts & Mini-Golf, Wood Shed Axe Throwing and Aquasplash. Select retailers, namely Sun Sport, provide bikes and watersport equipment (motorized and non-motorized) for rent, as well as ice fishing shack rentals in the winter.

With few anomalies, the primary local tourism businesses (including those mentioned above) are rated between 4.0 and 4.9 on Google. This demonstrates that quality of experiences is not the key issue, however, quantity of experiences is. While Sylvan Lake offers both Town- and community-led visitor-oriented experiences that can be enjoyed in a day trip, there are relatively limited options to entice multi-day stays. A gap in variety also limits the audiences to which Sylvan Lake can effectively appeal. For example, the slim selection of water- and nature-based activities hinders appeal to outdoor enthusiasts. Still, the necessity to invest more in paid and organic marketing initiatives to drive awareness remains a recurring theme.

This lack of diversity is also true for shops and restaurants available in the downtown area. The restaurants on Lakeshore Drive primarily embody a pub-style feel while there are limited boutiques and other unique shopping, eating, and experience providers to drive local spending.

As for accommodation options, hotels and motels in Sylvan Lake are rated between two- and three-stars, further demonstrating a gap in product diversity. This is an especially notable challenge, given that most hotels and motels are ideally located with waterfront views, but suffer because of quality. Additionally, the discrepancy between low ratings of traditional accommodators and high ratings of experience providers points to a lack in consistency of standard, and therefore, limits appeal to high-value travellers. There is an existing mis-match between the quality of experience and the quality of accommodation offerings which thwarts efforts to attract the high-value visitors Sylvan Lake needs.

Beyond quality and diversity, accessibility is an important consideration. A general truth in Sylvan Lake is that local businesses do not extend business hours to accommodate peak visitor season, often citing limited capacity and staffing resources. These circumstances may also be responsible for the lack of initiative or innovation by local businesses to capitalize on anticipated visitor influx periods, for example, by collaborating on unique experiences or activations to drive foot traffic in their doors. There is, however, evidence of local vendors actively collaborating with others in the area. For example, Sweet Home On The Lake and White Frog showcase and sell products from makers and artisans who are based in Sylvan Lake and neighbouring communities. Additionally, several businesses regularly promote and celebrate others on their own social media channels.

As for externally-organized events, The Town of Sylvan Lake currently has a Special Events Policy in place to facilitate organized events, programs or services taking place on publicly-owned land or in publicly-owned facilities,[57] and the associated application process. As recognized within the 2018 Tourism Festivals and Events Strategy— though referring to the previous iteration, remains true: "There are no linkages within this policy to an overarching strategy of festival and event development. Special event permits are granted on a first-come, first-served basis, and there are no guidelines relating to preferred events that match the community's brand and target markets."

Travel trade

With the rare exception, there are currently no external tour operators and destination management companies (DMCs) who include meaningful stops in Sylvan Lake within their itineraries. At present, a lack of tourism-ready, packageable experiences represent a barrier to fostering these opportunities. Eventually, as the scope and quality of local tourism product expands, Town-facilitated collaboration with operators provide a channel to connect with visitors from beyond the regional and/or provincial scope, which becomes an exciting opportunity for Sylvan Lake as its destination readiness evolves. (See CCS-DLM-8.4.)

PRODUCT DIVERSIFICATION

The aforementioned VSL Product Development Plan established in 2023 speaks to product diversification, particularly in its intent to support local tourism operators in creating new products and diversifying their businesses. As established, there is a lack of tourism product diversity, though research and trends provide various avenues for Sylvan Lake to explore. Trends such as staycations, remote work, resignation and retirement audiences connect with demand for experiences that center on self-care, well-being and personal enrichment.

From a regional perspective, Travel Alberta's Tourism Development Zones (TDZ) project has identified two product areas for the "Olds to Lacombe" region—in which Sylvan Lake resides—which are:

- Agritourism: breweries and distilleries, honey farms, wineries and an award-winning cheesemaker; and
- Outdoor recreation: camping, cycling, golf, hiking, kayaking, ice-fishing, skating, tubing and other activities.

They further identified an opportunity for the TDZ to invest in its positioning as an agritourism hub.

On a federal level, the Government of Canada continues to invest in tourism product expansion in the areas of winter/shoulder season, Indigenous experiences, sport, culinary and cultural, all of which Sylvan Lake can lean into with the right staffing capacity or third-party support.

As explored in Section 4: Becoming a Destination, aligning with Federal and Provincial tourism priorities is a strategic move, as it helps to balance local interests with wider tourism objectives, thereby increasing opportunities for resource optimization—including financial resources, knowledge, skills, and supplies—and enhancing visibility.

Winter & shoulder season

According to the Central Alberta Tourism Alliance Accommodation Study 2018, the region overall and each market individually were consistent in experiencing their lowest occupancy in the winter months: December, January and February.[58] The primary opportunity identified in response was to build demand during spring and fall (April-June, September-November) for meetings and conferences. While Sylvan Lake does not have a large events or conventions centre, there is an opportunity to activate small venues to host corporate meetings, events and retreats.

Ultimately, the Town's festivals and events drive visitation during this period of the year though, as established, they have yet to be leveraged effectively from a tourism perspective. Otherwise, the town lacks distinguished offerings to drive visitation during the fall, winter and spring. For example, there are limited opportunities for visitors to rent winter equipment such as snowshoes and ice skates, and there are minimal guided tours available. Additionally, while there is a trend of destinations activating golf courses by grooming trails for cross-country skiing or snowshoeing, the Town nor local businesses have not fostered these opportunities.

[DEFINE]

WHAT IS A **HIGH-VALUE VISITOR?**

A high-value visitor is one who seeks authentic, immersive and responsible travel experiences that connect them with the local community, culture and environment. They are driven by a desire to engage with the vibrant charm and spirit of a destination, and are willing to pay a premium for high-quality, unique and differentiated experiences that offer genuine connections with the land, people and stories of a place.

High-value visitors are responsibly-minded, prioritizing sustainable tourism practices. They seek out destinations and experiences that align with their values of environmental stewardship and cultural preservation. They are conscious of their environmental and social impact, and actively seek out opportunities to minimize their footprint while supporting local economies and grassroots initiatives.

Simultaneously, these discerning visitors have a refined taste for exceptional service and amenities, and are willing to invest in curated experiences that are tailored to their interests and preferences. They expect high-quality guest experiences, including unique accommodations, exclusive access to natural or cultural attractions, and experiences that offer a sense of exclusivity and differentiation.

It is imperative that the Town—complemented by efforts from the business owners, community groups and investors—strengthen its product offering during this time of year in order to compete effectively with other destinations in the province that have established, attractive, revenue-generating experiences.

Enhancing local assets through placemaking and destination development initiatives, as explored in Section 5: Places and Connections, will provide a stronger foundation from which winter and shoulder season experiences can be developed and provide the circumstances for success.

Indigenous tourism

Insights gathered during the DLMP engagement period pointed to a view of Sylvan Lake as an ideal place for Indigenous-led experiences, according to Indigenous Tourism Alberta, because of the inherent connections to the land and lake. As such, the town lends to nature-based activities. However, there is a gap in Indigenous entrepreneurs locally to lead such initiatives.

Powwow Times is a Sylvan Lake-based Indigenous experience provider, currently offering product in Red Deer and invested in expanding opportunities closer to home. While its efforts would enhance the visitor experience, having a singular operator is a constraint to the speed and growth of Indigenous tourism for the town as it is reliant on individual operator capacity.

Sport & recreation tourism

Sylvan Lake has a number of sport facilities, recently well-reviewed within the Recreation, Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan, particularly the Nexsource arenas, the football/multi-use spaces and soccer fields. The same report notes that "the number of baseball diamonds currently exceeds the Town's anticipated needs, though several are nearing the end of their lifespan." It does include recommendations for ball diamond improvements, and as those are made and Pogadl Park spaces are activated, there's an opportunity to consider opportunities for sport tourism. While the town does play host to some tournaments throughout the year and additionally, is home to the Sylvan Lake Gulls Western Canadian Baseball League team, there is an opportunity to further invest in promoting the destination from a sport tourism lens, particularly for minor league events. Additionally, there is an opportunity for the town to expand its festival and events offerings through sport, whether leveraging arenas, parks, fields or trails and taking on a lead, co-lead or supporting role.

Culinary tourism/agritourism

Sylvan Lake is located amongst rich agricultural land that has been identified by CATA and Travel Alberta as an opportunity for product development. There is an opportunity to showcase and celebrate the agricultural industry through culinary experiences, as identified by both Travel Alberta in its Olds to Lacombe TDZ Report and CATA's Agritourism Development Strategy.

Additionally, though Sylvan Lake's lakeshore restaurants generally have a similar type of menu, there are exciting and culturally diverse foods available in other areas of town that are often overlooked given they are not located on the waterfront.

Cultural tourism

There is no functional museum, walking tour-type guides or meaningful historic landmarks within Sylvan Lake. The ''Sylvan Lake and District Archives'' (the Archives) has laid the groundwork for recounting the town's and the lake's stories, through its collection of photographs, documents, and various forms of media. However, there remains untapped potential to consider how these narratives can translate into experiences. The VSL website provides a small collection of historical walking tours, though these are not monetized nor do they lend to enriching experiences.

Sylvan Lake has a history of music and dance, however these stories are not actively integrated into local storytelling or events. The camp-town legacy (Camp Kasota, Camp Kasota West, Kamp Kannawin, and Camp Woods) is also unique. There is an opportunity to activate these pieces of the town's identity from a tourism and visitor experience perspective, leaning into the exciting possibilities for product development and attracting new audiences.

Of these categories, it must be acknowledged that none of these opportunities exist in a silo. Cultural tourism is connected to Indigenous tourism, and all categories can be explored for shoulder/winter season, as some examples.

Intention and investment is required to position Sylvan Lake as a formidable alternative to destinations in the province with refined experiences that attract high-value visitors. Further, remaining on top of emerging opportunities—those products or experiences that become feasible as the Town advances its capacity—allows the Town to solidify its position as a regional leader while providing compelling experiences to the community and prospective visitors.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP & BUSINESS SUPPORT

Providing support to local entrepreneurs and businesses is critical to tourism market preparedness and product development. Given that 80 per cent of small businesses are tourism businesses (which means visitors represent a significant share of their customer base), tourism leadership is essential to success.

The Town administration has made investments in supporting local businesses to support tourism product readiness and development, though limited capacity is a barrier—as demonstrated in other areas of this Section, not to mention other areas of this Plan.

There is currently a perception from the local business community that the Town favours downtown businesses, as the Municipality directs a significant portion of its energy and attention to that area, particularly in its marketing, events and beautification efforts. These efforts are in response to ongoing realities, such as how many businesses are small and lack other resources/supports and that these businesses are also accessed less by locals. The needs for beautification and to fill vacancies are also factors for its focus. For the Town, this concentrated effort downtown is meant to be a stimulus for the short-term and not a long-term investment. However, property and business owners now expect the Town to be responsible for marketing, beautification, planning and collaboration. In the meantime, businesses that are not within the "downtown" area feel left out of visitor-focused initiatives. Those outside of the downtown vicinity and in the opposite direction of the beach from Centennial St. are interested in solutions that more intentionally include them in the fabric of Sylvan Lake's central tourism area.

There are some establishments in Sylvan Lake that exceed essential market preparedness, according to the criteria set out in Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness Criteria for Local Businesses. Leadership amongst these establishments is eager to, or currently working to expand their offerings beyond routine operations to entice visitor spending. However, the majority of existing businesses are not operating at this level.

There is limited evidence of collaboration between these businesses and the Town in visitor-related initiatives, though efforts are being made to bridge this gap. For example, the Tourism Industry Partnership Program (TPP) offers an opportunity for local tourism businesses to actively participate in Town of Sylvan Lake tourism initiatives and strategies. It is free for businesses to join and promises opportunities for cooperative marketing, referrals, and access to data, resources and training. Again, limited administrative capacity prevents the program from reaching its full potential.

With dedicated leadership, there is an opportunity to enhance the appeal and impact of the TPP to directly speak to the needs of local businesses and entrepreneurs, through training, mentorship and/or resource-sharing, embracing approaches that allow members to participate based on their own schedules, capacity and level of tourism readiness. The value of the program can then be strengthened by incorporating capacity building for collaboration and partnership, enabling grassroots initiatives and community led-efforts, and connecting community groups who want to explore how to lean on visitors to fund their community programs. Integrating broader perspectives (i.e., for the arts) is another opportunity, as noted in the 2023 Product Development Plan, which creates an opportunity for VSL to "help community cultural organizations flourish and better access tourism resources and markets as a funding stream for their development."[59]

Overall, there appears to be a disconnect between what the local business and entrepreneur community requires of the Town in order to be active participants in the tourism sector. One example of evidence to this effect is a lack of uptake to Town-led initiatives from the business community, intended to encourage foot traffic into downtown businesses. Engaging prospective participants to understand why this is the case provides a more collaborative approach to developing such opportunities, taking a needs-based approach versus one guided by assumptions.

The Tourism Experience Development Incubator (TEDI) program, which is an evolution to the mobile vending initiative, represents local shifts taking place. This latest iteration is designed to help vendors test ideas, gather proof of concept and provide support in eventually setting up permanent businesses elsewhere in town. There is an opportunity to evolve it further, to also consider other Town-led support for businesses and entrepreneurs.

The local Chamber of Commerce is an active partner to local businesses and entrepreneurs. The organization hosts networking events and produces marketing resources. There is an opportunity to increase collaboration between the Town and the Chamber, given the potential impact of aligning efforts, resources and priorities.

Labour

Note: Labour data presented in this section is according to 2016 and 2021 Statistics Canada data, specifically for Sylvan Lake.

Labour is a critical pillar that can define a visitor's experience and a destination's potential for product development.

The Sylvan Lake tourism industry is highly reliant on young workers. In 2016, almost half of the sector's workers were younger than 25 (43.9 per cent). The percentage of tourism jobs held by those under 25 did fall from 2016 to 2021, but that drop will have been affected by the pandemic shut-downs. Unfortunately, the 2021 census data is an unreliable indicator for assessing if tourism businesses in Sylvan Lake are now more or less reliant on young people.

Immigrants made up 10 per cent of tourism employees in Sylvan Lake in 2016, which is not surprising as immigrants represent a small percentage of the total community population. That said, only 5.9 per cent of the total population in Sylvan Lake at that time were immigrants, showing the inclination of this demographic group to work in the tourism sector. Employment data from the 2021 census should be viewed with caution, but it is worth noting that immigrants filled 15.9 per cent of tourism jobs that existed in the spring of 2021, despite their total share of the Sylvan Lake population growing to 6.5 per cent. Immigrants who had arrived in Canada within the last five years made up 46.7 per cent of the total immigrant population working in Sylvan Lake's tourism industry in 2016 and 23.5 per cent in 2021. This lower number in 2021 would be partially attributable to newer frontline workers being among those unemployed during the pandemic.

The reliance on young workers and new immigrants is likely aligned with the higher portion of part-time and part-year jobs in Sylvan Lake, relative to the province's tourism sector. Tourism has always held a high percentage of these jobs, but part-time jobs made up almost half of all tourism jobs in 2016. Nearly 30 per cent of tourism jobs in 2016 existed for less than half the year.*

The industry offers young workers a great opportunity to enter the labour force, and a safety net for new immigrants. But, its reliance on those workers and their willingness to accept lower wages is a weakness. Individual businesses may thrive, but the expansion of the industry will be limited by the availability of workers willing to fill these roles.

Expanding demand outside the summer months means increasing the number of jobs that are available year-round, which better aligns with the needs of newcomers, who are the main source of labour force growth and seeking long-term financial stability.

6.3 SUMMARIZING GAPS

There is a lack of diverse, Town-facilitated one-day and multiple-day paid visitor experiences and tourism products for exploring Sylvan Lake.

There is limited reach to high-value visitors seeking to connect with the community and enjoy responsible recreational experiences.

There is a gap in strategic distribution of visitor-facing products and experiences throughout the town and throughout the year.

There is no consistent, iconic experience that establishes Sylvan Lake as a gem in Central Alberta.

The town lacks authentic Indigenous experiences.

Public and private recreational assets (infrastructure and experiences) are not strategically utilized to diversify and enrich offerings for high-value visitors and year-round activation.

There is a lack of evidence of Town partnerships with community rights holders, including business owners and grassroots organizations, in creating visitor experiences & products.

Emerging and existing entrepreneurs do not have a clear development pathway that speaks to sector specific needs (including non-profits, grassroots), nor is there a comprehensive Town-led support system for entrepreneurs to start and/or grow their visitor-related businesses.

There is a gap in business diversification downtown and a gap in overall market preparedness, impacting the overall destination appeal and visitor experience.

Within the broad environmental context, There are gaps in policy and affordability to support entrepreneurial and grassroots activities.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

Product Diversification and Expansion (PDE)

Invest in ongoing Town-led, co-led and Town-enabled tourism product diversification and expansion, increasing year-round visitor spending and enhancing the visitor experience.

As defined by UNWTO, a tourism product is "a combination of tangible and intangible elements, such as natural, cultural and human-made resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities around a specific center of interest which represents the core of the destination marketing mix and creates an overall visitor experience including emotional aspects for the potential customers." To put it simply, tourism product refers to things people can pay to experience when visiting a destination.

Successful tourism product:

- offers unique and memorable experiences that reflect the culture or essence of a destination, and set a destination apart from others nearby;
- is accessible, by way of transportation and physical space;
- provides a safe and memorable experience;
- generates direct revenue for the Town or economic impact for the town, through purchasable experiences; and
- lends to exciting and enticing marketing content.

Tourism product diversification is the process of expanding, reinventing, improving, or growing an existing product offering by developing new or enhanced experiences. Diversification is key to attracting equally diverse audiences, and developing a destination's appeal on a year-round basis. It considers various types of experiences and audiences, indoor and outdoor spaces, and empowering local businesses & entrepreneurs whenever possible.

Product expansion focuses on new visitor markets, improved product lines, or seasonal experiences, considering opportunities in segments such as Indigenous tourism, cultural/heritage tourism, winter/shoulder season tourism, sport tourism, culinary tourism, accessible tourism and others.

Investing in diversification and expansion:

- reduces dependence on a single type or limited scope of tourism product and audience, creating more balance in year-round, visitor-driven economic impact and thereby making the town less vulnerable to economic shocks and fluctuations in demand;
- creates value and options for visitors, ultimately catering to a wider range of interests and therefore, a spectrum of high-value, prospective visitors year-round while extending the average length of stay;
- entices summer beach visitors to explore further and spend more;
- supports sustainable tourism development by encouraging the use of local resources in new and unique ways;
- represents new revenue channels for local entrepreneurs and businesses, as well as for the Town itself;
- enhances the town's small, laketown narrative and position as a regional tourism leader;

- extends Sylvan Lake's reach provincially, with focus on prospective visitors from major urban hubs in Alberta (i.e., Edmonton, Calgary);
- entices spending from Canadian and international travellers who visit Sylvan Lake for other reasons (i.e., to visit friends and family);
- draws visitor traffic beyond the lakefront and downtown, and extends visitor spending and throughout the whole town;
- utilizes product development as a mechanism for enhancing the public-private-community partnership (PPCP) capacities of the Town, local business, art and cultural groups, and other potential partners.

There is a spectrum of ways for destinations to manage product diversification and expansion. On one end, it is left as a strictly private sector activity, with minimal involvement from the local government. One the other end "are those destinations whose authorities play a hands-on role in encouraging, facilitating and supporting tourism development through the circulation of market research studies to the private sector, the organization of training programs for industry personnel, the availability of fiscal and other incentives for product development, and extensive promotion of the destination." For Sylvan Lake and most destinations of its size, the ideal solution is somewhere in the middle. Having a hand in these activities is valuable in managing impacts from economic, socio-cultural and environmental perspectives. Still, with limited capacity and resources, the Town cannot be solely responsible for product development, which is where providing support for entrepreneurs and businesses comes into play (see Direction 2: Entrepreneurship and Business Support).

High-impact product diversification and expansion rely strongly on destination development and placemaking efforts described in Section 5: Places and Connections. Those considerations and investments determine the foundation from which tourism development happens. Placemaking efforts, community-led initiatives and an expanded portfolio of activities & experiences more strongly position the town for success amongst prospective visitors across the Region and the Province. Accessibility and diversity of activities attract visitors who are willing to spend more and stay longer, including Summer Village Residents from nearby areas, as well as those from further afield.

Building upon the community's key strengths and assets is the key starting point for the Town, taking a "grow as you go" approach. While this DLMP guides efforts in specific segments, flexibility and creativity must be embraced in a community-centred model. This means allowing for organic development that may lead to a mix of things; art, culture, sport and other streams, specifically with a focus on the assets and opportunities that are market ready. From there, others will follow. For Sylvan Lake, this includes the lake and lakefront, trails, unique local businesses, access to growers and makers, and a healthy selection of sport and recreation facilities. The events and festivals are a core asset upon which the Town can leverage for further tourism development, embracing a two-pronged approach: offering those iconic theme-based events with a focus on visitor attraction,

and continuing to invest in events with a primarily community focus, while integrating a tourism view for the sake of enhancing economic impact. Further, attracting external event hosts to utilize Sylvan Lake's public spaces and attract audiences as a result is another key and potentially lucrative opportunity, as demonstrated by the Bull Riders Canada partnership.

Figure 16: Impacts of destination development initiatives

In the initial stages of DLMP implementation, the approach is to go grassroots as much as possible, capitalizing on existing resources (i.e., capacity, partnerships, etc.); start small, pilot ideas and develop proof of concept through data and feedback collection. Then, use evidence of success to attract investments and engagement from regional players and those further afield. As opportunities arise, the Town's role may be to lead, to co-lead or to support. Here are examples of what this might look like, all in an effort to drive more spending, more overnight visitors and shoulder-season visitation:

Indigenous tourism

As previously mentioned, Sylvan Lake's nature-based assets (i.e., lake, trails, etc.) lend themselves to Indigenous-led experiences. To understand the Town's role in developing this sector, the Town must invest in engaging local and regional Indigenous rights holders to define partnership and co-investment opportunities, informed by Indigenous values, perspectives and reconciliation. Whether working with Powwow Times as an established local business, or new Indigenous entrepreneurs who see the value of working in Sylvan Lake, the Town can identify its role in supporting pilot projects for product development.

Sport & recreation tourism

Focusing on activating local sport and recreation facilities represents an opportunity for Sylvan Lake product diversification and expansion, achieved by building a brand as Sylvan Lake as host for sport organizations. Existing resources position the town to host minor league tournaments and events, and provide a location for training camps or team building initiatives, potentially even connected to larger events in Calgary, Red Deer or Edmonton. Outdoor recreation opportunities lend to product development, such as camping, cycling, golf, hiking, kayaking, ice-fishing, skating, tubing and other activities.

Culinary tourism/agritourism

As established, there is a view from Travel Alberta and CATA to invest in agritourism development, and given its idyllic location within the region, there's an opportunity for Sylvan Lake to curate an initiative that showcases local agricultural producers. Creating strategic scenarios that bring together farmers, cheesemakers, growers, chefs, apiaries, brewers, vintners, and other agriculturally-aligned parties opens opportunities for the Town. The DLMP recommends an iconic culinary event to draw regional visitors. This is an obvious direction to take, particularly given the existing support in the subsector from CATA and Travel Alberta, as previously established. This has opportunities to grow and expand with time, and potentially include exclusive or premium experiences within, led by third-party partners. For example, an evening event whereby there is a 50-foot dinner table at Lakefront Park, and guests enjoy a farm-to-fork, five-course meal. This stream is best-leveraged in partnership with neighbouring municipalities and regional providers to maximize appeal and impact.

Cultural tourism

Engaging with Sylvan Lake Theatre, the Sylvan Lake Archives and other local & regional artists, musicians and dance groups lends to the creation of culturally-rich events that resonate with both residents and visitors. For instance, introduce local musical acts to major festivals or organize dance hall events and create Cultural Trail itineraries, mapping significant historical and cultural sites. Or, tap into the town's camp legacy by establishing creative camp product targeting various interest groups, in collaboration with local and regional suppliers and vendors. Collaborative efforts with cultural institutions and local communities expand the Town's authentic and impactful culturally-focused initiatives, therefore expanding the cultural component of the Sylvan Lake brand.

To drive visitor spending throughout the town, these themes can inspire packaged experiences or visitor passes to cater to various interests, in collaboration with local businesses; for example, a water-based recreation Visitor Pass might include access to AquaSplash and a paddleboat rental with SunSport as the key attractions, while a land-based recreation Visitor Pass might include access to Wood Shed Ax Throwing and Lakeside Go Karts & Mini-Golf, among other activities, each complemented by value-add components that make the Visitor Pass worth the investment. Seasonal Events Visitor Passes and Beach & Culinary may represent other possible themes.

At all points of development, product diversification and expansion efforts must be guided by a mission to enhance the small, lake town vibe. With that in mind, product expansion does not mean going large-scale; such an approach comes with risk of depleting the local essence. Instead, it means enhancing the value of Sylvan Lake as a destination through innovation and creativity, as reflected in the recommendations provided herein, such as activating satellite locations for key events, and connecting key tourism offerings through packaging and promotional initiatives.

Collaboration is key in this work—amongst administrative departments, the Town and community and the Town and regional tourism partners, as well as amongst local businesses and entrepreneurs, independent of the Town's efforts. To guide these connections, it is incumbent upon the Town to develop Partnership Cases that outline potential collaborations, and benefits to each, as a tool to whet the appetite of local and regional businesses.

Creating tools and resources like these Partnership Cases make it easy for local and regional businesses, partners, community groups and investors to see the value in Sylvan Lake. Paint the picture—whether via toolkits for prospective partners or packages & itineraries for visitors—and connect the dots between services and experiences to facilitate product diversification and expansion, which ultimately benefits the town, the community, partners and visitors alike.

CONSIDERING CLIMATE

Sylvan Lake has already seen how the realities of climate change pose risk to Town investments, most recently demonstrated by the cancellation of the 2024 Ice Dragon Boat Races. As a nature-based destination reliant on the lake as a core tourism driver throughout the year, integrating strategies focused on climate resiliency and making climate change-informed decisions is a necessity. This means organizing non-weather dependent complementary events to coincide with major outdoor events, giving visitors a reason to make the trip even if the main event is cancelled. For example, an indoor, makeshift Ice Dragon Boat Race event for kids and youth on the Nexsource ice pads. Alternatively, the Town may have "Events in a Box," as recommended in the Festivals and Events Strategy, that can be initiated with relatively quick turnaround time, using resources already dedicated to the main event.

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
Build VSL's foundational capacity for creating and enabling community-centric, high-value tourism products.			
VE-PDE-1. Expand VSL's capacity for product development.			
VE-PDE-1.1. Task the Internal Working Group (see CCS-DLM-1.1) with identifying priority investments in expansion, maintenance and upkeep of visitor-rated services throughout the town. Refer to the DLMP's 'Quick Wins & Projects' (Section 8) to guide these efforts. Use the investment priorities identified to inform the Town's infrastructure and community service improvement budgets.	1 Ongoing	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL	OIS.29
VE-PDE-1.2. Establish a dedicated Product Development Subgroup, comprised of Town team members and with VSL leadership, to focus on VSL's tourism product portfolio development. This may include some members of the Internal Working Group (see CCS-DLM-1.1).	1	VSL TOSL	OIS.34
VE-PDE-1.3. Employ a VSL team member to take on a dedicated Business & Partner Liaison role (see CCS-DLM-1.2).			
VE-PDE-1.4. Continue to invest in the Town's internal capacity building through training opportunities, in collaboration with Tourism Café, prioritizing the Product Development Subgroup.	1 - 2	VSL	
VE-PDE-1.5. Explore opportunities to enrich and extend the internal training to product themes, including events, ecotourism, sport and meetings & business conventions. Provide training opportunities to the TDC, based on their interest.			

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-PDE-1.6. Address gaps within and/or enhance Town procedures, policies, regulations and measures to strengthen VSL's role as an enabler, facilitator and/or partner in product and visitor experience development with private and public partners. This includes: • reducing barriers for investment or co-investment when considering VSL partnerships with external partners who seek to use Town-owned properties; • introducing measures to reduce barriers for procurement when considering partnerships with industry partners in tourism product development (see CCS-CII-3.1); • enabling VSL to allocate resources & incentives and offer complementary services and supports to initiatives with external partners; and • enabling bidding in collaboration with other DMOs Explore measures such as: • accelerated application processes (i.e., for using Town-owned properties, vendors, etc.); • an enhanced Procurement Policy; • an enhanced Special Events Policy, extending considerations beyond Town-owned properties; • incentives for major investments; • a rubric for community-centric ROI evaluation and Town benefits; and • premium use of select locations as recommended in CCS-DLM-7.12.	1 - 2	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL Third-party support	OIS.33, OIS.34
VE-PDE-1.7. Address gaps in regulations and policies regarding the commercial use of the town's natural assets, particularly the lake (see CCS-DLM-9.2,), as relevant within the Town's authority. Develop and approve detailed guidelines for using the town's natural assets in visitor experience development ('Sylvan Lake Natural Asset Use Guidelines'). (See VE-PD-9.1. and CCS DLM-9.3.)	2	Working Group (VSL lead) Third-party support	
VE-PDE-1.8. Prepare a Readiness Assessment Matrix for public signature assets that can be utilized in testing high-value recreational and cultural visitor experiences. Include types of activities that can be accommodated in each asset, the level of readiness (including the level of service and facility), visitor capacity (informed by Sylvan Lake Natural Asset Use Guidelines, see VE-PD-1.7.), and the investment scale needed to address gaps in service and infrastructure. Consider the following assets as priority options: • the Lake; • the Nexsource Centre; • Pogadl Park; • the Lakefront Recreational Zone (see PC-DDP-2.4); • trails; and • all small to medium-sized open, green public spaces. Review & revise the matrix at a minimum of every three years.	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL TOSL Third-party support	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-PDE-2. Showcase the practice of cultural diversity, accessibility and environmental sustainability in VSL product development.			
VE-PDE-2.1. Develop an internal guideline to inform cultural awareness and diversity, accessibility and environmental sustainability considerations in VSL product development (VSL Responsible Product Guideline - VE-PD-2.1). This may include: • types of activities & offerings; • recruitment and procurement processes and criteria; • implementation; and • content creation. (See CCS-DLM-9.3-CCS-DLM-9.5 and CCS-DLM-11.1.) Integrate this guideline in the Town/VSL's decision making process, by reviewing regulations and bylaws, and applying revisions where applicable (i.e., Sylvan Lake's Procurement Policy and the policy guide).	2 Ongoing	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL Third-party support	OIS.34, OIS.35
VE-PDE-2.2. Apply VSL Responsible Product Guideline (VE-PD-2.1) to one VSL-led event as a pilot, to determine its impact and feasibility. Use outcomes and impacts to inform policy and guideline updates accordingly, for VSL-led events and products. (See also: CCS-DLM-11.1.)	2 - 3	VSL	
VE-PD-3. Expand capacity for non-weather-dependent products and experiences, to enhance local tourism sector resiliency and sustainability.			
VE-PD-3.1. Dedicate resources annually to develop climate change-informed strategies for VSL delivery of tourism product, including events, based on the previous year's experience, trends and research. This may include ad-hoc alternatives and complementary initiatives on the calendar to proactively address climate-based disruptions, etc. (See also: CCS-DLM-9.5.)	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	OIS.28, OIS.34, OIS.35
VE-PD-4. Enhance VSL's capacity to evaluate emerging product development opportunities.			
VE-PDE-4.1. Create an Opportunity Evaluation Focus Group from the Product Development Subgroup (VE-PD-1.2) and representatives of the Tourism Development Committee (TDC). Task the Focus Group with using the Appendix F: Partnership Evaluation Framework for Experience Development to evaluate product development opportunities presented to VSL, and others that emerge based on market trends.	1 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) TDC Third-party support, as needed	OIS.28, OIS.30, OIS.34, OIS.44
VE-PDE-4.2. Collect local industry input (see CCS-CII-2.1) and subject matter expertise as required, when considering emerging product development opportunities.			

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
Enable visitor experience offerings, focusing on high-value markets, shoulder season activation and partnerships within Sylvan Lake.			
BUSINESS MEETINGS & EVENTS			
VE-PDE-5. Invest in supporting local recreational facilities and venues to attract small-scale business events, meetings and retreats.			
VE-PDE-5.1. Connect with potential local private recreational facilities, venues and accommodators, such as golf courses, Hilltop Wedding Center, hotels, and camps, to determine their interest in and capacity to host small-scale business events, meetings and retreats.	1 - 2	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	OIS.23, OIS.29, OIS.31, OIS.34
VE-PDE-5.2. Determine the Town's capacity to offer complementary services and supports to prospective local partners for attracting and hosting small-scale business events, meetings & retreats, such as: • providing shuttle service (see PC-VM-2); • offering complementary access to picnic shelters; private events/exclusive access at select locations such as the Pier, Lakefront Park and Lighthouse Park; • subsidized Visitor Passes (see VE-PD-9.4); and • free access to an upcoming iconic event. (See VE-PD-1.6. and CCS-DLM-7.12).		Working Group (VSL lead)	
VE-PDE-5.3. Work with interested partners to create Planning Packages for business events, meetings and retreats, targeting shoulder season visits. Include information about venues, accommodations, food services, experiences, and other relevant activities/services. Start with incentives and resources that are feasible, and expand/enhance Planning Package as more resources become available.	2 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) TDC (support)	
VE-PDE-5.4. Develop comprehensive resources (i.e., pamphlets, dedicated webpage, etc.) to present the Planning Packages and showcase Sylvan Lake as a host destination for small-scale business events, meetings and retreats. (See VE-M-4.) Invest in marketing initiatives to promote Planning Packages, focusing on the Central Alberta, Calgary and Edmonton markets. (See VE-M-7.)	2 - 3 (Resource development) Ongoing ((Outreach and pilot)	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	
VE-PDE-5.5. Track the success of the Planning Packages outreach in facilitating industry partnerships. See Appendix J: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure.	Ongoing		OIS.34 OIS.36

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
EXTERNAL EVENT ATTRACTION			
VE-PDE-6. Enhance Town capacity for supporting, co-facilitating and co-investment in events with external organizers, utilizing Sylvan Lake private and public recreational facilities, amenities and services.			
VE-PDE-6.1. Develop an External Partnership and Facilitation Toolkit, in consultation with local private venues, outlining hosting guidelines and processes. This may include: • information regarding costs of hosting an event (i.e. facility rates, civic services charges, etc.) (see CCS-DLM-7.12); • information regarding grant opportunities, sponsorship and other event supports; • requirements for a community-centric approach and responsible practice; • a listing of signature public and private assets (i.e. facilities and infrastructure) that can be utilized in these partnerships, with a focus on capitalizing on underutilized amenities and facilities, and open spaces (see VE-PDE-1.8); • a listing of advanced market ready local and regional service providers; and • a listing of ideas for/examples of partnership cases, informed by the potential scope of collaboration (see VE-PDE-6.2).	2 - 3	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) TDC (to support Business & Partner Liaison) Industry partners	OIS.23, OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS.31, OIS.34
VE-PDE-6.2. Identify local and regional event organizers, as well those from Calgary and Edmonton, who are prospective partners within this initiative. Consider a variety of sectors (i.e., business, recreational, cultural, adventure and sport events and tournaments) and identify the potential scope of collaboration. This may include: • PPCPs: such as community groups or local operators with evident capacity in event organizing, or • external hosts: such as business event organizers based in Red Deer or Calgary, • and other alternatives.		Working Group (VSL lead)	
VE-PDE-6.3. Present the Toolkit to the prospective partners mapped in VE-PDE-6.2.	3 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-PDE-6.4. Evaluate opportunities as they arise to determine the Town's role—specifically those seeking to utilize Sylvan Lake's public recreational facilities, amenities and services—using Appendix F: Partnership Evaluation Framework for Experience Development.	3 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) External organizers (project lead)	OIS.23, OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS.31, OIS.34
VE-PDE-6.5. Track the success of the External Partnership and Facilitation Toolkit in facilitating industry partnerships. See Appendix J: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure.			OIS.34, OIS.36
SPORT			
VE-PDE-7. Invest in establishing Sylvan Lake as a host or co-host for sport, leisure and cultural events, focusing on shoulder season opportunities.			
VE-PDE-7.1. Develop a list of prospective regional sport partners, such as teams and organizations in golf, baseball and hockey. Dedicate resources to outreach using the External Partnership and Facilitation Toolkit (see VE-PD-6.1), to present Sylvan Lake as an ideal host for pre-season training, and practices preceding major tournaments/events taking place in Calgary and Edmonton.	3 - 4	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29
VE-PDE-7.2. Explore opportunities to collaborate with major DMOs, such as Visit Calgary and Explore Edmonton. Pitch Sylvan Lake as a value-add in their pursuit of sport-related RFP/bid opportunities, acting as a satellite host for exclusive pre-tournament training camps. Use relevant evidence of VSL's collaborations/ partnerships with local recreational facilities (see VE-PD-5) external event organizers (see VE-PD-6) and as proof of concept.	4 - 5		
VE-PDE-7.3. Allocate ongoing resources to co-bidding with DMOs such as Red Deer, Lacombe, Calgary and Edmonton on RFP opportunities seeking a host community for theme-based events, programs and tournaments.	5		

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
INDIGENOUS TOURISM			
VE-PDE-8. Invest in facilitating Indigenous land-based experiences, using Sylvan Lake's natural assets and recreational infrastructure.			
VE-PDE-8.1. Develop an 'Asset Map of Regional Indigenous Entrepreneurs & Artists' who may be interested in Sylvan Lake tourism product development. Dedicate team, budget and other resources to relationship development, establishing an understanding of barriers and motivations for collaboration. (See CCS-CII-3.4.)	2	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) ITA	OIS.21, OIS.22, OIS.26, OIS.27
VE-PDE-8.2. Allocate resources to support interested Indigenous rights holders in creating authentic land-based experiences, which may include the facilitation/provision of land, capital and supplies. Allocate resources to support piloting one-day and multiple-day land-based experiences. (See also: PC-DDP-4.4 & PC-DDP-6.4.)	2 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) TOSL	
Invest in creating a tourism product and event portfolio for VSL, focusing on high-value markets.			
RECREATION & CULTURE			
VE-PDE-9. Invest in VSL-led packaged experiences, in collaboration with local industry and grassroots community groups, activating underutilized town assets.			
VE-PDE-9.1. Develop a series of packaged tourism experience ideas, using the Sylvan Lake Natural Asset Use Guidelines (see VE-PDE-1.7) and the Readiness Assessment Matrix (see VE-PDE-1.8). Themes may include: outdoor recreation/ adventure, culinary experiences, Indigenous land-based experiences, arts and culture, and wellness retreats, to name a few, targeting diverse visitor segments such as families, youth, seniors, etc. Consider potential collaborators specific to each package, using the Master List (see VE-PDE-1.6), to: • determine the initial feasibility of each idea; • identify needs that can be addressed through industry partnerships (i.e., provision of space); and • prioritize ideas based on the availability of necessary supports/assets.	1 - 2	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) TDC	OIS.23, OIS.26, OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS.31, OIS.32

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-PDE-9.2. Based on packaged tourism experience ideas, develop partnership cases for VSL-led pilots (see VE-PDE-1.6), including opportunities to provide a service or a partner experience, or to co-invest. Present partnership cases to target collaborators using VSL's exclusive business liaison channels (see VE-EBS-1.8 and VE-M-10). In cases where piloting the package idea requires more advanced preparedness, integrate them as potential pilot cases under TPA (VSL-led piloting stream - see VE-EBS-3) and encourage engagement of prospective participants through highlighting supports and resources available (including TPA Incentive & Acceleration Packages see VE-EBS-1.6, and Product Development Toolkit - see VE-EBS-6.5).	1 - 2	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) TDC	OIS.23, OIS.26, OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS.31, OIS.32
VE-PDE-9.3. Finalize details for packaged tourism experiences, and invest in at least initial two pilots (see CCS-DLM-7.10). Collect data, as outlined in Appendix J: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure, to understand the pilots' outcomes and inform future iterations of each package (see CCS-DLM-13). Enhance, update and expand packaged experiences, based on evidence gathered from pilots. (see CCS-DLM-8.2 - CCS-DLM-8.6).	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) Community partners/Grassroots groups	
VE-PDE-9.4. Negotiate with local and neighbouring businesses to create multiple thematic Visitor Passes, integrating visitor experiences and services offerings. These may include: • Recreational Water Adventures: Aquasplash, SunSport rentals, dinner on the lakefront; • Recreational - Land: Wood Shed Ax Throwing, Lakeside Go-Karts & Mini-Golf, camping, etc. • Sport: 18 holes of golf and tickets to a Gulls game • Seasonal Events Pass • Regional Attractions Pass: Connecting Sylvan Lake activities with others in neighbouring communities, including Red Deer. Integrate incentives to Passes to encourage purchases, such as waiving or discounting parking fees or Lakefront Stewardship Fee (see VE-PDE-1.6, CCS-DLM-7.3 and CCS-DLM-7.6). Enhance, update and expand themes and Visitor Passes available, as the destination and experiences evolve.	2 - 3 Ongoing	VSL TDC Community partners/Grassroots groups DMO/ municipal partners	OIS.23, OIS.31

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-PDE-10. Activate the town's assets (public and private) via VSL-led events, festivals and tournaments in different seasons, targeting high-value markets.			
VE-PDE-10.1. Define opportunities to increase activations of the town's public assets via events, informed by the Readiness Assessment Matrix (see VE-PD-1.8). These may include: • theme-based festivals at the Lakefront Recreational Zone (see PC-DDP-2.4) (i.e., agritourism festival, see VE-PD-11). • competitions & tournaments at the Nexsource Centre and/ or Pogadl Park; • pop-ups, races or art markets on local trails; • an art/creativity/culture-themed event with art/culture grassroots groups (see VE-PD-2 and PC-VM-7). Identify gaps and opportunities that can be addressed by collaboration with privately-owned recreational assets and facilities, including via satellite locations throughout the town.	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup	OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS. 32, OIS.34, OIS.36
VE-PDE-10.2. Based on identified opportunities, develop partnership cases for VSL-led event pilots based on the theme and needs, which may include vendor, supplier and co-investment opportunities. Present the partnership cases to prospective collaborators by tapping into existing networks, including: • the Entrepreneurship Asset Master List (see VE-EBS-1.9); • relationships with external partners (see VE-PD-5); and • network outreach via Red Deer and Lacombe DMOs (see VE-M-10.1).	2 Ongoing		
VE-PDE-10.3. Finalize details for each event, and invest in piloting. Collect data, as outlined in Appendix J: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure, to understand the pilot's outcomes and inform future iterations of the event (see CCS-DLM-13). Aim for at least one pilot event per year, considering opportunities/ partnership cases identified (see VE-PDE-10.2 and CCS-DLM-8.2 - CCS-DLM-8.6).	2 - 3 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) Community partners/ Grassroots groups	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CULINARY/AGRITOURISM			
VE-PDE-11. Invest and co-invest in creating an iconic festival (series) that positions Sylvan Lake as the gem of Central Alberta.			
VE-PDE-11.1. Develop an 'Asset Map of Central Alberta Agritourism Businesses and Culinary-Focused Entrepreneurs.'	1 - 2	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	OIS.23, OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS.31, OIS.32, OIS.34, OIS.35
VE-PD-11.2. Define a draft plan for a Regional Culinary Festival, considering various prospective components such as: 1. vision 2. industry partner participation (Central Alberta-wide) (see Asset Map); 3. a listing of signature public and private assets (i.e., facilities and infrastructure) that can be utilized throughout the town (see PC-VM-7); 4. target visitor markets; and 5. evidence of capacity to organize events.			
VE-PDE-11.3. Develop a Partnership Deck and dedicated website landing page as outreach tools to foster interest and participation, and present it to neighbouring tourism entities (Red Deer and Lacombe DMOs & CATA members in the Central Corridor). Negotiate partnership parameters for mutual benefits, including co-branding, destination showcases, ROI, etc. (see CCS-DLM-8.1).			
VE-PDE-11.4. Finalize the plan with interested partner(s).			
VE-PDE-11.5. Create content to increase the visibility of the initiative among industry partners (specifically, Central Alberta's culinary-related entrepreneurs) and recruit prospective participants and/or vendors. Present the content, tapping into existing networks, including: • the Asset Map of Central Alberta Agritourism Businesses and Culinary-Focused Entrepreneurs (see VE-PDE-11.1); • relationships with external partners (see VE-PDE-6); and • network outreach via Red Deer and Lacombe DMOs (see VE-M-10.1).		VSL DMO/ municipal partners	
VE-PDE-11.6. Invest in piloting the event. Collect data, as outlined in Appendix J: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure, to understand the pilot's outcomes and inform future iterations of the event (see CCS-DLM-13).	2	VSL DMO/ municipal partners Industry partners	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-PDE-11.7. Consider extending the reach, and diversifying the theme of the iconic event (such as a Central Alberta Art and Artisan Festival). Define new pilots in different seasons through collaboration with potential public, private & community partners and investors. (See CCS-DLM-8.2 - CCS-DLM-8.6).	3 Ongoing	VSL DMO/ municipal partners Industry partners Community partners/ Grassroots groups	OIS.23, OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS.31, OIS.32, OIS.34, OIS.35
COMMUNITY EVENTS			
VE-PDE-12. Pilot a VSL leadership structure for community events.			
VE-PDE-12.1. Choose at least two community events from the existing Town portfolio to pilot with VSL leadership, focusing on shoulder season options.	1	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29
VE-PDE-12.2. Invest in integrating elements that extend appeal to prospective regional visitors and beyond. This includes diversifying vendors for regional collaboration (see CCS-DLM-7.10), enhancing the placemaking quality, extending the service capacity (such as health & safety), investing in regional marketing efforts and utilizing the VSL brand (instead of the corporate Town brand).			
VE-PDE-12.3. Establish a mechanism to add a ticket-based approach for non-local attendees. As a low-cost option, consider making e-tickets available via third-party services (i.e., EventBrite) for a select period of time (i.e., 2 weeks) and promoted locally, before adding ticket fees and investing in non-local event promotion.		VSL (Product Development Subgroup) Third-party support	
VE-PDE-12.4. Conduct community and visitor satisfaction surveys, to determine the events' success and to inform a decision about shifting all small community events to within the VSL portfolio.		VSL	OIS.30, OIS.35, OIS.36
VE-PDE-12.5. Based on pilots' success, and if community events become fully managed within the VSL portfolio, establish a more permanent strategy to waive the fee for local resident access to small community events. Consider including free event access with the Nexsource Pass, as recommended within the VSL 2023 Product Development Plan.	2	VSL Third-party support TOSL	OIS.34, OIS.44

[EMPHASIS]

DEFINING **TARGETS**

Defining specific targets is counterproductive when taking a "grow as you go" approach, as recommended within the DLMP, however, as an example of what Town-led or co-led short- to mid-term targets can look like:

- At least one iconic festival event has taken place, integrating agritourism and food entrepreneurs across the region;
- Several thematic tourism event or festival are organized per season, with regional reach, including:
    - At least two events (in high and shoulder season) that utilize a 'satellite event' strategy (i.e., activating underutilized Town-owned and privately-owned open and closed spaces, as recommended in PC-DDP-3)
    - At least one winter product that includes a variety of activities not dependent on the lake's condition or weather more broadly, such as food and craft markets, live performances, and culturally-informed activations.
- Multiple small community events are organized year-round, with elements hat appeal to and attract the regional market, to subsidize cost;
- At least two recreational and or cultural tourism products in the shoulder seasons, tailored for youth, families, seniors, corporate retreats or other target group(s), through co-investment/ partnerships with local industry and grassroots community groups, activating town recreational assets, or activating privately owned assets.

** These examples do not speak to the number of events, but rather the character, and as such, a single event/product may align with multiple points.*

[CASE STUDY]

ECONOMIC IMPACT PROJECTIONS: SIGNATURE EVENT
REGIONAL CULINARY FESTIVAL

This case study considers the business and economic case for a one-day culinary festival organized by the Municipality to illustrate the benefits of professionalizing tourism-oriented events in Sylvan Lake, in collaboration with interested parties from across the Central Corridor.

1. BASE SCENARIO

Assumptions

- In 2028, the Town of Sylvan Lake launches a one-day regional culinary festival. The festival attracts the participation of 40 business owners from across Central Alberta as vendors and an attendance of 3,200 ticketed visitors.
- Participating vendors pay a $250 fee, and all attendees pay a $8 ticket price to access the festival.
- Visitors attending the festival are incremental (i.e., these are visitors who would not otherwise have visited Sylvan Lake if the festival does not take place), and the breakdown of visitors and their spending is (other than the ticket fee) consistent with spending assumptions used in the visitor spending model in 2028.
- The festival's financial performance is consistent with Alberta-wide averages for the industry NAICS 71132 - Promoters (presenters) of performing arts, sports and similar events without facilities with annual revenues of $30k to $5m, as reported in ISED's Financial Performance Data for 2022.

Benefits to the Town

Based on the aforementioned information, the proposed festival yields several sources of benefit to the Town of Sylvan Lake, as outlined in the following table. Specifically, the festival yields a total fiscal benefit of $15,878 for the Town of Sylvan Lake, including:

- an operating surplus of $8,615 for the event itself, and
- additional fiscal benefits of $7,263 through parking fees and municipal taxes associated with the economic impact of visitor spending by the event's attendees.

Incremental visitor spending as a result of the festival is estimated to amount to nearly $300,000, with a direct GDP impact of almost $170,000.

Table 11: Summary of signature event financials and impacts, base scenario

METRIC	AMOUNT
Visitation and visitor spending	
Incremental visitors	3,200
Incremental visitor spending	$299,509
Direct economic impact of visitor spending	
Direct GDP	$169,557
Direct labour income	$103,414
Direct employment (FTEs)	2.4
Benefits to the Town of Sylvan Lake	
Vendor fees	$10,000
Ticket fees	$25,600
Event revenue	$35,600
Less: operating expenses (75.8% of revenue, per ISED)	-$26,985
Event net operating surplus	$8,615
Parking fees (embedded in visitor spending)	$2,089
Direct municipal taxes supported by direct economic impact	$5,174
Total benefit to the Municipality	***$15,878***

2. EXPANDED SCENARIO

Assumptions

Building on this scenario, the following table repeats this analysis with some additional assumptions, namely that:

- By 2030, the event expands into a 3-day festival. The festival still features 40 vendors, but due to the extended duration, attracts 6,400 incremental visitors.
- The vendor fee doubles to $500, and the ticket pricing changes such that day trip visitors pay $12 for a single-day ticket and overnight visitors pay $35 for a multi-day pass.
- Operating costs (footed by the Town of Sylvan Lake) are assumed to be constant relative to an $8 ticket price. Any ticket fees in excess of the $8 per attendee (the ticket price used in the base scenario) do not drive a corresponding increase in operating costs. In other words, the extra revenue generated by the ticket price increase goes straight into the event's operating surplus.

Benefits to the Town

Based on the aforementioned information laid out above, the expanded festival yields several sources of benefit to the Town of Sylvan Lake, as outlined in the following table. Specifically, the festival yields a total fiscal benefit of $105,979 for the Town of Sylvan Lake, including an operating surplus of $91,397 for the event itself, and additional fiscal benefits of $14,582 through parking fees and municipal taxes associated with the economic impact of visitor spending by the event's attendees.

Incremental visitor spending as a result of the festival is estimated to amount to slightly more than $600,000, with a direct GDP impact of about $340,000.

Table 12: Summary of signature event financials and impacts, expanded scenario

METRIC	AMOUNT
Visitation and visitor spending	
Incremental visitors	6,400
Incremental visitor spending	$601,949
Direct economic impact of visitor spending	
Direct GDP	$340,562
Direct labour income	$207,904
Direct employment (FTEs)	4.8
Benefits to the Town of Sylvan Lake	
Vendor fees	$20,000
Ticket fees	$125,366
Event revenue	$145,366
Less: operating expenses (75.8% of revenue, per ISED – calculated based on revenue before applying the expanded scenario's ticket price increase)	-$53,970
Event net operating surplus	$91,397
Parking fees (embedded in visitor spending)	$4,172
Direct municipal taxes supported by direct economic impact	$10,410
Total benefit to the Municipality	***$105,979***

[CASE STUDY]

ECONOMIC IMPACT PROJECTIONS: SYLVAN LAKE-HOSTED KIDS CAMP

In order to illustrate the benefits of VSL-led packaged experiences in Sylvan Lake, this case study considers the business and economic case for a VSL-led multi-day children's camp.

1. BASE SCENARIO

Assumptions

- In 2028, the VSL pilots a three-day children's camp. The camp is designed for youth and features experiences provided by Sylvan Lake businesses and institutions.
- The camp hosts 50 attendees, all paying a registration fee of $1,250.
- The camp's financial performance is consistent with Alberta-wide averages for the industry NAICS 721213 - Recreational (except hunting and fishing) and vacation camps with annual revenues of $30k to $5m, as reported in ISED's Financial Performance Data for 2022.
- The camp hires a dedicated staff which is paid through registration fees. The balance of the camp's operating expenses are spent at local businesses supplying catering, experiences, etc.

Benefits to the Town

Based on the aforementioned information, the proposed children's camp yields several sources of benefit to the Town, outlined in the following table. More specifically, the product yields a total fiscal benefit of $7,849 for the Town, including an operating surplus of $6,938 for the camp itself, and additional fiscal benefits of $911 through municipal taxes associated with the economic impact of the camp's spending at local businesses.

Table 13: Summary of camp financials and impacts, base scenario

METRIC	AMOUNT
Visitation and visitor spending (includes direct camp expenditures)	
Incremental visitors	50
Incremental visitor spending (includes camp operating expenses paid to local businesses for catering, experiences, etc.)	$44,313
Direct economic impact of visitor spending (includes direct camp expenditures)	
Direct GDP	$43,274
Direct labour income	$26,550
Direct employment (FTEs)	0.5
Benefits to the Town of Sylvan Lake	
Total revenue (registration fees)	$62,500
Less: labour costs (18.0% of revenue, per ISED)	-$11,250
Less: other operating expenses (70.9% of revenue, per ISED)	-$44,313
Less: total operating expenses	-$55,563
Camp net operating surplus	$6,938
Parking fees	$0
Direct municipal taxes supported	$911
Total benefit to the Municipality	***$7,849***

2. EXPANDED SCENARIO #1

Assumptions

Building on this scenario, the following table repeats this analysis with some additional assumptions, namely that:

- By 2030, VSL extends the camp to a 5-day duration, and develops a packaged experience that encourages parents to stay in town while their children attend the camp, through collaboration with local industry partners. Forty per cent of children are accompanied by a party of 2 parents (40 overnight visitors altogether, all staying for 5 days).
- The camp still hosts 50 attendees but the registration fee increases to $2,050.
- Parents staying in Sylvan Lake for the duration of this camp are incremental (i.e., these are visitors who would not otherwise have visited Sylvan Lake if the camp had not taken place), and the breakdown of visitors and their spending is (other than the registration fee) consistent with spending assumptions used in the visitor spending model in 2030.

Benefits to the Town

Based on the aforementioned information, the proposed children's camp yields several sources of benefit to the Town, outlined in the following table. More specifically, the product yields a total fiscal benefit of $13,768 for the Town, including an operating surplus of $11,378 for the camp itself, and additional fiscal benefits of $2,391 through municipal taxes associated with the economic impact of the camp and parents' combined spending at local businesses.

Table 14: Summary of camp financials and impacts, expanded scenario

METRIC	AMOUNT
Visitation and visitor spending (includes direct camp expenditures)	
Incremental visitors	90
Incremental visitor spending (includes camp operating expenses paid to local businesses for catering, experiences, etc.)	$78,610
Direct economic impact of visitor spending (includes direct camp expenditures)	
Direct GDP	$74,303
Direct labour income	$45,601
Direct employment (FTEs)	0.9
Benefits to the Town of Sylvan Lake	
Total revenue (registration fees)	$102,500
Less: labour costs (18.0% of revenue, per ISED)	-$18,450
Less: other operating expenses (70.9% of revenue, per ISED)	-$72,673
Less: total operating expenses	-$91,123
Camp net operating surplus	$11,378
Parking fees	$120
Direct municipal taxes supported	$2,271
Total benefit to the Municipality	***$13,768***

2. EXPANDED SCENARIO #2

Assumptions

Building on this scenario, the following table repeats this analysis with some additional assumptions, namely that:

- By 2030, VSL extends the camps to a 5-day duration. VSL invests in enhancing the experience, with elements that distinguish it as a premium children's camp in Alberta and develops a packaged experience that encourages parents to stay in town while their children attend the camp. 40% of children are accompanied by a party of 2 parents (40 overnight visitors altogether, each pair sharing a hotel room for 5 days at an average daily rate of $108.39).
- VSL waived visitor parking fees for parents to encourage downtown visits and city exploration.
- The camp still hosts 50 attendees but the registration fee increases to $2,050.
- The camp enjoys a 28% margin over the performance of typical summer camps in Alberta (refer to footnote 2), which have an 11% profit margin. Summer camp prices range from $1,200 to $1,400 for overnight camps. Assuming the camp has a similar cost structure to a "typical" camp charging $1,400 per week, the additional profit ($650) amounts to 28%.
- Parents staying in Sylvan Lake for the duration of this camp are incremental (i.e., these are visitors that would not otherwise have visited Sylvan Lake if the camp did not take place), and the breakdown of visitors and their spending is (other than the registration fee and hotel accommodation) consistent with spending assumptions
  used in the visitor spending model in 2030.

Benefits to the Town

Based on the aforementioned information, the proposed children's camp yields several sources of benefit to the Town of Sylvan Lake, as outlined in the following table. Specifically, the product yields a total fiscal benefit of $43,017 for the Town, including an operating surplus of $40,270 for the camp itself, and additional fiscal benefits of $2,747 through municipal taxes associated with the economic impact of the camp and parents' combined spending at local businesses.

Table 15: Summary of camp financials and impacts, expanded scenario

METRIC	AMOUNT
Visitation and visitor spending (includes direct camp expenditures)	
Incremental visitors	90
Incremental visitor spending (includes camp operating expenses paid to local businesses for catering, experiences, etc.)	$65,384
Direct economic impact of visitor spending (includes direct camp expenditures)	
Direct GDP	$89,862
Direct labour income	$35,183
Direct employment (FTEs)	0.7
Benefits to the Town of Sylvan Lake	
Total revenue (registration fees)	$102,500
Less: labour costs (18.0% of revenue, per ISED)	-$12,600
Less: other operating expenses (70.9% of revenue, per ISED)	-$49,630
Less: total operating expenses	-$62,230
Camp net operating surplus	$40,270
Parking fees	$0
Direct municipal taxes supported	$2,747
Total benefit to the Municipality	***$43,017***

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

Entrepreneurship & Business Support (EBS)

Establish a multi-faceted tourism entrepreneurship support system, using a community-centric approach, to enable high-quality, year-round visitor experiences within the local industry.

Entrepreneurship in tourism is considered a central force of economic development. Sylvan Lake is brimming with entrepreneurial spirit, though harnessing this spirit relies on an environment that fosters growth and innovation. This includes:

- Supportive infrastructure, such as transportation and communication networks, as well as social infrastructure that facilitates entrepreneurship;
- Policies that reduce bureaucratic hurdles and encourage innovation;
- Access to resources like financial support, coaching, training programs and incubation to develop ideas, skills and businesses successfully; and
- A culture that celebrates testing ideas, risk-taking and entrepreneurial initiatives.

These factors work together in an ecosystem that fosters a thriving culture of entrepreneurship that has sustainable, positive impact on the local economy and social fabric. Robust entrepreneurial capacity leads to job creation, innovation and economic resilience, fostering a vibrant community that adapts to changing market conditions and seizes new opportunities.

Building entrepreneurial capacity refers to the ability of individuals, organizations and the community to identify and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities and grow successful businesses. It considers individuals who start businesses, as well as organizations and community groups that support entrepreneurship.

By taking on a role of building entrepreneurial capacity, the Town is able to guide local businesses and entrepreneurs toward independent success, rather than being constantly relied upon to do the heavy lifting. Building entrepreneurial capacity is a step toward product diversification and expansion outside of the Municipal organization, strengthening the town's appeal as a destination and expanding economic opportunities for local and regional businesses and entrepreneurs.

Training and skills development are only part of the equation to address the initial risks and barriers entrepreneurs face when getting started. For the Town, offering tax incentives and grants to attract and retain tourism-focused (or, tourism adjacent) businesses is another component, as is reviewing and amending bureaucratic barriers that make it challenging for entrepreneurs to get their ideas off the ground—for example, a lack of available, affordable space to house new services and assets (see Section 7: Destination Leadership and Management).

Further, it's valuable to provide incentives designed to mitigate the risks associated with entering new markets, as well as opportunities for piloting new initiatives and network-building. Based on feedback and outcomes of pilots, initiatives evolve to encompass support for both early-stage idea incubation and business acceleration, covering both essential market preparedness and advanced market preparedness. Other incentives may focus on partnership and co-investment amongst local operators, cost-shared promotions and marketing, experience packaging and activating places with tourism experiences. Taking this measured approach encourages a grow-as-you-go strategy, starting small and mitigating risks of entering the market, as new ideas and products are tested.

The DLMP sees all of these considerations captured in a reimagined Tourism Partnership Program: the Tourism Partnership Accelerator (TPA). By adopting an "accelerator" mentality, VSL:

- enhances collaborative efforts with and between local businesses & entrepreneurs;
- streamlines resource allocation;
- fosters tourism product diversification and expansion; and
- enables innovative tourism initiatives that drive sustainable growth and economic impact.

The TPA approach amalgamates various components of the Town's current entrepreneurship and business support initiatives—TEDI*, TPP, the Façade Improvement Grant and the Recreation Culture & Tourism Micro Grant—creating a singular Tourism Accelerator Grant that:

- supports existing businesses in diversifying services and experiences, to address gaps within the local visitor experience and attract high-value visitors;
- advances the market preparedness of local businesses and entrepreneurs, and seek new opportunities for sustainable revenue generation;
- reduces the risk of early-stage entry into the market, facilitating idea testing and piloting through programming, capital support and incentives, and place-based activation; and
- facilitates connections between businesses and entrepreneurs, to inspire collaborative product development.

Guided by TPA participants, Grant allocations may be themed based on ongoing needs & trends, encompassing a variety of efforts such as product development (to test early-stage ideas), beautification, refurbishments and placemaking (storefront, laneway, streetscapes, etc.).

The TPA provides multiple paths—articulated as Road Maps—to appeal to various levels of participant tourism preparedness, availability and capacity for time commitments, and motivation for growth while directly addressing gaps in the current Sylvan Lake visitor experience.. While some might include simple engagement as currently in place with VSL's Tourism Experience Development Incubator (TEDI) program, others may be more robust with a customized Case Management Plan for each participant that includes training and one-on-one coaching, based on their specific needs i.e., product development, facility operation and management, branding and marketing, guest experience). On either end of the spectrum, it is imperative to develop Road Maps that accommodate entrepreneurs and businesses at different points in their tourism development journey. Further, these Road Maps consider various sectors (i.e. tourism, hospitality, art and creativity, non-profit groups, grassroots groups, incorporated businesses and freelancers), and create paths for culture and tourism to work together for mutual benefit.

Given the business and entrepreneurship focus of this approach, the DLMP recommends the TPA be considered in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, as a two-year pilot. The Chamber is an ideal partner for this initiative, given its capacity, physical space and active network.

Ultimately, the Road Maps connect to two piloting streams, each of which call for the Town to play a different role as follows:

1. Providing participants with opportunities to test services and product ideas via VSL-led tourism products. In this Stream, VSL is the main investor and the business/entrepreneur is an active vendor or contributor, receiving premium access and support that enables them to be engaged in the initiative. This may include waving the vendor registration fee, organizing logistics and providing equipment, as a few examples. Applicable VSL products include an event or camp, or placemaking initiatives such as pop-ups, marketplaces or public art exhibits.

2. Enabling participant-led piloting by providing monetary support (grant funding, accelerated access to loans with a long grace period, etc.), and/or non-monetary support such as reduced fee/free space, an accelerated permit application process, marketing support, etc. In this Stream, VSL offers incentives to entrepreneurs in an effort to encourage product development–whether independently or with local industry.

Priority criteria, when considering TPA participants, are those who have engaged with Town initiatives in the past, such as those aforementioned (i.e., TEDI, TPP, etc.). Ideal participants are also positioned to fill gaps in the Sylvan Lake tourism product ecosystem (i.e., shoulder season) through their work. These may be Sylvan Lake-based entrepreneurs from across the spectrum (i.e., non-profit, for-profit), or non-Sylvan Lake based entrepreneurs, though in either case, have a vested interest in developing tourism product within the town. In its initial pilot stages, the TPA also focuses on participants currently at a level of advanced market preparedness (see Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness Criteria for Local Businesses). As capacity expands and the program becomes more refined, it extends support more broadly, which includes workforce capacity building, network expansion, access to capital, and facilitating co-investment and partnerships at local and regional levels. This is also an opportunity to enhance the support available through the TPA by curating additional practical resources for participants—such as a series of toolkits—to further enhance capacity, understanding and ability to invest in product diversification initiatives, from ideation to securing funding to marketing and execution.

The next phase of the TPA's evolution is establishing "Premium TPA," a paid version which includes:

- Workforce development and capacity building support (see CCS-DLM-8.8 and CCS-DLM-8.9).
- Priority access and support: Exclusive use of space for a specific period of time, priority access to funds, premium access to VSL RFPs.
- Networking and access to sales channels: Subsidizing partnerships with travel intermediaries (i.e., tour operators & destination management companies - see CCS-DLM-8.3 & CCS-DLM-8.4; subsidizing fees for membership to relevant professional associations; and subsidizing fees to access entry-level online sales channels, such as AirBnB Experiences), to name a few.
- Enhanced monetary supports: Accelerated loan with affordable terms and/or long grace period for major investment in infrastructure or operation improvement, subsidized commercial spaces (applicable under an affordable commercial

At its core, the TPA is about enabling partnership and collaboration, for the sake of strengthening the tourism product and experiences available in Sylvan Lake. Championing piloting is a simple and effective solution to address the risk many local business owners perceive to exist when it comes to creating visitor experiences—particularly those that require investment. This perception influences a willingness to experiment with new ventures especially during the shoulder season. Root causes for this hesitancy often lie in a lack of entrepreneurial capacity or capacity related to experience development and marketing, impeding business owners from exploring innovative ways to diversify their businesses, and identify & leverage existing opportunities and assets.

As an example of this issue is being addressed elsewhere, consider Market 707 at the Scadding Court Community Centre (see Case Study: Demonstrating Successful Entrepreneur Support: Scadding Court Community Centre). The initiative consists of four refurbished shipping containers, which accommodate small businesses (startups, non-profit organizations, and low-income entrepreneurs) by offering affordable rental rates, running water and electricity. This is complemented by the accessible business development programs provided by the Community Centre. Providing physical infrastructure and high-speed internet go a long way in fostering local innovation, and local innovation leads to programs and services that are valuable to residents and visitors alike.

Ultimately, understanding how the Town can foster a culture of entrepreneurship through increasing support and decreasing barriers encourages the birth of new ideas and initiatives, leading to positive economic impacts, enhanced reputation and more creative communities.

[CASE STUDY]

DEMONSTRATING SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR SUPPORT: **SCADDING COURT COMMUNITY CENTRE**

One example of a grassroots approach to entrepreneurship support is the Market 707 at the Scadding Court Community Centre in Toronto. Market 707 comprises four refurbished shipping containers to accommodate small businesses. Its main objective is to support startups, non-profit organizations, and low-income entrepreneurs by offering affordable rental rates for the refurbished containers, which come equipped with running water and electricity.

In addition to providing space, Market 707 has significantly worked on increasing visibility for the business owners by creating a unique brand identity that has turned the initiative into a popular visitor destination, known as "Toronto's most unique street food and retail market." (OCASI)

Scadding Court Community Centre also provides accessible business development programs designed to meet the needs and capacity of grassroots entrepreneurs. The success of the Market 707 model has led to the initiation of a new program, coined as Business Out of the Box, aimed at replicating the model in other neighbourhoods of Toronto through partnerships. (Click here for video.)

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-EBS-1. Launch a pilot of the Tourism Partnership Accelerator (TPA), as the evolution of the existing Tourism Partnership Program (TPP) and an amalgamation of various Town-led business support initiatives—TEDI, TPP, the Façade Improvement Grant and the Recreation Culture & Tourism Micro Grant.			
Leadership & Governance			
VE-EBS-1.1. Employ a VSL team member to a dedicated TPA leadership role (see CCS-DLM-1.2 and CCS-DLM-1.3).	1	VSL	OIS.34
VE-EBS-1.2. Assess the opportunity to partner with the Chamber of Commerce to pilot a two-year partnership for implementing the TPA, including utilizing their office space as the initial TPA hub. (See also: CCS-DLM-2.2).			OIS.30, OIS.31
Visioning & Strategic Planning			
VE-EBS-1.3. Develop initial Road Maps outlining how VSL can provide support to entrepreneurs through the TPA, for testing and piloting high-quality products depending on their level of market preparedness, and capacity and motivation to engage. Integrate all potential sectors (i.e., tourism, hospitality, art and creativity, non-profit groups, grassroots groups, incorporated businesses and freelancers), as well as potential components of the support as envisioned in DLMP, including: • coaching; • sector-specific capacity building and training; • workforce capacity building; • toolkits; • piloting and incubation; • networking and partnership; and • incentives and accelerations. (See VE-EBS-2, VE-EBS-3 and VE-EBS-6.)	1	VSL TDC Chamber of Commerce	OIS.12, OIS.17, OIS.20, OIS.30, OIS. 32, OIS.40
VE-EBS-1.4. Create an Entrepreneurship Focus Group of tourism, hospitality, creative and cultural entrepreneurs, as well as members of TDC and Chamber of Commerce. Invite participants to allow past experiences with the TPP, TEDI Program and/or other Town-led business support efforts to inform their feedback and consideration, if applicable. Task the Focus Group with: • reviewing the TPA Road Maps; • evaluating opportunities to address barriers to participation; • identifying main gaps in existing entrepreneurship support; & • ideating incentives to compel participation. Consider hosting sector-specific breakout group conversations, to understand unique market-readiness needs. Refine the Road Maps based on outcomes of the Entrepreneurship Focus Group.	1	VSL TDC Chamber of Commerce	OIS.8

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-EBS-1.5. Define a Tourism Accelerator Grant, streamlining existing programs (TEDI, TPP, the Façade Improvement Grant and the Recreation Culture & Tourism Micro Grant). Theme the Grant based on ongoing needs & trends identified by the TPA. This may include product development (to test early-stage ideas), beautification, refurbishments and placemaking (storefront, laneway, streetscapes, etc.).	1	VSL	OIS.30, OIS.31
VE-EBS-1.6. Define Incentive & Acceleration Packages responding to two piloting streams (i.e., via VSL-led tourism initiatives and self-led piloting), informed by Entrepreneurship Focus Group outcomes, as feasible. Integrate both monetary and non-monetary support that VSL can commit within the two-year collaboration with participants. This may include: Monetary: • waved or discounted fees (vendor application fee, Event registration fee, permits and other applicable Town-related fees); and • The Tourism Accelerator Grant (refer to VE-EBS-1.5). Non-monetary: • subsidized public spaces (for testing ideas); • investment/support in promotion or co-operative marketing opportunities • subsidized supplies, equipment and off-site infrastructure; • subsidized or free features on VSL online platforms (see VE-M-1.5, VE-M-3 and VE-M-4); • subsidized or free access to the TPA website portal (see VE-EBS-4.2); and • exclusive opportunities (e.g. direct procurement). Initiate with the achievable scope of support and extend as feasible.	1	VSL TDC Chamber of Commerce	OIS.12, OIS.17, OIS.20, OIS.30, OIS. 32, OIS.40

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
Engagement & Participant Recruitment			
VE-EBS-1.7. Create a rubric for TPA applicant evaluation based on feedback from the Entrepreneurship Focus Group. Use the framework provided in Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness Criteria for Local Businesses to inform criteria for the rubric regarding participants' level of tourism readiness. Consider specific criteria for selecting participants in the early stages of the initiative, prioritizing: • those which are most tourism-ready; • TDC participants (if applicable - see CCS-CII-2.3); • local partners who have engaged with Town initiatives, including active TPP participants, TEDI participants, and those who fall under VE-PD-5 to 10.	1	VSL	OIS.12, OIS.17, OIS.20, OIS.30, OIS.32, OIS.40
VE-EBS-1.8. Define "Terms of Commitment" applicable to VSL and entrepreneurs who participate in the initiative.			
VE-EBS-1.9. Establish exclusive engagement channels for business owners and entrepreneurs, within VSL's accessible, inclusive and interactive information-sharing and community-building (see CCS-CII-1 and CCS-CII-2). This may be a regular e-mail newsletter or a dedicated online forum. Consider this a tool to communicate TPA Road Maps and key differentiators, such as opportunities for: • low-risk piloting and testing high-value visitor experiences; • ongoing engagement with VSL partnership; • developing a practical understanding about responsible practice, community centric approaches, cultural sensitivity, and data-informed decision making (see VE-PD-2.1); and accommodating the participant's availability and level of readiness.	1 - 2		
VE-EBS-1.10. Develop an Entrepreneurship Asset Master List of tourism, hospitality, creative and cultural entrepreneurs and operators; and micro-scale makers and manufacturers (i.e., breweries, cheesemakers, flower/ plant producers, fresh fruit and vegetable producers, etc.), including incorporated businesses, freelancers and grassroots groups ('participant(s)'). Prioritize those in the Central Corridor, and expand the list regionally as the TPA evolves.	1 - 2	VSL TDC Chamber of Commerce DMOs/Municipal partners	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-EBS-1.11. Invest resources in recruiting participants from the Master List to apply via an online application. This may include one-on-one outreach, attending Chamber of Commerce events and campaigns, and targeted campaigns (see VE-M-10). In all engagement, emphasize the flexibility available within the program to accommodate participants' available time capacity and level of market preparedness. Prioritize outreach and engagement with Sylvan Lake prospective partners, and specifically: • those with previous experience with the Town's small business support initiatives (i.e., TPP, TEDI, Façade Improvement Grant, and the Recreation Culture & Tourism Micro Grant); and • those with high potential of collaboration within opportunities and cases developed under VE-PD-5 - VE-PD-10.	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL Chamber of Commerce	OIS.12, OIS.17, OIS.20, OIS.30, OIS.32, OIS.40
VE-EBS-2. Establish the 'Capacity Building for Product Development' component of the TPA that accommodates availability and varying stages of market preparedness.			
VE-EBS-2.1. Invest in creating a Case Management Plan for each participant, using the established Road Maps and first-hand data gained through one-on-one engagement. Customize "Terms of Commitment" (see VE-EBS-1.7) to accommodate the participant's availability, capacity, level of market preparedness and motivation. Include participant-defined key performance indicators (KPIs).	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL Chamber of Commerce	OIS.12, OIS.17, OIS.20, OIS.21
VE-EBS-2.2. Identify prospective public and private partners who provide tourism/business incubation/ acceleration services that can be outsourced to VSL as foundational TPA resources and support (i.e., Tourism Connects or eLearningU, via Travel Alberta). Prioritize programs focused on guiding essential market preparedness (see Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness Criteria for Local Businesses). Finalize partner(s), negotiate an agreement(s) and invest in their services.		VSL	
VE-EBS-2.3. Invest in a coaching network of credible Alberta industry professionals, specializing in various areas of market preparedness, with a focus on services and experiences (i.e., product development, facility operation and management, supply chain, branding and marketing, guest experience). Develop an inventory of coach profiles, and provide participants with opportunities to connect with applicable coaches. Initiate with the achievable scope of support and extend as feasible.		VSL Chamber of Commerce Third-party support	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-EBS-2.4. Develop practical guidelines on how participants follow VSL priorities in responsible practice, community centric approaches, cultural sensitivity, and data-informed decision making, shared via established engagement channels. Use the VSL Responsible Product Guideline (VE-PD-2.1) and Sylvan Lake Natural Asset Use Guidelines (VE-PD-1.7) to inform relevant aspects of this educational tool.	2 - 3	VSL	OIS.12, OIS.17, OIS.20, OIS.30, OIS.32, OIS.40
VE-EBS-2.5. Develop and offer modules to familiarize participants with VSL opportunities for tourism development, as envisioned by DLMP recommendations. (See Section 5: Places and Connections and Section 6: Direction 1 - Product Expansion & Diversification.)	3 - 4		OIS.20, OIS.31
VE-EBS-2.6. Provide workforce development and training support for Premium TPA businesses (paid participants - see VE-EBS-6.2). (See also: CCS-DLM-8.8 and CCS-DLM-8.9.)	4 - 5	VSL Third-party support	OIS.25
VE-EBS-3. Establish the 'Testing and Piloting' component of the TPA.			
VE-EBS-3.1. Establish feasible cases for piloting services and product ideas via VSL-led initiatives, addressing: • seasonality; • activating underutilized assets; • downtown animation; • using existing Town capacities; • encouraging local collaboration and place-based activation; • reducing the risk of early-stage entry into the industry; • addressing gaps in service quality/supply chain; and • promoting high-value market reach. Cases must also be informed by: • need for addressing different sector needs (i.e., grassroots, artists, etc); • Section 5: PC-DDP-3.2 and PC-DDP-3.3, related to locations; • Section 5: PC-DR-3 and PC-DR-4; and • Section 6: VE-PD-5, VE-PD-7- VE-PD-10.	2	VSL TDC Chamber of Commerce	OIS.11, OIS.12, OIS.18, OIS.19 OIS.21, OIS.23, OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS.31, OIS.32
VE-EBS-3.2. Share and discuss these cases with participants interested in testing and piloting. Identify at least two initiatives in which to integrate their product/ service. Test the initiatives within the two-year span of the cohort. Explore PC-DR-3.1 as a possible case to be integrated within this support program.	2 Ongoing	VSL TPA participants Industry partners	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-EBS-3.3. Present 'Incentive & Acceleration Packages' (see VE-EBS-1.6) to participants, responding to the stream of their interest (i.e., via VSL-led tourism initiatives and self-led piloting). Establish partnership agreements with each participant to use their Package for pilot purposes, within the two-year span of the cohort.	2 Ongoing	VSL TPA participants	OIS.11, OIS.12, OIS.18, OIS.19 OIS.21, OIS.23, OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS.31, OIS.32
VE-EBS-4. Integrate VSL online channels (i.e., website, social media) as part of the TPA.			
VE-EBS-4.1. Promote TPA pilots and participants via VSL web and social media content. (See VE-M-3 and VE-M-10.)	2 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.31, OIS.34, OIS.41
VE-EBS-4.2. Establish a password-protected portal for businesses and entrepreneurs, to host TPA-related modules, toolkits and other resources. Integrate it as part of the premium TPA. (See CCS-DLM-7.13 and VE-M-1.8.)	4 - 5	VSL Third-party support	
VE-EBS-5. Conduct regular evaluations of the TPA's performance to understand impacts on visitor experience development.			
VE-EBS-5.1. Evaluate TPA participant performance at the end of each cohort, based on self-defined KPIs as established in VE-EBS-2.1.	2 Ongoing	VSL Chamber of Commerce	OIS.30, OIS.34
VE-EBS-5.2. Establish a feedback system with participants regarding capacity-building, piloting and general satisfaction, to be implemented at the end of each cohort. Utilize findings and learnings to refine the TPA components, in particular, coaching (see VE-EBS-2.3) and the Incentive & Acceleration Packages (see VE-EBS-1.6).		VSL	
VE-EBS-5.3. Invest in a comprehensive evaluation of the TPA program, after five to six years of launch, to determine if the incubation support has led to an established tourism product. Focus on case studies with at least three years since their starting point with the TPA. Use Appendix J: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure to inform this study.	4 - 5	VSL Third-party support	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-EBS-6. Enhance, advance and refine the TPA program.			
VE-EBS-6.1. Invest in creating a TPA Badge for participants who completed a full, two-year commitment including piloting. Connect enhanced incentives to the Badge, as informed by engagement with participants and the TDC. Consider including access to premium marketing support, premium listings as envisioned for the External Partnership and Facilitation Toolkit (see VE-PD-6.1), and/or advanced connections to travel intermediaries.	3	VSL Third-party support	OIS.20, OIS.21
VE-EBS-6.2. Conduct an annual Business Roundtable engaging all potential partners (using the Entrepreneurship Asset Master List - VE-EBS-1.9), to identify emerging needs, concerns and implications of support based on new tourism trends. Consider a sector-based approach, if applicable. Use feedback to inform TPA enhancements and refinements.	3 Ongoing	VSL	
VE-EBS-6.3. Define and establish two pathways of the TPA: • Essential TPA: As established in the pilot version • Premium TPA: To support further development of established tourism product, through advanced market preparedness capacity building and coaching support. This may also include: • Workforce development and capacity building support (see CCS-DLM-8.8 and CCS-DLM-8.9); • Priority access and support: Exclusive use of space for a specific period of time, priority access to funds, premium access to VSL RFPs; • Networking and access to sales channels: Subsidizing partnerships with travel intermediaries (i.e., tour operators & destination management companies - see CCS-DLM-8.3 & CCS-DLM-8.4; subsidizing fees for membership to relevant professional associations; and subsidizing fees to access entry-level onlines sales channels, such as AirBnB Experiences); • Enhanced monetary supports: Accelerated loan with affordable terms and/or long grace period for major investment in infrastructure or operation improvement, • Subsidized commercial spaces: Applicable under enabling affordable commercial space/rental business spaces or applying property tax reduction (see PC-DR-3.3). Invest in resources and partnerships needed to establish the Premium TPA, as needed.	4 - 5	VSL (potentially with partner)	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-EBS-6.4. Invest in presenting and promoting the TPA as a regional tourism incubator (see CCS-DLM-2.2 and VE-M-10). Extend outreach initiatives to re-engage past TPA participants for the Premium stream, and recruit new participants.	5	VSL Private investors/ partners	OIS.20, OIS.23, OIS.31, OIS.35
VE-EBS-6.5. Establish a public-facing list of visitor-related businesses and entrepreneurs from Sylvan Lake and neighbouring communities to guide connections between small businesses and entrepreneurs seeking clients, suppliers, partners, co-investors, etc. Use the already-established Master List as a starting point (see VE-EBS-1.9).	3 - 4	VSL	
VE-EBS-6.6. Develop comprehensive toolkits, curating existing supports and creating customized resources as required, that provide practical resources and guidance on product development, marketing and operational best practices. Themes may include: • Public-Private-Community Partnership: Outlining pathways for collaboration and partnership with VSL in product development, activation of space and co-investment for infrastructure enhancement. Include examples of possible scenarios (see PC-DR-3.3), evidence of success (specifically, as a result of DLMP pilot projects) and support available to enable PPCPs via VSL/Town). • Grants: Guidance on identifying grant opportunities, writing successful grant applications and fulfilling grant requirements. • Guest Service Excellence: Providing educational materials and resources about enhancing guest experiences, including customer service protocols, conflict resolution techniques, and strategies for creating a welcoming, inclusive and memorable environment. • Marketing: Including templates (social media posts, content calendars, etc.), access to professional photo and video assets (see VE-M-5.4), and tutorials for digital marketing. • Product Development: Featuring step-by-step guides for developing new visitor experience development with focus on supply chain gaps in Sylvan Lake, diversification, expansion, addressing seasonality and responsible practice. Including market research tools, feasibility analysis templates and case studies, plus resources on packaging and pricing strategies to enhance market appeal. (Consider Destination Canada's Experiences: A Toolkit for Partners of the CTC.) Integrate tourism product/package themes and ideas developed under VE-PD-9.1 as part of the Toolkit, and outline resources and support available to enable local industry partnership for piloting. • Accessibility & Inclusivity: Offering checklists for assessing accessibility of facilities and services, training materials for staff on inclusivity, and guidelines for developing programs that cater to diverse audiences. • Event Planning and Management: Planning and budgeting templates, risk management strategies, promotional plans, plus tools & tips on engaging local communities, securing sponsorships, and measuring event success.	4 - 5	VSL (potentially with partner)	

6.6 THE CURRENT REALITY

VSL's current marketing efforts are commendable given the limited team capacity available to support. Marketing, as a vital component of tourism development, represents an exciting opportunity for the Town, to build brand awareness and attract high-value visitors.

VISIT SYLVAN LAKE MARKETING CHANNELS & INVESTMENTS

Visit Sylvan Lake (VSL) is the public-facing brand of the Town's tourism department. It has well-established marketing channels, including the official tourism website (visitsylvanlake.ca), plus Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook pages. Two formative, existing documents include the Tourism Marketing Strategy (2018) and Destination Positioning Strategy (2022), which informed the approach to define Sylvan Lake's identity as "unique as a lake town."

Social media

This is a guiding principle for the Town's Instagram and Facebook marketing efforts especially, which are trusted resources for information about what's happening in the town, with audiences including visitors, residents, cultural and community groups, and businesses.

The voice of Visit Sylvan Lake social media channels is separate and unique to the corporate Town platforms, established following a recommendation in the aforementioned Tourism Marketing Strategy (2018). While the Town's corporate pages focus on the administrative details—road closures, taxes, sanitation, local elections or local community services, for example—Visit Sylvan Lake pages feature the things to do and see. More specifically, the team describes their marketing efforts as serving three functions:

1. Promoting local culture and local businesses;
2. Marketing Town special events;
3. Marketing the destination to attract visitors.

Social channels also serve to respond to visitor information enquiries.

Because of the separation in identity from the Municipality's corporate channels, there is a latitude afforded to promote local businesses, thereby safeguarding the municipal brand, municipality, and politicians from possible perceptions of conflicts of interest and favouritism. Naturally, tourism partners and other businesses are acutely tuned into the channels, to observe fair promotion across the board. While promoting businesses in destination marketing is necessary, there are opportunities to establish strategic co-operative marketing efforts—on social media and more broadly—to accelerate tourism-ready products and businesses, in an effort to influence longer stays and greater visitor spending.

VSL has been successful at curating user generated content (UCG), demonstrated by how the hashtag #visitsylvanlake has been used nearly 11,000 times on Instagram alone (at the time of writing), to indicate a post that features the destination. UGC is a primary strategy for VSL's organic marketing initiatives, due to cost-savings, increased audience engagement, and the lighter draw on resources to curate and post content. This is important given a lack of VSL team capacity resources to invest in comprehensive daily social media channel management, providing an accessible approach for the team to address content gaps that otherwise require additional team members or investments in third-party support.

The team aims to post UGC in a timely manner in an effort to engage audiences with fresh and updated content, though is limited to the content the community is sharing; if users aren't generating content about Sylvan Lake, it limits VSL's visibility. Still, the success of its UGC approach reflects a trust and reliance on VSL channels amongst its audiences, which presents an opportunity to more fully operationalize the brand channels (website, social media platforms) for more strategic and enhanced information- and inspiration-sharing.

While an organic, UGC strategy is working for now, a more robust marketing approach is required for building brand awareness and attracting high-value visitors, leveraging social media in addition to other organic and paid channels.

In terms of marketing investments, VSL's annual tourism advertising budget is approximately $36,000, with an additional $8,000 allocated for maintaining the website and an additional $44,000 was paid out of the budget in past years for contracting support for content development made possible by grant funding. Content development remains highly dependent on grant funds. Paid tourism marketing efforts were halted in mid-2022, again due to a lack of team capacity to effectively manage investments. For growth and provincial level recognition of Sylvan Lake as a tourism destination, assessing the current budget in comparison with other destinations is essential.

[DEFINE]

ORGANIC VS. PAID MARKETING: **UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE**

A high-value visitor is one who seeks authentic, immersive and responsible travel experiences that connect them with the local community, culture and environment. They are driven by a desire to engage with the vibrant charm and spirit of a destination, and are willing to pay a premium for high-quality, unique and differentiated experiences that offer genuine connections with the land, people and stories of a place.

High-value visitors are responsibly-minded, prioritizing sustainable tourism practices. They seek out destinations and experiences that align with their values of environmental stewardship and cultural preservation. They are conscious of their environmental and social impact, and actively seek out opportunities to minimize their footprint while supporting local economies and grassroots initiatives.

Simultaneously, these discerning visitors have a refined taste for exceptional service and amenities, and are willing to invest in curated experiences that are tailored to their interests and preferences. They expect high-quality guest experiences, including unique accommodations, exclusive access to natural or cultural attractions, and experiences that offer a sense of exclusivity and differentiation.

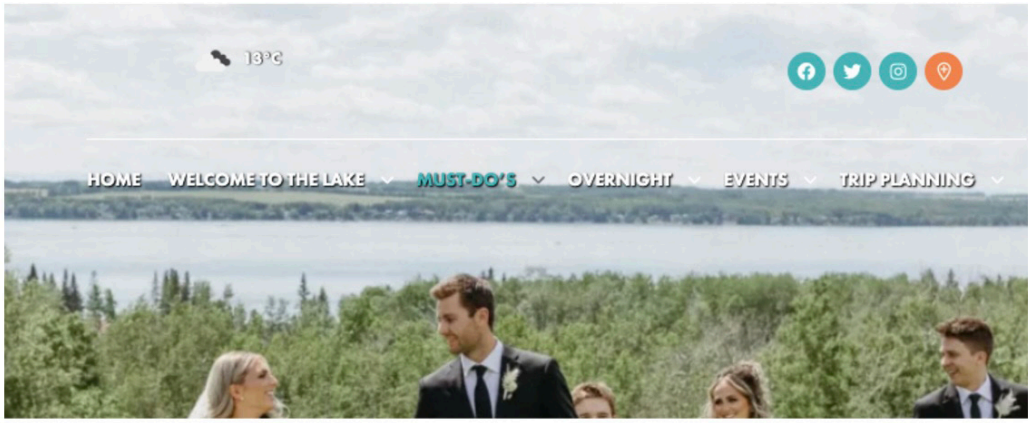
The VSL marketing budget is often combined with that of Culture and Events, given the overlap of impact and initiatives; however, there is no overarching strategic events marketing plan in place.

Social media management is a significant task, and to be done effectively, cannot be a side of the desk endeavour. With only one VSL team member, these platforms have not been activated to their fullest potential despite having been supported at times by the Town's communications team. At the time of writing, the Town is hiring an entry-level marketing position in 2024. This dedicated role is expected to enhance VSL's marketing efforts, particularly in leveraging user-generated content and growing its online community presence, which could potentially reduce the need for costly content production. Overall, it will allow for more impactful marketing initiatives, which simply isn't possible with only one dedicated VSL team member. In understanding messaging and audiences with additional capacity, there are exciting opportunities to expand marketing priorities, to manage and influence visitor behaviour and spending, and to educate and inform the community about the value of tourism investments.

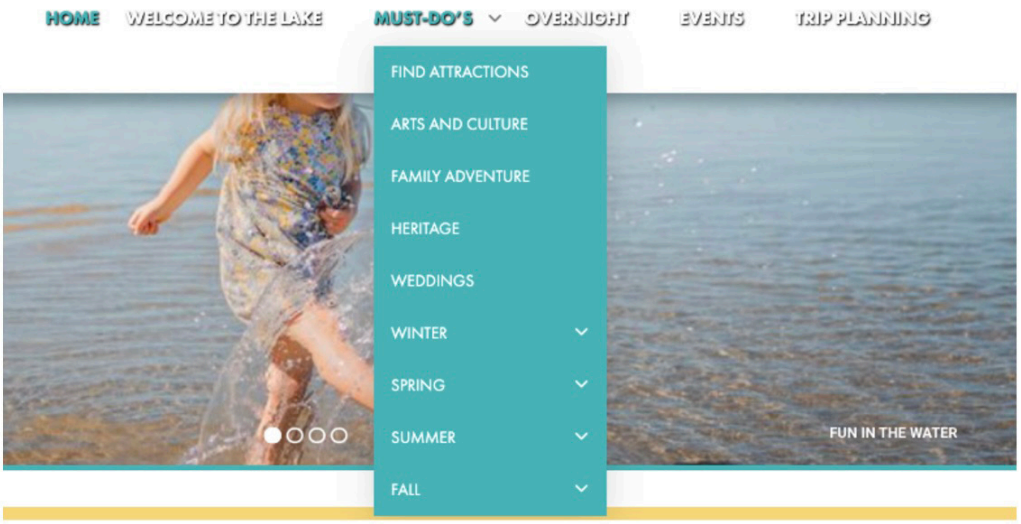
The VSL website

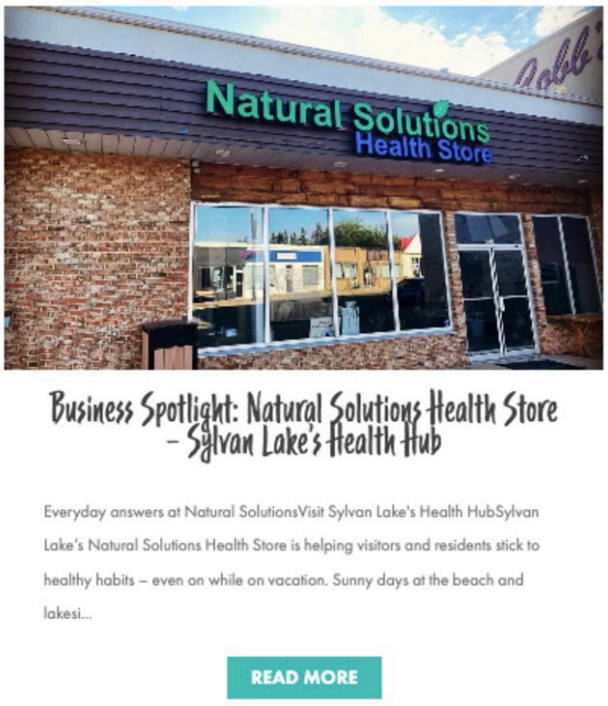
VisitSylvanLake.ca is a core resource for prospective visitors and residents seeking experiences and planning resources. However, there is room to improve both in design and content framework.

While the website does embrace the VSL Brand Book (2021), there are design elements that make the overall look and feel less refined. For example, the block letters with shadow in the main navigation are small, and can be hard to read.



This challenge becomes even more prominent when one's mouse is not navigating over the navigation bar. Take for example how it becomes especially hard to see on the "Weddings" page.





Further, using "Trailmade," the "decorative font" (as defined in the Brand Book) for headers is also hard to read. This particular font is most effectively used sparingly.

While simple, these basic design elements combined work against the brand, giving an unrefined look and feel. They also create barriers to accessibility and navigability of the website.

Further, there is room to refine how content is organized to more intuitively direct site visitors based on common starting points. Based on consumer behaviour, one can assume website visitors are seeking information that appeals to their interests & what they want to do or information based on who they are travelling with. The existing website does not proactively respond to these demands, which points to an opportunity for reimagining and enhancing the platform. Ultimately, this relies on strategic content development, including the development of itineraries and content that connects experiences and businesses throughout town, to clearly illustrate how visitors can spend their time, whether for a day or a multi-day stay. Providing a 'search' function as the site develops also enhances its function as a planning tool at various points of the customer journey (i.e., in the research phase, while visiting and in between trip planning).

The VSL Visitor's Guide

Discover Sylvan Lake is Sylvan Lake's annual Visitor's Guide. Beginning in 2023, VSL partnered with the Sylvan Lake News to enhance a connection across the community's visitor services

platforms. Like the website, there is an opportunity to refine the look and feel of the Guide, to elevate its appeal to high-value visitors. Reviewing the resource, one must ask if the objective and target audience is clear. While there is a lot of information within, there is not a lot of meaning or inspiration connected to it; listing off sites, businesses and experiences tells readers the "what" of Sylvan Lake, but misses the "why" and the "how," which ultimately drive purchase-based decision making. As VSL seeks to appeal to high-value visitors, it is important to reconsider how to leverage tools such as the Visitor's Guide to attract this psychographic catergory, driving spending and longer stays.

Cultivating culture and community

The basis of tourism marketing is sharing whatever elements make up the community with visitor populations. The food, arts, scenery, unique traditions and events, and the sense of community spirit and pride, is represented in the content that is shared across Visit Sylvan Lake channels. In this way, Visit Sylvan Lake can be more meaningfully understood as an online community that celebrates Sylvan Lake.

Beyond the goal of sharing visitor information and pulling in visitor traffic to Sylvan Lake, tourism marketing cultivates and shares the local culture and community for the community itself. These connections are especially clear via social media marketing, as the majority of content is UGC, provided by local residents. This connection to the community allows digital channels to maintain an authenticity that is especially resonant with high-value visitors. Further, marketing and storytelling work to preserve the local sense of place, reducing tensions between visitors and residents. Recognizing and leveraging Visit Sylvan Lake as a leader in supporting cultural and community development—which is currently at the heart of its marketing efforts—is an essential feature to continue into the future.

BUSINESS-LED TOURISM MARKETING

With regard to business-led marketing, there is a general gap in skills or confidence that is preventing many local business owners from taking initiative with regard to their own marketing. This represents an opportunity for VSL to lead through digital marketing and brand positioning capacity- and skills-building as addressed in Section 6: Entrepreneurship and Business Support.

There is also a greater role for the Town to embrace supporting local businesses in enhancing their visibility to prospective visitors. One effective solution advocated by local business owners is creating spaces and opportunities to promote their brands and businesses in tourist-rich areas, which is currently prevented due to the Third-Party signage bylaw.

6.7 SUMMARIZING GAPS

The purpose of VSL marketing and communication channels, and Town of Sylvan Lake marketing and communication channels should be further distinguished.

There is a fractured approach to marketing and promotion.

There is a lack of collaborative marketing and sales opportunities between the Town and local & regional partners.

There is a limited view of marketing as a promotional activity, which misses key components such as program- and place-based activations.

There is a lack of trip planning tools available via Sylvan Lake channels.

There is a lack of calls to action within marketing activities.

There is limited budget and capacity for effective destination marketing.

There is no dedicated events marketing strategy.

There is a lack of cohesion in the customer journey that connects all points of visitor interactions.

The Municipality views VSL as a "communications channel," rather than recognizing and enabling Visit Sylvan Lake's growth potential, ability to influence visitor consumer behaviour, ability to showcase local and authentic sense of place and culture, and future potential for revenue generation.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

Marketing (M)

Invest in expanding VSL organic and paid marketing efforts, to increase regional brand awareness, influence visitor behaviour, enhance community buy-in to tourism efforts, and attract high-value visitors to Sylvan Lake year-round.

Tourism marketing plays a primary role for a destination in shaping perception, building brand reputation, attracting visitors and influencing how visitors interact with the destination. It is also a strategy through which to engage residents, local entrepreneurs and businesses, and prospective investors. Given the potential power and influence marketing has on destination development, dedicating human and financial resources is essential. The capacity available to lead marketing initiatives directly determines the quality and impact of the marketing efforts, and to reap the benefits of this DLMP, marketing is a key investment.

Destination marketing takes many forms, which are influenced by the time of year, the target audience and the KPIs. Efforts may include social media, Google, SEO, e-mail marketing, traditional channels (i.e., radio, TV, newspaper), public relations and posters, to name a few. The scope of marketing is broad and can be overwhelming if not approached strategically; therefore content plans and campaigns must be thought-out at least one year in advance, leaving flexibility for unforeseen changes and or opportunities and knowing that approaches, messaging and audiences will evolve with the destination.

For Sylvan Lake, the ultimate goal of paid and organic marketing efforts is to build the town's reputation as a regional gem and distinguished brand in Central Alberta. This is achieved through pursuing various interconnected sub-goals, including:

Attracting high-value visitors to Sylvan Lake.

By showcasing the town, including its picturesque natural surroundings, vibrant events, local experiences and local businesses, VSL increases visitor awareness of what prospective visitors can see and enjoy. Compelling and strategic promotion introduces the town as a destination to: people who may know it but have never considered visiting; those who have visited before but perhaps have not explored it beyond the beach; and those who have not heard of Sylvan Lake. By sharing pieces of Sylvan Lake's story through photo, videos and written content, marketing works to influence visitation and build relationships for people to return time and again. Marketing investments with this goal in mind are particularly valuable outside of peak season, driving visitation when the town historically sees dips in arrival numbers. That said, strategizing campaigns to attract high-value visitors who stay longer and spend more during the summer season is also beneficial for VSL.

COMPARING **MARKETING CHANNELS**

Social media (Paid and organic)

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn offer extensive reach and engagement, especially effective when activated with strong visual appeal (creative videos, strong photos/imagery). Paid campaigns can target specific demographics, increasing the likelihood of attracting visitors interested in Sylvan Lake's offerings. Organic posts foster community interaction, build brand loyalty, and provide real-time engagement with prospective visitors.

Google ads (Paid)

Google Ads lead to high visibility in Google search results, directing targeted traffic to VSL's website. Pay-per-click campaigns can be optimized for specific keywords related to tourism, activities and events (i.e., "What to do in Calgary this weekend"), increasing the likelihood of capturing potential visitors during their planning stages.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) (Organic)

Effective SEO enhances the website's visibility in organic search results, driving long-term traffic without ongoing costs. By optimizing content with relevant keywords, creating quality backlinks, and improving website usability, VSL attracts a steady stream of interested visitors.

Posters and Flyers (Organic)

Physical marketing materials such as posters and flyers can be strategically placed in high-traffic areas and popular venues. They are effective for promoting local events, special offers, and attractions to both residents and visitors who are already in the area. These materials can also serve as tangible reminders of Sylvan Lake's offerings.

E-mail marketing (Paid and organic)

E-mail marketing allows for personalized communication with potential and past visitors. Regular newsletters, e-mail flows and promotional e-mails keep audiences informed about upcoming events, special offers, and new attractions, encouraging repeat visitation and enhancing visitor loyalty. E-mail marketing is also an ideal channel for information sharing, for example, with local residents, business owners, local entrepreneurs and community groups.

Traditional channels (radio, TV, newspaper) (Paid)

Traditional media channels offer broad reach, particularly effective for targeting local and regional audiences if strong outlets are established. Radio and TV ads aim to create a strong audio-visual impact, while newspaper ads cater to specific demographics that may not be as active online. These channels are also valuable for building brand recognition and credibility.

Public relations (Paid and organic)

Public relations efforts, including press releases, media relations, and influencer partnerships, enhance the credibility and reach of Visit Sylvan Lake. PR campaigns generate media coverage, build strong relationships with journalists and influencers, and increase visibility through trusted third-party endorsements. Effective PR strategies also help manage the destination's reputation and communicate key messages to a broader audience.

Influencing visitor behaviour.

Tourism marketing has the potential to shape the behaviours and attitudes of visitors by promoting responsible tourism practices, such as environmental stewardship and respect for local customs and communities. Approaches may be direct or indirect; "direct" meaning using language that specifically speaks to responsible tourism practices, and "indirect" meaning featuring natural spaces and the value they bring to community, thereby sparking a new level of appreciation amongst audiences, as one example. Campaigns also influence visitor behaviour by featuring the things to see and do throughout town, driving visitation from beyond the beach and inspiring spending at local businesses—whether restaurants, retailers or experiences. This not only increases economic impact, marketing efforts help minimize negative effects and enhance the overall experience for both visitors and residents. This is also a strategy for distributing visitor traffic more evenly throughout the year, alleviating pressure on the town's infrastructure and resources during peak seasons. Influencing visitor behaviour is applicable to marketing efforts year-round, though the key messages differ depending on the season. For example, while summer campaigns may focus on respecting natural environments and driving local spending, this messaging may be secondary to visitor attraction campaigns in the shoulder seasons.

Driving revenue for the Town and local businesses.

One of the key goals of tourism marketing is to boost the local economy by generating revenue for the town and its businesses. Strategic tourism marketing initiatives entice visitors to spend money during their stay, and even influence typical day trippers to opt for overnight stays. This is most effectively done by promoting packages, itineraries, events, and local assets & experiences, and may include incentives such as exclusive deals or seasonal promotions. By driving increased spending, these efforts contribute to the economic vitality of Sylvan Lake, supporting job creation, business growth and community development. On the municipal side, as Visit Sylvan Lake's channels continue to grow, VSL is positioned to be the primary channel for municipal sponsorships and advertising sales, as it has the Municipality's largest audience numbers and is best aligned with consumer interests.

Attracting investments.

Tourism marketing not only aims to draw visitors to Sylvan Lake but also to attract investments that can drive further development and enhancement of the town's offerings. By showcasing the town's potential through strategic campaigns, VSL positions Sylvan Lake as an attractive destination for various levels of investment, particularly amongst those whose needs align with the DLMP (i.e., sport organizations, external event hosts, etc.). Highlighting successful local businesses, vibrant events and local facilities & spaces works to build the narrative of Sylvan Lake as a partner and host.

Information-sharing and engagement with local and regional businesses.
As addressed in Section 6: Entrepreneurship and Business Support, communications and engagement with local and regional businesses is a critical component of the DLMP, particularly in enticing TPA participation. Ongoing communication with this corner of the local and regional community fosters a culture of participation and partnership, while providing an opportunity for businesses to align their strategies with VSL's, creating a cohesive and attractive destination experience for visitors. Moreover, by involving businesses in tourism activities and decision-making processes, VSL strengthens collaboration and encourages a collective investment in the town's success. This approach enhances the visitor experience and drives economic growth, as businesses are better equipped to meet the needs of visitors and capitalize on the increased visitor traffic.

Fostering buy-in and participation within tourism activities among residents.
Considering local audiences in marketing investments is a channel through which to educate and engage locals on the value of tourism and opportunities they can leverage from the sector for their own benefit. With time, this approach strengthens the community's involvement and enhances the overall visitor experience, as visitors are more likely to feel welcomed into the community when residents are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their town's attractions and offerings. To distinguish between VSL's work in promoting things to do, see and engage with throughout town, demonstrating the value of tourism for the community via educational content for the community is the role of Town channels. However, given the expertise required to articulate such messages, content and campaign developed in this area ought to remain the responsibility of VSL, which also helps to align content between the two platforms (VSL's vs Town's), so each continues to complement the other versus compete.

Building campaigns that work toward achieving the above goals amongst various audiences allows for thoughtful planning, messaging and targeting, particularly impactful when developed to be evergreen, for implementation over a two-year period with refinements made annually.

As with the rest of the DLMP, marketing requires a grow-as-you-go approach; while the first year of DLMP implementation may have fewer resources and fewer key messages to capitalize upon, this must evolve with the destination.

CONNECTING TOURISM PRODUCT AND TOURISM MARKETING

Marketing addresses the "then what?" of tourism product development, taking products, services and experiences, connecting them to an emotion or a need, and creating a narrative that effectively reaches and motivates the right audiences to take an action. Initially, the action may be scrolling through your social media pages, then it might be clicking through your website. The goal is to plant the seeds that eventually lead viewers to plan a trip to Sylvan Lake and seek out the experiences they initially learned about via VSL marketing initiatives.

Marketing helps tell the destination's story—one of natural spaces, strong community and expanding experiences. This involves crafting a compelling narrative that resonates with prospective visitors and aligns with their interests and expectations. To maximize success, marketing efforts must be multi-dimensional; for example, posting a picture of an experience on Instagram with a fun caption must then directly connect to content, itineraries and information on the VSL website, ultimately leading prospective visitors down the path to purchase. There must then be a call to action, which may direct people to the VSL website or a booking page on a partner's website.

Itineraries are a tried-and-true marketing tool in tourism, serving as a bridge between prospective visitors and the local tourism product. Not only are they engaging content with great potential for SEO, itineraries simplify the planning process and provide ready-made plans that cater to different interests and timeframes, thereby reducing the perceived effort of organizing a trip.

By featuring itineraries prominently in organic and paid marketing efforts, VSL can appeal to:

- various interests: such as nature-based activities, sport, culinary experiences, etc.;
- various audience segments: families, couples, bachelor/ette parties, etc.; and/or
- general planning themes: weekend getaways, escaping the city, etc.

Ultimately, the goal is to highlight the diverse and broad spectrum of things to see and do. For instance, a "weekend getaway" itinerary might include a mix of outdoor activities, dining experiences, and local events, while a "family-friendly" itinerary could focus on kid-friendly attractions, parks and educational activities. This targeted approach works to ensure that the marketing content resonates with diverse audience needs and preferences.

Itineraries also create opportunities for cross-promotion among local businesses. By collaborating with accommodations, restaurants, tour operators, and other service providers, VSL or local businesses themselves can bundle services and experiences into attractive packages.

Giving prospective visitors the opportunity to search the website for information they are looking for, if it is not immediately evident on the homepage, is critical to maximizing the impact of the resource. Additionally, the website can be further leveraged by connecting it directly to the Visitors' Guide; for example, embedding QR codes in the Visitors' Guide, directing users to expanded content or trip planning ideas. This becomes particularly critical as the scope of experiences expands throughout the town, as the DLMP is being implemented.

One of marketing's greatest benefits is that it can be dialed up or down, depending on Town needs. Increasing paid campaign investments allows VSL to drive specific messages or behaviours, such as attracting visitors to attend an event or promoting shoulder season visitation.

CONSIDERING MARKET PREPAREDNESS

Tourism preparedness is a critical consideration when developing marketing strategies, particularly speaking to prospective audiences. There can be no false impressions or promises made, otherwise a brand risks damaging relationships with various audiences. Therefore, it is important for VSL efforts to highlight the community, natural environment, local vibe and visitor-ready experiences. Authentic storytelling and leveraging user-generated content to foster a compelling narrative are important, though must be underpinned by a strong place brand that captures the essence of the destination and differentiates it from others. A well-crafted and well-activated place brand enhances a destination's competitiveness, attracts investment and fosters a sense of pride among locals. For Sylvan Lake, this is its small, lake town essence, which will only strengthen with the implementation of this DLMP. It serves as the foundation for all tourism marketing initiatives, providing a consistent and recognizable identity that resonates with visitors and stakeholders alike.

Preparedness is also an applicable consideration when speaking to businesses and prospective investors; honesty and transparency about what the Town has to offer within marketing and communications efforts is imperative to building trust and a positive reputation.

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-M-1. Invest in enhancing the Visit Sylvan Lake web platform.			
VE-M-1.1. Embed social media feeds and hashtags on the website to showcase user-generated content.	1	VSL Third-party support	OIS.34, OIS.40, OIS.41
VE-M-1.2. Integrate e-mail capture opportunities (i.e., pop-ups, newsletter sign-up page, etc.).			
VE-M-1.3. Redesign and restructure the VSL website and content, informed by a comprehensive website audit: • To represent more accessible design; • To provide content, tools and resources with high SEO value that inspire prospective visitors and support trip planning based on interests and/or who they're travelling with; and • To be responsive, for mobile use.			
VE-M-1.4. Create an engaging blog and news section, featuring articles on local attractions, events (pre- and post-event content) and insider tips for visitors (see VE-M-3.1). Dedicate resources to making regular updates, including the latest information on town tourism developments, events, tourism-related volunteer opportunities, engagement opportunities and special promotions.	2		
VE-M-1.5. Invest in integrating interactive maps and itinerary planning tools, such as: • interactive maps that highlight key attractions, accommodations, dining options, parking locations and activities in Sylvan Lake and neighbouring communities; • itinerary planning tools allowing users to create and share personalized travel plans based on their preferences; Explore third-party plug-ins and technology to support these initiatives.			

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-M-1.6. Integrate a dynamic, intuitive search feature allowing users to filter activities, accommodations and dining options based on their interests (i.e., water-based, land-based, culinary, sport, etc.). Include comprehensive details and direct links to booking or purchasing options for partner services and experiences within the search results.	2	VSL Third-party support	OIS.34, OIS.40, OIS.41
VE-M-1.7. Explore third-party plug-ins to integrate direct Town-led product sales to the VSL website (see CCS-DLM-7.1).	3		
VE-M-1.8. Establish a password-protected portal for businesses & entrepreneurs, to host TPA-related modules, toolkits and other resources, accessible to Premium TPA (see VE-EBS-6.2).	4 - 5		
VE-M-2. Invest in enhancing VSL's e-mail marketing and communications capabilities, to strengthen year-round engagement and personalize messaging to unique audience segments and prospective partners.			
VE-M-2.1. Integrate detailed audience data collection wherever possible; for example, via event ticket sales forms, e-mail capture forms, engagement platforms, etc., using third-party software with e-mail marketing capabilities. Utilize the software to create multiple e-mail segments such as first-time visitors, repeat visitors, special interests and visitor profile (i.e., resident, visitor, business, etc.).	1 Ongoing	VSL Third-party support	OIS.39
VE-M-2.2. Develop and activate evergreen e-mail marketing flows, including content assets, for specific segments based on triggers. These may include: • signing up for a newsletter • downloading a digital visitor guide; or • previous engagement with emails. Review and update flows annually.		VSL	
VE-M-2.3. Establish regular email outreach (i.e., 2x monthly), integrating content as developed in the Content Calendar (see VE-M-3).			
VE-M-2.4. Track the effectiveness of e-mail outreach and funnels using key performance indicators like open rates, click-through rates, conversion rates and overall ROI. Refine the strategy continually based on data, and implement feedback mechanisms within e-mails to collect subscriber insights.			

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-M-2.5. Utilize email software for outreach to prospective partners, as applicable to actions with Direction 1: Product Diversification & Expansion, to track performance of outreach initiatives.	1 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.34, OIS.40, OIS.41
VE-M-2.6. Ensure all e-mail marketing practices comply with CASL Regulations and municipal data collection policies. Regularly review compliance requirements and train the VSL marketing team on best practices, including respectful and ethical handling of subscriber data.			
VE-M-3. Develop a robust VSL Content Calendar, mapping-out content needs (photos, videos, text) for organic marketing activities on each VSL marketing platform (website, social media, B2B email newsletter, B2C email newsletter, Visitors' Guide).			
VE-M-3.1. Establish core content themes that reflect Sylvan Lake's unique identity and appeal, in alignment with the DLMP objectives and other VSL plans (i.e., Brand Positioning Strategy). These themes may include lake activities, local events, natural sites and community stories.	1 Annually	VSL	OIS.41, OIS.42
VE-M-3.2. Develop and implement an annual content calendar (i.e., in November for the following year), to be refined on a quarterly basis. Include specific themes (see VE-M-3.1), target audiences, publication platforms/ formats, required imagery, and publication dates. Include: • plans for user-generated content (see VE-M-6); • content related to important dates and VSL event promotion; • Itineraries (see VE-M-4.); • TPA participants and pilots; • business features and community profiles; • community stewardship; • responsible travel practice; • general "value of tourism to Sylvan Lake" content; • weekly/monthly content series (i.e., "What's On This Weekend," featuring cross-platform content promoting Town- and private-hosted events; "Guest Testimonials," featuring positive reviews of local events and establishments, as listed on Google; etc.). Include content plans/adaptations for various platforms, including website, social media, digital newsletters, printed marketing assets (i.e., pamphlets, brochures, posters) and for specific audiences as required.			

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-M-3.3. Assign content creation and management responsibilities to team members or external partners, with a strong focus on SEO. Roles may include writers, editors, graphic designers, videographers, photographers and a social media manager.	1 Annually	VSL Third-party support, as required	OIS.41, OIS.42
VE-M-3.4. Review analytics and performance metrics on a monthly basis, to assess the effectiveness of content across platforms. Adjust the Content Calendar based on performance data, audience feedback and evolving marketing goals.	1 Ongoing	VSL	
VE-M-3.5. Invest in enhancing the VSL Visitors' Guide, in collaboration with Sylvan Lake News. Apply a storytelling approach to content, and magazine approach to design. Integrate QR codes to drive readers to the VSL website. Provide advertisers with ad templates, in an effort to enhance and elevate the overall design.		VSL Sylvan Lake News	
VE-M-4. Develop theme-based itineraries that facilitate collaboration and partnership among local tourism and hospitality businesses.			
VE-M-4.1. Identify key themes that reflect the interests of target visitor segments, including outdoor recreation, culinary experiences, arts and culture, wellness retreats, and family-friendly activities.	1 - 2	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) TDC	OIS.41
VE-M-4.2. Curate detailed itineraries for each identified theme (see VE-M-4.1), including recommendations for accommodations, dining, activities and local attractions. Consider creating primary itineraries that connect local businesses meeting at least essential market preparedness criteria according to Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness Criteria for Local Businesses. (Refer to Entrepreneurship Asset Master List to guide initiatives - VE-EBS-1.9.) Integrate a community-centric lens in developing itineraries, to showcase local gems and grassroots initiatives (such as potential offerings from artists, artisans, creators, makers, and local cultural groups).	2 - 3		
VE-M-4.3. Utilize itineraries as a key paid and organic marketing tool, through VSL communication and outreach channels (see VE-M-3 and VE-M-8).	2 - 3	VSL	
VE-M-4.4. Enhance, update and expand itineraries, focusing on integrating emerging tourism entrepreneurs, and those who have been engaged with VSL's TPA initiative (see VE-EBS-1).	4 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-M-5. Invest in ongoing capture of polished and refined photo and video assets, featuring the lake town vibe throughout the seasons, and the diversity of the community & visitors.			
VE-M-5.1. Establish and follow Photo and Video Guidelines for VSL, aligning with the DLMP and Brand Positioning. These may include: • Emphasize candid moments and authentic experiences that reflect the true spirit of the destination. • Highlight key attractions, cultural experiences, local people, and landscapes. • Represent the diversity of the community and visitors, highlighting different ages, ethnicities, abilities and backgrounds. Add these as an addendum to the existing Brand Book.	1	VSL	OIS.39, OIS.40
VE-M-5.2. Continue to invest in photography and videography expertise to capture scenes at major Town events.	1 Ongoing	VSL Third-party support	
VE-M-5.3. Host seasonal photo and video shoots, every two years. Engage residents and visitors to participate as models, offering incentives such as gift cards to local restaurants and retailers to compensate for their time. Create detailed shot lists for each photo & video shoot, outlining specific scenes, locations and activities to be captured. Determine priorities according to Campaign Plans. Include a mix of landscapes, events, local businesses and candid shots, capturing moments that evoke emotion and a sense of place. Liaise with local businesses to coordinate shoot details, as required.			
VE-M-5.4. Establish an organized digital library to store and manage all photo and video assets, making it easy to access and utilize visuals for various campaigns. Categorize assets by season, theme, and type for efficient retrieval. Regularly update the library with new content to keep marketing materials fresh and relevant. Consider providing access to external partners; for example, as a value-add component of Premium TPA (see VE-EBS-6.2 & CCS-DLM-7.13).	2		

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-M-6. Develop organic campaigns and initiatives to encourage locals and visitors to share user-generated content (UGC).			
VE-M-6.1. Create User Generated Content Guidelines, for curating and crediting UGC to maintain quality and authenticity, and a process for collecting, organizing and tracking user-generated content.	1	VSL	OIS.39
VE-M-6.2. Organize seasonal or themed photo and video contests encouraging locals and visitors to share their best moments in Sylvan Lake. Provide incentives such as discounts, free passes, or exclusive event access for those who actively participate in sharing their content. Promote the contests through social media, e-mail newsletters and posters on display in town at key sites and local businesses. Integrate these initiatives within the VSL Content Calendar (see VE-M-3.2).	1 Ongoing		
VE-M-6.3. Place prompts at popular visitor spots and during local events, encouraging visitors to take and share photos, such as selfie stations with scenic backdrops, interactive public art or installations, or event-specific installations. (See PC-DDP-6.1.)			
VE-M-6.4. Integrate UGC (that which aligns with UGC Guidelines - VE-M-6.1) within the VSL Content Calendar (see VE-M-3).			
VE-M-7. Develop an annual Campaign Calendar to schedule, manage and develop VSL marketing campaigns.			
VE-M-7.1. Determine general campaign directions, according to market segments or themes, in pursuit of marketing objectives. These may include: • high-value travellers; • small scale business events, meetings and retreats; • sport and recreation; • local and regional businesses, entrepreneurs and investors; and • the Sylvan Lake community. Include specific Campaign Plans for VSL Event Marketing investments.			

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-M-7.2. Schedule promotions and campaigns for the year ahead, as appropriate to achieve marketing goals. This may include: • Promoting local tourism product, including the Visitors Pass or Theme-Based Packages; • Focusing marketing investments on influencing visitor behaviour/promoting responsible tourism during peak season; • Attracting high-value travellers, business and meeting events, and sport & recreation investments during shoulder season; and • Promoting major upcoming events throughout the year, as relevant.	1 Annually	VSL	OIS.39
VE-M-7.3. Develop and implement enhanced Campaign Plans. (See VE-M-6, VE-M-8, VE-M-9, VE-M-10 and VE-M-11.)		VSL Third-party support, as required	
VE-M-8. Invest in developing VSL-branded tourism marketing campaigns, including organic and paid elements, focused on engaging and attracting the following market segments: • **High-value travellers;** • **Small scale business events, meetings and retreats organizers;** • **Sport and recreation clubs and organizations;** • **and others, as value becomes apparent.**			
VE-M-8.1. Annually develop a Campaign Plan tailored to each market segment, including: • budget; • target profiles (i.e., age, interests, location, etc.); • relevant online and offline promotional platforms; • distribution strategies; • key messages and value propositions; • testing and optimization strategies; • calls to action; • potential marketing partners, including media and influencers; • campaign schedules (i.e., duration of each campaign, frequency and timing/seasonality).	1 Annually	VSL Third-party support, as required	OIS.42
VE-M-8.2. Develop assets for each campaign as required. These may include: • Text, photos and/or videos • Social media posts • Flyers and/or posters • Dedicated landing pages and/or blog content • Incentives, contests and/or giveaways • Email templates • Press releases • QR codes Align the Content Calendar (see VE-M-3) and the Campaign Calendar as required.	1 Ongoing		

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-M-8.3. Determine and include clear calls to action, customized for each campaign, driving audiences to relevant content or resources. As examples, this may include: • High-value travellers: Purchase pages for a Visitors Pass or Theme-Based Packages • Small-scale business events, meetings and retreats & sport and recreation	1 Ongoing	VSL Third-party support, as required	OIS.39
VE-M-8.4. Launch campaigns according to the timing and frequency defined in the Campaign Plan, enhancing investments for shoulder season visitor attraction.		VSL	
VE-M-8.5. Conduct post-campaign analysis to assess effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and capture lessons learned. Use insights to refine campaigns for future iterations.			
VE-M-9. Invest in developing VSL-branded marketing assets, campaigns and initiatives dedicated to influencing and managing visitor behaviour, and promoting responsible travel & tourism.			
VE-M-9.1. Plan and execute bi-annual comprehensive awareness campaigns to promote responsible travel behaviours, utilizing both digital and offline channels & focusing investments during peak season. Follow the process as outlined in VE-M-8.	1 Ongoing	VSL Third-party support, as required	OIS.43
VE-M-9.2. Develop engaging videos, infographics and blog posts to educate visitors and raise awareness about responsible tourism practice (see VE-M-3.2). Share these assets via digital channels (i.e., newsletters, social media, etc.) year-round.	1 Ongoing		
VE-M-9.3. Invest in organic and paid digital and offline marketing initiatives, as well as place-based initiatives, to promote a Visitors Code of Conduct (CCS-DLM-11.3). This may include social media posts, posters and brochures; placemaking initiatives (CCS-DLM-11.2); and creative modalities (i.e., printed on a canvas bag, magnet, etc). Distribute the Visitor Code of Conduct resources via local businesses, attractions, the Chamber of Commerce, the Nexsource Centre, any future Visitor Information Hubs and during major Town events.	2	VSL	
VE-M-9.4. Design and install informative signage at popular visitor services (i.e., garbage cans, public washrooms, etc.), outlining behavioural expectations and responsible tourism practice. (See also: CCS-DLM-4.2.)	3	VSL TOSL	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-M-10. Invest in developing VSL-branded marketing assets, campaigns and initiatives targeting entrepreneurship and local business development.			
VE-M-10.1. Plan and execute campaigns & content, focused on enhancing the visibility of the TPA, recruiting new participants and sharing opportunities for collaboration. Utilize dedicated engagement channels for business owners and entrepreneurs (see VE-EBS-1.8), paid targeted promotions via VSL social media platforms and outreach via partner DMOs (i.e., Red Deer, Lacombe). Follow the process as outlined in VE-M-8.	1 Ongoing	VSL Chamber of Commerce TDC	OIS.35
VE-M-10.2. Activate accessible and inclusive engagement channels (see VE-EBS-1.8) to collect insight and stories to inform business-directed content planning and development (see VE-M-3). Develop blog posts, case studies, success stories, how-to guides, and educational videos accordingly. Share these assets via regular newsletters (i.e., biweekly monthly) year-round.	1 - 2		
VE-M-10.3. Plan and execute campaigns & content that reflect the TPA as a tourism product incubator, to re-engage past TPA participants for the Premium stream, and recruit new participants from across Central Alberta. Utilize targeted e-mail and paid social media strategies. Leverage partner channels for enhanced visibility (i.e., CATA's email network).	5		
VE-M-11. Develop organic and paid in-destination campaigns and initiatives to enhance community cultural connection, community stewardship and local understanding of & involvement in the tourism sector. (See also: CCS-CII-1.)			
VE-M-11.1. Design an integrated marketing campaign that targets local residents with information about community engagement channels, as well as community stewardship (what and why) and the benefits of tourism to their community. Utilize local media channels, such as community newspapers and outdoor advertising, alongside digital platforms like social media, newsletters and local blogs, to disseminate campaign messages. (See also: CCS-CII-5.1.)	1 Ongoing	VSL TOSL	OIS.39, OIS.43, OIS.44
VE-M-11.2. Create educational programs and workshops aimed at local schools, community groups and residents more broadly discuss the local tourism sector and its impact on the local economy. Partner with educational institutions and community leaders to deliver these programs, incorporating interactive activities and learning opportunities.			

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-M-11.3. Showcase the positive impacts of tourism through stories and testimonials from local business owners, frontline hospitality and tourism workers, entrepreneurs and community members. Integrate this focus of storytelling within the Content Calendar (see VE-M-3), including video content, blog posts, and social media features that highlight these stories, providing a platform for locals to share their experiences.	2	VSL TOSL	OIS.39, OIS.43, OIS.44
VE-M-11.4. Employ targeted online advertising to reach local audiences with specific messages about tourism's positive impacts and opportunities for involvement. Use geo-targeting features on platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Google Ads to reach residents of Sylvan Lake and surrounding areas.	2	VSL	
VE-M-11.5. Regularly assess the effectiveness of in-destination campaigns in enhancing local understanding and involvement. Collect feedback through surveys, focus groups and social media engagement metrics to gauge public sentiment and make necessary adjustments to campaign strategies.	1 Ongoing		
VE-M-11.6. Implement a system for locals to provide feedback on tourism initiatives and their impact on the community, using accessible and inclusive engagement channels (see CCS-CII-2). Monitor and respond as required.			
VE-M-12. Develop funnels for co-operative marketing investments from local and regional partners.			
VE-M-12.1. Allocate a percentage of the VSL Marketing Budget to co-operative marketing initiatives, and establish a fee schedule for external partners. Develop transparent mechanisms for fund management, allocation and reporting to build trust and accountability among partners.	1	VSL	OIS.31, OIS.35
VE-M-12.2. Develop a Co-Operative Marketing Toolkit, outlining the benefits, goals and expectations of collaborative marketing efforts. Define participation levels and associated benefits for partners, such as different tiers of investment and corresponding promotional exposure. Clearly identify the respective roles of the Town and partners. Include a calendar of Co-Operative Marketing Opportunities, based on the Town's priorities and Campaign Calendar, to provide prospective partners information to determine opportunities for alignment/co-investment (i.e., upcoming major events or festivals, theme-based campaigns, etc). Integrate co-operative marketing opportunities as part of Premium TPA (i.e., waive fees - see VE-EBS-6.2).			

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
VE-M-12.3. Establish a feedback mechanism/process to share KPIs with partners upon campaign completion.	1	VSL	OIS.31, OIS.35
VE-M-12.4. Activate the TDC, the TPA and business-targeted e-mail marketing to share the Co-Operative Marketing Toolkit with local and regional partners. Commit to regular outreach (quarterly) to promote specific upcoming Co-operative Marketing Opportunities. Utilize case studies of success to entice partner participation.			
VE-M-13. Expand VSL's capacity for tourism marketing.			
VE-M-13.1. Invest in a full-time marketing position, plus third-party support as necessary, to effectively implement VSL marketing initiatives. This may include photographers, videographers, website designers, SEO specialists, e-mail marketing specialists and data analysts. Prioritize daily management of online channels, including responding to visitor inquiries submitted via social media.	1	VSL TOSL	OIS.34, OIS.35, OIS.39, OIS.41
VE-M-13.2. Increase marketing budgets on an ongoing, annual basis, according to success measurements of campaigns and initiatives.	1 Ongoing	TOSL	
VE-M-13.3. Explore opportunities for additional marketing funding through provincial and federal government grants. Assign team members to research funding opportunities, prepare proposals, and manage relationships with sponsors.	1 Ongoing	VSL	
VE-M-13.4. Explore options and invest in marketing planning and management software.	3		

Section 7:

Community, Collaboration & Sustainability

7.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sylvan Lake's current reality as both a residential community and tourism destination considers a range of intersecting factors, including residents' perceptions of tourism, community engagement and volunteerism, and existing collaboration between the Town with local and regional businesses, groups and tourism entities. Limitations to the Town's collection of metrics, existing bylaws, revenue generation and human resources are noted. There are exciting opportunities for innovation and capacity building to realize Sylvan Lake's potential as a destination leader.

Gaps exist in the Town's communication and structural efficiency in tourism development. There is limited information-sharing, inaccessible engagement channels, and knowledge and funding barriers. Additionally, a lack of strategies for public-private-community partnerships (PPCP), insufficient staff capacity, inadequate collaboration, unpreparedness for cultural diversity, inadequate resources, ineffective policies, and missing data collection systems that are identified as areas of opportunity and improvement. Sustainable tourism in Sylvan Lake depends on active community involvement, fostering ownership and empowering locals as stewards of their destination.

Strategic Direction 1 emphasizes community impact and integration through mechanisms that utilize tourism to build capacities in participatory decision-making, co-investment, partnerships, project building, and community cultural exchange. This Plan emphasizes investment in information-sharing and engagement channels to improve visitor experiences while strengthening local culture and environmental stewardship.

Integrating inclusive platforms for dialogue, information-sharing and participation addresses capacity-building needs and empowers volunteers, organizers, and businesses. A community-centric approach to the procurement of goods, services and workforce to support local tourism events and activities, along with PPCPs, will work to diversify tourism offerings, create economic opportunities, and maintain Sylvan Lake's unique charm. Reducing barriers and engaging visitors and residents in stewardship align tourism development with the community's quality of life and sustainability goals.

Strategic Direction 2 establishes a comprehensive framework for destination leadership and management, with regard to organizational capacity, revenue, funding models, policies, collaboration and metrics to support sustainable tourism and enhanced community engagement. Recommendations and actions address the need for expanded capacity, which encompasses human resource labour, tools and resources. Physical development policies, diversified revenue streams, strategic partnerships and dedicated environmental resources are needed to help realize Sylvan Lake as a destination leader, further supported with an impact measurement framework to inform tourism development initiatives and investments.

7.2 THE CURRENT REALITY

RESIDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TOURISM

While some Sylvan Lake residents acknowledge the realities that come with living in a beach town—traffic congestion, sharing public spaces, etc.— the overwhelming sentiment around tourism is negative. There is a sense that tourism—particularly in the summer months—disrupts the everyday life of residents and how they interact with the place they call home; many feel that it impedes their ability to enjoy and move about their town. For example, 84 per cent of surveyed local respondents report avoiding the beach during peak tourism times, despite it being the top attribute identified when asked what makes Sylvan a great place to live, work and/or play. Space occupied by tents and warming devices is considered a deterrent to their own access and enjoyment. There is a responsibility for any municipality to guide visitor behaviour, and introducing policies and/or bylaws to address this challenge is a first step.

Additionally, and as explored elsewhere in the DLMP, there is a perception and articulated frustration that tax dollars fund beach maintenance and clean-up, as well as bylaw enforcement, which residents see as expenses that exist because of non-residents, with no return benefit to the community. Visitor influxes influence residents to avoid the downtown area during high-traffic periods because of congestion (addressed in Section 5: Place and Connections). As a consequence, downtown and lakefront businesses do not see the local support they need. There is a desire amongst the community for more boutique shops and amenities, though it's a hard sell if the community doesn't support those kinds of businesses that already exist to the fullest extent possible. This avoidance is also informed by a perception of a lack of safety on Lakeshore Drive; some cite an overwhelm of intoxicated party-goers during the summer months which deter them from enjoying the lakefront area, especially with kids and teens.

There is a culture of "us versus them"—"residents versus visitors"—which is a deep-rooted issue that can only be mitigated through community-led planning and thoughtful destination leadership and management. Policies, bylaws and staffing resources are parts of this equation, through which there are opportunities for the Town to make swift and impactful changes to shift visitor behaviour and establish a more community-friendly tourism environment.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, PARTNERSHIPS & INTEGRATION

At present, there is an opportunity for growth in partnerships being led by the Town's tourism administration, and communication channels meant to foster dialogue, ideation and collective consideration for tourism development.

Current platforms used to connect with the community—including tourism-related business owners—include the Town and VSL social media channels, the Tourism Partnership Program (TPP) and the Tourism Development Committee of Council (TDC). While the Tourism Partnership Program has grown since its inception, the municipality can sometimes struggles to fully operationalize the potential power of these collectives and empower their independent or participatory initiative taking. It is important to invest in one-on-one engagement with existing and prospective participants to understand how to make the program more appealing based on their capacity and needs. These conversations will shape and lead the development of opportunities and initiatives to ensure continuous ability to meet industry needs and generate appeal and participation.

A gap in two-way communication between the Town and community leads to misalignments between Municipal decisions and the expectations or needs of residents and business owners. For example, while the Town has invested in initiatives meant to foster participation from downtown businesses, some initiatives have seen limited participation from businesses. The opportunity exists to engage businesses in the planning to confirm the ideas align with their interests and capacity, and following the initiative, complete follow-up to understand what barriers existed that hampered participation. This complete chain of communication would further enhance the municipality's ability to guide development direction consistently overtime. This speaks to a gap in process and communication, which requires greater staff capacity amongst the VSL team.

An absence of active and ongoing engagement may also be an influencing factor in the current perception among rights holders that it is the sole responsibility of the Town to nurture community involvement in place-based and program-based experience development. This limits drive from business owners and residents when it comes to initiating activities, such as activating spaces and programs, revitalizing the downtown commercial strip, creating a harmonious vibe throughout the town, and expanding cultural experiences. An absence of grassroots efforts in the tourism sector results in a scarcity of community-led visitor experiences and participatory placemaking initiatives. Establishing effective, diverse and inclusive communication channels works to bridge this divide, though funding scarcity from the Town available for community initiatives must also be addressed. Therefore, there are opportunities to establish community-centric strategies for pooling resources and capital to secure space, funds, and other necessary resources to support joint initiatives—and further, facilitate connections to make these strategies come to life.

At this stage, there is an exciting opening for innovative, grassroots capacity building through ongoing community engagement channels, co-investment opportunities, and training. By providing leadership within the community regarding communication and partnerships, the Town fosters a culture of collaboration and innovation, consequently strengthening the local visitor economy. There are already examples of this in Sylvan Lake, particularly as evidenced by the local Farmers' Market, Sylvan Lake Theatre and the former Jazz at the Lake event.

Jazz at the Lake was an external event hosted by a small group of musicians, that ran for about 20 years. Though Covid-19 is the initial reason it stopped, the annual event reportedly ceased to exist because of grant funding and burnout amongst organizers. Prior to the pandemic, grant programs were available for such programs but such opportunities have not resumed. While other funding is available for such programs at the provincial and federal levels, there is an opportunity to pursue the development of a unique tourism grant separate from the existing Recreation, Culture, and Tourism grant that focuses on capacity-building for applicants and on delivered ROI. There may also be a gap in skills and understanding in pursuing such opportunities by local organizations and operators, including in running non-profits, basic business skills, marketing skills, board development, and succession planning that can be delivered to strengthen such community assets.

For its part, Sylvan Lake Theatre has successfully organized community-oriented programs such as comedy nights, theatre programs and events, demonstrating a willingness amongst local community rights holders to collaborate and partner in art, creativity and placemaking initiatives. This also points to an existing local base of passionate cultural and creative entrepreneurs who can develop niche experiences, with proper support. There is an opportunity to connect such initiatives to visitor experience, which relies—at least, initially—on Town leadership and capacity building.

Volunteerism

Overall, there is a sense that Sylvan Lake lacks a culture of volunteerism. The Town does have a Volunteer Coordinator in the Social Services department, who generally posts opportunities on social media and emails their contact list.

For Visit Sylvan Lake (VSL) specifically, there have been volunteer positions open for anyone wanting to be a Visitor Information ambassador stationed at the beach, as per the suggestion of the Tourism Development Committee, though no one has participated to date.

There is also a marketing-focused volunteer program under VSL, which has garnered some traction since launching two years ago. Capacity limitations for recruiting, supporting and training volunteers remain barriers for the VSL team, not to mention the lack of volunteer spirit. In some cases, such as

the Bull Riders Canada event, the municipality pays a small honorarium for groups to "volunteer" such as a high school sport team or the Lions Club. Compensation is a key component of equitable practice when relying on the time, skills and energy of community volunteers.

Business collaboration

There is evidence of businesses supporting other businesses throughout Sylvan Lake, for example, with goods from local and regional makers, farmers and artists being sold within downtown cafés. In conversation with café owners, it is clear that they consider goods from the Central Corridor as "local."

Additionally, a handful of experience-oriented businesses have combined marketing efforts in the past to attract visitors to the Town. There is a sense that local entrepreneurs are interested in co-marketing more broadly, though say that a lack of capacity is a challenge to seeing things through with any great frequency. The seasonality of certain businesses is also a deterrent for some to make any broad commitments, given that the return on investment may not pay off in the same way as those open year-round.

This speaks to the previously noted opportunity for the Town to provide support and facilitate training, to foster capacity for and a culture of collaboration.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Sylvan Lake is a member of the Central Alberta Tourism Alliance (CATA), which brings the team together with economic development and tourism representatives from the Town of Blackfalds, Clearwater County, Town of Innisfail, Lacombe County, Red Deer County, City of Red Deer, Tourism Red Deer and the Town of Rocky Mountain House.

Most recently, CATA produced the Central Alberta Agritourism Development Strategy and previously in 2018, launched a consumer-facing website, visitcentralalberta.com (VCA). While noteworthy, there is a general sense amongst members that capacity constraints on the local level limit active contributions on the regional level. As a result, there has been limited impact in fostering a regional tourism narrative. This is evidenced by the VCA website, which could improve user friendliness and does not include regular content updates. As a collective, CATA is an example of strong regional partnerships that help establish connectivity between the network of Central Alberta communities. There is an opportunity for Sylvan Lake to broaden its role as a magnet for tourism to Central Alberta, continuing to draw visitor impact on the region. As emphasized throughout the DLMP, serving a wider array of interests requires additional VSL team capacity.

Travel Alberta, the destination management organization (DMO) of the Government of Alberta, supports communities throughout the province in product development and marketing, with a focus on domestic and international audiences. The DMO recently established Tourism Development Zones (TDZ), one of which is "Olds to Lacombe," of which Sylvan Lake is a part. Aligning with Travel Alberta's goals and initiatives allows Sylvan Lake to access funding and support for its own tourism development, as has been done in years past.

Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA) focuses on supporting Indigenous tourism entrepreneurs across the province, and in Sylvan Lake, works with Powwow Times. The Town itself has also collaborated with Powwow Times, exploring ways to support initiatives through collaboration and co-investment. This is a positive sign, pointing to a willingness amongst Town leadership to engage Indigenous rights holders to develop land-based experiences within the community. Building off this already-established momentum represents a meaningful opportunity for Sylvan Lake.

On a more local level, the local Chamber of Commerce—as noted in Section 6—is a significant partner in supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs. The Town has an opportunity to foster a more active partnership with the Chamber; specifically, to align efforts and lean on the Chamber's connections, and resources to support VSL efforts. Capacity at the Chamber level has been limited in past years with the employ of one full-time staff, and more recently, one part-time staff.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE, CAPACITY AND COLLABORATION

The role of the Municipality in local tourism development extends beyond promoting the destination, encompassing responsibilities related to tourism market readiness, marketing, product development, infrastructure development and planning. With such a broad scope, one would expect a large team with diverse skill sets. However, this is far from the reality; at present, there is only one full-time VSL employee dedicated to tourism efforts within the Town's Recreation, Culture and Tourism department. The tourism team further includes events, culture and CTE management staff who share a partial responsibility for tourism activities alongside the singular-focus Tourism Marketing and Development position. The team has previously contracted third-party support when possible, for example, for photography, videography and website maintenance. Regardless, maintaining current capacity levels will render the DLMP implementation impossible and ensure Sylvan Lake's aspirations for sustainable tourism growth remain elusive. To accomplish the DLMP's desired outcomes, there is a specific need for human resources to shift the municipality's tourism efforts from reactive maintenance to implementation, innovation and impactful growth.

Various Town departments recognize that their work impacts and intersects with tourism, though there are no formal processes in place to ensure the tourism team is consulted or involved in tourism/tourism-adjacent projects and decision making. Further, where VSL is involved in conversations around some initiatives related to cultural events, downtown activation, tourism projects and placemaking, there is a lack of formal influence or decision-making power. The absence of a process for intradepartmental planning and coordination for tourism-related efforts is a critical gap that exists despite the direct and/or indirect impacts various functions have on tourism development. There is an opportunity to establish an internal working group, led by VSL, for the sake of fostering collective ownership over tourism-related decision-making and responsibilities. This also represents an opportunity for resource and capacity-sharing, which may address the tourism staffing shortage, at least in part, in the short term. This would ensure that the municipality's collective efforts have the maximum impact and efficiency possible by ensuring alignment between non-tourism departments and overarching tourism strategy, achieving mutually beneficial goals.

Figure 17: Tourism ecosystem roles (Source: Travel Alberta 2023–2026 Business Plan: Recovery to Resilience[60]).

The tourism function has in past and currently relies on support from across other departments, although this has evolved overtime with different functions. For example, Parks and Public Works departments continue to support the deployment of large-scale tourism events, while the functions of VSL that previously relied significantly on the Communications department have been folded more concretely into the tourism team over time. Understanding municipal functions with direct linkages to tourism practice and the tourism sector and restructuring these roles within the administration to fall within the tourism portfolio represents a solution to staffing limitations while activating relevant functions from a tourism perspective and ensuring municipal efficiency is maximized.

There is a gap in the cultural diversity and representation on the Town staff and Council, which may impact perspectives that influence decision making across the board. This is especially important as community and visitor profiles grow and diversify. Systemic solutions are not addressed directly within the DLMP, though call for a broader community engagement initiative aimed at increasing diversity and inclusion within the Town's workforce and leadership positions. By prioritizing diversity and representation at all levels of the organization, the Town can better reflect the needs and perspectives of its population (present and prospective), leading to more inclusive and equitable decision-making processes.

Finally, the question of capacity also leads to questions of workspace functionality for the internal tourism team and the ability to fulfill the needs of the community, industry, and visitors. As the tourism team expands, where will they go? There is limited workspace at the Nexsource Centre, and given the unique nature of VSL's roles and responsibilities as the team grows, the tourism entity will eventually require its own space. Recognizing that tourism's work is often outside of the weekday 9-5, that the DLMP's strategic direction requires space for collaboration and engagement on a regular basis, and that there is a strong desire from industry to see a functional visitor information space activated, these needs will need to be addressed in the form of a multi-purpose workspace that facilitates internal staff workspace and connection with the public.

[EMPHASIS]

EXPLORING **DEPARTMENTAL CONNECTIONS** TO TOURISM

When reviewing the current administrative structure, it is important to understand the direct connection each municipal function has to tourism development.

Public Works:

- Ensuring roads, bridges, sidewalks, and utilities are well-maintained to provide safe and efficient transportation.
- Enhancing public spaces, such as streetscapes, parks and waterfronts, to create attractive environments where people want to spend time.
- Providing logistical support for events and festivals, including setup, signage and waste management.

Corporate Services:

- Managing items such as taxes, animal licenses, utility bills, parking fine payments, account receivable payments and media requests
- Providing services such as corporate infrastructure and services, communications, IT and finance

Planning and Development:

- Facilitating permits and licenses for businesses, events and activities.
- Leading implementation of regulations and land use policies—i.e., via designating areas for accommodations, attractions, and tourism-related infrastructure, mobile vending, parking, etc.
- Reviewing and approving development proposals for new facilities and attractions.
- Advancing the local business ecosystem and attracting new investments.

Parks and Protective Services:

- Maintaining parks, trails, and natural areas, including amenities like picnic areas, playgrounds, and interpretive signage.
- Providing safety and security services through law enforcement, emergency response and public safety initiatives.
- Protecting natural resources and wildlife habitats to preserve the scenic beauty and ecological integrity of natural spaces.

Recreation and Culture:

- Managing recreational facilities such as sports complexes, community centers, and arenas, where sports events, performances, and leisure activities are hosted.
- Organizing cultural events, festivals and programs that bring together community and visitors alike.

Wellness & Community Connections:

- Responsible for youth services, early childhood services, youth mentoring, volunteer services, home support, senior services, community development, family resource network (FRN) and information/referral services

REVENUES AND FINANCIAL CAPACITY

Revenues directly to the municipal tourism budget come from Program Registration Fees, Special Events Revenue, Mobile Vending Licensing, Federal Conditional Grants and Local Conditional Grants. Given the intersections with Culture and Special Events, there are shared revenue and expense lines.

Over the years, VSL has relied on provincial and federal grants and other funding sources that typically support activities such as strategic plan research and development, marketing and content development activities, and events and festivals, including for this DLMP. This leaves a gap in funding for critical tourism needs in infrastructure and development, capacity-building activities, and operations. Grant funding sources have been helpful mainly in the planning or development of growth initiatives but remain elusive in the implementation and sustainment of these projects which continue to require investment planning inclusion in the annual municipal budget.

For 2024, the Town budgeted $75,000 for events marketing and destination advertising investments, supported by a professional marketing firm made possible from funds supplied by a grant from Travel Alberta. Events serve as the municipality's primary shoulder season product development tool and tourism attraction strategy. Generally, within the events budget, expenses exceed revenue. The strong social benefit of events to residents and visitors is highly evident and while that benefit cannot be measured in dollars and cents, there is an opportunity to examine how to leverage events for more revenue generation from visitors as non-resident revenue sources, thus ensuring adequate ROI is achieved.

Another notable Town revenue source linked to visitors is the visitor pay parking program, which amounted to $224,674 and $252,478 in 2019 and 2020, respectively, growing to $499,952 in 2021, and $496,013 in 2022 with revenue posted within Parks and Protective Services and assisting in funding additional bylaw staff for pay parking enforcement and helping to offset other costs associated with the maintenance of the Sylvan Lake Park space. Enhancement of the program, including the enhancement of revenue generation, can benefit from tourism perspective inclusions and alignment with municipal tourism strategies. Given that the Pay Parking Program applies exclusively to out-of-town vehicles, parking is a revenue generator directly linked to tourism and should be considered as such as tourism is a stated priority for the Town.

In considering other financial support, Town Council has prioritized pursuing Tourism Based Community Status as an advocacy goal, a designation that the Province has considered introducing for years, specifically for Banff, Jasper and Canmore, and has been implemented in other provinces. If it becomes a reality, those communities with Tourism Based Community Status (those who take on substantial costs due to an influx in tourism over and above the residential population), would hope to receive stable, dedicated additional revenue from the Province that both offsets the additional costs to the municipalities and provides funding for sustainable growth and management of visitor populations. This funding is essential in providing municipalities with the stability necessary to continue to support and sustainably invest in their communities as primary drivers and attractors of visitors and reflects the importance of such communities at a provincial level.

[FYI!]

COMPARING DMOS

What are other tourism destinations investing in tourism? Here's a breakdown of 2023 expenditures:

- Tourism Drumheller: $600,000
- Tourism Lethbridge: $1.5 million
- Kootenay Tourism: $1.9 million
- Tofino: $2.3 million
- Kelowna: $6 million
- Banff: $16 million

Note: Dollar figures have been rounded to the closest hundred thousand.

POLICIES, BYLAWS AND GUIDELINES

The Town of Sylvan Lake has several policies and bylaws directly related to local destination leadership and management.

Some provide guidelines and parameters that support tourism development. For example, the Municipal Development Plan Bylaw addresses considerations such as public safety, environmentally sensitive development, water conservation, waste management, and regional collaboration. The Parks and Open Space Bylaw addresses questions about the public use and management of park spaces. Interpreting these documents allows for efficient planning and implementation of the Recommendations and Actions presented in the DLMP.

The Land Use Bylaw is also relevant, particularly as it relates to maintaining the integrity of the Lake recreational zone and downtown, for example, through functional uses of lands and buildings, design guidelines and measures such as the Visual Impact Assessment (as envisioned in the DLMP). This speaks directly to enhancing the lake town vibe, though there is an opportunity to enhance the document with more concise and directive language. This may include a set of detailed architectural style guidelines and considerations, as to the design, character, appearance and building materials to be used within target districts. Such initiatives aim to maintain a cohesive architectural aesthetic for downtown and lakefront areas in particular and for the whole town overall. The 50th Street Urban Design Guidelines also provides a solid ground for this purpose, however, lacks concise direction, design frameworks and control indicators that achieve desired cohesiveness in terms of architectural integrity and identity.

Detailed considerations in the 'Land Use District Regulations' section can define and control both residential and mixed-use developments in downtown and Lakefront, with a focus on maintaining view corridors to the lake and the vibe.

The Mobile Vending and Busking Bylaw has defined eligible locations for vending units (Schedule A). Reconsiderations are required for designated parks to address and align with desirable outcomes envisioned in DLMP, particularly to actualize the envisioned prime recreational zone that integrates parks along the lakeshore. Certain application parameters, specifically regarding insurance requirements, may limit the financial accessibility of opportunities to community members.

Another bylaw is the Short Term Rentals and Accommodations Bylaw which governs the regulations and allowances for AirBnB-style use of private residences and affects the accommodations industry overall.

METRICS AND REPORTING

At present, there is a critical gap in the Town's collection of metrics to inform tourism-related decision-making. The latest Tourism Economic Impact report referred to by the town dates back to 2014—10 years ago. Not only is the information outdated, given the decade that has passed since, but the world and consumer behaviours have changed dramatically since the pandemic. Regular collection of key visitor statistics on a standardized time frame is key to assessing the health of the industry and enables timely municipal response or intervention, communicates value to potential investors and businesses, and quantifies and supports funding requests made by the municipality.

Within the Tourism Partnership Program, Tourism Partner businesses have the opportunity to provide feedback on a wide variety of tourism initiatives each quarter and provides the tourism team with industry indicators. This feedback is shared with Town Council as well as forms the foundation of discussion at the Tourism Development Committee meetings.

The Town has an opportunity to invest in data collection. From economic to environmental impact and visitor to community satisfaction, qualitative and quantitative insights provide informed direction to guide municipal decisions in balancing economic gains, a high-quality visitor experience, sustainable experiences, and maintaining the community connections and vibe.

Furthermore, measuring alignment with and impact on the community plays a key role in managing visitors and overarching tourism policy impacts. There is a need for resident sentiment to be regularly measured and tracked and to equally inform municipal communications regarding tourism's value to community.

ENVIRONMENT

The health and wellness of Sylvan Lake's natural assets are a cornerstone of its appeal to visitors, particularly in the summer. The Sylvan Lake watershed contains diverse habitats supporting a variety of vegetation, wildlife and aquatic species, and provides many opportunities for nature-based activities, such as bird watching and fishing. The Sylvan Lake Watershed Cumulative Effects Management System (CEMS) was formed on the recommendation of the Government of Alberta to provide a vision, objectives, and outcomes for the Sylvan Lake watershed, and is designed to protect these natural assets. However, the human resources available to implement the CEMS has fallen short of anticipated; no active mechanisms are currently in place from the Town or other communities within the Watershed to implement the CEMS framework. Currently, there is no dedicated team member within the Town administration responsible for environmental monitoring and management overall in the manner described in the CEMS Framework.

To date, the environmental indicators detailed within the CEMS framework indicate favourable environmental conditions overall, however, without human resources assigned to actively monitor these conditions, it is challenging to proactively identify and act to mitigate potential negative impacts on the environment.

Further, the pending (at time of writing) Red Deer River Regional Plan (RDRP) is one of seven regional plans developed or in development by the Province. The lands on which the town of Sylvan Lake and the Sylvan Lake watershed occur are held entirely within the Red Deer River watershed. Regional Plans are legal documents and provincial and municipal decisions must be made in alignment with any applicable Regional Plan. At the time of this report, the RDRP is not completed. Once the RDRP is in place, a sub-regional plan under the RDRP could be developed to include consideration for the Sylvan Lake watershed as a unique environmental feature in the region.

Beyond formal plans, there are very few mechanisms in place to mitigate the environmental impacts of tourism. There is an opportunity to leverage visitor management tactics for this purpose, as further explored in Section 5: Places & Connections and Section 6: Visitors & Experiences.

7.3 SUMMARIZING GAPS

There is an opportunity to enhance information-sharing channels, whereby the Town can provide the community with updates about tourism-related initiatives, opportunities and investments.

There is a gap in accessible and inclusive engagement channels for community rights holders and visitors to participate actively in the conversation in tourism-related decision-making.

Knowledge, funding and communications barriers prevent community participation and investment in tourism-related initiatives.

There are no PPCP strategies currently in place for capital pooling and investment in destination development.

The current organizational structure disconnects tourism-related initiatives from one another; there is a lack of intradepartmental collaboration at the Town level to maximize the impacts of community-centric tourism and destination development initiatives.

The tourism team is not always consulted or involved in cross-departmental initiatives with tourism connections or implications, preventing VSL from being an active partner in positioning actions for tourism growth, or taking on a leadership capacity in the destination's evolution.

There is limited VSL staff capacity to effectively lead and carry out the DLMP implementation plan and actively leverage strategic partnership opportunities.

A lack of physical infrastructure, resources and tools–including funding— hinders the successful implementation of the DLMP.

There are no systems in place for ongoing tourism-related data collection.

Current policies and bylaws do not effectively facilitate community-centric practice in tourism development.

There is a gap in preparedness within the Town and among tourism experiences and services to address the needs of an ever-more culturally diverse visitor base.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

Community Impact and Integration (CII)

Enable mechanisms to utilize tourism for building capacities in participatory decision-making, co-investment, partnerships, project building, community cultural exchange and environmental stewardship.

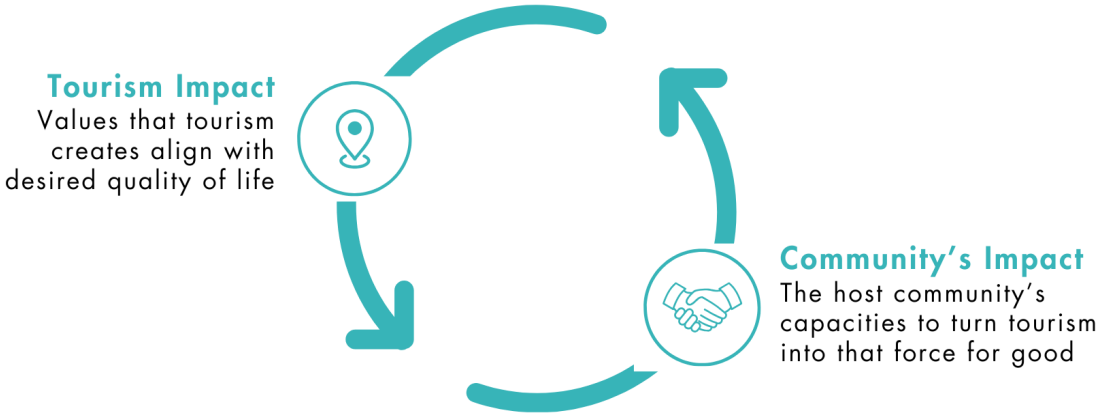


Figure 18: Connecting tourism's impact to community

Sustainable tourism development hinges on the active involvement and participation of the local community. Naturally, this becomes all the more necessary when taking a community-based tourism approach, as inherent to the DLMP. By fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment, community members become stewards of their destination, contributing to its growth and preservation. This enhances the visitor experience while strengthening the social fabric and cultural identity of any place.

Community engagement is core to the success of this Plan's implementation, which requires a mindset shift, engaging residents and local business owners as partners rather than bystanders. This necessitates diverse, inclusive and accessible platforms for information-sharing, dialogue, decision-making and piloting around place-based and program-based initiatives catering to both locals and visitors. When locals are involved in shaping how their community looks, feels and engages visitors, they become ambassadors, sharing their stories and pride of place with visitors. This cultural exchange enriches the visitor experience and promotes cross-cultural understanding, preserving and enriching the characteristics and charm that make Sylvan Lake a "destination" in the first place.

Further deepening community participation in local tourism initiatives requires the Town to embrace a leadership role in building capacity for volunteers, grassroots organizers and businesses. While this calls for more attention from the Town off-the-top (i.e., space, staff and capital), establishing capacity-building resources—such as training programs, co-investment opportunities and partnership-building initiatives—empowers community members to strengthen and showcase their entrepreneurial skills. This diversifies the tourism offerings and creates economic opportunities within the community.

The Town must also facilitate community-driven capital pooling and investment to create more equitable opportunities for community participation in tourism development, for example, in the form of public-private-community partnerships (PPCPs). The Town's role in PPCPs is to raise awareness and build capacity that enables and supports such initiatives. Concurrently, the private sector takes

co-ownership and/or co-leadership roles, or makes indirect contributions through financing, management expertise, technology and other resources. Exploring and evaluating existing PPCP models for their applicability to the Town is a crucial first step. These include: Real Estate Investment Cooperatives (REICs), Limited Equity Cooperatives (LECs), Community Capital Funds (CCFs), Community Bonds, and Commercial Land Trusts.

From there, the Town creates viable revenue streams for investors—both private and community-based—such as: providing reduced-cost use of government land for a specified period, furnishing utilities to support projects, offering tax incentives to private investors, exempting or relaxing zoning requirements, or placing exclusivity or restrictions on competing facilities within a specified distance or time frame. Establishing an official Culture & Entertainment District—leaning into the Province's Entertainment District designation—also helps to reduce red tape.

For investments requiring more significant capital, incentive strategies for capital pooling are essential, such as: offering tax incentives to private investors, exempting or relaxing zoning requirements, or placing exclusivity or restrictions on the approval of competing facilities within a specified distance or time frame.

Ultimately, fostering community integration and participation in tourism development is a holistic approach that yields multifaceted benefits: it strengthens the local economy, preserves and enhances community identity, and promotes environmental sustainability—all of which, in turn, enhance the visitor experience. By embracing this direction, Sylvan Lake can unlock the full potential of its tourism industry while keeping the community at the heart of its work.

[FYI!]

INSPIRING EXAMPLE OF CO-INVESTMENT FOR **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND RENEWAL**

Redirecting revenues

In Rwanda's Tourism Sharing Program, 10 per cent of park entry fees is allocated to local cooperatives, directly funding community-developed projects. Similarly, in Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations Tribal Parks Allies program, Tofino businesses pledge to donate one per cent of their sales to ongoing stewardship efforts aimed at preserving the picturesque ecosystem that helped Tofino gain international renown. The Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation developed a Graduated Capital Plan that allocates funds to various initiatives and community needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-CII-1. Create accessible, inclusive and interactive information-sharing channels for updates about tourism-related initiatives, opportunities and investments.			
CCS-CII-1.1. Create a communications strategy that addresses diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-discrimination, as guidelines for tourism-related messaging and engagement.	1	VSL Third-party support	OIS.34, OIS.40, OIS.41
CCS-CII-1.2. Further enrich dedicated online and offline central locations to share clear and accessible information about engagement opportunities, resources, and support.			
CCS-CII-1.3. Assign resources to monitor and address questions and concerns.			
CCS-CII-2. Create accessible and inclusive engagement channels for community rights holders and visitors to participate in tourism-related decision-making.			
CCS-CII-2.1. Further develop diverse feedback and idea-sharing tools that actively seek to identify community priorities in tourism-related initiatives, such as surveys, public forums, focus groups, social media, a dedicated online platform, and other participatory decision-making mechanisms. Integrate culturally appropriate ways of engagement for Indigenous rights holders.	2	VSL Indigenous leaders, rights holders and/or Knowledge Keepers	OIS.30, OIS.44
CCS-CII-2.2. Invest in raising awareness about these channels through campaign messaging, programming and testing via small initiatives. Integrate incentives when possible.			

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-CII-2.3. Identify barriers to participation in the Tourism Development Committee (TDC) through one-on-one outreach, including Indigenous entrepreneurs. Use findings to adapt/refine the Terms of Reference, application process and/or engagement strategies and approach, emphasizing equity, inclusion, representation and reconciliation. Consider offering incentives for TDC participation, such as business supports.	2	VSL Indigenous leaders, rights holders and/or Knowledge Keepers	OIS.30, OIS.44
CCS-CII-2.4. Initiate recruitment efforts for new TDC members, prioritizing representation from across the whole town (including 50th St., Lakefront, Industrial Zone and other areas).	2 - 3	VSL	
CCS-CII-3. Implement strategies to reduce barriers to participation, encourage active engagement and lower the risk of partnership and investment in tourism-related initiatives.			
CCS-CII-3.1. Develop a streamlined procedure for local procurement of goods, services and workforce for the Town's tourism-related initiatives—such as events, festivals, placemaking and beautification projects—with a focus on engaging businesses, artists and grassroots initiatives across the Central Corridor.	1	VSL TOSL	OIS. 31, OIS.35, OIS.40, OIS.44
CCS-CII-3.2. Invest in initiatives to raise awareness about opportunities to participate in and benefit from local tourism development.	2	VSL	
CCS-CII-3.3. Provide capacity and resources for low-risk and affordable community participation, investment and partnership, including training, seed funding, subsidized space, provision of supplies, equipment and off-site infrastructure, co-investment and marketing support.			OIS. 31, OIS.32, OIS.44
CCS-CII-3.4. Invest in engaging Indigenous rights holders to define partnership and co-investment opportunities, informed by Indigenous values, perspectives, and reconciliation. Outcomes from this collaboration might be piloted through projects as suggested in Section 8: Quick Wins & Projects.	1	VSL	OIS.22, OIS.30, OIS.31
CCS-CII-3.5. Define a series of pilot projects aimed to enhance the TDC's capacity to lead the design and implementation of small-scale, visitor-oriented initiatives. Focus these initiatives on place-based or program-based tourism development.	1	VSL TDC	OIS.30, OIS.31

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-CII-3.6. Define small-scale projects around visitor experience development and space activation, visitor management, and marketing focused on public-private-community partnerships. These might take the form of local markets, events, festivals, art campaigns or placemaking. Prioritize testing initiatives for shoulder season activation.	2	VSL	OIS.26, OIS.31, OIS.32
CCS-CII-3.7. Explore the potential for a Entertainment District structure for the Integrated Recreational Zone (PC-DDP-2.4) and downtown.	5	TOSL VSL	OIS.28, OIS.31
CCS-CII-4. Identify and implement community-centric strategies to encourage PPCP for capital pooling and investment in destination development.			
CCS-CII-4.1. Invest in educational efforts for the Town administration and Council, as well as community rights holders, around community-centric PPCP models, as well as community-driven approaches to capital pooling and affordable ownership.	2	TOSL VSL Third-party support	OIS.31, OIS.33, OIS.35
CCS-CII-4.2. Conduct a feasibility study to inform a series of investment scenarios or pilot projects. These projects aim to co-define and implement medium-scale investment on the refurbishment and upkeep of the downtown, infrastructure enhancement, new attractions, with a focus on community-centric PPCPs and building on community assets.	3		OIS.31, OIS.33
CCS-CII-4.3. Task the TDC with identifying a pathway for affordable ownership and community investment, by engaging local business owners.	3	VSL TDC	OIS.30, OIS.33
CCS-CII-4.4. Explore opportunities to develop equitable capital pooling/investment tools and mechanisms.	4	TOSL VSL Third-party support	OIS.31, OIS.33
CCS-CII-4.5. Launch and raise funds for an investment project, informed by feasibility studies (see CCS-CII-4.2. and PC-DR-3.3), with a focus on PPCP capital pooling and investment. This may include defining a Community Bond.	4 - 5	VSL TDC	OIS.31, OIS.33, OIS.35

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-CII-5. Invest in community-centric visitor management, and environmental & cultural stewardship.			
CCS-CII-5.1. Utilize accessible communication channels and streams to raise awareness among residents, local businesses and visitors about community stewardship and to share potential opportunities for individuals to become engaged. This includes marketing messaging and campaigns; pop-ups; neigbourhood intercepts; programs and activations; and other initiatives.	1 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.43, OIS.44
CCS-CII-5.2. Develop and lead a Community Animators Program within the tourism team, to collaboratively engage community rights holders and visitors in tourism initiatives such as cultural exchange, visitor management and environmental stewardship. The Community Animators program should include financial incentives, whether through honorariums or partial reimbursement, made possible through community partnership if needed. Define and test small-scale partnership scenarios with Animators' leadership, in partnership with local artists, art or creativity groups or other local non-profits.	2	VSL Community partner, if needed	OIS.31, OIS.43, OIS.44
CCS-CII-5.3. Define awareness-raising initiatives around Indigenous perspectives on land stewardship through collaboration with local Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, leaders and community members. This can include messaging, training and interactive place activations.	2	VSL Indigenous Tourism Alberta	OIS.16, OIS.31, OIS.43
CCS-CII-5.4. Define and test small-scale partnership scenarios aimed at influencing visitor behaviour and cultural & environmental stewardship, with strong leadership roles of the community grassroots groups in Sylvan Lake and the other 8 municipalities within the Lake watershed.	2 - 3	TDC VSL Grassroots groups Regional destination leadership	OIS.31, OIS.35, OIS.43, OIS.44

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

Destination Leadership and Management (DLM)

Establish regulations, structure, processes and resources for effective destination leadership and management, specifically regarding: organizational capacity; revenue; funding & co-investment models; bylaws and policies; collaboration; sustainability; and metrics & reporting.

This direction represents the core necessities to support all other strategic directions, recommendations and actions of the DLMP to be successfully implemented. Successful implementation requires foundationally establishing the resources necessary to effectively lead and manage the destination; it is in the strategy's name, after all!

Sylvan Lake, and the VSL team specifically, requires enhanced capacity to achieve the ultimate vision of this plan: for Sylvan Lake's tourism potential to be leveraged for full community benefit, and for the destination to further evolve as a tourism leader of regional and provincial significance. Inadequate staffing represents a critical impediment to evolving the town to a Regional Host from a Local Host and certainly from extending its potential to an Inter- and Intra-Provincial or Global Host.

A substantial increase in human resources is necessary for the Municipality to effectively implement DLMP strategies, and to demonstrate its commitment to tourism as a primary economic driver. Various skill sets and expertise are required—particularly, in taking a community-based tourism approach—and while there may be short-term opportunities for internal resourcing or contracting third-party support as discussed later in this section, long-term solutions are required to sustainably increase tourism-supporting programs and services that support a continuously attractive investment environment.

Equally important is addressing the current absence of coordinated and deliberate strategy of tourism-related efforts between Town departments. As noted at various points within the DLMP, tourism is unique in its encapsulation of responsibilities that currently fall under different administrative departments.

Establishing a formal body or working group to facilitate collaboration within the administrative structure allows for organizational adoption of tourism as a priority, and establishes the checks and balances required for decision-making across the organization to work toward enhancing the lake town vibe throughout the town. VSL must lead and coordinate these efforts, for the sake of aligning efforts with the DLMP, and to further demonstrate tourism as a priority for the town, leading to long-term benefits. Indeed, VSL leadership of an intradepartmental initiative allows for effective coordination between various departments, allows for effective management of resources, and fosters a collaborative environment where tourism thrives.

Strategic, joint efforts between departments are also a channel through which the tourism department's capacity challenges are addressed in the short term, by leveraging skills, expertise and roles already present throughout the Municipal structure. Maintaining current capacity levels nullifies the results of this DLMP, and ensures Sylvan Lake's aspirations for sustainable tourism growth and economic prosperity remain elusive. Allocating additional staffing and enlisting third-party support

are required investments for the Town of Sylvan Lake to effectively embrace tourism as a major economic driver and leverage tourism for positive community development, as the DLMP sets out to do.

This first requires a review of current organizational roles and responsibilities that are currently interconnected with tourism functions.

As one key example, Section 6: Visitors and Experiences, points to an opportunity for the Town to approach large events as a tourism product, informed by Culture, which is opposite to the current working order. This evolution positions events to simultaneously attract visitors and drive spending while celebrating the community. Similarly, VSL has a role to play in supporting key tourism industries and related B2C sectors, as well as capacity building, given the significance of small businesses and entrepreneurs within a burgeoning tourism sector. Downtown, the lakefront, beautification efforts, placemaking, and tourism infrastructure planning all align with the tourism leadership and management responsibilities and must be represented as such within the organizational structure to maximize tourism's community-building potential.

By understanding the unique characteristics of the tourism economy, the community, and its linkages, broadening the tourism department's scope, in relation to other departments, creates a standard split portfolio. This creates clear divisions of responsibilities amongst municipal departments, empowering each to focus on specialized efforts while diversifying the municipality's overall growth, efforts and services.

Further expanding the tourism team's portfolio sees several specialized teams emerge, as follows:

- Destination Marketing: To manage the Visit Sylvan Lake brand, handle sponsorship and advertising sales, promote events, and oversee content creation.
- Experience Development: To focus on creating high-value tourism products, building on the work initiated by the Events and Culture positions.
- Industry and Labour Liaison: To concentrate on entrepreneurship, workforce development, and small business growth, supporting the Tourism Partnership Accelerator (see VE-EBS-1) and fostering community engagement.
- Destination Development: To drive strategic initiatives such as visitor management, placemaking, public-private-community partnerships (PPCPs), and investment attraction, ensuring sustainable destination growth.

As the team expands, a Visitor Services team naturally develops to manage inquiries at a visitor information center and satellite locations. Essential functions like data analysis and financial strategy are overseen by the department's leadership positions.

In all this, shifting perceptions through language and labels is important, for example, by reframing the "Tourism Team" to the "Destination Leadership and Management Team" team—better encompassing a community-centric approach.

A dedicated workspace eventually becomes a required asset for impactful performance. The tourism function is unique within the administration, requiring attention and effort outside of the standard workday because of events, festivals, and ongoing visitor needs. A space to foster and facilitate this unconventional way of working is valuable to the team. Technological tools to support effective, efficient, and productive management of time, resources and capacity is also important. Start with simple technological investments, such as those that support team leadership, product management, environmental impacts and visitor data, and evolve as resources allow.

Recommendations throughout this DLMP speak to a need for balancing various tourism development priorities including economic receipt, quality of visitor experience, sustainability and community needs. Adaptability and multifunctionality provide the lenses through which to approach these considerations which is a necessary approach to physical use and development of public spaces, which often relies on hard-and-fast policy. Building equitable approaches to exploring and developing unique opportunities, especially in physical spaces, helps to articulate the kind of cultural development and sense of place for which true-blue tourism destinations are iconically known, unleashing creativity and empowering the community.

Therefore, by defining policies that preserve Sylvan Lake's small-town charm, maintaining view corridors and supporting the use and development of visitor-related infrastructure, the Town works to align tourism growth with the community's values and enhance the overall visitor experience. This is true, too, for grassroots community investment and participation in place-based and program-based activations, as this fosters a sense of ownership and pride among residents.

No doubt, in exploring the above components of this formative direction, one must be asking, "Who's going to pay for all of this?" Overall, the DLMP positions the Town to adopt a Blue Ocean Approach, focusing on creating new revenue channels through tourism activities, rather than competing for or reallocating existing revenues from other Municipal departments.

Introducing diverse revenue streams to support tourism development investments is a necessity, done by exploring various funding opportunities as recommended in the DLMP. This means introducing new fees for visitors and large-scale investors, particularly on existing activities, as well as increasing existing fees where possible. At present, the municipality tends to forgo opportunities to charge visitors when in fact, visitors are a potentially massive source of non-residential revenue that brings in new dollars to the economy. Reframing the conversation from servicing visitors to viewing

them as a resource to manage and draw financial benefit from is essential in reviewing potential revenue sources from tourism. Tourism should be treated as fulfilling a business unit function for the municipality as it is essential to ensure that the community receives a transactive value (whether in dollars, socio-cultural impacts, or other value) to visitation at least equal to the costs and impacts the destination will take on in playing host.

Taking a "grow as you go" approach allows for measured and data-informed scalability of investments; when there is evidence of success from a revenue perspective, increase investments. Profit and success must be measured in terms of tangible and intangible benefit for the municipality and for the community. The revenue streams identified within actions in the following Plan take the perspective of the Town as the main financial provider, supported further by PPCPs and provincial & federal funding.

Messaging is also critical when introducing new fees, such as a Community Enhancement Fee (CEF) as recommended (see CCS-CII-2). This CEF—collected by the major tourism sector industries including accommodations, food service, retail, transportation, entertainment and recreation—is a community-centric interpretation of destination development fees seen in other tourism communities. For example, The Jasper Destination Marketing Corporation (JDMC) is made up of more than 60 hotels, restaurants and attractions, all of whom charge their customers a two per cent destination marketing fee (DMF). In 2017, the DMF reportedly generated about $2.6 million.[61] To emphasize the point, the charge is facilitated through businesses and paid by patrons. Locals and visitors alike must be made aware of the value of the charge and how dollars collected are being invested. Likewise, businesses charging the fee must also be provided with thoughtful and digestible information about the charge so they are adequately prepared to answer any questions or concerns that arise. Focus this messaging on how funds collected go toward investing in community-centric tourism development such as placemaking, programming and experiences and ensure that businesses perceive a direct benefit from their participation.

In the instances where the DLMP directs the Town to initiate fees for businesses, such as the paid membership option for the Tourism Partnership Program (TPP) (see CCS-DLM-7.13), the Town must provide something in return to make it worthwhile. This may mean distinction within visitor-facing content, such as on maps, and other marketing or promotional advantages. Understanding what will make it worth the spend for tourism businesses prior to initiating any fees is an important step to take.

A community benefits charge is another channel through which the Town can collect funds to support community development, and is particularly relevant for initiatives related to affordability. CBCs primarily subsidize commercial spaces because of the large capital returns. While this does not

become a revenue line exclusively on the VSL budget, a percentage must be funneled to the tourism entity given its connection and contribution to improving community facilities, services, infrastructure and beautification, as CBC is meant to do. The same is possible for other tourism-adjacent fees, including parking; while VSL does not currently benefit from parking fees, redirecting a portion of these revenues to their budget is a logical and reasonable practice.

While finding money for VSL initiatives is one thing, measuring the success of investments is another. Metrics and reporting are critical to understanding the success of tourism development investments, and provide the insight required to determine where things are working and where refinements are needed. Investing in ongoing collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data allows for evidence-based decision-making. VSL can use the data collected to identify trends, assess the impact of interventions, and make strategic adjustments to optimize the return on investments. Areas to consider include economic impacts, visitor arrival and behavioural data and visitor satisfaction, with specific indicators provided in Recommendation CCS-DLM-12.

It is equally important to measure community satisfaction through resident sentiment surveys, especially considering the nature of the DLMP's approach. In a community-based model, these metrics allow the Town to measure how tourism development efforts continue to align with local needs and values, and influence perceptions of quality of place. This feedback loop strengthens community trust and engagement, and continues to foster a sense of ownership and partnership in tourism development. Additionally, understanding the community's perspective can highlight unforeseen challenges or opportunities that may not be apparent through visitor data alone and ensures resident and visitor cohesion.

Environmental impacts are another area to measure, though a far more complex consideration. Numerous environmental impacts have the potential to occur as a result of high volume tourism development. These can be direct impacts (e.g., development of infrastructure causing direct disturbance of vegetation, soil, hydrology etc.), or indirect impacts (e.g., increased regional visitation, higher recreational usage of Sylvan Lake, increased traffic, increased water consumption, increased waste production). In any case, considerations of environmental impacts extend beyond the lake to other natural assets in the community, and these impacts do not remain within a specific radius.

In addition to tourism-specific impacts, cumulative effects must be considered. Cumulative effects are defined as the combined effects from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities and natural processes. For example, in the Sylvan Lake region, cumulative effects include impacts from agriculture, oil and gas, forestry, urban and rural residential development, as well as natural processes such as climate change.

As stated in the Municipal Plan, "Recognizing that the lake is not just a local resource, cooperative working relationships are very important with surrounding municipalities while still maintaining the Town's autonomy in municipal matters."[62]

While VSL should embrace specific tactics to minimize its own environmental footprint and manage visitors' impacts, dedicated leadership within the Town administration to lead local and regional conversations around environmental impact is paramount, particularly given how the local tourism sector's identity and success hinge on the health of Sylvan Lake's natural assets.

[FYI!]

BEACH USE CASE STUDIES

In Sauble Beach, ON, the Town has a list of beach rules that include: "No cooking or warming devices," "No structures," and "No tents that you are unable to see through (sun canopies and kitchen tents which you can see through are permitted)." In Chestermere, AB, "Shade shelters under 10x10 feet are permitted on the grass, and shade options that do not need to be staked down are permitted on the sand area." Many beachdestinations strictly enforce "no smoking" and "no alcohol" rules as well.

There is a responsibility for any municipality to guide visitor behaviour, and introducing such policies and bylaws is a simple first step.

In the interest of visitor management while seeking out new tourism revenue opportunities, creative solutions abound. For example, both Ebeling Beach in Aspen Beach Provincial Park and Chestermere, AB, offer fire pits for public use (visitors are responsible for bringing their own firewood).

Private beach properties, such as Wander the Resort in Ontario, offer cabana rentals, which can accommodate a maximum of five guests. The rental package includes towel service, free parking, a bottle of sparkling wine, water activities and games, with access to additional food and drinks provided by the on-site restaurant and bar. The cabana experience costs $295 plus tax for a day, and can be booked through OpenTable.

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-DLM-1. Invest in reenvisioning organizational roles and responsibilities and collaboration, and expanding the tourism team to lead community-centric tourism and destination development.			
CCS-DLM-1.1. Pilot a Working Group, led by VSL with cross-departmental representation, for ongoing collaboration. This group will: 1. Establish a mandate and meeting schedule, with at least one meeting monthly. 2. Discuss the implications and overlapping roles, responsibilities and resources within the Organization in relation to the DLMP. 3. Develop/implement a roadmap for collaboration based on priorities identified in the Plan, including destination development (infrastructure, community services, placemaking, planning and policies), visitor experience development (cultural programs, events, and other Town-invested visitor experiences), economic development (entrepreneurship and small business economic development, investments), community liaison and environmentally responsible practice. 4. Determine what/how existing assets and skill sets can be allocated to the roadmap's implementation. 5. Collaborate on an ongoing basis, through project testing and by sharing regular updates about the roadmap's implementation.	1 Ongoing	Working Group (VSL lead)	OIS.34

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-DLM-1.2 Hire new staff or third-party support as necessaryto lead the implementation of the DLMP's recommendations for: 1. Tourism marketing and branding. 2. Community leadership and participation, including Community Animators Program for tourism ambassadorship (see CCS-CII-5.2), destination stewardship, and engagement & feedback channels for community rights holders and visitors to participate in tourism-related decision-making. 3. Visitor-related place-based activation, including priority projects and pilots identified in Section 8: Quick Wins & Projects. 4. Entrepreneurship, workforce and small business economic development (including Business & Partner Liaison - see VE-PDE-1.3). 5. Town-invested tourism product development, including iconic festivals and events. 6. Local and regional tourism collaborations & partnerships. 7. Tourism-related data analysis. 8. Visitor information services. 9. Investment and capital pooling. 10. Financial strategy and funding.	1 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.34
CCS-DLM-1.3. Outsource immediate priority actions as identified in the DLMP. This may include: implementing and managing community and visitor feedback channels; data collection and analysis; piloting iconic festivals and events with a regional focus; one-on-one outreach to and relationship development with entrepreneurs and cultural groups; and staffing and managing visitor information services.	1 Ongoing	Third-party support	
CCS-DLM-1.4. Conduct an annual evaluation of staff needs and budget available, to expand the dedicated tourism team, guided by the short-, mid- and long-term recommendations provided within the DLMP. Prioritize diversity and representation in staffing and decision-making.	Annually	VSL	
CCS-DLM-1.5. Adopt "Visit Sylvan Lake" (VSL) to refer to the Town's tourism leadership entity, as the Municipality's "Destination Leadership and Management" department. Represent this shift by branding VSL documents, reports, communications, content, e-mail signatures, dedicated work spaces (see CCS-DLM-2.1) and other channels, as applicable.	2	VSL	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-DLM-1.6. Pilot an interdepartmental panel with managerial representation from VSL, Planning and Development and other departments as needed, to incorporate DLMP priorities and recommendations in policies (i.e., land-use policies, zoning bylaw, etc.), Town plans (i.e., master plans) and investment decisions for infrastructure development. (See CCS-DLM-3.)	1 Ongoing	TOSL VSL	OIS.34, OIS.35
CCS-DLM-1.7. Evaluate the feasibility of a dedicated Destination Leadership and Management Organization (DLMO), guided by long-term recommendations provided within the DLMP.	4	VSL	
CCS-DLM-2. Invest in securing infrastructure, resources and tools for the tourism administration entity to implement the DLMP.			
Physical infrastructure			
CCS-DLM-2.1. Explore, evaluate potential locations and secure a dedicated workspace for the tourism administration entity.	2	VSL Third-party support	OIS.34
CCS-DLM-2.2. Evaluate the possibility of having an integrated space for the tourism leadership team, a centralized visitors hub and tourism entrepreneurship incubation. See Section 6: Visitors & Experiences - Entrepreneurship and Business Support.	3 - 4		OIS.13, OIS.17, OIS.34, OIS.35
Training			
CCS-DLM-2.3. Develop and deliver a Visitors' Services and Experiences Training Program for visitor-facing staff, industry, and volunteers. Include modules on customer service, effective communication, cultural competency and comprehensive destination knowledge.	1 - 2	VSL Third-party support	OIS.34, OIS.35, OIS.39
CCS-DLM-2.4. Invest in the upskilling and professional development of VSL and other Town staff involved in the DLMP's implementation, to enhance their understanding and skills in these areas: • Cultural competency • Reconciliation • Tourism community rights holder engagement • Technology adoption • Data management • and others as they emerge or are identified. See also CCS-CII-4.1		TOSL VSL Third-party support	OIS.30, OIS.31, OIS.33, OIS.36

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
Tools			
CCS-DLM-2.5. Establish a detailed five-year Implementation Plan to streamline priority projects and pilots recommended in Section 8: Quick Wins & Projects, guided by the Placemaking and Wayfinding Toolkit, Marketing Plan and Product Development Plan provided, as applicable. Include an Investment Plan, using actions provided in Recommendations CCS-DLM-6 and CCS-DLM-7, as well as detailed roles and responsibilities, steps, timelines and success indicators. Review and update the plan annually to evaluate alignment with targets, emerging needs and industry trends. Use this resource to inform annual planning activities.	1	VSL	OIS.34
CCS-DLM-2.6. Invest in advanced tools to support DLMP implementation, which can include: a customer relationship management (CRM) system; digital marketing tools; data collection and analytics tools; augmented reality (AR); online ticketing; and an advanced project management tool.	2 (Digital marketing tools; data collection and analytics tools; online ticketing) 3+ (CRM, AR, advanced project management tool)	VSL TOSL	OIS.34, OIS.35, OIS.39, OIS.41
CCS-DLM-2.7. Develop an action plan to implement parking and traffic control measures for peak tourism season, as suggested in Recommendation PC.VM.1. Integrate a new regulated policy (or bylaw) to support plan implementation as needed.	2	VSL TOSL	OIS.8
CCS-DLM-2.8. Develop a secondary five-year Implementation Plan for DLMP projects and pilots that fall into the second half of the DLMP timeline, informed by the performance measurement study on key DLMP initiatives (see CCS-DLM-13.2.). Include an Investment Plan, as recommended in CCS-DLM-6 and CCS-DLM-7, in addition to detailed roles and responsibilities, steps, timelines and success indicators. Review and update the plan annually to evaluate alignment with targets, emerging needs and industry trends. Use this resource to inform annual planning activities.	3	VSL	OIS.34, OIS.35

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-DLM-3. Adopt and/or refine policies related to the physical development of the town, to support the implementation of the DLMP.			
CCS-DLM-3.1. Enhance and extend existing policies and bylaws related to maintaining view corridors and controlling visual impact of development (i.e., the 50th Street Urban Design Guidelines and Land Use Bylaw). This may include defining a specific set of urban design guidelines for the implications and applciaitons of enhanced view corridors, to inform design and decision-making on development applications. This may also include additional decision-making guidlelines or a checklist for the Planning Authority, to inform decisions about the need for View Impact Assessment.	2	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL Third-party support (if applicable)	OIS.2
CCS-DLM-3.2. Define a policy (or policies) that include(s) detailed design & architectural style guidelines to preserve the small, lake town community characteristics. This policy will inform streetscape enhancement and beautification efforts, placemaking projects and new visitor-related infrastructure developments and refurbishments. This should be designed with the identified Unique Sense of Place in mind.		Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL	OIS.6, OIS.7
CCS-DLM-3.3. Periodically review land use policies and bylaws to extend opportunities and address gaps & barriers for appropriate micro-makers—such as breweries, cheese makers and coffee roasters—to establish themselves in downtown areas, enhancing the downtown experience (Centennial St., Festival St. and Lakeshore Drive) and diversifying the commercial use in a quality way.			OIS.18
CCS-DLM-4. Implement policy and practice to support the development of a multifunctional lakefront recreational zone (including Centennial Park, Sylvan Lake Park, Lighthouse Park and Lakefront Park), that prioritizes community appeal. (See also DC-DDP-2.4 and CCS-DLM-9.2.)			
CCS-DLM-4.1. Revisit existing bylaws to influence visitor behaviour. This may include restrictions to tents and other structures, and reenvisioning fixed assets meant for a particular use (i.e., fire pits, picnic shelters, benches, lighting, etc.), along the lakefront.	3	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL Third-party support	OIS.4, OIS.6
CCS-DLM-4.2. Reenvision the Third Party Signage Bylaw to allow for local marketing and promotions through quality placemaking initiatives in the lakefront and downtown. (See PC.VM.3.4.)			

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-DLM-5. Implement policy and practice to facilitate a community-centric approach in tourism development.			
CCS-DLM-5.1. Identify gaps in policies and Town procedures that prevent low-risk grassroots community investment, participation and partnership. Evaluate possibilities for measures that facilitate: • reduced application fee and liability insurance for small start-up vendors; • accessible permit application processes; • affordable rental or ownership; • tax incentives; reduced-cost use of public lands and spaces; and • exempting or relaxing zoning requirements, to name a few. See CCS-CII-3.1. and CCS-CII-3.3.	1	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL	OIS.31, OIS.32, OIS.33
CCS-DLM-5.2. Enhance the Municipal Development Plan to include more specific community-centric tourism policies echoing DLMP. Propose new objectives/ policies—or enhance existing ones—under Economic Development, Parks, Recreation, and Culture, and Regional Collaboration, that ensure physical infrastructure and economic development in tourism and hospitality: • prioritize sustainable, long-term community economic development, • encourage grassroots leadership, and • promote community partnerships. Key areas for consideration include, but are not limited to: 1. Enhance policies under Objective ED-5: "Enhanced Hospitality and Tourism Opportunities" to emphasize public-private-community partnerships in tourism development, community-based recreation, events, and attraction development that reflect local values and provide economic opportunities for residents, and community benefit agreements for larger tourism developments. 2. Expand policies under Objective PRC-3: "Variety of Recreation Facilities and Programs," to emphasize community stewardship of prime natural and cultural assets. 3. Strengthen policies under Objective RC-1: "Coordinated Land Use and Growth Management," to prioritize community buy-in, and the long-term benefits and interests of local residents in major intra-municipal tourism development projects.	2 - 3	Working Group (VSL lead)	OIS.34, OIS.35

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-DLM-5.3. Define a pilot project to test new measures, focused on downtown revitalization and beautification and enhancing visitor experiences.	2	TDC	OIS.34
CCS-DLM-5.4. Introduce Town-approved mechanisms and measures that commit medium to large tourism-related investments on new attractions (land development projects connected to recreation and visitor experiences) to bring wider social, economic and environmental benefits to the community. This may include: participatory planning; sustainable practice; capital investments local hiring; local procurement, and opportunities for small businesses.	2 - 3	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL	OIS.34, OIS.35, OIS.39, OIS.41
CCS-DLM-6. Pursue government funding to subsidize projects as suggested in DLMP.			
CCS-DLM-6.1. Pursue government funding to support DLMP implementation, including Quick Wins & Projects. In the short term, these may include but are not limited to: • Travel Alberta's Growth Fund • Travel Alberta's Innovation Fund • Travel Alberta's Rural Development & Promotion Fund • Travel Alberta's Events & Festivals Fund, and • Travel Alberta's Tourism Growth Program (TGP) in the Prairie provinces.	2	VSL TOSL	OIS.8
CCS-DLM-6.2. Pursue government funding to support PPCP projects/recommendations as envisioned in DLMP. These may include community-centric funds such as: • Community Economic Development and Diversification (CEDD) in the Prairie Provinces • Community Facility Enhancement Program Large Stream • Community Facility Enhancement Program Small Stream • Alberta Foundation for the Arts • Bob Etherington Heritage Conservation Fund • Community Initiatives Program – Operating Grant • Alberta Culture Days Grant • Community Initiatives Program - Cultural Heritage Initiatives Program • Community Initiatives Program – Major Cultural and Sport Events Grant • Community Initiatives Program – Project-Based Grant • Heritage Awareness Grants • Other Initiatives Program grant • Sport Participation Support Program • Heritage Research Grants	3	VSL	OIS.34, OIS.35

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-DLM-7. Create diverse revenue streams for tourism development investments, as recommended in the DLMP.			
CCS-DLM-7.1. Make existing iconic events **ticket-based**, with local and nonlocal rates. Sell tickets initially via a third-party platform, shifting to the VSL platform as capacity allows. (See Section 6: Visitors & Experiences - Marketing.)	1	VSL TOSL	OIS.34, OIS.40
CCS-DLM-7.2. Amend the Fees and Charges Bylaw to define a **registration fee** for iconic events, applicable to: • Vendors, with local and nonlocal rates • Participants, in the case of competitions (i.e., nature-based, art and creativity, and other recreational activities.)	2 - 3		
CCS-DLM-7.3. Explore the implementation of a **Lakefront Stewardship Fee** for non-local beach visitors on weekends, from May-September. Explore the feasibility of integrating the fee within the pay parking app or via the Visitor Pass (see VE-PDE-9.4).	1	TOSL	OIS.34, OIS.4
CCS-DLM-7.4. Explore the implementation of **premium pricing** for Centennial Park Picnic Shelters during weekends, from May-September and other visitor-oriented bookable spaces.			
CCS-DLM-7.5. Explore the possibility of allocating a percentage of **parking revenues** to VSL's budget.		TOSL VSL	
CCS-DLM-7.6. Explore the implementation of **increased parking rates**, informed by a zone-based strategy. (See PC-VM-1.3.)	1 - 2	TOSL Third-party support	OIS.8, OIS.34
CCS-DLM-7.7. Explore the implementation of a **tax on vacant commercial properties**. (See PC-DR-4.1.) Explore the possibility of allocating a percentage to VSL's budget.		TOSL	OIS.6, OIS.34
CCS-DLM-7.8. Activate **information hubs as points of sale** for authentic local and regional offerings. Use various compensation models (i.e., commission-based sales, revenue sharing, flat fee, etc). (See PC-VM-4.2.)		VSL	OIS.31, OIS.34

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-DLM-7.9. Consider piloting a **Community Enhancement Fee** facilitated through a wide range of tourism industry businesses in recognizing the breadth of the industry, to subsidize community-centric tourism initiatives as envisioned in the DLMP. This may start as a voluntary practice at 1-2%, and evolve into a fixed program based on further study and results of the pilot program.	1 - 2	TOSL	OIS.33, OIS.34
CCS-DLM-7.10. Pilot **co-investment** with local and regional tourism-related businesses, to subsidize community-centric tourism initiatives as envisioned in the DLMP. This may include: • Visitor information services, such as the comprehensive map of attractions, brochures, AR, etc. • Events, shared space and marketplaces • Partnership in at least two recreational packages tailored for youth, families, seniors, corporate retreats or other target visitor groups. (See Section 6: Visitors & Experiences - Product Development.)		VSL	OIS.26, OIS.28, OIS.33, OIS.34
CCS-DLM-7.11. Direct all **advertising revenues** earned from Visit Sylvan Lake platforms and initiatives to the Visit Sylvan Lake budget.	1 - 2	TOSL	OIS.34
CCS-DLM-7.12. Develop **permit opportunities at demand-based premium prices** for private events/exclusive access at select locations such as the Pier, Lakefront Park and Lighthouse Park. These may allow for: music, food, alcohol, tables, seating, electricity, etc. Implement measures that ensure equitable use of space, sustainable practice and community priorities.	2 - 3	VSL	OIS.29, OIS.34
CCS-DLM-7.13. Develop a **paid membership option** for the **Tourism Partnership Accelerator (TPA)**, applicable to advanced market-readiness and premium services & supports. (See Section 6: Visitors & Experiences - Entrepreneurship & Business Support.)			OIS.17, OIS.20, OIS.34
CCS-DLM-7.14. Implement the **pay parking program** during regional shoulder season events.		TOSL	OIS.8, OIS.34

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-DLM-7.15. Explore financial mechanisms that allow the Town to offset capital costs of improving community and visitor-related facilities, services, infrastructure and beautification efforts, as well as advancing affordable commercial space. Tools that may be investigated further for applicability and feasibility include: • a Community Redevelopment Levy, for areas covered within the Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan; • a Community Benefit Agreement, as part of permit requirements for certain developments in target benefit areas; • a recreation levy, as part of the existing Off Site Levy; and • Community Revitalization Levies (as proposed in the SWARP Action Plan).	4	TOSL	OIS.15, OIS.29, OIS.33, OIS.34
CCS-DLM-7.16. Develop **new tourism products**, targeting high-value visitor markets, as envisioned in the DLMP. (See Section 6: Visitors & Experiences - Product Development.)	1 Ongoing	VSL TDC	OIS.26, OIS.27, OIS.34
CCS-DLM-8. Utilize strategic partnerships with key tourism players at local and regional levels to realize the DLMP's vision for Sylvan Lake, to be a destination leader in Central Alberta.			
CCS-DLM-8.1. Identify opportunities for partnership and co-investment with the tourism entities at neighbouring municipalities and existing DMOs in the region, to pilot a Sylvan Lake-led culinary event. (See VE-PDE-11.)	1 - 2	VSL	OIS.23, OIS.27, OIS.34, OIS.35
CCS-DLM-8.2. Propose comprehensive partnership and co-investment opportunities for a collaborative regional event hosted in Sylvan Lake, based on the results of initial pilots and collaboration. This may include marketing, aiming to reach Alberta-wide audiences and beyond. Target tourism entities at neighbouring municipalities, existing DMOs in the region, industry partners and potential investors. (See VE-M-12.)	3		OIS.23, OIS.27, OIS.35, OIS.42
CCS-DLM-8.3. Develop a comprehensive inventory of tour operators, destination management companies (DMCs) and/ or other travel intermediaries operating in Central Alberta, or interested in Central Alberta product offerings.	1		OIS.23, OIS.34, OIS.35, OIS.42
CCS-DLM-8.4. Dedicate team, budget and other resources to relationship development and negotiations with tour operators, destination management companies (DMCs) and/or other travel intermediaries operating in Central Alberta, or interested in Central Alberta product offerings. Focus on showcasing/ promoting tourism products throughout the Town (Town-led and privately-owned).	1 - 2 Ongoing		

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-DLM-8.5. Develop an inventory of potential investors for product and infrastructure development, aligned with the principles and priorities of the DLMP. Include public and private prospects at local, regional, provincial and national levels.	4 - 5 Ongoing		OIS.33, OIS.34, OIS.35
CCS-DLM-8.6. Dedicate team, budget and other resources to relationship development and negotiations with potential investors, based on specific investment opportunities as they arise.	4 - 5 Ongoing		
CCS-DLM-8.7. Lead a collaborative planning initiative with the tourism entities at neighbouring municipalities and relevant DMOs in the region for: • managing tourism development impacts on the lake; and • destination leadership and management of the Central Corridor. • Follow recommendations as outlined in the Town of Sylvan Lake Municipal Development Plan.	3 - 4	TOSL	OIS.35, OIS.37
CCS-DLM-8.8. Co-develop resource-sharing initiatives for tourism workforce development with regional municipalities and tourism entities across Central Alberta. This may include: local or regional employee-sharing programs (as suggested by the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta's Labour Market Study 2023)[63] and joint training initiatives.	4	TOSL VSL	OIS.24, OIS.25, OIS.35
CCS-DLM-8.9. Collaborate with regional and provincial tourism organizations, and neighbouring municipalities, to introduce a tourism-focused workforce development initiative for the Central Corridor, utilizing existing streams such as immigration, temporary foreign workers, youth and seasonal placements and co-ops, etc. Allocate in-house resources, or build partnerships with relevant parties, to offer comprehensive support to local businesses specifically for accessing frontline workers. This may include support in applications, promotion, workforce training, etc.			
CCS-DLM-8.10. Collaborate with local Indigenous rights holders and Indigenous tourism partners in Central Alberta to develop a regional placekeeping pledge.		Working Group (VSL lead) Indigenous leaders, rights holders and/or Knowledge Keepers ITA	OIS.16, OIS.22, OIS.24

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-DLM-9. Enhance existing policies, regulations and practices to manage and monitor the environmental impact of tourism development at a local level.			
CCS-DLM-9.1. Assign existing Town of Sylvan Lake staff/team to focus on community-centric environmental stewardship initiatives and include them in the Working Group (see CCS-DLM-1).	1	TOSL	OIS.1, OIS.5, OIS.31, OIS.34
CCS-DLM-9.2.Work with relevant partners (i.e., Red Deer County, Province of Alberta), establish and implement a clear process for protecting the lake's environmental integrity and enhancing the natural appeal of the lakeshore area as it relates to access to the water, and for the commercial and non-commercial water-based businesses and developments. If possible, consider creating a collaborative framework to define, monitor and provide parameters around commercial and non-commercial recreational use of the lake. Include guidelines and best practices for environmentally responsible operations.	1 - 2	Town Leadership TOSL Provincial Government	
CCS-DLM-9.3. Develop a comprehensive and detailed set of procedures for environmentally sensitive development of tourism infrastructure projects within the whole town, informed by the Natural Areas Management Plan (2017). Incorporate: • Land use policy and spatial planning guidelines and best practices for environmentally cautious development and management of tourism infrastructure development projects; • a mandate for environmental assessment and environmental considerations as part of the evaluation for new development proposals; and • key priority indicators and criteria in sustainable use and monitoring impacts (operation and management). Align with or exceed provincial-level standards with criteria. Update procedures on a regular basis to reflect the standards and approaches of the day.	2	TOSL Provincial Government	OIS.5, OIS.34, OIS.37
CCS-DLM-9.4. Develop detailed guidelines, regulations and metrics for environmentally responsible practice to inform all business operations and place-based activations in the lakefront area, such as placemaking initiatives, events and community programming. Use resources as recommended in Actions CCS-DLM-9.2. and CCS-DLM-9.3.	2	TOSL VSL Chamber of Commerce	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-DLM-9.5. Integrate climate resilience and adaptation strategies into planning & implementing iconic events and major tourism infrastructure development (i.e., Lakefront Park). Include measures to address extreme weather events and changing climate conditions. Review these strategies on a regular basis (minimum every five years) or after significant environmental events.	3 - 4	TOSL Working Group (VSL lead) Third-party support	OIS.27, OIS.34
CCS-DLM-10. Initiate regional collaboration for environmental impact management of projects with potentially significant impacts on the lake's watershed ecosystem, using the Sylvan Lake Cumulative Effects Management System (CEMS) framework as a basis for directing efforts.			
CCS-DLM-10.1. Create a structure for shared application review for tourism & development projects, with potentially significant impacts on the lake's watershed ecosystem. This may include a regional oversight structure, priority indicators and a shared land use policy across the municipalities within the Sylvan Lake watershed. Utilize the CEMS framework as a key resource.	2	TOSL	OIS.5, OIS.34, OIS.37
CCS-DLM-10.2. Explore the possibility of initiating collaborative structure to evaluate the potential to implement key priorities in the CEMS Framework, using capacity built from a tourism case established as a result of CCS-DLM-10.1.	2	TOSL	OIS.34, OIS.35, OIS.37
CCS-DLM-11. Develop guidelines and initiatives for environmentally sensitive practice & messaging in tourism product development and marketing.			
CCS-DLM-11.1. Develop environmentally responsible event management guidelines to inform Town tourism events. Include measures and best practices such as: waste reduction strategies (i.e., using biodegradable or recyclable materials); using environmentally responsible suppliers and equipment; sourcing local materials; incorporating signage about environmental conservation and sustainable practices; creating incentives for vendors and/or participants to adopt green practices; and establishing "leave no trace" mandates, as some examples. Include detailed sets of criteria and indicators for impact monitoring and management.	2	VSL Third-party support	OIS.27, OIS.34, OIS.35
CCS-DLM-11.2. Invest in public awareness initiatives centred around responsible travel and tourism practices, targeting visitors and tourism operations. Incorporate both place-based and program-based initiatives. (See PC.VM.8.1. and VE-M-11.)	2 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.21, OIS.23, OIS.43, OIS.44

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-DLM-11.3. Establish a Visitors' Code of Conduct, informed by community input (see VE-M-9.3 and CCS-CII-2).	2	VSL TDC	OIS.31, OIS.43, OIS.44
CCS-DLM-11.4. Establish incentives to encourage the development of environmentally responsible visitor experiences.	3	VSL	OIS.5, OIS.21
CCS-DLM-12. Implement a context-specific Tourism Impact Measurement Framework (TIM) aligned with DLMP priorities to understand, measure and monitor tourism economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts and to inform respective tourism decision-making.			
CCS-DLM-12.1. Invest in resources (staff, budget, infrastructure, tools and know-how) to address priority gaps for collecting data on the following key areas: • Economic Impact (direct, induced and indirect impacts) • Entrepreneurship & Small Business Development • Environmental Impact • Visitation • Visitor Satisfaction • Community Satisfaction Focus on addressing gaps in capacity to collect data related to key metrics outlined in Appendix F: Tourism Impact Measurement Framework (TIM). (See Appendix F: Tourism Impact Measurement Framework).	1	TOSL VSL	OIS.34, OIS.36
CCS-DLM-12.2. Collect data on Key Metrics as outlined in Appendix F: TIM.	1 - 2	VSL Third-party support	OIS.34, OIS.36
CCS-DLM-12.3. Share the study's outcome with residents and businesses using accessible data and information-sharing channels that have been developed (see CCS-CII-1). Incorporate regular communication around the importance of understanding impacts and the need for data, with a focus on facilitating buy-in for data collection from diverse community right holders.	1 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.38, OIS.44
CCS-DLM-12.4. Incorporate more advanced Metrics in data collection. (See Appendix F: Tourism Impact Measurement Framework).	3 Ongoing	VSL Third-party support	OIS.34, OIS.36
CCS-DLM-12.5. Review TIM as needed and at least by the end of year 5, and extend or revise Indicators to meet emerging needs.	3		

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	OUTCOME/ IMPACT
CCS-DLM-13. Measure and monitor the outcomes of implementing DLMP recommendations, actions, and project deliverables to identify areas for improvement and inform subsequent actions.			
CCS-DLM-13.1. Invest in resources (staff, budget, infrastructure, tools and professional service) to address priority gaps in collecting data related to key metrics outlined in DLMP Implementation Plan (Section 8). This includes developing a municipal cross-departmental tracking tool for financial reporting related to tourism.	1	TOSL VSL Working Group Third-party support	OIS.34, OIS.36
CCS-DLM-13.2. Evaluate performance/ROI of DLMP-informed investments, projects and interventions by collecting relevant data, using metrics for each DLMP key initiative as outlined in Appendix G: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure. Follow the proposed procedure and intervals.	3 Ongoing	VSL Third-party support	OIS.34, OIS.36
CCS-DLM-13.3. Share key findings of this evaluation with residents, businesses, and other tourism key players using accessible data and information-sharing channels that have been developed (see CCS-CII-1).	3 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.38, OIS.44
CCS-DLM-13.4. Grounded on the findings of performance measurement (for key initiatives), identify both gaps/ performance shortcomings and successful initiatives. For shortcomings, determine the underlying reasons and define steps to meet targets or revise KPIs and targets as necessary. Engage diverse community rights holders in redefining strategies and actions, including developing new pilot projects and low-risk investments to test new strategies. Use successful evidence to inform future practices. Follow the procedures outlined in Appendix G: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure.	3 Ongoing	Working Group (VSL lead) TDC	OIS.30, OIS.34, OIS.35, OIS.36
CCS-DLM-13.5. Incorporate regular updates to community rights holders and other key players about finalized actions and contingency plans for addressing gaps. Share success outcomes with a focus on facilitating residents', businesses' and other key players' buy-in as applicable.	3 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.35, OIS.38, OIS.44
CCS-DLM-13.6. Review DLMP metrics as needed and at least by the end of Year 5. Expand or revise Indicators to meet emerging needs.	3	Working Group (VSL Lead) Third-party (if applicable)	OIS.34, OIS.36

Section 8:

Implementation Plan

8.1 DLMP IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This section combines the Strategic Directions, Recommendations and Actions presented throughout the DLMP. It provides budget estimates, and connects actions with "Quick Wins & Projects" presented in Part 2 of Section 8. The following legend provides insight for easy comprehension of the pages that follow.

PRIORITY

This category indicates the timeframe in which each Action is implemented.
1 - Within 2 years
2 - Within 2 - 4 years
3 - Within 5 - 7 years
4 - Within 8 - 10 years
5 - 10+ years
** In cases where priorities may require more time, you may see two numbers (i.e., Priority 1-2 = within 1-4 years.)*

COLLABORATORS

This category indicates parties responsible for, or involved in, implementing each associated Action. These include (in alphabetical order):

COLLABORATOR	**EXPLANATION** (if not immediately apparent)
CEMS municipal partners	The eight municipalities of the Sylvan Lake Watershed, including the five Summer Villages on the shore of Sylvan Lake (Norglenwold, Half Moon Bay, Sunbreaker Cove, Birchcliff, and Jarvis Bay), the Town of Sylvan Lake, Lacombe County and Red Deer County.
CATA	Central Alberta Tourism Alliance
Chamber of Commerce	Sylvan Lake's local Chamber of Commerce
Community Animators	A tourism ambassador program, as recommended in Section 7 (CCS-CII-5.2)
Community partners/Grassroots groups	Includes, but is not limited to, Sylvan Lake Community Partners Association and creative, grassroots non-profits
DMO/municipal partners	Refers specifically to official tourism and/or municipal bodies in proximity to Sylvan Lake, including Lacombe Regional Tourism and Red Deer Tourism
External organizers	Refers to the activation of a Collaborator (potentially from any of the categories listed here) as a project organizer
Indigenous leaders, rights holders and/or Knowledge Keepers	
Industry partners	Refers to a combination of any or all DMO/municipal partners, local businesses/tourism operations, regional businesses/tourism operations, Community partners/ Grassroots groups, etc.
ITA	Indigenous Tourism Alberta
Lacombe Regional Tourism	DMO for Lacombe region
Private investors/partners	
Provincial Government	Refers to the Provincial entity, outside of tourism-specific responsibilities
Red Deer County	
Regional businesses/tourism operations	

COLLABORATOR	EXPLANATION (if not immediately apparent)
Sylvan Lake News	The local Sylvan Lake media source/platform
Sylvan Lake SPARC	The Strengthening Positive Assets and Resiliency in Community) Coalition, which offers youth development training and community engagement activities
TDC	Tourism Development Committee
Third-party support	A contractor, consultant, or other entity outside of the Town administration, apart from those otherwise identified here
Tourism Red Deer	DMO for Red Deer & area
TPA participants	Businesses, tourism operators and community partners/grassroots groups participating in the Tourism Partnership Accelerator, as recommended in Section 6 (VE-EBS-1)
Travel Alberta	The Province's DMO
TOSL	The Town of Sylvan Lake; refers to the inclusion of various departments as relevant from across the Municipal organization, including Corporate Services, Planning and Development; Public Works, Parks and Protective Services, Economic Development, Recreation, and Family & Community Support Services (FCSS)
VSL	The Visit Sylvan Lake team, within the Town administration, including Culture, Tourism, and Events
Working Group	An internal team at the Town with cross-departmental representation and led by VSL, as recommended in Section 7 (CCS-DLM-1.1)

IMPACT/JUSTIFICATION

This category indicates the Outcome & Impact Statement(s) (OIS) the Recommendation/Action addresses, as articulated in Section 4: Becoming a Destination.

BUDGET

Specifies a cost estimate for each action as follows:

- n/a - No cost
- Micro: Less than $10,000
- Small: Between $10,000 - $25,000
- Standard: Between $25,001 - $50,0000
- Moderate: Between $50,0001 - $100,000
- Enhanced: Between $100,001 - $200,000
- Major: Between $200,001 - $500,000
- Extensive: Between $500,000 - $1 million+

Each action notes whether the Budget spend is a one-time investment of repeat/ongoing.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Budget estimates provided alongside 'Actions' that require evaluation or study prior to further investments being made assumes that the Municipality determines next steps should be taken based on said study or evaluation.
- Budget numbers do not speak to an annual allocation per action. It provides an estimation of the minimum budget required for the project to come to completion, which may be broken down over a number of years, based on the priority and Municipal resources.
- Budgets from associated "Quick Wins & Projects" are considered as a component of greater budget considerations.
- Given the DLMP is a leadership plan, the budget presented specifies what is needed for actions and recommendations to be implemented. Not all budget items are reflective of VSL-dedicated budget, and may apply to other TOSL departments or shared budget, as applicable.
- With the exception of new recruitments, third-party support and honorariums for community contribution, expenses related to human resources are not included in the budget presented.

RELEVANT QUICK WINS & PROJECTS

This category indicates which initiatives outlined in Section 8, Part 2: Quick Wins & Projects are connected to each action. Certain Quick Wins and Projects apply to multiple actions.

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
Destination Development and Placemaking (DDP)							
Embrace placemaking as a comprehensive framework for approaching public art, beautification, activation and wayfinding as interconnected solutions to Sylvan Lake's destination development, further supported by design, planning and policy interventions.							
PC-DDP-1. Maintain the visual, emotional and perceptual connections to the lake for the whole town.							
PC-DDP-1.1. Define and pilot placemaking and wayfinding projects to bring a sense of connection to the lake throughout the town. (See also CCS-DLM-3.1.)	1 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.2, OIS.6, OIS.9	Standard		x	QWP.11, QWP.12, QWP.13
PC-DDP-2. Invest in the enhancements of infrastructure, amenities and facilities connected to the lake experience.							
PC-DDP-2.1. Determine final recommendations for the redevelopment of/improvements to Lakefront Park (see Appendix K: Feasibility Study), for year-round activation.	1	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL	OIS.3, OIS.4, OIS.26	Moderate		x (for implementation of project(s))	
PC-DDP-2.2. Incorporate placemaking initiatives, including public art, programming and passive recreational experiences into Centennial Park, Sylvan Lake Park, Lighthouse Park and Lakefront Park, catering to a diverse range of interests and needs.	1 Ongoing	TOSL	OIS.3, OIS.4, OIS.11				QWP.1, QWP.2
PC-DDP-2.3. Further evaluate the recommendation provided by Lakefront Usage Strategy and Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan, specifically, "Improve access to water for recreational and commercial use along the shoreline." - A dog water access point; - A safe and well-defined location for launching non-motorized boats; - A more cost-effective and publicly accessible boat launch; and - A mooring field with defined access and a day/short-term mooring be built, likely at the end of the pier. Because some locations suggested in the Land Use Strategy fall outside of the Town's authority, consider a partnership with the Province. This evaluation considers the Lake's natural integrity, as well as environmental and community impacts.	2	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL Third-party support Province of Alberta	OIS.3, OIS.4, OIS.5	Moderate - Enhanced	x (If further evaluation confirms the need for investment)		
PC-DDP-2.4. Launch and implement a phased project that reenvisions the architectural appeal, land use, water access, furniture, equipment and facilities available at Sylvan Lake Park, Centennial Park, Lakefront Park and Lighthouse Park to develop its positioning as an iconic attraction and an prime, Integrated Recreational Zone that is multiseasonal, adaptable, multifunctional, interactive and accessible, with an enhanced sense of nature. Relocate mobile vending zones into other activated spaces (see PC.DR.3.1.). Introduce specific measures to enhance and protect the natural appeal of the wilderness lakeshore area (east of Sylvan Lake Park, between 34th and 39th Sts.).	3	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL Third-party support	OIS.3, OIS.4., OIS.11	Extensive	x		QWP.30
PC-DDP-3. Use placemaking to enhance the infrastructure of underutilized or unused open public spaces, Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPs) and vacant lots for recreational experience development (in particular, iconic events).							
PC-DDP-3.1. Reevaluate and enhance existing Pogadl Park plans to incorporate infrastructure, signage, amenities, landscaping, and placemaking needed to make it a prime community asset for outdoor recreational events and activities.	1	TOSL	OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29	Major	x		
PC-DDP-3.2. Conduct a comprehensive audit of underutilized/ unused open public space, POPs, and vacant lots along Lakeshore Drive, downtown, major non-downtown attractions and recreational facilities (i.e., Pogadl Park, baseball diamonds at Four Seasons Park), and major connectors and access points to and from the town, and identify potential sites for activation.	1	Working Group (VSL lead) Third-party support	OIS.27, OIS.28				

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
PC-DDP-3.3. Explore and define opportunities to pilot mechanisms such as community bonds and a Community Capital Fund, to: - capitalize on underutilized commercial spaces throughout the town and support emerging experience-driven businesses; - create more equitable opportunities for community ownership; and - support the upkeep of downtown storefronts and the retrofitting/ utilization of unused commercial spaces.* Engage community rights-holders, including property owners and tourism entrepreneurs, to assess the feasibility and interest in activating spaces. (See Section 5, LACE Up! Case Study)	2	VSL TDC TOSL Third-party support	OIS.26, OIS 19, OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.30	Extensive		x (If different projects/ investment tools are piloted) (total value of the projects have not been considered since projects are co-investment cases)	QWP.39, QWP.42
PC-DDP-4. Enhance the visitor experience for pedestrians and cyclists throughout the town.							
PC-DDP-4.1. Invest in local trail network connectivity and accessibility, according to the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan 2023.	2	TOSL VSL	OIS.10, OIS.11	Extensive	x		
PC-DDP-4.2. Design and develop 50 Avenue as a complete street from 53 Street to Lakeshore Drive, as recommended in the Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan, to safely accommodate vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.	2	VSL TOSL	OIS.7, OIS.10, OIS.11				
PC-DDP-4.3. Invest in infrastructure and placemaking enhancements for prime walkways and trails, with a focus on creating curiosity, engagement with place, and foot traffic.	3	TOSL VSL TOSL	OIS.7, OIS.10	Enhanced - Major	x		QWP.3, QWP.32
PC-DDP-4.4. Leverage trails for placemaking and storytelling through interpretive signage (using universal design principles) or installations that offer education and traditional teachings about plants, animals, the lake, Indigenous history and Sylvan Lake's history.	3	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL	OIS.16, OIS.43				
PC-DDP-5. Invest in adding, redistributing and refining wayfinding infrastructure to enhance visibility and create connections between parking, walkable routes, town attractions and supporting services.							
PC-DDP-5.1. Introduce simple, inexpensive and universally-designed ground wayfinding system (e.g., painted lines or arrows, temporary vinyl, etc.) to direct visitors to key attractions across the town, and introduce new colour and life to the streetscapes.	1	VSL TOSL	OIS.9, OIS.7	Moderate	x		QWP.9
PC-DDP-5.2. Remove and redistribute some of the existing "Downtown" district banners, installing them on existing infrastructure to extend the footprint of the downtown district with minimal cost.	1	VSL	OIS.9				
PC-DDP-5.3. Invest in temporary mobile signage solutions, including design and implementation, for festivals, events, and seasonal recreational activities.	1 Ongoing	VSL TOSL	OIS.9, OIS.7	Micro		x	
PC-DDP-5.4. Install additional directional signage in the downtown (Centennial St., Festival St. and Lakeshore Drive) to support visitor navigation and to highlight key areas for visitor experiences, guided by the Placemaking and Wayfinding Toolkit.	1 - 2		OIS.9, OIS.6	Moderate	x		
PC-DDP-5.5. Install additional wayfinding assets to invite, activate, define and/or guide visitors throughout the town, guided by Interpretive Design Guidelines (see PC-VM-3.1.) and the Placemaking and Wayfinding Toolkit.	3		OIS.9, OIS.7	Moderate	x		QWP.34
PC-DDP-5.6. Develop a cohesive and consistent trail wayfinding system that integrates wayfinding, interpretive signage and placemaking (using universal design standards) to mark, identify and connect existing trails, guided by the Placemaking and Wayfinding Toolkit.	3		OIS.9, OIS.7				
PC-DDP-5.7. Install additional gateway signs to invite and welcome visitors into town, guided by the Placemaking and Wayfinding Toolkit.	4	TOSL VSL	OIS.9, OIS.7	Major	x		
PC-DDP-6. Use placemaking to reflect and promote the local stories, history and legacy throughout the town, while creating visitor attractions.							
PC-DDP-6.1. Determine and implement feasible ways to add interactive elements to existing public art and installations, such as informational QR codes, photo opportunities, virtual reality experiences, and other creative ideas that encourage active engagement.	1 - 2	VSL TOSL	OIS.6	Major	x		QWP.3, QWP.35

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
PC-DDP-6.2. Engage the Tourism Development Committee to determine additional locations downtown (Centennial St., Festival St. and Lakeshore Drive) and pilot this strategy.	2	VSL TDC	OIS.6, OIS.30				
PC-DDP-6.3. Engage the Tourism Development Committee to determine potential locations beyond the downtown and pilot this strategy.	3		OIS.7, OIS.19, OIS.30	Enhanced		x	QWP.36
PC-DDP-6.4. Invest in activations throughout the town, informed by Indigenous place-based learning and knowing.	1 Ongoing	VSL TDC Indigenous leaders, rights holders and/or Knowledge Keepers	OIS.16, OIS.30, OIS.31	Moderate		x	QWP.5
PC-DDP-7. Customize a community-centric Placemaking Framework for Public Art.							
PC-DDP-7.1. Develop a Public Art Policy, through a community-informed process.	1	VSL TOSL	OIS.7, OIS.30	Moderate	x		
PC-DDP-7.2. Enhance the Public Art Evaluation Framework Draft provided in Appendix E by engaging community rights holders, to provide input regarding: - a transparent and inclusive public art selection process - visual and thematic considerations aligned with the local brand (for example, materials, colours, etc.).	1	VSL TOSL Community partners/Grassroots groups (arts/creativity-focused)				x	
PC-DDP-7.3. Develop an Artist Outreach & Engagement Strategy, focused on relationship development, community leadership, and encouraging & enticing artist participation in local initiatives.	1	VSL	OIS.31				
PC-DDP-7.4. Define public art projects focused on reflecting the diverse stories and community heritage of Sylvan Lake, guided by the Artists Outreach & Engagement Strategy (PC-DDP-7.3).	2 Ongoing	VSL TOSL TDC	OIS.7, OIS.31				QWP.3
Downtown Revitalization (DR)							
Invest in downtown revitalization to improve attractiveness and create a harmonious & engaging experience throughout.							
PC-DR-1. Invest in harmonising the visual and architectural aesthetics to reflect the essence of the Visit Sylvan Lake brand: a small, connected and vibrant lakeside community.							
PC-DR-1.1. Amalgamate the Façade Improvement Grant with other existing tourism-oriented funding programs into the Tourism Accelerator Grant (see VE-EBS-1.5), to strengthen the strategic impacts of funding sources of downtown vibrancy and programming. Lean on the Entrepreneurship Focus Group for input (VE-EBS-1.4) to guide funding program parameters.	1	VSL TOSL	OIS.6, OIS.7, OIS.17, OIS.30	Extensive	x		QWP.6
PC-DR-1.2. Enhance design guidelines and related bylaws about the visual integrity of street and retail frontage in downtown (Centennial St., Festival St. and Lakeshore Drive), including sidewalk interface, entrance, display windows design, and branding and signage regulations. Prioritize tourism needs within these measures..	2	Working Group (VSL lead) Third-party support	OIS.6, OIS.18				
PC-DR-1.3. Establish a comprehensive incentive strategy that includes co-investment (see CCS-CII-4.5), community grants, Tourism Accelerator Grant (see VE-EBS-1.5), tax credits, community benefits funds, and business loans with an extended grace period for streetscape beautification efforts.	2	Working Group	OIS.6, OIS.18, OIS.31				
PC-DR-1.4. Define a streetscapes beautification project focused on Lakeshore Drive between 52nd and 44th Sts., and along Centennial St. Explore potential opportunities for PPCPs (see CCS-CII-4.2. and CCS-CII-4.5) and utilize the incentive strategy defined in PC-DR-1.3.	3 - 4	Working Group (VSL lead)	OIS.6, OIS.18, OIS.31				
PC-DR-2. Invest in the improvements and enhancements of downtown infrastructure, amenities and facilities.							
PC-DR-2.1. Identify potential locations for public art and other placemaking initiatives (i.e., vacant parcels, façades, POPs, etc.), as a base for community activations.	2	VSL TOSL	OIS.6, OIS.31, OIS.18	Enhanced		x (if multiple projects are identified)	QWP.25

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
PC-DR-2.2. Design and develop Centennial St. and Festival St. as complete streets to improve the pedestrian experience and/or convert for pedestrian-only functions on occasion.*	3	TOSL	OIS.6, OIS.10, OIS.11, OIS 26	Extensive	x		QWP.11
PC-DR-2.3. PC-DR-2.3. Enhance the visibility of health and safety essential services and activations during peak season and events. This may include tactics such as additional staff, signage and maps, or as part of the overarching communications plans.	3		OIS.15				
PC-DR-2.4. Upgrade lighting, installations, accessibility and underground infrastructure (utilities) on Centennial St. for community-based activations.**	3		OIS.6, OIS 11, OIS.18, OIS 26, OIS.31				
PC-DR-3. Enable activation strategies to encourage business piloting, and starting small and adaptive (incrementalism).							
PC-DR-3.1. Define a business pop-up activation initiative that allows entrepreneurs to test out their business model, and start small and adaptive (incrementalism). Secure locations across downtown (Centennial St., Festival St. and Lakeshore Drive) to test the project. Evaluate the feasibility of privately-owned vacant lots, and activate where feasible, by building partnerships with owners and revisiting bylaws where necessary (see CCS-DLM-1.6 and CCS-DLM-5). Consider this an opportunity to relocate mobile vending. (See PC-DDP-2.4.) Negotiate the terms of use of Pocket Park, emphasising the focus on entrepreneurship versus vending.	2	VSL TDC	OIS.17, OIS.18, OIS.21, OIS.31 OIS.4 (if relocating of mobile vending gets realized)	Considered in PC-DDP-3.3	x (total value of the projects have not been considered since projects are co-investment cases)		QWP.39, QWP.42
PC-DR-3.2. Market these places as part of the campaign to attract a diversity of entrepreneurs to the downtown (Centennial St., Festival St. and Lakeshore Drive).	2	VSL					
PC-DR-3.3. Invest in a Feasibility Study to build a case for diversifying commercial uses of potential spaces in more affordable and accessible ways, through co-investment. Consider a mix of affordable rental business spaces in downtown, with a focus on Centennial St., including: micro-retail spaces; affordable shared retail spaces (mixed-concept/multi retailers); a makerspace (co-working spaces and shared facilities where them-based or particular vendors can create, network, share tools and resources, and sell their goods); and other strategies that encourage incrementalism.	2	VSL TOSL Third-party support	OIS.17, OIS.18, OIS.21, OIS.33				QWP.41
PC-DR-4. Implement measures that encourage the use of vacant spaces and the adaptive reuse and repurposing of retail & commercial spaces, downtown.							
PC-DR-4.1. Explore the implementation of a tax on vacant commercial properties.	1-2	TOSL	OIS.18, OIS.21	Extensive		x	
PC-DR-4.2. Introduce incentives (such as subsidizing or lowering permit fees and streamlined permitting processes, and redevelopment grants as proposed by the Waterfront Redevelopment Plan) for downtown property owners to convert unused properties into creative pop-up spaces, galleries or mixed-use developments.	1 Ongoing	VSL TOSL	OIS.18, OIS.21, OIS.31			Suggested annual minimum - varies based on incentives	
PC-DR-5. Define a regional/provincial campaign to attract prospective entrepreneurs.							
PC-DR-5.1. Assess the opportunity to collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce to: define the scope and budget of the project; determine respective roles; identify success metrics; and package incentives and supports as per PC-DR-4.2 and PC-DR-1.4. (See VE-EBS-1.)	1	VSL TOSL Chamber of Commerce	OIS.17, OIS.18, OIS.31	Standard		x	
PC-DR-5.2. Identify potential funds and resources to support the campaign through collaborations with regional and provincial organizations. Secure initial funds for testing. (See VE-M-10.)	1						
PC-DR-5.3. Launch the campaign in phases, 1. Local/Regional and 2. Provincial. Evaluate success according to metrics. Adapt accordingly, and relaunch.	2 Ongoing						
PC-DR-6. Define internal strategies with relevant departments to assess tourism considerations and applications of infrastructure needs and projects.							
PC-DR-6.1. Consolidate ongoing and planned infrastructure and capital projects (including upgrades, maintenance, extensions and expansions) within the municipal boundary into a GIS-based asset management database. Use this tool to support coordinated infrastructure work and strategic alignment across different plans.	1 - 2	TOSL VSL Third-party support	OIS.34, OIS.36	Standard	x		

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
PC-DR-6.2. Schedule regular Working Group meetings to facilitate tourism-focused coordinated infrastructure priority updates and the adoption of integrated infrastructure planning. Specifically: - Annually review priorities and update tourism-related and visitor experience infrastructure needs; - Make informed, collective decisions on addressing infrastructure capacity concerns and managing visitor growth; - Propose municipal-level strategies and actions to coordinate projects across departments aligned with infrastructure priorities, where applicable; - Initiate intermunicipal collaboration to address shared infrastructure needs and priorities, where relevant; and - Propose key inter-departmental actions to facilitate the adoption of integrated infrastructure planning. (See also PC-DR-6.3 and PC-DR-6.4.)	2 Ongoing	Working group (Planning and VSL co- lead)					
PC-DR-6.3. Establish a standardized procedure for integrating visitor-related and tourism infrastructure needs into Town-wide infrastructure planning. Key steps include: - Utilize the Destination Readiness Framework's readiness criteria (Appendix A) to prioritize tourism-related infrastructure needs and growth strategy; - Incorporate data-driven forecasting models, evidence-based planning (such as pilot projects and public studies), and needs assessment inquiries (i.e., the 'Importance-Satisfaction' model) to regularly evaluate visitor-related infrastructure demands and capacity gaps; and - Implement a formula-based model that integrates both resident population and tourism growth factors into municipal infrastructure projections. Account for baseline demand (residents), peak demand (visitors), and seasonal fluctuations, for balanced and adaptive infrastructure planning.	2 - 3	VSL Third-party support					
PC-DR-6.4. Explore the possibility of developing an integrated Master Plan or Infrastructure Asset Management Plan to guide future investment and planning initiatives in Sylvan Lake for all infrastructure maintenance, upgrades and expansions. Adopt best practices in decision-making and investment planning, guided by the National Guide to Sustainable Municipal Infrastructure (InfraGuide).	4 - 5	TOSL VSL Third-party support					
Visitor Management (VM)							
Leverage placemaking, downtown revitalization and program-based activations for effective visitor management.							
PC-VM-1. Implement creative solutions to peak-season parking challenges and future high-demand periods.**							
PC-VM-1.1. Pilot low-capital solutions (tactical urbanism) for one season, utilising 50 Avenue between 53 and 60 Street for different drop-off/pick-up and parking needs, including boat trailers, RVs and tour buses, as recommended in the Sustainable Waterfront Redevelopment Plan.	1	VSL TOSL	OIS.8	Moderate	x		
PC-VM-1.2. Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the project to determine longer-term solutions.							
PC-VM-1.3. Determine parking zones throughout the Town, considering parking lots and street parking, each with a designated parking rate based on proximity to the beach (i.e. lots near the beach are available at a premium, while those further away cost less).							QWP.7
PC-VM-1.4. Activate underutilised lots as visitor parking solutions during high season. Connect to shuttle service (see PC-VM-2.).	2			Enhanced		x	QWP.8
PC-VM-2. Implement shuttle connections to, from and within Sylvan Lake.							
PC-VM-2.1. Using an existing town-owned bus, pilot a shuttle service that provides a scheduled hop-on, hop-off solution connecting visitors to satellite parking sites, as well as attractions and visitor hot spots across the town during high season and iconic events.	1 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.8	Moderate		x	
PC-VM-2.2. Pilot a shuttle service to connect Sylvan Lake to communities in Alberta's central corridor, including Red Deer, Blackfalds, Bentley, Rimbey, Lacombe, and Innisfail, during high season and iconic events.	2 Ongoing	VSL Third-party support		Moderate	x (For partnership development/ outsourcing)		
PC-VM-2.3. Pilot a shuttle service to connect Sylvan Lake to Calgary and Edmonton during high season and iconic events.	2 Ongoing	VSL Third-party support					

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
PC-VM-3. Improve interpretation of wayfinding, placemaking and visitor information assets.							
PC-VM-3.1. Create Interpretive Design Guidelines to inform the visual/language/system consistency of wayfinding assets, guided by the Placemaking and Wayfinding Toolkit and informed by universal design principles.	3	VSL TOSL	OIS.7, OIS.11	Enhanced	x		
PC-VM-3.2. Create a trail system map connecting existing local green spaces, featuring community-chosen names. Provide information about broader trail experiences, including local and regional assets.	3		OIS.9, OIS.14, OIS.29, OIS.30				
PC-VM-3.3. Identify potential locations for visitor maps and trail system maps, prioritising options along the lakefront, downtown, at major intersections, access points and trailheads.	3	Working Group (VSL lead)	OIS.9, OIS.14				QWP.33, QWP.37
PC-VM-3.4. Embed an updated and user-friendly map of attractions within identified locations and via virtual channels. List all visitor-related services, vendors, and business owners, as well as public art installations, landmarks, and key attractions. Allocate space for local marketing content (i.e., posters).	3	VSL	OIS.9, OIS.14				QWP.1, QWP.33, QWP.37
PC-VM-4. Enhance Visitor Information hubs.							
PC-VM-4.1. Assess the opportunity to partner with the Sylvan Lake Chamber of Commerce to manage year-round visitor information services, as primary hub.	1	VSL Chamber of Commerce	OIS.13	Major	x		
PC-VM-4.2. Identify and activate satellite Visitor Information hubs for extended service during high season and major seasonal events. This may include the beach ambassador hut, the visitor information booth at the Library, the Nexsource Centre, and other feasible and valuable locations for visitor access.	2	VSL		Moderate		x	QWP.37
PC-VM-4.3. Evaluate the feasibility of a dedicated/independently-located Visitor Centre, possibly in connection with the development of a Cultural Centre as in the Cultural Master Plan.	5 (Depending on timeline for Cultural Centre visioning & design)	TOSL		TBD	(Depending on the outcome of actions PC-VM-4.1-PC-VM-4.2, and feasibility determined in connection with the Cultural Centre.)		
PC-VM-5. Enhance accessible experiences and connections.							
PC-VM-5.1. Develop an accessibility map (and populate existing apps with relevant and accurate information) that includes information about trail, beach, and public space accessibility, including trail, walkway or pathway surface, width/size, snow removal, curb cuts and ramps (or lack thereof) and distances to accessible washrooms, benches, water fountains, and parking. Train local staff, summer students or volunteers on accessibility standards and invest time in populating AccessNow, a crowd-sourced visitor-facing app regarding accessibility features in the community. Create a list of accessible businesses and services.	3	VSL TOSL	OIS.11, OIS.14	Enhanced	x		
PC-VM-5.2. Where possible, include walking distances / estimated durations (in minutes) from parking beyond downtown (Centennial St., Festival St., and Lakeshore Drive) to key attractions, amenities, and services.	3	VSL	OIS.8, OIS.11				
PC-VM-5.3. Invest in sight guides, rumble strips and auditory crosswalk / pedestrian crossing signals to make Sylvan Lake more accessible for individuals with visual impairments.	3	VSL TOSL	OIS.11, OIS.14	Enhanced	x		
PC-VM-5.4. Assess accessibility (mobility, sensory and neuro-diverse); invest in improvements to make Sylvan Lake's public spaces accessible to all.	3	Third-party support					
PC-VM-6. Enhance accessibility in tourism businesses and service.							
PC-VM-6.1. Develop an educational program in partnership with regional tourism organizations and/or Travel Alberta. This program equips tourism businesses and visitor-related services (both existing and new) with the knowledge to better understand accessible travel needs and provide strategies to adopt and implement essential accessibility requirements, at minimum.	4	VSL CATA/Travel Alberta	OIS.11, OIS.25	Small		x	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
PC-VM-6.2. Create an accessible tourism business recognition program and incentives, in partnership with regional DMOs and/or CATA. This recognition program highlights and rewards tourism businesses for their efforts in improving accessibility. The incentives (such as accessibility improvement grants, long-term loans, discounted permits, etc.) subsidize the cost of implementing accessibility measures. Prioritise the involvement of visitor accommodations, gastronomy businesses, major attractions and visitor-related services & experiences in this initiative.	4	VSL Tourism Red Deer/Lacombe Regional Tourism/CATA	OIS.11, OIS.12				
PC-VM-7. Use festivals and events to encourage visitor traffic beyond the lakefront and downtown.							
PC-VM-7.1. Identify potential open and enclosed locations for hosting medium- to large-sized satellite events. Explore partnerships with privately owned properties and operations (i.e., golf courses, camps, Hilltop Wedding Centre, etc).	2	Working Group (VSL lead)	OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS.31	Moderate		x	
PC-VM-7.2. Develop and implement a phased project to increase capacity and assets for satellite events (considering mobile furniture, infrastructure, design and cultural elements, and signage that represent the local charm/vibe, as well as services such as toilets).	2	VSL TOSL					
PC-VM-7.3. Define a pilot project to test a satellite event using various identified locations. (See Section 6: Visitors and Experiences.)	2	VSL					QWP.29
PC-VM-8. Use wayfinding and placemaking to influence visitor behaviour.							
PC-VM-8.1. Determine key locations throughout the town for impactful visitor behaviour messaging.	1	Working Group (VSL lead)	OIS.14, OIS.39, OIS.43, OIS.44	Enhanced	x		
PC-VM-8.2. Define phase-based projects to utilize playful placemaking for visitor behaviour messaging.	2 Ongoing						QWP.9
PC-VM-9. Use community programming to influence visitor behaviour.							
PC-VM-9.1. Expand Town-led volunteer programs for the purpose of visitor behaviour management. Define a series of half-day experiences that attract non-local visitors (including activities, refreshments, etc.) while embracing themes of community values and respectful behaviour. Use local producers and makers to enrich the experience and showcase community assets. (See CCS-CII-5.2.)	4	VSL TOSL Community partner/ Grassroots groups	OIS.31, OIS.39, OIS.43, OIS.44	Moderate		x	QWP.10

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY		RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
					1X	REPEAT	
Product Diversification and Expansion							
Invest in ongoing Town-led, co-led and Town-enabled tourism product diversification and expansion, increasing year-round visitor spending and enhancing the visitor experience.							
Build VSL's foundational capacity for creating and enabling community-centric, high-value tourism products.							
VE-PDE-1. Expand VSL's capacity for product development.							
VE-PDE-1.1. Task the Internal Working Group (see CCS-DLM-1.1) with identifying priority investments in expansion, maintenance and upkeep of visitor-rated services throughout the town. Refer to the DLMP's 'Quick Wins & Projects' (Section 8) to guide these efforts. Use the investment priorities identified to inform the Town's infrastructure and community service improvement budgets.	1 Ongoing	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL	OIS.29	Considered in CCS-DLM-1.2		x	
VE-PDE-1.2. Establish a dedicated Product Development Subgroup, comprised of Town team members and with VSL leadership, to focus on VSL's tourism product portfolio development. This may include some members of the Internal Working Group (see CCS-DLM-1.1).	1	VSL TOSL	OIS.34				
VE-PDE-1.3. Employ a VSL team member to take on a dedicated Business & Partner Liaison role (see CCS-DLM-1.2).	1		OIS.34				
VE-PDE-1.4. Continue to invest in the Town's internal capacity building through training opportunities, in collaboration with Tourism Café, prioritizing the Product Development Subgroup.	1 - 2	VSL	OIS.34	Considered in CCS-DLM-2.4 and CCS-DLM-2.3	x		
VE-PDE-1.5. Explore opportunities to enrich and extend the internal training to product themes, including events, ecotourism, sport and meetings & business conventions. Provide training opportunities to the TDC, based on their interest.	1 - 2		OIS.34				
VE-PDE-1.6. Address gaps within and/or enhance Town procedures, policies, regulations and measures to strengthen VSL's role as an enabler, facilitator and/or partner in product and visitor experience development with private and public partners. This includes: - reducing barriers for investment or co-investment when considering VSL partnerships with external partners who seek to use Town-owned properties; - introducing measures to reduce barriers for procurement when considering partnerships with industry partners in tourism product development (see CCS-CII-3.1); - enabling VSL to allocate resources & incentives and offer complementary services and supports to initiatives with external partners; and - enabling bidding in collaboration with other DMOs Explore measures such as: - accelerated application processes (i.e., for using Town-owned properties, vendors, etc.); - an enhanced Procurement Policy; - an enhanced Special Events Policy, extending considerations beyond Town-owned properties; - incentives for major investments; - a rubric for community-centric ROI evaluation and Town benefits; and - premium use of select locations as recommended in CCS-DLM-7.12.	1-2	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL Third-party support	OIS.33, OIS.34	Moderate	x		
VE-PDE-1.7. Address gaps in regulations and policies regarding the commercial use of the town's naturally-sensitive areas, particularly the lake (see CCS-DLM-9.2). Develop and approve detailed guidelines for using the town's natural assets in visitor experience development ('Sylvan Lake Natural Asset Use Guidelines'). (See CCS-DLM-9.3. and VE-PDE-6.2.)	2	Working Group (VSL lead) Third-party support					

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
VE-PDE-1.8. Prepare a Readiness Assessment Matrix for public signature assets that can be utilized in testing high-value recreational and cultural visitor experiences. Include types of activities that can be accommodated in each asset, the level of readiness (including the level of service and facility), visitor capacity (informed by Sylvan Lake Natural Asset Use Guidelines, see VE-PDE-1.7.), and the investment scale needed to address gaps in service and infrastructure. Consider the following assets as priority options: - the Lake; - the Nexsource Centre; - Pogadl Park; - the Lakefront Recreational Zone (see PC-DDP-2.4); - trails; and - all small to medium-sized open, green public spaces Review and revise the matrix at a minimum of every three years	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL TOSL Third-party support					
VE-PDE-2. Showcase the practice of cultural diversity, accessibility and environmental sustainability in VSL product development.							
VE-PDE-2.1. Develop an internal guideline to inform cultural awareness and diversity, accessibility and environmental sustainability considerations in VSL product development (VSL Responsible Product Guidelines). This may include: - types of activities & offerings; - recruitment and procurement processes and criteria; - implementation; and - content creation. (See CCS-DLM-9.3-CCS-DLM-9.5 and CCS-DLM-11.1.) Integrate this guideline in the Town/VSL's decision making process, by reviewing regulations and bylaws, and applying revisions where applicable (i.e., Sylvan Lake's Procurement Policy and the policy guide).	2 Ongoing	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL Third-party support	OIS.34, OIS.35	Moderate	x		
VE-PDE-2.2. Apply VSL Responsible Product Guideline (VE-PDE-2.1) to one VSL-led event as a pilot, to determine its impact and feasibility. Use outcomes and impacts to inform policy and guideline updates accordingly, for VSL-led events and products. (See also: CCS-DLM-11.1.)	2 - 3	VSL		Moderate	x		QWP.12
VE-PDE-3. Expand capacity for non-weather-dependent products and experiences, to enhance local tourism sector resiliency and sustainability.							
VE-PDE-3.1. Dedicate resources annually to develop climate change-informed strategies for VSL delivery of tourism product, including events, based on the previous year's experience, trends and research. This may include ad-hoc alternatives and complementary initiatives on the calendar to proactively address climate-based disruptions, etc. (See also: CCS-DLM-9.5.)	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	OIS.28, OIS.34, OIS.35	Enhanced - Major (Depending on the scale of product alternatives)		x	QWP.29
VE-PDE-4. Enhance VSL's capacity to evaluate emerging product development opportunities.							
VE-PDE-4.1. Create an Opportunity Evaluation Focus Group from the Product Development Subgroup (VE-PDE-1.2) and representatives of the Tourism Development Committee (TDC). Task the Focus Group with using the Appendix F: Partnership Evaluation Framework for Experience Development to evaluate product development opportunities presented to VSL, and others that emerge based on market trends.	1 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) TDC Third-party support, as needed	OIS.28, OIS.30, OIS.34, OIS.44	Small		x	
VE-PDE-4.2. Collect local industry input (see CCS-CII-2.1) and subject matter expertise as required, when considering emerging product development opportunities.	1 Ongoing						
Enable visitor experience offerings, focusing on high-value markets, shoulder season activation and partnerships within Sylvan Lake.							
BUSINESS MEETINGS & EVENTS							
VE-PDE-5. Invest in supporting local recreational facilities and venues to attract small-scale business events, meetings and retreats.							

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
VE-PDE-5.1. Connect with potential local private recreational facilities, venues and accommodators, such as golf courses, Hilltop Wedding Center, hotels, and camps, to determine their interest in and capacity to host small-scale business events, meetings and retreats.	1 - 2	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	OIS.23, OIS.29, OIS.31, OIS.34	Standard		x	
VE-PDE-5.2. Determine the Town's capacity to offer complementary services and supports to prospective local partners for attracting and hosting small-scale business events, meetings & retreats, such as: - providing shuttle service (see PC-VM-2); - offering complementary access to picnic shelters; private events/exclusive access at select locations such as the Pier, Lakefront Park and Lighthouse Park; - subsidized Visitor Passes (see VE-PDE-9.4); and - free access to an upcoming iconic event. (See VE-PDE-1.6. and CCS-DLM-7.12).	1 - 2	Working Group (VSL lead)					
VE-PDE-5.3. Work with interested partners to create Planning Packages for business events, meetings and retreats, targeting shoulder season visits. Include information about venues, accommodations, food services, experiences, and other relevant activities/services. Start with incentives and resources that are feasible, and expand/enhance Planning Package as more resources become available.	2 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) TDC					
VE-PDE-5.4. Develop comprehensive resources (i.e., pamphlets, dedicated webpage, etc.) to present the Planning Packages and showcase Sylvan Lake as a host destination for small-scale business events, meetings and retreats. (See VE-M-4.) Invest in marketing initiatives to promote Planning Packages, focusing on the Central Alberta, Calgary and Edmonton markets. (See VE-M-7.)	2 - 3 (Resource development) Ongoing (Outreach and pilot)	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)					
VE-PDE-5.5. Track the success of the Planning Packages outreach in facilitating industry partnerships. See Appendix J: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure.	1 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	OIS.34, OIS.36				
EXTERNAL EVENT ATTRACTION							
VE-PDE-6. Enhance Town capacity for supporting, co-facilitating and co-investment in events with external organizers, utilizing Sylvan Lake private and public recreational facilities, amenities and services.							
VE-PDE-6.1. Develop an External Partnership and Facilitation Toolkit, in consultation with local private venues, outlining hosting guidelines and processes. This may include: - information regarding costs of hosting an event (i.e. facility rates, civic services charges, etc.) (see CCS-DLM-7.12); - information regarding grant opportunities, sponsorship and other event supports; - requirements for a community-centric approach and responsible practice; - a listing of signature public and private assets (i.e. facilities and infrastructure) that can be utilized in these partnerships, with a focus on capitalizing on underutilized amenities and facilities, and open spaces (see VE-PDE-1.8); - a listing of advanced market ready local and regional service providers; and - a listing of ideas for/examples of partnership cases, informed by the potential scope of collaboration (see VE-PDE-6.2).	2 - 3	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) TDC (to support Business & Partner Liaison) Industry partners	OIS.23, OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS.31, OIS.34	Micro	x (for developing the Toolkit)		
VE-PDE-6.2. Identify local and regional event organizers, as well those from Calgary and Edmonton, who are prospective partners within this initiative. Consider a variety of sectors (i.e., business, recreational, cultural, adventure and sport events and tournaments) and identify the potential scope of collaboration. This may include: PPCPs: such as community groups or local operators with evident capacity in event organizing, or external hosts: such as business event organizers based in Red Deer or Calgary, and other alternatives.	2 - 3	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) TDC (to define scope) Industry partners					
VE-PDE-6.3. Present the Toolkit to the prospective partners mapped in VE-PDE-6.2.	3 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)					
VE-PDE-6.4. Evaluate opportunities as they arise to determine the Town's role—specifically those seeking to utilize Sylvan Lake's public recreational facilities, amenities and services—using Appendix F: Partnership Evaluation Framework for Experience Development.		VSL (Product Development Subgroup) External organizers					

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
VE-PDE-6.5. Track the success of the External Partnership and Facilitation Toolkit in facilitating industry partnerships. See Appendix J: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure.		(project lead)	OIS.34, OIS.36				
SPORT							
VE-PDE-7. Invest in establishing Sylvan Lake as a host or co-host for sport, leisure and cultural events, focusing on shoulder season opportunities.							
VE-PDE-7.1. Develop a list of prospective regional sport partners, such as teams and organizations in golf, baseball and hockey. Dedicate resources to outreach using the External Partnership and Facilitation Toolkit (see VE-PDE-6.1), to present Sylvan Lake as an ideal host for pre-season training, and practices preceding major tournaments/events taking place in Calgary and Edmonton.	3 - 4	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29	Major		x	
VE-PDE-7.2. Explore opportunities to collaborate with major DMOs, such as Visit Calgary and Explore Edmonton. Pitch Sylvan Lake as a value-add in their pursuit of sport-related RFP/bid opportunities, acting as a satellite host for exclusive pre-tournament training camps. Use relevant evidence of VSL's collaborations/ partnerships with local recreational facilities (see VE-PDE-5) external event organizers (see VE-PDE-6) and as proof of concept.	4 - 5						
VE-PDE-7.3. Allocate ongoing resources to co-bidding with DMOs such as Red Deer, Lacombe, Calgary and Edmonton on RFP opportunities seeking a host community for theme-based events, programs and tournaments.	5 Ongoing						
INDIGENOUS TOURISM							
VE-PDE-8. Invest in facilitating Indigenous land-based experiences, using Sylvan Lake's natural assets and recreational infrastructure.							
VE-PDE-8.1. Develop an 'Asset Map of Regional Indigenous Entrepreneurs & Artists' who may be interested in Sylvan Lake tourism product development. Dedicate team, budget and other resources to relationship development, establishing an understanding of barriers and motivations for collaboration. (See CCS-CII-3.4.)	2	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) ITA	OIS.21, OIS.22, OIS.26, OIS.27	Enhanced		x	
VE-PDE-8.2. Allocate resources to support interested Indigenous rights holders in creating authentic land-based experiences, including the facilitation/provision of land, capital and supplies. Allocate resources to support piloting one-day and multiple-day land-based experiences. (See also PC-DDP-4.4 & PC-DDP-6.4.)	2 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) TOSL Indigenous leaders, rights holders and/or Knowledge Keepers					
Invest in creating a tourism product and event portfolio for VSL, focusing on high-value markets.							
RECREATION & CULTURE							
VE-PDE-9. Invest in VSL-led packaged experiences, in collaboration with local industry and grassroots community groups, activating underutilized town assets.							
VE-PDE-9.1. Develop a series of packaged tourism experience ideas, using the Sylvan Lake Natural Asset Use Guidelines (see VE-PDE-1.7) and the Readiness Assessment Matrix (see VE-PDE-1.8). Themes may include: outdoor recreation/ adventure, culinary experiences, Indigenous land-based experiences, arts and culture, and wellness retreats, to name a few, targeting diverse visitor segments such as families, youth, seniors, etc. Consider potential collaborators specific to each package, using the Master List (see VE-PDE-1.6), to: - determine the initial feasibility of each idea; - identify needs that can be addressed through industry partnerships (i.e., provision of space); and - prioritize ideas based on the availability of necessary supports/assets.	1 - 2	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) TDC	OIS.23, OIS.26, OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS.31, OIS. 32	Moderate	x (For piloting partnership cases)		

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
VE-PDE-9.2. Based on packaged tourism experience ideas, develop partnership cases for VSL-led pilots (see VE-PDE-1.6), including opportunities to provide a service or a partner experience, or to co-invest. Present partnership cases to target collaborators using VSL's exclusive business liaison channels (see VE-EBS-1.8 and VE-M-10). In cases where piloting the package idea requires more advanced preparedness, integrate them as potential pilot cases under TPA (VSL-led piloting stream - see VE-EBS-3) and encourage engagement of prospective participants through highlighting supports and resources available (including TPA Incentive & Acceleration Packages see VE-EBS-1.6, and Product Development Toolkit - see VE-EBS-6.5).	1 - 2						
VE-PDE-9.3. Finalize details for packaged tourism experiences, and invest in at least initial two pilots (see CCS-DLM-7.10). Collect data, as outlined in Appendix X: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure, to understand the pilots' outcomes and inform future iterations of each package (see CCS-DLM-13). Enhance, update and expand packaged experiences, based on evidence gathered from pilots. (see CCS-DLM-8.2 - CCS-DLM-8.6).	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) Community partners/ Grassroots groups					QWP.29
VE-PDE-9.4. Negotiate with local and neighbouring businesses to create multiple thematic Visitor Passes, integrating visitor experiences and services offerings. These may include: - Recreational Water Adventures: Aquasplash, SunSport rentals, dinner on the lakefront; - Recreational - Land: Wood Shed Axe Throwing, Lakeside Go-Karts & Mini-Golf, camping, etc. - Sport: 18 holes of golf and tickets to a Gulls game - Seasonal Events Pass - Regional Attractions Pass: Connecting Sylvan Lake activities with others in neighbouring communities, including Red Deer. Integrate incentives to Passes to encourage purchases, such as waiving or discounting parking fees or Lakefront Stewardship (see VE-PDE-1.6, CCS-DLM-7.3 and CCS-DLM-7.6). Enhance, update and expand themes and Visitor Passes available, as the destination and experiences evolve.	2 - 3 Ongoing	VSL TDC Community partners/ Grassroots groups DMO/ municipal partners	OIS.23, OIS.31	Moderate		x (For extending partnership cases)	
VE-PDE-10. Activate the town's assets (public and private) via VSL-led events, festivals and tournaments in different seasons, targeting high-value markets.							
VE-PDE-10.1. Define opportunities to increase activations of the town's public assets via events, informed by the Readiness Assessment Matrix (see VE-PDE-1.8). These may include: - theme-based festivals at the Lakefront Recreational Zone (see PC-DDP-2.4) (i.e., agritourism festival, see VE-PDE-11). - competitions & tournaments at the Nexsource Centre and/or Pogadl Park; - pop-ups, races or art markets on local trails; - an art/creativity/culture-themed event with art/culture grassroots groups (see VE-PDE-2 and PC-VM-7). Identify gaps and opportunities that can be addressed by collaboration with privately-owned recreational assets and facilities, including via satellite locations throughout the town.	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS. 32, OIS.34, OIS.36	Moderate (for product piloting)		x	QWP.12
VE-PDE-10.2. Based on identified opportunities, develop partnership cases for VSL-led event pilots based on the theme and needs, which may include vendor, supplier and co-investment opportunities. Present the partnership cases to prospective collaborators by tapping into existing networks, including: - the Entrepreneurship Asset Master List (see VE-EBS-1.9); - relationships with external partners (see VE-PDE-5); and - network outreach via Red Deer and Lacombe DMOs (see VE-M-10.1).	2 Ongoing						

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY		RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
					1X	REPEAT	
VE-PDE-10.3. Finalize details for each event, and invest in piloting. Collect data, as outlined in Appendix J: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure, to understand the pilot's outcomes and inform future iterations of the event (see CCS-DLM-13). Aim for at least one pilot event per year, considering opportunities/ partnership cases identified (see VE-PDE-10.2 and CCS-DLM-8.2 - CCS-DLM-8.6).	2 - 3 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) Community partners/ Grassroots groups					QWP.29
CULINARY/AGRITOURISM							
VE-PDE-11. Invest and co-invest in creating an iconic festival (series) that positions Sylvan Lake as the gem of Central Alberta.							
VE-PDE-11.1. Develop an 'Asset Map of Central Alberta Agritourism Businesses and Culinary-Focused Entrepreneurs.'	1 - 2	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	OIS.23, OIS.27, OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS.31, OIS. 32, OIS.34, OIS.35	Moderate	x (For piloting partnership cases)		
VE-PDE-11.2. Define a draft plan for a Regional Culinary Festival, considering various prospective components such as: - vision - industry partner participation (Central Alberta-wide) (see Asset Map); - a listing of signature public and private assets (i.e., facilities and infrastructure) that can be utilized throughout the town (see PC-VM-7); - target visitor markets; and - evidence of capacity to organize events.	1 - 2						
VE-PDE-11.3. Develop a Partnership Deck and dedicated website landing page as outreach tools to foster interest and participation, and present it to neighbouring tourism entities (Red Deer and Lacombe DMOs & CATA members in the Central Corridor). Negotiate partnership parameters for mutual benefits, including co-branding, destination showcases, ROI, etc. (see CCS-DLM-8.1).	1 - 2						
VE-PDE-11.4. Finalize the plan with interested partner(s).	1 - 2						
VE-PDE-11.5. Create content to increase the visibility of the initiative among industry partners (specifically, Central Alberta's culinary-related entrepreneurs) and recruit prospective participants and/or vendors. Present the content, tapping into existing networks, including: - the Asset Map of Central Alberta Agritourism Businesses and Culinary-Focused Entrepreneurs (see VE-PDE-11.1); - relationships with external partners (see VE-PDE-6); and - network outreach via Red Deer and Lacombe DMOs (see VE-M-10.1).	1 - 2	VSL DMO/ municipal partners					
VE-PDE-11.6. Invest in piloting the event. Collect data, as outlined in Appendix J: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure, to understand the pilot's outcomes and inform future iterations of the event (see CCS-DLM-13).	2	VSL DMO/ municipal partners Industry partners					
VE-PDE-11.7. Consider extending the reach, and diversifying the theme of the iconic event (such as a Central Alberta Art and Artisan Festival). Define new pilots in different seasons through collaboration with potential public, private & community partners and investors. (See CCS-DLM-8.2 - CCS-DLM-8.6.)	3 Ongoing	VSL DMO/ municipal partners Industry partners Community partners/ Grassroots groups		Moderate		x (For extending partnership cases)	
COMMUNITY EVENTS							
VE-PDE-12. Pilot a VSL leadership structure for community events.							
VE-PDE-12.1. Choose at least two community events from the existing Town portfolio to pilot with VSL leadership, focusing on shoulder season options.	1	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	OIS.26, OIS.31	Standard - Moderate	x (For piloting the strategy		

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
VE-PDE-12.2. Invest in integrating elements that extend appeal to prospective regional visitors and beyond. This includes diversifying vendors for regional collaboration (see CCS-DLM-7.10), enhancing the placemaking quality, extending the service capacity (such as health & safety), investing in regional marketing efforts and utilizing the VSL brand (instead of the corporate Town brand).	1				and third party support is applicable)		
VE-PDE-12.3. Establish a mechanism to add a ticket-based approach for non-local attendees. As a low-cost option, consider making e-tickets available via third-party services (i.e., EventBrite) for a select period of time (i.e., 2 weeks) and promoted locally, before adding ticket fees and investing in non-local event promotion.	1	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) Third-party support					
VE-PDE-12.4. Conduct community and visitor satisfaction surveys, to determine the events' success and to inform a decision about shifting all small community events to within the VSL portfolio.	1	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)	OIS.30, OIS.35, OIS.36				
VE-PDE-12.5. Based on pilots' success, and if community events become fully managed within the VSL portfolio, establish a more permanent strategy to waive the fee for local resident access to small community events. Consider including free event access with the Nexsource Pass, as recommended within the VSL 2023 Product Development Plan.	2	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) Third-party support TOSL	OIS.34, OIS.44				
Entrepreneurship & Business Support							
Establish a multi-faceted tourism entrepreneurship support system, using a community-centric approach, to enable high-quality, year-round visitor experiences within the local industry.							
VE-EBS-1. Launch a pilot of the Tourism Partnership Accelerator (TPA), as the evolution of the existing Tourism Partnership Program (TPP) and an amalgamation of various Town-led business support initiatives—TEDI, TPP, the Façade Improvement Grant and the Recreation Culture & Tourism Micro Grant.							
LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE							
VE-EBS-1.1. Employ a VSL team member to a dedicated TPA leadership role (see CCS-DLM-1.2 and CCS-DLM-1.3).	1	VSL	OIS.34	Micro	x (honourarium and investment in partnership, if applicable)		
VE-EBS-1.2. Assess the opportunity to partner with the Chamber of Commerce to pilot a two-year partnership for implementing the TPA, including utilizing their office space as the initial TPA hub. (See also CCS-DLM-2.2).	1	VSL Working Group	OIS.30, OIS.31				
VISIONING & STRATEGIC PLAN							
VE-EBS-1.3. Develop initial Road Maps outlining how VSL can provide support to entrepreneurs through the TPA, for testing and piloting high-quality products depending on their level of market preparedness, and capacity and motivation to engage. Integrate all potential sectors (i.e., tourism, hospitality, art and creativity, non-profit groups, grassroots groups, incorporated businesses and freelancers), as well as potential components of the support as envisioned in DLMP, including: - coaching; - sector-specific capacity building and training; - workforce capacity building; - toolkits; - piloting and incubation; - networking and partnership; and - incentives and accelerations. (See VE-EBS-2, VE-EBS-3 and VE-EBS-6.)	1	VSL Working Group TDC Chamber of Commerce (if applicable)	OIS.12, OIS.17, OIS.20, OIS.30, OIS. 32, OIS.40				

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
VE-EBS-1.4. Create an Entrepreneurship Focus Group of tourism, hospitality, creative and cultural entrepreneurs, as well as members of TDC and Chamber of Commerce. Invite participants to allow past experiences with the TPP, TEDI Program and/or other Town-led business support efforts to inform their feedback and consideration, if applicable. Task the Focus Group with: - reviewing the TPA Road Maps; - evaluating opportunities to address barriers to participation; - identifying main gaps in existing entrepreneurship support; and - ideating incentives to compel participation. Consider hosting sector-specific breakout group conversations, to understand unique market-readiness needs. Refine the Road Maps based on outcomes of the Entrepreneurship Focus Group.	1	VSL Working Group TDC Chamber of Commerce (if applicable)					
VE-EBS-1.5. Define a Tourism Accelerator Grant, streamlining existing and prospective programs (TEDI, TPP, the Recreation Culture & Tourism Micro Grant and Façade Improvement Grant). Theme the Grant based on ongoing needs & trends identified by the TPA. This may include product development (to test early-stage ideas), beautification, refurbishments and placemaking (storefront, laneway, streetscapes, etc.).	1	VSL TOSL		Standard - Moderate		x (start from the minimum and scale-up as needs/demand evolve)	
VE-EBS-1.6. Define Incentive & Acceleration Packages responding to two piloting streams (i.e., via VSL-led tourism initiatives and self-led piloting, see pg. 40), informed by outcomes from the Entrepreneurship Focus Group, as feasible. Integrate both monetary and non-monetary support that VSL can commit within the two-year collaboration with participants. This may include: Monetary: - waved or discounted fees (vendor application fee, Event registration fee, permits and other applicable Town-related fees); and - The Tourism Accelerator Grant (refer to VE-EBS-1.5). Non-monetary: - subsidized public spaces (for testing ideas); - investment/support in promotion or co-operative marketing opportunities - subsidized supplies, equipment and off-site infrastructure; - subsidized or free features on VSL online platforms (see VE-M-1.5, VE-M-3 and VE-M-4); - subsidized or free access to the TPA website portal (see VE-EBS-4.2); and - exclusive opportunities (e.g. direct procurement). Initiate with the achievable scope of support and extend as feasible.	1 Ongoing	VSL TOSL					
ENGAGEMENT & PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT							
VE-EBS-1.7. Create a rubric for TPA applicant evaluation based on feedback from the Entrepreneurship Focus Group. Use the framework provided in Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness Criteria for Local Businesses to inform criteria for the rubric regarding participants' level of tourism readiness. Consider specific criteria for selecting participants in the early stages of the initiative, prioritizing: - those which are most tourism-ready; - TDC participants (if applicable - see CCS-CII-2.3); - local partners who have engaged with Town initiatives, including active TPP participants, TEDI participants, and those who fall under VE-PDE-5 to 10.	1	VSL		n/a (human resources only)	x		
VE-EBS-1.8. Define "Terms of Commitment" applicable to VSL and entrepreneurs who participate in the initiative.	1						

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY		RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
					1X	REPEAT	
VE-EBS-1.9. Establish exclusive engagement channels for business owners and entrepreneurs, within VSL's accessible, inclusive and interactive information-sharing and community-building (see CCS-CII-1 and CCS-CII-2). This may be a regular e-mail newsletter or a dedicated online forum. Consider this a tool to communicate TPA Road Maps and key differentiators, such as opportunities for: - low-risk piloting and testing high-value visitor experiences; - ongoing engagement with VSL partnership; - developing a practical understanding about responsible practice, community centric approaches, cultural sensitivity, and data-informed decision making (see VE-PDE-2.1); and accommodating the participant's availability and level of readiness.	1 - 2			Considered in VE-M-10.			
VE-EBS-1.10. Develop an Entrepreneurship Asset Master List of tourism, hospitality, creative and cultural entrepreneurs and operators; and micro-scale makers and manufacturers (i.e., breweries, cheesemakers, flower/plant producers, fresh fruit and vegetable producers, etc.), including incorporated businesses, freelancers and grassroots groups ('participant(s)'). Prioritize those in the Central Corridor, and expand the list regionally as the TPA evolves.	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL Working Group TDC Chamber of Commerce (if applicable) DMOs/Municipal partners		n/a (human resources only)		x	
VE-EBS-1.11. Invest resources in recruiting participants from the Master List to apply via an online application. This may include one-on-one outreach, attending Chamber of Commerce events and campaigns, and targeted campaigns (see VE-M-10). In all engagement, emphasize the flexibility available within the program to accommodate participants' available time capacity and level of market preparedness. Prioritize outreach and engagement with Sylvan Lake prospective partners, and specifically: those with previous experience with the Town's small business support initiatives (i.e., TPP, TEDI, Façade Improvement Grant, and the Recreation Culture & Tourism Micro Grant); and those with high potential of collaboration within opportunities and cases developed under VE-PDE-5 - VE-PDE-10.	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL Chamber of Commerce (if applicable)					
VE-EBS-2. Establish the 'Capacity Building for Product Development' component of the TPA that accommodates availability and varying stages of market preparedness.							
VE-EBS-2.1. Invest in creating a Case Management Plan for each participant, using the established Road Maps and first-hand data gained through one-on-one engagement. Customize "Terms of Commitment" (see VE-EBS-1.7) to accommodate the participant's availability, capacity, level of market preparedness and motivation. Include participant-defined key performance indicators (KPIs).	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL Chamber of Commerce (if applicable)	OIS.12, OIS.17, OIS.20, OIS.21	n/a (human resources only)		x	
VE-EBS-2.2. Identify prospective public and private partners who provide tourism/business incubation/ acceleration services that can be outsourced to VSL as foundational TPA resources and support (i.e., Tourism Connects or eLearningU, via Travel Alberta). Prioritize programs focused on guiding essential market preparedness (see Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness Criteria for Local Businesses). Finalize partner(s), negotiate an agreement(s) and invest in their services.	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL					
VE-EBS-2.3. Invest in a coaching network of credible Alberta industry professionals, specializing in various areas of market preparedness, with a focus on services and experiences (i.e., product development, facility operation and management, supply chain, branding and marketing, guest experience). Develop an inventory of coach profiles, and provide participants with opportunities to connect with applicable coaches. Initiate with the achievable scope of support and extend as feasible.	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL Chamber of Commerce (if applicable) Third-party support		Micro		x (start from the minimum and scale-up as needs/demand evolve)	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
VE-EBS-2.4. Develop practical guidelines on how participants follow VSL priorities in responsible practice, community centric approaches, cultural sensitivity, and data-informed decision making, shared via established engagement channels. Use the VSL Responsible Product Guideline (VE-PDE-2.1) and Sylvan Lake Natural Asset Use Guidelines (VE-PDE-1.7) to inform relevant aspects of this educational tool.	2 - 3	VSL		n/a (human resources only)	x		
VE-EBS-2.5. Develop and offer modules to familiarize participants with VSL opportunities for tourism development, as envisioned by DLMP recommendations. (See Section 5: Places and Connections and Section 6: Direction 1 - Product Expansion & Diversification.)	3 - 4		OIS.20, OIS.31				
VE-EBS-2.6. Provide workforce development and training support for Premium TPA businesses (paid participants - see VE-EBS-6.2). (See also: CCS-DLM-8.8 and CCS-DLM-8.9.)	4 - 5	VSL Third-party support	OIS.25	Considered in VE-EMS-6.		x (start from the minimum and scale-up as needs/demand evolve)	
VE-EBS-3. Establish the 'Testing and Piloting' component of the TPA.							
VE-EBS-3.1. Establish feasible cases for piloting services and product ideas via VSL-led initiatives, addressing: - seasonality; - activating underutilized assets; - downtown animation; - using existing Town capacities; - encouraging local collaboration and place-based activation; - reducing the risk of early-stage entry into the industry; - addressing gaps in service quality/supply chain; and - promoting high-value market reach. Cases must also be informed by: - need for addressing different sector needs (i.e., grassroots, artists, etc); - Section 5: PC-DDP-3.2 and PC-DDP-3.3, related to locations; - Section 5: PC-DR-3 and PC-DR-4; - Section 6: VE-PDE-5, VE-PDE-7- VE-PDE-10; and - Section 8: Quick Wins & Projects.	2	VSL TDC Chamber of Commerce (if applicable)	OIS.11, OIS.12, OIS.18, OIS.19 OIS.21, OIS.23, OIS.28, OIS.29, OIS.31, OIS. 32	n/a (human resources only)		x	
VE-EBS-3.2. Share and discuss these cases with participants interested in testing and piloting. Identify at least two initiatives in which to integrate their product/service. Test the initiatives within the two-year span of the cohort. Explore PC-DR-3.1 as a possible case to be integrated within this support program.	2 Ongoing	VSL TPA participants Industry partners					
VE-EBS-3.3. Present 'Incentive & Acceleration Packages' (see VE-EBS-1.6) to participants, responding to the stream of their interest (i.e., via VSL-led tourism initiatives and self-led piloting). Establish partnership agreements with each participant to use their Package for pilot purposes, within the two-year span of the cohort.	2 Ongoing	VSL TPA participants					
VE-EBS-4. Integrate VSL online channels (i.e., website, social media) as part of the TPA.							
VE-EBS-4.1. Promote TPA pilots and participants via VSL web and social media content. (See VE-M-3 and VE-M-10.)	2 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.31, OIS.34, OIS.41	Considered in VE-M-10.			
VE-EBS-4.2. Establish a password-protected portal for businesses and entrepreneurs, to host TPA-related modules, toolkits and other resources. Integrate it as part of the premium TPA. (See CCS-DLM-7.13 and VE-M-1.8.)	4 - 5	VSL Third-party support		Considered in VE-M-1.			
VE-EBS-5. Conduct regular evaluations of the TPA's performance to understand impacts on visitor experience development.							
VE-EBS-5.1. Evaluate TPA participant performance at the end of each cohort, based on self-defined KPIs as established in VE-EBS-2.1.	2 Ongoing	VSL Chamber of Commerce (if applicable)	OIS.30, OIS.34	n/a (human resources only)		x	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY		RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
					1X	REPEAT	
VE-EBS-5.2. Establish a feedback system with participants regarding capacity-building, piloting and general satisfaction, to be implemented at the end of each cohort. Utilize findings and learnings to refine the TPA components, in particular, coaching (see VE-EBS-2.3) and the Incentive & Acceleration Packages (see VE-EBS-1.6).	2 Ongoing	VSL					
VE-EBS-5.3. Invest in a comprehensive evaluation of the TPA program, after five to six years of launch, to determine if the incubation support has led to an established tourism product. Focus on case studies with at least three years since their starting point with the TPA. Use Appendix X: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure to inform this study.	4 - 5	VSL Third-party support					
VE-EBS-6. Enhance, advance and refine the TPA program.							
VE-EBS-6.1. Invest in creating a TPA Badge for participants who completed a full, two-year commitment including piloting. Connect enhanced incentives to the Badge, as informed by engagement with participants and the TDC. Consider including access to premium marketing support, premium listings as envisioned for the External Partnership and Facilitation Toolkit (see VE-PDE-6.1), and/or advanced connections to travel intermediaries.	3	VSL Third-party support	OIS.20, OIS.21	Small - Standard (for enhanced incentives)		x (start from the minimum and scale-up as needs/demand evolve)	
VE-EBS-6.2. Conduct an annual Business Roundtable engaging all potential partners (using the Entrepreneurship Asset Master List - VE-EBS-1.9), to identify emerging needs, concerns and implications of support based on new tourism trends. Consider a sector-based approach, if applicable. Use feedback to inform TPA enhancements and refinements.	3 Ongoing	VSL					QWP.41
VE-EBS-6.3. Define and establish two pathways of the TPA: 1. Essential TPA: As established in the pilot version 2. Premium TPA: To support further development of established tourism product, through advanced market preparedness capacity building and coaching support. This may also include: - Workforce development and capacity building support (see CCS-DLM-8.8 and CCS-DLM-8.9); - Priority access and support: Exclusive use of space for a specific period of time, priority access to funds, premium access to VSL RFPs; - Networking and access to sales channels: Subsidizing partnerships with travel intermediaries (i.e., tour operators & destination management companies - see CCS-DLM-8.3 & CCS-DLM-8.4; subsidizing fees for membership to relevant professional associations; and subsidizing fees to access entry-level onlines sales channels, such as AirBnB Experiences); - Enhanced monetary supports: Accelerated loan with affordable terms and/or long grace period for major investment in infrastructure or operation improvement, - Subsidized commercial spaces: Applicable under enabling affordable commercial space/rental business spaces or applying property tax reduction (see PC-DR-3.3). Invest in resources and partnerships needed to establish the Premium TPA, as needed.	4 - 5	VSL Private investors/ partners					
VE-EBS-6.4. Invest in presenting and promoting the TPA as a regional tourism incubator (see CCS-DLM-2.2 and VE-M-10). Extend outreach initiatives to re-engage past TPA participants for the Premium stream, and recruit new participants.	5	VSL (potentially with partner)	OIS.20, OIS.23, OIS.31, OIS.35	Considered in VE-M-10.		x	
VE-EBS-6.5. Establish a public-facing list of visitor-related businesses and entrepreneurs from Sylvan Lake and neighbouring communities to guide connections between small businesses and entrepreneurs seeking clients, suppliers, partners, co-investors, etc. Use the already-established Master List as a starting point (see VE-EBS-1.9).	3 - 4	VSL		n/a (human resources only)		x	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
VE-EBS-6.6. Develop comprehensive toolkits, curating existing supports and creating customized resources as required, that provide practical resources and guidance on product development, marketing and operational best practices. Themes may include: - Public-Private-Community Partnership: Outlining pathways for collaboration and partnership with VSL in product development, activation of space and co-investment for infrastructure enhancement. Include examples of possible scenarios (see PC-DR-3.3), evidence of success (specifically, as a result of DLMP pilot projects) and support available to enable PPCPs via VSL/Town). - Grants: Guidance on identifying grant opportunities, writing successful grant applications and fulfilling grant requirements. - Guest Service Excellence: Providing educational materials and resources about enhancing guest experiences, including customer service protocols, conflict resolution techniques, and strategies for creating a welcoming, inclusive and memorable environment. - Marketing: Including templates (social media posts, content calendars, etc.), access to professional photo and video assets (see VE-M-5.4), and tutorials and best practices for digital marketing. - Product Development: Featuring step-by-step guides for developing new visitor experience development with focus on supply chain gaps in Sylvan Lake, diversification, expansion, addressing seasonality and responsible practice. Including market research tools, feasibility analysis templates and case studies, plus resources on packaging and pricing strategies to enhance market appeal. (Consider Destination Canada's Experiences: A Toolkit for Partners of the CTC.) Integrate tourism product/package themes and ideas developed under VE-PDE-9.1 as part of the Toolkit, and outline resources and support available to enable local industry partnership for piloting. - Accessibility & Inclusivity: Offering checklists for assessing accessibility of facilities and services, training materials for staff on inclusivity, and guidelines for developing programs that cater to diverse audiences. - Event Planning and Management: Planning and budgeting templates, risk management strategies, promotional plans, plus tools & tips on engaging local communities, securing sponsorships, and measuring event success.	4	VSL Third-party support	OIS.17, OIS.20, OIS.31, OIS.34	Standard	x		
Marketing and Communications							
Invest in expanding VSL organic and paid marketing efforts, to increase regional brand awareness, influence visitor behaviour, enhance community buy-in to tourism efforts, and attract high-value visitors to Sylvan Lake year-round.							
VE-M-1. Invest in enhancing the Visit Sylvan Lake web platform.							
VE-M-1.1. Embed social media feeds and hashtags on the website to showcase user-generated content.	1	VSL Third-party support	OIS.34, OIS.40, OIS.41	n/a (human resources only)			
VE-M-1.2. Integrate e-mail capture opportunities (i.e., pop-ups, newsletter sign-up page, etc.).	1			Micro	x		
VE-M-1.3. Redesign and restructure the VSL website and content, informed by a comprehensive website audit: - To represent more accessible design; - To provide content, tools and resources with high SEO value that inspire prospective visitors and support trip planning based on interests and/or who they're travelling with; and - To be responsive, for mobile use.	2			Standard	x		

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY		RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
					1X	REPEAT	
VE-M-1.4. Create an engaging blog and news section, featuring articles on local attractions, events (pre- and post-event content) and insider tips for visitors (see VE-M-3.1). Dedicate resources to making regular updates, including the latest information on town tourism developments, events, tourism-related volunteer opportunities, engagement opportunities and special promotions.	2			Standard		x	
VE-M-1.5. Invest in integrating interactive maps and itinerary planning tools, such as: - interactive maps that highlight key attractions, accommodations, dining options, parking locations and activities in Sylvan Lake and neighbouring communities; - itinerary planning tools allowing users to create and share personalized travel plans based on their preferences; Explore third-party plug-ins and technology to support these initiatives.	2						QWP.33
VE-M-1.6. Integrate a dynamic, intuitive search feature allowing users to filter activities, accommodations and dining options based on their interests (i.e., water-based, land-based, culinary, sport, etc.). Include comprehensive details and direct links to booking or purchasing options for partner services and experiences within the search results.	2				x		
VE-M-1.7. Explore third-party plug-ins to integrate direct Town-led product sales to the VSL website (see CCS-DLM-7.1).	3						
VE-M-1.8. Establish a password-protected portal for businesses & entrepreneurs, to host TPA-related modules, toolkits and other resources, accessible to Premium TPA (see VE-EBS-6.2).	4 - 5			Standard	$		
VE-M-2. Invest in enhancing VSL's e-mail marketing and communications capabilities, to strengthen year-round engagement and personalize messaging to unique audience segments and prospective partners.							
VE-M-2.1. Integrate detailed audience data collection wherever possible; for example, via event ticket sales forms, e-mail capture forms, engagement platforms, etc., using third-party software with e-mail marketing capabilities. Utilize the software to create multiple e-mail segments such as first-time visitors, repeat visitors, special interests and visitor profile (i.e., resident, visitor, business, etc.).	1 Ongoing	VSL Third-party support	OIS.39	Small		x	
VE-M-2.2. Develop and activate evergreen e-mail marketing flows, including content assets, for specific segments based on triggers. These may include: - signing up for a newsletter - downloading a digital visitor guide; or - previous engagement with emails. Review and update flows annually.	1 Ongoing	VSL					
VE-M-2.3. Establish regular email outreach (i.e., 2x monthly), integrating content as developed in the Content Calendar (see VE-M-3).	1 Ongoing						
VE-M-2.4. Track the effectiveness of e-mail outreach and funnels using key performance indicators like open rates, click-through rates, conversion rates and overall ROI. Refine the strategy continually based on data, and implement feedback mechanisms within e-mails to collect subscriber insights.	1 Ongoing						
VE-M-2.5. Utilize email software for outreach to prospective partners, as applicable to actions with Direction 1: Product Diversification & Expansion, to track performance of outreach initiatives.	1 Ongoing						
VE-M-2.6. Ensure all e-mail marketing practices comply with CASL Regulations and municipal data collection policies. Regularly review compliance requirements and train the VSL marketing team on best practices, including respectful and ethical handling of subscriber data.	1 Ongoing						
VE-M-3. Develop a robust VSL Content Calendar, mapping-out content needs (photos, videos, text) for organic marketing activities on each VSL marketing platform (website, social media, B2B email newsletter, B2C email newsletter, Visitors' Guide).							
VE-M-3.1. Establish core content themes that reflect Sylvan Lake's unique identity and appeal, in alignment with the DLMP objectives and other VSL plans (i.e., Brand Positioning Strategy). These themes may include lake activities, local events, natural sites and community stories.	1 Annually	VSL	OIS.41, OIS.42	n/a (human resources only)	x		

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
VE-M-3.2. Develop and implement an annual content calendar (i.e., in November for the following year), to be refined on a quarterly basis. Include specific themes (see VE-M-3.1), target audiences, publication platforms/formats, required imagery, and publication dates. Include: - plans for user-generated content (see VE-M-6); - content related to important dates and VSL event promotion; - Itineraries (see VE-M-4.); - TPA participants and pilots; - business features and community profiles; - community stewardship; - responsible travel practice; - general "value of tourism to Sylvan Lake" content; - weekly/monthly content series (i.e., "What's On This Weekend," featuring cross-platform content promoting Town- and private-hosted events; "Guest Testimonials," featuring positive reviews of local events and establishments, as listed on Google; etc.). Include content plans/adaptations for various platforms, including website, social media, digital newsletters, printed marketing assets (i.e., pamphlets, brochures, posters) and for specific audiences as required.	1 Annually			Considered in VE-M-1.4.		x	
VE-M-3.3. Assign content creation and management responsibilities to team members or external partners, with a strong focus on SEO. Roles may include writers, editors, graphic designers, videographers, photographers and a social media manager.	1 Annually	VSL Third-party support, as required					
VE-M-3.4. Review analytics and performance metrics on a monthly basis, to assess the effectiveness of content across platforms. Adjust the Content Calendar based on performance data, audience feedback and evolving marketing goals.	1 Ongoing	VSL		n/a (human resources only)		x	
VE-M-3.5. Invest in enhancing the VSL Visitors' Guide, in collaboration with Sylvan Lake News. Apply a storytelling approach to content, and magazine approach to design. Integrate QR codes to drive readers to the VSL website. Provide advertisers with ad templates, in an effort to enhance and elevate the overall design.	1 Ongoing	VSL Sylvan Lake News		Standard		x	
VE-M-4. Develop theme-based itineraries that facilitate collaboration and partnership among local tourism and hospitality businesses.							
VE-M-4.1. Identify key themes that reflect the interests of target visitor segments, including outdoor recreation, culinary experiences, arts and culture, wellness retreats, and family-friendly activities.	1 - 2	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) TDC	OIS.41	Considered in VE-M-1.4.	x		
VE-M-4.2. Curate detailed itineraries for each identified theme (see VE-M-4.1), including recommendations for accommodations, dining, activities and local attractions. Consider creating primary itineraries that connect local businesses meeting at least essential market preparedness criteria according to Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness Criteria for Local Businesses. (Refer to Entrepreneurship Asset Master List to guide initiatives - VE-EBS-1.9.) Integrate a community-centric lens in developing itineraries, to showcase local gems and grassroots initiatives (such as potential offerings from artists, artisans, creators, makers, and local cultural groups).	2 - 3	VSL (Product Development Subgroup) TDC				x	
VE-M-4.3. Utilize itineraries as a key paid and organic marketing tool, through VSL communication and outreach channels (see VE-M-3 and VE-M-8).	2 - 3	VSL					
VE-M-4.4. Enhance, update and expand itineraries, focusing on integrating emerging tourism entrepreneurs, and those who have been engaged with VSL's TPA initiative (see VE-EBS-1).	4 Ongoing	VSL (Product Development Subgroup)					
VE-M-5. Invest in ongoing capture of polished and refined photo and video assets, featuring the lake town vibe throughout the seasons, and the diversity of the community & visitors.							

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY		RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
					1X	REPEAT	
VE-M-5.1. Establish and follow Photo and Video Guidelines for VSL, aligning with the DLMP and Brand Positioning. These may include: - Emphasize candid moments and authentic experiences that reflect the true spirit of the destination. - Highlight key attractions, cultural experiences, local people, and landscapes. - Represent the diversity of the community and visitors, highlighting different ages, ethnicities, abilities and backgrounds. Add these as an addendum to the existing Brand Book.	1	VSL	OIS.39, OIS.40	n/a (human resources only)			
VE-M-5.2. Continue to invest in photography and videography expertise to capture scenes at major Town events.	1 Ongoing	VSL Third-party support		Small		x	
VE-M-5.3. Host seasonal photo and video shoots, every two years. Engage residents and visitors to participate as models, offering incentives such as gift cards to local restaurants and retailers to compensate for their time. Create detailed shot lists for each photo & video shoot, outlining specific scenes, locations and activities to be captured. Determine priorities according to Campaign Plans. Include a mix of landscapes, events, local businesses and candid shots, capturing moments that evoke emotion and a sense of place. Liaise with local businesses to coordinate shoot details, as required.	1 Ongoing						
VE-M-5.4. Establish an organized digital library to store and manage all photo and video assets, making it easy to access and utilize visuals for various campaigns. Categorize assets by season, theme, and type for efficient retrieval. Regularly update the library with new content to keep marketing materials fresh and relevant. Consider providing access to external partners; for example, as a value-add component of Premium TPA (see VE-EBS-6.2 & CCS-DLM-7.13).	2	VSL Third-party support, as required		Small	x		
VE-M-6. Develop organic campaigns and initiatives to encourage locals and visitors to share user-generated content (UGC).							
VE-M-6.1. Create User Generated Content Guidelines, for curating and crediting UGC to maintain quality and authenticity, and a process for collecting, organizing and tracking user-generated content.	1	VSL	OIS.39	n/a (human resources only)	x		
VE-M-6.2. Organize seasonal or themed photo and video contests encouraging locals and visitors to share their best moments in Sylvan Lake. Provide incentives such as discounts, free passes, or exclusive event access for those who actively participate in sharing their content. Promote the contests through social media, e-mail newsletters and posters on display in town at key sites and local businesses. Integrate these initiatives within the VSL Content Calendar (see VE-M-3.2).	1 Ongoing			Micro		x	
VE-M-6.3. Place prompts at popular visitor spots and during local events, encouraging visitors to take and share photos, such as selfie stations with scenic backdrops, interactive public art or installations, or event-specific installations. (See PC-DDP-6.1.)	1 Ongoing						
VE-M-6.4. Integrate UGC (that which aligns with UGC Guidelines - VE-M-6.1) within the VSL Content Calendar (see VE-M-3).	1 Ongoing						
VE-M-7. Develop an annual Campaign Calendar to schedule, manage and develop VSL marketing campaigns.							
VE-M-7.1. Determine general campaign directions, according to market segments or themes, in pursuit of marketing objectives. These may include: - high-value travellers; - small scale business events, meetings and retreats; - sport and recreation; - local and regional businesses, entrepreneurs and investors; and - the Sylvan Lake community. Include specific Campaign Plans for VSL Event Marketing investments.	1 Annually	VSL	OIS.39, OIS.42	n/a (human resources only)		x	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY		RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
					1X	REPEAT	
VE-M-7.2. Schedule campaigns for the year ahead, as appropriate to achieve marketing goals. This may include: - Promoting local tourism product, including the Visitors Pass or Theme-Based Packages; - Focusing marketing investments on influencing visitor behaviour/promoting responsible tourism during peak season; - Attracting high-value travellers, business and meeting events, and sport & recreation investments during shoulder season; and - Promoting major upcoming events throughout the year, as relevant.	1 Annually						
VE-M-7.3. Develop and implement enhanced Campaign Plans. See VE-M-6, VE-M-8, VE-M-9, VE-M-10 and VE-M-11.	1 Annually	VSL Third-party support, as required		Moderate - Enhanced - Major		x	
VE-M-8. Invest in developing VSL-branded tourism marketing campaigns, including organic and paid elements, focused on engaging and attracting the following market segments: - High-value travellers; - Small scale business events, meetings and retreats organizers; - Sport and recreation clubs and organizations; - and others, as value becomes apparent.							
VE-M-8.1. Annually develop a Campaign Plan tailored to each market segment, including: - budget; - target audience profiles (i..e, age, interests, location, etc.); - relevant online and offline promotional platforms; - distribution strategies; - key messages and value propositions; - testing and optimization strategies; - calls to action; - potential marketing partners, including media and influencers; - campaign schedules (i.e., duration of each campaign, frequency and timing/seasonality).	1 Annually	VSL Third-party support, as required	OIS.42	Considered in VE-M-7.3.		x	
VE-M-8.2. Develop assets for each campaign as required. These may include: - Photos and/or videos - Text - Social media posts - Flyers and/or posters - Dedicated landing pages and/or blog content - Incentives, contests and/or giveaways - Email templates - Press releases - QR codes Align the Content Calendar (see VE-M-3) and the Campaign Calendar as required.	1 Ongoing						
VE-M-8.3. Determine and include clear calls to action, customized for each campaign, driving audiences to relevant content or resources. As examples, this may include: - High-value travellers: Purchase pages for a Visitors Pass or Theme-Based Packages - Small-scale business events, meetings and retreats & sport and recreation	1 Ongoing						
VE-M-8.4. Launch campaigns according to the timing and frequency defined in the Campaign Plan, enhancing investments for shoulder season visitor attraction.	1 Ongoing	VSL					
VE-M-8.5. Conduct post-campaign analysis to assess effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and capture lessons learned. Use insights to refine campaigns for future iterations.	1 Ongoing						
VE-M-9. Invest in developing VSL-branded marketing assets, campaigns and initiatives dedicated to influencing and managing visitor behaviour, and promoting responsible travel & tourism.							
VE-M-9.1. Plan and execute bi-annual comprehensive awareness campaigns to promote responsible travel behaviours, utilizing both digital and offline channels & focusing investments during peak season. Follow the process as outlined in VE-M-8.	1 Ongoing	VSL Third-party support, as	OIS.43	Considered in VE-M-7.3.		x	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
VE-M-9.2. Develop engaging videos, infographics and blog posts to educate visitors and raise awareness about responsible tourism practice (see VE-M-3.2). Share these assets via digital channels (i.e., newsletters, social media, etc.) year-round.	1 Ongoing	required					
VE-M-9.3. Invest in organic and paid digital and offline marketing initiatives, as well as place-based initiatives, to promote a Visitors Code of Conduct (CCS-DLM-11.3). This may include social media posts, posters and brochures; placemaking initiatives (CCS-DLM-11.2); and creative modalities (i.e., printed on a canvas bag, magnet, etc). Distribute the Visitor Code of Conduct resources via local businesses, attractions, the Chamber of Commerce, the Nexsource Centre, any future Visitor Information Hubs and during major Town events.	2	VSL					
VE-M-9.4. Design and install informative signage at popular visitor services (i.e., garbage cans, public washrooms, etc.), outlining behavioural expectations and responsible tourism practice. (See also: CCS-DLM-4.2.)	3	VSL TOSL					
VE-M-10. Invest in developing VSL-branded marketing assets, campaigns and initiatives targeting entrepreneurship and local business development.							
VE-M-10.1. Plan and execute campaigns & content, focused on enhancing the visibility of the TPA, recruiting new participants and sharing opportunities for collaboration. Utilize dedicated engagement channels for business owners and entrepreneurs (see VE-EBS-1.8), paid targeted promotions via VSL social media platforms and outreach via partner DMOs (i.e., Red Deer, Lacombe). Follow the process as outlined in VE-M-8.	1 Ongoing	VSL Chamber of Commerce TDC	OIS.35	Considered in VE-M-7.3.		x	
VE-M-10.2. Activate accessible and inclusive engagement channels (see VE-EBS-1.8) to collect insight and stories to inform business-directed content planning and development (see VE-M-3). Develop blog posts, case studies, success stories, how-to guides, and educational videos accordingly. Share these assets via regular newsletters (i.e., biweekly monthly) year-round.	1 - 2						
VE-M-10.3. Plan and execute campaigns & content that reflect the TPA as a tourism product incubator, to re-engage past TPA participants for the Premium stream, and recruit new participants from across Central Alberta. Utilize targeted e-mail and paid social media strategies. Leverage partner channels for enhanced visibility (i.e., CATA's email network).	5						
VE-M-11. Develop organic and paid in-destination campaigns and initiatives to enhance community stewardship and local understanding of & involvement in the tourism sector. (See also: CCS-CII-1.)							
VE-M-11.1. Design an integrated marketing campaign that targets local residents with information about community engagement channels, as well as community stewardship (what and why) and the benefits of tourism to their community. Utilize local media channels, such as community newspapers and outdoor advertising, alongside digital platforms like social media, newsletters and local blogs, to disseminate campaign messages. (See also: CCS-CII-5.1.)	1 Ongoing	VSL TOSL	OIS.39, OIS.43, OIS.44	Considered in VE-M-7.3.		x	
VE-M-11.2. Create educational programs and workshops aimed at local schools, community groups and residents more broadly discuss the local tourism sector and its impact on the local economy. Partner with educational institutions and community leaders to deliver these programs, incorporating interactive activities and learning opportunities.	1 Ongoing						
VE-M-11.3. Showcase the positive impacts of tourism through stories and testimonials from local business owners, frontline hospitality and tourism workers, entrepreneurs and community members. Integrate this focus of storytelling within the Content Calendar (see see VE-M-3), including video content, blog posts, and social media features that highlight these stories, providing a platform for locals to share their experiences.	2						
VE-M-11.4. Employ targeted online advertising to reach local audiences with specific messages about tourism's positive impacts and opportunities for involvement. Use geo-targeting features on platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Google Ads to reach residents of Sylvan Lake and surrounding areas.	2						
VE-M-11.5. Regularly assess the effectiveness of in-destination campaigns in enhancing local understanding and involvement. Collect feedback through surveys, focus groups and social media engagement metrics to gauge public sentiment and make necessary adjustments to campaign strategies.	1 Ongoing	VSL					
VE-M-11.6. Implement a system for locals to provide feedback on tourism initiatives and their impact on the community, using accessible and inclusive engagement channels (see CCS-CII-2). Monitor and respond as required.	1 Ongoing						

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
VE-M-12. Develop funnels for co-operative marketing investments from local and regional partners.							
VE-M-12.1. Allocate a percentage of the VSL Marketing Budget to co-operative marketing initiatives, and establish a fee schedule for external partners. Develop transparent mechanisms for fund management, allocation and reporting to build trust and accountability among partners.	1	VSL	OIS.31, OIS.35	Considered in VE-M-7.3.		x	
VE-M-12.2. Develop a Co-Operative Marketing Toolkit, outlining the benefits, goals and expectations of collaborative marketing efforts. Define participation levels and associated benefits for partners, such as different tiers of investment and corresponding promotional exposure. Clearly identify the respective roles of the Town and partners. Include a calendar of Co-Operative Marketing Opportunities, based on the Town's priorities and Campaign Calendar, to provide prospective partners information to determine opportunities for alignment/co-investment (i.e., upcoming major events or festivals, theme-based campaigns, etc). Integrate co-operative marketing opportunities as part of Premium TPA (i.e., waive fees - see VE-EBS-6.2).	1						
VE-M-12.3. Establish a feedback mechanism/process to share KPIs with partners upon campaign completion.	1						
VE-M-12.4. Activate the TDC, the TPA and business-targeted e-mail marketing to share the Co-Operative Marketing Toolkit with local and regional partners. Commit to regular outreach (quarterly) to promote specific upcoming Co-operative Marketing Opportunities. Utilize case studies of success to entice partner participation.	1						
VE-M-13. Expand VSL's capacity for tourism marketing.							
VE-M-13.1. Invest in a full-time marketing position, plus third-party support as necessary, to effectively implement VSL marketing initiatives. This may include photographers, videographers, website designers, SEO specialists, e-mail marketing specialists and data analysts. Prioritize daily management of online channels, including responding to visitor inquiries submitted via social media.	1	VSL TOSL	OIS.34, OIS.35, OIS.39, OIS.41	Considered in CCS-DLM-1.2.			
VE-M-13.2. Increase marketing budgets on an ongoing, annual basis, according to success measurements of campaigns and initiatives.	1 Ongoing	TOSL		n/a (human resources only)		x	
VE-M-13.3. Explore opportunities for additional marketing funding through provincial and federal government grants. Assign team members to research funding opportunities, prepare proposals, and manage relationships with sponsors.	1 Ongoing	VSL					
VE-M-13.4. Explore options and invest in marketing planning and management software.	3						

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
Community Impact and Integration (CII)							
Enable mechanisms to utilize tourism for building capacities in participatory decision-making, co-investment, partnerships, project building, community cultural exchange, and environmental stewardship.							
CCS-CII-1. Create accessible, inclusive and interactive information-sharing channels for updates about tourism-related initiatives, opportunities and investments.							
CCS-CII-1.1. Create a communications strategy that addresses diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-discrimination, as guidelines for tourism-related messaging and engagement.	2	VSL Third-party support	OIS.31, OIS. 32, OIS.44	Small	x		
CCS-CII-1.1. Create a communications strategy that addresses diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-discrimination, as guidelines for tourism-related messaging and engagement.							
CCS-CII-1.3. Assign resources to monitor and address questions and concerns.							
CCS-CII-2. Create accessible and inclusive engagement channels for community rights holders and visitors to participate in tourism-related decision-making.							
CCS-CII-2.1. Further develop diverse feedback and idea-sharing tools that actively seek to identify community priorities in tourism-related initiatives, such as surveys, public forums, focus groups, social media, a dedicated online platform, and other participatory decision-making mechanisms. Integrate culturally appropriate ways of engagement for Indigenous rights holders.	2	VSL Indigenous leaders, rights holders and/or Knowledge Keepers	OIS.30, OIS.44	Considered in CCS-CII-1.	x		
CCS-CII-2.2. Invest in raising awareness about these channels through campaign messaging, programming and testing via small initiatives. Integrate incentives when possible. (See also VE-M-11.)				Considered in VE-M-11.			
CCS-CII-2.3. Identify barriers to participation in the Tourism Development Committee (TDC) through one-on-one outreach, including Indigenous entrepreneurs. Use findings to adapt/refine the Terms of Reference, application process and/or engagement strategies and approach, emphasizing equity, inclusion, representation and reconciliation. Consider offering incentives for TDC participation, such as business supports.				n/a (human resources only)			QWP.14 - $
CCS-CII-2.4. Initiate recruitment efforts for new TDC members, prioritizing representation from across the whole town (including 50th St., Lakefront, Industrial Zone and other areas).	2 - 3	VSL		Micro (honourarium for TDC members)		x	
CCS-CII-3. Implement strategies to reduce barriers to participation, encourage active engagement and lower the risk of partnership and investment in tourism-related initiatives.							
CCS-CII-3.1. Develop a streamlined procedure for local procurement of goods, services and workforce for the Town's tourism-related initiatives—such as events, festivals, placemaking and beautification projects—with a focus on engaging businesses, artists and grassroots initiatives across the Central Corridor.	1	VSL TOSL	OIS. 31, OIS.35, OIS.40, OIS.44	Small - Standard	x		QWP.28
CCS-CII-3.2. Invest in initiatives to raise awareness about opportunities to participate in and benefit from local tourism development.	2	VSL				x (start from the minimum and scale-up as needs/demand evolve)	QWP.4, QWP.23
CCS-CII-3.3. Provide capacity and resources for low-risk and affordable community participation, investment and partnership, including training, seed funding, subsidized space, provision of supplies, equipment and off-site infrastructure, co-investment and marketing support.	2		OIS. 31, OIS.32, OIS.44				QWP.27, QWP.28
CCS-CII-3.4. Invest in engaging Indigenous rights holders to define partnership and co-investment opportunities, informed by Indigenous values, perspectives, and reconciliation. Outcomes from this collaboration might be piloted through projects as suggested in Section 8: Quick Wins & Projects.	1	VSL Indigenous leaders, rights holders and/or Knowledge Keepers	OIS.30, OIS. 31, OIS.22				QWP.17
CCS-CII-3.5. Define a series of pilot projects aimed to enhance the TDC's capacity to lead the design and implementation of small-scale, visitor-oriented initiatives. Focus these initiatives on place-based or program-based tourism development.	1	VSL TDC	OIS.30, OIS. 31				QWP.11, QWP.14
CCS-CII-3.6. Define small-scale projects around visitor experience development and space activation, visitor management, and marketing focused on public-private-community partnerships. These might take the form of local markets, events, festivals, art campaigns or placemaking. Prioritize testing initiatives for shoulder season activation.	2	VSL	OIS.26, OIS. 31, OIS. 32,				QWP.11, QWP.15, QWP.16, QWP.17
CCS-CII-4. Identify and implement community-centric strategies to encourage PPCP for capital pooling and investment in destination development.							
CCS-CII-4.1. Invest in educational efforts for the Town administration and Council, as well as community rights holders, around community-centric PPCP models, as well as community-driven approaches to capital pooling and affordable ownership.	2	TOSL VSL	OIS.31, OIS.33, OIS.35	Micro	x		

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
CCS-CII-4.2. Conduct a feasibility study to inform a series of investment scenarios or pilot projects. These projects aim to co-define and implement medium-scale investment on the refurbishment and upkeep of the downtown, infrastructure enhancement, new attractions, with a focus on community-centric PPCPs and building on community assets.	3	Third-party support	OIS.31, OIS.33	Small (for feasibility study)	x		QWP.11, QWP.39, QWP.41, QWP.42
CCS-CII-4.3. Task the TDC with identifying a pathway for affordable ownership and community investment, by engaging local business owners.	3	VSL TDC	OIS.30, OIS.33	Considered in CCS-CII-2.4 (not including project investments)	x		
CCS-CII-4.4. Explore opportunities to develop equitable capital pooling/investment tools and mechanisms.	4	TOSL VSL Third-party support	OIS.31, OIS.33	Considered in PC-DDP-3.3.	x		
CCS-CII-4.5. Launch and raise funds for an investment project, informed by feasibility studies (see CCS-CII-4.2, PC-DR-3.3 and PC-DR-1.4), with a focus on PPCP capital pooling and investment. This may include defining a Community Bond.	4-5	VSL TDC	OIS.31, OIS.33, OIS.35				
CCS-CII-5. Invest in community-centric visitor management, and environmental & cultural stewardship.							
CCS-CII-5.1. Utilize accessible communication channels and streams to raise awareness among residents, local businesses and visitors about community stewardship and to share potential opportunities for individuals to become engaged. This includes marketing messaging and campaigns; pop-ups; neigbourhood intercepts; programs and activations; and other initiatives.	1 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.43, OIS.44	Standard		x (start from the minimum and increase as the programs/projects expand)	
CCS-CII-5.2. Develop and lead a Community Animators program within the tourism team, to collaboratively engage community rights holders and visitors in tourism initiatives such as cultural exchange, visitor management and environmental stewardship. The Community Animators program should include financial incentives, whether through honorariums or partial reimbursement, made possible through community partnership if needed. Define and test small-scale partnership scenarios with Animators' leadership, in partnership with local artists, art or creativity groups or other local non-profits.	2	VSL Community partners/ Grassroots groups, if needed	OIS.31, OIS.43, OIS.44				QWP.10, QWP.18, QWP.19, QWP.20, QWP.21, QWP.22
CCS-CII-5.3. Define awareness-raising initiatives around Indigenous perspectives on land stewardship through collaboration with local Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, leaders and community members. This can include messaging, training and interactive place activations.	2	VSL Indigenous Tourism Alberta	OIS.16, OIS.31, OIS.43				
CCS-CII-5.4. Define and test small-scale partnership scenarios aimed at influencing visitor behaviour and cultural & environmental stewardship, with strong leadership roles of the community grassroots groups in Sylvan Lake and the other 8 municipalities within the Lake watershed.	2 - 3	TDC VSL Community partners/ Grassroots groups Regional destination leadership	OIS.31, OIS 35, OIS.43, OIS.44				QWP.18, QWP.19, QWP.20, QWP.21, QWP.22
Destination Leadership and Management (DLM)							
Establish regulations, structure, processes and resources for effective destination leadership and management, specifically regarding: organizational capacity; revenue; funding & co-investment models; bylaws and policies; collaboration; sustainability; and metrics & reporting.							
CCS-DLM-1. Invest in reenvisioning organizational roles, responsibilities and collaboration, and expanding the tourism team to lead community-centric tourism and destination development.							

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY		RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
					1X	REPEAT	
CCS-DLM-1.1. Pilot a Working Group, led by VSL with cross-departmental representation, for ongoing collaboration. This group will: - Establish a mandate and meeting schedule, with at least one meeting monthly. - Discuss the implications and overlapping roles, responsibilities and resources within the Organization in relation to the DLMP. - Develop/implement a roadmap for collaboration based on priorities identified in the Plan, including destination development (infrastructure, community services, placemaking, planning and policies), visitor experience development (cultural programs, events, and other Town-invested visitor experiences), economic development (entrepreneurship and small business economic development, investments), community liaison and environmentally responsible practice. - Determine what/how existing assets and skill sets can be allocated to the roadmap's implementation. - Collaborate on an ongoing basis, through project testing and by sharing regular updates about the roadmap's implementation.	1 Ongoing	Working Group (VSL lead)	OIS.34	n/a (human resources only)		x	
CCS-DLM-1.2 Hire new staff or third-party support as necessary to lead the implementation of the DLMP's recommendations for: - Tourism marketing and branding. - Community leadership and participation, including Community Animators Program for tourism ambassadorship (see CCS-CII-5.2), destination stewardship, and engagement & feedback channels for community rights holders and visitors to participate in tourism-related decision-making. - Visitor-related place-based activation, including priority projects and pilots identified in Section 8: Projects & Quick Wins. - Entrepreneurship, workforce and small business development (including Business & Partner Liaison - see VE-PDE-1.3). - Town-invested tourism product development, including iconic festivals and events. - Local and regional tourism collaborations & partnerships. - Tourism-related data analysis. - Visitor information services. - Investment and capital pooling. - Financial strategy and funding.	1 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.34	Enhanced - Major - Extensive		x (scale-up as needs/demand evolve)	
CCS-DLM-1.3. Outsource immediate priority actions as identified in the DLMP. This may include: implementing and managing community and visitor feedback channels; data collection and analysis; piloting iconic festivals and events with a regional focus; one-on-one outreach to and relationship development with entrepreneurs and cultural groups; and staffing and managing visitor information services.	1 Ongoing	Third-party support	OIS.34				
CCS-DLM-1.4. Conduct an annual evaluation of staff needs and budget available, to expand the dedicated tourism team, guided by the short-, mid- and long-term recommendations provided within the DLMP Prioritize diversity and representation in staffing and decision-making.	Annually	VSL	OIS.34	n/a (human resources only)		x	
CCS-DLM-1.5. Adopt "Visit Sylvan Lake" (VSL) to refer to the Town's tourism leadership entity, as the Municipality's "Destintion Leadership and Management" department. Represent this shift by branding VSL documents, reports, communications, content, e-mail signatures, dedicated work spaces (see CCS-DLM-2.1) and other channels, as applicable.	1	VSL TOSL	OIS.34	Micro	x		
CCS-DLM-1.6. Pilot an interdepartmental panel with managerial representation from VSL, Planning and Development and other departments as needed, to incorporate DLMP priorities and recommendations in policies (i.e., land-use policies, zoning bylaw, etc.), Town plans (i.e., master plans) and investment decisions for infrastructure development. (See CCS-DLM-3.)	1 Ongoing			n/a (human resources only)	x		
CCS-DLM-1.7. Evaluate the feasibility of a dedicated Destination Leadership and Management Organization (DLMO), guided by long-term recommendations provided within the DLMP.	4	VSL	OIS.34, OIS.35				
CCS-DLM-2. Invest in securing infrastructure, resources and tools for the tourism administration entity to implement the DLMP.							
PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE							
CCS-DLM-2.1. Explore potential locations and secure a dedicated workspace for the tourism administration entity.	2	VSL Third-party support	OIS.34	Moderate		x (assuming space will be rented)	
CCS-DLM-2.2. Evaluate the possibility of having an integrated space for the tourism leadership team, a centralized visitors hub and tourism entrepreneurship incubation. See Section 6: Visitors & Experiences - Entrepreneurship and Business Support.	3 - 4		OIS.13, OIS.17, OIS.34, OIS.35				
TRAINING							

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY		RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
					1X	REPEAT	
CCS-DLM-2.3. Develop and deliver a Visitors' Services and Experiences Training Program for visitor-facing staff, industry, and volunteers. Include modules on customer service, effective communication, cultural competency and comprehensive destination knowledge.	1 - 2		OIS.34, OIS.35, OIS.39	Small - Standard		x (scale-up as needs/demand evolve)	
CCS-DLM-2.4. Invest in the upskilling and professional development of VSL and other Town staff involved in the DLMP's implementation, to enhance their understanding and skills in these areas: - Cultural competency - Reconciliation - Tourism community rights holder engagement - Technology adoption - Data management and others as they emerge or are identified. See also CCS-CII-4.1	1 - 2	TOSL VSL Third-party support	OIS.30, OIS.31, OIS.33, OIS.36				QWP.24
TOOLS							
CCS-DLM-2.5. Establish a detailed five-year Implementation Plan to streamline priority projects and pilots recommended in Section 8: Quick Wins & Projects, guided by the Placemaking and Wayfinding Toolkit, Marketing Plan and Product Development Plan provided, as applicable. Include an Investment Plan, using actions provided in CCS-DLM-6 and CCS-DLM-7, as well as detailed roles and responsibilities, steps, timelines and success indicators. Review and update the plan annually to evaluate alignment with targets, emerging needs and industry trends. Use this resource to inform annual planning activities.	1	VSL	OIS.34	n/a (human resources only)	x		
CCS-DLM-2.6. Invest in advanced tools to support DLMP implementation, which can include: a customer relationship management (CRM) system; digital marketing tools; data collection and analytics tools; augmented reality (AR); online ticketing; and an advanced project management tool.	2 (Digital marketing tools; data collection and analytics tools; online ticketing 3+ (CRM, AR, advanced project management tool)	VSL TOSL	OIS.34, OIS.35, OIS.39, OIS.41	Small - Standard	x (based on the needs & priorities mentioned)		
CCS-DLM-2.7. Develop an action plan to implement parking and traffic control measures for peak tourism season, as suggested in PC.VM.1. Integrate a new regulated policy (or bylaw) to support plan implementation as needed.	2		OIS.8	n/a (human resources only)	x		
CCS-DLM-2.8. Develop a secondary five-year Implementation Plan for DLMP projects and pilots that fall into the second half of the DLMP timeline, informed by the performance measurement study on key DLMP initiatives (see CCS-DLM-13.2.). Include an Investment Plan, as recommended in CCS-DLM-6 and CCS-DLM-7, in addition to detailed roles and responsibilities, steps, timelines and success indicators. Review and update the plan annually to evaluate alignment with targets, emerging needs and industry trends. Use this resource to inform annual planning activities.	3	VSL	OIS.34, OIS.35				
CCS-DLM-3. Adopt and/or refine policies related to the physical development of the town, to support the implementation of the DLMP.							
CCS-DLM-3.1. Enhance and extend existing policies and bylaws related to maintaining view corridors and controlling visual impact of development (i.e., the 50th Street Urban Design Guidelines and Land Use Bylaw). This may include defining a specific set of urban design guidelines for the implications and applciaitons of enhanced view corridors, to inform design and decision-making on development applications. This may also include additional decision-making guidlelines or a checklist for the Planning Authority, to inform decisions about the need for View Impact Assessment.	2	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL Third-party support (if applicable)	OIS.2	Small	x		
CCS-DLM-3.2. Define a policy (or policies) that include(s) detailed design & architectural style guidelines to preserve the small, lake town community characteristics. This policy will inform streetscape enhancement and beautification efforts, placemaking projects and new visitor-related infrastructure developments and refurbishments. This should be designed with the identified Unique Sense of Place in mind.	2		OIS.6, OIS.7				

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
CCS-DLM-3.3. Periodically review land use policies and bylaws to extend opportunities and address gaps & barriers for appropriate micro-makers—such as breweries, cheese makers and coffee roasters—to establish themselves in downtown areas, enhancing the downtown experience (Centennial St., Festival St. and Lakeshore Drive) and diversifying the commercial use in a quality way.	2		OIS.18				
CCS-DLM-4. Implement policy and practice to support the development of a multifunctional lakefront recreational zone (including Centennial Park, Sylvan Lake Park, Lighthouse Park and Lakefront Park), that prioritizes community appeal. (See PC-DDP-2.4 and CCS-DLM-9.2.)							
CCS-DLM-4.1. Revisit existing bylaws to influence visitor behaviour. This may include restrictions to tents and other structures, and reenvisioning fixed assets meant for a particular use (i.e., fire pits, picnic shelters, benches, lighting, etc.), along the lakefront.	3	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL	OIS.4, OIS.6	n/a (human resources only - not including project investments)	x		
CCS-DLM-4.2. Reenvision the Third Party Signage Bylaw to allow for local marketing and promotions through quality placemaking initiatives in the lakefront and downtown. (See PC-VM-3.4.)							QWP.37
CCS-DLM-5. Implement policy and practice to facilitate a community-centric approach in tourism development.							
CCS-DLM-5.1. Identify gaps in policies and Town procedures that prevent low-risk grassroots community investment, participation and partnership. Evaluate possibilities for measures that facilitate: - reduced application fee and liability insurance for small start-up vendors; - accessible permit application processes; - affordable rental or ownership; - tax incentives; reduced-cost use of public lands and spaces; and - exempting or relaxing zoning requirements, to name a few. See CCS-CII-3.1. and CCS-CII-3.3.	1	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL	OIS.31, OIS.32, OIS.33	n/a (human resources only - not including project investments)	x		QWP.11, QWP.28, QWP.39
CCS-DLM-5.2. Enhance the Municipal Development Plan to include more specific community-centric tourism policies echoing DLMP. Propose new objectives/policies—or enhance existing ones—under Economic Development, Parks, Recreation, and Culture, and Regional Collaboration, that ensure physical infrastructure and economic development in tourism and hospitality: - prioritize sustainable, long-term community economic development, - encourage grassroots leadership, and - promote community partnerships. Key areas for consideration include, but are not limited to: - Enhance policies under Objective ED-5: "Enhanced Hospitality and Tourism Opportunities" to emphasize public-private-community partnerships in tourism development, community-based recreation, events, and attraction development that reflect local values and provide economic opportunities for residents, and community benefit agreements for larger tourism developments. - Expand policies under Objective PRC-3: "Variety of Recreation Facilities and Programs," to emphasize community stewardship of prime natural and cultural assets. - Strengthen policies under Objective RC-1: "Coordinated Land Use and Growth Management," to prioritize community buy-in, and the long-term benefits and interests of local residents in major intra-municipal tourism development projects.	2 - 3	Working Group (VSL lead)	OIS.34, OIS.35				QWP.11, QWP.39, QWP.42
CCS-DLM-5.3. Define a pilot project to test new measures, focused on downtown revitalization and beautification, and enhancing visitor experiences.	2	TDC		Considered in PC-DDP-3.3.	x		
CCS-DLM-5.4. Introduce Town-approved mechanisms and measures that commit medium to large tourism-related investments on new attractions (land development projects connected to recreation and visitor experiences) to bring wider social, economic and environmental benefits to the community. This may include: participatory planning; sustainable practice; capital investments local hiring; local procurement, and opportunities for small businesses.	2 - 3	Working Group (VSL lead) TOSL	OIS.34, OIS.35, OIS.44	n/a (human resources only)	x		
CCS-DLM-6. Pursue government funding to subsidize projects as suggested in DLMP.							
CCS-DLM-6.1. Pursue government funding to support DLMP implementation, including Quick Wins & Projects. In the short term, these may include but are not limited to: - Travel Alberta's Growth Fund - Travel Alberta's Innovation Fund - Travel Alberta's Rural Development & Promotion Fund - Travel Alberta's Events & Festivals Fund, and - Travel Alberta's Tourism Growth Program (TGP) in the Prairie provinces.	1 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.34	n/a (human resources only)		x	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
CS-DLM-6.2. Pursue government funding to support PPCP projects/recommendations as ıvisioned in DLMP. These may include community-centric funds such as: Community Economic Development and Diversification (CEDD) in the Prairie Provinces Community Facility Enhancement Program Large Stream Community Facility Enhancement Program Small Stream Alberta Foundation for the Arts Bob Etherington Heritage Conservation Fund Community Initiatives Program – Operating Grant Alberta Culture Days Grant Community Initiatives Program - Cultural Heritage Initiatives Program Community Initiatives Program – Major Cultural and Sport Events Grant Community Initiatives Program – Project-Based Grant Heritage Awareness Grants Other Initiatives Program grant Sport Participation Support Program Heritage Research Grants	1 Ongoing		OIS.31, OIS.34, OIS.44				
CS-DLM-7. Create diverse revenue streams for tourism development investments, as recommended in the DLMP.							
CS-DLM-7.1. Make existing iconic events ticket-based, with local and non-local rates. Sell ckets initially via a third-party platform, shifting to the VSL platform as capacity allows. (See ction 6: Visitors & Experiences - Marketing.)	1	VSL TOSL	OIS.34, OIS.40	Micro (for third-party platform)		x	
CS-DLM-7.2. Amend the Fees and Charges Bylaw to define a registration fee for iconic events, plicable to: Vendors, with local and nonlocal rates Participants, in the case of competitions (i.e., nature-based, art and creativity, and other creational activities.)	2 - 3	VSL TOSL		n/a (human resources only)	x		
CS-DLM-7.3. Explore the implementation of a Lakefront Stewardship Fee for non-local beach sitors on weekends, from May-September. Explore the feasibility of integrating the fee within e pay parking app or via the Visitor Pass (see VE-PDE-9.4).	1	TOSL	OIS.34, OIS.4				
CS-DLM-7.4. Explore the implementation of premium pricing for Centennial Park Picnic lelters during weekends, from May-September and other visitor-oriented bookable spaces.	1						
CS-DLM-7.5. Explore the possibility of allocating a percentage of parking revenues to VSL's udget.	1	VSL TOSL					
CS-DLM-7.6. Explore the implementation of increased parking rates, informed by a ne-based strategy. (See PC-VM-1.3.)	1 - 2	TOSL	OIS.8, OIS.34				QWP.7
CS-DLM-7.7. Explore the implementation of a tax on vacant commercial properties.(See C-DR-4.1.) Explore the possibility of allocating a percentage to VSL's budget.	1 - 2		OIS.6, OIS.34				
CS-DLM-7.8. Activate information hubs as points of sale for authentic local and regional ferings. Use various compensation models (i.e., commission-based sales, revenue sharing, flat e, etc). (See PC-VM-4.2.)	1 - 2	VSL	OIS.31, OIS.34	Micro (for maintenance & supplies)		x	
CS-DLM-7.9. Consider piloting a Community Enhancement Fee facilitated through a wide nge of tourism industry businesses in recognizing the breadth of the industry, to subsidize mmunity-centric tourism initiatives as envisioned in the DLMP. This may start as a voluntary actice at 1-2%, and evolve into a fixed program based on further study and results of the pilot ogram.	1 - 2	TOSL	OIS.33, OIS.34	n/a (human resources only)	x		
CS-DLM-7.10. Pilot co-investment with local and regional tourism-related businesses, to bsidize community-centric tourism initiatives as envisioned in the DLMP. This may include: Visitor information services, such as the comprehensive map of attractions, brochures, AR, c. Events, shared space and marketplaces Partnership in at least two recreational packages tailored for youth, families, seniors, rporate retreats or other target visitor groups. (See Section 6: Visitors & Experiences - oduct Development.)	1 - 2	VSL	OIS.26, OIS.28, OIS.33, OIS.34				
CS-DLM-7.11. Direct all advertising revenues earned from Visit Sylvan Lake platforms and tiatives to the Visit Sylvan Lake budget.	1 - 2	TOSL	OIS.34				

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
CCS-DLM-7.12. Develop permit opportunities at demand-based premium prices for private events/exclusive access at select locations such as the Pier, Lakefront Park and Lighthouse Park. These may allow for: music, food, alcohol, tables, seating, electricity, etc. Implement measures that ensure equitable use of space, sustainable practice and community priorities.	2 - 3	VSL TOSL	OIS.29, OIS.34				
CCS-DLM-7.13. Develop a paid membership option for the Tourism Partnership Accelerator(TPA), applicable to advanced market-readiness and premium services & supports. (See Section 6: Visitors & Experiences - Entrepreneurship & Business Support.)	2 - 3	VSL	OIS.17, OIS.20, OIS.34				
CCS-DLM-7.14. Implement the pay parking program during regional shoulder season events.	2 - 3	TOSL	OIS.8, OIS.34				
CCS-DLM-7.15. Explore financial mechanisms that allow the Town to offset capital costs of improving community and visitor-related facilities, services, infrastructure and beautification efforts, as well as advancing affordable commercial space. Tools that may be investigated further for applicability and feasibility include: - a Community Redevelopment Levy, for areas covered within the Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan; - a Community Benefit Agreement, as part of permit requirements for certain developments in target benefit areas; - a recreation levy, as part of the existing Off Site Levy; and - Community Revitalization Levies (as proposed in the SWARP Action Plan).	4		OIS.15, OIS.29, OIS.33, OIS.34				
CCS-DLM-7.16. Develop new tourism products, targeting high-value visitor markets, as envisioned in the DLMP. (See Section 6: Visitors & Experiences - Product Development.)	1 Ongoing	VSL TDC	OIS.26, OIS.27, OIS.34	Considered throughout 'Visitors & Experiences - Product Development'			
CCS-DLM-8. Utilize strategic partnerships with key tourism players at local and regional levels to realize the DLMP's vision for Sylvan Lake, to be a destination leader in Central Alberta.							
CCS-DLM-8.1. Identify opportunities for partnership and co-investment with the tourism entities at neighbouring municipalities and existing DMOs in the region, to pilot a Sylvan Lake-led gastronomic event. (See VE-PDE-11.)	1 - 2	VSL	OIS.23, OIS.27, OIS.34, OIS.35	n/a (human resources only)	x		
CCS-DLM-8.2. Propose comprehensive partnership and co-investment opportunities for a collaborative regional event hosted in Sylvan Lake, based on the results of initial pilots and collaboration. This may include marketing, aiming to reach Alberta-wide audiences and beyond. Target tourism entities at neighbouring municipalities, existing DMOs in the region, industry partners and potential investors. (See VE-M-12.)	3	VSL	OIS.23, OIS.27, OIS.35, OIS.42		x		
CCS-DLM-8.3. Develop a comprehensive inventory of tour operators, destination management companies (DMCs) and/or other travel intermediaries operating in Central Alberta, or interested in Central Alberta product offerings.	1	VSL	OIS.23, OIS.34, OIS.35, OIS.42		x		
CCS-DLM-8.4. Dedicate team, budget and other resources to relationship development and negotiations with tour operators, destination management companies (DMCs) and/or other travel intermediaries operating in Central Alberta, or interested in Central Alberta product offerings. Focus on showcasing/promoting tourism products throughout the Town (Town-led and privately-owned).	1 - 2 Ongoing	VSL				x	
CCS-DLM-8.5. Develop an inventory of potential investors for product and infrastructure development, aligned with the principles and priorities of the DLMP. Include public and private prospects at local, regional, provincial and national levels.	4 - 5 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.33, OIS.34, OIS.35		x		
CCS-DLM-8.6. Dedicate team, budget and other resources to relationship development and negotiations with potential investors, based on specific investment opportunities as they arise.	4 - 5 Ongoing	VSL				x	
CCS-DLM-8.7. Lead a collaborative planning initiative with the tourism entities at neighbouring municipalities and relevant DMOs in the region for: - managing tourism development impacts on the lake; and - destination leadership and management of the Central Corridor. Follow recommendations as outlined in the Town of Sylvan Lake Municipal Development Plan.	3 - 4	TOSL VSL	OIS.35, OIS.37		x		
CCS-DLM-8.8. Co-develop resource-sharing initiatives for tourism workforce development with regional municipalities and tourism entities across Central Alberta. This may include: local or regional employee-sharing programs (as suggested by the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta's Labour Market Study 2023) and joint training initiatives.	4		OIS.24, OIS.25, OIS.35,	Small	x		QWP.43

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY 1X	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY REPEAT	RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
CCS-DLM-8.9. Collaborate with regional and provincial tourism organizations, and neighbouring municipalities, to introduce a tourism-focused workforce development initiative for the Central Corridor, utilizing existing streams such as immigration, temporary foreign workers, youth and seasonal placements and co-ops, etc. Allocate in-house resources, or build partnerships with relevant parties, to offer comprehensive support to local businesses specifically for accessing frontline workers. This may include support in applications, promotion, workforce training, etc.	4			n/a (human resources and investments as considered in VE-EBS-1, VE-EBS-2 and and VE-EBS-6)		x	
CCS-DLM-8.10. Collaborate with local Indigenous rights holders and Indigenous tourism partners in Central Alberta to develop a regional placekeeping pledge.	4	Working Group (VSL lead) Indigenous leaders, rights holders and/or Knowledge Keepers ITA	OIS.16, OIS.22, OIS.24	Micro	x (for honorariums)		
CCS-DLM-9. Enhance existing policies, regulations and practices to manage and monitor the environmental impact of tourism development at a local level.							
CCS-DLM-9.1. Assign existing Town of Sylvan Lake staff/team to focus on community-centric environmental stewardship initiatives and include them in the Working Group (see CCS-DLM-1).	1	TOSL	OIS.1, OIS.5, OIS.31, OIS.34	Covered in CCS-DLM-1.2.		x	
CCS-DLM-9.2. Work with relevant partners (i.e., Red Deer County, Province of Alberta), establish and implement a clear process for protecting the lake's environmental integrity and enhancing the natural appeal of the lakeshore area as it relates to access to the water, and for the commercial and non-commercial water-based businesses and developments. If possible, consider creating a collaborative framework to define, monitor and provide parameters around commercial and non-commercial recreational use of the lake. Include guidelines and best practices for environmentally responsible operations.	1 - 2	TOSL Provincial Government		n/a (human resources only)	x		
CCS-DLM-9.3. Develop a comprehensive and detailed set of procedures for environmentally sensitive development of tourism infrastructure projects within the whole town, informed by the Natural Areas Management Plan (2017). Incorporate: - Land use policy and spatial planning guidelines and best practices for environmentally cautious development and management of tourism infrastructure development projects; - a mandate for environmental assessment and environmental considerations as part of the evaluation for new development proposals; and - key priority indicators and criteria in sustainable use and monitoring impacts (operation and management). Align with or exceed provincial-level standards with criteria. Update procedures on a regular basis to reflect the standards and approaches of the day.	2		OIS.5, OIS.34, OIS.37				
CCS-DLM-9.4. Develop detailed guidelines, regulations and metrics for environmentally responsible practice to inform all business operations and place-based activations in the lakefront area, such as placemaking initiatives, events and community programming. Use resources as recommended in Actions CCS-DLM-9.2. and CCS-DLM-9.3.	2	TOSL VSL					
CCS-DLM-9.5. Integrate climate resilience and adaptation strategies into planning & implementing iconic events and major tourism infrastructure development (i.e., Lakefront Park). Include measures to address extreme weather events and changing climate conditions. Review these strategies on a regular basis (minimum every five years) or after significant environmental events.	3 - 4	TOSL Working Group (VSL lead) Third-party support	OIS.27, OIS.34	Small	x		
CCS-DLM-10. Initiate regional collaboration for environmental impact management of projects with potentially significant impacts on the lake's watershed ecosystem, using the Sylvan Lake Cumulative Effects Management System (CEMS) framework as a basis for directing efforts.							
CCS-DLM-10.1-V2. Create a structure for shared application review for tourism & development projects, with potentially significant impacts on the lake's watershed ecosystem. This may include a regional oversight structure, priority indicators and a shared land use policy across the municipalities within the Sylvan Lake watershed. Utilize the CEMS framework as a key resource.	4 - 5	TOSL VSL CEMS municipal partners Third-party support	OIS.5, OIS.34, OIS.35, OIS.37	Enhanced	x		
CCS-DLM-10.2-V2. Explore the possibility of initiating a collaborative structure to evaluate the potential to implement key priorities in the CEMS Framework, using capacity built from a tourism case established as a result of CCS-DLM-10.1.	5						
CCS-DLM-11. Develop guidelines and initiatives for environmentally sensitive practice & messaging in tourism product development and marketing.							

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY		RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
					1X	REPEAT	
CCS-DLM-11.1. Develop environmentally responsible event management guidelines to inform Town tourism events. Include measures and best practices such as: waste reduction strategies (i.e., using biodegradable or recyclable materials); using environmentally responsible suppliers and equipment; sourcing local materials; incorporating signage about environmental conservation and sustainable practices; creating incentives for vendors and/or participants to adopt green practices; and establishing "leave no trace" mandates, as some examples. Include detailed sets of criteria and indicators for impact monitoring and management.	2	VSL	OIS.27, OIS.34, OIS.35	n/a (human resources only)	x		
CCS-DLM-11.2. Invest in public awareness initiatives centred around responsible travel and tourism practices, targeting visitors and tourism operations. Incorporate both place-based and program-based initiatives. (See PC.VM.8.1. and VE-M-11.)	2 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.21, OIS.23, OIS.43, OIS.44	Considered in VE-M-9.		x	QWP.25
CCS-DLM-11.3. Establish a Visitors' Code of Conduct, informed by community input (see CCS-CII-2).	2	VSL TDC	OIS.31, OIS.43, OIS.44	n/a (human resources only)	x		
CCS-DLM-11.4. Establish incentives to encourage the development of environmentally responsible visitor experiences.	3	VSL	OIS.5, OIS.21	n/a (human resources and investments as considered in VE-EBS-1, VE-EBS-2 and VE-EBS-6)		x	QWP.31
CCS-DLM-12. Implement a context-specific Tourism Impact Measurement Framework (TIM) aligned with DLMP priorities to understand, measure and monitor tourism economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts and to inform respective tourism decision-making.							
CCS-DLM-12.1. Invest in resources (staff, budget, infrastructure, tools and know-how) to address priority gaps for collecting data on the following key areas: - Economic Impact (direct, induced and indirect impacts) - Entrepreneurship & Small Business Development - Environmental Impact - Visitation - Visitor Satisfaction - Community Satisfaction Focus on addressing gaps in capacity to collect data related to key metrics outlined in Appendix F: Tourism Impact Measurement Framework (TIM).	1	TOSL VSL	OIS.34, OIS.36	Standard		x (starting with investment in addressing priority gaps, followed by investments in data resources/sources as needed)	
CCS-DLM-12.2. Collect data on Key Metrics as outlined in Appendix F: TIM.	1-2	VSL Third-party support					
CCS-DLM-12.3. Share the study's outcome with residents and businesses using accessible data and information-sharing channels that have been developed (see CCS-CII-1). Incorporate regular communication around the importance of understanding impacts and the need for data, with a focus on facilitating buy-in for data collection from diverse community right holders.	1 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.38, OIS.44	Considered in CCS-CII-1.	x		QWP.26
CCS-DLM-12.4. Incorporate more advanced Metrics in data collection. (See Appendix F: Tourism Impact Measurement Framework).	3 Ongoing	VSL Third-party support	OIS.34, OIS.36	Considered in CCS-DLM-12.1 and CCS-DLM-12.2.		x	
CCS-DLM-12.5. Review TIM as needed and at least by the end of year 5, and extend or revise Indicators to meet emerging needs.	3			n/a (human resources only)	x		
CCS-DLM-13. Measure and monitor the outcomes of implementing DLMP recommendations, actions, and project deliverables to identify areas for improvement and inform subsequent actions.							
CCS-DLM-13.1. Invest in resources (staff, budget, infrastructure, tools and professional service) to address priority gaps in collecting data related to key metrics outlined in DLMP Implementation Plan (Section 8). This includes developing a municipal cross-departmental tracking tool for financial reporting related to tourism.	2	TOSL VSL Working Group Third-party support	OIS.34, OIS.36	Considered in CCS-DLM-12.1 and CCS-DLM-12.2.		x (starting with investment in addressing priority gaps, followed by investments in data	

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTIONS	PRIORITY	COLLABORATORS	IMPACT/ JUSTIFICATION	BUDGET	INVESTMENT FREQUENCY		RELEVANT QUICK WINS/PROJECTS (if applicable)
					1X	REPEAT	
CCS-DLM-13.2. Evaluate performance/ROI of DLMP-informed investments, projects and interventions by collecting relevant data, using metrics for each DLMP key initiative as outlined in Appendix G: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure. Follow the proposed procedure and intervals.	3 Ongoing	VSL Third-party support				resources/sources as needed)	
CCS-DLM-13.3. Share key findings of this evaluation with residents, businesses, and other tourism key players using accessible data and information-sharing channels that have been developed (see CCS-CII-1).	3 Ongoing	VSL	OIS.38, OIS.44	Considered in CCS-CII-1.		x	
CCS-DLM-13.4. Grounded on the findings of performance measurement (for key initiatives), identify both gaps/performance shortcomings and successful initiatives. For shortcomings, determine the underlying reasons and define steps to meet targets or revise KPIs and targets as necessary. Engage diverse community rights holders in redefining strategies and actions, including developing new pilot projects and low-risk investments to test new strategies. Use successful evidence to inform future practices. Follow the procedures outlined in Appendix G: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Procedure.	3 Ongoing	Working group (VSL lead) TDC Local businesses/ tourism operations	OIS.30, OIS.34, OIS.35, OIS.36				
CCS-DLM-13.5. Incorporate regular updates to community rights holders and other key players about finalized actions and contingency plans for addressing gaps. Share success outcomes with a focus on facilitating residents', businesses' and other key players' buy-in as applicable.	3 ongoing	VSL	OIS.35, OIS.38, OIS.44				
CCS-DLM-13.6. Review DLMP metrics as needed and at least by the end of Year 5. Expand or revise Indicators to meet emerging needs.	3	Working Group (VSL Lead) Third-party (if applicable)	OIS.34, OIS.36	Considered in CCS-DLM-12.1 and CCS-DLM-12.2.	x		

8.2 **QUICK WINS & PROJECTS**

OVERVIEW

This "Quick Wins & Projects" section supports the DLMP's Implementation Plan and provides specific ideas for translating broader Recommendations and Actions into tangible projects. Notably, many of the outlined Quick Wins & Projects connect to multiple Recommendations and Actions, further demonstrating the interconnections between various elements of the DLMP. These reflect core components of the DLMP: testing and piloting, and expanding tourism development investment and capacity based on an evidence-based approach.

The presentation of Quick Wins & Projects follows a similar format to the Implementation Plan, though each is tagged according to its scope and requirements as follows:

- Quick Wins require nominal investment, are low risk, and can be completed within the first one to four years of DLMP implementation. They are designed to deliver immediate benefits and set the stage for larger projects.
- Projects require more substantial investment, resources, and partnerships and are, therefore, more complex undertakings. Projects are meant to be pursued after the initial few years of the DLMP's implementation.

While the DLMP calls on VSL, the Town Leadership and other key players to devise and carry out projects beyond those presented here, these quick wins and projects provide impactful steps in Sylvan Lake's tourism development, bridging the gap between visionary planning and concrete action.

READING QUICK WINS & PROJECTS

The Quick Wins and Projects table is broken down into four columns, as follows:

Quick Wins & Projects

- Indicates a specific Quick Win or Project, connected to one or multiple Recommendations and Actions provided in the Implementation Plan
- Because PPCPs are an important part of capacity building, Quick Wins and Projects with the potential to adopt PPCP models have been marked with an asterisk (*).

Collaborators

- Indicates parties responsible for, or involved in, implementing each associated Action within the Municipal Administration or a third party, if noted, as outlined in Section 1: Setting the Stage.
- ** If VSL is mentioned as the main 'Collaborator,' this suggests they are the lead. When paired with TOSL, a specific role is identified.*

Budget

- Specifies a cost estimate for each Quick Win and Project, as follows:
    - n/a - No cost
    - $ - Under $10,000
    - $$ - $10,001 - $24,999
    - $$$ - $25,000 - $49,999
    - $$$$ - $50,000 - $99,999
    - $$$$$ - $100,000+
- **NOTE: THE BUDGET SCALE FOR QUICK WINS AND PROJECTS IS DIFFERENT FROM THAT USED WITHIN THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.**
- Unless otherwise stated, budgets represented for each 'Quick Win and Project' may be a portion of the budgets allocated to associated Recommendations and Actions in the main Implementation Plan.

Connected to Recommendation(s) and Action(s)

- Specifies the Recommendation(s) and/or Action(s) to which each Quick Win and Project is connected.

QUICK WINS

QUICK WINS	COLLABORATORS	BUDGET	CONNECTED TO ACTIONS
QWP.1. Use placemaking to reenvision the appeal and activation of lakefront public toilets. Explore options such as murals and other public art, and visitor information signage/user-friendly maps of attractions.	VSL (Project Lead) Community partners/ Grassroots groups Third-party support, if needed TOSL	$ - $$	PC-DDP-2.2 PC-VM-3.4
QWP.2. Use placemaking to reenvision the appeal and activation of lakefront picnic shelters, to enhance visitor appeal. Consider options such as: • incorporating interactive art installations; • adding comfortable and attractive seating; • creating themed picnic areas with unique designs; and/or • integrating natural landscaping elements. Additionally, consider picnic shelters as potential locations for visitor maps and trail system maps (PC-VM-3.3).	VSL (Project Lead) TDC TOSL	$ - $$	PC-DDP-2.2
QWP.3. Engage local residents in a creative placemaking initiative to update the historic plaques along the downtown lakefront, adding new plaques to represent the present day as well as overlooked and missing histories.	VSL (Project Lead) TOSL Community partners/ Grassroots groups Third-party support, if needed	$$$	PC-DDP-4.3 PC-DDP-6.1 PC-DDP-7.1 PC-DDP-7.3
QWP.4. Work with the local schools/school board to define a youth-centric project for placemaking, environmental and cultural stewardship, visitor management and/or testing tourism products.	TOSL VSL (co-lead) Community partners/ Grassroots groups Third-party support, if needed	$	CCS-CII-3.2

QUICK WINS	COLLABORATORS	BUDGET	CONNECTED TO ACTIONS
QWP.5. Work with the "Let Them Play" artist to envision interactive elements for the installation. Invest in enhancements as determined.	VSL	$$	PC-DDP-6.4
QWP.6. Use the reimagined Tourism Accelerator Grant (VE-EBS-1.5) to test a streetscapes beautification project focused on Lakeshore Drive between 52nd and 44th Sts., and along Centennial St. (PC-DR.1.2).	TOSL VSL (advocate/ facilitate multi-stakeholder conversation/ co-lead) TDC Local businesses/tourism operations	$$ - $$$$	PC-DR-1.1 PC-DR-1.2
QWP.7. Implement non-resident fees on parking lots in the areas east of 50 Street, along 50 Avenue, and along 49 Avenue, between 46 Street and 50 Street.	TOSL VSL (advocate/ facilitate multi-stakeholder conversation)	$	PC-VM-1.3 CCS-DLM-7.6
QWP.8. Establish a satellite parking pilot project that uses the reclaimed lagoon site and HJ Cody High School parking lot as a parking solution, through negotiation with connected parties. Include a shuttle service connecting these satellite parking locations to downtown.	VSL (Project Lead) TOSL	$$ - $$$	PC-VM-1.4
QWP.9. Define and install playful placemaking and wayfinding elements along the lakefront that encourage visitors to dispose of garbage properly (i.e., hopscotch painted on the ground leading to a garbage can, recycling bins, etc.).	VSL (Project Lead) Third-party support, if needed TOSL	$- $$	PC-DDP-5.1 PC-VM-8.2
QWP.10. Define a project with Sylvan Lake Theatre and local performers, specifically focusing on visitor behaviour messaging. Integrate the project within VSL marketing plans.*	VSL Community partners/ Grassroots groups, if needed Third-party support, if needed	$- $$	PC-VM-9.1 CCS-CII-5.2

QUICK WINS	COLLABORATORS	BUDGET	CONNECTED TO ACTIONS
QWP.11. Design and launch a Design-Build Contest themed around beautification and enhanced pedestrian experiences in partnership with local grassroots individuals or establishments (e.g., an artist, or creative-based businesses and entrepreneurs in Sylvan Lake or from neighboring communities). Call on applicants—including local artists, creators, and designers in the Central Corridor—to provide design ideas that reflect Sylvan Lake's unique small, lake town vibe, with a focus on storefronts and commercial streetscapes on Centennial St., Festival St., and along the lakefront. Determine a selection of winners based on funding and support resources available (aim for a minimum of 5) to support the implementation of proposals within the committed time frame. Leverage the implementation itself as a unique event, inviting audiences to observe how the projects evolve and take shape. Include PR and other marketing initiatives, utilizing VSL's digital channels.	VSL (Project Lead) TOSL Community partner/Grassroots groups, if needed Third-party support, if needed	$$ - $$$$	PC-DDP-1.1 PC-DR-2.2 CCS-CII-3.5 CCS-CII-3.6 CCS-CII-4.2 CCS-CII-5.2
QWP.12. Define a theme around which to envision and develop a series of connected pop-up events, activating Lighthouse Park, Lakefront Park, Sylvan Lake Park, Railway Promenade, the Lakefront Park parking lot, the Library parking lot, alleyways, and the parkette in front of the Nexsource Centre over a single day or weekend. Consider themes such as: • culinary (i.e., food trucks, vendors, etc.) • arts and performances (i.e., makers, musicians, etc.)	VSL (Project Lead) TDC Chamber of Commerce TOSL	$$ - $$$	PC-DDP-1.1 VE-PD-2.2 VE-PD-10.1

QUICK WINS	COLLABORATORS	BUDGET	CONNECTED TO ACTIONS
QWP.13. Evaluate the capacity and interest in a pilot project that would allow businesses to set up patios along the alleyways within the Waterfront Commercial Area (part of the future Integrated Recreational Zone - see PC-DDP-2.4), also understanding what incentives would encourage participation. Plan and initiate the project based on interest, considering the following: • Allocate a loan or small grant to support participation, if possible. • Provide implementation guidelines to participants for the sake of harmonized aesthetics. • Promote the initiative via VSL marketing initiatives, including a special launch event to bring visibility to the initiative.	VSL TDC Chamber of Commerce TOSL	$ - $$	PC-DDP-1.1
QWP.14. Identify and develop a feasible project to showcase local business owners and entrepreneurs (i.e., thematic campaigns, small event, pop-up market), led by the TDC to test its capacity to engage in activations/short- to medium-scale tourism development projects. Test the incorporation of a dedicated task force per project, comprised of partners interested in each initiative (i.e., investment, service providers, activity leaders, volunteers and other roles). Explore the possibility of injecting a percentage of the Community Enhancement Fee into these projects, if applicable/when available (CCS-DLM-7.9).	VSL TDC	$	CCS-CII-2.3 CCS-CII-3.5
QWP.15. Develop and implement a Mural Festival that celebrates the town's unique heritage and diverse artistic expressions, in collaboration with local artists and creative entrepreneurs. Bring together local artists, business owners, and the Town to transform the city's streets into an open-air gallery. Include support and permits for artists to create small- to large-scale murals on permanent and temporary walls, buildings and properties throughout the town.	VSL TDC Community partners/ Grassroots groups Third-party support, if needed	$$	CCS-CII-3.6

QUICK WINS	COLLABORATORS	BUDGET	CONNECTED TO ACTIONS
QWP.16. Develop investment cases to encourage private investment for temporarily enclosing an open public space (i.e., part of a park) for creating events in the spring or fall. Highlight proposed event types, expected revenue models, and benefits to local businesses and the community. Present cost-benefit analyses, sustainability considerations, and partnership opportunities to attract partners and investors.*	VSL Third-party support, if needed	$	CCS-CII-3.6
QWP.17. Define a pilot project for naming initiatives related to signage and wayfinding strategies to reflect the evolving values of residents and visitors (i.e., renaming streets, naming districts/zones, etc.). Explore a collaboration with Indigenous rights holders for the project.	VSL Indigenous leaders, rights holders and/or Knowledge Keepers TOSL	$	CCS-CII-3.4 CCS-CII-3.6
QWP.18. Develop and run a volunteer campaign for cleaning up the beach, whereby those interested can donate time or money. Aim to involve local residents, businesses, and visitors.	VSL Community Animators	$	CCS-CII-5.2 CCS-CII-5.4
QWP.19. Develop and run a 'Lakefront Care Program' to monitor the safety and cleanliness of Lakeshore Drive during peak season through volunteer attraction or partnership with a local grassroots group.	TOSL VSL (co-lead) Community partners/ Grassroots groups Community Animators	$	
QWP.20. Pilot a 'Beach Ambassadors' program using support from Canada Summer Jobs. Focus the program on relationship-building between the community and visitors, as well as cultural exchange during high season.	VSL Community partners/ Grassroots groups	$	
QWP.21. Invest time and resources in partnership development and negotiation with owners of vacant lots in the downtown area and adjacent areas, to add temporary parking spaces during peak season.	TOSL VSL (co-lead, facilitate multi-stakeholder conversation)	$ - $$	

QUICK WINS	COLLABORATORS	BUDGET	CONNECTED TO ACTIONS
QWP.22. Engage the Sylvan Lake SPARC (Strengthening Positive Assets and Resiliency in Community) Coalition to develop a youth ambassadorship program centred on visitor management and local stewardship. Inject a portion of the Community Enhancement Fee (CCS-DLM-7.9) into their budget to subsidize their project-based services as a long-term strategy to maintain this partnership, based on the program's success.	VSL (Project Lead) SPARC Community partners/ Grassroots groups (if needed) TOSL	$ - $$	CCS-CII-5.2 CCS-CII-5.4
QWP.23. Develop a community-capacity-building workshop series, in collaboration with community groups or organizations, to support the development of key skills, knowledge and abilities to carry out the DLMP in the community. Integrate and engage special interest groups including youth, women, seniors and people with side hustles.	VSL (Project Lead) Community partners/ Grassroots groups Third-party support TOSL	$ - $$	CCS-CII-3.2
QWP.24. Develop and implement a training plan for upskilling and professional development of Town staff involved in the DLMP's implementation that considers timelines, investments, third-party support required, and other relevant details.	Working Group (VSL Lead) Third-party support	$ - $$	CCS-DLM-2.4
QWP.25. Use at least one of the locations identified (PC-DR-2.1) to implement an interpretive signage project, educating visitors about local ecosystems and the destination's natural assets & conservation practices, to: • encourage respect for the environment and the local community; and • promote responsible tourism practices among visitors and local operations.	VSL (Project Lead) TOSL Third-party support	$ - $$	PC-DR-2.1 CCS-DLM-11.2
QWP.26. Activate the Community Animators program (CCS-CII-5.2) to communicate and share positive outcomes and experiences (both from visitors and community rights holders) identified through Tourism Impact Measurement initiatives. Utilize diverse community outreach methods including pop-ups and kiosks (i.e., at major intersections or connecting sites, such as lobbies). Focus on sharing individual experiences (i.e., those of local business owners, Town tourism leadership, local and non-local participants in Town-led events, etc.) and the positive impacts that tourism creates in the community.	VSL Community Animators	$	CCS-DLM-12.3

QUICK WINS	COLLABORATORS	BUDGET	CONNECTED TO ACTIONS
QWP.27. Develop and implement a micro-grant program for community-driven place-based or program-based activations that enhance visitor experiences. Direct the grant to grassroots ideas for initiatives defined in the DLMP. Consider allocating funds collected from the Community Enhancement Fee (CCS-DLM-7.9) to support this initiative.	VSL (Project Lead) TOSL	$$	CCS-CII-3.3
QWP.28. Invest resources in reviewing and redefining Town application processes that impact or appeal to tourism-related businesses and entrepreneurs. (i.e., procurement, goods, workforce, permits), for the purpose of making them more accessible and community-centric. Engage the community and tourism industry to inform decision-making and changes.	VSL (Project Lead) TDC TOSL Third-party support	$	CCS-CII-3.1 CCS-CII-3.3 CCS-DLM-5.1
QWP.29. Pilot a ticket-based version of Winterfest (see CCS-DLM-7.1), targeting regional markets and beyond. Diversify the event with indoor and outdoor performances and cultural exhibits, by connecting the experience to the town's music and dance legacy. Explore possibilities to merge or extend this pilot with other proposed key pilots related to VSL-led events aiming to: • Utilize underutilized Town spaces for satellite events across town (see VE-PD-10). • Engage grassroots as Town partners or event vendors (see VE-PD-9). • Create a visitor-oriented version of the Town's community event portfolio in the shoulder season (see VE-PD-6 & VE-PD-7).*	VSL Community partners/ Grassroots groups (potential partners) External event organizer (potential partner)	$$-$$$	PC-VM-7.3 VE-PD-3 VE-PD-9.3 VE-PD-10

PROJECTS

PROJECTS	COLLABORATORS	BUDGET	CONNECTED TO ACTIONS
QWP.30. Invest in less capital-intensive placemaking initiatives to enhance the appeal and interactivity of the Pier. Explore the opportunity to establish a semi-enclosed, temporary space to host theme-based events and act as a cultural hub,	VSL TOSL Third-party support	$ - $$	PC-DDP-2.4
QWP.31. Establish an awards campaign for the "Top Environmentally Responsible Visitor Experience," to recognize environmentally responsible visitor experiences every two years, including those from neighbouring communities. Include opportunities to take nominations from visitors and the community.	VSL Neighbouring municipalities/ communities	$	CCS-DLM-11.4
QWP.32. Explore and pursue opportunities to partner with the Moccasin Identifier Project to bring the initiative to Sylvan Lake, including the CP Trail and Lakeshore Drive.	VSL Indigenous leaders, rights holders and/or Knowledge Keepers Third-party support (Moccasin Identifier Project) Indigenous Tourism Alberta	$$$	PC-DDP-4.3 PC-DDP-4.4
QWP.33. Develop an updated and user-friendly map of attractions that lists all visitor-related services, vendors and business owners. Include information on public art installations, historical sites, and key landmarks to guide visitors throughout Sylvan Lake, as well as digital platforms.	VSL (Project Lead) TDC Chamber of Commerce TOSL Third-party support	$$$	PC-VM-3.3 PC-VM-3.4 VE-M-1.5
QWP.34. Invest in placemaking and wayfinding initiatives to address gaps related to 'Guide' and 'Activate' strategies for CP Trail and Pogadl Park. (See Appendix D: Placemaking & Wayfinding Toolkit.)	VSL (Project Lead) TOSL Third-party support, if needed	$$ - $$$	PC-DDP-5.5

PROJECTS	COLLABORATORS	BUDGET	CONNECTED TO ACTIONS
QWP.35. Integrate strategically designed elements for photo ops, augmented reality, virtual reality and/or QR codes to enhance interactivity and marketability, or informational value for public art. Consider: • Add QR codes to the 'Varsity Hall' installations, that link to animated content highlighting the town's music and dance history. • Replacing one letter in the 'Sylvan Lake letters' installation with a "placemat" or some other prompt to invite passers-by to stand in as a letter. Include a sign that encourages users to share their image on social media, with a dedicated hashtag.	VSL (Project Lead) TOSL Third-party support	$$$	PC-DDP-6.1
QWP.36. Develop an Activation Strategy for the intersections of the rail trail (Railway Promenade), with north-south connectors, in particular, 50th St. & 46th St., to better connect the northern section of the city with the south and bring better visibility to downtown and the Integrated Lakefront Recreational Zone.	TOSL VSL (co-led, facilitate multi-stakeholder conversation) Third-party support	$$$ - $$$$	PC-DDP-6.3
QWP.37. Activate a selection (2-3) of the feasible locations identified for "information hubs" (PC-VM-3.3.). Include a map and basic town information. Give local businesses opportunities to be included. Use this "hub" to streamline signage and reduce ad-hoc "visual noise" along the waterfront while directing pedestrians to potentially overlooked locations. See Appendix D: Placemaking and Wayfinding Toolkit for details. (See also QWP.33).	VSL (Project Lead) TDC Chamber of Commerce TOSL Third-party support, if needed	$$ - $$$$	PC-VM-3.3 PC-VM-3.4 CCS-DLM-4.2
QWP.38. Define and launch a Trail Naming Project. Give residents an opportunity to submit and vote on ideas for trail names via established community engagement channels. Utilize this project as a pilot to inform approaches to similar community engagement initiatives.	VSL (Project Lead) TOSL Third-party support	$$	PC-VM-3.2 CCS-CII-2.1 CCS-CII-2.2 CCS-CII-2.3

PROJECTS	COLLABORATORS	BUDGET	CONNECTED TO ACTIONS
QWP.39. Pilot a temporary lightweight modular marketplace as a platform for local talent to showcase their products and experiences. Call for private partnerships to allocate a vacant lot across Lakeshore Drive. The scope and parameters of partnership can range from providing the land, and/or investing in the structure itself. Alternatively, allocate public land and co-invest with a private partnership. This may include piloting capital pooling through community investment to fund the activation of the marketplace, with terms centred on benefiting from renting the space. The marketplace is focused on subsidized rent and possible support for space activation, making it accessible for local artists and small businesses to test their product and/or services. Operate the marketplace for a 3-6 month period.*	VSL (Project Lead) TOSL Community partners/ Grassroots groups (if PPCP is applicable) Local businesses/tourism operations (if PPCP is applicable) Private investors/ partnerships	$$$$$	PC-DDP-3.3 PC-DR-3.1 CCS-CII-4.2 CCS-CII-4.3 CCS-CII-4.4 CCS-CII-4.5 CCS-DLM-5.1 CCS-DLM-5.2
QWP.40. Organize and host a workshop series about public-private-community partnerships, for the Town administration, Council and Tourism Development Committee (TDC) to learn about best practices and success stories, and to explore how these models can be leveraged in the Sylvan Lake tourism context.	TOSL VSL (co-led, facilitate multi-stakeholder conversation) Third-party support	$	CCS-CII-4.2
QWP.41. Explore the potential to secure commercial property in the proposed High-Density Residential/Commercial Mixed Use Zone on 50 St. or the current industrial district, for the purpose of incubating emerging niche, high-quality tourism and hospitality initiatives and /or high-quality shopping, dining, and other hospitality-focused experiences and services. Adopt the role of 'enabler' in this partnership, supporting the initial business leadership capacity building among potential community stakeholders and business owners that is required for this partnership to happen. Provide a financial contribution towards property tax reductions and the purchase price.*	VSL (Project Lead) Working Group Chamber of Commerce Private investors/ partners TDC Local businesses/tourism operations (if PPCP is applicable)	$$$ - $$$$$	PC-DR-3.3 VE-EBS-6.2 CCS-CII-4.3

PROJECTS	COLLABORATORS	BUDGET	CONNECTED TO ACTIONS
QWP.42. Develop a pilot project aimed at activating feasible underutilized/unused open public spaces, POPs, alleyways, and private vacant lots along Lakeshore Drive and downtown for a season-long project focusing on active recreational experiences, including pop-up events and thematic festivals. Include temporary installations and other seasonal activations that test concepts and gather community and visitor feedback.	VSL (Project Lead) TDC TOSL	$$ - $$$$	PC-DR-3.1 PC-DDP-3.3 CCS-CII-4.4
QWP.43. Develop a youth-focused paid training and work placement program focused on skill development and certification for early talent interested in working in the industry, then connecting participants with tourism employers for paid, hands-on learning opportunities. Explore partnerships with youth-focused non-profits (i.e., Sylvan Lake Community Partners Association), public entities focused on employment (i.e., Tourism HR Canada, other municipalities) and school boards (i.e., Chinooks Edge Public School Division, Red Deer Catholic Regional School Division). Seek funding to support the program from the Province of Alberta's Training and Employment Services. Consider existing programs for inspiration, such as the Toronto District School Board's 'On The Line Culinary Training,' Metro Toronto Movement For Literacy's 'Hospitality Workers Training Centre (HWTC)' and Progress Career Planning Institute's 'Hospitality Training.' Evolve the project into a sustainable, long-term program through partnership and outsourcing (as required), with implementation responsibilities residing outside of the Municipality, including sector-partner liaisoning (i.e., prospective employers).	VSL Neighbouring municipalities/ communities Community partners/ Grassroots groups Third-party support	$	CCS-DLM-8.8 CCS-DLM-8.9

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Appendix A:

Destination Readiness Framework & Analysis

OVERVIEW

The Sylvan Lake Destination Readiness Framework (DRF-SL) tool serves two main functions within this plan: Firstly, to assess Sylvan Lake's readiness as a tourism destination across four distinct Host-levels (Local, Regional, Inter- and Intra-Provincial (National) and Global), and secondly, to inform gap analyses, strategic directions, recommendations and actions.

This tool delves into destination readiness with greater detail than typical assessments, offering a framework that supports Sylvan Lake through every stage and aspect of destination leadership and management.

Founded with a community-centric perspective, the DRF-SL leverages a broad spectrum of firsthand and secondhand data to craft an assessment uniquely designed for Sylvan Lake's tourism context. Therefore, this framework may not be applicable to other destinations.

Terminology clarification: In this document, the terms 'destination,' 'town,' and 'Sylvan Lake' are used interchangeably. 'Town' (with a capital 't') refers to the Municipal Administration.

FOUR LEVELS OF READINESS

Level 1: The Local Host

The destination offers attractions and experiences that cater to the interests of the community, both in high season and shoulder season, and is fully equipped to draw visitors and tourists from nearby communities. While the focus is on one-day trips and short visits, the destination has infrastructure in place for longer stays such as weekend getaways. It has also established the foundational capacities to participate in regional tourism development and marketing initiatives.

Level 2: The Regional Host

The destination has advanced to the level of being fully prepared to host visitors and tourists from across the region and beyond, for short and long stays year-round, and acts as a prominent regional leader in tourism development. It has implemented successful regional marketing efforts and initiated province-wide marketing initiatives. As a regional leader, it collaborates with DMOs, tour operators and/or other travel intermediaries operating across Central Alberta, and has initiated collaborations with provincial tourism development and destination marketing organizations.

Level 3: The Inter- and Intra-Provincial (National) Host

The destination has achieved readiness to accommodate tourists and host visitors from across the province as well as from other provinces. Its marketing efforts are geared towards a national audience, and its partnerships are well-established at the provincial level, with strong evidence of collaborations with provincial and national tourism development and destination marketing organizations. It maintains strong strategic relationships with tour operators and/or other travel intermediaries operating across the country.

Level 4: The Global Host

The destination is fully equipped to host international visitors and tourists. It boasts landmark attractions and/or unique experiences that attract global audiences. It has successfully established a national brand that highlights its unique tourism experiences and offerings. The Global Host collaborates with international distribution channels (travel trade) to ensure seamless access and memorable experiences for global travellers.

CRITERIA CATEGORIES

"Criteria," in the context of this tool, represents conditions that need to be met in order for Sylvan Lake to fall into a particular level of destination readiness.

Criteria are organized across the following primary categories and, where relevant, sub-categories:

Infrastructure & Attractions:
Focuses on the physical capacity, variety and quality expected from primary physical assets.

Visitor-Related Facilities, Amenities, and Services:
Focuses on the operational capacity, variety and quality of the local tourism industry, broken down across its key sectors and four levels of destination readiness.

Market Reach/Market Establishment:
Focuses on the levels of market reach and market establishment of the destination.

Workforce and Training:
Focuses on the labour aspect of tourism, in terms of skills and necessary capacity enhancements across four levels of destination readiness.

Heritage, Culture, and Community Vibe:
Delves into the representation of the community's stories, histories and legacy as part of the visitor experience across different levels of destination readiness, and further includes operationalization of the unique sense of place.

Community Engagement, Leadership, and Partnership:
Addresses criteria related to adopting a community-centric approach to tourism development in the destination. It encompasses aspects such as communication and information dissemination, engagement and participation, co-investment and partnership, and decision-making and stewardship.

Market Preparedness & Tourism Entrepreneurship:
Includes a spectrum of criteria related to the local entrepreneurship ecosystem with focus on the overall readiness of local businesses to offer visitor-related services and products and to contribute to the tourism sector, across different levels of market readiness. It also looks into mechanisms available to boost tourism development through entrepreneurship support.

Tourism Economic Impact:
Outlines criteria addressing the economic benefits of tourism through a lens of local community development. This set of criteria doesn't speak to economic targets (such as tourism GDP or visitor expenditure targets), as these are growth targets—not measures of readiness. Instead, it focuses on conditions necessary for equitable opportunities for diverse community rights holders to benefit directly (i.e., through employment and business revenue) or indirectly (i.e., through improvements in infrastructure and community services) from tourism. It also looks into the capacity for the collection and assessment of economic impact data related to tourism.

Tourism Products and Experiences:
Focuses on the diversity, capacity and quality of visitor-oriented experiences and tourism products.

Marketing & Communication:
Outlines the strategic approach, resource allocation & management and execution of branding, marketing and communication efforts across four levels of destination readiness, covering tourism brand, marketing channels and strategies, as well as collaboration and partnerships.

Visitor Management, Health & Safety:
Criteria in this category focus on the capacity and scope of data, services, strategies and programs aimed at managing visitors' impact on the community, as well as enhancing the quality of visitors' experiences through access to information, attractions and services, and maintaining safety and security.

Destination Management and Leadership:
Addresses the key capacity components of the tourism management and leadership entity, including organizational structure, human resources and know-how, capital and resources, network and connections, and strategic tools and measures.

Strategic Partnership:
Outlines the capacities necessary for maintaining strategic positioning at local, regional, provincial, national and international levels through the development and facilitation of strategic partnerships.

Environmental Impact Management, Sustainability and Resilience:
Outlines the capacities required for proactive management of tourism impacts on natural resources and local environmental assets, including tourism activities (i.e. visitation and services) and destinations development (i.e., tourism infrastructure projects). It also looks into essential capacities for climate change adaptation.

READINESS LEGENDS

A colour-coding system categorizes criteria across four levels of readiness; a colour-filled cell indicates the level of Host (i.e. destination readiness) that specific criteria represent.

SYLVAN LAKE ANALYSIS

With an extensive synthesis of both first-hand and second-hand data, the DRF-SL has been utilized to provide a detailed picture of Sylvan Lake's status in terms of meeting criteria. The findings are visually represented by the following symbols, supported by highlights of gaps and strengths. These insights provide the rationale for the symbols assigned, reflecting how well Sylvan Lake meets the individual criteria:

- ● Sylvan Lake fully satisfies the expected criteria, demonstrating complete alignment with the set benchmarks.
- ◑ Sylvan Lake partially meets the criteria. Initial efforts have been made, creating a backbone for future improvements and advancements.
- ○ Sylvan Lake faces substantial gaps in fulfilling the criteria, highlighting areas that need considerable attention and improvement.

Progressing to the next Host level requires meeting the criteria set for the current level, representing an added capacity to move forward to the next level. Some criteria may recur across multiple categories. This repetition intentionally underscores the interconnectedness of different aspects of readiness.

Infrastructure & Attractions	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
A well-established access network creates a convenient commute in and between the destination & nearby attractions and destinations.	●				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Congestion is a reported issue on Lakeshore Drive in the summer months and during major events along the lake. A great deal of stress is placed on the town's transportation infrastructure with the focus on car-only access and circulation. • Access to the destination is dominated by private vehicles, by necessity, as there are no public transit or shuttle options locally or regionally. Strengths and Opportunities: • Sylvan Lake has a prime geographic location, less than a 75 minute drive from Calgary (155 kilometres south) and Edmonton (163 kilometres north), and 20 minutes from Red Deer (24 kilometres east). • Routes are well-maintained and easily navigable. • There are several primary access points in town from Highway 11, including via Centennial St., 60th St. and Highway 20 and Highway 11A.
Prime transportation infrastructure and service centres create access between the destination and a vast network of commercial, residential and tourism support resources in the region.		●			
Parking spaces are well-distributed to serve popular attractions, as well as recreational and entertainment facilities.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Parking capacity does not always meet demand during peak season. • Parking spaces are not well distributed throughout the town. • There is a lack of designated parking for RVs, buses, boat trailers, etc. along the lakefront and throughout the town. • Paid parking spaces are insufficient and inconsistent in the downtown core for both residents and visitors. • Paid parking is limited to peak season, May - September, and not activated during off-peak events. • Paid parking rates are consistent throughout the town. Strengths and Opportunities: • Tourism drives parking revenues, amounting to $515,836 in 2023—funds which can be directed, in whole or in part—to town tourism initiatives. • There remains an opportunity to expand economic impacts of parking and mitigate congestion by increasing rates and reducing free parking zones available during peak tourism seasons, and directing a portion of parking revenues to support VSL initiatives.
There are designated parking spaces for different types of vehicles (RVs, buses, etc.).		○			

Infrastructure & Attractions	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
There is a wide-reaching open space network, including: active and passive parks, green spaces, privately owned publicly accessible spaces (POPs), trails and open public areas.		●			Gaps and Weaknesses: • Public spaces throughout the town—including lakefront, parks, alleyways, walkways, trails and small parkettes—are underutilized and lack interconnections (via wayfinding, signage, maps, etc.) for the purpose of experience quality and experience development. • Town infrastructure lacks walkability and cyclability. • Interpretative signage is limited throughout the town, including in prime tourist areas. • Public washroom spaces are not activated for the purposes of information sharing (i.e., maps, signage, local promotions, etc.). • All public washroom spaces are gendered. • There is a lack of visitor information infrastructure, with no dedicated year-round hub that offers information and direction to visitors. • Purpose-built visitor information kiosks are not used for visitor information purposes. • Major attractions and visitor services do not adhere to comprehensive accessibility standards. Strengths and Opportunities: • There are a wide variety of parks, trails and open spaces to leverage and activate for the purposes of tourism experience development, placemaking and active transportation. • The boardwalk along Lakeshore Drive connects users to shops, restaurants, signature trails, picnic areas, playgrounds and open public spaces. • Public restrooms are located in proximity to the beach. • There is an opportunity to collaborate with local landowners to activate privately owned publicly accessible spaces (POPs). • There is an opportunity to enhance interpretive signage and visitor amenities (i.e., information, toilets, etc.) throughout the whole town.
Visitor-related infrastructure and information, including amenities like washrooms, interpretive signage, and details about upcoming experiences, are integrated into the whole town.	◑				

Infrastructure & Attractions	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
The destination's prime natural and built assets are utilized as visitor attractions or amenities, garnering economic receipt from visitors. This means that they are utilized in a tourism activity/tourism activities that create(s) revenue and hence build(s) the town's visitor economy.		◑			Gaps and Weaknesses: • There are limitations to the use, activation and appeal of Centennial Park, Sylvan Lake Park, Lakefront Park and Lighthouse Park. • With some minor exceptions, direct visitor use of the lake/lakefront does not garner economic receipt for the Municipality. • There is no public boat launch within town limits. • No formal boat lunch for non-motorized boats creates safety concerns, decreases quality of experience, and limits the possibility of well-organized visitor management. • Lakefront use is disorganized, creating conflict between users (i.e., swimming, motorized boating activities, non-motorized boating activities, other water-based recreational activities). • Strengths and Opportunities: • The lakefront is a natural oasis on the edge of an urban centre. • Sylvan Lake (lake) is one of the few recreational lakes in Alberta that doesn't get blue-green algae. The lake is ideal for swimming, with crystal clear waters and without a mucky bottom. • The boardwalk along Lakeshore Drive connects users to shops, restaurants, signature trails, picnic areas, playgrounds and open public spaces. • There is an opportunity to reenvision the architectural appeal, land use, water access, furniture, equipment and facilities available at Sylvan Lake Park, Centennial Park, Lakefront Park and Lighthouse Park, and connect these key lakefront locations. • There is an opportunity to leverage Sylvan Lake's unique potential as a winter destination, leaning into lake-based activities. • Pogadl Park, home of the WCBL Sylvan Lake Gulls and attraction for visitors from Central Alberta, is being developed as an 80-acre hub for outdoor activities. It is in its final phase of development and is already a signature multi-use facility.
The destination makes substantial investments in new or improved amenities and attractions, integrating them into tourism activities that cater to a national audience.			○		

Infrastructure & Attractions	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Attractions in downtown and Lakefront reflect the sense of community and lake town vibe through design elements, cultural themes and programming.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Downtown lacks a visible and palpable identity. • The Visit Sylvan Lake brand has not been physically operationalized throughout the town to reflect the local essence of a small, connected and vibrant lake town community. • There is a gap in place-based activations (programming, placemaking) that echo the charm, heritage, stories and people. • There is a lack of harmonized aesthetics that embodies and demonstrates a unique sense of place. • Vacant storefronts and retail spaces needing maintenance or improved upkeep define the downtown. • There are limited weather-protected venues and performance spaces are few. • Beautification efforts on Centennial St. are challenging due to a lack of power and the extensive space between street poles. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to activate Sylvan Lake Park, Centennial Park, Lakefront Park and Lighthouse Park as one key iconic landmark, with a variety of experiences and activations. • There is an opportunity to enhance the sense of community and lake town vibe throughout the whole town, via design elements, cultural themes and programming.
Major attractions and visitor-related facilities within the whole town reflect the sense of community and lake town vibe through design elements, cultural themes and programming.		○			
The destination features iconic landmarks, or unique natural or built assets that are nationally and /or Internationally recognized.			○		
Destination's signature trails serve as a signature attraction for the destination.[1]	○				Gaps and Weaknesses: • The local trail network lacks interconnectivity, with minimal wayfinding, signage, maps and activations throughout. • Local trails are not formally named. • There is no deliberate or distinct connection between local trails/routes to regional trails/routes. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to activate the existing trail network, through wayfinding, signage, maps and activations throughout, for the purposes of experience development, visitor attraction and active transportation. • There is an opportunity to create a trail system map connecting existing local green spaces, featuring community-chosen names.
A well-maintained and well-connected network of trails (urban and natural) serves as a signature attraction for the destination.		○			
The local trail network serves as an integral component of the regional trail network in Central Alberta, achieved either through strategic packaging and product development or by the establishment of new trails.[1]			○		

1 This could include the potential signature trails as envisioned in "Central Alberta Tourism Alliance: Trails Tourism Master Plan, 2020" , such as Sylvan Lake to Red Deer trail, or Bentley to Sylvan Lake trail)

Infrastructure & Attractions	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Major attractions and visitor-related facilities are easily accessible and well-connected, at least through a cohesive wayfinding strategy.	◐				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is a lack of comprehensive wayfinding and signage that connects major assets and attractions throughout the town. • Wayfinding and signage fail to connect visitors to experiences throughout the town. Strengths and Opportunities: • A wayfinding strategy is currently being implemented; there is an opportunity to redistribute and refine wayfinding infrastructure to enhance visibility and create connections between parking, walkable routes, town attractions and amenities.
Major attractions and visitor-related facilities are easily accessible and well-connected through well-defined and diversified routes, such as bike lanes, walking paths and car routes, and a cohesive wayfinding strategy.		○			
Major infrastructure and attractions accommodate individuals with diverse needs, including entry-level enthusiasts, families, seniors, and those with disabilities. This at least involves adhering to relevant accessibility codes, adding accessible pathways, and incorporating appropriate signage, furniture, and fixtures.	◐				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Major attractions and visitor services do not adhere to comprehensive accessibility standards. • The beach and waterfront can be a challenge to access and enjoy for people with disabilities/accessibility needs. • There is a gap in accommodation options with consistent levels of accessibility that consider those with varying abilities. • There are gaps in the infrastructure and experiences for seniors and people with disabilities. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to activate the existing trail network, through wayfinding, signage, maps and activations throughout, for the purposes of experience development, visitor attraction and active transportation. • There is an opportunity to create a trail system map connecting existing local green spaces, featuring community-chosen names.
All infrastructure and attractions adhere to comprehensive accessibility standards and measures, which encompass appropriate design, signage, furniture, and fixtures, catering to the needs of individuals with disabilities.		◐			
Downtown and lakefront accommodate various modes of transportation with focus on foot traffic and accessibility.		◐			Gaps and Weaknesses: • Town infrastructure lacks walkability and cyclability, due to gaps in signage, wayfinding and interconnectivity. • Strengths and Opportunities: • Trails and bike paths are in place for foot traffic and cycling.

Infrastructure & Attractions	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Downtown and lakefront areas offer numerous pedestrian-focused uses, including areas for public gatherings and markets.		◑			Gaps and Weaknesses: • Pedestrian-focused areas for public gatherings and markets lack strategic and ongoing passive activation. • There is a lack of integrated, community-informed, strategic placemaking approach to offer a clear sense of how diverse spaces can be utilized. Strengths and Opportunities: • There are numerous locations for public gatherings, markets and pedestrian-focused uses in Sylvan Lake's downtown, including Pocket Park, Centennial Park, Sylvan Lake Park/Baby Beach, Lakefront Park, Lighthouse Park and Festival St., as well as multiple trails. • Town events and festivals take place in downtown and lakefront areas. • There is a 1,000-metre boardwalk along Lakeshore Drive, providing access to nearby shops, restaurants, picnic areas, playgrounds and parks. • There is an opportunity to develop complete streets downtown, to safely accommodate vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians.
Downtown and lakefront feature a variety of place-based initiatives that echo the vibe and essence of a small lake town.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Placemaking has yet to be embraced as a comprehensive approach to public art, beautification, activation and wayfinding, as interconnected solutions that enhance the lake town vibe. • There is a lack of harmonized aesthetics that embodies and demonstrates a unique sense of place. • There is a gap in place-based activations (programming, placemaking) that echo the charm, heritage, stories and people. Strengths and Opportunities: • Town events and festivals take place in downtown and lakefront areas. • There are select public art exhibits in place, including the "Here Comes the Sun" mural on Centennial St., the SYLVAN LAKE name sign on the pier, the 'Let Them Play' Indigenous mural and the 'Varsity Hall' exhibit. • There's an opportunity to enhance streetscapes to represent the town's cultural identity.
Visually enhanced streetscapes in downtown and the whole town represent the town's cultural identity.		○			
Destination enjoys a harmonized aesthetic within the whole town which reflects the small lake town vibe through design elements, placemaking, cultural themes and programming.			○		

Infrastructure & Attractions	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Downtown and lakefront areas feature a variety of premium local shops and services that cater to a diverse audience of local and non-local visitors, with storefronts that echo and enhance the lake town vibe through application of design or cultural elements.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Vacant storefronts and retail spaces needing maintenance or improved upkeep define the downtown. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is a selection of unique shops downtown, and an opportunity to attract new and diverse retailers and restaurants, to draw visitors off the beach.
Picturesque storefronts are thriving within the whole town, reflecting their own distinguished brand as well as the collective sense of Sylvan Lake's vibe and charm.		○			
The beach area prioritizes functions and uses aligned with the community's desires and expectations, and creates a fulfilling visitor experience for both local and non-local visitors.	○				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There are conflicts of recreational use in and adjacent to the lake (swimming, motorized and non-motorized boating activities, and other water-based recreational activities). • There is limited sandy beach space. • There is no public boat launch within town limits. • Visitors erect large structures at the beach during the busy season, claiming large swaths of prime space. • Locals avoid the beach area during peak season. Strengths and Opportunities: • The beach is well-managed from waste management, public works and safety perspectives. • There is an opportunity to activate Sylvan Lake Park, Centennial Park, Lakefront Park and Lighthouse Park as one key iconic landmark, with a variety of experiences and activations. • Prioritizing beach areas for uses that require beach/water access and moving other uses elsewhere can help facilitate greater traffic around town
The beach area with well-managed enhanced infrastructure contributes to a high quality visitor experience for both local and non-local visitors.		◑			
Signature visitor attractions are spread across the community, drawing visitors not only to downtown but also to other areas.			◑		Gaps and Weaknesses: • Town-led festivals and events are almost exclusively hosted along the lakefront and in downtown. • There is a lack of visitor information infrastructure, to entice visitors beyond the downtown. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to draw visitors beyond the downtown, via signature visitor attractions.
Enhanced infrastructure, information and services across the town entice visitors to explore beyond the downtown.		○			

Infrastructure & Attractions	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
A unified signage and wayfinding strategy is implemented in prime visitor areas guiding visitors to attractions, facilities, and services.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is a lack of comprehensive wayfinding and signage that connects major assets and attractions throughout the town, and provides information to visitors. • Wayfinding and signage does not reflect the destination aesthetic and unique sense of place. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is existing signage and wayfinding in prime visitor areas. • There is an opportunity to introduce a unified signage and wayfinding strategy. • There is an opportunity to use wayfinding to influence visitor behaviour.
A unified signage and wayfinding strategy is implemented within the entire town, guiding visitors to attractions, facilities, services and vendors.		○			
The signage designs reflect the destination's unique sense of place and capitalize on the lake town vibe, with full attention to accessibility and inclusivity.	◑				

Visitor-Related Facilities, Amenities, and Services		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
						Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Accommodation & Lodging	The destination offers a diverse range of tourism accommodations that cater to various budget preferences and meet the demands of short and medium-length stays. This includes the right mix of campgrounds, hotels and motels, cabins and lodges, bed & breakfasts.		◑			Gaps and Weaknesses: • Hotels and motels in Sylvan Lake are rated between two- and three-stars. The quality of accommodation spaces and services do not meet the needs and expectations of high-value markets. • Inventory lacks diversity and capital investment in improvements, limiting appeal to higher-spending visitors. • Accommodation providers in Sylvan Lake have varying levels of visitor market readiness, including with regard to customer service. • There is a general lack of comprehensive accessibility standards in local accommodations. • Accommodation establishments do not foster the sense of staying in a lake town. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is a range of accommodation options in Sylvan Lake, including mid-budget level hotels, short-term rentals, RV parks and seasonal campgrounds. • RV parks attract long-staying visitors. • There is an opportunity for local accommodations to incorporate design elements, cultural themes and programming, connected to the local lake town vibe. • In general, local accommodations meet Essential market readiness criteria. (See Appendix B.)
	The destination offers a diverse range of tourism accommodations that cater to various budget preferences, catering specifically to the demands of longer-term stays, including resorts and vacation rentals.			◑		
	Accommodation establishments meet all essential tourism market readiness criteria that enable high quality services. (Refer to Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness for Businesses, Essential Market Readiness Criteria.)	◑				
	Accommodation establishments meet or exceed local quality standards for cleanliness, safety, and guest services, and consistently maintain high-quality service and operations to meet the demanding influx of visitors during peak seasons.	◑				

Visitor-Related Facilities, Amenities, and Services		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
						Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Accommodation & Lodging	Accommodation options are designed to cater to visitors with disabilities.	◑				Strengths and Opportunities: (...continued from previous page) • There is an opportunity for Town accessibility policies to influence the development of new, and/or improvements to existing, accommodation types.
	Accommodation establishments meet essential and advanced tourism market readiness criteria that enable year-round high quality services. (Refer to Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness for Businesses, Advanced Market Readiness Criteria).		○			
	Accommodation establishments meet the quality expected from a popular regional destination. They provide full services to tourists attending seasonal events and tournaments, as well as beach lovers in peak seasons which may include access to alternative means of transport, local guides, local tours and offers, etc.			○		
	Accommodation establishments meet essential tourism export readiness criteria, and might also align with advanced export-readiness criteria, ensuring consistent, year-round premium quality services tailored for competitive overseas markets. (Refer to Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness for Businesses, Essential and Advanced Market Readiness Criteria).			○		
	Accommodation establishments provide the sense of staying in a lake town, reflecting the vibe and identity of the destination through design elements, cultural themes and programming.	◑				
Food, Beverage, Other shops	A diverse range of local cafes, restaurants, and other retailers offering products and services that draw visitors' interests are readily available. These operations cater to a wide range of preferences and budgets while meeting Essential market readiness criteria. (Refer to Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness for Businesses, Essential Market Readiness Criteria).	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Generally speaking, locally-owned and -operated small-scale restaurants and retail shops do not actively serve target visitors from various demographics on a year-round basis. • There is limited access to support services (i.e., groceries, gas) in the lakefront area. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is a diverse range of local cafes and restaurants. • Local retailers source and sell locally-made products.

Visitor-Related Facilities, Amenities, and Services		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
						Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Food, Beverage, Other shops	A variety of locally-owned and -operated, small-scale culinary and retail shops actively serves target visitors from various demographics. These operations offer high-quality services year-round and have already integrated visitor experience offerings and initiatives into their business models, aligning with Advanced market readiness criteria. (Refer to Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness for Businesses - Advanced Market Readiness Criteria.)		◑			Strengths and Opportunities: (...continued from previous page) • There are opportunities to further capitalize on Central Alberta's agritourism appeal, and foster local and regional collaboration between food and beverage establishments, as well as other local shops.
	Destinations feature a selection of retailers, both in the food and non-food sectors, that possess the capacity to establish, or have already established, partnerships with tour operators and/or other service providers in the region or beyond, demonstrating readiness for export markets (refer to: Tourism Market Preparedness for Businesses - Essential and Advanced Export Readiness Criteria).			○		
Recreation, Entertainment	The destination boasts well-maintained and fully operational indoor and outdoor recreational and entertainment facilities and amenities that serve both the local community and tourists/visitors throughout the year and/or seasonally.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Generally speaking, existing facilities—both Town-led and private businesses—are not leveraged effectively for tourism product development. • There is a gap in local entertainment venues/facilities. • There is a lack of indoor capacity to accommodate large-size events. • Key lakefront assets are underutilized, including Sylvan Lake park, Lakefront Park, Pier and Lighthouse Park, as is true for nearby walkways. Strengths and Opportunities: • The existing trail network throughout the lakefront area and other parts of town is well-used and considered a great recreational amenity for residents. • Essential infrastructure (i.e., power, water, public washrooms, etc.) is in place at popular local facilities and amenities. • Facilities and amenities adhere to health, safety and security protocols relevant to their service type and scale. • There is a selection of both indoor and outdoor facilities and amenities to host small- and medium-sized events or group experiences, aligning with year-round tourism product development potential.
	The destination has certain facilities and amenities, whether indoor or outdoor, that are effectively leveraged in the development of tourism products. Examples may include the local arena used as the venue for seasonal, ticket-based local/regional events or private recreational businesses, such as golf clubs, serving as venues for local annual conventions.		○			

Visitor-Related Facilities, Amenities, and Services		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
						Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Recreation, Entertainment	The destination features a variety of facilities and amenities, both indoor and outdoor, that are fully utilized to provide diverse tourism experiences tailored for high and shoulder seasons. These experiences include winter and aquatic activities, local seasonal festivals, and weather-independent recreational and entertainment offerings.			○		Strengths and Opportunities: (...continued from previous page) • There is an opportunity to more strategically-/thoughtfully-connect facilities and amenities to the lake town vibe.
	The destination features facilities and amenities that can serve small to medium-sized events or group experiences (up to a population of 1,000).	●				
	The destination features facilities and amenities that can serve medium-sized events or group experiences (up to a population of 4,000).		◑			
	The destination features recreational and entertainment facilities and amenities that can serve large-sized events or group experiences (up to a population of 7,000).			○		
	The destination features recreational and entertainment facilities and amenities that can serve oversized events or group experiences (a population of 7,000+).				○	
	Infrastructure essential for events, including power, water, public washrooms, and site access, is either already installed or allocated for use in the target facilities and amenities with the highest annual event usage, and the service level adequately meets the needs of the number of participants.	●				
	All facilities and amenities equipped to accommodate individuals with disabilities.		◑			
	All facilities and amenities adhere to health, safety and security protocols relevant to their service type and scale.	●				
	The signature amenities feature a harmonized architectural sense and/or interpretive design elements that reflect the sense of a lake town vibe.	◑				

Visitor-Related Facilities, Amenities, and Services		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
						Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Transportation	Transportation options are available for visitors from neighbouring communities during high season and major seasonal events, providing prospective visitors an opportunity to visit without relying on private vehicles.	○				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is a lack of visitor information infrastructure in a central tourist location, with no dedicated year-round hub that offers information and direction to visitors. • Two purpose-built visitor information kiosks are not used for visitor information purposes (one near the library and the other, on the lakefront). • Visitor services available via the Nexsource Centre are not well-marked or well-communicated/promoted, nor does the location embody the lake town vibe. • There is no robust or formal tourism-dedicated training for Nexsource team members. Strengths and Opportunities: • Visitor Information Services are currently available via the Nexsource Centre.
	Alternative transportation modes, such as scooters and shuttle services, are readily available for transfers within the destination during high season and major seasonal events.		◑			
	The destination benefits from enhanced transportation options to accommodate the influx of visitors, including regular bus or shuttle services from major regional urban hubs, Calgary and Edmonton, during high season and major seasonal events.		○			
	Convenient transportation options, including packaged services, charter or regular buses and flights, are readily available year-round from other regional hubs, Calgary and Edmonton, as well as other target market destinations beyond the province.			○		
	Alternative transportation modes follow quality and safety standards and are aligned with the vibe of a small lake town.	◑				
	There are transportation options within and from/to the destination that cater to people with disabilities.	○				
Travel Facilitation/Info	The destination features a dedicated hub or multiple booths for visitor information, strategically placed within the municipal and community hubs and/or close to the most popular visitor spots and attractions. The hub operates with extended hours, beyond typical business hours, including evenings and weekends.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is a lack of visitor information infrastructure in a central tourist location, with no dedicated year-round hub that offers information and direction to visitors. • Two purpose-built visitor information kiosks are not used for visitor information purposes (one near the library and the other, on the lakefront). • Visitor services available via the Nexsource Centre are not well-marked or well-communicated/promoted, nor does the location embody the lake town vibe.

	Visitor-Related Facilities, Amenities, and Services	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
						Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Travel Facilitation/Information	The destination maintains a year-round active visitor information hub staffed with trained personnel. This visitor hub is located at or visible from critical access points and/or tourism hot spots.		○			Gaps and Weaknesses: (…continued from previous page) • There is no robust or formal tourism-dedicated training for Nexsource team members. Strengths and Opportunities: • Visitor Information Services are currently available via the Nexsource Centre.
	The visitor information hub/centre reflects the unique vibe of the local lake town through design elements, interpretive designs, or cultural themes.		○			
	Evidence exists of active collaboration of local operations with tour operators and/or other travel intermediaries operating in the region and beyond. This may include local tour operators and intermediaries who work closely with local vendors and attractions to represent the destination, or regional tour packages that offer a signature experience from the destination.		○			Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is limited evidence of active collaboration of local operations with tour operators and/or other travel intermediaries operating in the region and beyond. • Limited tourism products present a challenge for revenue-generating product development and investment from third-party companies and investors. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to invest in relationship development and negotiations with tour operators, destination management companies (DMCs) and/or other travel intermediaries operating in Central Alberta, or interested in Central Alberta product offerings. Focus on showcasing/promoting tourism products throughout the Town (Town-led and privately-owned).
	Evidence exists of active collaboration of the local tourism industry with travel intermediaries operating across the province and beyond. This may include a variety of tour packages offered by inbound tour operators, online travel agents, wholesalers, or travel agents with a Canada-wide market reach, which integrate or offer a range of signature experiences and services from the destination.			○		
	Evidence of active collaborations of the local tourism industry with international travel intermediaries exists. This includes an established travel trades network that works closely with inbound tourism operators in product development, destination representation and tourism delivery.				○	

Visitor-Related Facilities, Amenities, and Services		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
						Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Supporting Services (non-tourism)	Destination has well-maintained municipal services and facilities such as restrooms, parks and picnic areas that can serve both the local community and tourists/visitors on a regular and seasonal basis.	●				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Municipal services and facilities, such as restrooms, parks and picnic areas, are largely concentrated along the lakefront. • Limited operating hours impact the availability and reliability of supporting services. • Municipal services hours are not extended into shoulder season. Strengths and Opportunities: • There are well-maintained municipal services and facilities such as restrooms, parks and picnic areas. • Supporting services, such as grocery stores and gas stations, are available in Sylvan Lake.
	Essential services such as medical care, emergency response, police, and safety measures meet the needs of both the local community and tourists/visitors.	◑				
	Access to essential services is maintained year-round. Other supporting services such as grocery stores, gas stations, and equipment rentals are available with extended operating hours including weekends.	◑				
	An established supporting network, including en route services (i.e., gas-coffee-washroom complexes between cities), transportation services, etc., within the region enables year-long prime service delivery to visitors from across the region.		◑			
Workforce & Training		**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**	**Sylvan Lake Analysis**
						Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Tourism operations and hospitality services have trained workforces capable of providing high-quality customer service.		◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Customer service and personalized experiences are inconsistent throughout the town, with some establishments meeting a much higher standard than others. • Generally speaking, there is a gap in quality customer service and limited cultural competency/sensitivity among the front line tourism & hospitality workforce. • There is a lack of evidence pointing to a highly-skilled workforce and personalized customer service. • There is no robust or formal tourism-dedicated training for Nexsource team members who provide visitor information services.
Tourism operations and hospitality services have trained workforces capable of providing personalized experiences to visitors.			◑			
Tourism operations and hospitality services have trained workforces knowledgeable about cultural sensitivity to ensure a respectful and inclusive experience for non-local visitors.				◑		

Workforce & Training	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Tourism operations and hospitality services have employees trained in multiple languages or with multilingual skills.				○	Strengths and Opportunities: • Existing tourism experiences in town have high Google ratings, speaking to positive guest satisfaction (which is influenced, in part, by interactions with frontline staff). • There is evidence that finding labour is not a major challenge for local businesses. • There is an opportunity for the Town to provide training resources and programs to local businesses and their teams.
The destination management entity actively engages with local tourism stakeholders to identify gaps in skills and capacity building requirements, and provides access to training support for addressing gaps in skills.	◐				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is limited ongoing workforce training and skill enhancement opportunities available through the Town. • There is limited human resource capacity at the Town for regularly engaging employers and frontline tourism staff, to understand needs and challenges & respond accordingly. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity for the Town to lead or facilitate skills development training tailored to local and regional needs, and providing ongoing capacity-building support.
The destination management entity regularly conducts workforce forecasts and needs analyses to determine the current and future staffing requirements of the tourism sector.		○			
Well-established ongoing capacity-building support is in place, tailored for local needs and regional tourism demands and trends, and catered to existing and prospective tourism workforce development. Capacity-building efforts are accessible for both local and regional industry partners.		○			
The destination management entity implements targeted workforce development programs or incentives - grounded in the needs analysis - to subsidize training and development for tourism-related skills.			○		
Heritage, Culture and Community Vibe	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**	**Sylvan Lake Analysis**
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
The destination demonstrates well-established place-based and program-based initiatives that are visitor-oriented and authentically reflect the town's unique charm and vibe, including public artworks, street festivals, cultural events and programs, and art campaigns.	◐				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Existing public art and installations do not incorporate interactive elements or meaningful storytelling to prompt engagement from passer's by. • There is a gap in place-based activations (programming, placemaking) that echo the charm, heritage, stories and people.

Heritage, Culture and Community Vibe	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Certain place-based and/or program-based initiatives are in place that educate about local history and legacy, preserve and promote local culture and heritage, and foster cultural connections, while creating visitor attractions.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: (...continued from previous page) • Aside from the 'Let Them Play' installation, there is a lack of place-based initiatives/installations that showcase local Indigenous culture and perspective. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to enhance the Town's investments in public art through strategic decision making. • Festivals and events are considered one of Sylvan Lake's strongest attributes, with an opportunity to activate these assets from a tourism perspective. • There is an opportunity to invest in activations throughout the town, informed by Indigenous place-based learning and knowing.
Certain place-based and/or program-based initiatives are in place that raise awareness of Indigenous histories through the lens of reconciliation and decolonization and showcase Indigenous perspectives about connection with the land.	◑				
The destination makes substantial investments and allocates a dedicated budget to create a distinct sense of place within the entire town that radiates its cultural identity and embodies the vibrant lake town vibe. This commitment is evident through beautification, refurbishments, and renovations, new developments, placemaking, public art installations, and other animating strategies that are implemented throughout the entire town.		○			
The destination strongly integrates its stories, heritage, community culture, and vibe into prominent marketing initiatives, and signature tourism products and experiences.		◑			Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is a gap in place-based activations (programming, placemaking) that echo the charm, heritage, stories and people. • There is a significant gap in connecting local stories to the visitor experience in ways that encourage visitors to learn about the history and essence of the community • Existing public art and installations do not incorporate accessible design or interactive elements to prompt meaningful engagement from passer's by. • The public art selection process is not defined by an artist-led community engagement component, to ensure final installations reflect the diverse stories and community heritage of Sylvan Lake. • Historical plaques throughout town are evidence incorporating stories and heritage into the local culture/vibe,, however these lack interactivity and meaningful storytelling, and are concentrated exclusively along the lakefront. • There is a minimal variety of tourism products to entice visitors to spend more/stay longer, and no packaged experiences currently available for booking.

Heritage, Culture and Community Vibe	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
A variety of tourism products and packaged experiences are offered, providing visitors with immersive, culturally enriching opportunities that showcase the destination's history, heritage, and community vibrancy.			○		Gaps and Weaknesses: (...continued from previous page) • Sylvan Lake Archives are not leveraged or activated for place-based or program-based experiences. Strengths and Opportunities: • User-generated content is prominent within VSL's marketing content line-up, presenting an opportunity for further enhancing the connection between people and place in marketing initiatives. • There is an opportunity to use placemaking to reflect and promote the local stories, history and legacy throughout the town, while creating visitor attractions. • There is an opportunity to enhance and activate existing initiatives, particularly the historic walking tours on the VSL site, by investing in promotion/visibility, design and potentially tourism package development. • There is an opportunity to feature local people in marketing and storytelling—or local places, through people—in order to more effectively connect with prospective visitors whilst also more effectively demonstrating the "lake town vibe." • There is an opportunity to reenvision the 'Let Them Play' installation through collaboration with the artist, to enhance interactivity. • There is an opportunity to leverage local stories and histories to inform and inspire tourism experiences.
Community Engagement, Leadership and Partnership	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**	**Sylvan Lake Analysis**
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
There is evidence of small-scale visitor-oriented initiatives that engage business owners, entrepreneurs, artists or local non-profits and grassroots. These initiatives may include local markets, pop-ups, art and cultural programs organized by community groups or locally owned businesses, with active participation and leadership from residents.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Of the local, small-scale initiatives that exist within the town, there is limited evidence that they are visitor-oriented. • There is a strong expectation (and reliance) from existing community groups regarding the Town's role in providing support and funding. • Knowledge, funding and communications barriers prevent community participation and investment in tourism-related initiatives. • Jazz at the Lake was dissolved because of grant funding from the Town and burnout amongst organizers, pointing to a lack of support for community-led, visitor-oriented initiatives.

Community Engagement, Leadership and Partnership	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
There are community groups that are active in visitor-oriented services and activities and at least partially fund themselves either through providing direct visitor experience or providing support services.		○			Gaps and Weaknesses: (...continued from previous page) • An absence of grassroots efforts in the tourism sector results in a scarcity of community-led visitor experiences and participatory placemaking initiatives. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is some evidence of community-led or business-led activations/ programming, such as the Farmers' Market, Sylvan Lake Theatre and pop-ups led by local entrepreneurs, which represent opportunities for engaging visitors through community-oriented activities. • There is an opportunity to invest in the skills development of community groups (i.e., seeking & securing funding, strategy & development), enhancing and expanding community capacity to lead visitor-oriented initiatives. • There is a desire and potential to expand community-led visitor-related initiatives such as art, food and creativity.
Active community groups focused on visitor services and activities have notably diversified their funding sources via tourism. This diversification is demonstrated by their financial independence from Town support, a clear movement towards self-sustainability, or a demonstrated interest in co-investing in destination development.			○		
Utilization of destination's assets in visitor-oriented experience is done with full consideration of community needs and priorities, as evidenced by inclusive community consultations and alignment with local development plans.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There are limited information-sharing channels, whereby the Town can provide the community with updates about tourism-related initiatives, opportunities and investments. • There is a gap in accessible and inclusive engagement channels for community rights holders and visitors to participate in tourism-related decision-making. • There is little buy-in/participation to community opportunities with the Town, for example, the Tourism Development Committee and the Tourism Partnership Program. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to create diverse, accessible, inclusive and interactive information-sharing channels for updates about tourism-related initiatives, opportunities and investments. • There is an opportunity to create diverse, accessible and inclusive engagement channels for community rights holders and visitors to participate in tourism-related decision-making.
Multiple mechanisms are established for effective, accessible, and on-going communication and feedback-sharing between diverse community rights holders, tourism industry and the destination management entity.	◑				
Active engagement of diverse voices and perspectives in place-based activations is evident and well-established, including Indigenous-informed placekeeping strategies.		○			

Community Engagement, Leadership and Partnership	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Established, accessible mechanisms are in place for community participation in tourism and destination development decision making. This might be in the form of voting platforms, community focus groups or task forces from different local groups that are actively engaged in deciding about and piloting place-based and program-based initiatives that cater to both local visitors and tourists, or other forms of participatory decision making.		○			Strengths and Opportunities: (...continued from previous page) • There is an opportunity to reimagine Town committees that rely on community volunteers, based on engagement from public engagement.
There is established evidence of the investment of tourism revenue into the community, leading to community integration. This includes the enhancement of infrastructure, amenities, places, programs, and services that foster cultural connections, resource and idea sharing, and social integration among local residents.			○		
Diverse evidence exists of public-private-community partnership (including the municipality, local business owners and community groups) in small-scale visitor oriented place-based or program-based activities.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is little evidence of public-private-community partnership in small-scale visitor oriented place-based or program-based activations. • There is limited leadership capacity and knowledge gaps around community-centric PPCP models, as well as community-driven approaches to capital pooling and affordable ownership. • There is limited collaboration between the local Chamber of Commerce and the Town. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to identify and implement community-centric strategies to encourage PPCP for capital pooling and investment in destination development. • There is an opportunity to enhance and further activate the Tourism Partnership Program, by incorporating capacity building for collaboration and partnership, enabling grassroots initiatives and community-led-efforts, and connecting community groups who want to explore how to lean on visitors to fund their community programs.
There are instances of participation in cost-shared promotions among visitor-related business owners, at least within local tourism markets.	◑				
Diverse evidence exists of public-private-community partnership in tourism product development, marketing initiatives, space activation, visitor management, and investment efforts that are aligned with tourism development priorities.		○			

Community Engagement, Leadership and Partnership	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Diverse evidence exists of public-private-community partnership in small to medium scale local destination development initiatives such as co-investment in small to medium scale local infrastructure and attractions, enhancing/diversifying visitor experiences, provincial and national scale marketing, and environmental/ cultural protection.			○		Strengths and Opportunities: (...continued from previous page) • There is evidence of a desire among local visitor-related business owners for co-marketing and promotion opportunities, presenting an opportunity for the Town to foster. • There is an opportunity for the Town to pursue government funding to support PPCP projects. • There is an opportunity to champion piloting to address the risk many local business owners perceive to exist when it comes to creating visitor experiences.
Diverse evidence exists of public-private-community partnership in large-scale local or regional destination development such as in co-investment in large-scale/ regional infrastructure and attractions, international-scale marketing, and packaged experiences and whole-selling.				○	
Local talents and businesses are showcased in marketing initiatives led or co-led by the destination management entity.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is limited team capacity at the Town level for strategic and ongoing content development, featuring local talents and businesses, for use in marketing and promotional activities. • The Town administration has made investments in supporting local businesses to support tourism product readiness and development, though limited capacity is a barrier. • There is limited engagement with local talents and businesses, to guide Town initiatives meant to support local businesses. In examples where Town initiatives have seen little uptake, there was no follow-up with businesses to ask what barriers prevented participation (also due, in part, to a lack of Town team capacity). • There is limited evidence of co-development–between the Town and community or local business owners–in creating visitor experiences and placemaking initiatives. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to champion piloting to address the risk many local business owners perceive to exist when it comes to creating visitor experiences. • Local retailers source and sell locally-made products.
The destination management entity enables opportunities for low-risk and affordable community co-investment in destination development and tourism product development. This might be evident in engaging artisans, entrepreneurs, and cultural groups, in the co-creation of visitor experiences and placemaking initiatives.	○				
The destination management entity fosters collaboration between the tourism industry and other local businesses and groups in the design and delivery of tourism packages or collaborative experiences.		◑			
The destination management entity facilitates partnerships between local tourism industry stakeholders, and relevant governmental bodies for resource pooling in collaborative tourism products and marketing.			○		
The destination management entity actively involves local tourism industry stakeholders in shaping international visitor experiences. Collaborations between local stakeholders and national/global partners lead to the creation of globally competitive tourism products.				○	

Market Preparedness & Tourism Entrepreneurship		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
						Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Market Preparedness	The destination features a diverse range of visitor-related local businesses that have achieved at least the Essential level of market readiness to conduct tourism operations. *(See Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness for Businesses - Essential market readiness criteria.)*	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • A large number of existing businesses operate at a minimum level of market readiness. • There is little buy-in/participation to community opportunities with the Town, for example, the Tourism Development Committee and the Tourism Partnership Program. • Customer service and personalized experiences are inconsistent throughout the town, with some establishments meeting a much higher standard than others. • Generally speaking, there is a gap in quality customer service and limited cultural competency/sensitivity among the front line tourism and hospitality workforce. • Limited team capacity prevents VSL and other CATA members from implementing meaningful collaborative initiatives. • There are limited channels to facilitate collaboration between visitor-related businesses throughout the Central Alberta region. • Strengths and Opportunities: • Local visitor-ready operations are eager to expand their offerings to meaningfully benefit from the visitor economy. • There is an opportunity to streamline processes for entrepreneurship and small business support, to enable cross-sector growth, including access to capital and investment in market-readiness.
	There are local businesses with established relationships (partnership, membership, etc.) with the local tourism organization (i.e. Visit Sylvan Lake) and/or evidence of collaboration or partnership with the tourism industry network at the local level.	○				
	The destination features a diverse range of visitor-related local businesses that have been operational for at least one year and meet the extended level of market readiness criteria. *(See Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness for Businesses - Advanced market readiness criteria.) They generate revenue from both local and regional market demands.*		◑			
	There are local tourism operations and facilities with established relationships (partnership, memberships, etc.) with local and regional tourism organizations and DMOs and/or evidence of collaboration or partnership with tourism industry networks in Central Alberta is present.		○			
	The destination features a diverse range of visitor-related local businesses that have been operational for at least two years and have built initial capacities to become tourism trade (i.e., export) ready. *(See Appendix B: Tourism Market Preparedness for Businesses - Essential market readiness criteria.)*			○		

Market Preparedness & Tourism Entrepreneurship		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
						Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Market Preparedness	There are local tourism operations and facilities with established relationships (partnership, membership, etc.) with regional and provincial tourism networks and DMOs (e.g., Travel Alberta), and evidence of utilizing their networks for market reach at the inter and intra-provincial scale (e.g., whole Alberta and BC) is present. This may include collaborations with tour operators or DMOs for cross-province or cross-country packaging, participation in industry networking events at the provincial level, and engagements with online travel agents.			○		(refer to previous page)
	The destination is home to a diverse range of visitor-related local businesses that have been established for at least three years (evidence of products and experiences offered for three years or more) and meet the extended level of export readiness criteria. *(Refer to: Tourism Market Preparedness for businesses- Advanced export readiness criteria).*				○	
	There are local tourism operations and facilities with established relationships (partnership, membership, etc.) with regional, provincial, and national tourism networks and DMOs (e.g., Destination Canada), and evidence of established connections with distribution trade partners, through leveraging these networks and resources, is present. This can include an active presence in international tradeshows, participation in international tourism industry networking events, and organizing media and trade familiarization visits.				○	
Entrepreneurship	The destination has a number of signature local businesses that have initiated visitor-oriented experiences in addition to, or as part of, any commercial/retail nature of the establishment. The emphasis is on the provision of an "experience" versus the delivery of a community service. Such businesses include, but are not limited to, art and culture-based businesses, culinary-related businesses, nature-based businesses, nature-based experiences, sports and adventure businesses.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • A limited number of town businesses operate from a visitor-oriented lens, in whole or in part, to provide tourism experiences. • There are no mechanisms in place to foster tourism product packaging and promotion. Strengths and Opportunities: • Local visitor-ready operations are eager to expand their offerings to meaningfully benefit from the visitor economy, and operate as such to the extent possible based on capacity.

Market Preparedness & Tourism Entrepreneurship		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
						Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Tourism Entrepreneurship	The destination has a strong and diverse range of signature local businesses that provide visitor-oriented experiences on a regular basis in addition to, or as part of any commercial/retail nature of the establishment.		◑			Strengths and Opportunities: (...continued from previous page) • There is an opportunity to foster local tourism entrepreneurship, through educational efforts, funding and piloting.
	The destination has a strong presence of a diverse range of established signature local tourism operators that offer tourism experiences individually or as part of a tourism package.			○		
	Visitor-related local businesses and initiatives have business models and operational capacities that ensure their economic resiliency, and this is evident through diversity of services and products, evidence of packaging and partnership, and evidence of investment in operations and human resources.			○		
	Evidence exists of the Town practice and policies to support entrepreneurship, business attraction, innovation and incubation of tourism and hospitality services.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Small business attraction and retention is not currently led from a tourism-informed perspective. • There is limited Town team capacity, and limited mechanisms in place, to support and foster local entrepreneurship, innovation and incubation for visitor-related products, services and experiences. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to create a VSL position dedicated to supporting entrepreneurship, business attraction, innovation and incubation of tourism and hospitality services • There is an opportunity to enhance collaborations between the Town and the Chamber of Commerce.
	A well-established capacity building and support system for hospitality and tourism entrepreneurship is in place, focused on at least essential market-readiness. This support program incubates or facilitates establishing new hospitality-related service providers, side hustlers, artisanal crafts and experience providers. It provides opportunities for piloting and network building at local and regional levels.		○			
	A comprehensive entrepreneurial capacity building program is established, focused on tourism and hospitality entrepreneurship and business development. This program spans from early-stage idea incubation to established business acceleration (i.e. both essential market readiness and advanced market readiness) as well as workforce capacity building. It facilitates piloting, partnership, and co-investment at regional and provincial levels.			○		
	A well-established add-on support program or mechanism exists that is focused on business acceleration, export readiness, investment, partnership, and packaging at national and international levels.				○	

Market Reach/Market Establishment	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
The destination has tapped into the local market (the town, neighbouring towns and communities) through established programs and experiences, and is planting seeds to access the regional market through piloting programs, experiences and partnerships.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Sylvan Lake's visitor market is primarily local, including those from the Central Corridor. • There is evidence of limited visitor spending while in Sylvan Lake. • There are limited visitor-ready experiences to entice visitors from further afield, to come longer and spend more. Strengths and Opportunities: • Sylvan Lake is a well-known name within the Central Alberta region. • There is an opportunity to further expand tourism appeal (through DLMP implementation), to expand the visitor market and with that, economic returns on tourism investments.
The destination has utilized the domestic market at regional scale (Central Alberta) and has also reached the market of major urban hubs across the province, in particular Calgary and Edmonton. This is evident in the diversity of visitors' receipts (geographically), longer length of stay, and increased visitor spending.		○			
The destination has an established tourism market from Central Alberta, Calgary and Edmonton, has reached the domestic market at national scale, and has started to plant seeds in accessing the inbound tourism market. This is evident in the diversity of visitors' receipts (geographically) and diversity of packaged products. They have active partnerships with tourism and travel associations at provincial level, and inbound tour operators.			○		
The destination has accessed the inbound tourism market through active partnership with tourism and travel associations at the national level, inbound tour operators and overseas travel distributors including travel wholesalers, direct sellers, travel agents, meeting planners and event planners.				○	
The destination has a *Market Readiness Index that enables informed decisions about the timing and approach to reactivating sales and marketing activity to attract visitors to the destination. **Market Readiness Index is a regular summary of market signals and indicators assessing the readiness of visitor source markets for Sylvan Lake's visitor economy.*				○	

Tourism Economic Impact	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
There are significant business opportunities and stakeholder interest to fill capacity in the shoulder season and increase the utilization of existing infrastructure and assets in tourism.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Visitor-related businesses are primarily located along the lakefront and in downtown. • Sylvan Lake is overly dependent on summer season visitation, especially evident in hotel occupancy (average summer occupancy: 80-85%; average winter occupancy:45-50%). • There is limited Town team capacity, and limited mechanisms in place, to support and foster local entrepreneurship, innovation and incubation for visitor-related products, services and experiences. • There is limited Town team capacity for engaging artisans and storytellers to envision and co-develop tourism offerings. • Knowledge, funding and communications barriers prevent community participation and investment in tourism-related initiatives. Strengths and Opportunities: • Events and festivals draw some visitors during the shoulder season. • There is an opportunity for the Town to attract diverse businesses and investors, to expand visitor-related products, services and experiences available. • There is an opportunity for the Town to develop shoulder season products and experiences. • Events often provide opportunities for vendor participation. • There is an opportunity for the Town to help vendors test ideas, gather proof of concept and provide support in eventually setting up permanent businesses elsewhere in town. • There is an opportunity to feature local people in marketing and storytelling—or local places, through people—in order to more effectively connect with prospective visitors whilst also more effectively demonstrating the "lake town vibe." • There is an opportunity to develop a streamlined procedure for local procurement of goods, services and workforce for the Town's tourism-related initiatives—such as events, festivals, placemaking and beautification projects—with a focus on engaging businesses, artists and grassroots initiatives. • There is an opportunity to provide artisans, entrepreneurs and storytellers with capacity and resources for low-risk and affordable community participation, investment and partnership, including training, seed funding, subsidized space, provision of supplies, equipment and off-site infrastructure, co-investment and marketing support.
There is a good track record of increased shoulder season visitation, mid-week stays and overall length of stay throughout the year.		○			
A diversity of visitor-related businesses in downtown and at least a number of operations and attractions in other areas of the town generate direct revenue from visitation.	◑				
A diverse range of visitor-related businesses across the entire town generates direct revenue from visitation, alongside evidence of private investments in the development of visitor experiences.		○			
A diverse range of visitor-related businesses across the entire town generates direct revenue from visitation, alongside evidence of private investments in infrastructure and attraction development.			○		
Diverse opportunities are available for community artisans, entrepreneurs and storytellers to engage in tourism offerings and service delivery.	◑				
There is evidence of tourism activities benefiting community groups and nonprofits, enabling them to independently generate revenue by providing visitor-related services and experiences, or through partnerships and investments in tourism product development.		○			
There is evidence of opportunities for community investment in tourism infrastructure and attraction development and affordable ownership.			○		

Tourism Economic Impact	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Tourism investments generate direct and indirect positive impacts on local economic development, including revenue generation, employment, workforce enhancement, and local business growth.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • The success and impacts of tourism investments is limited to limited investments in tourism development, including having only one dedicated VSL team member. • Failing to consider small business economic development and culture (specifically, festivals and events) limits the tourism economic gains possible from these activities. • Thus far, there are investments in new businesses and services that create jobs, though not significant in terms of numbers. • There is no recent data (within the past five years) to demonstrate the actual economic impact (direct, indirect and induced) of tourism on the town. • Overall, there's a noticeable lack of investment in tourism—both private and public capital—aimed at distinguishing Sylvan Lake as a unique destination in Central Alberta. Strengths and Opportunities: • Some Town investments–such as Centennial Park enhancements, new signage and wayfinding, historic plaques, and Pogadl Park development–are closely linked to tourism. • There is an opportunity to foster new and existing private investments in facilities and infrastructure to benefit tourism development.
Tourism investments yield direct and indirect positive impacts on local community development by enhancing the physical appeal, accessibility, and connectivity of downtown and lakefront areas.		◑			
Tourism investments contribute to direct and indirect positive impacts on local community development by improving infrastructure, public spaces, and amenities throughout the town.			○		
Tourism investments create a variety of full-time and part-time jobs across multiple sectors within the local tourism industry.			◑		
The Town generates tax revenues from tourism activities, contributing to municipal budgets.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Estimated tax revenues from tourism in Sylvan Lake are about $5.2 million, which is insignificant for a self-proclaimed "tourist town." (For reference, Kelowna's tourism tax revenue is $226 million.) • While parking revenues are exclusively attributable to visitor arrivals, it is not considered as part of the VSL budget and 0% of revenues are reinvested in tourism development. Strengths and Opportunities: • There are opportunities to introduce new taxes and fees to enhance tax revenues, such as tax on vacant commercial properties. • There are opportunities to implement new fees for community benefit and direct revenues, in whole or in part, to VSL initiatives.
There is a track record of the Town's reinvestment of its tourism revenue into tourism development, including investments in tourism business support and workforce development, marketing, organizational capacity, and visitor management.		○			
There is a track record of the Town's reinvestment of its tourism revenue into tourism and destination development, including larger investments in tourism business support and workforce development, investment in placemaking, infrastructure and amenities, tourism partnership, organizational capacity, new product development, and visitor management.			○		

Tourism Economic Impact	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
A system is in place for the periodic collection of essential tourism impact data, including both visitor and economic metrics. This data at least includes: number of annual visitors, annual visitor expenditure, annual town tourism revenue (including tax revenue), capital investment, and employment figures.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • The latest Tourism Economic Impact Assessment available is from 2014. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to develop and commit to regular tourism economic impact assessments, to guide and inform tourism investments.
Regular tourism economic impact assessment tracks the economic contributions of tourism to the Destination at least every five years.	◑				
An advanced tracking system is in place for the regular collection of comprehensive tourism economic impact data. This includes, but is not limited to, detailed visitor expenditures (covering spending on accommodations, dining, entertainment, local attractions and services) on an annual and seasonal basis, revenue generated for the Town through tourism activities and infrastructure development (including tax revenue), wages and salaries, capital investment in tourism development, employment numbers (full-time, part-time, and seasonal jobs per tourism sector), and other relevant industry inputs.		○			
The destination conducts a comprehensive tourism economic impact assessment at least every five years. This assessment identifies direct, induced and indirect economic impacts generated from tourism.		○			
Tourism Products and Experiences	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**	**Sylvan Lake Analysis**
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
The destination offers a variety of visitor-oriented experiences that can be consumed in a day trip.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is limited diversity in market-ready, visitor oriented experiences, to entice multi-day stays. • A large number of existing businesses operate at a minimum level of market readiness (speaking to quality standards). • Generally speaking, there is a gap in quality customer service and limited cultural competency/sensitivity among the front line tourism and hospitality workforce.
The destination offers a variety of visitor-oriented experiences that entice short to medium stays (1-5 nights).		○			
The destination offers a variety of tourism experiences that entice longer stays (6+ nights).			○		

Tourism Products and Experiences	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Visitor-oriented offerings meet or exceed established quality standards at local and regional levels.	○				Strengths and Opportunities: • Existing tourism experiences in town have high Google ratings, speaking to positive guest satisfaction (which is influenced, in part, by interactions with frontline staff).
Visitor-oriented offerings adhere to or exceed industry standards at a regional (Central Alberta) level.		○			
Visitor-oriented offerings adhere to or exceed industry standards at a provincial level.			○		
If applicable, visitor-oriented offerings adhere to or exceed industry standards at a national level.				○	
Visitor-oriented offerings provide visitors with a sense of the local community and integrate experiencing its unique small lake town vibe.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • The "small lake town vibe" is not evident beyond the lakefront and downtown. • There is limited incorporation of the "lake town vibe" within local visitor offerings, apart from the Town's events. • There is a gap in place-based activations (programming, placemaking) that echo the charm, heritage, stories and people. • There is a lack of harmonized aesthetics that embodies and demonstrates a unique sense of place. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to further leverage the town's unique position as the only urban centre located directly on a lake in Alberta. • Festivals and events often take place along the lake, and embody the "small, lake town vibe." • There is an opportunity for the Town to dedicate resources to product development, diversification and enhancements, to provide visitors with a sense of the local community, showcasing the small lake town vibe and distinctive sense of place that sets it apart in the region.
Visitor-oriented offerings contribute to a distinctive sense of place that sets the destination apart in the region.		○			
Visitor-oriented offerings create a distinctive experience of a small lake town that make them sought-after experiences, nation-wide or internationally.			○		
Tourism offerings play a pivotal role in establishing the destination as a globally recognized and sought-after tourism destination, allow integration of visitors with different languages and cultures and hence transcending borders and cultures, and foster cultural exchange and social integration on an international scale.				○	
Visitor-oriented offerings cater to diverse budgets and diverse demographics, including youth, seniors and families.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is limited data to inform town visitor demographics. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is a selection of visitor-appealing offerings that cater to a variety of interests, and demographics. • There is an opportunity to attract visitor-oriented offerings that cater to mid-high and high budgets.
Visitor-oriented offerings cater to a diversity of psychographic segments that have been targeted as desired and envisioned by the destination and aligned with its assets.		○			

Tourism Products and Experiences	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
There are a number of signature visitor-oriented offerings that have made the destination popular among neighbouring communities during high and/or shoulder seasons.	◐				Gaps and Weaknesses: • The primary visitor-oriented offering (the beach) generates little revenue for the town, beyond parking fees. • Festivals and events are the primary tourism drivers in the shoulder season and have not yet been activated/approached from a tourism perspective, representing little to no direct revenue opportunities for the Town. • There is limited diversity in market-ready, visitor oriented experiences, to entice multi-day stays. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to develop a signature visitor-oriented event, in collaboration with other Central Alberta partners. • There is an opportunity to focus product diversification on the winter/ shoulder season.
There are a variety of signature visitor-oriented offerings that have turned the destination into a popular destination within the region during high and shoulder seasons.		○			
The destination features major year-round tourism offerings that are recognized regionally and provincially with some signature products that also attract visitors at least from neighbouring provinces.			○		
The destination features major year-round tourism offerings that are recognized nationally, with some signature products that draw international tourists.				○	
Visitor-oriented offerings cater to local preferences and to some extent accommodate regional trends and demands. This at least includes a variety of community events that have been enhanced and extended to serve non-local visitors from neighbouring towns and cities.	◐				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Events are not marketed with a budget or marketing goals, so the vast majority of attendance is local. • There is limited diversity in market-ready, visitor oriented experiences, to entice multi-day stays. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is a strong Festivals & Events Strategy in place. • Events are not marketed with a budget or tourism marketing goals, so the vast majority of attendance is local.
Visitor-oriented offerings are aligned with regional and provincial trends and demands, including a variety of nature-based, recreational and sport, cultural, art, and culinary experiences.		○			
Tourism offerings cater to national trends and regional, inter/intra provincial demands.			○		
Signature tourism offerings cater to international demands and trends.				○	
The destination features trail experiences using its signature trails such as CP trail, lakeshore walkways and railway promenade.		○			Gaps and Weaknesses: • Though there are 26 kilometres of trails, the lakefront trail network is poorly connected "to and through the rest of the Town." • Trails are not currently activated for visitor-oriented experiences, nor for festivals and events. Strengths and Opportunities: • The existing trail network throughout the lakefront area and other parts of town is well-used and considered a great recreational amenity for residents.
Signature year-round diverse trail experiences, both single-use (hiking) and mixed-use (ATV, Off-Highway Motorcycle, Side by Side, Pedestrian), are operationalized.			○		

Tourism Products and Experiences	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
					Strengths and Opportunities: (...continued from previous page) • There is an opportunity to invest in infrastructure and placemaking enhancements for prime walkways and trails, with a focus on creating curiosity, engagement with place, and foot traffic. • There is an opportunity to connect existing trails via a trail wayfinding system that integrates wayfinding, interpretive signage and placemaking. • There is an opportunity to develop events connected to trail experiences.
The destination hosts a number of thematic summer and shoulder season events and festivals with regional reach, with at least one signature event that stands out in Central Alberta. These events span agritourism, culinary, culture, adventure, recreational and sport events.		◑			Gaps and Weaknesses: • Festivals and events are the primary tourism drivers in the shoulder season and have not yet been activated/approached from a tourism perspective, representing little to no direct revenue opportunities for the Town. • Festivals and events are primarily culture-focused. • Events are not marketed with a budget or tourism marketing goals, so the vast majority of attendance is local. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to develop a signature visitor-oriented event, in collaboration with other Central Alberta partners.
The destination hosts numerous signature events year-round, with provincial reach, with at least one signature event that stands in Alberta. These events span agritourism, culinary, culture, adventure, recreational and sport events.			○		
There is evidence of visitor-oriented offerings that engage local operations from neighbouring towns and communities. This might be evident in conducting events arranged through partnerships or selling each other's products and experiences.	○				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is limited Town team capacity to proactively engage tourism businesses and operators from neighbouring communities. Strengths and Opportunities: • Local events do attract vendors from neighbouring communities. • Local retailers source and sell locally-made products. • There is an opportunity to expand Town team capacity and dedicate resources to collaboration with neighbouring towns and communities, for tourism experience and product development. • There is an opportunity for the Town to support local businesses and grassroots groups, through education around partnership development, to foster collaboration between privately-owned or community-operated entities in and beyond Sylvan Lake.
There is evidence of distinctive/locally unique visitor-related offerings that are shaped through enhanced local entrepreneurial capacities and local and regional partnership. This includes packages shaped through working with regional tourism operations, DMOs, and travel intermediaries (such as travel agents that are active in Central Alberta).		○			

Tourism Products and Experiences	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
High-quality tourism products, services, and experiences are delivered through local, regional, and provincial partnerships and/or collaboration with travel intermediaries operating nationwide. This can include a variety of niche cultural, nature-based, recreational, sport, and adventure packages, as well as business-related packages, including conventions and events.			○		(see previous page)
The destination offers an extensive variety of high-quality tourism products, services, and experiences accessible through international distribution channels (travel trades).				○	
Marketing & Communication	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**	**Sylvan Lake Analysis**
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
A small marketing budget (<$5,000) is available to promote the destination to local audiences.	●				Gaps and Weaknesses: • VSL's marketing budget is approximately $36,000 annually, which is nominal for a self-proclaimed "tourist town." Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to expand tourism revenues and direct these revenues back to VSL, in part for the purposes of marketing. • There is an opportunity to invest marketing budget into enhanced marketing assets, including written and visual content (photos, videos).
A moderate marketing budget (>$20,000-$200,000) is available to promote the destination to regional audiences.		◑			
A substantial marketing budget ($2-$5 million) is available to promote the destination to national audiences.			○		
A robust marketing budget (>$5 million) is available to promote the destination to international audiences.				○	
The Corporation of the Town of Sylvan Lake manages any tourism-related marketing and communications initiatives.	●				Gaps and Weaknesses: • While the Visit Sylvan Lake brand exists, there is limited Town team capacity to leverage/activate it fully, from a marketing perspective. • There is limited creative presence of the VSL brand at local festivals and events, largely due to a lack of Town team capacity. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity for Sylvan Lake to be Alberta's premier lake town destination. • VSL marketing efforts embrace and embody the defined brand.
A dedicated tourism brand is established within the Corporation, to lead strategic tourism marketing initiatives (i.e. Visit Sylvan Lake). The destination has an established, consistent destination brand strategy in place. The brand informs and inspires marketing initiatives across various channels and is further reflected in both place-based and program-based initiatives. The destination's brand positioning differentiates it from other communities.		◑			

Marketing & Communication	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
The destination is a known and respected tourism brand on an inter- and intra-provincial level, led by the designated Destination Leadership and Management Organization (DLMO).			○		Strengths and Opportunities: (...continued from previous page) • There is an opportunity to strengthen Visit Sylvan Lake brand recognition through enhancing the local quality and selection of visitor experiences, whilst investing in expanded/enhanced marketing content and promotional activities.
The destination is a known and respected tourism brand on a global level, led by the designated DLMO.				○	
The destination packages and promotes tourism products and experiences.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is limited packaging of tourism products and experiences. • Local market readiness and product diversity is not at a level that attracts or entices tourism operators, agencies and organizations. • There are no co-marketing opportunities available for local businesses and entrepreneurs to take advantage of. Strengths and Opportunities: • VSL features local visitor-oriented experiences. • While the Town is a member of the Central Alberta Tourism Alliance (CATA), there is an opportunity to take a leadership role in initiating and implementing regionally-inclusive tourism experiences, events and package development.
The destination participates in regional B2B and B2C tourism initiatives, including organizations, associations, events and tradeshows, which leads to the packaging and promotion of local tourism products by regional, inter- and intra-provincial tourism operators, agencies and organizations.		◑			
The destination participates in international B2B and B2C tourism initiatives, including organizations, associations, events, and tradeshows, which leads to the packaging and promotion of local products by international tourism operators, or those with global reach.				○	
Cooperative marketing opportunities with the destination exist for local tourism businesses, for market visibility and enhanced visitor reach.	○				
Cooperative marketing opportunities with the destination exist for regional tourism businesses, for market visibility and enhanced visitor reach.		○			
Targeted marketing campaigns are in place to attract visitors from neighbouring communities and to plant seeds to attract regional tourists.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Marketing initiatives are generally reactive, due to a lack of Town team capacity. • Town budgets limit impact and reach of marketing investments. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to feature local people in marketing and storytelling—or local places, through people—to enhance and illustrate the local, place-based storytelling and attract a more responsible prospective visitor who is interested in the community itself.
Targeted marketing campaigns are in place to build brand awareness across Canada. SEO is in place for national reach.			○		
Targeted marketing campaigns are in place to build brand awareness in key international markets. SEO is in place for international reach.				○	

Marketing & Communication	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
The destination works with local and/or regional influencers, and traditional media companies, to promote its tourism brand and assets.	◑				Strengths and Opportunities: (...continued from previous page) • There is an opportunity to develop and implement an updated Marketing Strategy.
The destination works with influencers, as well as online platforms and traditional media companies from across the country, to promote its tourism brand and assets.			○		
The destination works with influencers, as well as online platforms and traditional media companies in key international markets, to promote its tourism brand and assets.				○	
Cooperative marketing opportunities with the destination exist for local tourism businesses, for market visibility and enhanced visitor reach.	○				
Cooperative marketing opportunities with the destination exist for regional tourism businesses, for market visibility and enhanced visitor reach.		○			
A well-designed, user-friendly, responsive destination website exists with up-to-date information about attractions, services, and tourism products and experiences. The design of the website is a strong reflection of the destination brand.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • The website loads at a slower speed than most optimized websites. • The website isn't built for mobile and isn't responsive. • There is no ability for website visitors to book tourism experiences. • It is challenging to find product/experience-specific information on the website. Strengths and Opportunities: • VSL's social media channels are trusted resources for information about what's happening in the town, followed by locals and visitors alike. • There is an opportunity to strengthen the brand representation on the VSL website. • There is an opportunity to integrate trip planning and package booking capabilities on the VSL website and through social media channels, as the tourism sector expands.
The destination has a robust digital presence (website/online platforms/social media) with dedicated management, to reach prospective visitors and to highlight the town's vibe, attractions, products and experiences.		◑			
The destination's robust digital presence further provides visitor-related services such as trip planning and package booking tools.			○		
The destination's digital presence (website/online platforms/social media) provides content in multiple (minimum 2) languages.				○	
Local entrepreneurs, businesses and experiences are well-represented and visible across various destination-managed marketing channels.	◑				

Marketing & Communication	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Online and offline resources & tools are available for trip planning and booking/securing tickets for events and experiences. Visitors have easy access to information that will enhance their in-destination experience while they are on the ground.		○			(see previous page)
The destination's social media channels see ongoing engagement from local audiences, who provide user generated content. These are sought-after resources for information and trip planning, before and during a visitor's trip.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • VSL has limited social media following for a tourism destination (i.e., on Instagram, there are +9,100 followers–which is higher than Drumheller (+6,000) but well-below Banff (360,000). Strengths and Opportunities: • VSL's social media channels are trusted resources for information about what's happening in the town, followed by locals and visitors alike. • VSL actively collects and features user-generated content (UGC).
The destination's social media channels see ongoing engagement from regional audiences, who provide user generated content during or after their visit. These are sought-after resources for information and trip planning, before and during a visitor's trip.		◑			
The destination's social media channels see ongoing engagement from national audiences, who provide user generated content during or after their visit. These are sought-after resources for information and trip planning, before and during a visitor's trip.			○		
The destination's social media channels see ongoing engagement from international audiences. These are sought-after resources for information and trip planning, before and during a visitor's trip.				○	
Visitor Management, Health & Safety	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**	**Sylvan Lake Analysis**
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
An essential data collection system with basic indicators is in place to collect data on the number of visitors annually and per season.	○				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is no data collection system in place to collect data on the number of visitors annually and per season. • The Town has not invested in third-party data collection systems, to understand visitor numbers and spending. • There is a lack of Town team capacity for data collection and analysis.
An advanced data collection system is in place to track annual and seasonal visitor patterns, including number of visitors, visitor origins, their travel patterns to/from and within the community, and their in-destination spend.		○			
Extensive indicators are in place to track repeat visitation and collect visitor demographic and psychographic data.			○		

Visitor Management, Health & Safety	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Multiple feedback and information channels, managed by the tourism administration entity, are available for visitors to share feedback and ask questions. These channels should include at least one digital platform, such as social media, and must also feature dedicated physical location(s)offering up-to-date information on local attractions, events, hospitality services and experiences. These physical sites operate beyond typical business hours, including extended hours during high season and major seasonal events and weekends.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • VSL social media channels are the tourism entity's exclusive feedback and information channels, and are largely intended for information sharing versus feedback gathering. • Recreation centres, namely the Nexsource Centre, provide dedicated information boards featuring local events, though there is limited general information on other things to do and places to see throughout town. • There is a lack of process and platforms for feedback gathering. Strengths and Opportunities: • VSL's social media channels are trusted resources for information about what's happening in the town, followed by locals and visitors alike. • The Tourism Partnership Program's quarterly survey and the TDC act as industry feedback loops • There is an opportunity to develop thoughtful, two-way visitor feedback and information channels with a wider range of tourism rights-holders.
A diverse range of dynamic information and feedback channels are managed by the tourism administration entity. This include a dedicated webpage or website for visitor information, various social media channels, and a year-round active physical place staffed with trained personnel, located at or visible from critical access points and/or tourism hot spots, and offers up-to-date information on upcoming events, maps/lists of local hospitality services, experiences, and attractions, and other critical information for visitors including safety and security resources and information, visitor management related measures and regulations, and other tourism-relevant items.		◑			
The destination offerings are searchable and bookable through reliable and accessible booking platforms or trustworthy websites and intermediaries for travel services and booking.		◑			
Multiple online, offline, and in-person visitor feedback and information channels are operated year-round by the tourism administration entity. This includes an enhanced dedicated web-based platform with a diversity of online and offline resources and tools for trip planning, and visitors' feedback sharing. This platform accommodates accessibility, inclusivity and different visitor groups' needs and includes options for booking experiences, amenities, and services either directly or through third party websites. There is at least one dedicated visitor centre active year-round, supported by other hubs during high season or high-demand seasonal events.			○		

Visitor Management, Health & Safety	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
The visitor centre provides language assistance such as multilingual guides or translation services to cater to international visitors.				○	(see previous page)
Clear policies, visions, and strategic oversight are in place to guide ongoing improvements and maintenance of the downtown and lakefront with a focus on advancing a sense of small lake town vibe and inclusive community.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Key strategies, such as the Lakefront Usage Strategy and Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan, exist for the sake of guiding downtown and lakefront improvements, though have been minimally implemented. • The Sylvan Lake brand has not been physically operationalized throughout the town. • Downtown lacks a visible and palpable identity, which impedes its success as a tourism asset. • There is a lack of harmonized aesthetics that embodies and demonstrates a unique sense of place. There is a gap in place-based activations (programming, placemaking) that echo the charm, heritage, stories and people. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to strengthen guidelines and bylaws, such as 50th Street Urban Design Guidelines and the Land Use Bylaw. • There is an opportunity to embrace placemaking as a comprehensive framework for approaching public art, beautification, activation and wayfinding as interconnected solutions to Sylvan Lake's destination development, further supported by design, planning and policy interventions. • There is an opportunity to invest in harmonizing the visual and architectural aesthetics to reflect the essence of the Visit Sylvan Lake brand: a small, connected and vibrant lakeside community.
Clear policies, visions, and strategic oversight are in place to guide enhancement of visitor-related infrastructure, facilities and attraction within the whole town with focus on maintaining the sense of small lake town vibe and inclusive community.		○			
Effective visitor management practices are implemented to preserve the town's charm and prevent overcrowding during peak seasons, with a particular focus on beach visitor management and the management of foot and vehicle traffic in the downtown and lakefront.	○				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Key strategies, such as the Lakefront Usage Strategy and Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan, exist for the sake of guiding downtown and lakefront improvements, though have been minimally implemented. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to strengthen guidelines and bylaws, such as 50th Street Urban Design Guidelines and the Land Use Bylaw,

Visitor Management, Health & Safety	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
An established set of strategies, programs and place-based activation initiatives is in place for beach visitor management. These encompass land use policies, visitor-behaviour messaging, placemaking, signage, as well as community-engaged programs dedicated to lake/beach stewardship and other efforts aimed at preserving the lake's beauty and tranquility while enhancing the beach experience for all.		○			Strengths and Opportunities: (...continued from previous page) • Scope and capacities of visitor management initiatives with focus on managing visitors' negative impact on the community's daily life, natural resources and attractions.
An established set of priority metrics inform beach utilization, prioritizing functions and uses that create the best balance among economic receipt, quality of visitor experience, sustainability and maintaining community vibe.		○			
Parking strategies are in place to respond to high- season demand.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Parking spaces are not well distributed. • There is a lack of designated parking for RVs, buses, boat trailers, etc. • Parking revenues are not directed, in whole or in part, to the VSL budget. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to expand paid parking to include major festivals and events, beyond May-September. • There is an opportunity to implement creative solutions to peak-season parking challenges and future high-demand periods, such as activating underutilized lots as visitor parking solutions during high season. • There is an opportunity to increase parking revenues, at least in primary areas of town. • There is an opportunity to implement shuttle connections to, from and within Sylvan Lake to alleviate parking pressures.
Parking strategies are in place to respond to respective demands all year-round, applying effective and community-centric program-based strategies.		○			
A comprehensive parking strategy addresses and manages visitor flux in different seasons. This strategy implements a variety of place-based and program-based strategies, policy measures, and tracking guidelines to ensure seamless connections and commuting across the town for both visitors and non-visitors throughout the year.			○		
Visitors in prime visitor areas (downtown and lakefront) seamlessly discover attractions, facilities, and services due to the unified signage and wayfinding strategy in place	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • The existing signage throughout the town is primarily directional and is installed along roadways to privilege drivers, there is a lack of comprehensive wayfinding and signage that connects major assets and attractions throughout the town. • There is a gap in pedestrian-oriented visitor information. • The colour-coded signage system is unrefined and confusing, and does not correspond with other signage or town maps.
Visitors throughout the entire destination effortlessly navigate their way to attractions, facilities, services, and local businesses, and access visitor information about them, all thanks to the unified visitor information signage and wayfinding strategy that spans the entire destination.		○			

Visitor Management, Health & Safety	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
					Strengths and Opportunities: (...continued from previous page) • There is an opportunity to invest in adding, redistributing and refining wayfinding infrastructure to enhance visibility and create connections between parking, walkable routes, town attractions and supporting services. • There is an opportunity to define and pilot placemaking and wayfinding projects to bring a sense of connection to the lake throughout the town. • There is an opportunity to invest in temporary mobile signage solutions, including design and implementation, for festivals, events and seasonal recreational activities. • There is an opportunity to consider how public art can be used as a creative wayfinding tool.
Essential accessibility measures and considerations are implemented in major attractions and visitor-related facilities, as well as in municipal services and facilities. This includes the beach, lakeshore parks, trails, washrooms, showers, parking spaces, event spaces, downtown businesses, and services, as well as lakeshore businesses and amenities such as hotels, restaurants, and other vendors.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Major attractions and visitor services do not adhere to comprehensive accessibility standards. • There lacks a unified set of accessibility measures and considerations throughout the town. Strengths and Opportunities: • The Town invested in a wheelchair-accessible beach mat for the lakefront, enabling beach access for wheelchairs, strollers, and canes. • The Town also purchased three beach-accessible wheelchairs, two of which can float and go underwater. • There is an opportunity to use third-party support to assess accessibility (mobility, sensory and neuro-diverse) and invest in improvements to make Sylvan Lake's public spaces accessible to all. • There is an opportunity to invest in education to equip tourism businesses and visitor-related services (both existing and new) with the knowledge to better understand accessible travel needs and provide strategies to adopt and implement essential accessibility requirements.
A unified set of accessibility measures and considerations is implemented throughout the entire destination, including all visitor-related facilities and services. This encompasses attractions and experiences, recreational and entertainment facilities and infrastructure, accommodations, food and beverage facilities, open public spaces, and municipal services.		◑			
The destination maintains a safe and clean environment in key visitor areas through implementing Health and Safety Measures in popular areas and visitors' hot spots such as the beach and lakeshore area. This includes sanitation standards, and providing emergency contact details/accessible emergency services for visitors.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is a perception that visitors do not respect natural spaces, especially along the lakefront during peak season. • Locals avoid the lakefront during the summer months, informed by a perception of a lack of safety on Lakeshore Drive due to an overwhelm of intoxicated party-goers.

Visitor Management, Health & Safety	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
The destination has comprehensive safety measures for the whole town in place, including well-maintained public spaces and lighting.		◑			Gaps and Weaknesses: (...continued from previous page) • An absence of actively-present health and emergency services was observed, at least during shoulder season. Strengths and Opportunities: • Sylvan Lake (lake) is one of the few recreational lakes in Alberta that doesn't get blue-green algae. The lake is ideal for swimming, with crystal clear waters and without a mucky bottom. • There is an opportunity to connect existing trail infrastructure to improve the viability of using active transportation to make the network safer and easier to navigate. • There is an opportunity to designate locations for health and safety essential service pop-ups, activated during peak season and events.
Risk prevention measures and training are in place to effectively handle emergency situations that may impact the safety of both the community and visitors.		○			
The destination has a robust safety and risk management system, including preparedness plan, visitor safety training for tourism staff, regular safety audits and a process for implementing improvements based on findings.			○		
The destination has a comprehensive crisis management plan, which encompasses coordination with emergency services and communication strategies for tourists during emergencies, as well as evacuation plans for popular visitor attractions.				○	
Adequate healthcare facilities and emergency response services are accessible with extended working hours including weekends.	◑				
Emergency response services are well-equipped to handle tourism-related incidents year-round.		◑			
The destination maintains a 24/7 emergency response centre dedicated to tourists' needs.			○		
Evidence of collaboration exists among local law enforcement agencies and tourism stakeholders to ensure the safety of both residents and visitors.	◑				
There is active engagement with regional health authorities and law enforcement to address tourism-related health and safety issues.		○			
The destination collaborates with regional and provincial health agencies to enhance visitor safety.			○		
The destination implements all health and safety protocols for visitors and adheres to standards set at the local, regional and provincial levels, ensuring the creation of safe and healthy experiences and spaces for all.	◑				

Visitor Management, Health & Safety	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
The destination implements all health and safety protocols for visitors and adheres to standards set at the local, regional, provincial, and national levels, ensuring the creation of safe and healthy experiences and spaces for all.			◑		(see previous page)
The destination adheres to international health and safety standards for visitors.				○	
Destination Management and Leadership	**Level 1**	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**	**Sylvan Lake Analysis**
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
A designated municipal department responsible for community-centric tourism development plays a pivotal role in enhancing the local tourism experience. Its responsibilities encompass market-readiness support, tourism product development, tourism marketing, visitor management, destination development, and community liaison connected to visitor experience and visitor management.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • At present, there is only one full-time VSL employee dedicated to tourism efforts within the Town's Recreation, Culture and Tourism department. • Current staffing and budgets do not provide adequate circumstances for VSL to successfully and meaningfully implement the DLMP. • There are no formal processes in place for interdepartmental collaboration, or to ensure tourism is consulted or involved in tourism/tourism-adjacent projects. • VSL is involved at an arm's length in conversations around initiatives related to cultural events, downtown activation projects and placemaking, with formal influence or decision-making power despite the impact such areas have on tourism development and visitor experience. • There is a lack of cultural diversity and representation on the Town staff and Council. • There is limited workspace at the Nexsource Centre, and given the unique nature of VSL's roles and responsibilities as the team grows, the tourism entity will eventually require its own space. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to establish an internal working group, led by VSL, for the sake of fostering collective ownership over tourism-related decision-making and responsibilities. • There is an opportunity to introduce diverse revenue streams to support tourism development initiatives.
There is an established capacity and mechanism for cross-department collaboration between the tourism department and other municipal departments for decisions about infrastructure improvements, amenities development, program-based and place-based activations that directly impact the visitor experience and visitor management.	○				
The tourism department has dedicated staff with backgrounds in tourism management (including product development, visitor management, marketing), and community and local businesses liaison, as well as sufficient budgetary and non-budgetary resources. The annual budget may exceed $250k.	◑				
A designated cross-department entity within the municipality spearheads community-centric tourism development. In addition to roles specified for the tourism department, this entity holds a strong say and significant role in decisions related to investments in infrastructure/amenities improvements, and in local economic development initiatives, as well as in place-based activations aimed at enhancing the visitor experience and visitor management.		○			

Destination Management and Leadership	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
There are dedicated full-time staff and a moderate budget allocated specifically for marketing, product development, visitor management and data collection, community and tourism industry liaison, entrepreneurship, business development and workforce development support, reconciliation, strategic partnership and investments, and place-based activations. The annual budget may exceed $500,000.		○			Strengths and Opportunities: (...continued by previous page) • There is an opportunity to serve small business and wider B2C economic development and events coordination within the VSL portfolio. • VSL has successfully secured government funding in the past, and there's an opportunity to continue pursuing government funding to subsidize projects as suggested in DLMP. • There is an opportunity to utilize strategic partnerships with key tourism players at local and regional levels to realize the DLMP's vision for Sylvan Lake.
The designated tourism development entity has acquired the necessary capacities in terms of organizational structure, human resources, budget, work plans, tools and resources, and destination development strategy to initiate partnerships with industry stakeholders at the local and regional level.		○			
The entity enjoys dedicated team/sub-sections for different roles as outlined, as well as a substantial budget. Dedicated teams spearhead tourism infrastructure investments, and sustainability. It might establish a DMO, responsible for tourism marketing, destination positioning, and regional/provincial partnerships. The annual budget may exceed $1 million.			○		
A destination leadership and management organization (DLMO) is established, with the necessary capacities in terms of organizational structure, human resources, budget, work plans, tools and resources, to initiate partnerships with industry stakeholders at the national level.			○		
The DLMO has gained required capacities in terms of organizational structure, human resource, budget, working plan, tools and resources, destination development strategy to initiate partnerships with industry stakeholders at an international scale. The annual budget may exceed $2 million.				○	
A comprehensive destination management and leadership strategy outlines the vision, mission, and key priorities for community-centric tourism development.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Current team and budget limitations do not provide adequate circumstances for VSL to successfully and meaningfully implement the DLMP.
An overarching tourism strategy aligns with other municipal strategic documents and implementation plans.	◑				

Destination Management and Leadership	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Detailed annual and long-term work plans are in place, outlining specific goals, objectives, actions, timelines and resources (including budgetary resources) for tourism development, including success indicators. These plans are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure alignment with evolving destinations and industry trends.		○			Strengths and Opportunities: • The DLMP provides a defined vision and roadmap for community-centric tourism development, in alignment with other municipal strategic documents such as Lakefront Usage Strategy, Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan, Festival & Events Strategy, and the Land Use Strategy, to name a few.
The tourism development entity utilizes advanced tools and resources for tourism management, including customer relationship management (CRM) systems, digital marketing platforms, and data analytics tools and performance measurement indicators.			○		
Regulations are in place to govern and monitor tourism development including land use policies, licensing, architectural guidelines, health and safety, workforce, and environmental protection.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • A community centric, placemaking lens is lacking within existing Town plans. • There is a gap in detailed guidelines for creating and enforcing a harmonized aesthetic. • There are a number of Town Plans (Sustainable Land Use Strategy. The Land Use Bylaw, etc), some of which lack detailed recommendations. These factors may create confusion in determining a path forward.
An integrated placemaking strategy and investment is in place that connects existing placemaking assets as a more cohesive experience and embraces the town as a whole, promoting the unique cultural identity throughout.	○				
A comprehensive physical development strategy preserves and promotes the town's architectural characteristics. This strategy informs streetscape enhancement and beautification efforts, placemaking projects, and new visitor-related developments. It also includes a detailed design and architectural style guideline for all new developments and refurbishments so that they align with the destination's brand and small lake town characteristics.		○			Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to strengthen guidelines and bylaws, such as 50th Street Urban Design Guidelines and the Land Use Bylaw. • There is an opportunity to embrace placemaking as a comprehensive framework for approaching public art, beautification, activation and wayfinding as interconnected solutions to Sylvan Lake's destination development, further supported by design, planning and policy interventions.
Mechanisms are in place for facilitating partnership building with local businesses and recreational operations for the diversification and expansion of local visitor experiences.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • While the Tourism Development Committee and Tourism Partnership program have created strong systems for connection and collaboration, the programs remain underutilized in realizing piloting, partnerships, and gaining traction . This is largely due to a lack of staff capacity and broader Municipal uptake.
Mechanisms are in place for facilitating tourism product development and packaging among tourism entrepreneurs and operations across the region.		○			

Destination Management and Leadership	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
					Strengths and Opportunities (...continued from previous page): • The Tourism Partnership Program and the Tourism Development Committee present exciting opportunities for piloting and collaboration when nurtured with sufficient staff capacity and when taken-up across the municipality as a tool and resource
The tourism and destination management entity has dedicated capital sources and an established funding strategy for visitor-experience development and visitor management through community-engaged initiatives.	○				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Current team and budget limitations do not provide adequate circumstances for VSL to successfully and meaningfully implement the DLMP. • There are no formal processes in place for interdepartmental collaboration, or to ensure tourism is consulted or involved in tourism/ tourism-adjacent projects. Strengths and Opportunities: • The Tourism Partnership Program and the Tourism Development Committee present exciting opportunities for piloting and collaboration on place-based and program-based activities.
Established mechanisms are in place for building capacity and allocating resources necessary for tourism market readiness. This includes support for workforce and business development, as well as provisions for funding, space, supplies, equipment, staff, and affordable rental options.	◑				
Incentive mechanisms are in place for community leadership in place-based and program-based activities that contribute to downtown revitalization and improving and enhancing visitor experiences. This may include honorariums for volunteers, reduced registration fees for local business/ entrepreneurs' participation in events and activities, funding for beautification, subsidies or provision of supplies, equipment and off-site infrastructure.	○				
Policies and strategies are in place to incentivize community partnership and investment in visitor experience development, and to reduce entry risks for new tourism and hospitality businesses. This might include loans with extended grace periods, affordable rental or ownership options, tax incentives, reduced-cost use of public lands and spaces for a specific period of time, exempting or relaxing zoning requirements.		○			
Incentive mechanisms are in place for small to medium scale private investment in downtown revitalization and lakefront enhancement with a focus on beautification, improving and enhancing infrastructure and visitor-related services.		○			
Incentive mechanisms are in place for medium to large scale private investment in destination development spanning the whole town with focus on improving and enhancing visitor experiences/infrastructure/services.			○		

Destination Management and Leadership	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
A shoulder season activation strategy is in place to activate the downtown and lakefront during the shoulder seasons, aimed at enhancing the quality of life for local residents and attracting non-local visitors from the region. This strategy may encompass seasonal regulations, place-based and program-based initiatives, and incentives such as grants or funding programs to incentivize local businesses and organizations to maintain their quality services and/or partner in place-based programs such as hosting winter-time events and activities.		○			Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is no strategy in place for shoulder season activation. Strengths and Opportunities: • The Town has invested in efforts for shoulder season activation; there is an opportunity to approach these efforts from a strategic framework. • There is an opportunity to increase or enhance revenue streams for the Town via shoulder season tourism activation.
The tourism and destination management entity has extended capacity for the operation and maintenance of infrastructure to maintain quality foot traffic experience, accessibility, and connectivity throughout the town during colder seasons.			○		
The tourism and destination management entity generates revenue from tourism, including revenues from tourism products, visitor management, destination marketing, and community partnerships. This income may account for up to 5% of its required budget.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Special events, mobile vending licensing and grants are VSL's primary revenue sources, none of which are consistent or reliable, with grants being the largest revenue source by far • While parking revenues are exclusively attributable to visitor arrivals, it is not considered as part of the VSL budget and 0% of revenues are reinvested in tourism development. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to introduce diverse revenue streams to support tourism development initiatives. • There are opportunities to introduce new taxes and fees to enhance tax revenues, such as tax on vacant commercial properties. • There are opportunities to implement new fees for community benefit and direct revenues, in whole or in part, to VSL initiatives.
The tourism and destination management entity secures a sustainable income through revenues generated from tourism product development, visitor management, destination marketing, and local investments. This income may account for 10-50% of its required budget.		○			
The tourism and destination management entity secures a sustainable income through revenues generated from tourism product development, visitor management, destination marketing, local and regional/intra-provincial partnership and co-investment. This income may account for up to 30-80 % of its required budget.			○		

Destination Management and Leadership	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
The tourism and destination management entity measures performance and outcomes in the following areas and through essential indicators: • Number of visitors • Economic impact (essential metrics) • Marketing and communications • Business development support • Community engagement • Product development • Visitor management • Place-based activation and downtown revitalization	○				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is limited Town capacity and expertise to collect and analyze data, to influence tourism decision making.
The tourism and destination management entity measures performance and outcomes in the following areas and through advanced indicators: • Visitor demographics • Economic impact (comprehensive metrics) • Marketing and communications • Entrepreneurship and business development support • Community engagement and volunteer retention • Community and visitor satisfaction • Industry relations • Partnership development • Product development • Visitor management • Place-based activation and downtown revitalization		○			
The tourism and destination management entity measures performance and outcomes in the following areas and through extensive indicators: • Visitor demographics/psychographic • Economic impact (comprehensive metrics) • Marketing and communications • Entrepreneurship, business development support and workforce development • Community engagement and volunteer retention • Community and visitor satisfaction • Industry relations • Partnership development • Product development • Visitor management • Infrastructure, amenities, public spaces and services improvement/development			○		

Strategic Partnerships	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
The destination has established partnerships with Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and neighbouring municipalities in the region. This is evident through collaborative efforts in creating visitor-related offerings and joint marketing initiatives.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • VSL lacks capacity to initiate strategic partnership at local, regional and provincial levels. • Limited team capacity prevents VSL and other CATA members from implementing meaningful collaborative initiatives. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to utilize strategic partnerships with key tourism players at local and regional levels to realize the DLMP's vision for Sylvan Lake. • There is an appetite for collaboration among CATA members, and an opportunity for Sylvan Lake to participate equally with other DMOs in the region in the leadership capacity the organization is looking for • There is an opportunity for the Town to support local businesses and grassroots groups, through education around partnership development, to foster collaboration between privately-owned or community-operated entities in and beyond Sylvan Lake.
The destination holds a leadership position among neighbouring towns and cities, and has already fostered strategic relationships with Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), tourism organizations, and tour operators throughout Central Alberta. This leadership is evident in collaborative planning, co-investment, and partnerships for marketing and tourism product development.		○			
The destination has an established place in Central Alberta and thus a regional face to prompt province-wide and nation-wide strategic relationships with DMOs, tourism organizations, and travel trades, and this is evident in synergistic efforts in planning, mutual initiatives in destination visibility, marketing, market reach, product development, packaging and distribution.			○		
There is evidence of public-private-community partnership at a regional scale (collaborations between community groups, municipality and regional tourism stakeholders) to enhance regional economy through tourism. This may include collaboration in developing destination development policies and measurements, co-investment in product development, infrastructure enhancement, marketing, distribution, or visitor management.			○		
The destination has established partnerships with key industry stakeholders and tourism organizations at the national level, as evident by collaborative marketing efforts and the creation and distribution of premium tourism packages. With this national face, it fosters strategic relationships with both tourism associations and travel trades at the international level and this is evident in partnerships in trend setting, marketing, market reach, product development, packaging and distribution.				○	

Environmental Impact Management, Sustainability and Resilience	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
The destination uses various communication channels to deliver behavioural messages to visitors, promoting responsible and respectful behaviour towards natural areas and local residents.	○				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There are no processes, systems or resources in place for the town to deliver behavioural messages to visitors. • There is limited Town team capacity to develop marketing campaigns and content specifically dedicated to visitor management and behavioural messaging. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to leverage placemaking, downtown revitalization and program-based activations for effective visitor management. • There is an opportunity to invest in community-centric visitor management, and environmental and cultural stewardship. • There is an opportunity to use events and festivals to draw attention and foot traffic away from the downtown and lakefront, to other areas of town. • There is an opportunity to develop guidelines and initiatives for environmentally sensitive practice and messaging in tourism product development and marketing.
There are a variety of place-based and program-based initiatives to mitigate the negative impacts of visitation on the local community and environment. These initiatives include informative and interpretive signage and interactive placemaking, strategically located in key visitor areas, along with educational programs. These measures aim to educate visitors about local ecosystems, the destination's natural assets and conservation practices, encouraging respect for the environment and local community and promoting responsible tourism practices among tourists, and local operations.		○			
The destination has an established visitors' code of conduct and a comprehensive set of measures to communicate and enforce it. This includes policies and behavioural messaging delivered through diverse visitor communication channels such as pamphlets,, social media, educational programs and events, signage, and community engagement initiatives. The code of conduct details expected behaviour and the consequences of non-compliance, with mechanisms in place for monitoring compliance and effectiveness.			○		
Regular waste collection and proper disposal facilities maintain cleanliness of the beach area, downtown, and other tourist hotspots during both high and shoulder seasons.	●				Gaps and Weaknesses: • Proper waste management processes appear to be established. Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to enhance environmental protection and preservation in natural areas. • There is an opportunity to enhance bylaws and/or bylaw enforcement for crowd control and public space-use.
A comprehensive waste management system, including protocols and infrastructure for proper disposal, recycling, and composting, is implemented year-round in all high-visitor areas across the town. This system is regularly audited for effectiveness.		◑			

Environmental Impact Management, Sustainability and Resilience	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
Measures are in place for crowd control during peak season to ensure a positive experience for visitors and avoid overwhelming local resources.	○				(see previous page)
Measures are in place to protect the environmental integrity of the beach and the lake environment from the impacts of visitation and tourism activities, including conservation efforts, and eco-friendly initiatives.	○				
An established set of regulations and control measures with essential indicators monitor experiential and environmental carrying capacities. These measures effectively address conflicts between various experiential services connected to the lake, including recreational and adventure activities, and between public recreation and commercial tenure holders.		○			
Infrastructure and control measures with advanced indicators monitor, forecast, and mitigate the pressure of increased visitation on the natural environment. This includes long-term environmental planning that accommodates changing environmental conditions and tourism growth forecasts.			○		
Clear guidelines and enforcement mechanisms are established for compliance with local, regional, national, and international environmental regulations and standards. These guidelines are used to monitor and manage the experiential and environmental carrying capacities of natural environments.				○	
Land use policies and spatial planning guidelines are in place that integrate environmental considerations and best management practices for tourism projects.		◑			Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is no dedicated Town team capacity for the purposes of environmental advocacy, protection and preservation.
The Town is an active rights-holder in the regulatory process, reviewing and commenting on proposed tourism-related development projects in the lake watershed that could impact valued ecological components within the region.			○		Strengths and Opportunities: • There is an opportunity to develop a bylaw/regulations focused on protecting the lake's environmental integrity and enhancing the natural appeal of the lakeshore area. • There is an opportunity to enhance existing policies, regulations and practices to manage and monitor the environmental impact of tourism development at local and regional levels.

Environmental Impact Management, Sustainability and Resilience	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
					Strengths and Opportunities: (...continued from previous page) • There is an opportunity to develop guidelines and initiatives for environmentally sensitive practice & messaging in tourism product development and marketing.
Certain municipal-level environmental legislation and policies are applicable to tourism projects, ensuring foundational regulatory compliance.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • SL has a Cumulative Effects Management Plan to address cumulative effects at a smaller regional scale within the Sylvan Lake watershed, however, there is no dedicated Town team capacity or other active mechanisms to implement the CEMS framework. • There is an absence of process, policies and/or guidelines focused on environmental considerations in tourism projects. Strengths and Opportunities: • Few to no projects within the Sylvan Lake region are anticipated to have significant impacts that trigger project-specific evaluation of cumulative effects within an Environmental Impact Assessment. • There is an opportunity to develop a context-specific tourism impact measurement framework to understand, measure and monitor tourism economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts, and to inform respective tourism decision-making.
Municipal guidelines, plans and policies are in place for environmental assessment and environmental considerations of tourism projects, including priority indicators for environmental impact assessment of tourism projects and infrastructure developments.	◑				
A formalized system is in place to implement a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment Framework (EIA) for development projects with potential significant environmental impacts, including tourism projects within the Sylvan Lake watershed. This framework adheres to municipal, provincial, and federal guidelines, measures both direct and cumulative impacts with key priority indicators, and mandates documentation of EIA results and adherence to mitigation strategies.		◑			
Regional and sub-regional plans for the Lake Watershed address the management of specific environmental concerns and conditions within the town of Sylvan Lake, including environmental impacts of tourism development. These plans also formalize active cooperation among municipalities within the lake watershed for collective environmental management.		○			
A comprehensive plan for environmental management and monitoring at the regional level involves the Town actively. This includes implementing an EIA Framework focused regionally on the Sylvan Lake watershed, incorporating a comprehensive set of indicators and measures related to the lake watershed management and cumulative effects management of development projects, including tourism.			○		

Environmental Impact Management, Sustainability and Resilience	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Sylvan Lake Analysis
					Weaknesses and Gaps /Strengths and Opportunities
A formalized system of regular cumulative impact assessments on all significant tourism-related activities and projects within the lake watershed ensures ongoing environmental sustainability and integrity of the lake and the natural environment of the region.				○	(see previous page)
Designated protected areas are clearly marked and maintained, with strict controls on tourism activities to prevent ecological disturbance.	◑				Gaps and Weaknesses: • There is no priority matrix to evaluate Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) suitability for development, and lack of a finer scale ESA mapping for the Sylvan Lake watershed to inform municipal level monitoring and assessments. • There is currently random boat mooring in the lake during the summer season, creating environmental and safety risks. Strengths and Opportunities: • The Natural Areas Management Plan identifies all Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA) within the Town to focus conservation and development infrastructure to encourage sustainable usage of these areas.
Active mechanisms are in place for management of priority Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA) within the town and to encourage conservation and ensure sustainable usage. Regulations for tourism activities (such as events) and infrastructure development in these areas are established, with compliance monitored.	◑				
A monitoring and protection framework is in place for the regional management of ESAs through inter-municipal cooperation across the lake watershed. This framework includes comprehensive mapping of priority ESAs across all municipalities involved, and active measures for regulating tourism activities and infrastructure development in these areas.		○			
Comprehensive sustainability standards are in place for major tourism infrastructure development projects and operations. Compliance with the standard is assessed through criteria that align with or exceed provincial-level standards.		○			Gaps and Weaknesses: • There are no guidelines or criteria for adaptability and resilience when planning and implementing iconic events and major tourism infrastructure development. Strengths and Opportunities: • Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan addresses essential measures in sustainable use of the waterfront with limited implications for project-level initiatives. • There is an opportunity to develop a context-specific tourism impact measurement framework to understand, measure and monitor tourism economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts, and to inform respective tourism decision-making.
Measures are in place for integrating climate resilience and adaptation strategies into tourism planning, infrastructure development, and operations. These strategies aim to handle extreme weather events and changing climate conditions, with plans and adaptations that are reviewed on a regular basis (minimum every five years) or after significant environmental events.			○		

Appendix B:

Tourism Market Preparedness Criteria for Local Businesses in Sylvan Lake

Note: For Indigenous tourism initiatives, and in particular cultural grassroots initiatives, follow the ITA Development Matrix Tool, which is included for reference at the end of this Appendix.

INTRODUCTION

The following Tourism Market Preparedness Criteria for Local Businesses in Sylvan Lake serves two purposes:

1. To guide evaluations that determine the tourism market preparedness of local businesses ('essential' or 'advanced'), and provide benchmarks for local businesses to work toward as they seek to advance their market preparedness; and
2. To guide evaluations that determine the tourism export readiness of local businesses ('essential' or 'advanced'), and provide benchmarks for local businesses to work toward as they seek to advance their export readiness.

What is "tourism market preparedness"?

Tourism market preparedness refers to the ability of a business to meet operational, customer service, and marketing standards needed to effectively attract and serve visitors.

What is "tourism export readiness"?

"Export ready" refers to a tourism product or business that markets to and through travel trade distribution sales channels, specifically to reach international audiences.

As the Town of Sylvan Lake invests in the tourism sector, there is an onus on local businesses to invest in themselves (with support from the Town), to capitalize on the opportunities that come with a growing visitor economy.

This Criteria outlines the knowledge, resources, and operational capacities needed to attract and serve visitors from local, regional, national, and international markets, and serve as a practical framework to guide tourism-related businesses in meeting the expectations of visitors and align with the Town's goals.

ESSENTIAL MARKET READINESS CRITERIA

Essential tourism market preparedness refers to meeting the fundamental criteria necessary to provide a quality experience for visitors. It involves being equipped to consistently provide a reliable and enjoyable experience that aligns with the destination's overall appeal. Meeting an essential level of tourism market preparedness is a building block for long-term success in tourism, as it creates positive first impressions, fosters trust with visitors, inspires positive reviews & recommendations, and contributes to the overall reputation of the destination. Criteria include:

Operational capacity/Requirement

- ☐ The business is visitor-ready, meaning that it has obtained the minimum requirements to run its operation. This includes meeting public health and employee and visitor safety requirements (including emergency plans, safety equipment, and training) and having an up-to-date business license, required permits, and insurance.
- ☐ Daily operations are structured and supported by standard operating procedures.
- ☐ The site, infrastructure, facilities and equipment (whichever applies to the operation) are sufficient, safe and maintained regularly.
- ☐ There are frontline staff in a position to meet the current demands of the business.
- ☐ Services and/or sites are accessible.
- ☐ During the operating season, maintains quality customer service, including consistent business hours and service levels and two-business day response time to inquiries and reservation/booking requests.

Product & experience

- ☐ The business offers a quality, visitor-oriented product, service or experience that caters to its target market and reflects the destination's vibe.

Communications & marketing

- ☐ Several active customer communication channels are in place, including telephone, fax and/or e-mail. Seasonal businesses provide automated responses through voicemail and or email during the off-season.
- ☐ A brand identity is in place, and (if applicable) there is branded on-site signage.
- ☐ At least one up-to-date promotional item—such as a brochure or rack card—is available, as is at least one up-to-date social media channel.
- ☐ The business has a published pricing policy, consumer billing, payment and cancellation policy.

Market reach/Market establishment

- ☐ The business regularly markets its offerings to potential visitors and provides high-quality services. Existing patrons are, at least, local residents and residents of neighbouring communities.
- ☐ While the business currently serves the local-level market, it is actively advancing its level of operation and is working to tap into the regional market.

Networking and partnership

- ☐ The business is an active stakeholder, or eligible to become a stakeholder, within its local tourism association.

ADVANCED MARKET READINESS CRITERIA

Advanced tourism market preparedness refers to a business's ability to operate at a higher level of sophistication, going beyond essential readiness and developing the capacity to offer more refined experiences that appeal to a broader or more specialized audience. Advanced preparedness positions a business to expand its market reach, enhance its reputation, and increase its competitiveness. Businesses that are advanced in their readiness can generally handle larger visitor volumes, foster stronger partnerships, and attract higher-value markets. The business must meet "Essential market readiness" criteria plus:

Operational capacity/Requirement

- ☐ The business has frontline staff who are trained in customer service delivery.
- ☐ The business has the capacity to maintain quality customer service year-round. This includes: consistent business hours and service levels; two-business day response time to inquiries; and one-business day response time to reservation/booking requests.
- ☐ If accepting tours and group visits, the business has the capacity to accommodate and adapt to the needs of the target market. This might include offering tour bus access and parking, washroom facilities, maximum group size and group pricing.

Product & experience

- ☐ In addition to the core product, specialized experiences or niche activities are available to attract a wider variety of visitors or higher spending per visitor.
- ☐ Visitors have the opportunity to package various products/experiences.
- ☐ Offerings can be seamlessly adapted based on group size, visitor demographics, and seasonal variations, without compromising experience quality.

Communications & marketing

- ☐ The business has an established marketing plan to garner business from target markets, and for business/partnership development with local and regional organizations.
- ☐ The business has several up-to-date, professionally designed (and potentially, professionally managed) promotional items and marketing channels such as brochures, social media channels, blog/website.

Market reach/Market establishment

- ☐ The business has a proven track record (at least one year) for safe and professional operations, adhering to the standards of its specific tourism sector, and is a recognized brand in the Central Alberta tourism market.

Networking and partnership

- ☐ There is evidence of partnerships and collaborations for the business's tourism product packaging at the local and regional levels, or the business has both the capacity and intention to extend its market reach through packaging.
- ☐ The business has established relationships (partnership, membership, etc.) with regional travel and tourism associations, organizations and networks (ie. Travel Alberta ATIS) and/or evidence of collaboration and partnership within the tourism industry network.

ESSENTIAL EXPORT READINESS CRITERIA

"Export ready" refers to a tourism product or business that markets to and through travel trade distribution sales channels, specifically to reach international audiences. The following criteria must be met if a tourism business is to be classified as "export ready:" The business must meet "visitor and market ready" criteria plus:

Operational capacity/Requirement

- ☐ The business's operations meet Provincial and Federal Health & Safety Regulations.
- ☐ The business maintains an active quality assurance program, to ensure its product and/or service consistently meets high standards.
- ☐ The business has an efficient booking system in place for reservations, changes and confirmation. This includes convenient billing and payment mechanisms for target markets.
- ☐ The business has the capacity to maintain excellent customer service year-round, including one-business day response time to all inquiries and same-day booking confirmation.
- ☐ The business has the capacity to cover operating costs until paid by the partner distribution channels e.g. tour operators).

Communications & marketing

- ☐ The business has an adequate budget and marketing plan for co-investment or partnership marketing with provincial or national collaborators, for the packaged experience(s).
- ☐ The business has a marketing plan and customized promotional materials to support the marketing efforts of local and regional DMOs, and Travel Alberta, as well as to cater to tour operator partners.

Pricing

- ☐ The business has a good understanding of the price structure in working with international intermediaries, and is prepared to iterate it in its own pricing as required. This means a good understanding commissions and net rate pricing.

Market reach/Market establishment

- ☐ The business has a proven track record for safe and professional operations (for at least two years), adhering to the standards of its specific tourism sectors, and is recognized in regional and provincial tourism markets.
- ☐ The business possesses a good level of domestic distribution network.
- ☐ The business has undertaken thorough research of national and international markets to determine the best fit for its product or service, and has hence developed a good understanding of relevant domestic and international markets to target. Representatives understand the needs to enhance or refine key aspects of the business (i.e., product and experience, marketing and communication, operations and human resources, sustainability, and cultural integrity) to effectively provide an excellent guest experience.
- ☐ The business recognizes and caters to the distinct needs of international markets compared to domestic ones.

Networking and partnership

- ☐ The business understands the roles played by third-party distributors such as inbound tour operators, wholesalers, online travel agents and retailers, and is willing to engage with them to sell its products and experiences to visitors nationally and/or overseas.

ADVANCED EXPORT READINESS CRITERIA

This is the highest level of readiness required for tourism operators to reach overseas markets. Meeting this standard means the operator/facility qualifies for national-level cost shared marketing programs and initiatives, including programs directed at overseas markets and/or the travel trade.

Operational capacity/Requirement

- ☐ The business has the capacity to provide high-level service to international tourists, in terms of product and experience, marketing and communications, operations and human resources, sustainability and cultural integrity. This is demonstrated by having frontline staff that speak the language of the target markets, and the ability to accept payment from overseas clients (or being prepared to set up billing arrangements with third-party distributors).

Communications & marketing

- ☐ The business has an adequate budget and a well-defined marketing plan that supports the marketing efforts of local and regional DMOs, as well as Travel Alberta and Destination Canada. The plan and budget also cater to partnerships with international tourism operators. This might include support (free or reduced rates) for international media and travel trade familiarization tours.
- ☐ The business has promotional materials designed for its target distribution parties. The promotional material includes essential details about its product and service, such as net rates, reservation and cancellation policy, accepted payment methods, experience details, provided transportation services, and any specialized customer services available on-site, as relevant.
- ☐ The business provides detailed pricing and program information to tour operators and wholesalers at least one year in advance of the selling season.

Pricing

- ☐ The business has factored appropriate commissions into its pricing to trade partners. This means that its published rates leave room for commissions, net rates, and other discounts that support industry partners at various levels.

Market reach/Market establishment

- ☐ The business has a proven track record for safe and professional operation, adhering to the standards of its specific tourism sector, for a minimum of three years.
- ☐ The business demonstrates a consistent offering of a product or experience during this period, which may have evolved over time.
- ☐ The business has established recognition at the regional, provincial and national tourism levels.

Achieving export readiness positions a business to successfully engage with international markets, particularly by gaining access to a broader range of distribution channels including tour operators, wholesalers, and online travel agencies. This expanded reach enhances the business's visibility and reputation on provincial, national & international scales, and increases revenue potential.

Indigenous Tourism Alberta's Market-Preparedness Matrix

	Grassroots	Visitor	Market	Export
Operations & Infrastructure				
Business license, required permits, and insurance are obtained and up to date.		☐	☐	☐
Daily operations have a structure and are supported by standard operating procedures.			☐	☐
Business accounting and financial management are in place.			☐	☐
Staffing and staff training meet the current demands of the business.			☐	☐
Site, infrastructure, facilities, and equipment are sufficient, safe, and maintained regularly.			☐	☐
Visitor and employee safety regulations are adhered to including emergency plans, safety equipment, and training.		☐	☐	☐
Public health requirements are adhered to including cleanliness protocols.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Products & Experiences				
A quality product or service is delivered on a consistent basis and this can be verified by 1 or more ways (e.g., increase in visitors/clients or repeat business, positive reviews/ feedback, industry support, accreditation or awards/recognition, independent review)			☐	☐
A way to track, monitor, and evaluate client satisfaction is in place (e.g., web-based review or rating system).			☐	☐
There is sufficient demand for the business' product or service and this can be verified.			☐	☐
Cultural authenticity is maintained in the design and implementation of the product or experience and this can be verified.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Contingency plans have been developed in case of the inability to offer the business' normal product or service.			☐	☐
All required equipment, training, and/or information is provided to visitors to enjoyably and safely partake in the product, service, or experience.			☐	☐
Marketing & Communications				
The business has a set schedule of operating hours and is contactable 365 days/year, 24 hours/day a day via a website, email, phone, or voicemail.			☐	☐
Inquiries and messages are responded to within 24 hours during business hours either directly or via an automated response.			☐	☐
Branded signage identifies the business, and any required directional or informational signage is present.		☐	☐	☐
The business has a professional online presence (often a website) that allows potential clients to easily find at a minimum hours/dates of operation, product and/or service offering, and contact information.			☐	☐
A medium for facilitating online business transactions is available to clients whether it be online reservations, e-commerce, or another service applicable to the business.			☐	☐
A brand identity has been established which includes a logo.			☐	☐
Marketing activities are undertaken using a at a minimum a loose strategy which is based on market research.			☐	☐
Digital and/or traditional marketing materials have been developed containing the product, price, dates, and reasons to visit.			☐	☐
The business meets necessary requirements to work with the international travel trade, including online sales, logistics management, and refunds, and is able to securely book group travel up to 18 months in advance.				☐
Culture & Sustainability				
Strengthening Indigenous culture, preserving traditional knowledge, or empowering Indigenous communities is an outcome of business operations.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The business incorporates respect for and protection of Mother Earth and this can be verified.	☐	☐	☐	☐
The business produces positive socio-economic impacts for Indigenous communities and this can be verified.				☐
Educating visitors/clients about Indigenous cultures is an outcome of business operations.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Embracing diversity and inclusion practices are considered and implemented within the businesses.			☐	☐
The business can cover its operating costs and is ideally financially self-sustaining; if not, there is a plan in place to become so.			☐	☐
Total Required	5	8	26	28
Self Assessment				

Appendix C:
Strategic Alignment Analysis

INTRODUCTION

To envision the opportunity for this DLMP and set a direction that aligns with, supports or leads broader organizational, regional and/or provincial initiatives, strategies and reports from these various levels are considered, to maximize the efficiency, effectiveness and overall success of the DLMP.

Aligning the DLMP with the principles outlined in the international and national strategic documents highlighted in this section helps propel Sylvan Lake towards sustainable tourism development, embracing global sustainability ideals, supporting national visions for tourism growth and aligning with provincial & regional visions and priority areas. These strategies underscore the importance of economic sustainability, community engagement and environmental stewardship, aiming to elevate Sylvan Lake as a model for responsible and inclusive tourism.

Alignment with strategies at the local level, the DLMP will synthesize community insights and strategic directions from existing local plans, aiming to create a cohesive and vibrant tourism and recreational landscape. The objectives are to prioritize the development of Sylvan Lake's natural and cultural assets, fostering partnerships across public, private and community sectors to take a collective approach to destination development.

Adopting innovation, inclusivity and sustainability, the DLMP seeks to enhance Sylvan Lake's position as a destination host, ensuring that tourism growth contributes positively to the community's economy and environmental preservation. Through strategic alignment and localized action, the DLMP lays the groundwork for a dynamic and sustainable future for tourism in Sylvan Lake.

GLOBAL

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

The UNWTO is the United Nations agency responsible for promoting responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO plays a crucial role in shaping the industry globally, offering guidance and support to enhance economic growth, inclusivity, and environmental sustainability in tourism. With 160 member states and over 500 affiliates members (including the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC)), the UNWTO facilitates vital discussions on key issues, best practices and challenges facing the global tourism industry.

The UNWTO has developed resources that align sustainable and inclusive practices within tourism development. The lUla Framework for Inclusive Community Development through Tourism (2020) and The Sustainable Tourism for Development Guidebook (2013) are two insightful resources that emphasize the significance of community engagement, environmental stewardship and capacity building. They offer guidance for developing tourism strategies that are not only economically feasible but also environmentally sustainable and that advocate for the participation of all community members which can be applied in the development of Sylvan Lake's DLMP.

AlUla Framework for Inclusive Community Development through Tourism (2020)

Under the leadership of the 2020 G20 Saudi Presidency, the UNWTO and the G20 Tourism Working Group developed the "AlUla Framework for Inclusive Community Development through Tourism (2020)" to help fulfill the sector's potential to contribute to and achieve inclusive community development and the Sustainable Development Goals. While the framework is specifically designed for the AlUla region in Saudi Arabia, its principles and strategies offer valuable insights and benefits for tourism in Sylvan Lake. The framework encompasses four action pillars that were developed to address current challenges and to provide recommendations that take advantage of opportunities for the sector to contribute to inclusive community development. The four action pillars of this framework are:

- Empower – boosting community leadership and representation in tourism development and building capacity;
- Safeguard – protecting the local population, cultures and natural environment;
- Prosper – supporting innovation and entrepreneurship, especially participation from equity-deserving groups; and
- Collaborate – facilitating partnerships between governments, the private sector, local organizations and community members.

To align with the framework's action pillars, the DLMP can adopt strategies that promote inclusive community engagement, prioritize the protection of local culture and the environment, and support innovative partnerships between governments, the private sector, and local organizations.
The framework underscores the importance of public-private-community partnerships (PPCPs) to promote sustainable and inclusive tourism. PPCPs are defined as a cooperative model wherein all three parties share in the development, resources, and responsibilities to further the benefits of tourism and the impact of community development. The PPCP model supports the grassroots approach the DLMP will utilize, which aims to engage all community members, focusing on equity, representation, and inclusivity by sharing in the responsibility for tourism development.

To measure and evaluate the impact, the framework recommends adopting the Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (MST) recognized by the UN Statistical Commission as the framework to measure the contribution of tourism to the Sustainable Development Goals agenda. Conducting assessments and impact studies allows organizations to measure their impact and track the progress toward their sustainability goals. Aligning with the framework principles of measurement and evaluation, the DLMP will adopt values of transparency and accountability, continuous improvement and decision-making practices that rely on measurement and data collection.

A recommended area of alignment within the framework focuses on policies and programs that promote human capital development, particularly for women, youth, and other equity-deserving groups in the tourism development process. To align with these policies, the DLMP will adopt strategies that engage and leverage the talents of community members, particularly those who have been underrepresented or underserved in the tourism development market. Aligning with the framework's inclusive community development, sustainability, and cultural preservation principles the DLMP will adopt policies and practices that promote equity, accessibility, and participation for all community members, prioritize environmentally sustainable practices and promote the revitalization of traditions, languages, and cultural practices.

Sustainable Tourism for Development Guidebook (2013): Enhancing capacities for Sustainable Tourism for development in developing countries

The Sustainable Tourism for Development Guidebook takes a comprehensive approach to tourism, covering a wide range of topics relating to its planning, development, management and impact. While the guidebook is written with developing countries in mind, it contains 12 aims of sustainable tourism, many of which align with the development of the DLMP, including social equity, local control, community well-being and physical integrity. The 12 aims of sustainable tourism and how they align with the DLMP include:

1. Economic Viability is at the forefront of the DLMP development, ensuring that tourism enterprises prosper and deliver long-term benefits.
2. Local Prosperity is a primary goal, emphasizing the retention of visitor spending within the community.
3. Employment Quality is prioritized, focusing on creating and supporting local jobs with fair pay and conditions.
4. Social Equity is a guiding principle, aiming for a widespread distribution of economic and social benefits to improve community members' opportunities, income, and services.
5. Visitor Fulfillment underscores Sylvan Lake's commitment to providing a safe and satisfying experience for all visitors without discrimination.
6. Local Control is a key strategy, engaging and empowering local communities in planning and decision-making for sustainable tourism development.
7. Community Well-Being is paramount. It focuses on maintaining and strengthening the quality of life in Sylvan Lake, including access to resources, amenities, and support systems (networks of people and services that provide emotional, practical, and social assistance), and avoiding any form of social degradation or exploitation.
8. Cultural Richness and
9. Physical Integrity ensures the preservation of the heritage and landscapes, while
10. Biological Diversity supports the conservation of natural areas.
11. Resource Efficiency and
12. Environmental Purity guides the DLMP in minimizing the use of resources and reducing pollution.

By aligning with the UNWTO's 12 sustainable tourism aims, the DLMP will adopt a multifaceted approach that considers economic, social, environmental, and economic goals that benefit the community, visitors, and the environment alike.

NATIONAL

The Canadian government plays a pivotal role in developing and supporting the country's tourism sector. This multi-billion-dollar industry is a significant contributor to Canada's economy, employing hundreds of thousands of Canadians. The government recognizes tourism's economic and social importance by developing comprehensive strategies, funding channels, and legislative measures to ensure the sector's growth and inclusivity.

The government's commitment to support the tourism sector is highlighted by its financial investments in the tourism industry. Between 2008 and 2020, approximately $1 billion was invested, with an additional $1 billion announced in 2021, including the Tourism Relief Fund. This fund is designed to help position Canada as a top global destination post-Covid-19 pandemic, supporting tourism businesses in enhancing and creating new experiences to attract a broader range of visitors. Substantial investments have also been made to support the recovery and growth of Indigenous tourism businesses, reflecting a commitment to cultural diversity and richness. Furthermore, the government has also focused on improving accessibility in the tourism sector, as exemplified by the introduction of the Accessible Canada Act in 2018. This act aims to create a barrier-free Canada, enhancing accessibility in federal areas, including transportation services.

The government of Canada promotes tourism through the national DMO, Destination Canada, which works to attract visitors (primarily international) to explore the country and its diverse regions. Destination Canada operates collaboratively with provinces and territories in a coordinated effort to develop national strategies that promote tourism across the country. The following three strategic documents outlined in this section set the stage for the future of tourism in Canada. These plans collectively lay the blueprint for Canada's tourism industry, navigating through year-round engagement, adaption to global trends and focused recovery strategies.

They underscore innovation, sustainability, market diversification, and stakeholder collaboration as fundamental pillars for aligning Canada's tourism sector with future demands and opportunities. Together, they aim to enhance Canada's position as a leading, all-season destination, ready to meet travellers' evolving expectations while ensuring sustainable growth and inclusivity within the tourism sector. Exploring national strategic plans will help align Sylvan Lake's DLMP with the broader goals and initiatives that influence Canada's tourism industry.

Understanding national strategies helps in anticipating policy changes, leveraging funding opportunities and aligning local efforts so that they are supported by and contribute to the nation's overarching tourism goals. Aligning with the strategies will maximize the impact and success of the DLMP.

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Destination Canada: A World of Opportunity

The National Strategy, 'A World of Opportunity' outlines several key strategies for developing tourism at the local community level as follows:

- Adopting a community-centric approach to tourism development.
- Emphasizing multi-stakeholder collaboration for the development of corridor strategies that connect different destinations and attractions, encouraging longer stays and maximizing regional potential.
- Prioritizing the development of tourism experiences that celebrate and preserve local culture, including Indigenous heritage.
- Collaborating with Indigenous partners to develop authentic experiences and support economic reconciliation.
- Adopting a regenerative approach by prioritizing tourism practices that balance economic prosperity with environmental stewardship and social inclusivity.
- Utilizing tourism data and analytics to inform local tourism strategies and investments.
- Creating an environment that attracts both public and private investment in local tourism assets.
- Ensuring local tourism offerings align with Canada's overall brand positioning of "open hearts, open minds, open spaces."

Regarding tourism trends, the plan emphasizes that tourism is expected to grow across all seasons, with a focus on dispersing visitors beyond peak times. The strategy particularly emphasizes increasing yield by attracting high-value travelers who stay longer and spend more, rather than just increasing visitor numbers.

Other key trends include a greater focus on environmentally friendly and socially responsible tourism practices, experience-based tourism, improved accessibility, technological integration throughout the customer journey, and maintaining a strong domestic tourism base.

Several key priorities are also highlighted for local community development, including infrastructure development, workforce development, and fostering local partnerships.

Canada's Tourism Renaissance: Our Strategy for Recovery Spring 2022

Destination Canada's comprehensive strategy for recovery, "Canada's Tourism Renaissance," prioritizes the perception of tourism within host communities, emphasizing the need for positive interactions and fostering a sense of pride and involvement among local residents. The strategy ensures that the tourism initiatives are not only beneficial to visitors but also enrich the local community. Promoting sustainable and responsible tourism, while building strong relationships between visitors and Sylvan Lake residents, is essential for the long-term success of Sylvan Lake as a tourist destination.

The strategy identifies four strategic drivers, two of which ('Brand Resonance' and 'Support from Canadians') are relevant to the DLMP:

- Brand Resonance – positioning Canada as a destination for life-changing experiences appeals to high-value travellers
- Legendary Experiences – attract international high-value visitors and investment to develop unique tourism experiences
- Industry Vitality – stimulating the tourism sector for growth while recognizing the impacts of tourism on the host communities
- Support from Canadians (Social License) – trust and an understanding of the well-being and economic benefits are required for host communities to become champions for tourism.

Brand resonance and responsible and life-changing travel experiences that resonate with high-value travellers seeking destinations that prioritize both their personal growth and the well-being of the local community and environment have become increasingly important for travellers and destination managers. To align with brand resonance, the DLMP can adopt strategies that leverage brand messaging that resonates with high-value travellers, engage with stakeholders to curate unique experiences for visitors and Integrate sustainable tourism practices into the core of the brand experience.

Tourism's Big Shift: Key Trends Shaping the Future of Canada's Tourism Industry November 2021

Destination Canada hired Resonance Consultancy to conduct an extensive scan and assessment of the tourism sector (post-Covid) to identify key trends that are most likely to have the greatest impact on the travel and tourism industry in Canada over the next one to three years. Long-term trends were also identified as part of the process to anticipate adaptive measures for the industry moving forward.

The report highlights an urgent need for adaptation in the tourism sector and outlines key trends and strategic responses. It emphasizes the importance of embracing digital transformation, sustainable practices, community-focused tourism and inclusivity in shaping the future of tourism. These key strategic responses underscore the necessity of creating inclusive, environmentally responsible, and digitally enhanced customer experiences within the scope of destination development and tourism growth in Sylvan Lake.

Recognizing the forecasted higher demand for local and domestic travel presents an opportunity to position Sylvan Lake as an excellent "Local" and trendsetting "Regional" Host and tap into inter-provincial and intra-provincial visitor markets.

Sylvan Lake's Destination Management and Leadership Plan (DLMP) must adopt a focused strategy to effectively align with the evolving tourism landscape. This includes capitalizing on the increasing interest in local and domestic travel by positioning Sylvan Lake as a prime destination in Central Alberta and across the province. There is an opportunity to explore how the town can strengthen connections with Indigenous communities to ensure inclusive and culturally-minded tourism development.

The DLMP's principle of equity, inclusivity and accessibility strongly aligns with Destination Canada's focus on adopting anti-racism and equity-focused strategies. This principle embraces visitors, aiming to create a welcoming environment for all, and fosters a nurturing ecosystem for the tourism workforce.

Canada 365: Welcoming the World. Every Day, Federal Tourism Growth Strategy (2023)

The report outlines the Federal Tourism Growth Strategy, focusing on revitalizing and enhancing Canada's tourism sector. The vision for tourism growth aims to harness tourism's potential to drive economic growth across communities and elevate Canada's profile as a premier international tourist destination.

The strategy is grounded in key principles of equity, diversity and inclusion, with a focus on accessibility for all, including both workforce and visitors. When it comes to the workforce, the strategy emphasizes the need for a skilled and sustained workforce to propel sector growth, focusing on inclusive economic growth by employing youth, women, Indigenous peoples, new Canadians, and people of diverse backgrounds. Equally important, it emphasizes harnessing tourism as a means of active reconciliation, through enabling and promoting more authentic Indigenous-led experiences. The approach is sustainability and regeneration-oriented, aligning with environmental goals and avoiding over-tourism's impact. Special attention is given to rural Canada, leveraging tourism for local community development; diversifying and strengthening rural/remote/small communities' economic base and viability and preserving culture and heritage.

Strategic priorities include investing in tourism assets, embracing nature-based and adventure tourism, strengthening Indigenous tourism partnerships, and utilizing event tourism for product diversification, growth and enriching shoulder seasons.

These directions strongly mirror the needs and priorities identified for destination development and tourism growth in Sylvan Lake, showcasing synergies in macro-tourism and local development strategies and opportunities. These should be implemented through context-specific strategies and actions. Key needs like workforce rebuilding, infrastructure improvement, technology use and environmentally responsible operations and partnerships resonate with Sylvan Lake's tourism growth scope, indicating potential alignment and growth areas.

PROVINCIAL

In 2021/2022, the Government of Alberta (GOA) and Travel Alberta were restructured. Where tourism was previously under the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade, and Tourism, in late 2022, the GOA placed Tourism in the Ministry of Forestry, Parks, and Tourism, speaking to the importance of land management in tourism growth and development. In mid-2023, the GOA moved tourism again into the Ministry of Sport and Tourism. The diversity of movement also speaks to the flexibility of tourism to serve diverse goals and require diverse resources. Tourism priorities previously served by the GOA were moved into the Travel Alberta portfolio with Travel Alberta's mandate extending beyond Destination Marketing to also include Destination Development. This combination of marketing and development serving one unified goal is expected to increase the efficiency and efficacy of achieving Alberta's tourism growth goals.

In 2022, Travel Alberta, the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta, and Indigenous Tourism Alberta began collaborating heavily on sustainable development and promoting Alberta's tourism potential. This included an international trip with select operators in promoting travel trade initiatives, including an Indigenous operator from Sylvan Lake. This relationship is beneficial in ensuring industry needs and interests are heard through the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta's (TIAA) advocacy efforts, that marketing functions are connected to long-term strategic development goals through Travel Alberta, and that Indigenous tourism can flourish authentically and benefit from the tourism economy in preserving and celebrating Indigenous heritage and culture.

Indigenous Tourism Alberta's goal is to enhance economic viability, further engage and support Indigenous peoples, and nurture partnerships throughout Alberta by sharing their stories, culture, and experiences with a global audience.

At the time of writing, Travel Alberta has just debuted its Tourism Development Zone travel corridors project. Funding programs offered by Travel Alberta indicate a desire to see collaborative projects between multiple partners with distinct returns on investment.

Travel Alberta 2023 - 2026 Business Plan

Travel Alberta's vision is centred on driving the growth of Alberta's visitor economy and placing tourism as a strong means to increase job growth and economic diversification within the province. Travel Alberta focused its strategic actions on collaborative and synergistic efforts and partnerships, including working with industry operators, DOs, industry associations, and Destination Canada to form the basis of Alberta's tourism ecosystem. This plan, titled "Recovery to Resilience," was developed in the context of the tourism industry's recovery, with improvements in air recovery and visitation, particularly due to domestic travel and the forecasted continued growth in international visitation. Its overarching goal is to recover and grow Alberta's tourism industry while investing in the sector's long-term resilience.

Travel Alberta recognizes its role in destination development with the scope of regulatory navigation, supporting long-term development plans with communities, activating new plans in emerging destinations, and evolving tourism investment programs. There is also a great emphasis on connectivity across the province through route investments

and Intra-provincial transportation. Within this scope, the emphasis on community and business support, investment in product development and businesses' market-readiness, and inter-provincial partnerships, closely align with and support the scope of Sylvan Lake DLMP.

The goal set by Travel Alberta's Product Investment Fund grant program to create a direct impact of $8.5 to $10.5 million on the GDP from 2019 to 2024 suggests a strong foundation for Sylvan Lake's local business and entrepreneurship development, product diversification, and investment in business readiness. It also opens a great avenue for more strategic collaboration with Travel Alberta in this regard.

Travel Alberta's marketing and promotion scope combines a focus on the iconic experiences found in legacy destinations to attract and retain high-value travellers from U.S and, to some extent, international visitors, and the increasing trend of environmental and cultural consciousness among visitors. It prioritizes co-investment in promotional campaigns that differentiate Alberta.Within this scope, there is an emphasis on collaborative marketing and sales efforts with the support of Travel Alberta programs and funding, as well as through local destination's leadership. There is a further emphasis on differentiation through unique storytelling and driving sales through partnerships, all of which support and align with the scope and directions of Sylvan Lake DLMP.

The emphasis on economic modelling and forecasting present a need for data-informed decisions and analysis regarding tourism investment and destination development decision-making. This directly speaks to a significant need that is also identified for Sylvan Lake to thrive as a major asset to the Province's tourism diversification.

Travel Alberta's role as a driver, partner, and convener in destination management aligns with Sylvan Lake's approach to developing a community-focused tourism sector. With guidance from Indigenous Tourism Alberta, their initiative to invest in and develop local Indigenous tourism experiences complements Sylvan Lake's commitment to cultural inclusivity and diversity in tourism.

The Sylvan Lake DLMP and Travel Alberta's sustainability framework have a shared vision for sustainable tourism development that is grounded on the uniqueness of destination, inclusivity, adaptability, direct socio-economic benefits for the local community through tourism investment, preserving culture and history, conserving the environment and fostering innovation.

Indigenous Tourism Alberta Strategy (2019 - 2024)

ITA is a leader in developing and marketing authentic Indigenous tourism experiences through innovative partnerships. ITA's vision for Indigenous tourism is a thriving Indigenous tourism economy in Alberta, offering authentic, memorable, and enriching experiences.

The Indigenous Tourism Alberta Strategy aims to improve socio-economic conditions in Indigenous communities by developing sustainable, market-ready, and export-ready Indigenous tourism products. It sets specific economic targets, including a 25% increase, or $35 million, in tourism expenditures and a 52% increase in market-ready businesses by 2024.

Indigenous Tourism Alberta 2019-2024 Strategy and the Sylvan Lake DLMP align closely in their community-centric approach to tourism development and emphasis on equity-centric tourism development. They share a focus on developing sustainable, market-ready Indigenous tourism products and growing demand for such experiences in Alberta. ITA's strategy targets the Cultural Explorers segment, who seek deep cultural immersion, aligning with Indigenous traditions of hospitality and sharing authentic stories. The plan also emphasizes on recognizing the diversity of Indigenous culture and experiences across Alberta and addressing current misconceptions about the homogeneity of Indigenous culture, which has limited visitor retention and multiple visits across the province.

Within the context of Sylvan Lake DLMP, this highlights the need for integrating Indigenous tourism into Sylvan Lake's emerging visitor economy through engagement and partnership at both provincial and local levels. It also underscores the importance of prioritizing the diversification of Indigenous products by identifying local Indigenous assets and gifts that can tap into the unique stories of land and water to create authentic Indigenous land-based experiences. Equally important, it sheds light on the importance of long-term planning for diversifying visitor segments in Sylvan Lake, focusing on cultural experience-seeking visitors and market demands, and ensuring that the unique story of the land is told through both marketing and the experience itself.

To achieve these goals ITA has prioritized improving Indigenous tourism operators' entrepreneurial and operational capacities, nurturing new experiences, and engaging media and travel trade partners to promote firsthand Indigenous experiences. This approach complements Sylvan Lake's DLMP focus on integrating tourism development with community well-being and cultural authenticity. It unfolds the need to prioritize industry partnership, community collaborations, and Indigenous rights holders' leadership to develop market-ready Indigenous tourism initiatives in Sylvan Lake.

REGIONAL

The Central Alberta Tourism Alliance (CATA) currently includes the communities of Red Deer, Lacombe, Sylvan Lake, Innisfail, Rocky Mountain House, and Clearwater County with representation from Travel Alberta and the Government of Alberta. Sylvan Lake sits within Red Deer County and shares the lake with both Counties with a significant portion of the lake sitting within Lacombe County. There is an opportunity for the Town of Sylvan Lake to work collaboratively with both Lacombe and Red Deer cities, counties, and tourism organizations for mutual benefit including in tourism initiatives, inter-municipal development planning and environmental health, and shared programs and facilities, as well as with the Sylvan Lake Summer Villages around the lake.

Central Alberta Destination Management Plan (2015)

The Central Alberta Destination Management Plan (2015) presents a comprehensive approach to enhancing the region's tourism sector, with Sylvan Lake playing a pivotal role. The plan envisions transforming Central Alberta into an authentic, memorable, sustainable, and must-experience destination . It ambitiously aims to grow and diversify the tourism benefits, targeting specific visitor segments such as Cultural Explorers, Authentic Experiencers, and Cultural History Buffs. Acknowledging a missed opportunity in region-wide branding, the plan suggests connecting various visitor experiences to form cohesive travel itineraries. A key priority is developing a collaborative destination leadership model, fostering cross-regional cooperation among municipal and provincial tourism stakeholders. This involves leveraging regional and inter-regional partnerships to create and promote complementary travel packages, thereby enhancing the overall attractiveness of Central Alberta as a tourist destination. This priority underscores the significant need and potential for Sylvan Lake to proactively collaborate with regional partners and regional tourism initiatives to leverage collective resources and align strategies for mutual benefit.

Phase 3 of its Marketing and Communications Strategy, the plan intends to launch themed itineraries that span a broad spectrum, including adventure, eco, aboriginal, food, culture, heritage, arts, festivals, sports, and blended travel. These itineraries are designed to showcase the rich diversity of experiences available in Central Alberta, with Sylvan Lake identified as a crucial hub. The town is envisioned as a community offering a varied mix of experiences, attractions, activities, accommodations, and amenities, facilitating short stays and enriching visitor experiences.

Additionally, the plan underscores the importance of theme-based tourism, particularly in the Lakes District zones, where Sylvan Lake is a primary attraction. This area is defined by its appeal to visitors seeking lake-based nature, adventure, ecotourism, festivals, events, and sports-based experiences. Emphasizing the conservation of the natural environment and offering authentic and memorable experiences are central themes in this approach.

Furthermore, Sylvan Lake is recognized as a priority area for diversifying accommodations, including upgrading campgrounds, to enhance the visitor experience. The plan categorizes visitor experiences into distinct themes based on their maturity in the Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle Model, encompassing festivals, special events, sports tourism, business events, cultural heritage, arts tourism, agriculture, culinary tourism, nature, adventure, ecotourism, and aboriginal tourism. This classification helps strategically focus product development efforts and marketing strategies to attract diverse visitor segments.

Envisioning broader connectivity, the plan proposes developing themed touring routes extending beyond Central Alberta. These routes are designed to encourage collaboration with neighbouring regions, creating a seamless tourism experience that transcends regional boundaries. Sylvan Lake features prominently in these itineraries, such as stopping on the Agriculture, Artisans & Rodeo Tour. Other proposed routes include Experience the West Country, Cowboy Trail, Calgary to Edmonton Trail, and the David Thompson & Aboriginal Peoples route.

In conclusion, the Central Alberta Destination Management Plan (2015) aligns closely with Sylvan Lake DLMP scope for elevating Sylvan Lake to a trendsetter Regional Host (refer to "Ambition" and "Purpose," Section 1.4). Sylvan Lake is identified as a key component in this strategic vision, serving as a hub for various tourism activities and playing a vital role in the overall enhancement of the Central Alberta tourism experience. The Plan's significant emphasis on collaboration, thematic diversity, and creating a cohesive and attractive tourism offering underscores direct implications for Sylvan Lake's strategic directions in tourism product development aligned with the overarching vision of creating authentic, memorable, and sustainable tourism experiences.

Central Alberta Agritourism Development Strategy

The Central Alberta Agritourism Development Strategy outlines the region's ambitious vision for agritourism. By 2033, Central Alberta aims to be recognized as Alberta's premier agritourism destination. This vision invites visitors to engage with the region's rich agricultural heritage and connect them with the people and places that define it.

The strategy outlines several outcome statements describing its strategic directions. Key among these is establishing an impactful and sustainable collaboration framework to support agritourism development in Central Alberta. The emphasis is on increasing agritourism products' availability, diversity, and visibility, fostering an enabling ecosystem for local business development and growth, and positioning agritourism as a main driver of community economic development.

As a key player in the region, Sylvan Lake is recognized for its strong event and festival leadership and is a significant regional draw and asset. It is suggested that agritourism operators can benefit from existing and new festivals and events—hosted in and by Sylvan Lake—by incorporating their experiences into these, particularly in culinary-related areas.

The plan's strong focus on collaboration, partnership among stakeholders, and high-value actions directs Sylvan Lake's DLMP towards placing organization capacity enhancement at its core. Its emphasis on product diversification through partnerships and multiple investments, as well as capacity enhancement

for local business owners and community partners in tourism product development, outlines the importance of leveraging public-private-community partnerships within Sylvan Lake's destination development. It also highlights the significance of utilizing Sylvan Lake's strengths in hosting events and festivals to integrate agritourism experiences, particularly those related to culinary tourism.

Olds to Lacombe: Travel Alberta Tourism Development Zone Discovery Report (2024)

The Olds to Lacombe Tourism Development Zone, (TDZ) Destination Discovery Report is the result of an initiative by Travel Alberta, in partnership with communities, to define and position rural Alberta, (destinations outside of the six most popular tourism destinations), as "emerging" and with high potential for tourism growth and economic impact over the next 10 years. Engagement across the province led to the definition of 10 zones. Sylvan Lake is considered the top visited destination in the Olds to Lacombe Tourism Development Zone zone (anonymized mobile data, 2019).

The Destination Discovery Report is intended to demonstrate the alignment of local stakeholders' tourism development goals with the province's goal of doubling tourism revenue by 2035.

The report includes relevant data for consideration in Sylvan Lake's tourism planning, including:

- Visitation to the Olds to Lacombe TDZ is highly domestic, with the majority of travellers coming from nearby Calgary (17.8 per cent), Edmonton (14.1 per cent), Olds (eight per cent), and Mountain View County (3.2 per cent).
- Approximately 41 per cent of visitors to the zone visit two or more times per year. Albertans account for almost 44 per cent of repeat visitation.
- International visitors spend the longest time in the zone, with an average of 36.7 hours. The rest of Canada, regional, U.S. visitors and Albertans all have average lengths of stay between 28 and 30 hours.
- Fewer than 40 per cent of Albertans are likely to visit the Olds to Lacombe TDZ.
- An asset inventory conducted in the zone identified over 226 tourism-related assets within the Olds to Lacombe TDZ.
- A large majority of potential travellers surveyed envision only a day trip, perhaps to a farmers' market; 72 per cent say they are most likely to visit between June and August, and 73 said they are likely to only stay between one and two nights.
- Existing products in the Olds to Lacombe TDZ align best with the trip anchors of visitors from within Alberta, Canada and the U.S. For these visitors, trip anchors include breweries or wineries, nature parks, self-guided driving tours, and local food and drink.
- Travel Alberta has identified "Curious Adventurers" and "Hotspot Hunters" as the high-value travellers likely to spend more per visit, yield the highest return on investment, and contribute the most to the province's economic growth. Tourism businesses, communities, and associations can attract these valuable visitors by tailoring products and experiences to their unique travel styles.

The Report estimates that over the next 10 years, the Zone has the potential to achieve a 3.9% growth rate in visitor spending, resulting in an additional $98 million and over 700 new jobs. Key to achieving this growth is addressing two "inter-related dynamics," identified in this discovery initiative, that are considered both a challenge and an opportunity: First is regional compression, whereby 75 per cent of expenditures in the province are in five legacy destinations. Second is seasonal compression, where the majority of revenues occur from June to August. Initiatives to address these two unique dynamics will be undertaken in product development planning for the region.

Recommendations include: increasing collaboration among tourism businesses in the TDZ; increasing the overall accommodations offering, with a focus on upper-scale glamping and boutique accommodation; increasing overall product offerings, with a focus on anchor attractions; and creating packages and itineraries that appeal to a higher-value traveller.

Central Alberta Tourism Alliance Accommodation Study (2018)

The Accommodation Study (2018), commissioned by the Central Alberta Tourism Alliance, assesses Sylvan Lake's accommodation sector within the broader regional context. The study identifies limited year-round accommodation options as a constraint on tourism growth, particularly in supporting off-peak and winter visitation. While peak summer months see high demand, the lack of diverse lodging types, including upscale hotels and winter-ready camping facilities, limits Sylvan Lake's ability to position itself as a four-season destination.

The study emphasizes the need for expanded fixed-roof accommodations to attract more overnight visitors. It also highlights the importance of increasing capacity to support events and extended stays. Recommendations also focus on developing linkages between products and experiences across the region to entice demand, including agri-tourism, culinary tourism, sport tourism & training camps, nature & the outdoors, and winter adventure tourism & events amongst its key product areas.

LOCAL

Sylvan Lake has invested in developing multiple comprehensive strategies and plans that have guided the growth and direction of the town. From sustainable waterfront redevelopment to transportation master plan, these strategic documents each inform vital aspects of Sylvan Lake and ultimately play a part in shaping the visitor's experience to Sylvan Lake. The analysis of the documents captures key strategic directions that need to be aligned, synergistic efforts and any outstanding conflict that may hamper DLMP's implementation or may bring negative outcomes for the respective plan. This integrated planning approach ensures a coherent tourism development that enhances Sylvan Lake's appeal while primarily serving as a community development strategy. It effectively connects tourism development directions to the community's broader strategic goals and actions, ensuring that tourism growth aligns with and supports the overall development and well-being of Sylvan Lake and its residents. This analysis majorly informs the plan when it comes to recommendations and actions.

Sylvan Lake - Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan - Draft (January 2023)

The Sylvan Lake Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan (Draft, January 2023) presents a 10-year blueprint for the development, re-development and enhancement of the Town's parks, open spaces, recreation facilities and programming. This plan provides a unique and timely opportunity for the DLMP to partner with the Sylvan Lake Parks and Recreation department to create world-class outdoor spaces that meet the diverse needs of community members, ensure sustainable development, honour the cultural heritage of the land, and are designed for universal access wherever possible.

The plan envisions offering a wide assortment of accessible and inclusive opportunities for physical literacy, ensuring that all community members can engage in recreational activities. It prioritizes enhancing, maintaining and adapting parks and open spaces to be climate-resilient, reflecting a commitment to sustainability. Equitable access to parks and recreation for the diverse residents of Sylvan Lake is a core commitment of the plan.

The draft reports that trails of all kinds—whether paved or natural—remain in high demand among community rights holders. To enhance safety and usability, high-priority trail and trail lighting development in the downtown waterfront area is suggested. To improve wayfinding, the plan recommends installing galvanized steel Trail Map Kiosks and wooden Trail Marker posts at 55 priority locations.

Furthermore, the draft suggests implementing a Trail Lighting Strategy to make trails safer and more conducive to active transportation for commuting and leisure activities throughout the year. This comprehensive approach aims to ensure that the parks and open spaces in Sylvan Lake are inviting, functional, and sustainable for all residents and visitors.

Sylvan Lake - Tourism Destination Positioning Strategy (2022)

The Sylvan Lake Tourism Destination Positioning Strategy (2022) evaluates the town's current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to develop a differentiation strategy for Sylvan Lake's tourism marketing efforts.

The strategy identifies what is unique about Sylvan Lake provincially to establish a unique, competitive position for the destination. It suggests that this position can be articulated through both marketing and the destination's physical characteristics. It targets the EQ segments of "Curious Adventurers" and "Hotspot Hunters," recognizing their potential to drive tourism growth.

The strategy suggests that Sylvan Lake seizes the opportunity to shape and define itself as an iconic lake town, serving as a standout example provincially and nationally. It recommends that more communication and a unified vision are required for rights-holders to participate and align in destination development, ensuring they understand the benefits of tourism.

The plan further articulates Sylvan Lake's unique sense of place from an extensive community engagement process which sets the direction for the brand and considers placemaking from a tourism perspective. The Plan suggests that, by leveraging its unique attributes and fostering a cohesive approach among stakeholders, Sylvan Lake can enhance its tourism appeal and establish a strong, competitive position in the market.

Sylvan Lake - Community Profile (2022)

The Sylvan Lake Community Profile (2022) provides a comprehensive overview of the town's economic and demographic characteristics, emphasizing its identity as a four-season tourism destination. The document outlines Sylvan Lake's strengths, including its growing population, strategic location between Edmonton and Calgary, and diverse economic sectors. The town's economy is primarily driven by tourism, manufacturing, professional services, oil and gas supply, and value-added agriculture. It highlights how tourism remains a dominant sector, supported by Sylvan Lake's distinct lakeside appeal and range of recreational activities throughout the year. In summer, visitors enjoy in swimming, boating, paddleboarding and jet skiing, while winter activities include ice fishing, skating, hockey and outdoor festivals. These experiences highlight the lake's role as a central economic and lifestyle asset.

Sylvan Lake's population has experienced steady growth, increasing from 12,362 in 2011 to nearly 16,000 by 2021, with projections to reach 20,000 residents by 2032. This growth underscores the importance of infrastructure planning, visitor management, and business development to maintain a balance between resident quality of life and tourism growth. The report also highlights Sylvan Lakers' strong community pride and commitment to preserving their natural environment while fostering a vibrant, business-friendly atmosphere.

Sylvan Lake - Business Visitation Program Report (November 2022)

The Sylvan Lake Business Visitation Program Report (November 2022) captures feedback from local business owners, highlighting several key challenges and opportunities. Business owners expressed concerns about the lack of parking and available commercial spaces for rent in the downtown area. This feedback suggests that enhancing the variety of businesses and arts and culture opportunities could make the downtown area more vibrant.

The report identifies significant limitations to business operations, including a lack of available labour, cash flow issues and supply chain challenges. Additionally, respondents pointed out that the relatively small population and the seasonal nature of the economy are major drawbacks to operating a business in Sylvan Lake.

Addressing these challenges and leveraging the identified opportunities could enhance the business environment in Sylvan Lake, fostering a more dynamic and resilient local economy.

Sylvan Lake - Transportation Master Plan (2022)

The Sylvan Lake Transportation Master Plan (2022) proposes self-enforcing traffic calming measures to reduce traffic volume, speed, and shortcutting. The plan emphasizes the need for a Trail and Sidewalk Master Plan to establish a coherent trail network and enhance connections throughout the town. By implementing these strategies, Sylvan Lake aims to improve safety, accessibility, and overall connectivity for residents and visitors alike.

Sylvan Lake - Lakefront Usage Strategy (2020)

The Sylvan Lake Lakefront Usage Strategy (2020) proposes a visual and descriptive concept for the future lakefront, aiming to enhance the overall experience for visitors and residents. Key aspects of the strategy include significant improvements in lake access, with the introduction of new public docks and boat rental locations and a dedicated non-motorized boat launch. The plan also envisions additional sandy beach areas and new barrier-free lake access points to ensure inclusivity.

The strategy introduces a new 'No Wake' zone and an expanded water play feature to promote safe and enjoyable water activities. A formalized mooring field and a new public dock providing access to it are also part of the plan. The designated commercial water use area will cater to various business activities related to water sports and rentals.

The strategy calls for reprogramming Sylvan Lake Park and Lakefront Park to better serve the community and visitors, including the addition of a new washroom facility in the Cottage Area. Future mixed-use development is also proposed to support a vibrant, active lakefront that meets the diverse needs of the community.

Sylvan Lake – Land Use Bylaw Summary

The Sylvan Lake Land Use Bylaw establishes regulations for land development, zoning and permitting processes, ensuring that growth aligns with environmental protection, community needs, and economic objectives. Applicants must meet standard permitting requirements and may be required to submit additional assessments, such as a Visual Impact Assessment for developments affecting scenic corridors or an Environmental Impact Assessment for projects with potential ecological impacts. A Waterfront Construction Management Plan is mandatory for developments within 300m of the lake, addressing erosion control and nutrient runoff mitigation. The bylaw outlines zoning regulations for commercial, residential, industrial and direct control districts (DC). Notably, 50th Street Direct Control District (DC-50) prioritizes small-scale commercial use.

Sylvan Lake - Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan (2019)

The Sylvan Lake Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan provides a comprehensive vision and a 20-year plan to guide growth for the Waterfront area, positioning it as the vibrant heart of Sylvan Lake and a hub of culture and recreational activities. This plan envisions Sylvan Lake as a year-round destination and activity center, meeting the community's needs while making the best use of the limited land base. The plan emphasizes orderly and efficient development and redevelopment, maintaining or enhancing access to the lake, and protecting the lake's environmental integrity.

Key principles include maintaining the Cottage Area's identity and aesthetic, developing a mixed-use Waterfront Commercial Area, and ensuring an active street presence throughout the year. The plan also proposes improved boat launching and pier enhancements, including a natural amphitheater and barrier-free lake access. Streets like 50 Avenue and 50 Street are to be utilized as complete streets, with 50 Street serving as a temporary pedestrian area for community events. Additionally, an indoor/outdoor cultural hub is envisioned for events and community gathering activities, while alleyways are to be transformed into spaces for business pop-ups, public artworks, and other interventions.

The plan outlines characteristics of good design such as all-season adaptability, contextual responsiveness, seamless connectivity, and environmental sustainability. Strategies for parks and open spaces development include barrier-free public access to the Marina and parks, recreational uses on the lake, redevelopment of Lakefront Park, a Public Art Program, grant programs for community-based projects, a winter warming hut competition, and a dog water access point. Heritage and culture conservation strategies involve creating a heritage building inventory to identify and preserve significant historical and cultural sites.

To enhance the Waterfront Commercial Area, the plan recommends focusing on redevelopment and mixed-use intensification of commercial properties on the south side of Lakeshore Drive, creating an active pedestrian streetscape, and improving the streetscape of 46 and 50 Streets. It also suggests exploring the potential for utilizing 50 Avenue between 53 and 60 Street for boat trailer parking with a shuttle system connecting to the Lakefront.

Sylvan Lake – Business Satisfaction Report (2019)

The Business Satisfaction Report (2019), conducted by the Sylvan Lake Chamber of Commerce, surveyed 100 businesses to assess challenges, workforce needs and overall business satisfaction. Seventy-eight per cent of respondents chose Sylvan Lake as their preferred business location, citing quality of life, community growth and access to recreational amenities as key advantages. Businesses also reported workforce shortages, high operating costs and limited commercial space as barriers to growth.

Tourism businesses, particularly in accommodation, food service, and retail, highlighted seasonal fluctuations and hiring challenges. Fifty per cent of businesses interacted with Town departments, with satisfaction levels varying based on regulatory and support services.

Sylvan Lake - Tourism Festival and Event Strategy (2018)

The Sylvan Lake Tourism Festival and Event Strategy (2018) identifies the opportunity for a DMO-style organization to take on tourism functions, including tourism marketing and development. The strategy suggests positioning the municipality as the host organization to enforce the vision, oversee tourism product development, secure grants to fund festivals and events, and provide necessary funding.

The strategy envisions Sylvan Lake collaborating with local and regional tourism partners, tapping into strong existing markets to attract visitors to events and festivals year-round. It predicts that implementing the recommendations would generate an additional $4.4 million in direct visitor spending over the following ten years, establishing tourism economic impact as a primary measure of success and ROI.

Community benefits identified include strengthening community pride, enhancing community engagement, and improving the quality of life for residents through events tourism. Challenges noted in the strategy include the lack of business participation in developing complementary programming and the existence of community events that do little to further tourism goals.

Recommended development opportunities include destination animation, celebrating every season, preparing an "event in a box" to be ready when conditions are just right, leveraging facilities like the NexSource Center to attract external events, and investing in supportive capital infrastructure. The strategy also establishes recommendations for the roles of an Event Committee and other organizations throughout the community to collaborate and foster events tourism effectively.

Sylvan Lake - Tourism Marketing Strategy (2018)

The Sylvan Lake Tourism Marketing Strategy (2018) proposes several initiatives to enhance tourism, particularly during the shoulder seasons. It recommends offering experiential tourism products and promoting events to attract out-of-town visitors. The strategy suggests forming seasonal and thematic driving routes by partnering with nearby towns and establishing collaborative partnerships with regional tour operators to promote Sylvan Lake as a year-round destination.

The strategy highlights the need for additional staff capacity to effectively support marketing efforts and initiatives. It also recommends focusing on residents while maintaining a visitor-friendly and visitor-ready position. The association of visitors primarily with the lake rather than the town itself is identified as a key factor in what makes Sylvan Lake distinct from other locations, although there is a concern that the town's small-town essence and authenticity are at risk of being lost.

The report points out a disconnect between local businesses and the municipality and emphasizes the need for a formal communication system between the Town and tourism businesses. It identifies the Free Spirit EQ psychographic group as the target audience and suggests separating the roles of the municipality and the destination.

Sylvan Lake - Development Process and Design Guidelines (2018)

The Sylvan Lake Development Process and Design Guidelines establish a structured approach to development, to align land use, infrastructure and public spaces with municipal standards and long-term planning objectives. The document outlines the process for land development, including subdivision approvals, servicing studies, engineering design and permitting, while setting technical standards for roadways, water systems, stormwater management, landscaping and public amenities.

These guidelines reinforce the importance of sustainable growth, connectivity and efficient land use. Themes align with other Town documents, including a focus on high-quality public spaces, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure and environmental considerations. By standardizing development expectations, the guidelines support tourism growth by maintaining an attractive and well-integrated built environment, complementing the town's vision for a vibrant, accessible and visitor-friendly community.

Sylvan Lake Cultural Master Plan (2017)

The Cultural Master Plan identifies tourism as a key economic driver for Sylvan Lake, emphasizing cultural activations to attract visitors year-round and boost the local economy. This strategy focuses on key assets including festivals, cultural events, downtown/waterfront revitalization, and cultural facilities.

Festivals and cultural events are seen as significant attractions, with the Plan calling for support of existing successful festivals and the development of year-round initiatives to diversify offerings and extend the tourism season.
Downtown and waterfront areas are recognized as significant assets for cultural activities and visitor attraction, with cultural activations proposed to revitalize these areas, enriching both the visitor experience and the town's cultural identity.
Recommendations include using public art, signage, and placemaking to highlight Sylvan Lake's history and beauty. The Plan also highlights the potential of existing and new entertainment and cultural facilities to enhance tourism offerings, aligning with broader economic development strategies.

Collaboration between cultural groups, the Town, and businesses is emphasized for cultural activations, along with cross-municipal partnerships for cultural tourism and promotional strategies. The plan underscores a community-centric approach, fostering local pride and deeper connections with the town's cultural assets while enhancing its appeal to visitors.

Sylvan Lake – Natural Areas Management Plan (2017)

The Sylvan Lake Natural Areas Management Plan (2017) identifies Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) within town boundaries, mapping 426 sites based on ecological value. Of these, 31 areas were classified as high quality, 122 as moderate, and 273 as low quality. The plan prioritizes key conservation areas and outlines strategies for sustainable land use and infrastructure development to protect Sylvan Lake's natural environment.

Significant ESAs include wetlands, the former rail corridor, agricultural lands near Pogadl Sports Park, and the waterfront north of town. These areas serve as critical habitats and play a role in maintaining biodiversity, stormwater management, and recreational green spaces.

The plan emphasizes connectivity between ESAs to guide responsible development, ensuring that growth and tourism expansion align with environmental stewardship. By integrating natural area conservation into planning policies, Sylvan Lake can preserve its ecological assets while supporting sustainable tourism and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Sylvan Lake - Visitor Friendly Assessment and Action Plan (2016)

The Sylvan Lake Visitor Friendly Assessment and Action Plan (2016) proposes strategies to enhance the visitor experience in Sylvan Lake. Firstly, it recommends enhancing the appearance of the waterfront downtown area by using elements such as wayfinding signage, public art installations, and a consistent visual identity to create an inviting and cohesive atmosphere. Secondly, the Plan suggests building the capacity of local businesses through training programs aimed at improving employee engagement, standardizing customer service levels, and developing effective marketing strategies, all contributing to a positive visitor experience.

Further, there is a recommendation about providing a shuttle bus service to the beach, to enhance accessibility and convenience for visitors.

Lastly, the strategy suggests establishing a system for routine data collection, evaluation, and iteration on visitor-friendly efforts. This continuous improvement approach ensures that Sylvan Lake remains responsive to visitor needs and preferences, enhancing overall satisfaction and promoting repeat visits.

Sylvan Lake - Community Social Master Plan (2016-2019)

The Sylvan Lake Community Social Master Plan (2016-2019) is underpinned by the following guiding principles: Collaboration; Inclusion; Shape Our Own Future; Prevention and Responsiveness; and Resilience. Its stated vision for the community is: "Sylvan Lake is a safe and caring community where residents enjoy a healthy quality of life." The Plan envisions Sylvan Lake as a community with an accessible range of transportation options, particularly focusing on community organizations, low-income residents, families, and seniors. It aims to enable opportunities for residents to form strong, positive social connections.

It recommends promoting volunteer opportunities for parents and their children, as well as creating a volunteer coordinator position within the Town. These initiatives are designed to foster a sense of community engagement and contribute to the overall well-being and social fabric of Sylvan Lake.

Sylvan Lake – Retail Gap Analysis (2015)

The Retail Gap Analysis (Phases 1 & 2) evaluates Sylvan Lake's retail market. The study recommends expanding retail on the west side of town, improving year-round retail strategies for the Waterfront Commercial District (WCD), and promoting smaller-scale, pedestrian-friendly retail villages. Key opportunities for the WCD include independent coffee shops, bakeries, craft breweries, farmers' markets, and boutique retail, creating a vibrant, all-season shopping and dining destination that attracts both locals and visitors. The analysis outlines best practices, including multi-use public spaces, creating culinary destinations in the downtown, clustering as a "pull" for both residents and visitors, as well as investments in public gathering spaces & beautification, noting "an integral aspect of revitalization is providing the necessary components to drive and nurture the businesses, culture and identity of the community."

Sylvan Lake – Watershed Cumulative Effects Management Plan (2015)

The Sylvan Lake Cumulative Effects Management System (CEMS, Phases 1 & 2) provides a science-based framework for monitoring and managing environmental impacts on the Sylvan Lake watershed. Developed through collaboration between municipal councils, technical experts and community consultation, CEMS follows an adaptive management approach, continuously assessing policies and responding to environmental changes.

The system monitors Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs), using indicators to track both existing conditions and potential risks. It establishes triggers to prompt early intervention and limits to prevent unacceptable environmental degradation. Indicators fall into three management zones: Green (stable conditions), Yellow (potential risk), and Red (likely degradation), guiding appropriate management responses.

Considering the natural environment in the DLMP, it is important to note that, while this framework is in place, ongoing monitoring has yet to be fully implemented due to capacity constraints.

Sylvan Lake – Economic Impact Assessment of Tourism (2014)

The Economic Impact Assessment of Tourism quantifies the financial contributions of tourism to Sylvan Lake, highlighting its role as a key economic driver. The study estimates that 761,223 tourists visited Sylvan Lake in the summer of 2014, spending an average of $35.17 per day, generating a total economic impact of $75 million. Tourism supported 600 person-years of employment, contributing $40.3 million to GDP and $25.7 million in labour income.

Sylvan Lake – 50th Street Urban Design Guidelines (2014)

The 50th Street Urban Design Guidelines (2014) establish a vision for revitalizing 50th Street as a pedestrian-friendly corridor that balances commercial vibrancy, residential livability and waterfront connectivity. The guidelines emphasize mixed-use development, high-quality architecture and active street frontages, aiming to enhance the street's role as a gateway to Sylvan Lake's waterfront. A key focus is on preserving and enhancing views to and from the lake, with specific provisions to frame (rather than obstruct) view corridors at the terminus of public roads. The guidelines integrate placemaking principles, supporting small-scale commercial activity and higher-density mixed-use developments, while prioritizing streetscape improvements and winter-friendly design.

Sylvan Lake - Tourism Strategy (2013-2018)

The Sylvan Lake Tourism Strategy 2013-2018 envisions establishing a tourism organization to lead destination development, management, and marketing efforts at the town level. The strategy aims to enhance visitor experiences by developing a unifying concept and attracting new businesses to the downtown area. It also suggests expanding options for overnight accommodations to accommodate increased visitor traffic.

A key priority of the strategy is to increase repeat visits and spending in Sylvan Lake through enhanced marketing efforts by the Town, regional partners, and local businesses. The strategy emphasizes the importance of easily accessible visitor information and attractions, proposing improved wayfinding and parking designs. It also recommends regular economic impact assessment and monitoring to track the effectiveness of tourism initiatives.

The strategy prioritizes enhancing boat access infrastructure to access a new visitor marker and identifies major events as a key strategy for attracting tourism to Sylvan Lake. These initiatives collectively aim to position Sylvan Lake as a desirable and vibrant tourist destination.

Other documents reviewed to inform the DLMP include (but are not limited to):

- Memorial Trail Functional Planning Study 2022
- 2022 10-Year Capital Plan
- 2021 Sylvan Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan
- 2020 Wastewater Master Plan and Inflow and Infiltration Study
- 2020 Water Master Plan
- 2019 Stormwater Master Plan
- 2016 Retail Investment Booklet

Appendix D:

Placemaking & Wayfinding Toolkit

Introduction

Placemaking is a people-first approach to city building. It connects citizens to their built environment by making everyday spaces destinations and gathering places. These spaces make a location desirable for people to live, work, and play, influencing how people feel about each other, their neighbourhoods, and their town overall.

A strong sense of place is no longer a luxury, but a necessity for healthy and vibrant communities. Sylvan Lake, to remain competitive and attractive, must be strategic and intentional in creating this sense of place. This Placemaking and Wayfinding Strategy is the first step towards this goal, providing a solid foundation for the Town's future work in shaping, activating, and managing placemaking and wayfinding.

This toolkit is not just a guide, but a key to unlocking Sylvan Lake's unique small town charm, casual atmosphere, and lake-town vibe. These elements are not just attractions, but the very essence of Sylvan Lake's identity. Placemaking and wayfinding, as outlined in this strategy, are the tools Sylvan Lake can use to foster and enhance this identity, building community wellbeing and driving tourism and economic growth.

Who asks for the road, doesn't get lost.
—Finnish Proverb

Community Insights

This toolkit is informed and motivated by the community in and around Sylvan Lake, as well as past and prospective guests. The insights have been selected and adapted from the DLMP, to share what was heard throughout engagement activities that inform the Plan, and highlight challenges that placemaking can address.

Operationalize the 'Vibe'
The Town lacks a "vibe" or "essence." Its identity needs to be operationalized.

Pedestrian Flow and Trail Connections
There is a desire to encourage increased connections along trails and paths downtown to support visitor flow throughout the town.

Beyond the Beach
There is a lack of awareness and visibility for what visitors can do in Sylvan Lake beyond the lakefront

Animate the Core
There is a need and a desire to beautify, active and animate the downtown beyond the waterfront.

Go Grassroots
Local businesses and residents want to lead and collaborate on tourism initiatives, to enhance their town.

Unoccupied Opportunities
The quality of retail options downtown can be improved. The use and upkeep of unoccupied spaces also need to be addressed.

Magnify Arts and Culture
The expansion of arts and culture in Sylvan Lake is exciting, with opportunities to enhance the visitor and pedestrian experience.

Embrace Indigenous Ways of Thinking and Doing
Nature-based Indigenous experiences and links to Indigenous communities and culture need to be explored.

Beach For All
The beach is in demand, and space is limited. Crowding, litter, and bylaws need to be addressed, and accessible opportunities to experience the beach need to be added.

Car Flow
Parking and traffic downtown are exacerbated in the summer months, creating challenges for locals and visitors alike.

Guide Visitors
Visitors need guidance, as not enough maps, brochures, and information exist to guide them throughout the town and to the local experiences.

Placemaking

Placemaking refers specifically to a collaborative process where communities shape and use public spaces, layering them with meaning, identity, and shared values, created by the community. This process strengthens the connection between people and the public spaces they share. It highlights—and capitalizes—on the unique assets of the community and promotes a community's health, happiness, and well-being. Placemaking invites a collective re-imagining of public spaces as the heart of every community.

Placemaking in action can take many forms—temporary and permanent, large and small scale. It is a community that defines a sense of place and brings that shared vision to life through signage, wayfinding, public artworks and installations, events and festivals, and more.

Placekeeping

Placekeeping is an alternative to placemaking that acknowledges the colonial structures inherent in urban planning and design–and, therefore placemaking. Placekeeping is often used within Indigenous communities and recognizes that the place is already there and doesn't need to be made—instead, it needs to be preserved, celebrated, or stewarded. In this document, the term placemaking is used. The DLMP acknowledges the importance of including diverse community perspectives and surfacing missing histories.

Wayfinding

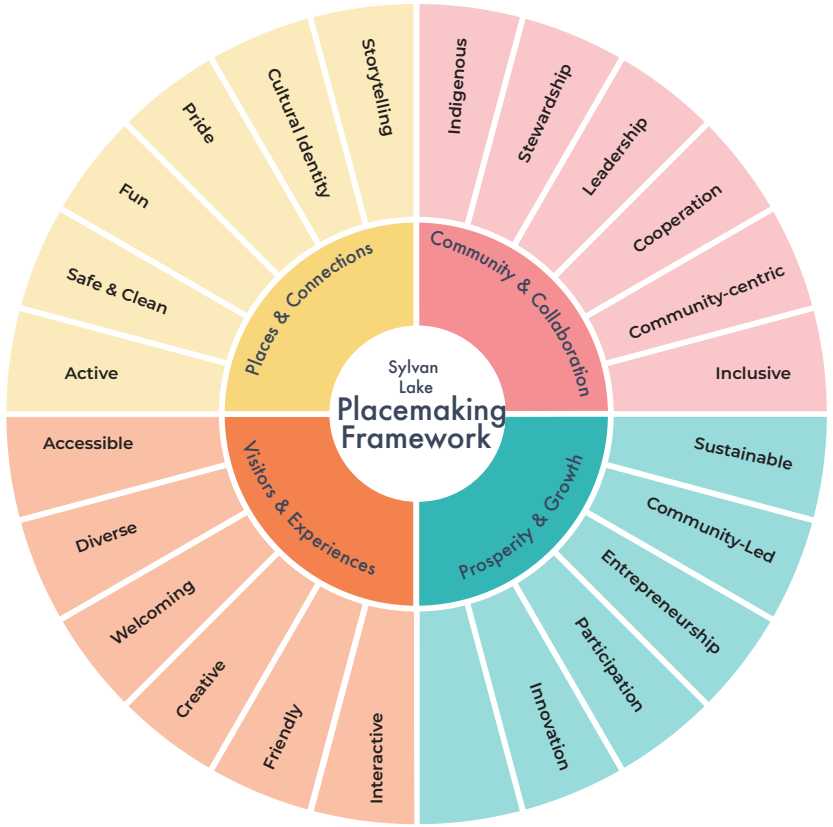
Wayfinding is both necessary signage infrastructure and information and an aspect of placemaking, as it can impact one's experience of a place. It enhances connections between physical places and themes or ideas while telling a story and communicating information. It can influence behaviour, presenting complex information in a clear and useful way for a diversity of users.

Wayfinding considers the end-to-end journey of a person's experience. Its ultimate role is to consider and connect all the elements of the built environment. Wayfinding extends beyond signage; it can include landmarks, edges and pathways, artworks, installations, and other visual cues built into the urban environment. Wayfinding focuses on the planning and design of a range of information tools. It takes a system approach to coordinate virtual experiences (mobile, web) with print, signage, and even public art to support and connect journeys.

Sylvan Lake as "place"

Great places are home to social and economic interactions, see a mix of cultures, make space for celebration and gathering, are active and alive, and express the identity of the people who live, work, and play there.

This Sylvan Lake Placemaking Framework is built upon the themes identified in the DLMP and key Town plans and strategies. These represent the ingredients needed to enhance Sylvan Lake as a "place." As identified in the Visit Sylvan Lake Destination Positioning Strategy (2022), the lake town vibe is core to Sylvan Lake's essence. Placemaking efforts should reinforce (and celebrate!) this sense of place, staying authentic to the destination and community while articulating this essence to visitors.



Placemaking & Wayfinding

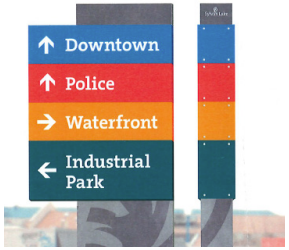
This section outlines a range of wayfinding and placemaking components and applications to suit Sylvan Lake's specific needs. These components are considered to prevent cluttering the public realm by ensuring that each is multi-functional.

Components

The components include sign types and public realm infrastructure. All can be considered tools to be leveraged across different applications to make for a distinctively Sylvan Lake experience across the town.

Monolith Signage acts as information hubs; multi-functional signage monoliths that offer a one-stop shop for visitors' wayfinding and include maps.

Banners recede into the background, crafting a vibe and creating an identity. They can be used to mark gathering spaces and define the boundaries of places.

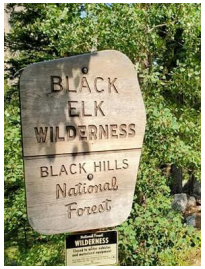


Directional Signage points to where things are and creates a path through a series of connected signs.

Public Art can add instant vibrancy while supporting a place's identity, welcoming or directing visitors without adding clutter.

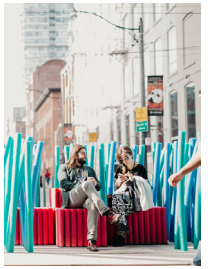
Gateway Signage announces the arrival at a destination, acting as a welcoming identifier and marking the boundaries of a place.

Temporary Signage is mobile and flexible, able to adapt to changing circumstances, such as road closures or parking change



Trail Signage acts as a clear, yet unobtrusive guide with a hierarchical system that includes a trail indicator to welcome, informational signage to educate and subtle directional cues that connect across a system.

Visual Beacons like distinct buildings or public artworks are inherently integrated into wayfinding systems as recognizable landmarks.



Infrastructure such as bike locks, seating, or trash cans, can become visual beacons or moments of placemaking and wayfinding. **Lighting** can be functional and support safety, but it also enhances the experience of a place.

Strategic Applications

This outlines a set of applications in which the components (pg. 6) can be applied to suit the specific needs of those sites and locations. This allows for a flexible system that can grow over time or respond to changing circumstances. As new opportunities for signage and wayfinding arise, the appropriate wayfinding component most suitable for application and intention can be applied.

Invite

A welcome gesture that announces one's arrival and draws them into a space. It also serves a recognition of having reached a destination.

Activate

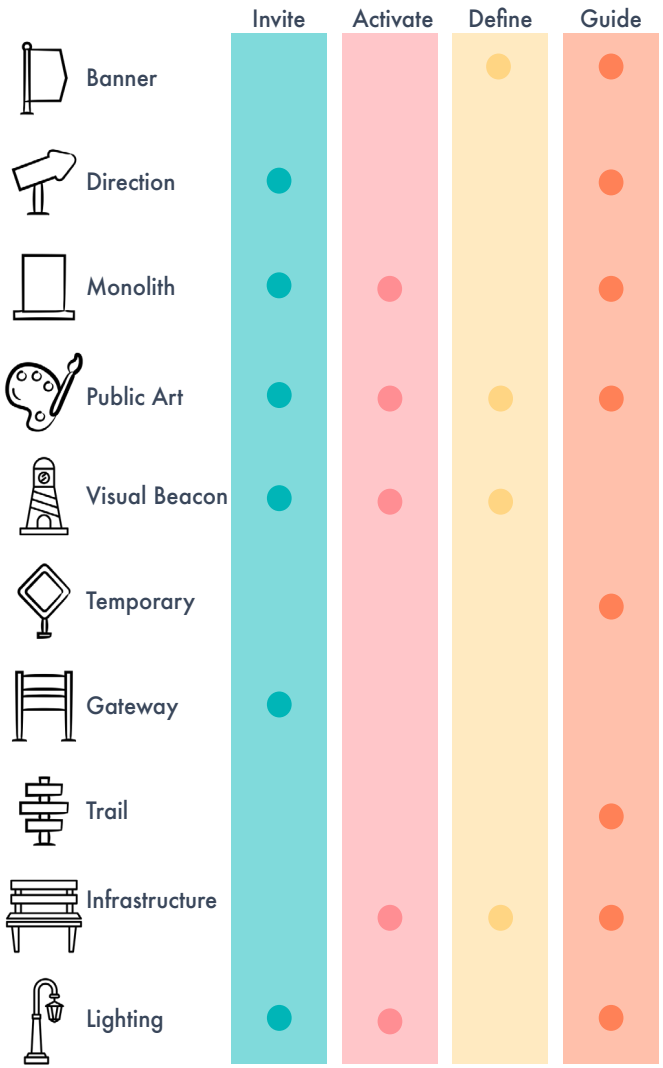
Brings life and vibrancy, inviting people to participate, gather or enjoy.

Define

Creates cohesion and a common visual language to a defined area, promoting its unique identity. It can serve to orient yourself relative to your destination and other known areas.

Guide

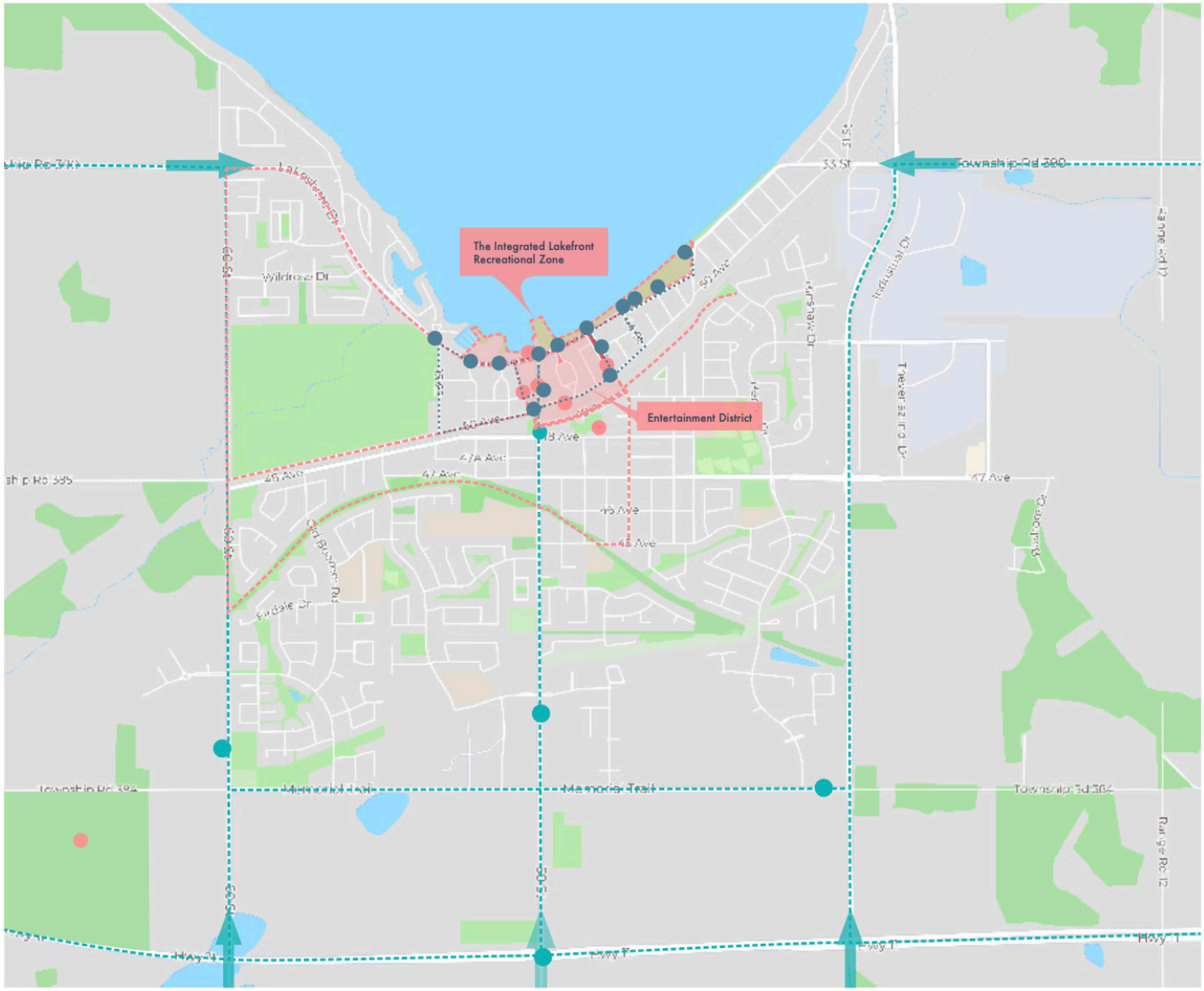
Offers guidance and creates new connections and efficiency, fostering exploration and discovery. It helps make decisions about your journey and confirms you are on the right path.



Section 3

Approach

Proposed additions to placemaking and wayfinding



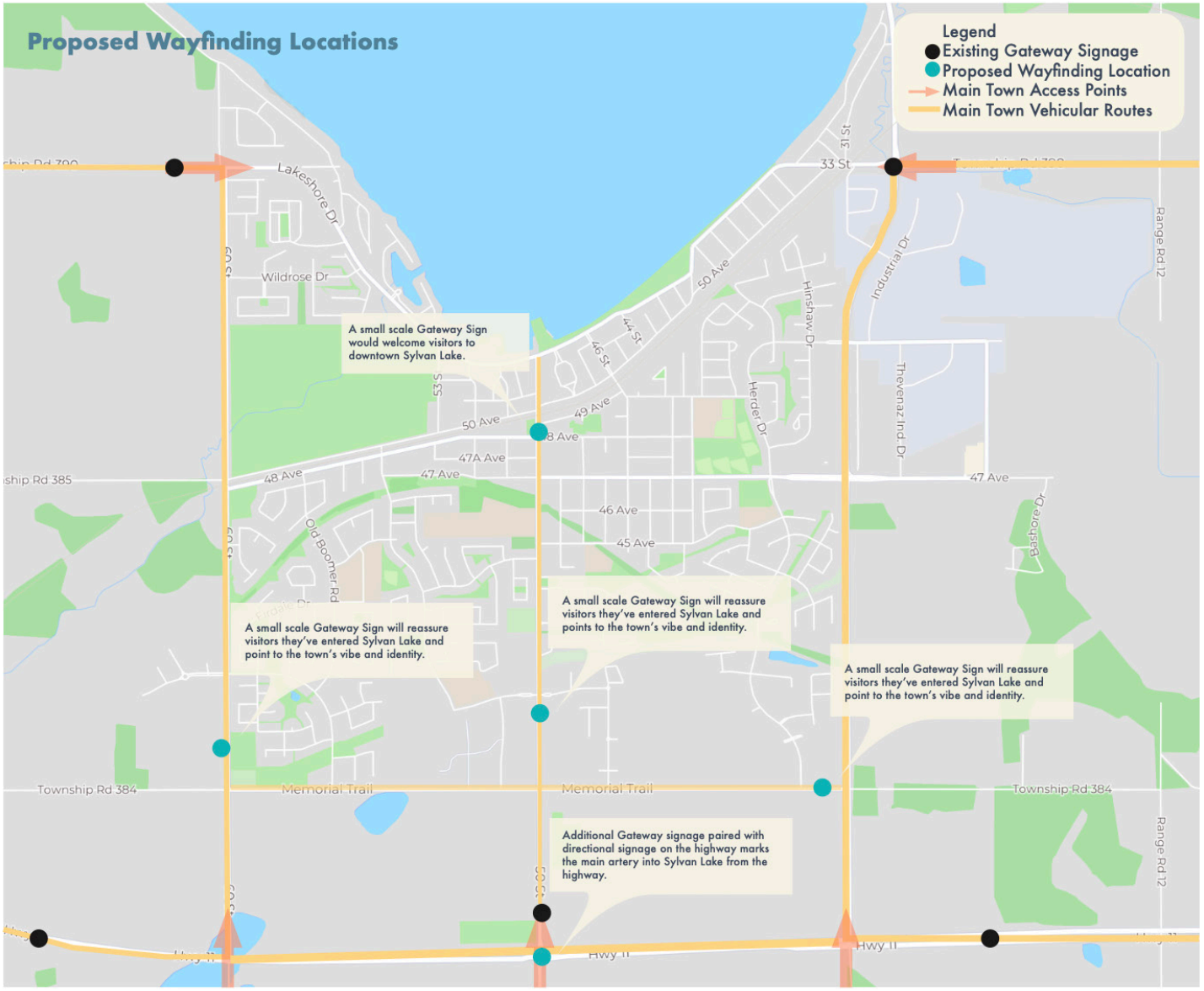
Invite

The "Invite" application uses placemaking and wayfinding components to announce one's arrival at a destination and welcome people to that place. It focuses on Sylvan Lake gateway signage and opportunities to welcome people not only to the town itself but also to new areas within the town.

Context
Sylvan Lake has several possible entry points from the provincial highway. Four recently installed gateway signs announce your arrival in Sylvan Lake.

Opportunity
While existing gateway signage marks the boundaries of the town and announces arrival, many are along highways in a rural setting, and none point to the precise location of the Town. Additional signage at various town entry points can further draw in, welcome, and assure visitors they have arrived at their destination and better establish the identity and vibe of Sylvan Lake

This map identifies potential locations for "Invite" signage and wayfinding.

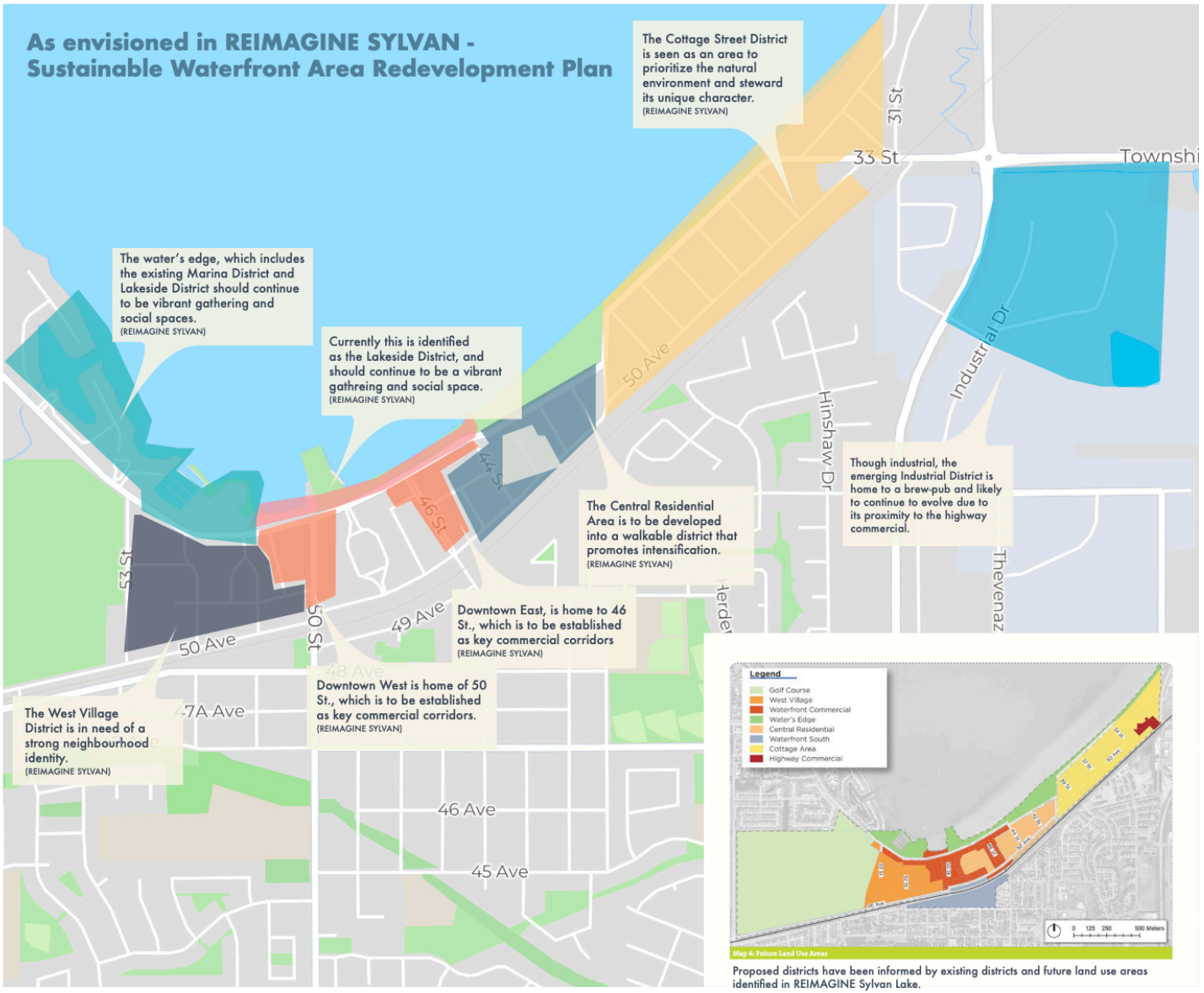


Define

The "Define" application endeavours to create diverse districts, each with a name and associated colour and vibe. These distinct districts support the town's unique sense of place but allow different aspects of the essence to be expressed. These defined areas offer distinct identities behind which local residents and businesses can rally and an additional layer of wayfinding for visitors to discover new areas.

Context
Currently, colourful mounted banners running along main arteries identify five districts; Cottage, Marina, Downtown, Gateway, and Lakeshore. Though these districts have been provided a name and colour through these banners, there is no coordination with other wayfinding or brand elements.

Opportunity
Districts across the town provide a sense of ownership and identity for each distinct area. In alignment with land use and economic goals, defined new districts should respond to the distinct character of each area and can be represented with a colour and name. Signage, wayfinding, placemaking, and street infrastructure (i.e., seating) within these districts can be colour coded to provide an additional visual wayfinding cue. Banners can be used as the primary district indicator to define the boundaries of each district. These districts can become additional navigational information; a business located on 50a Ave. can specify to customers in which district they are located. New district names can be defined in collaboration with the community or emerge from existing colloquial nomenclature. Further, there is an opportunity to define an Integrated Recreational Zone along the lakefront, combining the seperately-named parks currently there in place, which also presents a unique naming opportunity.



Proposed districts have been informed by existing districts and future land use areas identified in REIMAGINE Sylvan Lake.

Guide

"Guide" focuses on reinforcing existing connections while building new ones throughout the town. Through wayfinding and placemaking interventions, pedestrian and vehicular behaviours change as people are given improved guidance and navigation tools.

Context
Sylvan Lake installed vehicular directional signage in 2020. This signage uses a colour system that is not reflected anywhere else in the signage system, and does not embody the town's unique sense of place. Signage that accommodates the pedestrian experience has not been installed.

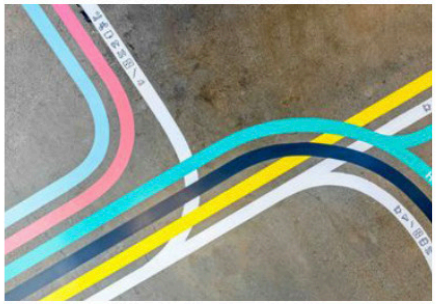
Opportunity
Through the installation of monolith signage and playful wayfinding that connects them, pedestrians are guided through the downtown. Monolith signage includes a map to provide an overview of the town and its relevant position, as well as a local area map that supports walking journeys of approximately 10 minutes. Additionally, the relevant district name and/or colour scheme are applied along with simple directional information to aid orientation. Some may include an interpretive context (i.e., heritage, culture, tourism). Placement at key arrival and decision points along pedestrian thoroughfares provides continuity and reassurance to users by directing them to key destinations. The pairing of these monolith signs act as information hubs, while simple wayfinding interventions further influence pedestrian behaviours, drawing them to new areas to explore. These may even impact where visitors choose to park, as new walking routes are highlighted for them.

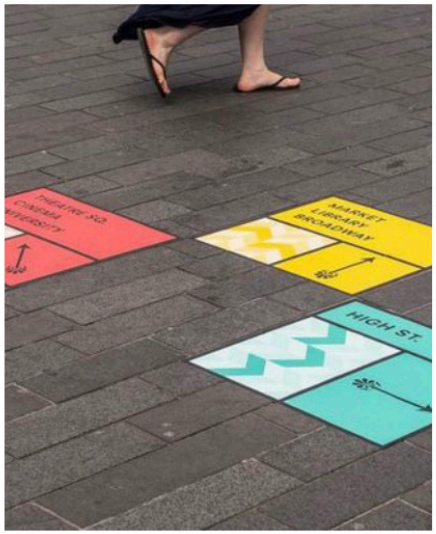
Guide

Wayfinding Connections

The following examples will enhance the pedestrian experience. A playful wayfinding system, created in collaboration with the community or by local artists, can be inexpensive, flexible, and adaptable while enhancing street vibrancy.

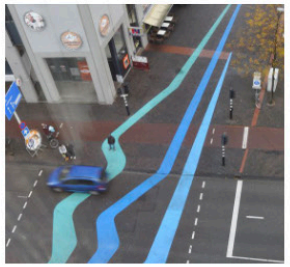
The system can include a series of dots, shapes, or lines that guide visitors throughout the town, labeled and colour-coded to align with districts. This approach to wayfinding can grow and evolve over time as new routes or identifiers are added. Material choices—paint, chalk paint, vinyl, etched concrete, etc.—position parts of the system as temporary or enduring.



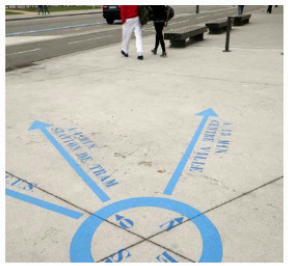


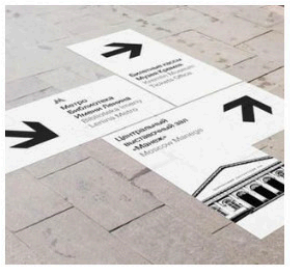
Consider moments where the system jumps from the ground to simple or existing infrastructure, to provide visible winter wayfinding connections.

Consider additional layers of information includes distances and times to particular destinations.



Consider labeling and colour coding the system to align with key attractions, particular services and amenities or districts.





Consider decision points like intersections, adding additional information to empower users to navigate freely.

Guide

Trail Experience

Sylvan Lake is home to more than 26 km of trails that connect to the parks, downtown and lakefront. As a part of development approvals, Sylvan Lake requires developers to demonstrate trail connectivity prior to new development approval, resulting in the growth and evolution of the network.

However, opportunities to better connect existing trails and parks across the town have been raised by residents. An improved trail network that considers the walkability of visitors and an enhanced pedestrian experience would serve to address several other challenges that have been raised; namely, this could aid in drawing pedestrian and vehicle traffic away from the lakefront and allowing people to discover under-visited areas of the town. Additionally, using signage, wayfinding and placemaking tools to influence behaviour in natural spaces can be leveraged for the sake of environmental protection and preservation. Here we offer some specific recommendations and considerations for the trail network.

Trail Sign Types

Infoboards are used to communicate a significant amount of wayfinding and trail condition information to trail users. This information should presented in an accessible format. Infoboards and any other signs with detailed information not intended to be read by trail users in motion should be placed away from the trail, with sufficient room for trail users provided outside of the rail's lateral clearance areas, and separated by a visually-contrasting, cane-detectable surface.

Decision signs are used to identify route options at any decision points along a trail and at access points. Decision signs include information about connecting trails, pedestrian or bicycle facilities, as well as identifying important destinations ahead. Decision signs should always make note of accessibility conditions, including a description of conditions to be encountered. Typically decision signs are to be located 5 to 10 metres before decision points.

Confirmation signs are used to confirm to trail users what trail they are on and indicate distances to points ahead. They are typically located 20 to 30 metres after decision points and approximately every kilometer along a continuous trail where no other decision or information signs are present.

Consider trail markers and directional signage that are simple and subtle and complement the natural atmosphere. Place them at regular intervals to reassure users.

Consider trail maps and infoboards as hubs and place them at trail access points and decision making points.

Consider interpretive signage that offers moments of education about flora and fauna, using simple, playful and creative interventions. These can also be approached as art projects or collaborative community projects.

Consider wooden posts and corten steel as your durable and weather-resistant substrate. Left to oxidize, they will further protect themselves from corrosion. Leverage cutouts, aluminum lettering, or aluminum or dibond plaques to display information.

Activate

Sylvan Lake is lively and active along the lakefront, especially during summer and winter months. Activations seek to bring life to underutilized spaces, drawing attention and pedestrian activity to new areas and along new routes.

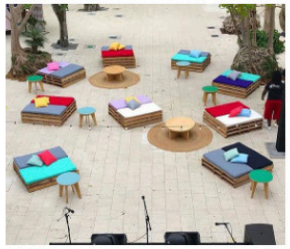
Here, find specific ideas of how to activiate some of the aforementioned proposed locations, accomplished in collaboration with community members or local business partners. (Various initiatives for community-involved planning are outlined in the DLMP.)

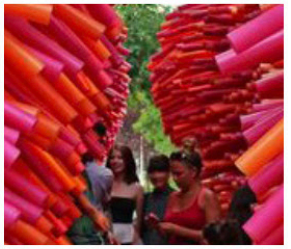
Generally speaking, bumpouts, medians and other under-utilized urban infrastructure provide a canvas for activation. The opportunities range from low-cost and temporary (planters, temporary street furniture, ground murals, painted bollards, painted crosswalks and sidewalks, to interactive installations and

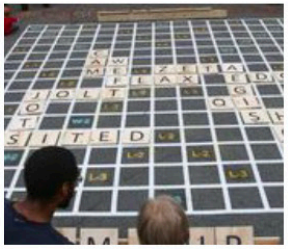
The bumpout at the north-east corner of 50a St. and 50A Ave offers an opportunity for activation and beatification.

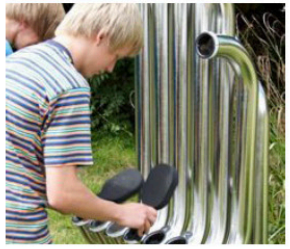
An activation the north side of Lakeshore Dr. would be visible to people along Lakeshore Dr. and traveling south on 50 St., drawing people westward.

The median strips between 48 St. and 49 St. as well as 46 St. present opportunities for activation that is visible to beach-goers.









Next steps

Step 1

Conduct a tourism wayfinding and signage audit.

Prior to introducing new signage or wayfinding elements, conduct an audit to better understand and evaluate the current context, surface gaps and prioritize improvements. Consider:

- Document existing signage and wayfinding elements across Sylvan Lake. Note the sign's location, purpose, and style.
- Evaluate existing signage and wayfinding elements with the Wayfinding Audit Checklist.
- Schedule regular audits to ensure the wayfinding system remains effective and up-to-date.
- Create journey maps for the routes outlined in this document's "Guide" section. Use these journey maps to evaluate and enhance existing signage, and plan for signage and wayfinding pilots and interventions to enhance these routes and change visitor behaviours.
- Use the completed audit to surface gaps and prioritize signage and wayfinding interventions.
- Observe the typical flow of visitors to create a visitor flow analysis and understand common routes, opportunities for intervention, and points of confusion. Use the "Visitor Flow Framework" (under 'Visitor Flow Framework' on this page).
- Establish an ongoing feedback mechanism for visitors and locals to report issues or suggest improvements.
- Define and track metrics to evaluate the success of the wayfinding system.

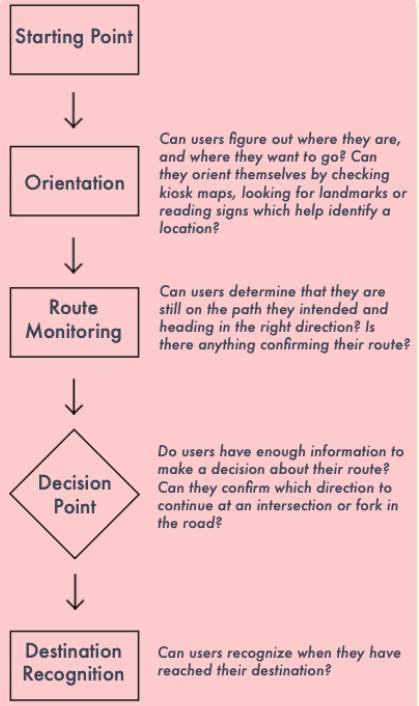
Wayfinding Audit Checklist

- ☐ List all primary destinations that should be included in your wayfinding system.
- ☐ Categorize all existing tourism signs (directional, informational, gateway, etc.)
- ☐ Create a detailed map marking the locations of all signs.
- ☐ Assess and document the physical condition of each sign (excellent, good, fair, poor)
- ☐ Evaluate the visbility of each sign (well-placeced, obstructed, poorly lit, etc.)
- ☐ Evaluate if the text and symbols are clear, readable from a distance and understandable by all visitors.
- ☐ Document the style and brand of each sign to evaluate the consistency, cohesion and uniformity across your signage system.
- ☐ Verify that all information, including directions and arrows, is current and correct.
- ☐ Evaluate whether the signage system caters to all users, including those with disabilities (accessibility compliance, tactile elements, audible signs)
- ☐ Confirm any digital integration (QR code, web address) is also up to date, still connected to the unique sense of place.

Visitor Flow Framework

Choose a starting point for a visitors journey. Walk their path and consider if they can orient themselves, monitor their route, make route decisions and recognize their destination.

- Assess whether existing signs are placed at appropriate decision points and if they logically guide visitors from one sign to the next.
- Identify major decision points where visitors need clear guidance (i.e., intersections, parking lots, transit stops).
- Ensure that there is logical and seamless connectivity between different waypoints and key locations.
- Identify areas lacking sufficient signage.
- Pinpoint areas where visitors frequently get lost or confused.
- Pinpoint underutilized routes or areas where signage may change user behaviour and redirect visitor flow.



Step 2

Create a cohesive signage and wayfinding design system.

Using the information and insights that surfaced from the signage and wayfinding audit, develop a signage and wayfinding system for pedestrian experiences in Sylvan Lake. Include a cohesive and consistent trail wayfinding system that also integrates interpretive signage and placemaking to mark, identify and connect existing trails.

- Develop standards and design templates, using Visit Sylvan Lake brand elements, for each sign type needed to allow for flexible implementation with a cohesive visual language. Ensure templates embody the 'lake town vibe.'
- Include material standards in the development of sign design templates.
- Ensure signage follows recommended guidelines (under 'Guidelines' on this page).
- Establish and confirm Sylvan Lake district names and sub-brand identities through community engagement and collaboration with tourism partners. To encourage the adoption of district identities, surface names from existing landmarks, neighbourhood features, historic elements, or local nomenclature.
- Pilot an inexpensive playful ground application of wayfinding elements in collaboration with community or local artists to evaluate the possibilities for changing visitor behaviour throughout the town.

Guidelines

Accessible
Placemaking and wayfinding are clear and accessible, and work to create increase the accessibility of the Town.

Site-Responsive
Placemaking and wayfinding respond to its context and environment, to define or reinforce the character of an area.

Visible
Placemaking and wayfinding are unobstructed and visible from multiple angles, distances and perspectives.

Uncluttered
Placemaking and wayfinding are placed thoughtfully in an uncluttered manner to better provide clarity.

Coordinated
Placemaking and wayfinding are coordinated and connected, creating a cohesive visual look and feel and coordinated user experience.

Step 3

Prioritize accessibility, visibility and legibility.

Guided by the considerations below and any other industry best practices highlighted throughout the audit, ensure that the signage and wayfinding system is accessible, visible, and legible. Consider sign placement, physical access, material, size and scale when evaluating accessibility.

- Legibility should acknowledge that 1 inch of letter height allows for 10 feet of readability. (ie: 3" tall letters make the best impact at 30')
- The sign's height and design should be optimized for comfortable reading. A height of no higher than 1.7 meters and no lower than 1.0 meters is suggested.
- Signage should be accessible, with a colour contrast ratio at a minimum of 4:5:1.
- The sign surface should prevent glare and avoid glass and other glossy finishes.
- Wayfinding and signage elements should be featured prominently in the urban environment, clearly visible to pedestrians from multiple vantage points and from a distance.
- Signage should be placed near street lights or other light sources to maximise the available illumination for viewing it at night.
- Monolith signage should offer enough clearance from sidewalks, fire hydrants, lamppost,s etc. to allow for people to gather around without obstructing nearby access points.
- Any signs with detailed information not intended to be read by trail/path users in motion should be placed away from the trail/path, with sufficient room for users provided outside of the trail's clearance areas, and separated by a visually contrasting, cane-detectable surface.
- Trail signs and posts should be installed outside of lateral clearance areas, but not farther than 1.8 meters from the edge of the trail.
- Trail signs should be installed with tops no higher than 2.4 meters and no lower than 1.8 meters. This balances visibility with reducing the risk of vandalism or theft.
- Trail signs placed at intersections and decision points should always make note of accessibility conditions, including a description of conditions to be encountered.
- Trail signage at decision-making points should be located 5 to 10 metres before decision points.
- Trail signs that confirm you are on the right path should be located 20 to 30 metres after decision points, and approximately every kilometer along a continuous trail where no other decision or information signs are present.

Appendix E:

Public Art Evaluation Framework

INTRODUCTION

The Destination Leadership and Management Plan (DLMP) identifies public art as a critical component of the placemaking investments required to enhance Sylvan Lake's unique sense of place, the "lake town vibe," to activate spaces and influence visitor behaviour.

Recommendation PC-DDP-7 in the DLMP's Section 5: Places and Connections - Destination Development and Placemaking says, "Customize a community-centric Placemaking Framework for Public Art." The following framework provides a jumping-off point for a transparent and inclusive process for selecting public art projects and involving the community in decision-making. It identifies specific criteria and a grading rubric, meant to inform decision-making in Sylvan Lake's public art selection process.

Once VSL engages the community to determine visual and thematic considerations aligned with the local brand, the framework can be updated, customized and implemented.

USING THE PUBLIC ART EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

To use the framework/rubric effectively for evaluating public art projects, follow these steps:

Determine the location and/or purpose.

- Prior to evaluating public art opportunities, determine the need you are currently trying to fill (Invite, Guide, Define, Activate). For each contender, determine if it aligns with your need (Invite, Guide, Define, Activate).
- Assess alignment with the destination's unique sense of place and the contribution of proposed pieces to the area's character.

Evaluation process.

- Build a Steering Committee, with representatives from both community rights holders and the Town organization. The Town may wish to have a standing committee, or recruit participants based on the project (i.e., if it is a youth-based public art project, develop a youth-based steering committee).
- Develop a standardized application process and required information for applicants (i.e., concept, design, proposed location (if not pre-determined), community engagement plan, sustainability considerations, whether the artist has/plans to secure funding, and the investment required).
- Through public call-outs (supported by marketing initiatives), collect proposals for the public art project.
- Determine if the project aligns with the Town's needs, as initially identified (Invite, Guide, Define, Activate). If it does not align, or cannot be modified to align, do not continue with the evaluation process.
- If it does speak to the need identified, task the Steering Committee with reviewing the project's alignment with each criterion in the rubric, considering the specific metrics and guidance provided for each score (1, 2, or 3 points).

Scoring criteria.

- Assign a score of 1 point for criteria where the project falls short or has minimal impact.
- Award 2 points for criteria where the project meets expectations but has room for improvement.
- Give 3 points for criteria where the project excels and demonstrates outstanding performance.

Minimum point requirement.

- Set a minimum requirement of at least 2 points for each criterion, totalling a minimum of 36 points (out of a possible 54 points) across all criteria to move forward with the art project. This ensures that the project demonstrates a solid foundation in community engagement, embracing the local essence, inclusivity, sustainability, artistic excellence and feasibility. Note: Adjust the minimum point requirement based on the project's scale, significance and context.

Decision making.

- Use the total points accumulated across all criteria to make informed decisions about the project's viability and potential impact. Take all evaluation scores submitted by the Steering Committee, to determine the top contenders.
- Provide the community with an opportunity to participate in the final decision-making process through social media polls and other engagement initiatives (see Destination Management & Leadership Plan, Section 7: Community Impact and Integration, Recommendation CCS-CII-2).

STEP 1: Align With the Town's Need

INVITE	GUIDE	DEFINE	ACTIVATE
• Uses placemaking and wayfinding components to announce your arrival and welcome you to a place. • Focuses on Sylvan Lake gateway signage, and opportunities to welcome people to the town itself and new areas within the town.	• Reinforces existing connections and builds new connections throughout Sylvan Lake. • Influences pedestrian and vehicular behaviours, providing improved tools for guidance and navigation.	• Speaks to the laketown vibe while serving a distinct district. • Helps to define the distinct identities of different areas, behind which local residents and businesses can rally.	• Animates a community hub or gathering place

STEP 2: Evaluation Criteria

CRITERIA	1 POINT	2 POINTS	3 POINTS
COMMUNITY RELEVANCE AND ENGAGEMENT			
Artistic development process includes community engagement, to inform the final approach. (Consider assigning extra points to this criteria.)	No or limited community engagement in process.	Some community engagement in process.	Strong community engagement in process.
Ability of the artwork to resonate with the local community's values, history, cultural narratives.	No or limited connection to community values and history.	Some connection but lacks depth or breadth.	Strong connection to community values, history and narratives.
Includes or has potential to include interactive elements (such as informational QR codes, photo opportunities, virtual reality experiences, etc.)	No or limited opportunities for interactive elements.	Some opportunities for interactive elements.	Clearly identifies and incorporates interactive elements.
Highlights the perspective of underrepresented and/or equity-deserving groups	No or limited perspective, or tokenistic.	Some perspective but lacks diversity.	Strongly highlights the perspective of underrepresented and/or equity-deserving groups.
Potential to foster dialogue and education among residents and visitors	No or limited potential for dialogue or education within the art itself.	Some potential for dialogue or education but not significant.	Strong potential to foster dialogue and education.
SENSE OF PLACE AND IDENTITY			
Appropriateness of the artwork in capturing and enhancing the town's unique character and essence through subject, colours or materials used, and speaks to the local "laketown vibe"	Does not enhance the town's character or speak to the "laketown vibe."	Partially captures the town's essence.	Enhances and embodies the town's essence and the "laketown vibe."
Integration with the historical, cultural and architectural context of the site/location in question (if application)	Disconnected from the context of the site/ location.	Partially integrated with the context of the site/ location.	Seamlessly integrates with the context of the site/location.
Ability to create a distinctive sense of place and contribute to the town's identity	Lacks distinctiveness or identity contribution.	Partially distinctive or contributory.	Highly distinctive and contributes significantly.
Potential to serve as a landmark or gathering space for the community	No or minimal potential to serve as a landmark or gathering space.	Some potential but lacks distinctiveness or functionality as a gathering space.	High potential to serve as a landmark and functional gathering space for the community.

CRITERIA	1 POINT	2 POINTS	3 POINTS
COMMUNITY ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY			
Consideration of physical and intellectual accessibility for all community members	No or limited accessibility features.	Some accessibility, but not comprehensive.	Fully accessible in physical and intellectual aspects.
Promotion of inclusivity and representation of diverse groups within the community	No or limited representation or exclusionary.	Some inclusivity but lacks representation.	Promotes inclusivity and represents diverse groups.
ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY			
Use of environmentally friendly materials and sustainable practices	No or limited sustainability considerations.	Some sustainable practices but room for improvement.	Strong emphasis on environmentally friendly materials and practices.
Design and materials are resilient, to reduce vandalism or other unforeseen challenges	No resilience within the design or materials.	Some resilience within the design or materials.	Strong resilience within the design or materials.
Potential to raise awareness about environmental or social issues relevant to the community	No or limited awareness or advocacy.	Some awareness but lacks advocacy.	Raises awareness and advocates for relevant issues.
ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION			
Originality, creativity and technical proficiency of the artwork	Lacks originality or technical proficiency.	Some creativity but lacks originality or technical excellence.	Highly original, creative and technically proficient.
Innovative use of materials, techniques or concepts that resonate with the community and visitors	Conventional or unremarkable use.	Some innovation but not groundbreaking.	Innovative use that resonates with the community.
FEASIBILITY AND MAINTENANCE			
Alignment with the allocated budget and available resources	Budget exceeds available resources significantly.	Budget slightly exceeds available resources.	Budget aligned with available resources.
Consideration of long-term maintenance requirements and associated costs	High maintenance requirements and costs.	Moderate maintenance requirements and costs.	Low maintenance requirements and costs.
Potential for community stewardship and ownership of the public art project	Limited potential for community stewardship or ownership.	Some potential but lacks clear strategies for community involvement or ownership.	High potential for community stewardship and ownership, with clear strategies for involvement.

Appendix F:

Partnership Evaluation Framework for Experience Development

INTRODUCTION

The Sylvan Lake Destination Leadership and Management Plan (DLMP) provides a robust Product Development Plan (see Section 6: Visitors and Experiences),, highlighting opportunities to strengthen the town's small, lake town vibe, enhance its position as a regional leader, and encourage greater visitor spending year-round through developing all-season "things to do" and iconic visitor experiences that define Sylvan Lake's unique tourism offering.

As the Town and the Visit Sylvan Lake Town team consider experience development opportunities—whether presented to them or uncovered thanks to VSL initiatives—there must be a clear understanding of the scope of their commitment, based on:

- Strategic Alignments: How the opportunity works toward achieving the DLMP ambition and purpose (as defined in the DLMP's Section 1: Setting the Stage).
- Resource Availability: VSL/the Town's capacity to allocate financial, human, and logistical resources necessary to support and execute the opportunity.
- ROI & Risk: The potential return on investment and associated risks, including revenue, economic, and social and cultural benefits.

The following framework identifies specific criteria, according to these categories, to guide the Town in understanding its role as opportunities (and/or ideas) are presented, if any. Roles may include:

Lead: The Town takes full responsibility for the opportunity's planning, execution, and management. This role requires the Town to allocate significant resources, including financial, human, and logistical support, and drive the project, ensuring it aligns with strategic goals, and oversees all aspects of its implementation and success.

Co-lead: The Town equally shares responsibility for the opportunity with one or more partners. This role involves significant collaboration, with the Town contributing resources as relevant to the opportunity and playing an active role in decision-making and implementation.

Enable: The Town does not actively participate in planning or executing the opportunity except to offer resources such as funding, facilities, marketing support, or advisory services. External partners are primarily responsible for planning and executing the project, while the Town's involvement is supplementary and focused on enabling the initiative's success through targeted support.

Pass: There is no clear case for allocating any Town resources to the opportunity, in any capacity.

This framework is intended to be applied to partnership proposals presented to the Town directly related to the visitor experience. This may include place-based activations, capital projects and/or product development.

USING THE **PARTNERSHIP EVALUATION FRAMEWORK** FOR EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

This evaluation must be carried out with the cross-departmental Working Group, as established by the DLMP.

To use the framework/rubric effectively for determining the Town's role in visitor experience development projects, follow these steps:

1. Refer to the "Strategic Alignments" rubric.

- Grade "Strategic Alignments" based on a "Pass" or "Fail designation.
- If there are 3 or more "Fails," pass on the opportunity.
- If there are fewer than 3 "Fails," move on to "Resource Availability" and "ROI & Risk."

2. If the opportunity warrants the "Resource Availability" and "ROI & Risk" analysis, refer to the designated rubric.

- Complete the evaluation and assign points to your evaluation as follows:
    - 3 points to each category marked "Lead"
    - 2 points to each category marked "Co-Lead"
    - 1 point to each category marked "Enable" and
    - 0 points to each category marked "Pass."
- The Town's role is defined as follows, based on final points:
    - Lead: 21 points
    - Co-lead: 14 - 20 points
    - Enable: 7 - 13 points
    - Pass: Fewer than 7 points

3. Develop a detailed action plan for the opportunity, in collaboration with partners (if relevant).

STEP 1: Strategic Alignment

- Grade "Strategic Alignments" based on a "Pass" or "Fail designation.
- If there are 3 or more "Fails," pass on the opportunity.
- If there are fewer than 3 "Fails," move on to "Resource Availability."

LEAD, CO-LEAD OR ENABLE	PASS
The opportunity directly aligns with and strengthens the small, lake town essence, enhancing a distinctive sense of place that sets the Town apart in the region.	There is no direct or indirect alignment that will strengthen the small, lake town essence or enhance a distinctive sense of place that sets the Town apart in the region.
The opportunity directly works to strengthen the Town's position as a regional hub.	The opportunity does not work to strengthen the Town's position as a regional hub.
The opportunity respects the natural integrity of the lake and other naturally sensitive areas of the town and is cautious of the ecosystem's health.	The opportunity disrupts the integrity of the lake or other natural assets, or there is a significant lack of alignment between the activities and the guidelines of the Sylvan Lake Natural Asset Use Guidelines (see DLMP, VE-PD-1.7) or the VSL Responsible Product Guideline (see DLMP - VE-PD-2.1).
The opportunity lends to local and regional collaboration with businesses, vendors, grassroots organizations, artists, DMOs, investors, etc.	The opportunity does not lend to local or regional collaboration (with businesses, vendors, grassroots organizations, artists, DMOs, investors, etc.).
The opportunity creates cross-cultural and social connections.	The opportunity does not create cross-cultural or social connections.
The opportunity caters to diverse budgets and diverse demographics.	The opportunity does not cater to diverse budgets and diverse demographics.
The opportunity fills a gap in current tourism products/visitor experiences/programming (i.e., takes place during shoulder season).	The opportunity does not fill a gap in current tourism products/programming (i.e., shoulder season) nor provides unique/distinguished offerings that enhance current Sylvan Lake's visitor experiences (i.e. a niche summer activation).
The opportunity creates connections between the lake and the rest of the town.	The opportunity does not create connections between the lake and the rest of the town.
The opportunity creates reasons/incentives for visitors to book overnight stays.	The opportunity does not create reasons /incentives for visitors to book overnight stays.
The opportunity utilizes untapped/underutilized visitor-related assets (i.e., places, infrastructures, entrepreneurs) of the town (i.e. Downtown business owners, non-downtown operators, public and private recreational assets, venues, open spaces, etc.)	The opportunity does not tap into the town's underutilized assets and creates pressure on community-needed assets (i.e. a community park) or a Naturally sensitive asset (i.e. overusing of lakefront or trails) as outlined in/informed by Sylvan Lake Natural Asset Use Guidelines, or doesn't match with the readiness of the target asset as identified in the VSL Readiness Assessment Matrix.
Pass: /10	**Fail: /10**

*** Move to the next section ONLY if there are fewer than 3 "Fails." ***

STEP 2: Resource Availability, ROI & Risk

ONLY COMPLETE THIS ANALYSIS IF THE OPPORTUNITY PASSES THE "STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS" ANALYSIS.

Complete the evaluation and assign points to your evaluation as follows: • 3 points to each category marked "Lead" • 2 points to each category marked "Co-Lead" • 1 point to each category marked "Enable" and • 0 points to each category marked "Pass."	The Town's role is defined as follows, based on final points: • Lead: 21 points • Co-lead: 14 - 20 points • Support: 7 - 13 points • Pass: Fewer than 7 points

LEAD	CO-LEAD	ENABLE	PASS
Resource Availability			
The Town has the necessary financial, human, and logistical resources to lead, plan and execute the opportunity.	The Town can allocate some resources to the opportunity, and requires partner support for impactful implementation.	The Town has limited financial and human resources to allocate to the opportunity, though it can provide supporting resources such as seed funding, subsidized space, supply provision, co-investment, and/or marketing support.	The Town lacks the financial, human and logistical resources to lead, plan and execute the opportunity.
The Town has the necessary infrastructure established to implement the opportunity successfully.	The Town has the necessary infrastructure established OR some of the necessary infrastructure in place, though the opportunity would best benefit from partner support to supplement additional needs for successful implementation.	The Town has minimal infrastructure in place to support the opportunity, but it can support it through partnerships and the provision of ancillary facilities.	The Town does not have the necessary infrastructure, nor supplementary value/ resources to provide, for the successful implementation of the opportunity.
The VSL Readiness Assessment Matrix (see DLMP - Appendix A) confirms the opportunity can be accommodated using relevant Town assets.	The VSL Readiness Assessment Matrix indicates the opportunity can be partially accommodated using Town assets, with additional partner contributions.	The VSL Readiness Assessment Matrix suggests limited capacity to accommodate the opportunity, but the Town can support alternate contributions.	There are no relevant Town assets to accommodate the opportunity.
ROI & Risk			
The opportunity has clear and direct revenue opportunities for the Town/VSL.	The opportunity has potential revenue opportunities for the Town and requires partner support to maximize these.	The opportunity offers limited revenue opportunities for the Town but can generate revenue through indirect means or partnerships.	There are no direct revenue opportunities for the Town.
The opportunity has direct economic benefits for the town (i.e. local procurement, local employment, increasing visitors spending in local businesses, etc.)	The opportunity has clear and direct economic benefits for the town and requires partner support to maximize these.	The opportunity offers limited economic benefits but can enhance economic activity through supplementary roles.	There are no clear or direct economic benefits for the town.
The opportunity has direct social and cultural benefits for the community (i.e., activating of spaces for the community, encouraging culture exchange and connections, engaging community cultural groups, etc.)	The opportunity has potential social and cultural benefits for the community, requiring additional partner engagement to maximize impact.	The opportunity provides limited social and cultural benefits but can support community engagement through collaborative efforts.	The opportunity presents no clear social or cultural benefits for the community and no appeal to local residents.
The immediately apparent risks (financial and non-financial) associated with the opportunity are manageable within Town resources.	The immediately apparent risks associated with the opportunity are partially manageable within Town resources, but partner support is required to mitigate the remaining risks.	The immediately apparent risks associated with the opportunity are mostly manageable by partners, with the Town providing limited support to mitigate risks.	There are clear risks, with no track record of successful implementation nor a risk management plan in place.
/21	**/14**	**/7**	

Appendix G:
Marketing Toolkit

INTRODUCTION

As a critical component of the Sylvan Lake Destination Leadership and Management Plan (DLMP), this Marketing Toolkit serves as a comprehensive resource for Visit Sylvan Lake's (VSL's) consumer-facing marketing initiatives. Its primary purpose is to provide a comprehensive set of resources, by laying out:

- The visitor trip planning journey;
- Key marketing tactics;
- Annual marketing tasks; and
- Tips for enhancing the efficacy of VSL marketing activities & investments.

Marketing is a field that thrives on novelty and is in continuous evolution from trends, technology, customer preferences, and available market opportunities. The Toolkit is meant to complement the marketing recommendations provided in the DLMP and should not be interpreted as a robust and complete Tourism Marketing Strategy (note: Tourism Marketing Strategy development is recommended for annual planning in quarterly, 1-year and 3-year cycles). Instead, the Toolkit provides a high-level perspective to help VSL effectively engage with prospective, high-value visitors, capturing long-term planning and providing key insight to be considered within VSL's regular marketing planning.

An Overview of Visit Sylvan Lake's Marketing Initiatives

Visit Sylvan Lake channels have been primarily handled under the Town's Recreation, Culture, and Tourism department since 2020. This autonomy allows the VSL team to make the competitive, timely, strategically integrated decisions necessary in a tourism marketing world. The team covers what's fun and happening around town, visitor information, events, arts and culture, business promotion and other entertainment. As explored in the DLMP, there is an opportunity to expand storytelling efforts to include more people-based stories and histories.

VSL's social media channels—in particular, Instagram and Facebook—have a significant local follower base who contribute the vast majority of user-generated content (UGC) featured. Showcasing the authentic community and mirroring the place back to people, social media serves to foster community spirit and pride in place for locals and visitors alike. Specific efforts of the VSL team include:

Channel Management:
The internal municipal team manages organic (non-paid-for placement) day-to-day content, website updates and organic event marketing efforts. This also includes providing visitor information resources online and in person. Having these activities managed in-house, providing a local eye and ear on the ground, allows VSL to stay abreast of local market changes, such as the weather, new events or businesses, and topics of interest to the community.

Live Reporting:
There is significant opportunity for Visit Sylvan Lake to build further on its "live reporting" as VSL's ability to be first to report, or on-site has in past reinforced the audience's trust and reliance on the channel, fueling the engagement and growth of the channel. There is a future opportunity for this increase in activity through labour to be combined with photo and video asset collection on a regular basis, ensuring that content is captured and maximized year-round.

Advertising:
In 2024, a third-party advertising company was hired to promote the destination through paid advertising efforts (paid-for placement) for the most significant and largest tourism events. This addition of advertising expertise allowed the internal team to enhance the capacity for creative development and increase ROI through more efficient spending on ad placement. Due to team capacity, the internal team has pulled back from seasonal destination advertising over the last few years. Still, there is a recognition that these efforts are essential to growth and recognition, particularly at a provincial and national level. Still, VSL's marketing budget compared to other destinations remains a limiting factor for growth until an increase of funds position Sylvan Lake to enhance its competitive edge. Long-term creative development and paid-placement advertising campaigns—when matched with a competitive ad budget—can continue to benefit from the expertise, online tools, and placement efficiency of a third-party advertising agency. These efforts can expand to include all major events with a tourism lean and regular seasonal destination advertising.

VISITOR TRIP PLANNING JOURNEY

The Visit Sylvan Lake channels (i.e, website, social media, etc.) funnel prospective visitors through to real-life trip planning, purchase, visitation, word-of-mouth generation, and return visitation! The table below outlines the intricate steps included in this "marketing funnel." These steps all work together to engage prospective visitors, help them plan a visit, engage with them during their visit, and stay engaged so they return in the future. This table helps inform customer journey considerations—from the customer perspective—when building campaigns and evaluating campaign effectiveness.

	AWARENESS	CONSIDERATION	DECISION-MAKING	VISITING	RETENTION
ACTIONS	Browsing social channels and the web, watching TV, talking to friends & family	Searching for destinations, signing up for newsletters, visiting specific websites, comparing experiences and pricing	Asking questions, looking and/or waiting for deals or incentives, making a decision, and planning a trip (including making bookings, if necessary based on a day trip or overnight)	Experiencing what VSL has promised across marketing channels (social media, website, newsletters, etc.) attending events, engaging with local businesses (including retailers, restaurants, experiences, services, etc.)	Following social media accounts, reading email marketing, talking to friends and family about their experience visiting, leaving a review on Google for local establishments, beginning to plan and thinking about their next trip
TOUCH POINTS	Organic and paid media (social and Google), SEO, commercials, PR, word of mouth	Email marketing, VSL website, organic social media, channels for local businesses (i.e., social, websites)	VSL website, email, paid media	Email, traditional marketing, local marketing	Email, organic social, paid media, website (when clicking on marketing)
FEELINGS	Unaware or minimal awareness of Sylvan Lake, likely seeking an escape but hasn't started planning.	Possibly feeling overwhelmed with choice, or unsure of exactly where to go. Committing to a plan is still in the future, but they want to decide soon.	Ready to choose from the many choices, can feel overwhelmed due to pressure to make the right decision, arranging details for a worthwhile escape, etc.	Pleased with their choice and excited to visit	Very satisfied with their visit and refreshed after a getaway. Thinking about their next escape after 2-3 months.
CHALLENGES	Inundated by advertising from destinations, and likely not fully aware of what Sylvan Lake has to offer.	Continue to be overwhelmed by the targeted marketing they are seeing, and need to be convinced to engage with any specific destination.	Budgets, value for dollar, options to fill time in alignment with interests.	Settling in quickly	Timing on what part(s) of their visit to provide a review for and on what platform, and seeing ongoing targeted marketing by destinations hoping to host them on their next escape.
SOLUTIONS	Sharing the Sylvan Lake story— including views, sites, experiences and people—via organic and paid media.	Personalize messaging and provide meaningful content that speaks to their interests while showcasing a unique sense of place.	Emphasize the value of a Sylvan Lake escape, provide sample itineraries, and offer discounts or incentives at the right time–whether as VSL or in collaboration with local businesses.	Provide content and tools/ ideas for effective use of time in destination, via email.	Include card upon checkout and email to encourage a review, goodbye emails sent, continue to send email messaging but remove from paid media targeting for 3 months

THE HIGH-VALUE VISITOR

The core target market for VSL—regardless of demographic—is **high-value visitors**, in an effort to ensure that visitation has a positive impact on the community. As defined in the DLMP:

> A high-value visitor is one who seeks authentic, immersive and responsible travel experiences that connect them with the local community, culture and environment. They are driven by a desire to engage with the vibrant charm and spirit of a destination, and are willing to pay a premium for high-quality, unique and differentiated experiences that offer genuine connections with the land, people and stories of a place.
>
> High-value visitors are responsibly-minded, prioritizing sustainable tourism practices. They seek out destinations and experiences that align with their values of environmental stewardship and cultural preservation. They are conscious of their environmental and social impact, and actively seek out opportunities to minimize their footprint while supporting local economies and grassroots initiatives. They have a high interest in preserving the authentic aspects of communities that they value most, and therefore, are most aligned with the community's interests.
>
> Simultaneously, these discerning visitors have a refined taste for exceptional service and amenities, and are willing to invest in curated experiences that are tailored to their interests and preferences. They expect high-quality guest experiences, including unique accommodations, exclusive access to natural or cultural attractions, and experiences that offer a sense of exclusivity and differentiation.

This is a foundational quality as VSL considers more specific target groups for marketing efforts, particularly useful when investing in **consumer-focused, paid targeted marketing**. Focusing efforts and advertising dollars on this visitor market changes the profile of visitors coming to Sylvan Lake over time, broadening the visitor base and expanding the tourism investment opportunity.

ANNUAL MARKETING TASKS

As discussed, this Marketing Toolkit is not a robust and complete marketing strategy as marketing is a field in continuous evolution. Marketing excellence requires being on top of ever-changing market conditions, continuous innovation, and preempting trends & preferences.

For effective marketing, certain tasks must be **carried out on an annual basis**. Each of these tactics, as outlined in the DLMP, are deeply interconnected and are meant to inform one another. *Note: The resources provided are options to consider, though VSL may determine that other resources, not included here, are more appropriate.*

Relevant DLMP Recommendations	Resources	Timeline
Develop a VSL Content Calendar.		
VE-M-3.1. Establish core content themes that reflect Sylvan Lake's unique identity and appeal, in alignment with the DLMP objectives and other VSL plans (i.e., Brand Positioning Strategy). These themes may include lake activities, local events, natural sites and community stories. **VE-M-3.2.** Develop and implement an annual content calendar, to be refined on a quarterly basis. Include specific themes (see VE-M-3.1), target audiences, publication platforms/formats, required imagery, and publication dates. Include: • plans for user-generated content (see VE-M-5); • content related to important dates and VSL event promotion; • itineraries, as established via VE-PD-9.3; • TPA participants and pilots; • business features and community profiles; • community stewardship; • responsible travel practice; • general "value of tourism to Sylvan Lake" content; • weekly/monthly content series (i.e., "What's On This Weekend," featuring cross-platform content promoting Town- and private-hosted events; "Guest Testimonials," featuring positive reviews of local events and establishments, as listed on Google; etc.). Include content plans/adaptations for various platforms, including website, social media, digital newsletters, printed marketing assets (i.e., pamphlets, brochures, posters) and for specific audiences as required. **VE-M-3.3.** Assign content creation and management responsibilities to team members or external partners, with a strong focus on SEO. Roles may include writers, editors, graphic designers, videographers, photographers and a social media manager.	Templates: - Option 1: Click here - Option 2: Click here - Option 3: Click here Reading material: - How to Create a Content Calendar for your Marketing Strategy - 9 Easy Steps to Build a Content Calendar - 3 Rules for Building a Better Content Calendar	Each November, for the following year. Refine on a quarterly basis.

Relevant DLMP Recommendations	Resources	Timeline
Develop a VSL Campaign Calendar.		
VE-M-7.1. Determine general campaign directions, according to market segments or themes, in pursuit of marketing objectives. These may include: • high-value travellers; • small-scale business events, meetings and retreats; • sport and recreation; • local and regional businesses, entrepreneurs and investors; and • the Sylvan Lake community and culture. Include specific Campaign Plans for VSL Event Marketing investments. **VE-M-7.2.** Schedule promotions and campaigns for the year ahead, as appropriate to achieve marketing goals. This may include: • Promoting local tourism product, including the Visitors Pass or Theme-Based Packages; • Focusing marketing investments on influencing visitor behaviour/promoting responsible tourism during peak season; • Attracting high-value travellers, business and meeting events, and sport and recreation investments during shoulder season; and • Promoting major upcoming events throughout the year, as relevant. **VE-M-7.3**. Develop enhanced Campaign Plans. See VE-M-6, VE-M-8, VE-M-9, VE-M-10 and VE-M-11.	A guide to building a marketing campaign calendar	Each November, for the following year. Refine on a quarterly basis.
Develop interest/theme-based itineraries.		
VE-M-4.1. Identify key themes that reflect the interests of target visitor segments, including outdoor recreation, culinary experiences, arts and culture, wellness retreats, and family-friendly activities. **VE-M-4.2**. Curate detailed itineraries for each identified theme (see VE-M-4.1), including recommendations for accommodations, dining, activities and local attractions. Consider creating primary itineraries that connect local businesses meeting at least essential market preparedness criteria according to Appendix B. (Refer to Entrepreneurship Asset Master List to guide initiatives. Integrate a community-centric lens in developing itineraries, to showcase local gems and grassroots initiatives (such as potential offerings from artists, artisans, creators, makers, and local cultural groups). **VE-M-4.3.** Utilize itineraries as a key paid and organic marketing tool, through VSL communication and outreach channels (see VE-M-3 and VE-M-8). **VE-M-4.4**. Enhance and update itineraries, focusing on integrating emerging tourism entrepreneurs, and those who have been engaged with the VSL TPA initiative.	How Your DMO Can Create a Travel Itinerary Worth Reading Examples: - Bonjour Quebec - Travel Utah	Ongoing

Relevant DLMP Recommendations	Resources	Timeline
Develop Campaign Plans.		
VE-M-8. Invest in developing VSL-branded tourism marketing campaigns, including organic and paid elements, focused on engaging and attracting the following market segments: • High-value travellers; • Small scale business events, meetings and retreats organizers; • Sport and recreation clubs and organizations; • and others, as value becomes apparent. **VE-M-9.** Invest in developing VSL-branded marketing assets, campaigns and initiatives dedicated to influencing and managing visitor behaviour, and promoting responsible travel & tourism. **VE-M-10.** Invest in developing VSL-branded marketing assets, campaigns and initiatives targeting entrepreneurship and local business development. **VE-M-11.** Develop organic and paid in-destination campaigns and initiatives to enhance community cultural connection, community stewardship, and local understanding of and involvement in the tourism sector. (See also: CCS-CII-1.)	Templates: - Option 1: Click here - Option 2: Click here Technology: - Use software to schedule campaign content, as possible (i.e., Later).	Each November, for the following year, or as otherwise laid-out in the Campaign Calendar. Refine on a quarterly basis.

ENHANCING EFFICACY OF **MARKETING ACTIVITIES** & **INVESTMENTS**

Some marketing efforts—such as organic social media posts, website content, and public relations—do not require marketing dollars to be effective. There are some cases where an unpaid approach makes the most strategic sense—for example, when it comes to promoting an event that has sold out in the past with an exclusively organic approach.

Still, paid marketing efforts have a time and place, and are important to invest in strategically for the sake of maximizing the impact of VSL efforts. Because real dollars and cents are required, planning is imperative; understanding the purpose of any marketing spend, expected ROI, and success measurements.

As budgets and human resource capacity expand, VSL is positioned to consider the more technical elements of marketing, particularly considering advertising initiatives and spending. There are a few key strategies that can be used to maximize the impact of marketing investments and initiatives, and to continue conversations with prospective visitors.

This section explores tactics for various channels, including:

DIGITAL:

- Website
- E-mail marketing
- Paid media
- Organic social media

BEYOND DIGITAL:

- Community posters and signage
- Traditional media
- Public relations

DIGITAL

WEBSITE

Includes:
VisitSylvanLake.ca

Purpose:
The website serves as the central hub for all marketing activities and visitor information. It provides detailed and up-to-date information about experiences and events, and has the potential to make or break a prospective visitor's decision to plan that trip. A well-optimized website with quality content and user-friendly navigation ensures that visitors can easily find what they are looking for, which enhances the overall visitor experience. SEO strategies help improve the site's visibility on search engines, attract organic traffic, and convert visitors into potential customers. Regularly updated blog content also engages visitors, provides trip inspiration, and boosts the site's SEO ranking.

Tips:
- Invest in enhancing the SEO of the VisitSylvanLake.ca website. This will begin with an initial SEO audit, likely leading to recommendations for building new landing pages.
- Install Meta pixel on the website upon setting up the Ads Manager (see Meta directions on its website here). This allows VSL to collect and analyze data accurately.
- Link the VSL web platform to email software, to encourage further opportunities to segment audiences for higher engagement.
- Invest in updates, as recommended in the DLMP (see VE-M-1).

EMAIL MARKETING

Includes:
Individual campaign sends and email flows

Purpose:
Email marketing is key to keeping prospective and returning visitors engaged and to encouraging bookings with local accommodators, restaurants, and experiences.

Tips:

- **Automate email flows.** Email flows allow for automatic messaging to be done as the audience hits different points in their journey (i.e., research, trip planning, visiting the destination, returning home, etc.). Recommended essential flows for VSL's success include:
    - Welcome email flow: 2-3 emails sent over the course of one week, triggered by a new sign-up. Provide content that features Sylvan Lake—the essence, things to do and reasons to visit.
    - 1 Year Anniversary flow: 1 email send that gets triggered each year on the date of each individual's initial sign-up. This is an opportunity to invite them for a visit, share promotions available through local partners and promote the destination.
    - To encourage bookings: If booking capabilities become available via the website (see DLMP: VE-M-1.7), develop triggered email flows if someone is on specific booking pages for longer than 8 minutes. Ideally, this includes 2 emails sent over one week, focused on furthering their interest in finalizing a booking.

- **Segment the VSL audience.** The DLMP recommends integrating audience data collection wherever possible. This allows for audience segmentation, and for catering messages based on interest or demographic. This is easily done with email marketing platforms (i.e., Klaviyo, Mailchimp), which is especially useful when building targeted email campaigns.

- **A/B Testing.** A/B Testing means testing variables to determine which elicits the greatest response from audiences. This may include:
    - Testing subject lines for higher open rates
    - Testing two completely different designs
    - Testing whether VSL gets a higher clickthrough rate when buttons are higher up or lower in the hero image
    - Testing whether VSL gets a higher clickthrough if the hero image is a smaller banner allowing the second design block to start above the fold

  Larger subscriber numbers allow for easier and more accurate A/B testing. Constantly use A/B testing to track and evaluate subscriber trends and behaviour, and pivot approaches based on learnings.

PAID MEDIA

Includes:

Meta (Instagram, Facebook), Google ads, Display, Pinterest, YouTube

Purpose:

Paid media is one of the most important factors when it comes to reaching new audiences, and encouraging repeat visitation. Effective paid media requires established marketing funnels, to continue driving people through the customer journey.

Tips:

- Paid Media will be a key component of certain VSL campaigns. Consider the following:
    - Determine a baseline spend per campaign; shorter campaigns, such as event promotions, might have a shorter timeline but higher spend, while longer campaigns may require lower spend over longer durations. Depending on the length of each campaign, increase spend month-over-month.
    - Generally, focus on Meta and Google Ads as the primary Paid Media platforms. As capacity (budget, human resources) increase, integrate Pinterest, YouTube (via Google), and Display Ads into Campaign Plans. Determine relevant platforms for each campaign based on the campaign goals, target market, and market share.
    - A/B test creative (i.e., visual elements, captions, etc.) to determine what resonates most strongly with high-value travellers.
    - Connect Paid Media to a call to action, and ideally, a dedicated landing page for each campaign. Data shows that leading new prospects to a general homepage isn't impactful enough to encourage repeat website visits or take those prospects "to the next level" (this means, signing up for a newsletter, download an itinerary or making a booking with a local accommodator or experience operator, based on the campaign). As such, develop one or more landing pages optimized for paid media, according to campaign calls to action. These pages should include:
        - Social proof
        - Key selling points
        - Email sign up mid-way through the page
        - Reviews and/or videos (i.e.,. one from the brand content)
    - Track performance according to engagement and website sessions.
    - Always use UTM tracking links in order to track the success and data via Google Analytics (GA4)
        - See Google's tracking link builder here.
        - GA4 allow access to deeper data into session times, bounce rates and more.

- When it comes to content, consider current algorithm trends and best practices.
    - For videos:
        - Keep it to 15 seconds or less.
        - Include key messaging at the beginning.
        - Update once per quarter.
        - May include user-generated content.
    - For copy (written content):
        - Keep it short, sweet and to the point, as the goal is to intrigue people to get them to click.
        - For re-marketing, use both video, still imagery and a carousel advertisement.

- Include re-marketing initiatives, engaging audiences who have already interacted with the VSL brand, to encourage them to take a desired action that may interest them, such as conversion.
    - Target web visitors from the last 90 or 180 days to keep the pool of people wide (depending on the Campaign Plan).
    - Note: Once re-marketing initiatives are live, the core campaign should be updated to exclude website visitors from the past 90 days or 180 days (depending on the chosen timeframe).
    - Eventually, launch dynamic ads that are triggered by people visiting certain pages

- Use Google Ads.
    - Set up regular use of Google Ads and Google Analytics. Set up can be done here. (Note: Consider hiring a Google Ad specialist to set up the account, should support be required to get started.)
    - Integrate 'Promotions' and 'Sitelinks' for free, easy wins on organic SEO and to enhance future ads with Google.
    - Include plans for Google Ads as part of the VSL Campaign Plans.

- Scale!
    - As the destination evolves, there will be more to work with from a marketing perspective. Increase marketing budgets annually, and manage paid marketing spend according to what the data says is working best.

INCREASING PAID MEDIA SPEND: **WHY AND WHEN DO IT?**

When to increase paid media spend is a common question, and essential to know when to begin to use and scale paid media. Here is what to look for with each paid media channel:

Meta

- Click-through rate is high and above 3.5%
- ROAS (Return on Ad Spend) is over 8
- High number of people signing up for email compared to a previous time period
- If there's been a discovery in the data that showcases a specific demographic, location or person is showing high interest, consider starting a new campaign targeted at them, with specific messaging on top of the campaign currently running (use exclusions to ensure they're not crossing over).
- For specific and potentially time-sensitive campaigns (i.e., marketing an event)

Google Ads

- ROAS (Return on Ad Spend) is above 10
- Click-through rates are:
    - +5% for Brand campaigns
    - +1.8% for prospecting (Performance Max, YouTube, etc.)
- If a particular campaign is doing well, in terms of ROAS or click-through rate and the 'Limited By Budget' notice is up.
- For specific and potentially time-sensitive campaigns (i.e., marketing an event)

Pinterest

- Click-through rate higher than 1.5%
- Increase in website visits from Pinterest that have higher-than-average engagement
    - Almost always, visitors from Pinterest ads (or organically) have a higher engagement rate on the website since they were looking for something specific
- For specific and potentially time-sensitive campaigns (i.e., marketing an event)

ORGANIC SOCIAL MEDIA

Includes:

Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest

Purpose:

Organic social media is a valuable tool for ongoing, community engagement through meaningful storytelling. This marketing tactic is not meant to bring in revenue or travellers directly, but rather, acts as a supporting piece in the overall strategy that fosters relationships while ensuring regular and ongoing brand presence amongst online networks.

Tips:

- **Commit to consistent posting and audience engagement.**
    - The Content Calendar helps with this!
    - Post at optimal times based on VSL's audience activity.
    - Commit, as best as possible, to a timeline for responding to comments and messages.
    - Engage the audience by asking questions and running polls.
    - Acknowledge and share user posts that tag the VSL account.

- **Maintain the VSL brand voice and look.**
    - Keep the tone approachable and lighthearted, leaning into that "lake town vibe" narrative.
    - Use branded hashtags and encourage followers to use them as well.
    - Use high-quality visuals and compelling stories.
    - Incorporate a mix of content types, including photos, videos, carousels, and stories.

- **Monitor and adjust.**
    - Track performance metrics like engagement rate, reach, and impressions.
    - Use insights to refine the strategy and content.
    - Experiment with different content formats and adjust based on what resonates with the VSL audience.

BEYOND DIGITAL

COMMUNITY MARKETING & DIRECT MAIL

Includes:

Posters, flyers, banners, signage, direct mail, place-based marketing, and community engagement initiatives.

Purpose:

While digital marketing plays a critical role in reaching a broad audience, community marketing initiatives remain important for local, on-the-ground outreach. Physical marketing materials such as posters and signage can be strategically placed in high-traffic areas to capture the attention of passersby. These tactics allow for direct interaction with both residents and visitors, and can reinforce messages and encourage immediate action, such as attending an event, visiting a local business, or exploring the destination. The idea is to "meet people where they are"—literally.

Tips:

- **Invest in high-quality printed materials.**
    - Ensure all printed marketing materials are professional, eye-catching, and align with the overall VSL brand.
    - Posters, flyers, and banners should carry consistent messaging and design elements that complement the look and feel of digital campaigns. This cohesion strengthens the overall brand presence and keeps the storytelling consistent across all platforms.

- **Strategic placement is key.**
    - Place posters and banners in high-visibility areas where residents and visitors are likely to see them. These include local businesses, community centers, parks, visitor experiences and high-traffic public spaces.
    - Focus on locations that align with the target market. Rotate materials to keep them fresh and relevant.

- **Incorporate QR codes for tracking and engagement.**
    - Include QR codes on all printed materials, directing people to specific landing pages or campaign content. This allows for tracking engagement and measuring the effectiveness of each placement.
    - Differentiate codes by campaign, design, or location to understand what drives the best results.

- **Utilize direct mail for targeted outreach.**
    - Direct mail can be an effective way to connect with specific demographic groups within Central Alberta, Edmonton, or Calgary.
    - Sending high-quality flyers, programs or postcards to target audiences to promote upcoming events or special offers works well in tandem with email marketing, driving recipients to a dedicated landing page to learn more.

- **Explore unique, place-based initiatives.**
    - Consider creative place-based marketing approaches such as temporary murals, interactive installations, or pop-up booths. These can serve as memorable, shareable experiences that people will naturally promote through social media, extending your reach organically.
    - Include branded visuals and QR codes to ensure these experiences link back to the digital space, offering more information or a way to continue engaging with Visit Sylvan Lake.

- **Track and adjust.**
    - Use insights gathered from QR code scans, traffic to landing pages, and engagement at events to assess the success of non-digital efforts.
    - Regularly review the data to identify high-performing locations or tactics, and pivot strategies accordingly. This data-driven approach ensures that beyond-digital marketing efforts remain impactful and contribute to the overall success of VSL's campaigns.

TRADITIONAL PAID MEDIA

Includes:

Radio, TV, print (magazines, newspapers)

Purpose:

Traditional media remains a powerful tool for reaching a broad audience, particularly within local and regional markets. These outlets provide a platform to share the Sylvan Lake story in a way that is engaging and informative. Radio spots, TV segments, and print advertisements allow for brand storytelling in established channels that are trusted by consumers, helping to elevate Sylvan Lake's profile as a premier destination.

Tips:

- **Develop compelling ads.**
    - Craft creative, concise, and visually appealing advertisements for TV and print, and engaging, memorable scripts for radio.
    - When designing print ads or broadcast spots, align messaging with campaign goals and VSL branding.
    - Focus traditional paid media investments on promoting timely and unique events or experiences.

- **Integrate call-to-actions.**
    - Always include a clear call-to-action, whether it's visiting the website, attending an event, or following on social media.
    - Including QR codes in print media or unique URLs/hashtags in radio and TV spots can help bridge the gap between traditional and digital engagement, and enable tracking of the spots' effectiveness.

- **Monitor and adjust.**
    - Track the performance of traditional media campaigns through website traffic, direct response metrics (e.g., coupon redemptions), or inquiries from media coverage.
    - Make adjustments based on the data, refining the approach to ensure continued relevance and resonance with target audiences.

PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR)

Includes:

PR is a strategic communication initiative using external media and influencer platforms to build and maintain a positive reputation and relationships, and garner notice. PR tactics include sharing press releases and pitching media-tailored story angles. Visitor information, newsworthy events, and new tourism industry investments are low-hanging fruit, public relations is also an opportunity for creative communications initiatives that focus on public perception of the municipality, community, tourism, and destination.

Purpose:

As an easy destination for people in Central Alberta, Edmonton and Calgary, focusing on a PR strategy in order to reach new audiences will enhance Sylvan Lake brand awareness and entice visitation.

Tips:

- **Create a media list**
    - Compile a list of local and regional media contacts.
    - Include newspapers, magazines, blogs, and TV/radio stations in Central Alberta, Edmonton and Calgary.

- **Craft compelling pitches and news releases as part of the Content Calendar development.**
    - Develop press releases to communicate general news updates and announcements to the media list.
    - Develop Ttailored pitches to media outlets, highlighting unique angles and newsworthy aspects that speak to their unique audiences.
    - Don't overdo it! Don't let people on the receiving end become accustomed to seeing the VSL brand in their inbox. Save pitching for noteworthy—and newsworthy—events and moments, such as the launch of an iconic event, a unique partnership, or a milestone development (i.e., the launch of the TPA!).

- **Stay current.**
    - Monitor industry trends, news and what various relevant outlets are speaking about to identify timely PR opportunities.
    - Adjust the PR strategy based on emerging trends and feedback from media contacts.

- **Maximize partnerships with local and regional outlets.**
    - Work closely with media partners across radio, TV, and print to create tailored content that speaks directly to their audience.
    - Foster relationships with key media contacts so Visit Sylvan Lake stays top of mind when they are looking for destination-related stories or features.

- **Consider outsourcing PR responsibilities to a local PR specialist with media relationships and resources, to support major initiatives.**

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?
A PITCH VS A PRESS RELEASE

When it comes to PR strategy, sometimes a press release helps achieve your goals. On other occassions,a custom pitch is likely to have a greater impact. And every now and then, it's worth doing both. So what makes sense based on the occassion and goals?

Media Release

- A media release is best used for general announcements, providing essential information to a broad audience. Send a media release when:
- There is a significant event or newsworthy story that could attract wide-ranging media interest.
- There are factual, timely details to share—for example, event launches, partnerships, or milestones.
- The information must be distributed to multiple outlets simultaneously to ensure consistent messaging.

Tailored Pitch

- A tailored pitch is a personalized approach aimed at specific journalists, bloggers, or media outlets, proposing a narrative that compels more in-depth reporting. Tailor a pitch when:
- Create a personal connection or focus on a particular angle that matches the recipient's interests or audience.
- There is a target niche or industry-specific outlets where a more curated story could gain traction.
- The story offers unique value to a particular publication or writer, such as an exclusive interview or behind-the-scenes access.

For example - Culinary Event:

- Send a general media release to announce the upcoming event, including date, time and other relevant details for people interested in participating as racers or attendees.
- If VSL can secure a notable chef as a partner & participant, craft a specific pitch that speaks to their expertise, highlighting the unique culinary twist they bring to the event. Focus on how their participation elevates the overall experience; for instance, emphasize the chef's special dishes that will be showcased or how their involvement speaks to a culinary evolution in the community. Send this pitch specifically to journalists, bloggers and influencers whose focus is culinary-specific. Include an opportunity for them to interview the chef. The goal is to receive coverage prior to the event, reaching a specific audience and attracting new visitors to the event.

Appendix H:

Environmental Impacts and Considerations

OVERVIEW & SUMMARY

The Town of Sylvan Lake and the surrounding area is a diverse and unique region. The natural environment is a draw to the region and enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. There is interest in maintaining this resource for the enjoyment of current and future generations and to protect the intrinsic environmental value held within the area.

Growth of the tourism sector in the Town of Sylvan Lake will increase pressures on the local environment. With appropriate understanding of potential impacts and application of mitigations, impacts can be minimized. However, environmental monitoring must be implemented to confirm if environmental impacts are within an acceptable range, and adaptive management applied to mitigate potential adverse impacts if required.

Potential impacts from tourism, as well as cumulative effects from tourism and other impacts together over time, must be considered and managed to maintain long-term ecological integrity within the region. Cumulative effects must be considered both in terms of the dynamics between impacts to individual Valued Ecological Components (VEC) (e.g., impacts to vegetation communities relates to impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat), but also between tourism and other impacts in the region.

Tourism project impacts are typically evaluated and mitigated on a project specific basis through existing environmental assessments, legislation, and approvals at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels. Although under provincial and federal frameworks projects with potential for significant impacts trigger project specific evaluation of cumulative effects within an Environmental Impact Assessment which includes an evaluation of cumulative effects, few to no projects within the Sylvan Lake region are anticipated to trigger this level of assessment. As such, cumulative effects monitoring and mitigation falls to other mechanisms.

To address cumulative effects at a local scale within the Sylvan Lake watershed, the Sylvan Lake Cumulative Effects Management Plan was developed, which is divided into two phases, framework development and implementation (SLMC 2014, O2 2015). The Sylvan Lake Watershed Cumulative Effects Management System (CEMS) was formed on the recommendation of the Government of Alberta to provide a vision, objectives, and outcomes for the Sylvan Lake watershed. However, the manpower to implement the CEMS has fallen short of anticipated, and currently no active mechanisms are in place to implement the CEMS framework.

To date within the Sylvan Lake Watershed, the environmental indicators detailed within the CEMS framework indicate favourable environmental conditions overall. However, without human resources assigned to actively monitor these conditions it will be challenging to proactively identify and act to mitigate potential negative impacts on the environment.

The Sylvan Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) established in 2021 represents a collective view of all eight municipalities surrounding Sylvan Lake to protect the environment, maintain a high quality of life for residents, and set consistent development standards (Lacombe et al. 2021). The scope of the IDP does not include the waterbody of Sylvan Lake itself because lake management falls within provincial jurisdiction. Environmental objectives under the Sylvan Lake IDP include creating a unified approach to environmental management, protecting long-term health of the watersheds and waterbodies, and balancing environmental protection with appropriate development (Lacombe et al. 2021).

From inception to its disbanding in 2021, the Sylvan Lake Management Committee (SLMC) provided

oversight for the implementation of the CEMS, when the Sylvan Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) Committee was deemed to have an overlapping mandate for environmental management and protection. The IDP Committee has greater strength to act on environmental initiatives, as it is under a Statutory Plan. At this time, the IDP Committee is primarily focused on land use reviews (e.g., annexations etc.), and has not focused on the CEMS.

Elements of performance management, and indicator selection are detailed in Phase 1 of the CEMS (SLCM 2014), and management strategies, monitoring, evaluation and reporting are detailed in Phase 2 of the CEMS (O2 2015). The Sylvan Lake CEMS selected VECs, or "indicators" to be monitored that are pertinent to the CEMS' goals of healthy watersheds and lakes, including:

- **Planning:** Planning indicators include the number of SLMC municipalities who review development applications, the use of SLMC to guide development, having Best Management Practices in place and applied, the frequency of SLMP review, and having municipal planning incorporating environmental setbacks, environmental and municipal reserves.
- **Environmental Indicators:** Several environmental indicators are included in the CEMs, include water quality, water balance, biological indicators (e.g., spawning habitat, emergent vegetation, wetland and riparian health, eagle populations, and colonial water bird population structure).
- **Diverse Recreation:** Recreation is acknowledged as a key indicator in the CEMS, with indicators including sport fishery, lake use, open and public spaces, access, and natural spaces.

Although the strength of implementation of the CEMS increases when it includes the participation of all eight municipalities, the Town of Sylvan Lake should review the CEMS framework to identify key priority items to which the Town of Sylvan Lake can implement outside of the IDP structure. A Town of Sylvan Lake staff should also be identified who is responsible for leading and monitoring the implementation of the CEMS and other environmental initiatives within the Town. These responsibilities should be incorporated formally into a formal job role, and if needed, the capacity of current Town staffing should be evaluated. If required, hiring additional Town staff, or external support should be conducted to ensure adequate staffing for these environmental initiatives.

The pending Red Deer River Regional Plan (RDRP) is one of seven regional plans developed or in development by the Province. The lands which the town of Sylvan Lake and the Sylvan Lake watershed occur are held entirely within the Red Deer River watershed. Regional Plans are legal documents and provincial and municipal decisions must be made in alignment with any applicable Regional Plan. At the time of this report, the RDRP is not completed. Once the RDRP is in place, a sub-regional plan under the RDRP could be developed to include consideration for the Sylvan Lake watershed as a unique environmental feature in the region.

Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA) areas of environmental significance, ranging from local to broader significance. Regional management of ESAs requires inter-municipal cooperation, likely through the IDP committee. Within the CEMS framework, maintaining the integrity of ESAs regionally is identified for environmental protection for a variety of ecosystem types. The CEMS Phase 2 framework identifies targeted environmental and educational programs within regional ESAs, including developing a list of priority ESAs within the Red Deer County regional ESA mapping. The Town should incorporate this goal in discussions with the IDP committee when evaluating incorporating regional cumulative effects monitoring and other environmental initiatives that require the collaboration of the seven participating

municipalities. Further ESA mapping and studies were recommended within CEMS Phase 2 to build upon existing ESA mapping.

Management of ESAs within the Town limits can be conducted under the Town governance. The Sylvan Lake Natural Areas Management Plan (RC Bio Solutions 2017) identifies all Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA) within the Town. A total of 426 ESAs were mapped in the study which were primarily within undeveloped lands at the time of the study, with 31 areas noted as high quality, 122 as moderate quality, and 273 as low quality. The Sylvan Lake Natural Areas Management Plan identifies several higher quality ESA, which are recommended areas to focus conservation and development infrastructure to encourage sustainable usage of these areas, including:

- Golf Course area and contiguous lands to the southwest of the Golf Course,
- Former rail corridor crossing the south side of town,
- Wetland complex and agricultural lands in the Southwest of Town near Pogadl Sports Park,
- Various lands in the east and northeast of Town (Lighthouse Point, and various wetland/ drainage features near the northeast limit of Town boundaries, and
- Waterfront parcel that begins at the northern limit of Town boundary and extends to the adjacent land parcel to the north.

Within the Sylvan Lake Natural Areas Management Plan, Figure 3.1-2 shows core ESA areas and connectivity between ESAs within Town limits. This can be used to guide ESA development. A priority matrix should be developed to evaluate ESA suitability for development (e.g., are under Town ownership or able to be acquired by Town, incorporate high value ESAs, include connectivity through Town and between ESAs, and are currently in lands with inappropriate human usage causing degradation).

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

The Town of Sylvan Lake is situated within the Blindman River subwatershed of the Red Deer River Watershed. The Red Deer River Watershed encompasses approximately 229, 837 hectares within the counties of Ponoka, Lacombe, Red Deer, and Wetaskiwin No. 10 (RDRWA 2023). Several communities are present within the Blindman River subwatershed including the City of Red Deer, the Towns of Blackfalds, Bentley, Rimbey, and the Summer Villages of Birchcliff, Gull Lake, Half Moon Bay, Jarvis Bay, Norglenwold, Parkland Beach, and Sunbreaker Cove. Gull Lake and Sylvan Lake are two major recreational lakes within the subwatershed (RDRWA 2023).

Sylvan Lake is a large (42.8 km2) freshwater lake, with a maximum depth of 18.3 m, located within HUC 8 watershed 08010301 (GoA 2023a). Two provincial parks are established along the shore of the lake, Jarvis Bay, and previously, Sylvan Lake Provincial Parks. The shoreline is composed mainly of sand, or a mixture of rock and gravel, with large sandstone banks up to 20 m above water level present along the northeast shore (Lakewatch 2021).

The Sylvan Lake watershed is located within the Blindman River subwatershed. The Sylvan Lake watershed covers an area of 113.8 km2 (Lakewatch 2021). The Sylvan Lake watershed drains the area immediately surrounding Sylvan Lake, through overland flow and several unnamed watercourses (Figure 1; O2 2015). The outflow from Sylvan Lake drains southeast through Sylvan Creek and into Cygnet Lake, eventually entering the Red Deer River about 2 km southwest of the City of Red Deer.

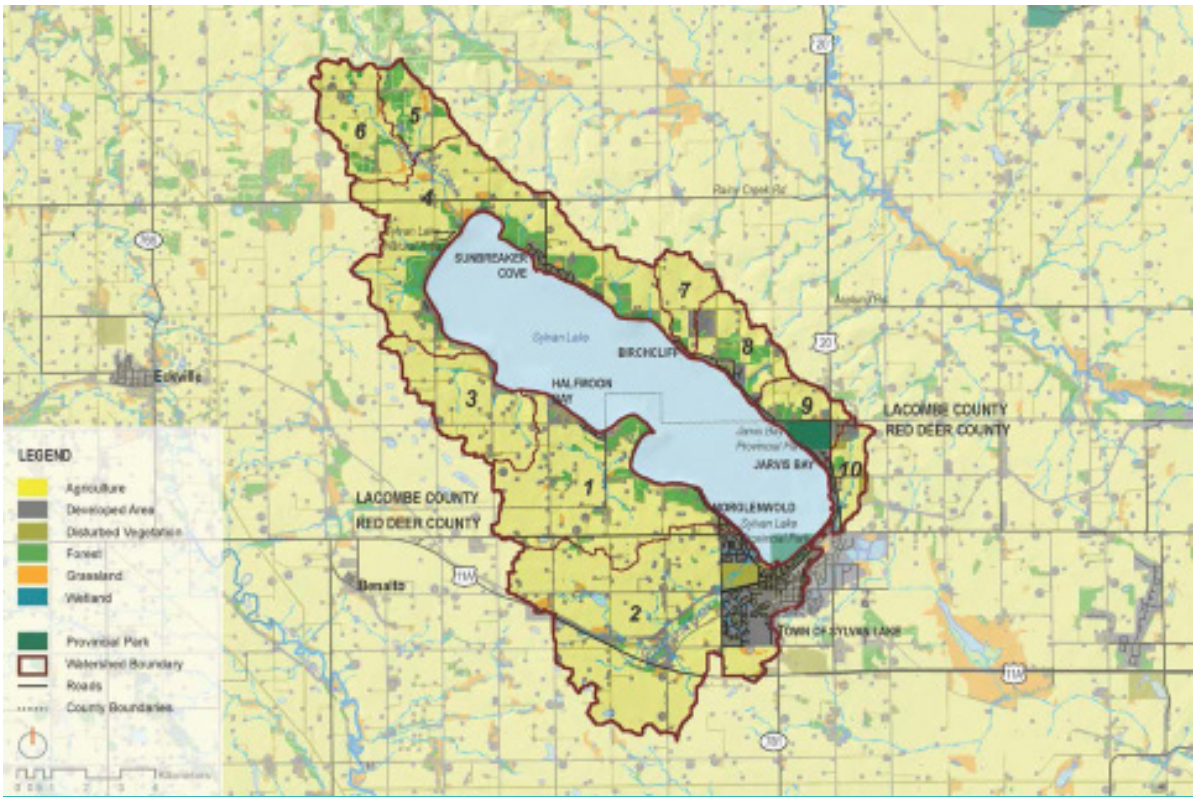
Fifteen fish species have reported observations within Sylvan Lake, including lake trout (Salvelinus namaycush) and rainbow trout (Oncorhynchus mykiss)

which are listed provincially as Sensitive, and At Risk, respectively. Exotic/introduced species have been reported in Sylvan Lake, including brown trout (Salmo trutta), and Prussian carp (Carassius gibelio) (GoA 2023a; GoA 2023b).

The Town of Sylvan Lake is located at the convergence of the Dry Mixedwood and Central Mixedwood Natural Subregions (NRC 2006). Transitional areas between Natural Subregions often have a mixture of characteristics from each type. The Dry Mixedwood NSR overlaps the west side of the town and extends northwest to encompass the entirety of Sylvan Lake, while the Central Mixedwood overlaps the east side of the town and surrounding area.

Land use within the Sylvan Lake watershed is dominated by agriculture (e.g., annual crops and mixed farming), with only 10% of the native vegetation communities remaining. Prior to agricultural development the Sylvan Lake watershed was dominated by mixedwood forest (O2 2015). The region contains diverse habitat supporting a variety of vegetation, wildlife, and aquatic species. The Sylvan Lake watershed provides many opportunities for nature-based activities, such as bird watching and fishing.

Figure 1. Sylvan Lake Watershed Boundary



Source: Sylvan Lake Watershed CEMS Phase 2: Implementation Plan (SLMC, 2015).

THE CHALLENGE

Growth of the tourism sector in the Town of Sylvan Lake will inherently increase pressures on the environment. With appropriate understanding of potential impacts through environmental assessment, planning, and application of mitigations, potential impacts can be minimized. However, environmental monitoring must be paired with these actions to confirm if environmental impacts are within an acceptable range. Where monitoring identifies unacceptable impacts, adaptive management will be applied to mitigate potential adverse impacts. Having resources and infrastructure available from the Town and other municipalities in the Sylvan Lake watershed to monitor for potential environmental impacts, and implement adaptive management is a significant challenge. It is worth noting that the current storm system is not treated and does discharge directly into Sylvan Lake, Cygnet Creek and Cygnet Lake.

In this section, to provide context to the challenges of addressing environmental impacts of tourism, the framework for environmental assessment, permitting, and cumulative effects assessment are detailed to provide context for mechanisms currently in place to evaluate and mitigate environmental impacts of tourism.

Environmental impacts of tourism

Numerous environmental impacts have the potential to occur as a result of tourism development. These can be from direct impacts (e.g., development of infrastructure causing direct disturbance of vegetation, soil, hydrology etc.), or indirect impacts (e.g., increased traffic, water consumption, and waste production). Impacts can be further compounded when Town infrastructure does not keep up with increased visitation. This can result in impacts like degradation to vegetation and soil from informal paths along the waterfront, improper disposal of garbage, erosion, and damage to the shoreline of Sylvan Lake.

The interrelatedness of different stressors on the local environment makes management complex. Potential environmental impacts of tourism in Sylvan Lake are summarized in Table 1, broken down by valued ecosystem components (VECs). VECs are defined as components of the natural and human world that are considered valuable by participants in a public review process when assessing environmental impacts (Beanlands and Duinker 1983).

The impacts summarized in Table 1 are only examples of potential environmental impacts. Projects may impact a few, or all of the VECs listed to varying degrees. To help quantify impacts and help identify potential impacts that have the greatest likelihood of detrimental impact, assessment criteria can be used, and are typically evaluated for both unmitigated, and with mitigations applied, including:

- Direction of effect (i.e., positive or negative),
- Nature of effect (i.e., direct or indirect),
- Geographical extent of effect (i.e., local or regional),
- Magnitude of effect (e.g., ranging from negligible to high),
- Duration and frequency (i.e., temporary, seasonal, or permanent), and
- Likelihood of occurring.

In addition to project specific impacts, cumulative effects must also be considered, both in terms of the dynamics between impacts to individual VECs (e.g., impacts to vegetation communities relates to impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat), but also between tourism projects and other impacts in the region.

Monitoring lake water quality, pollution levels and other environmental indicators are responsibilities of Alberta Environment and Protected Areas and Alberta Health Service, with assistance provided by the Town's Environmental Services Department as requested.

Table 1. Potential Environmental Impacts Related to Tourism Development

Valued Ecosystem Component	Potential Impact
Air Quality, Climate and Noise	• Reduced air quality (e.g., increased odours, decreased visibility), • Particulate deposition, • Impacts to climate, • Increased noise from construction, traffic, visitors, etc.
Hydrogeology	• Impacts to groundwater quality or quantity, • Changes in groundwater recharge rate, • Impacts to terrestrial, riparian, wetlands, wildlife, and aquatic resources related to changes in groundwater conditions, • Conflicts with other groundwater users, • Changes to groundwater flow regime, including seasonal variations, • Intrusion of waste product contaminants.
Surface Water	• Changes to the quantity of surface flow and water level, • Changes to surface water quality, including increase input of nutrients to watercourses and lakes related to tourism activities (e.g., golf course development and maintenance), • Changes in sedimentation rates, • Increased contaminant concentrations.
Aquatic Ecology	• Loss and/or alteration of fish habitat, • Increased fishing pressures, • Introduction of non-native and invasive species and disease.
Vegetation	• Clearing of vegetation, • Changes to vegetation community structure and composition • Introduction and colonization of weeds and non-native invasive species and disease, • Fragmentation and loss of upland, riparian and wetland habitats, • Vegetation changes that exacerbate impacts on other VECs.
Wildlife	• Change relative abundance, habitat availability, mortality, movement patterns, and distribution of wildlife, • Habitat fragmentation (edge effects, changes to core habitat, influence of linear features and infrastructure), • Alteration of wildlife corridors, • Modification of predator-prey relationships, • Increased highway mortality.
Terrain and Soils	• Changes in erosion potential, • Soil compaction, • Changes in soil structure and composition, • Changes in organic matter content, • Changes to the topography, elevation, and drainage patterns.
Historical and Paleontological Resources	• Disturbances to historical and paleontological resources.
Traditional Knowledge and Land Use	• Impacts on traditional, medicinal, and cultural practices in the area.

Note: The VECs and potential impacts listed are not considered comprehensive and are for discussion purposes only.

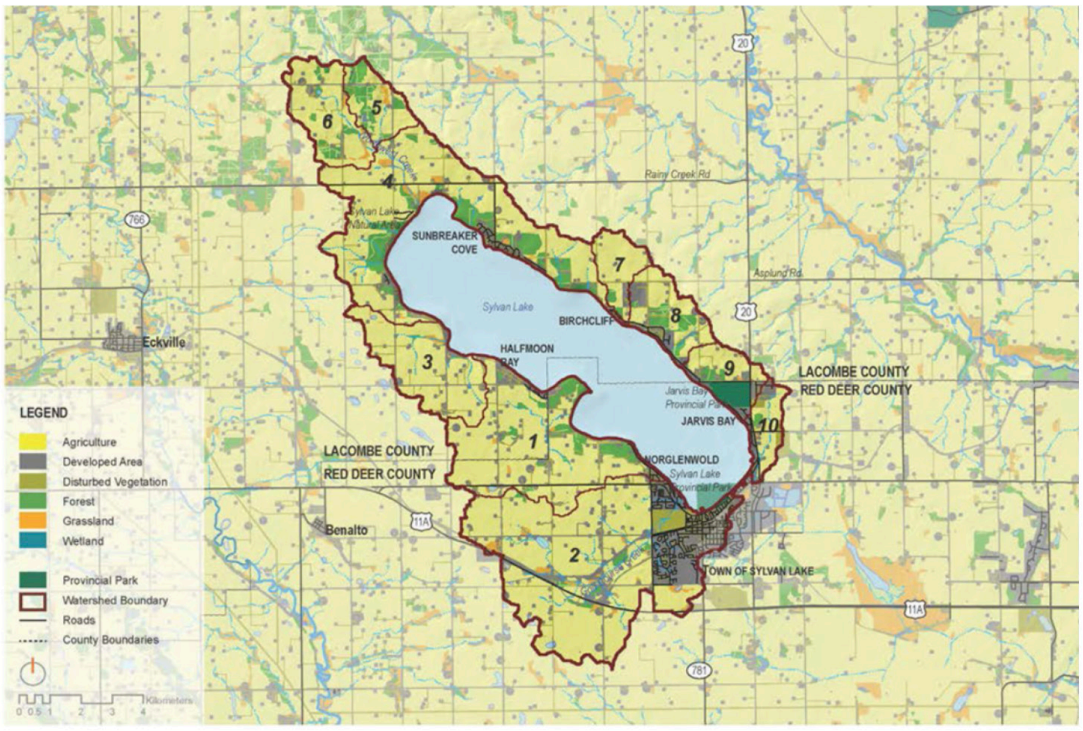
Environmental Impact Mitigation

Mitigation of potential environmental impacts is key to reducing overall effects on the environment, and should be considered at the planning and development stage of all tourism projects, as well as ongoing if impacts are detected that are beyond an acceptable threshold. As mentioned earlier, project specific impacts can be challenging to isolate, and adaptive management to mitigate impacts is often best done at a regional scale using cumulative effects assessment.

The mitigation hierarchy in Figure 2 shows types of mitigation that can be applied, shown in order of effectiveness from left to right. Often several mitigations are applied together to address various impacts throughout a project life cycle. Avoidance of impacts altogether is the most effective mitigation and can be achieved through changes to approach, or deciding to not pursue something that will cause unacceptable impacts. However, avoidance is not always possible, or is in conflict with other goals and objectives such as economic development or job creation. Minimizing impacts is a second preventative mitigation, and can be achieved through actions like project siting which considered environmental impacts, alternative planning, changing the scale of a project etc. Preventative mitigations are preferred over restoration and offsetting as they can prevent or minimize potential impacts.

Restoration, or reclamation, is implementing measures to return an area to a similar condition to pre-impact conditions or equivalent land-capability. It is often challenging to reclaim an area to the equivalent pre-disturbance capability and an even greater challenge to restore equivalent pre-disturbance conditions. The last step in the mitigation hierarchy is offsetting, which refers to compensating for impacts through restoration or reclamation efforts in a different area. Offsetting can include initiatives such as habitat restoration (e.g., wetland construction or restoration, riparian or watercourse restoration), or land conservation.

Figure 2. Environmental Impact Mitigation Hierarchy



Source: Sylvan Lake Watershed CEMS Phase 2: Implementation Plan (SLMC, 2015).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

When planning for new projects in Alberta several regulatory frameworks exist to guide project development, evaluate project specific environmental impacts, and guide and constrain how projects are developed. These include project specific permits, licenses and approvals, and environmental legislation. Depending on project types and scale, these processes can also require various mitigations and monitoring to address environmental impacts.

Project specific regulatory frameworks and requirements correlate to project type, scale and size, location, and environmental sensitivities potentially impacted. Regulating bodies generally fall into three categories, municipal, provincial, and federal. Depending on the project context, required permits, licenses and approvals may have stipulations for various environmental assessments, guidelines, limits, monitoring, and reclamation obligations.

A high-level overview of potential environmental permitting and legislation relating to tourism projects is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Potential Environmental Legislation and Policy Applicable to Tourism Projects

Legislation or Policy	Responsible Authority	Purpose or Intent	Applicability
Inter-Nation			
Treaty 6	The Canadian government, specifically the Crown which is represented by the federal government	To establish a peaceful and cooperative relationship between the Indigenous signatories of Treaty and the Canadian Government, based on mutual respect, friendship, and the sharing of land and resources. Treaties are recognized in the Constitution of Canada and are protected under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.	There are several environmental legislative and policy frameworks that apply to Treaty 6 and 7, including several listed below. Duty to consult: Overall, these legislative and policy frameworks demonstrate the importance of recognising and respecting Indigenous rights and perspectives when making decisions about environment and natural resources on Treaty 6 and 7 lands.
Treaty 7			

Table 2 is continued on the following pages

Legislation or Policy	Responsible Authority	Purpose or Intent	Applicability
Federal			
Fisheries Act	Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)	To prevent the harmful alteration, degradation or destruction (HADD) of fish or fish habitat, including release of deleterious substances to fish habitat.	Activities with potential for HADD require at minimum a Department of Fisheries and Oceans Request for Review (RfR) to evaluate potential impacts to fish and fish habitat. If the RfR determines the death of fish or Harmful Alteration, Destruction or Displacement (HADD) will occur, Fisheries Act Authorization (FAA) needs to be obtained.
Migratory Birds Convention Act (MCBA)	Environment Canada	The protection and conservation of migratory bird individuals and populations, their nests, and habitats.	Projects should follow protocols and guidelines that mitigate impacts to migratory birds. These include respecting the migratory bird Restricted Activity Period (RAP), and conducting nest sweeps to confirm if nests are present and establish required setbacks or other mitigations if needed. Typically, permits under the MBCA would not be anticipated for tourism related development, however hunting permits, bird banding, and a variety of other permits are governed by the MBCA.
Species at Risk Act (SARA)	Environment Canada	To prevent the extirpation or extinction of wildlife species, as well as to provide for the recovery of species currently at risk due to human activity, and to prevent species of special concern from becoming at risk.	The SARA provides protection of any known federally listed Species at Risk (SAR) or their critical habitat from disturbance or damage. Although avoidance of impacts to SAR is recommended, if required permits to conduct activities that may impact SAR or their critical habitat can be granted under SARA. However, activities are limited to scientific research, activities that benefit Species at Risk, or activities that incidentally impact Species at Risk.
Impact Assessment Act (IAA) and Impact Assessment Act Physical Activities Regulations	Impact Assessment Agency	Governs the Environmental Impact Assessment process of major projects and projects carried out on federal land or outside of Canada.	Projects which meet the thresholds identified in the IAA and Impact Assessment Act Physical Activities Regulations require at minimum a screening assessment, and potentially a full EIA. It should be noted that the Joint Panel process guided by the Canada-Alberta Agreement on Environmental Assessment Cooperation applies to projects triggering both provincial and federal EIAs, allowing them to be assessed under a single application package.

Legislation or Policy	Responsible Authority	Purpose or Intent	Applicability
Provincial			
Water Act and associated regulations.	Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA)	To promote the conservation and management of water in Alberta, including wetlands.	The Act supports and promotes the conservation and management of water, through the use and allocation of water in Alberta. The Water Act and associated regulations governs assessments and approvals for water related activities, such as water management (e.g., diversion, withdrawal), and disturbances to wetlands and watercourses.
Alberta Wetland Policy	Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA)	To conserve, protect, and restore Alberta's wetlands to sustain the ecosystem services and benefits associated.	The Alberta Wetland Policy provides strategic direction and tools required to make informed management decisions in the long-term interest of Albertans. The policy will minimize the loss and degradation of wetlands, while allowing for continued growth and economic development in the province.
Soil Conservation Act (SCA)	Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA)	Requirement to prevent soil loss or deterioration from taking place or to stop loss or deterioration from continuing.	Projects must adhere to the requirements under the SCA. The SCA also provides authority to local municipalities and outlines the powers and duties of the designated officers, and outlines penalties relating to contravention of the SCA.
Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act (EPEA) and associated regulations.	Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA)	To support and promote the protection, enhancement, and use of the environment	EPEA is the primary act in Alberta through which regulatory requirements for air, water, land, and biodiversity are managed. The Act supports and promotes the protection, enhancement and wise use of the environment by designating proposed activities for which an approval or registration is required. Projects whch meet the thresholds identified in EPEA and Environmental Assessment (Mandatory and Exempted Activities) Regulation require an EIA according to provincial requirements.
Wildlife Act	Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA)	Protection of plants and wildlife species in the province, including harvest or hunting, and management of species at risk	Projects should follow protocols and guidelines that mitigate impacts to plants and wildlife species. These include respecting the migratory bird Restricted Activity Period (RAP), and conducting wildlife and nest sweeps to confirm if nests are present and establish required setbacks or other mitigations if needed.

Legislation or Policy	Responsible Authority	Purpose or Intent	Applicability
Public Lands Act	Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA)	To manage and protect Crown owned land for sustainable use, including the bed and shores of all waterbodies	The Act establishes the role of the Alberta government in managing public land, including controlling public land use through the establishment of public land use zones, recreation areas and trails. The Act provides for appropriate use and management of public land and for the classification of the public land base in Alberta. The Master Schedule of Standards and Conditions (MSSC) identifies conditions that apply to formal disposition applications approved under the Public Land Act, but can also be applied as a Best Management Practice for private lands. The MSSC includes conditions relating to land management, vegetation, soil, wildlife, watercourses, waterbodies etc.
Historic Resources Act (HRA)	Alberta Culture	Provides for the use, designation, and protection of moveable and immoveable historic resources	The HRA provides for the use, designation and protection of historic resources, including palaeontological, archaeological, historic or natural sites, structures or objects. Depending on site context, a HRA Approval can be required prior to disturbance of previously undisturbed extents, and may also require a Historic Resource Impact Assessment (HRIA) in support of the HRA Approval.
Municipal			
Municipal development Plan (MDP) (Parkland Community Planning Services)	The Town of Sylvan Lake	Long range planning document. Our goals, objectives, and planning direction for the future, are outlined	The MDP includes various policies including land use, natural environment, and regional collaboration. Environmental policies are outlined relating to the following objectives: design with nature, increased environmental awareness and education, tree canopy conservation and growth, and material resource management. Key policies include protection of green infrastructure networks, environmentally sensitive development, open space preservation, environmental reserve dedication, environmental education, and urban forestry.

Legislation or Policy	Responsible Authority	Purpose or Intent	Applicability
The Town of Sylvan Lake Land Use Bylaw	The Town of Sylvan Lake	Regulates development within the Town of Sylvan Lake	Any development within the Town of Sylvan Lake will require a development permit to be issued prior to commencing. Environmental assessments are included as part of application packages, including a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA), biophysical assessment, preliminary Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) report. Projects may also require a Phase II ESA, detailed TIA and other supporting assessments.
Sylvan Lake Parks and Open Spaces Bylaw (Town of Sylvan Lake 2022)	The Town of Sylvan Lake	Bylaws addressing the use of Town of Sylvan Lake parks and open spaces.	Addresses protection of natural areas and habitat, including protections of Environmental Reserves, modifications to shorelines, protection of wildlife.
Sylvan Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan (Lacombe et al. 2021).	Collaboration of all eight municipalities surrounding Sylvan Lake	To protect the environment, maintain a high quality of life for residents, and set consistent development standards.	Environmental objectives under the Sylvan Lake IDP include creating a unified approach to environmental management, protecting long-term health of the watersheds and waterbodies, and balancing environmental protection with appropriate development. Environmental Assessments, develop a Natural Areas Management Plan, and Implement Environmental Reserves and Development Setbacks from Sylvan Lake and Sylvan Lake tributaries.
Area Structure Plans (ASP)	The Town of Sylvan Lake	Provides a framework that describes land uses, density of population, sequence of development, general location of major roadways, public utilities in the area and any additional requirements.	Projects must follow frameworks outlined in the applicable ASP. Four Area Structure Plans exist for the Northeast, the Northeast Gateway, the South, and the West of the Town of Sylvan Lake. If an area structure plan does not exist for the outline plan area, the Developer may be required to create one.
Sylvan Lake Municipal Sustainability Plan (Town of Sylvan Lake 2018a)	The Town of Sylvan Lake	Roadmap for the Town to follow, as decisions are made that impact the sustainability of the community.	This is a non-statutory plan which guides Town decisions relating to sustainability. Plan outlines actions for improving lake and watershed health, including recommendations for education and incentive programs to promote sustainable practices amongst residents of Sylvan Lake.

Legislation or Policy	Responsible Authority	Purpose or Intent	Applicability
Area Redevelopment Plans (ARP) (McElhanney 2019; Armin et al. 2010)	The Town of Sylvan Lake	Guide how existing neighborhoods in the community will redevelop in the future.	ARPs outline the future land uses and contain policies for the redevelopment of vacant and underutilized land. Currently two ARPs exist for the Town of Sylvan Lake, the Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan and the 50th Street Redevelopment Plan. The ARPs include environmental goals and objectives, and environmental policies relating to development (e.g., setbacks from high water, requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment [EIA] if detrimental effects are anticipated, evaluate options for wetland protection etc.).
Town of Sylvan Lake Natural Areas Management Plan (NAMP; RC BioSolutions 2017)	The Town of Sylvan Lake	Address management of Natural Areas within the Town of Sylvan Lake and during annexation of adjacent lands.	Provides the approach for rating values of Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA) to assist Town Council and other decision makers in the management of impacts to ESAs. The NAMP also provides Best Management Practices (BMP) for environmental conservation, including setbacks for ESAs and wildlife corridors.
Development Process and Design Guidelines (Town of Sylvan Lake 2018b)	The Town of Sylvan Lake	Provides information regarding the Town of Sylvan Lake's standards governing new development design and servicing standards, the design and construction approval process and drawing submission requirements.	Several process and design requirements are focused on environmental assessment and management, including situations requiring Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments, biophysical assessments., Environmental Construction Operations (ECO) plan, and identification of environmentally sensitive areas in an outline plan.

Note: The environmental permits and legislation listed are not considered comprehensive and are for discussion purposes only.

Cumulative Effects Monitoring and Mitigation

Cumulative effects assessment evaluates the combined impacts that occur over time from a series of individual projects. Although the simplest way of viewing cumulative effects is to assume impacts are additive, the relationship between impacts can be much more complex, particularly if cumulative effects reach thresholds above an ecosystem's adaptive capacity.

Evaluating cumulative effects at a regional scale provides a stronger basis for decision making and managing impacts than when looking at individual projects or disturbance types. In addition to tourism, several other significant sources of environmental impacts exist within the Sylvan Lake area including urban and rural residential development, agriculture, oil and gas, forestry, and industrial impacts.

The evaluation of cumulative effects in relation to a specific project can be triggered through provincial and federal environmental approvals processes, however this is unlikely to be required for the types of tourism development anticipated to occur in the Town of Sylvan Lake. In Canada, certain project types trigger a cumulative effects assessment as part of their environmental assessments supporting project approvals. Projects triggering this level of assessment are typically large projects, requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) under the provincial Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act (EPEA; GoA 2022a) or federally under the Impact Assessment Act (IAA; GC 2019). The cumulative effects assessment under these two frameworks typically evaluates the specific project impacts, as well as cumulative effects of existing and future known larger scale projects within the regional study area. A goal of this process is to assist regulators and public in evaluating if a project is in the best interest of the public.

More commonly, individual projects do not require cumulative effects assessment as they fall below the thresholds for EIA under EPEA or IAA. Given the limited application of project specific evaluation, cumulative effects monitoring should be conducted at the regional scale. The Alberta government is committed to managing cumulative effects on a regional level through the Land-Use Framework (GoA 2008) and development of Regional Plans. The Alberta Land Stewardship Act (ALSA) (GoA 2022b) and Alberta Land Stewardship Regulation (GoA 2022c) provide the authority to Land Use Frameworks (LUF) providing the framework for regional plans which are structured around major river watershed boundaries within the province. The Town of Sylvan Lake is located within the area covered by the pending Red Deer River Regional Plan (RDRP; GoA 2023c). Once the RDRP is in place, monitoring and progress reports will be conducted by the province to summarize and evaluate strategies and initiatives under the RDRP. Examples from the Lower Athabasca and South Saskatchewan Regional Plans are available on the Government of Alberta website.

To address cumulative effects at a smaller regional scale within the Sylvan Lake watershed, a Cumulative Effects Management Plan was developed, and is divided into two Phases, framework development and implementation (SLMC 2014, O2 2015). The Sylvan Lake Watershed Cumulative Effects Management System (CEMS) was formed on the recommendation of the Government of Alberta to provide a vision, objectives, and outcomes for the Sylvan Lake watershed. The development of the CEMS was stewarded by the Sylvan Lake Management Committee (SLMC), which consisted of eight regional municipalities, provincial and federal government representatives, and the Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society. The SLMC was subsequently disbanded in 2021 when the Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) and IDP Committee were formed as the committee were considered to have overlapping mandates (SLMC 2021). The CEMS framework is intended to be applied in conjunction with other local and regional plans, frameworks, and planning. The CEMS framework is discussed further under Analysis within the Environmental Impacts and Considerations Section.

ANALYSIS

As discussed in the Challenge section, in order to meet the desired environmental outcomes for the Town of Sylvan Lake it is important to evaluate and manage environmental impacts under regional initiatives in addition to project specific regulatory and permitting frameworks.

Frameworks have been developed to support environmental management and monitoring in the Sylvan Lake region. Although this Plan is focused on the Town of Sylvan Lake, several governing bodies share interest in maintaining the environmental integrity of the Sylvan Lake watershed and surrounding area, including Red Deer County, Lacombe County, Summer Villages of Birchcliff, Jarvis Bay, Half Moon Bay, Norglenwold, and Sunbreaker Cove, Government of Alberta, and the Government of Canada.

Many established sources of monitoring data and frameworks that can be applied within the Sylvan Lake region. A summary of key existing regional frameworks, monitoring and data sources is provided in Table 4, detailing scope and highlights of available reporting and data. A detailed list of watershed initiatives related to watershed health organized by Sylvan Lake watershed municipality is provided in the Sylvan Lake CEMS (O2 2015).

Frameworks which are important for meeting the desired environmental outcomes for the Town of Sylvan Lake include:

- The Sylvan Lake Cumulative Effects Management Plan (SLMC 2015, O2 2015),
- Red Deer Regional Plan (GoA 2023c), and
- Sylvan Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP 2021).

Sylvan Lake Cumulative Effects Management Plan

The Sylvan Lake CEMS was developed for the Sylvan Lake watershed (SLMC 2014, O2 2015).

The Sylvan Lake CEMS takes an adaptive management approach to continually assess and improve policies and practices, and address impacts from past, current and foreseeable future impacts in and around Sylvan Lake (SLMC 2014). Contributors to the Sylvan Lake CEMS included:

- Sylvan Lake Management Committee (SLMC) and Municipal Councils – Promoted and communicated the vision of the CEMS, and provided advice and decisions,
- SLMC Technical Advisory Team (TAT) – Provided scientific and technical information for planning and CEMS framework,
- SLMC Working group – Sub-committee of SLMC which reviewed technical information, and
- Community consultation (SLMC 2014).

Elements of performance management, and indicator selection are detailed in Phase 1 of the CEMS (SLCM 2014), and management strategies, monitoring, evaluation and reporting are detailed in Phase 2 of the CEMS (O2 2015).

The Sylvan Lake CEMS selected VECs, or "indicators" to be monitored that are pertinent to the CEMS' goals of healthy watersheds and lakes, summarized in Table 3. Indicators were selected to gauge and measure changes over time that include both conditions indicators (i.e., quantified metrics that can be compared with applicable guidelines and thresholds), and risk indicators (i.e., potential threats). The Sylvan Lake CEMS developed indicator limits and triggers to evaluate changes to indicators in a systematic way. Triggers are thresholds that are set lower than or in advance of limits to provide signal for proactive management, and limits are thresholds set at a level at which risk of adverse effects is unacceptable. The Sylvan Lake CEMS also includes management strategies, monitoring initiatives, evaluation initiatives to gauge progress and adaptive management, and reporting initiatives to synthesis and communication of results (SLMS 2014, O2 2015).

Table 3. Sylvan Lake Cumulative Effects Management Plan Environmental Impact Indicators

Indicators	Indicators Limits and Triggers
Planning	
Municipal Planning	Includes metrics for municipal planning activities including: • Number of SLMC municipalities who review development applications • Use of SLMC to guide development • Best Management Practices in place and applied • Frequency of SLMP review • Planning incorporates environmental setbacks, environmental and municipal reserves
Sylvan Lake Management Committee (SLMC)	Includes metrics for the management and activity of the SLMC, including: • Frequency of meetings • Membership across participating municipalities • Communication Strategy and public education
Environmentally Healthy Watershed and Lake	
Water Quality (Groundwater and Surface Water)	• Water quality limits for total Nitrogen (N) and Phosphorus (P) limits to evaluate lake eutrophication
Water Balance (Groundwater and Surface Water)	• Lake level upper and lower limits based on SLMC and Government of Alberta developing water balance models
Bio-Indicators	Key bio-indicators identified to represent overall bio-indicators for the Sylvan Lake watershed: • Spawning habitat for pike • Emergent vegetation • Wetland health • Riparian health • Eagle population • Colonial water bird population structure
Diverse Recreation	
Sport Fishery	• Walleye population structure.
Lake Use	• Boating density and safety • User experience • Thresholds for different user types
Open and Public Spaces	• Availability, density and access of beach space
Access	• Number of boat access points with parking • Status of safety and boat access challenges • Foot path development through environmental and municipal reserves • Dog access to lake
Natural Spaces	• Impact to natural areas • Loss of vegetation • Status of biodiversity • Riparian health

Environmental Impact Mitigation

The Sylvan Lake CEMS categorizes indicator conditions into three "management zone" categories, with different actions taken under each category for a variety of outcome specific indicators. The management zone categories are:

- Green – Desired conditions where no effects are occurring,
- Yellow – Shifting away from desired conditions where effects are possible, and
- Red – Degradation of desired conditions where effects are likely (Figure 3; SLMC 2014).

Ongoing monitoring to evaluate which management zone indicators fall within has not been conducted to date due to manpower shortages.

Figure 2. Environmental Impact Mitigation Hierarchy

RED DEER REGIONAL PLAN

The pending Red Deer River Regional Plan (RDRP) is one of seven regional plans developed or in development by the province. The Sylvan Lake watershed is located within the Red Deer River watershed. Regional Plans are legal documents and provincial and municipal decisions must be made in alignment with any applicable Regional Plan. At the time of this report the RDRP has not been completed, but is planned to be developed in a phased manner:

Regional Planning:

- Gathering and assessing information, input and advice,
- Receiving feedback and drafting RDRP,
- Finalizing RDRP approach.

RDRP Regional Advisory Council (RAC):

- Developing a RAC composed of a cross-section of individuals who live, work, recreate and/or have an interest in the region, and are able to strategically consider what is best for the entire region at a holistic level.

Consultation:

- Contributions from the RDRP RAC, First Nations and Métis groups, stakeholders, municipalities and the public inform the development of the RDRP.

RDRP:

- Develop the RDRP that provides an approach for managing lands and natural resources within the Red Deer River watershed the Province of Alberta's long-term environmental, economic and social goals (GoA 2023c).

Currently the Lower Athabasca and South Saskatchewan Regional Plans have been developed (GoA 2023c). Regional plans establish the framework for shared stewardship of the environment to manage air quality, biodiversity and ecosystems, watersheds, and efficient use of land, and provides opportunities for collaborative work with governments and stakeholders to prepare collective management plans to institute regulatory and non-regulatory tools. These plans consider integrated approaches for subregional and issue-specific planning.

Regional Plans allow for management at the sub-regional scale, using mechanisms such as designation of Special Management Areas, or sub-regional plans. The RDRP will provide opportunities to develop sub-region plans, including for the Sylvan Lake watershed as a unique environmental feature in the region.

Tourism can also be addressed within Regional Plans. For example, the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan lays out steps to enhance tourism destination areas within the region by engaging with aboriginal communities, municipalities, industry, and other local stakeholders to encourage tourism investment and infrastructure development opportunities.

INTERMUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The Sylvan Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) represents a collective view of all eight municipalities surrounding Sylvan Lake to protect the environment, maintain a high quality of life for residents, and set consistent development standards (Lacomb et al. 2021). The scope of the IDP does not include the waterbody of Sylvan Lake itself because lake management does not fall within the municipalities' jurisdiction.

The Government of Alberta recommends IDPs when municipalities share a shoreline to allow for coordinated development. IDPs are governed under the Municipal Government Act (MGA), and must provide procedures for conflict resolution, plan amendment or repeal, administration of the plan, and cost sharing structure and agreement.

The Town of Sylvan Lake also participates in the Red Deer County IDP, which addresses lands located immediately around the Town of Sylvan Lake (Sylvan Lake and Red Deer County 2021). This IDP has limited spatial scope and does not allow for the same strength to address watershed level issues as the Sylvan Lake IDP. Because of this, the focus of this section is on the Sylvan Lake IDP.

The scope of the Sylvan Lake IDP includes the following:

- Defining an appropriate plan boundary,
- Building on the Partners' approved statutory and regulatory plans as a foundation for all aspects of the plan,
- Identifying the development patterns,
- Creating policy for environmental health within the Plan Area; shared infrastructure services, including regional wastewater line; lake access; and recreation services,
- Focusing the plan on creating harmonized development standards,
- Developing agreed upon next steps through the plan's implementation, communications, and appropriate dispute resolution policies.

The IDP is implemented by an IDP Committee with representatives from all Sylvan Lake watershed municipalities (e.g., Red Deer County, Lacombe County, and Summer Villages of Birchcliff, Jarvis Bay, Half Moon Bay, Norglenwold, and Sunbreaker Cove). The IDP also includes a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), composed of administrative staff members from each of the Partner Municipalities. The IDP Committee meets annually or as needed to discuss issues and collaborative projects. The IDPC determines which projects will be pursued in any given year.

Environmental objectives under the Sylvan Lake IDP include creating a unified approach to environmental management, protecting long-term health of the watersheds and waterbodies, and balancing environmental protection with appropriate development (Lacombe et al. 2021). Environmental policies detailed includes:

- Environmental Assessments:
  - Requirement of a Level 1 Preliminary Natural Site Assessment (PNSA) will be required prior to land redesignations and can also be required at the discretion of the approving authorities. The Level 1 PNSA is an environmental assessment to evaluate the environmental context of a site. Based on recommendations within the Level 1 PNSA, sites may also require a Level 2 Environmental Screening, or Level 3 Scoped Biophysical Impact Assessment (BIA) depending on project context.
  - Requirement of Level 3 Scoped BIA for redesignation applications which occur within an Environmentally Significant Area (ESA).
  - Develop municipality level ESA mapping, and ahead of this being developed, compile an interim ESA using existing provincial data sources.

- Develop a Natural Areas Management Plan for the Plan Area, including management intent and direction for ESAs, natural areas, and wildlife corridors at the Sylvan Lake watershed scale. A Natural Area Management Plan is in place

for the Town of Sylvan Lake; however this does not cover the regional scope detailed in the IDP recommendations (RC BioSolutions 2017). However, at the scale of the Town of Sylvan Lake, this framework provides valuable tools for a decision making and environmental assessment framework.

- Implement Environmental Reserves and Development Setbacks from Sylvan Lake and Sylvan Lake tributaries, which will be applied through municipal subdivision conditions. Additionally, the Sylvan Lake IDP has general setback policy recommendations for municipalities to develop Development Design Plan criteria and expectations to mitigate negative watershed impacts.

At this time, the IDP Committee is primarily focused on land use reviews (e.g., annexations etc.). However, the SLMC which was focused on implementing the Sylvan Lake CEMS was disbanded citing overlapping environmental mandates (SLMC 2021), and the fact that the IDP Committee has greater strength to act on environmental initiatives, as it is under a Statutory Plan. The Sylvan Lake IDP should increase their focus on environmental management, and specifically the implementation of the CEMS to address the current gap.

Table 4. Summary of Existing Regional Monitoring and Data Sources

Organization / Data Source	Jurisdiction	Scope and Data
Sylvan Lake Management Committee (SLMC) *(Disbanded)*	Municipal, provincial and federal government	The SLMC consists of eight municipalities, provincial and federal government representatives, and the Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship society. The SLMC was intended to support the implementation of the Sylvan Lake CEMS, through committee meetings, representation from participating municipalities, and public education. Available data includes: • The Sylvan Lake Watershed Cumulative Effects Management System (CEMS) Phase 1 and 2 (SLMC 2014, O2 2015), • Commissioned AXYS Environmental Sylvan Lake Water Quality Assessment and Watershed Management (2005), • Supported funds for Sylvan Lake Groundwater Master Thesis, and • Commissioned Golder and Associates Flow Model (2012).
Alberta Lake Management Society (ALMS 2023)	Non-Profit	ALMS is a non-profit to promote understanding and comprehensive management of lakes and reservoirs and their watersheds. At Sylvan Lake the LakeWatch program collects and reports on several water quality parameters at Sylvan Lake, and within the Red Deer Watershed. The program evaluates water quality (nutrients, routine chemistry, metals, and chlorophyll-a parameters), invasive aquatic species, and in-situ water chemistry depth profiles. Historical data is evaluated for lake health in the context of Sylvan Lake as a stand-alone waterbody. Sylvan Lake has not been included in the Red Deer River watershed report, but this report can be used to provide regional context for changes to lake health. Available data includes: • Red Deer River State of the Watershed Report (2009), • Blueprint: An Integrated Watershed Plan for the Red Deer River Watershed (Phase One: Water Quality), and • Annual Reports (most recent 2021-2022).

Organization / Data Source	Jurisdiction	Scope and Data
Red Deer Watershed Alliance (RDRWA 2023)	Non-Profit	The RDRWA is a non-profit society that serves as a designated Watershed Planning and Advisory Council (WPAC) for the Red Deer River watershed under the Government of Alberta's Water for Life Strategy. Available data includes: • Red Deer River State of the Watershed Report (2009) • Blueprint: An Integrated Watershed Plan for the Red Deer River Watershed (Phase One: Water Quality) • Annual Reports (most recent 2021-2022) • Riparian Mapping Project
Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society (Disbanded) (SLWSS 2021)	Non-Profit	The Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society was a non-profit group which operated from 1999-2021 as a stewardship group for the protection of Sylvan Lake.
Alberta Working Well Program (GoA, 2023f)	Non-Profit	The Working Well program works to ensure and secure groundwater supplies for water well users in Alberta by helping well owners manage and understand water wells and how human activities impact them. Available data includes: • Working Well: Clean Water Protected fact sheet • E-books, videos, and other resources to educate landowners on how to protect and maintain water wells
Alberta Water Well Information Database (GoA, 2023g)	Provincial Government	The Alberta Water Well Information Database (AWWID) site is maintained by the Groundwater Information Centre (GIC). It hosts a database of approximately 500,000 records with nearly 3,000 new records added annually. Available data includes: • Water well drilling reports • Chemical analysis reports up to the end of 1986 • Geophysical logs • Springs • Flowing shot holes • Test holes • Yield tests conducted on water wells
Edmonton-Calgary Corridor Groundwater Atlas (Baker et al. 2011)	Provincial Government	This groundwater-mapping atlas focuses on the Edmonton-Calgary Corridor (ECC) and examines fresh groundwater based on its geological, hydrological and hydrochemical properties. This report describes the groundwater-mapping process used to map these resources. Available data includes: • Bedrock and surficial geology • Hydrology • Hydrogeology • Hydrochemistry

Organization / Data Source	Jurisdiction	Scope and Data
Provincial Surface Water Quality Data for Rivers and Tributaries (GoA, 2023d)	Provincial Government	The Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEP) and its partners monitor surface water quality in waterbodies across the province. The data is made available through the Water Quality Data Portal (WQD Portal). Available data includes: • The Long Term River Network (LTRN) is a monitoring program for Alberta's major rivers • The Tributary Monitoring Network (TMN) is a program of water quality monitoring stations on tributaries contributing to many of Alberta's major rivers • Lake/Reservoir Station Data includes raw water quality data and summaries of lake conditions
Alberta Floods Portal (GoA, 2023h)	Provincial Government	The potential for flooding exists along all streams and lakes in Alberta. To assist communities in keeping Albertans safe and protecting their properties from floods, the Government of Alberta manages the productions of flood studies and maps under the Flood Hazard Identification Program. Available data includes: • Provincial flood study results are displayed in the Flood Awareness Map Application. • Flood awareness maps include hazard maps, inundation maps, likelihood maps, and range maps.
Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) Water Use Performance Report (AER, 2023)	Provincial Government	Energy companies use water throughout the life cycles of their projects and activities. The Alberta Water Use Performance Report shows how water is allocated and used to recover oil, gas, and oil sand resources. Available data includes: • Information about water allocation and use for oil sands mining, in situ operations, enhanced oil recovery, and hydraulic fracturing.
Aquatic Invasive Species in Alberta (GoA, 2022f)	Provincial Government	Alberta Parks is collaborating with AEP and other government and external agencies to respond to aquatic invasive species (AIS) being introduced into provincial waterbodies. Available data includes: • Information on identifying aquatic invasive species. • Tools and guidelines for preventing the spread of AIS and whirling disease.
Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI, 2014)	Non-Profit	The Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI) non-profit organization that tracks changes in Alberta's wildlife and their habitats to provide relevant scientific information on the state of the province's biodiversity to support natural resource and land-use decision making. ABMI collects, and makes available freely online, province-wide data measurements on over 2,500 species, land cover, and inventory of human footprint. Available data includes: • Species and habitat raw data • Wall-to-wall land cover inventory • Wall-to-wall human footprint inventory • Advanced landcover prediction and habitat assessment (ALPHA) Products

Organization / Data Source	Jurisdiction	Scope and Data
ABMI Status of Biodiversity in Grassland and Parkland Region (ABMI, 2014)	Non-Profit	This report presents data and analysis on several indicators of environmental health for the Grassland and Parkland Natural Regions of Alberta. This information provides a baseline to evaluate change in biodiversity in these regions. Available data includes: • Models and maps of above ground biomass and carbon storage across native grassland in Alberta • Inventory of wetlands and assessment of annual rates of wetland losses • Land cover inventory and assessment of annual rates of land cover change
Riparian Web Portal (RWP, 2020)	Non-Profit	The Riparian Web Portal is a collaborative project between government and charitable organizations in Alberta that was designed to support Albertans in building healthier riparian areas by providing access to condition assessments, summary statistics for waterbodies, and resources for conservation and restoration. Available data includes: • Generate a riparian assessment report of riparian intactness in a custom or pre-defined area • Examples of restoration projects conducted by landowners and conservation groups • Resources and educational material about restoration or conservation projects
Riparian Mapping in the Medicine-Blindman Rivers Watershed (2011) (RDRWA, 2020)	Non-Profit	RDRWA works with a range of partners to improve the health of riparian areas across the Medicine-Blindman watershed by prioritizing areas for conservation and restoration and supporting on-the-ground projects. The RDRWA provides information that can be used as the basis for the development and implementation of riparian area management within the Medicine-Blindman Rivers watershed. Available data includes: • Evaluation of riparian intactness, and natural and anthropogenic pressures within local catchments

Note: This list of available environmental data and reports is not exhaustive.

REGIONAL CASE STUDIES

Two case studies of regional communities with lake-based tourism were undertaken to evaluate the approach for environmental assessment, management, and mitigation of tourism-based impacts. The goal of the case studies was to evaluate both successful initiatives and potential gaps within these communities so they can be applied to Sylvan Lake, as applicable.

The criteria for case study location selection were based on:

- Stand alone municipalities,
- Similar permanent population size to Sylvan Lake,
- Existing lake-based tourism industries, and
- Located within Alberta, where possible.

The City of Cold Lake, Alberta, and Penticton, British Columbia were selected, and results of the case study reviews provided in Table 5 and Table 6.

Both case studies showed that environmental impact assessment and management was governed under multiple frameworks, and through multiple levels of government and non-profit organizations. Additionally, Cold Lake has a multi-jurisdiction watershed management plan, that similarly to the Sylvan Lake CEMS, requires collaboration and cooperation across municipalities. The Beaver River Integrated Watershed Management Plan (Palliser 2022) establishes targets and thresholds for environmental indicators in the watershed. This plan was finalized in 2022, and as such does not have a long history of implementation that can be used as a model for this type of inter-jurisdictional plan. Beaver River Integrated Watershed Management Plan has a larger spectrum of indicators evaluated compared to the Sylvan Lake CEMS, including more water quality indicators including additional water chemistry parameters of concern, and evaluation of various municipal practices that impact water quality (e.g., septic).

The Town of Cold Lake is located within the Lower Athabasca Watershed, which has a completed watershed level Regional Plan. The Cold Lake Sub-Regional Plan was developed under the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan to manage sub-regional issues (GoA 2022d). This aligns with earlier discussion regarding the potential for the development of a Sub-Regional Plans in the Red Deer River watershed to address the management of unique environmental features in the region. The structure of the Cold Lake Sub-Regional plan can be used to guide how a Sylvan Lake Sub-Regional Plan could be developed. The Cold Lake Sub-Regional Plan addresses several environmental sensitivities that are not present within the Sylvan Lake watershed (e.g., caribou), however many aspects are applicable, including land use frameworks across multiple usage types (e.g., industrial, forestry, agriculture), and development of monitoring indicators (GoA 2022d).

Penticton, B.C. does not have the same provincial legislative structure so direct correlations for regional initiatives was not possible. A regional water quality monitoring plan was developed for Okanagan Lake (Nordin 2005) which provides thresholds and triggers for water quality objectives, as well as monitoring recommendations. Development of a detailed water quality monitoring plan is a recommendation in the Sylvan Lake CEMS (O2 2015). The Okanagan Lake plan (Nordin 2005) can provide a framework for this initiative as it discusses objectives, approaches of this type of lake specific monitoring program.

Table 5. Case Study – Cold Lake, Alberta

LOCATION	COLD LAKE, ALBERTA
Rationale for Selection	• Similar permanent population size to Sylvan Lake • Diverse industry in region (agriculture, oil and gas, forestry) • Complex cumulative effects • Growing lake-based tourism economy • Municipal governance of town only
Population	• Permanent Population 16,302 • Average Annual Visitors Unknown
Environmental Context	The City of Cold Lake is located on Cold Lake which is a large lake in northeastern Alberta in the Central Mixedwood Natural Subregion. Industry in the area includes extensive oil and gas, forestry, and agriculture.
EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION, GUIDELINES AND FRAMEWORKS	

Beaver River Integrated Watershed Management Plan
 	
(Palliser 2022)
	• The Beaver River Integrated Watershed Management Plan provides recommended Valued Components (VCs) and their targets and thresholds for the watershed. Many of the goals must be achieved through inter-jurisdictional cooperation between provincial government and municipal government and their many departments therein. The following is a summary of these recommendations by VC.
	
	Water Quantity
	• Indicator - Lake water levels
	  • Measure: Adequate water levels to support various uses including community water supply, recreation (boat access, beaches, fish habitat), aquatic life, and downstream needs.
	• Recommendations: follow the Surface Water Allocation Directive (GoA 2021); maintain or remediate hydrology; model groundwater, surface water, land cover, and climate to predict and assess long-term trends.
	
	Water Quality
	• Indicator - Trophic status and chemistry
	  • Measure: Temporal and spatial trends of chemistry, nutrient load, etc.
	• Indicator - Aquatic life
	  • Measure: Species diversity and abundance.
	• Indicator - Water temperature
	• Measure: optimum and maximum water temperature.
	• Recommendations: maintain, improve, and protect water quality by: reducing external nutrient and sediment inputs through Best Management Practices (connected to land use below), adopting riparian health targets and applying setbacks, retaining wetlands and wetland integrity, assess septic and sewage discharges, consider upgrading septic and sewage systems, use municipal sewer and water services for properties adjacent to the lake instead of septic tanks/fields; monitor and evaluate health of lakes, streams, and tributaries in the watershed through monitoring programs; promote lake stewardship; monitor groundwater quality (e.g., arsenic levels), create community groundwater monitoring program, assess and decommission abandoned domestic water wells, ensure industrial remediation and reclamation activities meet end-use criteria.
	
	Riparian Areas and Wetlands
	• Indicator - Recreation, riparian function
	  • Measure: Measure the number of water quality advisories per year
	• Indicator - Riparian health scores, intactness (condition, extent), percentage wetland area, wetland loss
	  • Measure: Impact thresholds (per wetland type)
	• Recommendations: Follow provincial riparian setback guidelines; develop and follow municipal riparian setbacks; follow setbacks associated with agricultural activity, forestry, and oil and gas; restore damaged riparian areas; inventory, retain, and restore wetlands.

Beaver River Integrated Watershed Management Plan
 	
(Palliser 2022)
 	
(continued from previous page)
	Biodiversity
	• Indicator - Fish, wildlife, and vegetation
	  • Measure: species composition, population estimates, Index of Biological Integrity, regulated invasive plants, disturbance and rare plants
	  • Measure: Percentage change in land cover
	  • Measure: upland systems support native fish, wildlife, and plants that are also resilient to adversity and changes.
	  • Measure: Maintain watercourse crossings, and stream connectivity
	  • Measure: Ensuring proper stream crossing placement can prevent sedimentation and erosion as well as fish passage
	• Recommendations: determine local and regional fisheries goals; identify, retain, and restore fish habitat; retain or restore stream connectivity; manage shorelines for fish and waterfowl; manage human-wildlife conflict where needed (e.g., beaver, double-crested cormorant); retain and restore key wildlife and biodiversity zones; manage aquatic invasive species (e.g., Himalayan balsam, zebra and quagga mussels)
	
	Land Use
	• Indicator: Change to human footprint and population, recreation and tourism, access
	  • Measure: percentage change in land use cover, census data, population growth rate, user data (day use, registrations), road density
	• Recommendations: urban development should use setbacks and proper stormwater management (e.g., low impact development); use BMPs to manage and mitigate agricultural impacts; apply forest industry standards to harvest practice; reduce impacts from industry (e.g., well density, linear fragmentation); remediate/reclaim areas immediately following abandonment of operations; industry must have and follow emergency response plans; assess and reclaim orphan wells; ensure tourism and recreation activities do not compromise ecological, cultural, and historical values; develop outdoor recreation management plan

Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (GoA 2012) (Provincial)	The Lower Athabasca Regional Plan falls under the same framework as the Red Deer River Regional Plan (pending). The plan includes: • Land use planning framework • Promotes creation of Destination Development Strategy and Tourism Opportunity Plan to increase visitation while ensuring sustainable development • Monitoring and management frameworks for air, water, biodiversity, and land disturbance in progress • Includes environmental thresholds and triggers • Limits and triggers for air, surface, and groundwater • Dedicate lands for various types of recreation

Cold Lake Sub-Regional Plan
 	
(GoA 2022d)
 	
(Provincial)
	The Cold Lake Sub-Regional Plan was developed to provide management approaches that support naturally functioning ecosystems that will benefit a wide range of species. Some specific aspects that relate to Sylvan Lake include:
	• Stipulating 250 m setbacks from named waterbodies
	• Supports new and expanded tourism in ecologically suitable areas
	• Develop a recreation management plan which will:
	  • Identify priority areas
	  • Maintain natural areas to support recreation
	  • Ensure management is compatible with ecological values
	  • Manage land uses to maintain cultural and historical values
	• Requirements to support recreation outcome
	  • Prioritize recreation in recreation management areas
	  • Create a recreation management plan
	  • Create trail system network that considers motorized and non-motorized recreation and ecological sensitivities

Cold Lake Sub-Regional Plan
 	
(GoA 2022d)
 	
(Provincial)
 	
(continued from previous page)
	• Several Environmental Performance Indicators, including:
	  • Anthropogenic footprint
	  • Caribou
	  • Barred owl
	  • Forest cover age class
	  • Moose
	  • Natural disturbance
	  • Restoration of legacy seismic lines
	  • Songbirds
	  • Wetlands
	  • Socio-economic performance indicators including recreation

City of Cold Lake Municipal Development Plan (ISL 2021) (Municipal)	The Municipal Development Plan featured community feedback and priorities that will direct their efforts in the coming years. Regarding recreation, there was a focus on beach and marina improvements, as well as completing a fully-connected trail system throughout town with access to the lakefront. Access to recreation areas through trails and transit was another key concern. Environmental concerns were given as such, identification and protection of natural areas (e.g., wetlands, drainage courses, etc.), and environmental impacts and mitigations for conflicting land use. Lastly, environmental stewardship was highlighted by community members with a goal of protecting and enhancing biodiversity for current and future use. This is to be achieved through studies to evaluate environmentally significant areas, biophysical and wetland assessments, conservations tools such as environmental reserve dedications, geotechnical assessments, Municipal environmental impact assessments, environmental site assessments, ensuring ecological connectivity through methods such as retaining wildlife corridors, and conserving trees. The City intends to dedicate the environmentally significant lands, especially waterbodies and wetlands, as Environmental Reserve to create a buffer around these features and to provide public access. The width of the Environmental Reserve shall be at least six meters but may increase based on relevant surveys.
SUMMARY	
Successes	• Up to date and comprehensive watershed management plan • Limits and triggers for surface water • Performance and management indicators • Recommendations for indicators and management • Goals include a balance between human use and ecological needs
Gaps	• Few complete regional management frameworks (e.g., biodiversity) • Implementation is lagging
Applicability to Sylvan Lake	• Several recommendations, guidelines, and triggers that will be useful in planning • Same provincial guidelines and frameworks • Development of a Regional Plan and Sub-Regional Plan under the provincial Land Use Framework • Similar ecological and recreation needs

Table 6. Case Study – Penticton, British Columbia

LOCATION	PENTICTON, BRITISH COLUMBIA
Rationale for Selection	• Similar permanent population size to Sylvan Lake • Diverse industry in region (agriculture, forestry) • Complex cumulative effects • Well established lake-based economy • Municipal governance of town only
Population	• Permanent Population 36,885 (2021) • Average Annual Visitors 1.2 million
Environmental Context	The City of Penticton is located between two lakes, Skaha and Okanagan in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia. Industry in the area includes agriculture and forestry.
EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION, GUIDELINES AND FRAMEWORKS	
Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Urban Systems 2018) (Municipal)	Environmental benefits of parks and recreation • Protection of habitat, biodiversity, and ecological integrity • Opportunities for human connections with nature, environmental education and stewardship • Pollution abatement and cooling of air and water (trees and soil) • Rainwater management • Climate change adaptation, including mitigation of extreme weather events • Carbon sinks Goal to protect Penticton's natural areas within parks • Biodiversity • Species at risk • Lake (fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals) • River channel (constructed) fish conduit and habitat (migration, rearing, spawning, and incubation for Kokanee salmon, rainbow trout, whitefish, non-game species) • Creeks (fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and songbirds) • Oxbows (plants and animals, stormwater collection issues such as sediments and hydrocarbons) • Ravines- creeks (wildlife corridors, species at risk key habitat, riparian habitat)
Okanagan Valley Destination Development Strategy (Destination BC Corp. 2017) (Provincial, Municipal)	The strategy was developed to enhance the competitiveness of the area as a destination. • Goal of maintaining a healthy natural environment • Develop sustainable trail system that recognizes interactions with fragile ecosystems • Manage and mitigate tourism carrying capacity issues • Access to pump-outs for boats/marinas (water quality) • Mitigating shoreline damage from boating activity through enforcement and education • Understanding and supporting environmental flow needs (fisheries) • Policy for lakefront development and access

Water Quality Objectives for Okanagan Lake
 	
(Nordin 2005)
 	
(Provincial)
	• Thresholds and triggers for water quality objectives (e.g., dissolved oxygen, nutrients, contaminants, etc.)
	• Influences on water quality (e.g. agriculture, forestry, septic tank systems, etc.)
	• Monitoring recommendations, including:
	  • Timing and frequency
	  • Parameters
	  • Frequency of results publication
	  • Future studies

Official Community Plan Bylaw
 	
(The Corporation of the City of Penticton 2020)
 	
(Municipal)
	• Goal to protect the Nationally Significant Biodiversity
	  • Prepare for increasing risks, exposure, and costs associated with natural hazards resulting from changing climate
	  • Protect natural environments
	  • Protect water resources
	• Guidelines for landscape design to avoid compromising natural environment
	• Stream and riparian protection
	  • Water conservation
	  • Tree retention and planting
	  • Increase available habitat for birds and pollinators
	  • Stormwater management
	  • Minimize surface runoff
	• Riparian and environmental guidelines
	  • Riparian development permit area: Riparian assessment reports, financial security conditions, review process, defines areas that will not allow development
	  • Environmental development permit area: Environmental assessment reports, review process, defines areas that will not allow development

Okanagan Sustainable Water Strategy (Okanagan Water Stewardship Council 2019)
 	
(Non-Profit)
	• Watershed approach
	• Water quality
	  • Updating human waste management systems (septic to community sewer)
	  • Improve stormwater management
	  • Strengthen provincial legislation for wetlands
	  • Ecosystem inventory
	  • Control aquatic invasive species
	  • Source water protection
	  • Aquatic, wetland, and riparian ecosystem conservation/restoration
	  • Water quality monitoring
	• Water quantity actions
	  • Enable flexible irrigation licensing without increasing allocation
	  • Improve irrigation management and water efficiency
	  • Groundwater mapping
	  • Understand water supply and demand
	  • Understand and develop plans for droughts and floods

SUMMARY	
Successes	• Focus on balancing tourism and environment • Permit and review process for development in sensitive areas • Considering changing climate in management goals
Gaps	• Lack of comprehensive watershed management plan
Applicability to Sylvan Lake	• Penticton is a tourist hub in British Columbia and has several destination development/tourism and recreation plans

MOVING AHEAD: **THE ROLE OF THE TOWN OF SYLVAN LAKE**

The natural environment in and surrounding Sylvan Lake is a draw to the region and should be maintained for the enjoyment of current and future generations, and to protect the intrinsic environmental value held within the area. As the Town of Sylvan Lake develops its tourism industry, it is important to grow and manage the tourism sector and visitors to avoid, reduce, and mitigate environmental impacts.

The DLMP addresses tourism development within the municipal boundaries of the Town of Sylvan Lake. However, the environmental impacts related to tourism development in Sylvan Lake will have wider spread environmental impacts in the surrounding region, centering primarily on lake-based user impacts. Challenges exist in how to assess, govern, monitor and mitigate these impacts given the complexity of cumulative effects and multi-juristictional context. Tourism-based impacts will interact with other impact sources, including anthropogenic and natural impacts, and span across various levels of government, non-government, and stakeholder management frameworks.

Tourism projects within Town boundaries are expected to fall under the thresholds of triggering extensive provincial or federal environmental assessment and approvals processes, and will not have project specific cumulative effects assessments. Regulatory systems are in place for evaluating project level impacts through federal, provincial, municipal legislation, policy, plans, bylaws etc., however a gap exists for addressing cumulative effects at the local Sylvan Lake watershed level, as well as provincially within the Red Deer River watershed. It is important for the Town to address this gap to meet environmental objectives.

Based on a review of the existing information on the environmental assessment framework applicable to the Town of Sylvan Lake and surrounding region, several steps are outlined below to address environmental impacts within the Sylvan Lake area. However, it should be noted that these are high-level and not all fall within the responsibility of Town tourism leadership. Recommendations within existing policies, frameworks and plans should be considered.

INVOLVEMENT IN REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Within the Sylvan Lake CEMS framework, the Sylvan Lake Management Committee (SLMC) was critical to the implementation of the management system, and committee involvement is even stipulated as an indicator (SLMC 2014). When the Sylvan Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) and IDP Committee were formed in 2021 the SLMC was disbanded as the two committees were seen to have overlapping mandates in relation to environmental management (SLMC 2021). However, to date the IDP committee has focused primarily on land use reviews, and has not fully replaced the function and intent of the SLMC within the CEMS.

The Sylvan Lake CEMS has proven to be challenging to implement, regardless of the SLMC or IDP committee involvement as this requires both manpower and regional support. The Sylvan Lake CEMS is an important framework for identifying thresholds for cumulative effects in the Sylvan Lake watershed, but requires additional manpower and support to action. The CEMS framework was developed to be applied in conjunction with other local and regional plans, frameworks, and planning.

It is recommended that the Town of Sylvan Lake utilize the IDP Committee to advance cumulative effects monitoring efforts in absence of the SLMC. This is not specified within the current Sylvan Lake IDP (Lacomb et al. 2021), but could be approached as an amendment. Alternatively,

as outlined in O2 (2015), the participating Sylvan Lake watershed municipalities could enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to address expectations for managing the watershed. However, given the Sylvan Lake IDP has been formed and can serve this purpose, the MOU approach provides little benefit unless a smaller subset of the eight partnering municipalities under the IDP is wanting to enter such a collaborative agreement.

The Town of Sylvan Lake should be actively involved in the regional initiatives that relate to watershed management and cumulative effects management. This will allow the Town to advocate for the inclusion of specific concerns and conditions within the Town of Sylvan Lake and Sylvan Lake watershed. For example, in the development of the Red Deer Regional Plan (RDRP), there are potential opportunities for providing feedback and review for regional planning, participation on the RDRP Regional Advisory Council, and involvement in consultation as a municipality (GoA 2023c). Once developed, the RDRP will provide the legal framework to support watershed management within the region.

Once the RDRP is developed, the Town of Sylvan Lake should work with the provincial government and other municipalities surrounding Sylvan Lake to develop a Sub-Regional Plan for the Sylvan Lake Watershed. A Sub-Regional Plan would be a binding plan to address subregional concerns in the Sylvan Lake watershed. The Sylvan Lake CEMS can serve as a core piece of a Sub-Regional Plan. However, the timing of this is dependent on the development and implementation of the RDRP, as this Sub-Regional Plan is governed under the larger watershed plan. The Cold Lake case study can be used to evaluate potential structures for Regional and Sub-Regional Plans (GoA 2022d).

The Town of Sylvan Lake should participate in the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance. This non-profit supports watershed management planning, and technical reports relating to the Red Deer River watershed.

The Town of Sylvan Lake should dedicate in-house resources to tracking and assessing existing environmental monitoring initiatives, incorporating results from these initiatives to manage environmental goals and objectives within the Sylvan Lake watershed. Several existing organizations, including government and non-profit, monitor environmental parameters at and surrounding Sylvan Lake. Long term data sets are available that can be analyzed to see if impacts to valued components can be detected, however it would be challenging to isolate tourism related impacts. Cumulative effects from tourism, combined with a variety of anthropogenic and natural impacts need to be evaluated holistically.

Additionally, the Town of Sylvan also dedicates in-house resources for involvement on regional project approval application reviews as Stakeholders. This will allow the Town to voice concerns in terms of project impacts to the region that may have environmental impacts within the Sylvan Lake watershed.

TOWN OF SYLVAN LAKE ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

Significant effort was placed on developing recommendations within Phase 2 of the Sylvan Lake CEMS, including regional, and municipality specific initiatives to support cumulative effects monitoring and management (O2 2015). Recommendations specific to the Town of Sylvan Lake are still pertinent, and should be revisited to determine status, and evaluate which initiatives might be undertaken in the future.

Specific recommendations for the Town of Sylvan Lake within the Sylvan Lake CEMS included:

- Include a stronger focus on maintaining watershed health in the Town's Growth Management Strategy.
- Develop Golf Course integrated environmental management to provide more robust management considerations or best practices to address riparian area management and water quality concerns (e.g., fertilizer and pesticide inputs). Golf Course Creek flows through both agricultural lands and the Golf Course prior to entering Sylvan Lake.

- Environmental and invasive species education, and development of an invasive species strategy to minimize the spread of aquatic invasive species (e.g., zebra and quagga mussels).
- Implementing education and incentive programs recommended by the Sylvan Lake Municipal Sustainability Plan influence and change public behavior patterns that can negatively impact the lake (O2 2015).

Key recommendations for the Sylvan Lake watershed in general that were flagged in O2 (2015) as applicable to the Town of Sylvan Lake are detailed in below:

- Develop a Subregional Plan for the Sylvan Lake Watershed – Under the Red Deer River Regional Plan (pending), a sub-regional plan can be developed as a binding plan to address subregional concerns in the Sylvan Lake watershed. The Sylvan Lake CEMS can serve as a core piece of a sub-regional plan.
- Map Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) for the Sylvan Lake watershed to identify areas of high ecological value to assist in land use planning. Development near or within an ESA can be used to trigger more stringent project assessment (e.g., Biophysical Impact Assessment). ESA mapping has been produced at the provincial level to quarter section scale (Fiera 2014). ESA mapping was also developed for the Town of Sylvan Lake at a finer scale, which maps out individual ESAs within and adjacent to municipal boundaries (RC BioSolutions 2017). The Town of Sylvan Lake ESA mapping is currently incorporated into annexation and reclassification assessment processes to assist in decision making. However, finer scale ESA mapping should be conducted for the Sylvan Lake watershed to assist in alignment at the watershed level. The recommendation to develop municipal level ESA mapping is also stipulated in the Sylvan Lake IDP (Lacombe et al. 2021).
- Development of a water quality monitoring plan for the Sylvan Lake watershed, tailored to the conditions within the watershed.

PUBLIC ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Within the Sylvan Lake MDP, increasing environmental awareness and education is identified as one of the most important efforts that the Town of Sylvan Lake can undertake to protect, conserve, and steward the environment (Town of Sylvan Lake 2018a). Policy NE-2.1 under the MDP pertains to developing environmental education programs.

Environmental education for both residents and visitors should be used as a tool to mitigate environmental impacts. This can be in the form of fact sheets, signage, public information sessions etc. Various non-profit and government sources exist for education, best management practices, and guidelines that can be adapted and modified for the environmental context within the Town of Sylvan Lake.

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Appendix I:

Local Labour Analysis

OVERVIEW

The tourism sector is a people-centric industry. Tourism employees are essential to delivering the quality service that defines the Canadian tourism industry and allows it to grow. Without an adequate labour supply, businesses face lower growth, higher operating costs, and reduced profits. Travel Alberta, the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta, and the new Federal Tourism Growth Plan all recognize the importance people play. They are the heart of the industry and the heart of communities.

Tourism is an economic sector, comprising a number of industries up and down the value chain that are inherently linked and collectively impacted by visitation. Generally, these industries include accommodations, retail, food service, transportation and entertainment, as well as leisure/recreation, arts and cultural industries. (This may vary somewhat from place to place). Small- and medium-sized enterprises make up the majority of these industries, as tourism thrives on localized entrepreneurial ingenuity, primarily focusing on business-to-consumer (B2C) enterprises.

Tourism employs a high percentage of women, youth, and other equity-seeking community members, including those with limited education, and/or language barriers, given the high number of entry-level positions that do not require special certification, education or skills training.

During the past several years, tourism businesses lost workers as businesses were forcibly closed and employees laid off during the pandemic. Rounds of rehiring and further layoffs led to workers moving to other industries, and the tourism sector has not yet replaced all lost workers. In Sylvan Lake, the number of tourism workers recorded by the census was 28% lower in 2021 than in 2016. Across Alberta, the number of tourism workers remained below 2019 levels as of June 2023. Travel Alberta expects domestic tourism spending to be 16.5% higher in 2023 than in 2019. Demand for tourism is surging back faster than tourism businesses can restaff and expand—demonstrated by incredibly high vacancy rates in the industry.

Sylvan Lake is seeking growth in signature events and attractions, facilitating tourism throughout the community and increasing off-season tourism. To do so, workers are essential.

The following section reviews some challenges and opportunities to grow the tourism workforce. Note: Unless otherwise stated, data presented within this report is based on an analysis of the Statistics Canada Sylvan Lake Census Profile 2021 and 2016 Census of Population.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- In Alberta, demand for tourism from domestic travellers will recover in 2023, US travel demand will recover in 2024, and demand from other countries will recover in 2025.
- At both the federal and provincial levels, there is a focus on shifting tourism demand from major urban centres to other areas of the country. Increasing demand for tourism in rural areas and small population centres will increase the need for workers in these areas.
- Fifty percent of Canadians have worked in tourism at some point. But they do not stay in the sector due to a perceived lack of career opportunities and financial security.
- The sector attracts employees from all walks of life, but two are particularly prominent. One group is young, Canadian-born workers who seek part-time or seasonal jobs while in school and then move on after a short time in the industry. The sector also attracts new Canadians who are older and seek tourism jobs as an entrance to the labour force and a possible career. However, they also tend to leave the industry.
- Worker shortages are severely impacting the industry. Some tourism industries now employ more workers than in 2019, but employment remains deeply suppressed in other industries.
- Immigration is the leading cause of future labour force increases. By 2030, over 70% of Alberta's population growth will be due to immigration.
- Wages and salaries in tourism-related industries have grown faster than average. Despite the increase in earnings, tourism workers still tend to make less than those in the broader economy.
- The higher earning potential in other industries—some of which also face severe labour shortages—consistently pulls tourism workers away from the industry.
- Sylvan Lake's tourism sector is highly reliant on people aged 15 to 24. They held 43.9% of tourism jobs in Sylvan Lake in 2016.
- Immigrants filled 10% of tourism jobs in Sylvan Lake in 2016, despite only being 6.5% of the population at that time.
- The Temporary Foreign Worker program can provide employees but is difficult to navigate. An over-reliance on the program as a source of workers is a risk in the long term as policy changes can swiftly change the program's viability for businesses.
- In the long term, the industry will need to expand the number of full-time, year-round jobs it offers to align with the demands of the future labour market.

LABOUR AND THE FEDERAL TOURISM STRATEGY

Before 2019, the constrictive nature of labour shortages on tourism's growth was recognized. Labour issues were prominent within a succession of federal tourism strategies and visions. The 2013 strategy released by the Federal Government listed "fostering an adequate supply of skills and labour" as one of four pillars. The 2017 tourism vision relegated "investing in tourism sector jobs and skills training" to one of 20 action items. By 2019 however, the labour force was once again front and centre of Canada's tourism strategy, as utilizing tourism to build middle class jobs was the entire focus of the strategy. Identifying Canada's big opportunity, the strategy noted that, "With international travel growing fast, the recent Destination Canada study found that with the right policies and investments, Canada's visitor economy has the potential to generate up to $25 billion in tourism export growth and upwards of 180,000 new jobs by 2030." However, the strategy also noted labour as one of five long-standing challenges that stood in the way of growing the sector.

The importance of an adequate labour supply has never been more critical. Between March and April 2020, almost 900,000 tourism workers lost their jobs. Rounds of rehiring and further layoffs followed, and the tourism sector has not yet replaced all lost workers.

The turmoil of the last few years called for the redevelopment of Canada's tourism strategy and an even greater focus on finding ways to attract workers to the tourism sector.

The 2023 federal tourism growth strategy recognizes that, "Canada's visitor economy will only grow and prosper with a robust workforce for entrepreneurs to thrive." "Our success is made possible by the many dedicated workers across the country. The tourism industry is booming, thanks in part to the people whose knowledge and expertise help visitors get the most out of their trip."

The strategy includes programs designed to bolster the tourism workforce now. These include programs that tourism employers can use to access frontline workers, including the student work placement program and the expanded temporary foreign worker program.

Yet challenges are also noted. The strategy states that tourism workers face, uncompetitive wages, lack of affordable transportation, and the high cost of housing in popular tourist areas.

Labour will be addressed as part of the Government's plan to improve coordination with a Federal Ministerial Council. The proposed council will coordinate policies and strategies across the government to address issues in the sector, including workforce challenges.

It can be assumed that, in part, the federal government is leaning on its increased immigration policy to deal with labour shortages across all industries—hence specific strategies to increase the tourism labour force are absent from the tourism growth strategy. The Federal Government's November 2022 announcement of 2023-2025 immigration levels noted that, "the plan embraces immigration as a strategy to help businesses find workers and to attract the skills required in key sectors."[1]

These workers will be needed as the majority of future labour force

1 Government of Canada. (2022, November 1). An immigration plan to grow the economy. Retrieved from https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/11/an-immigration-plan-to-grow-the-economy.html

growth will be created through immigration. The new Tourism Strategy does set some economic targets for the sector, including an increase in the tourism sector's contribution to GDP by 40% (relative to 2019) by 2030. This would mean an additional 85,000 direct jobs. If the ratio of direct jobs to total tourism sector employment is the same in 2030 as in 2019, the sector will need to employ roughly 2.3 million workers on an average annual basis. There will be an even greater need for workers in peak summer months. In Alberta, this would require the sector to hire 54,000 workers in addition to the 216,800 tourism workers that existed in 2022.

Alberta is relatively well positioned among provinces—with higher-than-average population and labour force growth expected between 2023 and 2030.[2] This will be driven by a higher rate of natural population increase than most provinces, but immigration will play the main role in expanding the labour force. This will benefit the tourism industry. Although immigrants only made up 20.8% of the province's population in 2016, they filled 30.5% of tourism jobs. The industry recognizes the importance newcomers will play in making the tourism sector's growth sustainable, which was reflected in numerous requests related to immigration that Alberta tourism associations made during the consultation phase of the federal tourism growth strategy. For example, the Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA) and the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta (TIAA) called for increased quotas for the International Experience Canada program. This program allows young people from across the globe to visit Canada and work during their stay. Often referred to as the, "working holiday visa," this program is used heavily by the ski industry, and mountain parks. It was essentially inactive due to restrictions on travel between 2020 and early 2022.

In January 2023, it was announced that the number of workers who can arrive in Canada via the International Experience Canada program would increase. In 2023, there will be a 20% increase in the number of applicants who can apply to the program, allowing up to 90,000 individuals from across the world to arrive in Canada for work.[3]

The AHLA also sought to increase the number of hours international students could work each week while studying to 40 from 20. On October 7th, 2022, it was announced that the 20-hour-per-week cap on the number of hours that International students can work while in class would temporarily be lifted.[4]

However, several calls for support made by Tourism Industry Associations have not yet been acted on. While it is reasonable to expect that not all requests made during the consultation phase would be included in the new strategy, more work is needed to alleviate shortfalls of labour in the tourism sector. Missing requests, that would further alleviate tourism labour shortages include:

- Implementation of a comprehensive Tourism Immigration Strategy.
- Implementation of an Indigenous Workforce Strategy.
- An increase in the number of high school tourism programs.
- Prioritization of hotel jobs under the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program
- The launch of a domestic recruitment campaign

There is a clear desire to increase tourism demand in all regions of Canada, and recognition that workers are essential for that task. Growing tourism will require significant investments in labour. Further work to implement these requests should be a priority for associations that speak on behalf of the tourism sector. Strengthening the labour force needs to be a particular focus of small communities that are seeking to draw travellers to their region, because there is also a clear

2 Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0057-01 Projected population, by projection scenario, age and sex, as of July 1 (x 1,000)
3 Government of Canada. (2023, January 9). International Experience Canada program is now open to welcome international youth to Canada. Retrieved from https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2023/01/international-experience-canada-program-is-now-open-to-welcome-international-youth-to-canada.html
4 Government of Canada. (2022, October 7). International students to help address Canada's labour shortage. Retrieved from https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/10/international-students-to-help-address-canadas-labour-shortage.html

desire to shift tourism demand away from major urban centres and into other regions of the country.

Before 2019, a report developed for Destination Canada noted that Canada's tourism sector faced five key challenges. One was labour. Another was the concentration of tourists in specific locations. International visitors to Canada tended to concentrate in particular areas. At the time, over 80% of international visitors went to Ontario, British Columbia, or Quebec, and most of those visitors went to Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. Their visits were also highly concentrated in the summer months. This concentration created a situation where the areas receiving these travellers had little room for further growth because they were at capacity. To help tourism grow despite these capacity constraints, geographical dispersion of tourism demand was suggested. In other words, push tourism demand from urban centres to other regions of the country. This policy aim was intended to spread the benefits of tourism more evenly. This policy aim was renewed in the 2023 federal strategy. A focus on rural Canada is one of the guiding principles of the new strategy, noting that there are opportunities to attract more international and domestic tourists to remote and rural parts of Canada.

Increasing tourism outside of major urban areas is also a provincial policy. In its 2022-25 corporate plan, Travel Alberta listed a key objective, "spearheading the development of destination master plans for ten traveller corridors (over three years) to increase capacity in priority regions." This includes selecting specific locations to invest in, "outside the Rockies and the two major cities."

As travel patterns stabilize, this focus on pushing travellers beyond urban boundaries will continue. But tourists increasingly visiting rural areas and towns like Sylvan Lake will also increase demand for workers in these regions.

TOURISM AS A PLACE OF WORK

Canadians believe tourism is essential to economic well being. In a survey conducted by Tourism HR Canada, 89% of respondents stated that tourism is somewhat or very important to the economic well being of Canada, and 71% said it was important to the economic well being of their community.
But despite viewing tourism as economically important.

Canadians are less enthusiastic about working in the sector. The last several years have negatively impacted Canadian's view of tourism as a place of work. In the fall of 2020, a survey by Leger on behalf of Tourism HR Canada found that 39% of Canadian's view of tourism as a place of work had become more negative. A follow-up survey in late 2022 found several factors that have led to the industry's current labour crisis.

Tourism is seen as a place to learn skills and gain valuable work experience. But, despite 50% of Canadians having worked in the tourism industry at some point, most do not stay in the sector. Those who had worked in the industry primarily did so for temporary employment during school (37%) or while searching for other employment (23%).

Several factors drive this view of the industry as a place for temporary employment. Training is minimal, with 33% of those who had worked in the sector stating they received no training and 34% indicating that their main form of training was job shadowing. Only 23% of respondents said they were offered a promotion to a managerial or supervisory role. However, only a third of respondents indicated they had any desire to move to a supervisory or managerial position in the first place. Seasonality within the industry can also be a challenge, as 55% of Canadians said they were unwilling to work seasonally.

Ultimately, the perception of wages and the potential for future wage increases via career promotion are problems for the industry. Fifty-nine percent of all survey respondents said the pay was too low for most jobs in the industry. Among those who had worked in tourism, 70% think that the pay is low for most jobs in the industry, and 64% think that the pay for most tourism jobs is not enough to lead a satisfactory life. With these perceptions, the industry will have difficulty attracting long-term workers seeking financial stability.

On the positive side, the fact that 50% of Canadians have worked in the industry demonstrates that tourism is a gateway to employment. And most people who worked in the industry were satisfied with their job. Among tourism industries, the food services sector has the lowest level of satisfaction—yet 50% of current or former workers were satisfied with their job. In the recreation industry, 68% reported satisfaction with their job. Yet despite satisfaction with the job, these individuals still left the industry. Further analysis of the perception survey data conducted by Tourism HR Canada found that tourism employs Canadians from all walks of life. But two types of personas are more prominent than others, the adventurer and the new Canadian.

The adventurers are young, middle class, white people who work part-time or seasonally. Often while in school—although not exclusively. They enjoy tourism but do not see it as a career, moving on when ready for, "higher pay, more 'professional' lifestyle, or a more prestigious career."

The new Canadian is older than the adventurer, non-white and less financially secure. They enter the workforce to get an entry-level job and are looking for a reliable job with a steady paycheck. They tend to see tourism as a viable career, but the longer they stay, the greater the likelihood that they become disenchanted by the sector and leave.

SALARIES AND WAGE

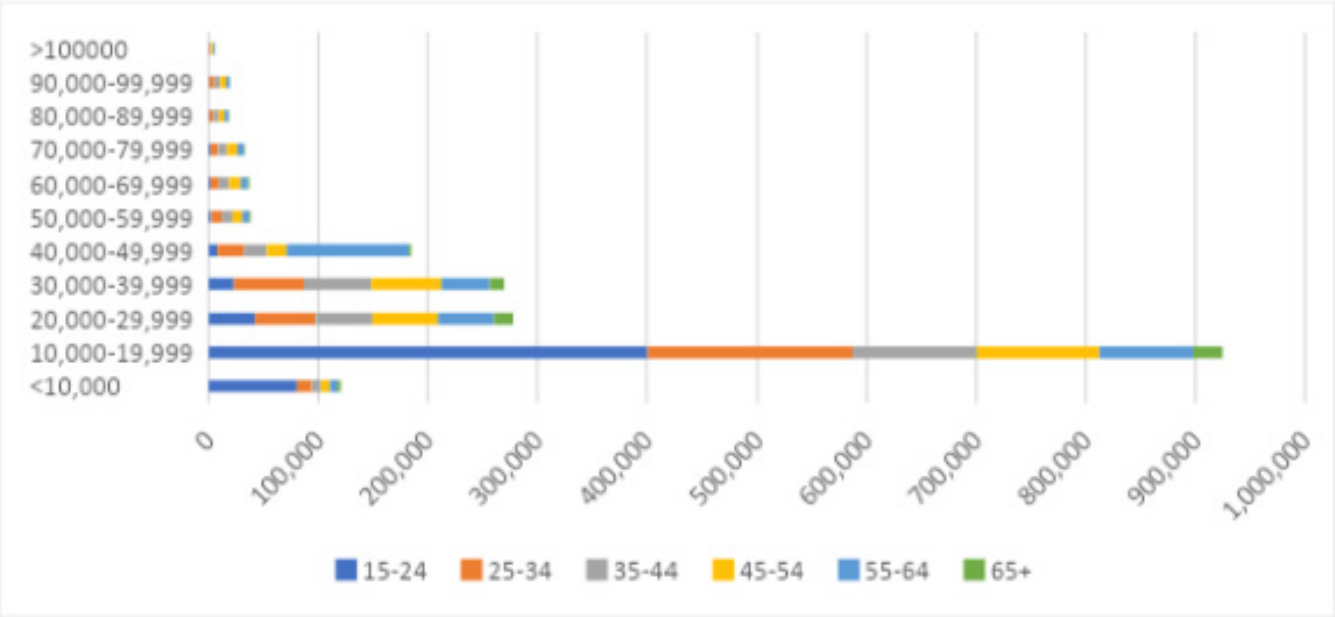
Retaining these workers long-term is challenging because their perceptions around low wages and salaries is not without merit. The tourism sector is large. In 2019, it employed over two million people. In an industry of such size, there are many high paying jobs, but the majority of jobs are entry-level, part-time, or seasonal.

Only 12% of Canadians report that a salary ranging from $25,000 to $34,0000 would meet their current financial needs, although 20% of those aged 15 to 24 said it would. Only when a base salary reached $55,000 did more than half of Canadians (53%) indicate it would meet their financial needs. At $65,000, 75% of Canadians stated that the salary would meet their needs.

A report prepared for the 2018 Travel and Tourism Research Conference used industry data from the 2016 census to assess median wages and salaries within the entire sector. The results showed a gradually sloping pyramid, with a broad base of workers earning less than $20,000 per year and a small number of workers in high earning occupations near the top. Of the 1.9 million tourism employees counted by the census, 54% earned less than $20,000 in the previous year.

This is not as negative as it may seem. Many of these jobs were held by young people and would have been part-time or seasonal. Job patterns that many young workers actively seek. But the potential earnings make these jobs less appealing to older workers. Workers age out of the tourism sector as their financial needs increase.

Figure 1: Median Earnings: All Tourism Occupations by Age Group



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There has been an improvement in the earnings of those within the sector since 2016. Wages and salaries in tourism related industries have increased rapidly in Alberta. From 2015 (the year the census collected earnings) to 2019, the average hourly earnings for those paid by the hour in the amusement, gambling and recreation industry increased by 20.0%. In the accommodation industry, hourly wages rose 10.4%, and in the food services industry, they rose 22.4%. Over the same period, hourly earnings for all workers paid hourly rose only 2.9%. Since 2019, hourly wages have grown quickly. The average hourly wage for all workers paid hourly rose 6.6% from 2019 to 2022. The rise in earnings cooled in the recreation industry (only rising 3.3%) but rose 7.3% in the accommodation services sector and 4.2% in the food services sector.

The rapid increase from 2015 to 2019 partially reflects the significant increase in the minimum wage in Alberta from $11.20 in 2015 to $15.00 in 2018.

For salaried employees in recreation industries, hourly earnings grew in line with the overall increase in earnings from 2015 to 2019, but have risen by 13.1% since then (2019 to 2022). The accommodation services and food services industries have also seen significant increases.

Despite the rapid increase in earnings, workers in tourism-related industries still tend to make less than those in the broader economy. In 2022, the average hourly wage for food service employees who are paid hourly was 40.4% lower than the average hourly wage. For salaried employees, their hourly earnings were 44.2% lower than average. A recent study gathered wage data from 142 tourism businesses in Alberta. The average hourly tourism wage for full-time tourism employees (excluding the transportation industry), was $19 per hour in 2022 in Alberta. Part-time workers earned $16 per hour

Figure 2: Average Percent Increase in Hourly Earnings for Workers by Industry

	Paid Hourly		Salaried	
	2015 to 2019	2019 to 2022	2015 to 2019	2019 to 2022
All Jobs / Industries	2.9%	6.6%	3.9%	8.8%
Amusement, gambling and recreation	20.0%	3.3%	3.5%	13.1%
Accommodation services [721]	10.4%	7.3%	8.1%	20.3%
Food services and drinking places [722]	22.4%	4.2%	19.5%	7.4%

Figure 3: Average Hourly Earnings by Industry

	Paid Hourly		Salaried	
	2022	Percent Change	2022	Percent Change
All Jobs / Industries	$29.62	0%	$44.93	0%
Amusement, gambling and recreation	$19.83	-33.0%	$34.72	-22.7%
Accommodation services [721]	$20.48	-30.9%	$31.95	-28.9%
Food services and drinking places [722]	$17.64	-40.4%	$25.08	-44.2%

Figure 4: Average Hourly Wage of Full-Time Tourism Workers by Occupation

	Full-Time Hourly Wage Alberta		
	Minimum	Average	Maximum
Light duty cleaners (Housekeepers)	$16	$17	$20
Program leaders and instructors	$17	$18	$19
Hotel front desk clerks[5]	$27	$28	$29
Food counter attendants	$15	$16	$16
Cooks	$16	$18	$19
Food service supervisors	$16	$16	$17
Restaurant managers	$19	$20	$22
Bartenders	$15	$16	$17
Food and beverage servers	$15	$15	$16
Tour guides[6]	$35	$43	$50
Outdoor recreation guides[7]	$26	$30	$35

5 Due to one postal code reporting $39 per hour. All other reporting businesses ranged from $15 per hour up to $21 per hour
6 Based on one reported instance. Across Canda, hourly rates ranged from $15 up to $23
7 Based on one reported instance. Across Canda, hourly rates ranged from $15 up to $23

on average. The study reports some relatively high wage levels for hotel front desk clerks and tour guides in Alberta, but this appears to be due to small samples. The high wages reflect conditions at a limited number of high paying businesses. This shows that there are high paying frontline jobs in tourism, but they do not reflect conditions in most of the industry. Businesses that can afford to offer the higher level of pay will attract more workers—and retain them longer. But most tourism businesses are not in a position to pay these wages.

Other industries are in a position to offer higher wages. In Alberta, the average hourly wage in 2015 was just under $27 and increased to $29.81 in 2022.[8] The average hourly earnings for a salaried worker in Alberta was $44.92 in 2022. These higher wages act as a consistent draw on tourism employees, especially as they age. As long as there is a labour shortage, the tourism industry will constantly be challenged by employees being drawn away by the potential for higher earnings.

THE COMING LABOUR CHALLENGE IS ALREADY HERE

The tourism sector's labour challenges are significant and unlikely to disappear anytime soon. Labour demand has eased slightly from its peaks in the early summer of 2022 but remains exceptionally high. Demand for tourism goods and services continues to increase at the same time.

International travel was suppressed during the pandemic, but some rural areas offering outdoor recreation saw demand levels spike sharply upwards as Canadians began travelling within their region. While demand levels for tourism were lower, some destinations were overwhelmed. As travel patterns stabilize, these regional spikes are shifting into an overall increase in demand for tourism across all regions of Canada.

The focused spikes in demand that occurred in 2021 may have eased somewhat, but a long-term trend towards domestic visitation outside of major urban centres will continue to drive high levels of demand for tourism, and with it, higher levels of demand for labour.

Travel Alberta and Tourism Economics project that tourism demand will recover this year. Spending on tourism by Albertans within Alberta will reach $6.7 billion this year (compared to $5.7 billion in 2019). Spending by travellers from the rest of Canada will also recover in 2023. Demand from US travellers will recover in 2024, and demand from other countries the following year.[9] [10] The cost of travel has increased since 2019—meaning that spending will recover faster than

8 Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0209-01 Average hourly earnings (including overtime) for salaried employees, by industry, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality, Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0205-01 Average hourly earnings for employees paid by the hour, by industry, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality

9 Travel Alberta. (2023, January). Tourism spend forecasts.

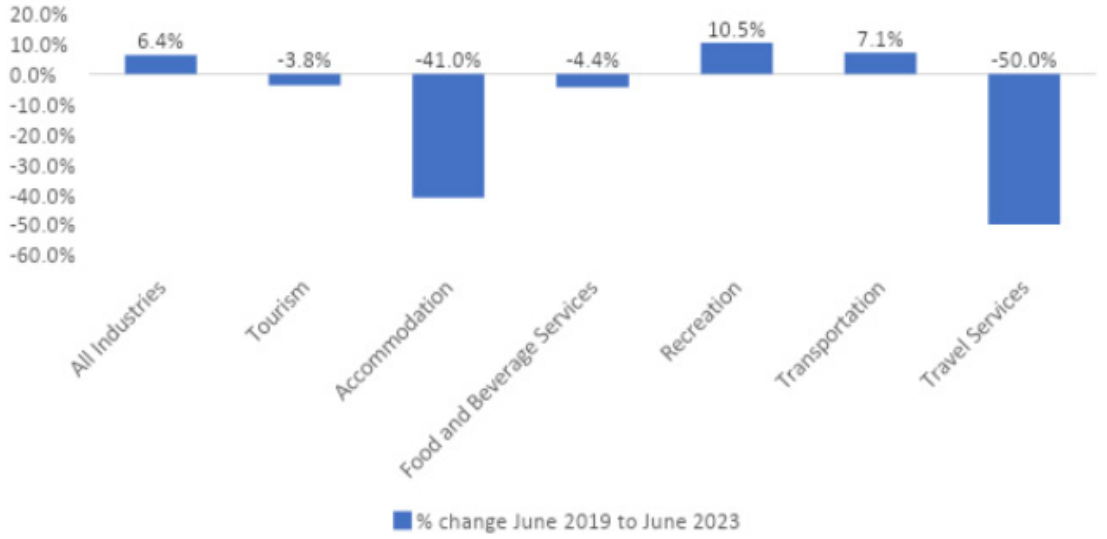
10 Alberta's Visitor Economy. Forecast Scenarios & Spending Segmentation, January 2023, Tourism Economics.

the number of visits. Still, tourism operators can anticipate a busy summer. Total trips by Canadians reached 97% of 2019 levels in 2022.[11] Therefore, Canadians will take more domestic trips in 2023 than before the pandemic. Tourism operators that mostly cater to domestic travellers should expect a busy summer. International travel is still recovering but growing swiftly. Through the first four months of 2023, arrivals in Alberta by US travellers stood at 75.5% of 2019 levels and arrivals from other countries stood at 82.8%.[12]

JOB VACANCIES & SHORTAGES

As of June 2023, the number of employed workers in Alberta had increased by 6.2% compared to June 2019. Total employment in Alberta's tourism sector was 3.8% lower than in June 2019. While the labour situation in tourism has improved since the end of 2022—in December, tourism employment was 15.4% lower than in the same month of 2019—it has not increased as quickly as customer demand. The employment outlook varies depending on the specific industry within tourism. Some industries have been able to replace lost employees, but not all. The recreation and entertainment industry

Figure 5: Change in Employed Workers June 2019 to 2023 (Alberta – Seasonally Unadjusted)[13]



11 National Travel Survey
12 Statistics Canada. Table 24-10-0055-01 Non-resident visitors entering Canada, by country of residence, mode of transportation, arrival type and traveller type
13 Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0355-01 Employment by industry, monthly, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted, and trend-cycle, last 5 months (x 1,000) and Rapid Research, Tourism HR Canada.

has increased employment by 10.5% compared to June 2019. Tourism related transportation industries in Alberta have also added workers. But restaurant employment remains down 4.4% across the province. More concerningly, employment in the accommodation sector was down 41.0%.

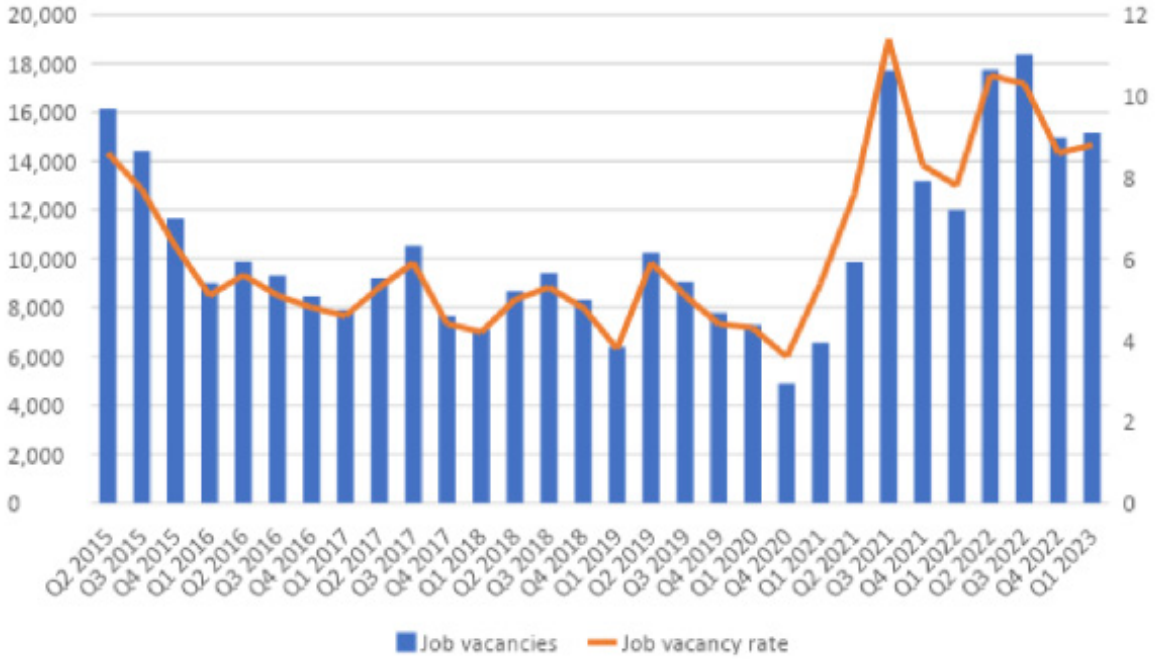
The lack of hotel workers is concerning as they are vital for allowing people to visit for longer periods of time. Without hotels, tourism businesses must rely on a higher share of same-day guests, and fewer long-haul travellers who spend more in the local economy.

As employers have tried to replace lost workers, job vacancies have spiked sharply. Within Alberta's accommodation and food services sector, job vacancies reached an all-time high in the third quarter of 2022, and the job vacancy rate (the percentage of empty positions out of all available positions) stood at 10.3%. As of the 1st quarter of 2023, vacancies had decreased slightly but remained extremely high. Filling vacancies this summer will be difficult as the unemployment rate in Alberta is a relatively low 5.7% (it was 6.7% in June of 2019).[14]

The gap between the number of unemployed individuals seeking work in Alberta and the number of vacant positions has also narrowed dramatically. It reached its narrowest in October 2022, when unemployed workers exceed vacancies by only 10,000. The gap has since widened but remains perilously close.

There is a relationship between the offered hourly wage in an industry and the vacancy rate. As offered

Figure 6: Vacancies and Job Vacancy Rate in Accommodation and Food Services (Alberta)[15]



14 Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0355-01 Employment by industry, monthly, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted, and trend-cycle, last 5 months (x 1,000)
15 Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0326-01 Job vacancies, payroll employees, job vacancy rate, and average offered hourly wage by industry sector, quarterly, unadjusted for seasonality

Figure 7: Job Vacancies and Unemployed Workers in Alberta[16]

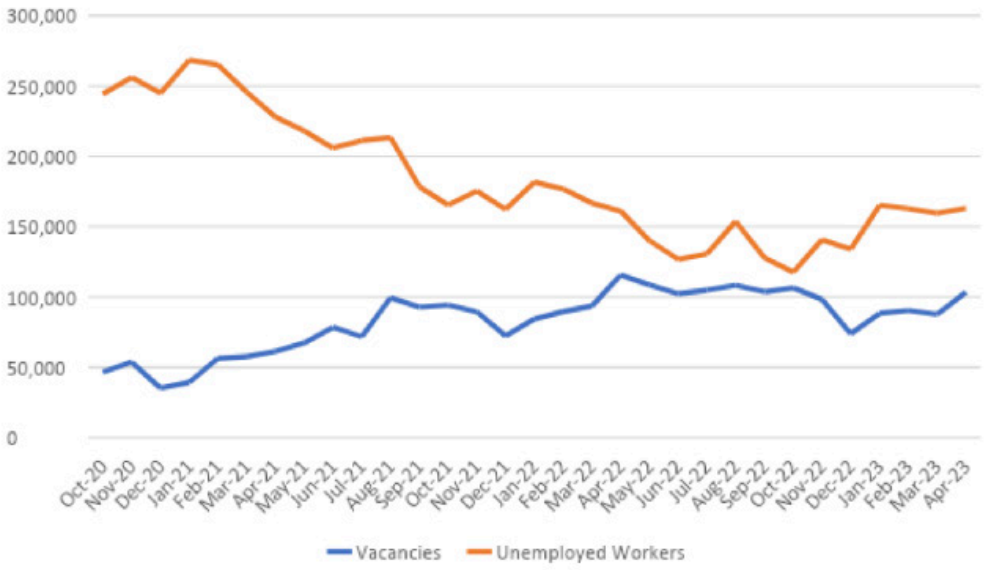
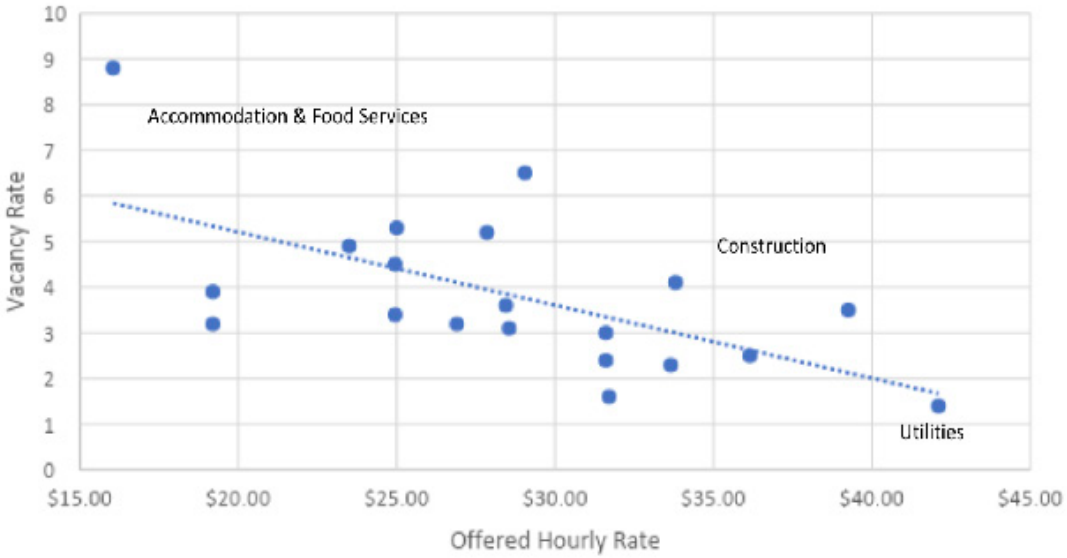


Figure 8: Job Vacancy Rate and Offered Hourly Wage by Sector 1st Quarter 2023 (Alberta)[18]



wages climb, vacancies go down, although some industries, such as construction and accommodation/food services, have higher vacancy rates than their starting wages would suggest they should have (relative to other industries).

A key point for the tourism industry is that the sector's labour shortages are not happening in a vacuum. Other industries are facing significant shortages as well. Increasing the workforce may only partially offset tourism shortages if additional workers move into other industries before considering the tourism sector.

Another trend impacting labour for the tourism sector was noted in Destination Canada's Next Big Shift report. Not only did workers leave the industry during the pandemic, they took with them their skills and intellectual capital within the management ranks of businesses. Training to replace this intellectual capital loss will be extremely important and requires a shift in attitudes within the sector. As noted above, most tourism workers are offered no training or job shadowing. Replacing the core management workers lost in the pandemic will require significant investments by businesses in a time when their capacity is already stretched.

The last two years also sped up the pace of retirements. This trend was already occurring and will continue for several years as more and more of the baby boom generation reach the age of 65. This trend affects tourism from both a supply and demand angle. Retirements remove people from the labour force. This can create job openings within the tourism industry itself but also increases demand for workers

16 Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0326-01 Job vacancies, payroll employees, job vacancy rate, and average offered hourly wage by industry sector, quarterly, unadjusted for seasonality
17 Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0326-01 Job vacancies, payroll employees, job vacancy rate, and average offered hourly wage by industry sector, quarterly, unadjusted for seasonality

generally, creating a tight labour market where tourism must compete with other industries. Secondly, retirements increase the demand for travel. Destination Canada noted that, "By 2025, people aged 65 and older will account for 11% of the world's population, and their international travel — the number of cross-border trips they take per year — will more than double. With time and money for travel, this segment remains a key audience for travel operators." These retirements will increase the demand for tourism at a time when workers are in short supply.

Data from Tourism HR Canada and the Conference Board of Canada supports this assertion. In late 2019, they estimated that demand for tourism jobs (based on potential spending by tourists and locals) in Alberta would grow from 235,508 jobs in 2020 to 256,584 by 2035. However, the available labour supply would not allow all of those potential jobs to be filled. The supply of workers available to the industry would only grow enough to fill 244,553 tourism jobs, capping the growth potential of the industry.

Five months after that report was released, almost 900,000 tourism workers lost their jobs in the first two months of the pandemic. The tourism labour force has not yet recovered, but tourism demand is growing again. Because tourism's labour supply underwent massive shifts, it is not yet possible to re-estimate future labour supply. However, the demand for jobs has been estimated. New projections of demand for tourism jobs are not available for Alberta, but across the Prairies, demand for tourism jobs is expected to by 388,359 by 2025. Notably, this is higher than the pre-pandemic tourism job demand estimate of 384,362.

Figure 9: Job Vacancy Rate and Offered Hourly Wage by Sector 1st Quarter 2023

	Average offered wage	Vacancy Rate
Accommodation and food services	$16.05	8.8
Construction	$29.05	6.5
Other services (except public administration)	$25.00	5.3
Transportation and warehousing	$27.85	5.2
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	$23.50	4.9
Administrative support, waste management/ remediation	$24.95	4.5
Professional, scientific and technical services	$33.80	4.1
Arts, entertainment and recreation	$19.20	3.9
Real estate and rental and leasing	$28.45	3.6
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	$39.25	3.5
Health care and social assistance	$24.95	3.4
Manufacturing	$26.90	3.2
Retail trade	$19.20	3.2
Wholesale trade	$28.55	3.1
Public administration	$31.60	3
Management of companies and enterprises	$36.15	2.5
Finance and insurance	$31.60	2.4
Information and cultural industries	$33.65	2.3
Educational services	$31.70	1.6
Utilities	$42.10	1.4

THE TOURISM LABOUR FORCE IN SYLVAN LAKE

Increasing demand for tourism goods and services requires either more workers or increased productivity from the existing workforce. The number of hours worked per tourism worker in Alberta has increased, but big gains in productivity are difficult to achieve in a service-based industry. In a recent survey, businesses in Sylvan Lake expressed satisfaction with their current staff, but the potential labour pool was viewed more negatively. That survey, part of a larger report, analyzed business conditions within Sylvan Lake and the Red Deer economic region. Within the report, tourism is not treated as its own sector. However, the report covers tourism-related industries such as accommodation and food services, arts/entertainment and recreation, and information and cultural industries. Retail establishments derive significant demand from tourists in destination areas such as Sylvan Lake. The retail industry also competes for much of the same workers as other tourism industries and was therefore included in this analysis.

Sylvan Lake has 39 businesses in the accommodation and food services sector (not including STARs), 69 retail businesses, and ten businesses in recreation/entertainment or the information and cultural industries. Most accommodation and food services businesses have at least ten employees. In contrast, entertainment businesses tend to be smaller, with 83% having fewer than ten employees. Firm size matters for productivity, small businesses generally have less capacity to increase productivity or utilize programs designed to increase available workers due to the amount of effort required.

Businesses in tourism related industries also pay less than the average wages. The average wage across all industries in Sylvan Lake was $54,747, according to a recent EMSI Analyst, conducted for the community. Average wages in the accommodation and food services sector were $20,562. Wages in the arts, entertainment and recreation industry were slightly higher, while those in the information and cultural industries were closer to the average.

Figure 10: Average Wage by Industry: Sylvan Lake

Industry	Average Wage
All Industries	$54,747
Information and cultural industries	$47,942
Arts, entertainment and recreation industry	$28,113
Accommodation and food services	$20,562

Several industries in Sylvan Lake pay significantly higher wages, Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction ($79,764), construction ($73,898), transportation and warehousing ($70,595). In contrast, most other industries are closer to the average.

The tourism sector needs to compete with these industries for labour. The playing field heavily favours non-tourism industries when it comes to wages and salaries. Other aspects of tourism will need to be emphasized to attract workers. It will also need to be recognized that other industries will pull tourism employees away as they age or start looking for greater financial stability.

The EMSI analysis suggests that tourism related industries will be among those that see the greatest demand for jobs in the next five years. Finance and insurance, health care and social assistance, retail trade, accommodation and food services, and arts, entertainment and recreation are expected to grow the most.

Job demand within tourism related industries is likely underestimated in this report. The data shows a decline in jobs within these industries between 2016 and 2022. In fact, the projections show that tourism industries in Sylvan Lake will have fewer employees in 2028 than in 2016. The decline from 2016 to 2022 was due to the pandemic and the resulting reduction in demand for services from the tourism industry. Those industries need to replace lost employees and add more employees as tourism demand resumes a normal growth trajectory out to 2028. Because that initial demand for replacement employees is not part of the analysis, it should be assumed that demand for workers in these industries will be even greater than suggested.

Sylvan Lake does have certain strengths when it comes to the future labour force. The following analysis looks at some of the strengths and weaknesses of the local population as they relate to finding staff for tourism businesses. Because people will travel for work, this assessment looks at Sylvan Lake and the broader Red Deer economic region.

Between 2016 and 2021, the population of Sylvan Lake grew by 7.9%. Generally, population growth will help support an expanding labour force, if that population growth occurs among the working-age population. From a tourism perspective, growth among younger workers is incredibly important. In Sylvan Lake, the number of people aged 15 to 19 grew by 7.4% from 2016 to 2021, increasing the number of people in a critical age category for the tourism sector. However, the number of individuals aged 20 to 24 declined slightly. In the wider Red Deer region, the number of young people fell from 25,995 to 24,700. Longer term, the number of children—future potential tourism workers—grew by 2.2% in Sylvan Lake, but declined in the wider region.

The Sylvan Lake tourism industry is highly reliant on young workers. In 2016, almost half of the sector's workers were younger than 25 (43.9%). The percentage of tourism jobs held by those under 25 did fall from 2016 to 2021, but that drop will have been affected by the pandemic shut-downs. Unfortunately, the 2021 census data is an unreliable indicator for assessing if tourism businesses in Sylvan Lake are now more or less reliant on young people. Regardless, Sylvan Lake's tourism sector is much more reliant on young people than the tourism sector in Alberta (see Figure 11).

Despite a growing youth population, tourism demand will grow even faster. Tourism businesses will need to attract a greater percentage of young people into tourism if they are to fill seasonal and part-time jobs on an ongoing basis. Young people are an excellent source of workers for these jobs, but as noted above, they are unlikely to transition to full-time, year-round long-term employees.

Figure 11: Percentage of Tourism Workers and Population Aged 15 to 24[18]

	Alberta	**Red Deer Region**	**Sylvan Lake**
	2016		
% of Tourism Workers	30.7%	36.0%	43.9%
% of Population	12.3%	12.4%	12.9%
	2022		
% of Tourism Workers	26.9%	33.2%	37.4%
% of Population	11.7%	11.6%	12.3%

Immigrants made up only 10% of tourism employees in Sylvan Lake in 2016, which is not surprising as immigrants make up a small percentage of the population. However, at that time, only 5.9% of the total population in Sylvan Lake were immigrants, showing the inclination of this demographic group to work in the tourism sector. Employment data from the 2021 census should be viewed with caution, but it is worth noting that immigrants filled 15.9% of tourism jobs that existed in the spring of 2021, despite their total share of the Sylvan Lake population growing to 6.5%.

Figure 12: Percentage of Population and Tourism Jobs Held by Immigrants[19]

	Alberta	**Red Deer Region**	**Sylvan Lake**
	2016		
Tourism Jobs held by Immigrants	30.5%	21.7%	10.1%
% of Population	21.2%	10.7%	5.9%
	2022		
Tourism Jobs held by Immigrants	35.7%	26.4%	15.9%
% of Population	23.2%	11.9%	6.5%

18 Statistics Canada, Census 2016 & 2021, customized tabulations and 2016 Census & Census Profile, 2021 Census of the Population
19 Statistics Canada, Census 2016 & 2021, customized tabulations and Census Profile, 2016 Census & Census Profile, 2021 Census of the Population

Immigrants who had arrived in Canada within the last five years made up 46.7% of the total immigrant population working in Sylvan Lake's tourism industry in 2016 and 23.5% in 2021. This lower number in 2021 would be partially attributable to newer frontline workers being among those unemployed during the pandemic.

The reliance on young workers and new immigrants is likely aligned with the higher portion of part-time and part-year jobs in Sylvan Lake, relative to the province's tourism sector. Tourism has always had a high percentage of these jobs, but part-time jobs made up almost half of all tourism jobs in 2016. Nearly 30% of tourism jobs in 2016 existed for less than half the year.[20]

Figure 13: Percentage of Tourism Jobs that are Part-Time or Seasonal[21]

	Alberta	**Red Deer Region**	**Sylvan Lake**
Part-time	35.2%	38.8%	42.1%
Less than six months	19.3%	22.1%	28.6%

WHERE ARE THE WORKERS COMING FROM?

As noted above, in Sylvan Lake, the growth of young people within the population is relatively robust. But in the broader region, the outlook for the key youth demographic is more concerning. Between 2016 and 2021, the Red Deer economic region's population grew by only 1.9%, compared to 4.8% for Alberta as a whole. The number of children under the age of 15 declined by 0.3%, even though it rose in Sylvan Lake itself.

The other key source of workers for the tourism sector are newcomers to Canada. In Alberta, 23.2% of the population are immigrants, with almost 40% of those immigrants having arrived since 2011.
The Red Deer economic region, and Sylvan Lake in particular, have a much smaller proportion of immigrants within their population (11.9% and 6.5%, respectively). Within the Red Deer area, 44.8% of those immigrants arrived since 2011, and in Sylvan Lake, 34.1% arrived within the last decade.
The share of the population made up of newcomers is growing, but it is growing slower compared to Alberta generally.

From a provincial perspective, this puts Sylvan Lake in a decent position to draw more young workers into the industry. The region's tourism sector will also benefit from immigration but to a lesser degree than Alberta. Slower growth of the immigrant community may constrain the ability of Sylvan Lake to grow those segments that are more reliant on newcomers (e.g., accommodation services).

Several policy changes have occurred that can increase the number of newcomers arriving directly in the region and filling tourism jobs.
The Federal Government has increased the number of immigrants who can arrive in Canada yearly. This policy has ramifications for all industries, as population projections for Canada show that by 2030, approximately 86% of future population growth will be driven by immigration. The share of population growth from immigration is lower in Alberta (71.3% by 2030), but still massively exceeds the 21.1% of natural population growth (births minus deaths). As population growth is driven by immigration, labour force growth will be as well.

As of April 2022, the Federal Government has expanded the ability of employers to hire workers through the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Program. These individuals are given work permits tied to the employer hiring them, and can work for a maximum period of two years. Under these changes:

- Labour Market Impact assessments will be valid for 18 months
- For sectors with demonstrated labour shortages (including accommodation and food services), employers can hire up to 30% of

20 Due to employment patterns in 2020 and 2021, census data on work patterns from the 2021 census is not considered to present a reliable picture of actual work patterns that will exist under normal circumstances within the tourism sector.
21 Statistics Canada, Census 2016 & 2021, customized tabulations

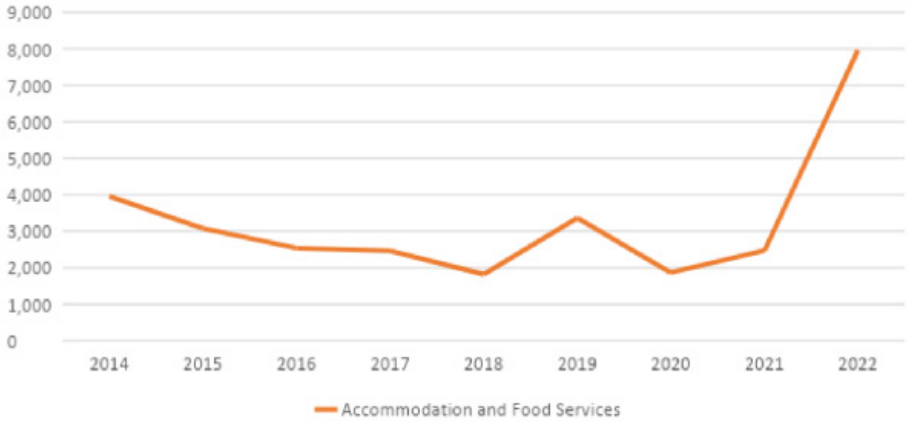
their workforce through the program for one year.
- The Government will no longer automatically refuse applications from regions with 6% unemployment.
- There will no longer be a limit to the number of low-wage positions that employers in seasonal industries can fill through the TFW program.[22]

As of September 20th, the following policy changes were made to help ensure the safety of Temporary Foreign workers.

- Employers must commit to having an employment agreement with the employee. They must provide a signed copy of the agreement on the first day of work. This is to improve workers' understanding of their wages and the work they will be performing.
- The definition of "abuse" has been adjusted to include "reprisal" against TFWs.
- Employers are prohibited from charging or recovering fees they were charged during the recruitment process. Employers must also ensure that recruiters acting on their behalf do not attempt to recover fees from the employee either.
- All employers are required to make reasonable efforts to provide health care services when a temporary foreign worker is injured or becomes ill in the workplace.
- All TFWP employers must obtain and pay for private health insurance covering emergency medical care during the period the temporary foreign worker is not covered by their provincial or territorial health insurance system.
- The employer must provide the foreign worker with working conditions that are substantially the same as (and not less favourable than) those set out in that offer.

These changes have resulted in a notable increase in the number of Temporary Foreign workers joining the labour force. The number of TFWs coming to Alberta on positive LMIAs to work in the accommodation and food services industry had been declining until

Figure 14: Number of Temporary Foreign Workers on Positive LMIAs – Alberta[23]



22 Which industries are considered "seasonal" is not clearly defined

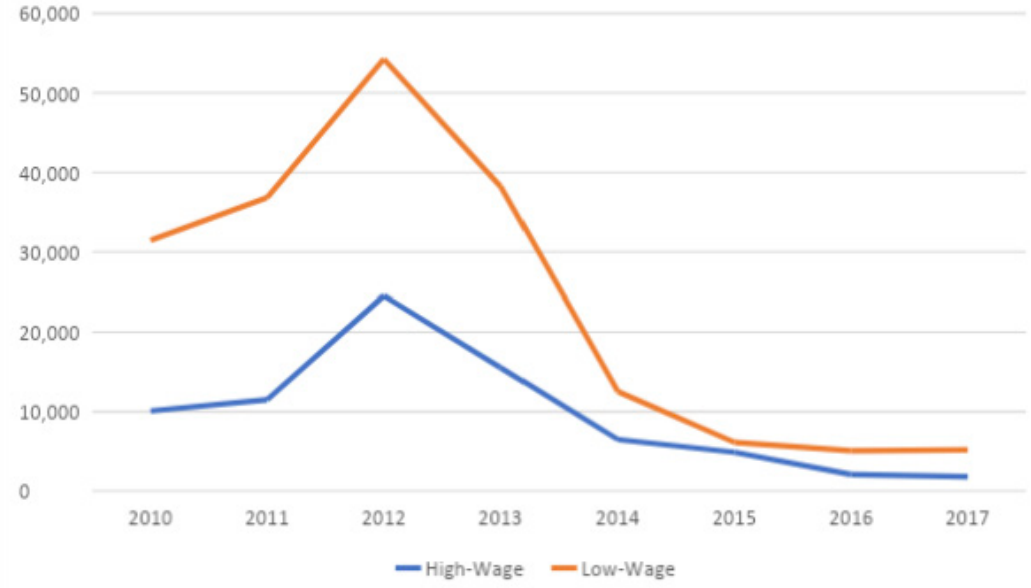
23 IRCC, Number of temporary foreign worker (TFW) positions on positive Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs) by North American Industry Classification System - 2002 (NAICS) and province/territory

2018. There was a significant increase in 2019. But with the new changes, the number of TFWs arriving in 2022 has increased massively, jumping 137% relative to 2019. The Federal Government has also increased the number of workers who can arrive in Canada via the International Experience Canada program. In 2023, there will be a 20% increase in the number of applicants who can apply to the program as of January 9th 2023. Historically, the largest percentage of workers in this program have been destined for Alberta, British Columbia and Quebec, giving those provinces a disproportionate benefit. However, specific industries and regions tend to attract workers, particularly ski hills and resorts. Still, there is an opportunity to attract some of these workers to Sylvan Lake when the ski season ends.

Increasing the number of spots available for International Experience Canada participants is a helpful step but does not guarantee that all available spots will be taken up. It will take some time for the program to revive from its lowest point in 2020/21, but the program is reviving. The peak season for permits being issued to IEP participants occurs in the spring and summer. In 2022, 1035 work permits were issued between April and September to participants who intended to work in Alberta, a 60% increase from 2021. Across Canada, 18,690 IEC work permits were issued in 2022, only 20% of the 90,000 spots available in 2023.[24] There is significant room to grow the available labour supply from this program, which has historically attracted many young tourism workers to Alberta.

While these are excellent options in the short and medium term, they do have draw backs. Employers report difficulty

Figure 15: Number of TFW on Positive LMIAs by Stream - Alberta[25]



24 IRCC, May 31, 2023, Open Government Data Portal, Canada - International Mobility Program (IMP) work permit holders by province/territory of intended destination, program and year in which permit(s) became effective, January 2015 - May 2023

25 IRCC, Number of temporary foreign worker (TFW) positions on positive Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs) by stream by province/territory

navigating the bureaucracy of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. The International Experience Canada program can increase the number of available workers in the region, but the program does not directly supply workers to a particular business. Some employers do recruit potential employees into the program with the intent of hiring them once they arrive in Canada, but this is beyond the capacity of most small employers.

Long-term, employers should be wary of relying on either of these programs to provide a significant portion of their employees. In the past, both the Temporary Foreign Worker program and the International Experience Canada program were subject to policy decisions that quickly curtailed the number of workers available through the program. Changes to the TFW program in 2014 purposefully limited the ability of accommodation and food service businesses to fill certain positions.[26] When changes were announced, the Government noted that some employers filled over half of positions with Temporary Foreign Workers. Post-change, employers with ten or more employees could fill no more than 10% of their workforce with TFWs. The Federal Government also stopped processing any applications in regions with greater than 6% unemployment and for frontline occupations in the Accommodation, Food Services, or Retail industries. These restrictions are now lifted, making the TFW program an excellent pipeline for tourism workers once again. But, the sudden restrictions on the program in 2014 created severe staffing problems for businesses that relied heavily on the program. Although unlikely in the near term, it is always possible that policy around TFWs will become more restrictive once more.

Similarly, once in Canada, Australian participants in the EIC program used to be able to renew their work permits multiple times until they hit the program's age cap. Program participants sometimes worked with employers for up to a decade. This ability to renew was cut off in 2015, changing the program from one that supplied both temporary and long-term employees to one that only provided temporary employees.

While these program changes can supply some additional tourism workers to help Sylvan Lake grow its tourism sector, it is the local population that will supply the bulk of workers. As noted in the Tourism Growth Outlook, "As a sector, tourism employs a high percentage of women, youth, and other vulnerable members of the community, including those with limited education, and language barriers."

The industry offers young workers a great opportunity to enter the labour force. But, its reliance on those workers and their willingness to accept lower wages is a weakness. Individual businesses may thrive, but the expansion of the industry will be limited by the availability of workers willing to fill these roles. The industry will always have seasonal and part-time jobs available, which is good. These jobs offer an opportunity to enter the labour force and support many people who are seeking part-time and seasonal employment while in school. Tourism will always have seasonal and part-time jobs to fill that align well with the needs of young people entering the labour market. There are not enough workers who fill these jobs to meet all the demand coming from tourists. As the number of young people available to work is growing slowly or shrinking, businesses will need to attract a higher percentage of young people who are available to work. Doing so means increasing sector participation in education programs to raise career awareness is vital. Young people are vital to filling seasonal and part-time jobs in the sector. In the long term, providing more stable, year-round employment will attract older workers and help retain young workers as they transition from a need for seasonal/part-time work.

Encouraging local schools to integrate tourism related curriculum, like the Canadian Academy of Travel & Tourism, into their school programs will help attract students to tourism jobs, whether that be for a summer job or a career. Tourism businesses can also take advantage of programs such as Propel, a Tourism & Hospitality Student Work Placement Program that provides employers with a wage subsidy for each qualifying post-secondary student hired through the program. In the short-term these programs help fill jobs at tourism businesses and, in the long-term, bolster the number of Canadians choosing tourism as a career.

Demand for tourism is growing, and with it, the demand for workers. The existing labour force is not meeting that demand for workers. The majority of future labour force growth will occur due to immigration. Higher

26 Overhauling the Temporary Foreign Worker Program

immigration can be beneficial to tourism businesses as immigrants tend to gravitate to tourism jobs—but like other Canadians, they also tend to move on. Many of the jobs offered by the industry do not align with the financial needs of immigrants. Programs such as the Temporary Foreign Worker program can fill jobs, but the viability of this program can swiftly change. It is risky for businesses to rely on such programs long-term. Longer-term industry growth will require businesses to change their approach to labour to deal with a new reality. Finding ways to provide the same service with fewer staff is one approach. For businesses where this is not possible, greater investments in staff, including increasing monetary compensation, will be required. Doing this is difficult as it requires a significant shift to the business model many tourism businesses operate with. But, as a recent report from the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta noted, "businesses need to start thinking of staff as an investment, rather than a cost."[27] The number of positions that are full-time, full-year and well-compensated will need to increase. This doesn't mean that part-time, seasonal jobs should be discarded—they have an important place in the industry—but the industry cannot expand simply by increasing those jobs.

INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT PROFILES

Current assessments are based on customized census data for Sylvan Lake and the Red Deer Economic Region.[28] Where applicable, they are compared to provincial trends.

Recreation and Entertainment

- Slightly more female workers (52.0%) than males (44.0%), which is similar to the provincial average which sees an even split between genders (males 48.8%, females 51.1%).
- Highly reliant on young people aged 15 to 24 who fill 48.0% of jobs in Sylvan Lake. More than the 34.8% of recreation jobs held by youth in the Red Deer region and the 33.6% of recreation jobs held by youth across Alberta.
- The recreation industry does not hire as many immigrants as other tourism industries. In Alberta, only 15.4% of jobs in this industry were held by newcomers, with an additional 1.1% held by non-permanent residents. In Sylvan Lake and Red Deer, only 8.0% and 10.0% of jobs were held by immigrants and non-permanent residents in 2016.
- A higher than average share of jobs are part-time (54.2% compared to 40.9% within the industry across Alberta and the Sylvan Lake average for tourism of 42.1%)
- Twenty-nine percent of workers were employed for less than six months.

Overall, the workforce profile for the recreation industry is one that is young, born in Canada, with a high share of part-time and seasonal employment. This is true across Alberta, but Sylvan Lake is particularly reliant on young, Canadian born, part-time, seasonal workers. Across

27 Labour Market Study of Alberta's Tourism Sector, March 2023, Tourism Industry Association of Alberta
28 Due to small sample sizes in the data for Sylvan Lake, some percentages may not sum to 100%

Alberta, the most common occupation in the industry is program leaders and instructors. This occupational group includes jobs such as camp counsellors, lifeguards, ski patrollers, golf instructors, fitness instructors, and recreation program leaders.

The individuals holding program leader/instructor jobs accentuate the industry trends further.

- 46.4% are under 25.
- 57.8% worked part-time.
- 22.0% worked for less than six months of the year.
- Only 10.5% of these positions are held by immigrants, although of those immigrants, 19.0% had arrived in Canada within the last 5 years

Accommodation

- The majority of jobs in the accommodation industry are filled by women (66.7%).
- This industry tends to employs a smaller share of young people than other tourism industries. In the Red Deer economic region, 16.6% of jobs are held by those 15 to 24. This is significantly lower than the average for the tourism sector (36.0%)
- The majority of workers in the industry are between the ages of 35 and 64.
- It employs the highest percentage of immigrants among tourism industries (almost 40% across Alberta. In Sylvan Lake, 16.7% of jobs in the industry were filled by immigrants. At that time, immigrants only made up 5.2% of the Sylvan Lake population.
- In Alberta, jobs in the accommodation industry are more likely to be full-time (83.3%) and most jobs are year-round.

In Alberta, the accommodation industry shows work patterns that are similar to the overall economy. A similar share of jobs are full-time, and only a slightly higher share of jobs are seasonal (existing for less than six months). Jobs tend to be held by women and by immigrants, particularly newly arrived female immigrants, although newly arrived male immigrants also fill a significant share of jobs within the industry. Certain occupations highlight this reliance on newcomers and women. Female immigrants hold 43.0% of light duty cleaner jobs, and 17.8% of light duty cleaner jobs are held by female immigrants who arrived in Canada in the last five years. Cook jobs within the industry are also heavily reliant on immigrants (53.4%). However, unlike light duty cleaners, most of these jobs are held by male immigrants (37.5%). These jobs are also less likely to be held by immigrants who arrived within the past five years. Most immigrants holding jobs as cooks within the accommodation industry arrived within five to ten years.

Food and Beverage

- Of the industries making up tourism, food and beverage services employs the most workers. In Sylvan Lake, the food services sector is by far the largest employer among tourism industries. In Alberta, food services employs 52.1% of all tourism workers. In Sylvan Lake, food services employed 65.5% of all tourism workers.
- It is highly reliant on young people, 54.6% of jobs are filled by individuals under the age of 25, and a further 18.6% are held by those 25 to 34.
- The industry has 59.8% of its jobs filled by women. Women make up the majority of workers in all age groups.
- 10.3% percent of jobs are filled by immigrants, which is slightly higher than the average for tourism.
- The food services industry has a higher share of part time jobs (45.1%) than any other tourism industry. Jobs lasting less than 6 months made up 27.5% of jobs.

Within the industry, many jobs are part-time, but most are year-round. The industry heavily relies on young people. Newcomers also hold a high percentage of jobs relative to their share of the total population.

Across Alberta, Women hold the large majority of front-of-the-house jobs. Women hold almost 90% of host positions and 83% of server positions. They also hold 60% of food counter attendant jobs, that are commonly found at quick service restaurants. The back of the house tends to be male dominated, with 78.6% of chefs and 68.1% of cook jobs being held by men.

Management jobs tend to be evenly divided between genders, with 49.2% of restaurant manager positions held by men and 50.8% held by women.

The back-of-house positions held by men, also tend to be held by immigrants. Approximately half of the industry's chef jobs were held by immigrants, as were 41.1% of cook jobs. Immigrants were also prominent amongst cashiers (45.3%) and food counter attendants (38.2%). Cashier and food counter attendant jobs tend to be held by newly arrived immigrants. Only 4.0% of these jobs are held by immigrants who arrived before 1996. No period of arrival is particularly prominent among immigrants holding positions as cooks or chefs.

Retail

The retail sector in Sylvan Lake employs more female than male workers. In 2016, 67% of retail employees were female. This percentage dropped slightly by 2021 to 63% of all employed retail workers.

In the wider Red Deer area and across Alberta, women also outnumber men in the retail industry, but not to the same degree. In 2021, 54 percent of retail workers in Red Deer were female, and the average for all of Alberta was 53%. In Sylvan Lake, the gender discrepancy is noticeable in most age brackets, except for those aged 25 to 34, where the number of male and female workers is equal. Among workers over the age of 65, men outnumber women.

Figure 16: Retail Trade Workers by Age and Gender (Sylvan Lake)

Age	Female	Male
Total - Age	62.6%	37.4%
15 to 24 years	67.3%	28.6%
25 to 34 years	51.4%	48.6%
35 to 44 years	67.5%	32.5%
45 to 54 years	66.7%	33.3%
55 to 64 years	64.3%	35.7%

The number of retail employees who immigrated to Canada increased significantly between 2016 and 2021, climbing 233%, while the total number of retail workers increased by 24.2%—from 785 workers to 975 workers. In 2016, newcomers to Canada filled 3.8% of retail jobs in Sylvan Lake, and by 2021, they had filled 10.3%. The increase was largely driven by newcomers who had arrived in Canada since 2011.
In Alberta, immigrants filled 28.1% of retail jobs in 2021, up from 24.8% in 2016. Similarly, the Red Deer region saw the percentage of retail jobs filled by immigrants rise from 11.5% to 15.7%.

Figure 17: Retail Trade Workers by Immigration Status

	Alberta	Red Deer	Sylvan Lake
2016	24.8%	11.5%	3.8%
2021	28.1%	15.7%	10.3%

While increasing its reliance on immigrants, the retail sector in Sylvan Lake has also increased its reliance on younger workers. In 2016, 17.8% of retail workers in the area were under the age of 25, by 2021, 28.2% were younger than 25. The share of employees declined for all age groups between 25 and 64, while the share of workers aged 65 and older increased slightly.

The increase in younger workers is not linked to the increase in immigrant workers. Newcomers to Canada tend to be older than the general population. This may be due to a loss of long-term employees during the pandemic, who younger workers replaced.

Figure 18: Retail Trade Workers by Age (Sylvan Lake)

Age	2016	2021
15 to 24 years	17.8%	28.2%
25 to 34 years	20.4%	17.9%
35 to 44 years	22.9%	20.5%
45 to 54 years	18.5%	13.8%
55 to 64 years	15.9%	14.4%

As the number of retail jobs filled by immigrants has increased, so has the number of jobs filled by workers who identify as a visible minority. From 2016 to 2021, the percentage of retail jobs filled by visible minorities increased from 3.2% to 9.2% of all retail jobs in Sylvan Lake. The number of workers who identified as Indigenous increased in line with the total increase in retail jobs. As a percentage, the number of jobs filled by Indigenous workers was stable at around 7.0%.

As of 2021, the percentage of retail workers who identify as a visible minority in Sylvan Lake is smaller than in Alberta (32.0%) or Red Deer (15.0%). However, the percentage of retail workers in Sylvan Lake who identify as Indigenous is higher at 7.2% than in Alberta (5.5%) or Red Deer (5.8%).

In 2016, the percentage of full-time Sylvan Lake retail sector workers was 75%. However, this share shrank to 66% by 2021. The increase in part-time workers is primarily due to the increased percentage of workers under 25 in retail jobs. In 2016 and 2021, more than half of retail employees aged 15 to 25 worked part-time hours. The increase in the number of youth workers from 18% to 28% of all workers increased the total share of part-timers. Although the percentage of 15 to 24-year-olds who worked full-time did increase from 25% in 2016 to 36%, it could only partially offset the effect of the increased reliance on that age group.

However, the increased precarity of work during the pandemic also had an impact. Statistics Canada defines a full-time worker as someone who usually works more than 30 hours weekly. Workers who had been full-time may have been classified as part-time due to conditions in the year prior to the census (April 2020 to May 2021). Indeed, for workers above 25, the share of workers classified as part-time increased slightly from 2016 to 2021.

Retail Employee Compensation

Alberta's Retail trade employees have seen greater earnings increases than the average for workers in all industries. That said, retail trade employees still earn less on average. For those paid an hourly wage, hourly earnings grew 9.8% from 2015 to 2019 and have risen by 9.3% since then (2019 to 2022). In 2022, the average hourly earnings (including any overtime pay received) was $21.76.

Retail employees who receive a salary have seen their average hourly earnings increase by 7.7% from 2015 to 2019 and 12.0% from 2019 to 2022. Alberta's average salaried retail worker earned $31.97 per hour in 2022.

Figure 19: Average Percent Increase in Hourly Earnings for Workers by Industry[29]

	Paid Hourly		Salary	
	2015-2019	2019-2022	2015-2019	2019-2022
All Jobs / Industries	2.9%	6.6%	3.9%	8.8%
Retail Trade	9.8%	9.3%	7.7%	12.0%

Figure 20: Average Hourly Earnings by Industry[30]

	Paid Hourly		Salary	
	2022	% change	2022	% change
All Jobs / Industries	$29.62	0%	$44.93	0%
Retail Trade	$21.76	-26.7%	$31.97	-28.8%

29 Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0205-01 Average hourly earnings for employees paid by the hour, by industry, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality
30 Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0209-01 Average hourly earnings (including overtime) for salaried employees, by industry, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality

Vacancies

Like the accommodation and food services sector, the retail trade sector in Alberta saw an increase in job vacancies starting in 2021. However, the degree of the increase was much less. The vacancy rate topped out at 4.7% in the second and third quarter of 2022, compared to rates that reached 10.5% and 10.3% in the accommodation and food services industry during the same period.

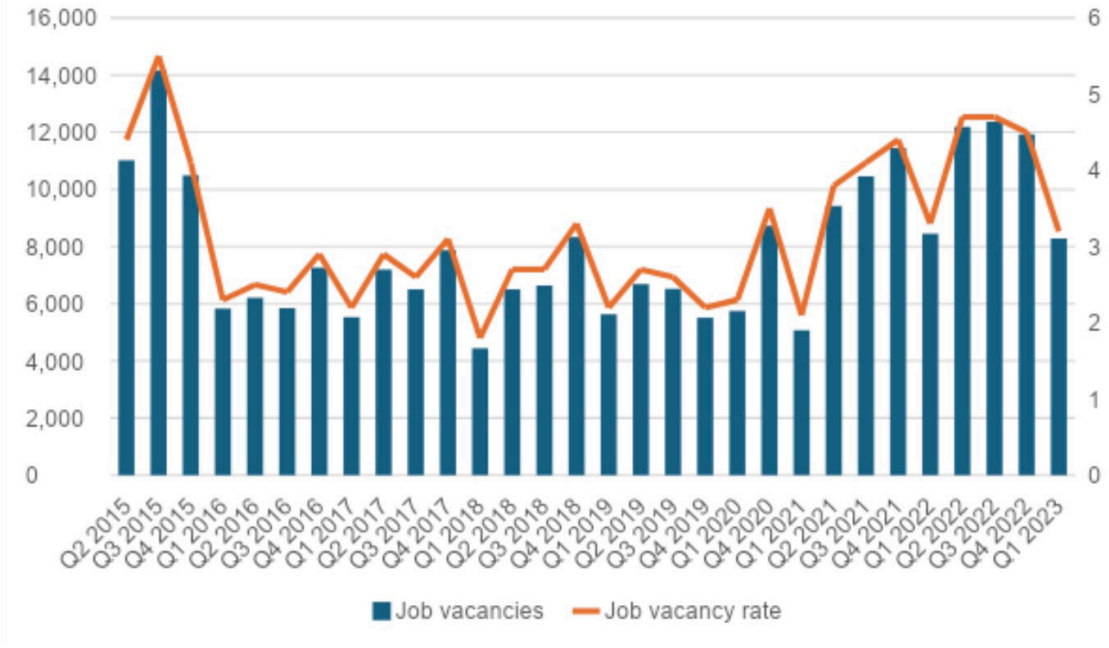
TRANSPORTATION

The latest business counts data shows how few tourism-related transportation companies are in the region.

There are taxi services in Sylvan Lake, as well as two air transport companies and two charter bus companies in Red Deer, but no tourism-related transit companies in Sylvan Lake itself reflected in labour-specific Census data; the sample size for transportation workers in Sylvan Lake is too small to produce reliable demographic breakdowns.

Still, transportation must be considered a key component of tourism leadership and management and is a consideration within the DLMP.

Vacancies and Job Vacancy Rate in Retail Trade (Alberta)[31]



31 Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0326-01 Job vacancies, payroll employees, job vacancy rate, and average offered hourly wage by industry sector, quarterly, unadjusted for seasonality

DESIRED OUTCOME

Young people will always be an important part of tourism, just as part-time seasonal jobs will always be an important entry point to the labour market for those seeking their first job, or summer employment.

It is not desirable to turn all employment in the sector into full-time, full-year employment. The existence of part-time, seasonal jobs in the tourism sector is incredibly beneficial for those entering the workforce. There is a reason that 50% of Canadians have held a tourism job at some point.

At the industry level, meeting demand, especially during peak season, will be limited by the availability of young people. Increasing the percentage of youth who seek jobs in tourism will help, but ultimately industry growth would be limited by the growth of the demographic that fills those jobs..

However, as the industry expands, it needs to increase the number of full-time, year-round jobs at a greater rate than it increases part-time, seasonal jobs. Those seasonal, part-time jobs are an excellent fit for many young workers—but young workers are not the main source of future labour force growth.

Increasing demand for tourism outside of peak season will help grow the tourism sector. Expanding demand outside the summer months also means increasing the number of jobs that are available year-round. Full-year jobs better align with the needs of newcomers, who are the main source of labour force growth. Immigrants are also seeking long-term financial stability. Increasing the number of jobs that can provide the stability those workers seek will also be essential.

GOALS AND LOOKING AHEAD

In the short term, it is clear from the data on vacant positions that not enough workers will be available. Some industries, such as recreation, may face less severe shortages than industries such as hotels. But, in the immediate term, employers will struggle to fill all available positions. In turn, the sector will struggle to grow.

Any expansion of the number of tourism businesses will create additional competition for existing workers. When thinking of strategies to expand the tourism industry, it should be done in such a way as to minimize the need for workers. In a situation of labour shortages, opening a walk-up, self-serve eating establishment is a better approach than a full-service, sit-down restaurant. The latter option may create a thriving business, but only by pulling workers away from other tourism businesses. Demand will shift from one business to another without expanding the number of visitors served. Another approach is to focus on attracting fewer guests who spend more per capita. These higher value guests may require more service. Still, the total ratio of workers needed to dollars spent per customer will be less.

However, the industry also needs to recognize that internal changes are needed if the industry is to expand. As stated in a report by the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta, "ultimately, the desirability of working in tourism is tied to whether or not a tourism job will give someone a life they want to lead." Businesses need to recognize that employees are not just a cost. Tourism businesses must find ways to increase their ability to offer higher wages, or the growth of the industry will stall. Expanding year-

round full-time employment relative to part-time seasonal employment is also essential as the future labour force will have a greater number of workers seeking those types of jobs.

That said, shifting how an industry operates is a long-term undertaking. In the medium term, employers should consider programs that provide access to foreign workers to supplement the workers they can hire locally. Tourism businesses in the province are actively using the temporary foreign worker program. The program can be effective but is cumbersome and time-consuming for small businesses. Business owners should also be wary of becoming too reliant on the program as it is subject to political whims and can be curtailed as quickly as it can be expanded.

The expansion of the International Experience Canada program is also a helpful step for increasing the availability of labour. Unlike the TFWP program, however, there is no direct linkage between employers and potential workers. That said, continuing to push for further expansion of this program will benefit Albertan businesses in the long run. Alberta attracts a significant number of IEC participants, and although most initially go to resort areas such as Banff and Jasper, other communities can benefit from spill over effects. Longer-term, supporting efforts to create dedicated immigration steams for tourism, whether for temporary workers or permanent residents will be needed.

In the long-term, providing more stable, year-round employment will attract older workers and help retain young workers as they transition from a need for seasonal/part-time work. However, tourism will always have seasonal and part-time jobs to fill that align well with the needs of young people entering the labour market. Increasing awareness of tourism as a temporary job, or future career via the education system is vital.

For small employers who are already dealing with labour shortages, the work required to recruit employees via government programs or engage with local schools and post-secondary programs can be daunting. The day-to-day needs of the business take priority, especially in an environment of increasing demand and not enough workers to keep up. Municipalities or regions should establish or expand the mandates of regional tourism bodies to provide local centralized services to businesses. These services should include support for immigration applications, and providing HR and financial training to operators.

There has already been a significant shift among federal and provincial tourism bodies away from being pure marketing entities, towards stewards of destination development. Tourism businesses need support in areas other than attracting customers. Aside from direct support for businesses, tourism associations are uniquely suited for acting as the public face of tourism. They can raise the sector's profile—independent of the individual needs of any one employer—by "representing tourism as a career destination in schools, with career counsellors, and at job fairs."

GENERAL LABOUR OVERVIEW

It is recognized that people are the core of the industry, without its workers tourism cannot thrive. The sector was facing labour shortages in 2019 and the lack of available workers has only become more difficult to manage. As travellers have returned, businesses are not finding enough workers to meet the resurgence of demand, let alone grow the industry.

From the workers perspective, there are challenges associated with working in tourism, including low wages, and a poor perception of the industry as a place to find long-term careers. As workers age, they look elsewhere for jobs that can sustain them financially. These challenges have always existed in the sector, hence the reliance of the industry on young people who are looking for part-time or seasonal employment and for whom lower wages were less of a concern.

Going forward, the number of young workers will grow slowly. Future labour force growth will rely heavily on immigrants. The increased presence of immigrants will benefit the industry, as newcomers tend to take jobs in tourism more frequently than non-immigrants of the same age. However, rural regions will need to actively attract newcomers, and recognize that unless jobs can provide long-term financial stability, workers will continue to move on to other industries.

Appendix J:

Metrics & Reporting

PART 1:
TOURISM IMPACT MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK (TIM)

PURPOSE

This Tourism Impact Measurement Framework ('TIM,' 'Framework') provides a structured approach for the Town of Sylvan Lake's tourism administration ('Visit Sylvan Lake,' 'VSL') to document and report the overall impact of tourism on the community. This Framework seeks to monitor and report on the big picture, including the overall socio-economic value of the local tourism economy. It covers the following key impact areas:

- Economic Impact
- Entrepreneurship & Small Business Development
- Visitor Satisfaction
- Community Satisfaction
- Environmental Impact

See Part 2 of this Appendix, "DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Guidelines," for measuring and monitoring intermediate outcomes of implementing DLMP recommendations, actions and project deliverables.

1. ECONOMIC IMPACT

The following key metrics and methodology enable VSL to track the overall flow of visitor-related expenditures through the local economy and their employment, wage and tax impacts, as well as quantify tourism's indirect (supplier) and induced (income) impacts.

Key Metrics	Procedure/ Tools/Methods	Data Sources	Data Inquiry	Tourism Decision-Making	Notes
• Number of visitors (by origin and type of visit) • Total visitor spending (per sector) • Average visitor spending (by origin) • Number of visitors staying in commercial accommodation • Duration of visit and occupancy rate • Employment (full-time/direct- • indirect-induced) • Labour income (full-time/ / direct-indirect-induced) • Tax contribution (municipal, provincial, federal) • GDP contribution (direct-indirect-induced)	Economic Impact Study	Statistics Canada National Travel Survey Other national, provincial and local relevant databases	Every 4 years	• Provides an understanding of the potential and magnitude of the local tourism economy and the overall impact of visitor spending on local economic growth. • Serves public relations needs (i.e., communications efforts to attract new businesses to the town, public awareness raising on tourism benefits) • Provides evidence of success and presents potential scenarios for public and private investment and partnership	Performing an economic impact study articulates the overall economic importance of tourism. However, it does not provide granular, actionable insights. Economic impact studies tend to prefer using comprehensive statistical data sources, which are not typically released in short logs. Therefore, such analysis is not a timely way to evaluate tourism's short—to mid-term economic impact to inform real-time decisions. These studies are particularly valuable in pursuing grant funding from provincial and federal sources.

To determine tourism's tangible economic outcomes, more frequent and focused tracking of visitation and visitor spending is needed beyond the aforementioned Economic Impact Study. As follows:

Key Metrics	KPIs	Data Source(s)/ Procedure/Tools /Methods	Data Inquiry	Tourism Decision-Making	Notes
Number of visitors (by origin)	Number of unique non-SL billing addresses transacting with SL businesses, broken out by billing address location (e.g., Central AB, Rest of AB, Rest of Canada, International)	Point of sale (POS) data* Mobile data/ Geofencing	Quarterly	• Informs product development and economic development initiatives/areas of focus • Supports understanding the actual growth in a specific visitor segment • Informs strategic decisions and directions (i.e., annual budgeting and planning) • Helps identify the change /new patterns in tourism spending • Helps understand the impact of tourism initiatives on seasonality (through quarterly data analysis)	If current tourism initiatives should be driving growth in a specific visitor segment (by origin), look for increases relative to past years. When using quarterly data, always compare to the same quarter in previous years.
Average visitor spending (by origin-by sector)	Average value of transactions for each unique non-SL billing address	POS data*	Quarterly		POS data (i.e., via Moneris) should be able to break out data based on sector (i.e., accommodation, retail, food & beverage, recreation and attractions, etc.). For example, VSL could monitor food and beverage (F&B) spending at local restaurants and bars while a local festival occurs.
Number of visitors staying in commercial accommodation	Number of unique non-SL billing addresses transacting with SL hotels/ accommodators	POS data* Sylvan Lake hotels/ accommodators	Quarterly		This works as an indicator to see if initiatives are prompting more stays at commercial accommodation (and therefore driving more paying overnight visits). This indicator is more relevant to increasing economic impact than StatCan (which includes stays with friends and family) because accommodation can be a significant source of spending and employment.
Duration of visit	The average duration of stays	Sylvan Lake hotels/ accommodators	Quarterly		VSL can ask hotels and accommodators to share data. This data can also be obtained if local hospitality businesses are collecting/remitting a Community Enhancement Fee on visitor nights (see CCS-CII-2).
Occupancy rates	Occupancy rates	Sylvan Lake hotels/ accommodators	Quarterly		Red Deer can be used as a regional comparator; for example, is Sylvan Lake outperforming relative to visitation trends in the immediate area (https://economicdashboard.alberta.ca/dashboard/accommodation-occupancy-rate/)

** If POS data is available (i.e., Moneris), try to obtain annual data for each metric dating back to 2018. This would provide two years of pre-pandemic data and all subsequent data, which is sufficient to interpret current trends thoroughly. Begin monitoring the results, focusing only on data relevant to decision-making. Quarterly data is likely the most useful for tracking trends and making year-over-year seasonal comparisons.*

2. ENTREPRENEURSHIP & SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

The following key metrics and methodology support VSL in monitoring the overall dynamics of tourism entrepreneurship in Sylvan Lake, and identifying critical gaps, needs and investment opportunities in the supply chain for the local tourism industry.

Key Metrics	KPIs	Data Source(s)/ Procedure/ Tools /Methods	Data Inquiry	Tourism Decision-Making	Notes
Annual growth in tourism experiences, services, and product offerings from local industry	Number of new registered businesses (tourism industry) Number of tourism industry businesses that meet essential market readiness criteria (see Appendix B: Market Preparedness Local Businesses), categorized by subsectors (i.e., retail, accommodation, food & beverage, recreation activities/experiences, etc.) Number of tourism industry businesses that meet advanced market readiness criteria see Appendix B: Market Preparedness Local Businesses), categorized by subsectors (i.e., retail, accommodation, food & beverage, recreation activities/experiences, etc.)	Business registration data Industry survey*	Bi-annually (Once every two years)	• Provides insights into tourism sector growth and helps in strategic planning for sector-specific development and investment (i.e., accommodation, retail, food & beverage, recreation and attractions, etc.). • Supports an understanding of gaps in local services and products • Backs up planning for TPA strategies (see Section 6, Direction 2), including piloting schemes, product and monetary supports	• Conduct a bi-annual industry survey (once every two years) to understand the tourism preparedness stage of industry businesses stage, including their needs and plans for diversification • Ensure that data collection covers a representative sample of at least 50% of the tourism-related businesses in Sylvan Lake • Include input from all TPA participants and TDC members • Use big data analytics to enhance understanding and tracking of the small business ecosystem • Start the annual assessments from Year 2 of DLMP onward.
Annual growth in revenue for local industry	Total annual revenue per sector (i.e., retail, accommodation, food & beverage, recreation activities/ experiences, etc.)	Industry survey	Annually		
Annual growth of industry investment in advancing/ extending their tourism capacity	Annual target spending of local business in infrastructure advancement, experience development, marketing, and staff training (separate entry fields) Number of full-time employees and total wage value Number of new development permits issued to tourism-related businesses Number of new operational permits issued to tourism-related businesses/activities	Industry survey	Annually		

** Given gaps in specific data related to the local tourism industry, and hospitality-related retail business in particular, conducting an Industry Survey is necessary to collect data in areas related to workforce needs, gaps, full-time employees and total wage value.*

3. VISITOR SATISFACTION

The following key metrics and methodology support VSL in monitoring overall visitor satisfaction and evaluating the success of specific place-based or program-based pilots in attracting visitors.

Key Metrics	KPIs	Data Source(s)/ Procedure/Tools /Methods	Data Inquiry	Tourism Decision-Making	Notes
Overall visitor satisfaction	Average satisfaction rating Net Promoter Score (NPS)	Visitor survey	Year 1 - 5: Annually, with a focus on gathering input during/from major attractions & events Year 5+: Twice per year	• Provides insights into gaps and opportunities for diversification and expansion • Helps identify promoters and detractors • Helps prioritize improvements in facilities, services and experiences	• Ensure a diverse range of visitors are surveyed • Use big data analytics for in-depth analysis • Include NPS questions in all major surveys • Include satisfaction with/level of use of supporting services, as well as tourism information services and infrastructure (i.e., wayfinding experience, satisfaction with finding and accessing local attractions, experience with booking and/or registration for Town-led products, what are the go-to sources of information, etc.)
	Number and type of complaints and suggestions received	Visitor feedback forms (through visitor information hubs, ad hoc engagement at events, etc.) Complaint tracking system (through VSL platforms) Online reviews	Ongoing, with quarterly analysis		
Satisfaction with specific VSL-led tourism product	Average satisfaction rating Net Promoter Score (NPS)	Visitor survey	During the pilot/ the offering period or when milestones are achieved (implementing a beautification initiative or other place-based initiatives) Include in the annual overall survey	• Guides improvement initiatives for a specific pilot, including next steps • Helps identify promoters and detractors • Informs potentials for scalability, evolution and other measures for success	• Tailor surveys to capture detailed feedback on target initiatives • Include questions about specific tangible and intangible interventions and initiatives (i.e., a new placemaking initiative, changes to parking rates and/or zones, Community Enhancement Fee, etc.) and perceptions of place where applicable
Repeat Visitor Rate	Percentage of visitors who return annually	Visitor survey	Year 1-5: Annually, with focus on major attractions Year 5+: Quarterly	• Informs strategies to encourage visitor return and enhance visitor retention	• Track trends in repeat visitation

4. COMMUNITY SATISFACTION

The following key metrics and methodology support VSL in monitoring the overall satisfaction of community rights holders and their support for tourism. These metrics are also helpful in understanding the level of active engagement of community rights holders with destination leadership and management.

Key Metrics	KPIs	Data Source(s)/ Procedure/ Tools /Methods	Data Inquiry	Tourism Decision-Making	Notes
Overall sentiment on tourism	Percent of Sylvan Lake residents who feel tourism is important to & positive for their community Average sentiment rating	Community survey Social media analysis	Year 1- 5: Annually Year 5+: Quarterly	• Informs strategies to mitigate negative community perceptions of tourism and enhance positive ones • Informs visitor management strategies with a community leadership lens, including community stewardship initiatives • Guides priority investment in visitor-related infrastructure improvements with a community-first lens • Informs community rights holders' engagement strategies and participation initiatives • Guides future event planning and improvement • Helps evaluate the effectiveness and reception of place-based initiatives from a community-first lens • Informs next steps for placemaking and beautification efforts	• Utilize various distribution channels and methodologies to work toward diverse demographic representation in community surveys • Use digital survey platforms such as SurveyMonkey to gather analytical data regarding the level of engagement • Include satisfaction with/level of use of supporting services, as well as tourism information services and infrastructure • Include NPS questions, where applicable • Use other big data analytics for in-depth analysis
Annual growth in residents' visitation of the lakefront area and downtown during the Summer season	Number of unique SL billing addresses (filtered by billing address location and date) transacting with downtown businesses	POS data* Mobile data/ Geofencing	Annually		• Compare with previous years' data to track changes in residents' visitation and spending patterns
Average residents' spending on Lakefront and Downtown businesses during the Summer season	The average value of transactions for each unique SL billing address transacting with downtown businesses (filtered by billing address location and date)		Annually, with a focus on the summer season		

COMMUNITY SATISFACTION (continued from previous page)

Key Metrics	KPIs	Data Source(s)/ Procedure/Tools /Methods	Data Inquiry	Tourism Decision-Making	Notes
Level of providing Input for tourism Initiatives	Number of unique SL-resident who participate/provide input per outreach initiative Frequency of participation Net Promoter Score (NPS)	Community survey Analysing engagement with community engagement channels	Annually	Continued from previous page	• Monitor trends over time for consistent feedback • Include NPS questions
Level of participation in VSL-led events and tourism products	Number of unique Sylvan Lake residents who participate per initiative Frequency of participation	Event registration data (filtered by fees category) Post-event surveys POS data Mobile data/ Geofencing	After each event, with an annual summary		• Track and compare participation trends over multiple events. Where applicable, compare participation trends over local and regional events.
Perception of VSL-led place enhancement initiatives	Percentage of positive vs. negative feedback on the initiative Net Promoter Score (NPS)	Community survey Community focus groups Social media analysis	Annually		• Where applicable, include feedback on specific measurements or interventions (e.g., a new placemaking initiative) and perception of the place. • Focus on high-visibility projects for detailed feedback

5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

As the health of the lake watershed ecosystem and other Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) are core considerations in the Sylvan Lake Cumulative Effects Management Plan (CEMS) and the Sylvan Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP), it is advisable to focus on:

1. Monitoring the Sylvan Lake CEMS Environmental Impact Indicators (see Appendix H: Environmental Impacts and Considerations, Table 3) and the environmental objectives under the Sylvan Lake IDP.

2. The application and implementation of project-specific regulatory frameworks and requirements correlate to project type, scale and size, location, and environmental sensitivities potentially impacted, informed by Appendix H: Environmental Impacts and Considerations and the DLMP's recommendations (see CCC-DLM-9-11).

PART 2:

DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Guidelines

PURPOSE

This guideline provides a basis for the Town of Sylvan Lake's tourism administration (VSL) to measure and monitor intermediate outcomes of implementing DLMP recommendations, actions and project deliverables. Rather than the big picture, this guideline focuses on the immediate feedback of VSL's progress regarding implementing the DLMP (the Plan).

FUTURE PLANNING, EVALUATION, AND REPORTING OF DLMP PROGRESS:

A key component of the success of DLMP is the evaluation of its Implementation Plan (in this appendix, referred to as 'the Plan'). Review and update the Plan annually, in the third quarter, formalizing and approving the updated version by the end of the year. Focus review of the Plan on:

- Re-evaluating the priorities of actions: If actions are added or significantly modified as Plan implementation progresses, weigh the relative priority of all actions within the relevant Strategic Direction. Refer to the Plan's key performance indicators (KPIs) to make decisions regarding any modifications.
- Re-evaluating the priorities of projects: Consider the impact on all relevant actions and their relative priorities when making decisions regarding any modifications.

EVALUATING VSL INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES

The DLMP puts significant weight on initiatives that enable industry partnership and co-investment in diversifying visitor experiences and tourism products. Key components of these initiatives include tools that help VSL effectively direct its liaison efforts and outreach investments with prospective partners and collaborators. Some of the primary tools recommended in the DLMP include:

- Planning Packages (see VE-PD-5.3.): This tool helps VSL in channeling high-value markets of business conventions into Sylvan Lake, enabling prospective local partners to attract and host small-scale business events, meetings & retreats.
- External Partnership and Facilitation Toolkit (see VE-PD-6.1): This tool enhances VSL's capacity to build partnerships with event organizers at local, regional, and provincial levels. It is envisioned with a strong focus on PPCP.
- Partnership cases for VSL-led pilots (see VE-PD-9.2, VE-PD-10.2, VE-EBS-3.1): Partnership cases help VSL proactively create opportunities for co-investment, recruitment and procurement, with a focus on product diversification within the local tourism industry.
- Partnership Deck for Regional Culinary Festival (see VE-PD-11.3): This tool serves as an outreach mechanism for VSL to foster interest and participation in VSL-led iconic festival as recommended in the Plan
- TPA's Incentive & Acceleration Packages (see VE-EBS-1.5.): This tool acts as an incentive strategy for VSL to encourage local industry buy-in and participation in VSL's product diversification and enhancement initiatives, as envisioned in the DLMP. The significance of this tool lies in its exclusive focus on testing, piloting and extending local partners' capacities and interests in PPCP.

Implement the following strategies to track the success of these tools in facilitating industry partnerships:

- Conduct an annual assessment of industry partnership liaison efforts, focusing on partnerships secured using these tools. Key metrics to consider include:
    - Number of businesses and prospective partners reached
    - Number of new partnerships formed
    - Volume of co-investment secured
- Conduct surveys with partners and external interested parties at the end of the partnership term or at a target milestone to gauge their satisfaction and gather data on key metrics.
- Include a section in VSL's Annual Report dedicated to evaluating these tools, summarizing the performance metrics, key achievements and areas for improvement.

EVALUATING VSL EVENTS AND TOURISM PRODUCTS

Various metrics and reporting initiatives are necessary for evaluating VSL-led events and tourism products, including:

Data Collection:
Using pilot events/products, gather accurate attendance and spending data, prioritizing the highest-impact initiatives. Use the following strategies:

- Conduct visitor surveys during each pilot to collect data related to the following metrics:
  - Visitor origin
  - Total trip spending (estimated, as the trip is in progress)
  - Trip duration
  - Party size
  - Purpose of the trip (to determine if the visit was attributable to the event/product)
  - How the visitor heard about the event/product (to understand the effectiveness of marketing)

- Invest in mobile and POS data to determine:*
  - Number of visitors (by origin)
  - Visitor profiles
  - Visitor patterns (i.e., how they are moving through/interacting with the town)
  - Average visitor spending (by origin-by sector)

  *This specific strategy applies only to events.

- Conduct an industry partner survey at the end of each pilot event and VSL-led tourism offering to identify gaps and opportunities in extending/enhancing partnerships and increasing local industry economic receipt in future iterations. Record answers to address the following metrics:
  - Vendor origin (the business's official location)
  - Total value of sales during the event (voluntary)**
  - Highest and lowest days of sales (where applicable)
  - Number of unique sales
  - Total cost of providing service (including supplies, staff, etc.)
  - Questions to evaluate Town support
  - Questions to evaluate the duration of the event
  - Questions to evaluate overall satisfaction with the initiative and willingness to participate in future partnership opportunities
  - **Include a disclaimer in the survey outlining that all information is confidential and used solely to understand the initiative's overall success as an economic driver for the community.

Economic Outcome Analysis:
- Use these data points to understand if an event or visitor experience is achieving positive economic outcomes, specifically:
  - Whether the initiative is attracting visitors who wouldn't otherwise have come
  - Whether the visitors it attracts (from any origin and with any trip purpose) are spending more or less than typical visitors to the town.

- Based on findings, identify appropriate adjustments to maximize the economic impact of future iterations of the initiative.

Evaluation of Town Benefits and Direct ROI:
- Evaluate the Town's total benefit and direct ROI of each initiative, considering the following metrics:
  - Total direct operational costs (including supplies, equipment, marketing, staff)
  - Total revenue generated for the Town directly through the initiative (e.g., ticket fees, vendor fees, experience package fees)
  - Total revenue generated through other points of sale as a result of the initiative (e.g., parking fees)
  - Direct municipal taxes supported by the direct economic impact

- Always record visitor numbers, total visitor spending, and the direct economic impact of visitor spending (direct employment, labour income, and GDP) when evaluating Town benefits. This helps frame the success of each initiative within the broader local economic development context. This data is also critical for presenting the outcomes of each initiative to community rights holders and industry partners (See Case Studies in Section 6: Visitors and Experiences).

- Use the information to determine the viability of events, and to adjust future iterations accordingly.

EVALUATING VSL-LED/ CO-LED PILOT PROJECTS FOR PLACE ENHANCEMENT

Based on the DLMP's vision and the implementation of the 'Working Group' strategy (see CCC-DLM-1.1), and with VSL's enhanced organizational capacity, there will be a shift in how decisions around place enhancement are made. VSL will take an active role in these decisions from a tourism and destination development perspective. Therefore, monitoring and measuring how investments in place-based initiatives by the Town impact visitors' spending on local offerings is crucial, thereby creating direct benefits for the community.

These analyses are robust instances of evidence-based decision-making, as they can inform business cases for prioritizing investments in infrastructure and services. For example, suppose studies show that place-based investments and enhancements effectively draw visitor spending and attract new visitors from target markets. In that case, this provides compelling evidence for further investments in such interventions.

- Conduct targeted surveys to evaluate the short-term outcomes of place-based initiatives and infrastructure improvements/enhancements, with strong potential impacts on visitor attraction and spending. These may include enhancements to lakefront amenities, downtown beautification, wayfinding, interactive placemaking, etc.
- Administer surveys at the end of the trial period or as milestones are achieved. Measure:
    - Outcomes related to project objectives
    - Feedback from community rights holders directly involved in the initiative (e.g., TDC, local grassroots groups, etc.)
    - Feedback from visitors at the place (categorized by origin to identify local vs. non-local experience)
    - Feedback from local businesses connected with the initiative (e.g., downtown businesses benefiting from beautification efforts, lakefront businesses benefiting from walkway activations, non-downtown businesses benefiting from improved signage and wayfinding strategies, etc.)
    - Where applicable, include the evaluation of the direct economic impact of visitor spending based on survey results
- Use the information to determine the viability of the next steps for each pilot project.

EVALUATING THE TOURISM PARTNERSHIP ACCELERATOR (TPA)

Evaluate each cohort:

- Conduct participants' satisfaction surveys at the end of each cohort. Record answers to address the following metrics:
  - Vendor origin (the business's official location)
  - Level of engagement with support streams (such as one-on-one coaching, grant, etc.)
  - Self-evaluated success of the pilot, using self-report KPIs
  - Net Promoter Score (NPS)
  - Likelihood of referring others to the program
  - Likelihood of repetitive collaboration
- Use email analytic tools to track level of engagement with outreach pre-cohort , during and post-cohort. Keep track of patterns.

Evaluate each participant:

- Establish participant-defined key performance indicators (KPIs) with each participant as they join the TPA program (see VE-EBS-2.1).

Evaluate the overall TPA program (every five years):

- Conduct a Focus Group to determine if the incubation support has led to an established tourism product and to review possibilities for TPA program enhancements. Include participants who have been part of the TPA for at least three years. Discuss perceptions and feedback about the following topics, to determine opportunities for enhancements and refinements:
  - The impact, appeal and influence of TPA benefits and incentives
  - The people, expertise and use cases for Coaching services
  - The quality, relevance and overall helpfulness of Toolkits available.
- Use TPA datasets, annual cohort evaluation, email analytics, and focus group outcomes to report on the following key metrics:
  - Total # of outreach (within the study period)
  - Total # of participants (within the study period) and breakdown of supports/resources they benefit from
  - Total $ value of support and resource investment and breakdown of types of supports/resources
  - Total # of coaching hours invested
  - Total $ granted as part of product development grant
  - GDP generated from product pilots funded by the TPA (in their first three years)
  - Ratio of private sector investment on pilot project vs VSL investment
  - # of participants returning for advanced support

EVALUATING IMPACTS OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Conduct assessments of VSL marketing initiatives to inform approaches to social media content, campaigns, newsletters, website development and other marketing initiatives, as follows:

Ongoing:

- Social media engagement, including likes, shares, comments, click-throughs, etc.
- Open rates and click-throughs on newsletters
- Website visits and bounce rates
- Scans of QR codes used in offline marketing initiatives
- New followers or subscribers on various platforms
- Use of the #visitsylvanlake hashtag and other hashtags specific to campaigns
- As recommended within the Marketing Toolkit (Appendix X), use A/B testing to understand successful and resonant marketing approaches further.

Campaign-specific:

- Impressions and reach, including the number of times campaign content is viewed and the unique users it reaches.
- Social media engagement, including likes, shares, comments, etc.
- Conversions and leads, including click-throughs to dedicated campaign webpages, or other actions such as form submissions, downloads and/or purchases
- Cost per conversion
- ** Evaluate targeted marketing for specific VSL-led initiatives (events or other tourism products) as part of the Visitor Survey conducted during the offering to evaluate the initiative.

Annual review:

- Conduct an annual survey to measure brand awareness, recall and recognition, as well as product awareness (i.e., of key products or events)
- Net Promoter Score (NPS)
- Audience growth (i.e., the increase in followers or subscribers on social media and newsletters)
- Audience engagement, including overall likes, shares, comments, click-throughs, etc.
- Website and online presence, including: the organic search traffic coming to the VSL website from organic search results; and website visitors' time on site and pages per visit. (Note: Use this data to inform content development plans, based on what visitors are gravitating to)

EVALUATING VSL-LED INITIATIVES FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The DLMP places significant weight on initiatives that encourage/enable community engagement and leadership with a diverse focus, including participation in decision-making (such as the TDC) and collaboration and partnership in place-based and program-based initiatives (such as the Community Animators program, grassroots arts group engagement, etc.). This section speaks to community engagement and involvement within and beyond the tourism sector.

Implement the following strategies to track the success of these initiatives from both a level of engagement and participants' satisfaction:

- Analyse data to evaluate:
    - Impact of communication initiatives (i.e., email click-throughs, comments or feedback via engagement channels, inquiries received, new email subscriptions, etc.).
    - Participation, using the following metrics: Number of first-time participants and number of returning participants.

- Conduct community surveys during and following the initiative, or at a target milestone, to gauge community satisfaction about the engagement initiative and gather key metrics including the likelihood of referring others to participate, Likelihood of return, gaps in outreach and engagement.

- Include a section in VSL's Annual Report dedicated to evaluating VSL community engagement initiatives summarizing the performance metrics, key achievements and areas for improvement.

EVALUATING TOURISM-RELATED FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF THE TOWN

Use the municipal cross-departmental tracking tool developed for financial reporting (CCS-DLM-13.1), to annually track and report total expenses and total revenues related to tourism. Analyse:

- Total expenses and total revenues related to tourism
- Departmental-specific expenses and revenues related to tourism

Use the data to analyse the total cost of Town investment in tourism-related initiatives and operations.

PART 2:

DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Guidelines

PURPOSE

The DRF-SL tool, presented in Appendix A: Destination Readiness Framework & Analysis, offers a framework for the Town of Sylvan Lake's tourism administration (VSL) to assess Sylvan Lake's readiness as a tourism destination across four distinct host-levels: Local, Regional, Inter- and Intra-Provincial (National) and Global (see Appendix A: Destination Readiness Framework & Analysis: The Four Levels of Readiness). It serves as a tracking tool for the destination's graduation from a "Local" destination to a "Regional" destination and beyond, as envisioned by the DLMP.

As part of Metrics and Reporting efforts, VSL must complement the Part 1: Tourism Impact Measurement Framework (TIMF) and Part 2: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Guidelines, by utilizing this tool as a way to track the destination's evolution and garner a comprehensive picture of the DLMP's progress.

This tool is designed specifically for the Sylvan Lake context, and therefore is particularly relevant to assessing the Town's destination readiness. However, it can also be used to benchmark Sylvan Lake's overall progress and positioning against similar destinations, focusing on shared characteristics and industry trends.

TOOL OVERVIEW

The DRF-SL tool is a product of extensive context-specific analysis, providing a detailed set of criteria representing conditions that need to be met for Sylvan Lake to achieve particular levels of destination readiness. These criteria are organized across 14 categories, aligned with the priorities and desired outcomes identified in DLMP.

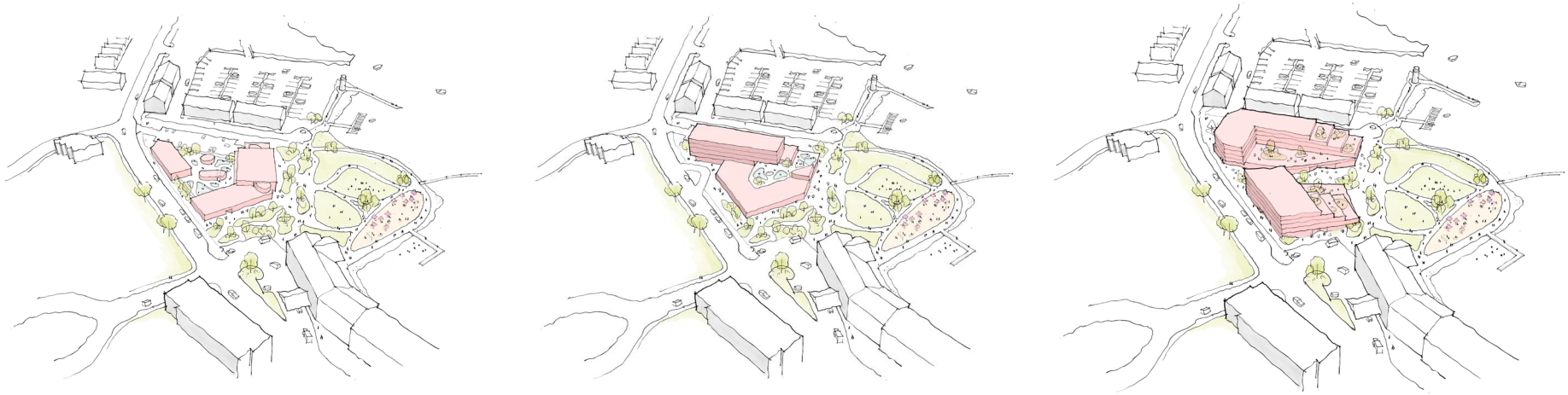
IMPLEMENTATION

Allocate necessary resources (time, personnel, budget) for conducting an annual assessment using the DRF-SL tool to gain an overall picture of Sylvan Lake's readiness level. This assessment helps evaluate the positioning of Sylvan Lake as a destination, focusing on capacities gained and major gaps in capacity:

1. Criteria Assessment: For each criterion in the tool, evaluate Sylvan Lake's current status using the provided symbols (●,◑,○) to indicate full, partial, or minimal alignment with the set benchmarks.
2. Gap-Strength-Opportunities Analysis: Using the categories, subcategories, or a bundle of criteria, as relevant, identify areas where Sylvan Lake falls short and areas that present progress (strengths or opportunities). Ask important questions such as:
    - Has Sylvan Lake gained considerable progress in particular areas of destination readiness?
    - Could Sylvan Lake meet criteria of a more advanced host level in certain areas?
    - What areas lack sufficient progress?
    - What areas present considerable advancement in readiness?
3. Tracking: Document the overall strengths, gaps, and opportunities relevant to each priority area (i.e., categories) and gain an overall picture of readiness level. Compare results year-over-year to measure advancement across the various areas. Use the current analysis presented in Appendix A as a basis for future studies.
4. Strategic Planning: Use the assessment results to inform annual strategic planning, aligning efforts with strategic directions and recommendations of DLMP.
5. Detailed Analysis: As needed, conduct a more detailed analysis at the level of each criterion. In addition to scoring the status of Sylvan Lake per criterion (i.e., which level of host it sits concerning that particular benchmark), map gaps, strengths and opportunities relevant to each criterion. The current analysis presented in Appendix A serves as a basis for future studies. Use this analysis to inform actionable steps in the annual action plan, and VSL's approach to DLMP implementation.
6. Reporting: Develop an annual report summarizing the assessment results, progress made, and key areas for improvement. Share this report with key parties and community rights holders to maintain transparency and garner support for tourism initiatives.

Appendix K:

Feasibility Study: Waterslide Site



Town of Sylvan Lake

Development Feasibility Assessment

5104 Lakeshore Drive

Submitted June 05, 2024

Summer 2019

Spring 2022

Winter 2019

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Document Review

The Town of Sylvan Lake is seeking to develop a package of information to be used to evaluate and understand potential development opportunities for 5104 Lakeshore Drive. As part of this analysis it is imperative to understand the strategic and guiding document framework under which future development on the site will operate.

The existing policies and guiding documents that could influence future development on the site can be broadly evaluated based on the potential 'Opportunities', required 'Actions', and 'Considerations' that each presents. Opportunities indicate a document that could be leveraged to either implement or enhance implementation of future development on the site. This could include external funding or strategic policy alignment. Actions indicate a document that requires some form of response from the Town of Sylvan Lake arising from future development on the subject site. This could include amendments to planning documents or investments in municipal infrastructure. Considerations indicate documents that contain information worth considering as part of the broader development opportunity visioning, but that do not warrant specific amendments to the vision in and of themselves. This could include infrastructure servicing documents that do not identify needed upgrades, or tourism strategies with which future development on the site is inherently aligned.

The chart on the right provides a quick-glance overview of how each strategic document should be considered when considering a development case for 5104 Lakeshore Drive. The following pages provide brief synopses of each document's relevance to the development scenario.

	Document	Opportunities	Actions	Considerations
Town	Municipal Development Plan	●	●	
	Land Use Bylaw	●	●	
	Parking Caveat	●		●
	Community Social Master Plan	●		●
	Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan			●
	Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan		●	●
	Lakefront Usage Strategy			●
	2018/2019 Waterfront Redevelopment Strategy			●
	2014 50 Street Urban Design Guidelines			●
Regional	2018 Central Alberta Tourism Alliance Accommodation Study	●		●
	2015 Central Alberta Destination Management Plan			●
Provincial	2022-2025 Travel Alberta Business Plan	●		
	2019-2024 Indigenous Tourism Alberta Strategy			●
Federal	Federal Tourism Growth Strategy	●		
	Canada's Climate Action Plan	●		
	Canada's National Housing Strategy	●		
	Transportation 2030	●		
	Green Municipal Fund	●		

Town of Sylvan Lake Documents

There are several Town of Sylvan Lake documents that warrant Consideration as part of the site assessment. These include:

- Municipal Development Plan
- Land Use Bylaw
- Community Social Master Plan
- Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan
- Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan
- Lakefront Usage Strategy
- 2018/2019 Waterfront Redevelopment Strategy
- 2014 50 Street Urban Design Guidelines

Broadly speaking these documents all enable waterfront development and outline aspirations for an active, engaging, and publicly accessible experience in the site location. Specific Opportunities, Actions, and Considerations for each are outlined below.

Municipal Development Plan

Depending on the final master plan's functional programming for the subject site, a Municipal Development Plan amendment may be required. This presents an Opportunity but also will require Action from the Town to strategically decide how best to engage with any required amendments. The Town could pre-emptively approve these amendments so as to maximize the marketability of the site, or the Town may choose to require future developers to undergo a redesignation process so as to have a legal tool through which to require additional developer contributions. The master planning process should identify strategic opportunities for implementing future amendments if required.

Land Use Bylaw

The Town should not adopt the proposed Land Use Bylaw updates until the completion of this master planning process. By waiting until the master planning process is complete the Town will be able to leverage the Opportunity of these updates to ensure the stock waterfront district or districts reflect the future intended uses of the subject site without requiring further future Land Use Bylaw amendments.

Community Social Master Plan

While the Community Social Master Plan does not include any specific Actions for the subject site's future development, there exists considerable Opportunity to directly respond to the Housing, Income, and Employment goals identified. These include expanding the continuum of housing in the Town, providing more diversified and year-round employment opportunities, and broadening the range of incomes derived from the tourism economy by incorporating development on the site that supports these goals.

2023 Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan

Future development of this site does not present any immediate Opportunities or Actions in relation to the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan.

Consideration should be given to incorporating elements of this new plan's recommendations into the future site development plan, including providing additional opportunities for communities and neighbourhoods to gather and attracting private recreation partnership opportunities.

Sustainable Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP)

Broadly, the ARP provides sound and comprehensive guidance for the future development of the subject site, ensuring that it contributes to the broader overall vision for Sylvan Lake's waterfront. Given this, Consideration should be made for the vision and generalized intention for the Water's Edge designation that the subject site is identified within the ARP.

Despite this context, it may be the case that the Town must take Action and approve targeted amendments to the ARP following preparation of the master plan to ensure that development targets, parking requirements, and other Considerations are made fully compliant with the ARP.

Lakefront Usage Strategy

As a non-statutory document there are not obligations to align the master plan with the recommendations of this Strategy. Despite this, Consideration should be given to the proposed Future Lakefront concept's vision for the site, as it includes specific amenities and re-programming of the lakefront that reflect desires expressed by the public.

Specific Consideration should be given to incorporating public washrooms on site, maintaining the water play feature in the lake, and enhanced lake access at this location.

Regional Documents

2018/2019 Waterfront Redevelopment Strategy

The Waterfront Redevelopment Strategy is another non-statutory document, and as such no Action will be required should the master plan for the subject site not fully align with the Strategy. Despite this, Consideration should be given for complying with the broad overall vision of the Strategy, as it is again developed through widespread public consultation and depicts a future state for Sylvan Lake's waterfront that relies heavily on the subject site to play a central role in redefining how residents and visitors alike engage with the lake.

2014 50 Street Urban Design Guidelines

Future development of this site does not present any immediate Opportunities or Actions in relation to the 2014 50 Street Urban Design Guidelines.

Consideration should be given to adhering to the guidelines to the extent possible unless more strategic urban design Considerations are required to maximize highest and best use of the subject site.

There are two documents at a regional level worth considering in cases for development.

- 2018 Central Alberta Tourism Alliance Accommodation Study
- 2018 Central Alberta Destination Management Plan

These documents provide Opportunities and Considerations on how the site can play a role in addressing needs and desires in the region's tourism infrastructure offering.

2018 Central Alberta Tourism Alliance Accommodation Study

This Study identifies significant Opportunity for Sylvan Lake to expand its meeting and conference-supporting capabilities through a large dedicated events space, and through that substantially increase the number of overnight visitors to the Town. Incorporating elements of this into the subject site's master plan would help the Town to address this identified gap in the current service offering provided by Sylvan Lake, thus expanding the overall diversity of tourism offerings in the Town and attracting more longer-term, higher-value visitors to the area.

Beyond these specific Opportunities, the master plan should also give broad Consideration to the overall recommendations and key actions identified by the study, as they are rooted in local economic realities and market analysis. Responding to the identified needs of Sylvan Lake in terms of addressing current gaps in the visitor experience that are inhibiting longer duration and higher-value stays in the Town will help maximize the impact of investment on this site.

2018 Central Alberta Destination Management Plan

This Destination Management Plan identifies Central Alberta's primary target market as being Cultural Explorers and Authentic Experiencers – what this means is that the focus of the master plan should give Consideration to fostering unique and authentic experiences for visitors to directly engage with. As Alberta's largest true lakefront community, Sylvan Lake is well-suited to foster an already unique experience with additional lakeside amenities and activities, and ensuring that these are thoughtfully interwoven not just as one singular activity, but as a range of different ways to engage with Sylvan Lake throughout the sight, will be important for leveraging the full tourism-generating potential of the master plan.

Provincial Documents

The Provincial government is directly involved in the tourism and tourism marketing industry. With a vested interest in supporting tourism development and growth in this industry, the Government of Alberta has prepared several plans and strategies that outline their priorities for funding and expanding this important part of our provincial economy. Potentially relevant to Sylvan Lake are the following plans, strategies, and programs.

- 2022-2025 Travel Alberta Business Plan
- 2019-2024 Indigenous Tourism Alberta Strategy

As the Province is the senior partner in any relationship with the Town, the majority of these documents represent Opportunities or Considerations for aligning with Provincial policy and leveraging dedicated funding tied to such alignment. There are limited direct Actions that arise from the Provincial documents reviewed.

2022-2025 Travel Alberta Business Plan

The purpose of Travel Alberta is to market Alberta's tourism assets, attractions, and opportunities; promote the development and growth of the tourism industry in Alberta; to increase revenue and employment in the tourism industry; to provide visitor services; and to assist Alberta communities and tourism industry operators to develop and market their products. In order to support this mission the most recent Business Plan outlines several strategic pillars. These include increasing marketing of destinations, improving access to destinations, and investing in places.

Specifically relevant to Sylvan Lake is the Opportunity arising from Travel Alberta's new funds dedicated to supporting rural experience development through the Cooperative Investment Fund and Product Investment Fund. The Town should identify Opportunities to best align with the strategic objectives of these funds in order to potentially access them for future development.

Key Initiatives

- $2.5 million in Cooperative Investment Fund to support rural experience development and event promotion
- $7.5 million in Product Investment Fund for new, emerging, and established tourism businesses
- $4 million investment in Indigenous Tourism Alberta
- 2019-2024 Indigenous Tourism Alberta Strategy

2019-2024 Indigenous Tourism Alberta Strategy

Through 2024 and beyond, Indigenous Tourism is anticipated to be a significant growth industry in Alberta. While there are no specific Opportunities arising from this Strategy, Consideration should be given throughout master planning work for providing opportunities for local First Nations to be directly embedded into and financially benefit from future development of the site. Leveraging the growth potential of this sector in a spirit of genuine reconciliation has the potential to yield significant benefits for all involved.

Federal Documents

The federal government has taken an active role in addressing environmental, economic development, and reconciliation initiatives throughout the country over the past several years. Coupled with these initiatives are often large funds that can be accessed through joint partnerships and agreements on projects that align with federal priorities. Potentially relevant to Sylvan Lake are the following plans, strategies, and programs.

- Federal Tourism Growth Strategy
- Canada's Climate Action Plan
- Canada's National Housing Strategy
- Transportation 2030
- Green Municipal Fund

Major takeaways for the Town of Sylvan Lake from these documents is that where there are Opportunities to build federal initiative-aligned outcomes into the proposed development plan for the property, these should be pursued. Potential for leveraging federal grant money can increase the overall impact of the project, heighten its visibility and thus marketability to potential economic partners, and ultimately result in a better outcome for Town residents and visitors alike.

Federal Tourism Growth Strategy

This strategy is built around three pillars: Building Tourism in Canada's Communities; Attracting Investment to the Visitor Economy; and A Renewed Focus on Public-Private Collaboration. Collectively these pillars seek to level Canada's tourism demand by building out winter and shoulder-season tourism opportunities, supporting rural and remote tourism, and encouraging public-private partnership investments in tourism development.

There is significant Opportunity for the Town to access the below identified funds and grants to help facilitate master plan implementation.

Key Initiatives

- $58 million Canadian Experiences Fund dedicated to expanding rural tourism and shoulder-season and winter tourism.
- $2.2 billion infrastructure funding for local communities through a municipal top-up, allocated to short-term priorities in municipalities such as tourism and cultural infrastructure.

Canada's Climate Action Plan

This plan is a strategic plan tied to the federal budget that seeks to cut pollution, create jobs, and support a healthier economy and environment. The core of the plan is Canada's commitment to net-zero emissions by 2050 and the federal government has committed over $15 billion towards investments and initiatives that are climate positive, with a focus on reducing energy waste, building better communities, and providing clean, affordable transportation.

There are Opportunities to leverage funding tied to this plan into support for implementing climate-aligned elements of any future development on the subject site such as EV charging, the use of high energy efficiency materials in construction, and more.

Key Initiatives

- $1.5 billion fund over three years for green and inclusive community building (10% to projects serving First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities)
- $150 million fund over three years in charging and refueling stations across Canada
- Development of a National Active Transportation Strategy
- $631 million fund over 10 years to work with provinces, territories, conservation organizations, Indigenous communities, private landowners, and others to restore and enhance wetlands, peatlands, grasslands and agricultural lands

Canada's National Housing Strategy

The National Housing Strategy is intended to cut chronic homelessness and build 125,000 new homes across Canada. This initiative is funded through the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Company, there are various means to access this program's funding in partnership with housing developers, not-for-profits, and First Nations rights holders. Funds are prioritized for:

- Housing those in greatest need (deep subsidy)
- Social housing sustainability
- Indigenous housing
- Sustainable housing and communities
- Balanced supply of housing

Should the master plan incorporate a housing component there are significant funding Opportunities particularly tied to CMHC funding that could be used to not only address social needs in Sylvan Lake but also incentivize developer involvement in any future redevelopment project on the subject site.

Key Initiatives

- National Housing Co-Investment Fund (New Construction)
- Affordable Housing Innovation Fund
- Rental Construction Financing

Transportation 2030

Transportation 2030 is the federal government's plan for supporting economic growth, job creation, and Canada's middle class through targeted investment in the national transportation network. Priority areas for investment identified by the federal government include:

- Green and innovative transportation
- Safer transportation
- Overall transportation improvements.

Similar to the Climate Action Plan, there are potential Opportunities around incorporating green infrastructure into future developments in order to leverage federal grant funding.

Key Initiatives

- Work with provinces and territories to reduce carbon pollution from the transport sector
- Invest $10.1 billion for transportation infrastructure to help eliminate bottlenecks and build more robust trade corridors
- Reduce transportation inefficiencies while increasing safety and security
- Invest in electric car charging and low emission fueling stations

Green Municipal Fund

This fund was established to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve local air, water, and soil quality, and promote renewable energy. It prioritizes green infrastructure spending and is dedicated funding to help municipalities advance knowledge, development, and implementation of environmentally innovative projects. Funding for capital projects can involve the retrofitting, construction, replacement, expansion, or purchase and installation of fixed assets or infrastructure.

This fund presents a strategic Opportunity for future development on the subject site to leverage, particularly as it may relate to upfront capital expenses required to be covered by the Town prior to unlocking the full development potential of the site.

Key Program Support Areas

- Public infrastructure investments that could have a positive impact on the environment
- Green infrastructure that improves positive environmental outcomes
- Public transit to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution
- Asset management and feasibility studies to support better planning and longer-term environmental impact considerations

Site Profile

Environmental Considerations

In 2019, the Town of Sylvan Lake undertook a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) for 5104 Lakeshore Drive. This report used site observations and information obtained through records review and regulatory inquiries to determine if any environmental issues were present on the site.

The summary of this report states:

> Based on the information collected and reviewed during the period of this assessment, the following conclusions have been made relative to the Site:
>
> - Historically, the Site had been relatively undeveloped since prior to 1982.
> - Based on the aerial photographs received, the construction of the landfill pier, Wild Rapids, and the development of a few surrounding properties occurred in the early 1980's;
> - All historical reports and correspondence with the Town of Sylvan Lake indicated no environmental concerns pertaining to the Site or most recent landowners; and,
> - Based on the age of the building, there is potential that asbestos and lead containing material and Urea Foam Formaldehyde Insulation may be present in the original building footprint. Intrusive investigation of the building materials and associated sampling was not within the scope of work for this Phase I ESA.
>
> Overall, there is no evidence of current environmental contamination or APEC apart from the original building construction materials outlined in Section 5.4 and Section 6. As stated by Mr. Boudreau, the current building will be responsibly demolished prior to any future developments. It is of the opinion of Union Street that these APECs do not pose a significant environmental risk to the future use of the site.
>
> Based on the information collected, and the understanding that the existing on-site structure is to be removed, it is Union Street's opinion that the potential for soil and groundwater impacts related to historical activities at the Site are low. Union Street does not recommend any further investigations at this time.

Gross & Net Developable Land

The gross site area is:

- 11,670 square metres,
- 2.88 acres, or
- 125,619 square feet.

The net development area is determined by removing all known areas that cannot be developed upon. This number is difficult to determine due to a number of possible factors:

- the potential to discharge existing easements (for example, Caveat 082434336 through breach of lease conditions or the provision of agreed upon accommodations to the leaser)
- the potential for future easements (for example, the swale along the western edge of the property, if the existing stormwater and sanitary force-main will remain in-place, or if any future public access easements as part of the future design, ensuring public access through the site to Lakefront and Lighthouse Parks.

Due to these unknowns, we are providing a conservative estimate of the net developable area, including healthy allowances for potential future access and utility easements as well as the retention of the existing parking lease caveat. The ultimate net developable area is imagined to be more than this amount, but it would be determined through the design and approvals process of a future development application.

The net site area is:

- 9,184 square metres,
- 2.27 acres, or
- 98,856 square feet.

There is one additional relevant developable area restriction on the land, the 30m setback for all buildings from the high water mark. This bylaw, however, is relaxable in areas where subject lands are already disturbed to do not exhibit native ecological functions.

All site development scenarios herein respect all existing and potential easements and setbacks. Due to the site's large size and irregular shape, we believe these restrictions do not limit developability on the parcel.

Specific conditions on the land

The site mostly consists of a gravel surface parking lot. Between Lakefront Drive and the parking area, there is a sloped landscape area with grass, trees and shrubs. This area negotiates a roughly 1.50m change in elevation. The North of the site partially contains the old poolhouse building from the previous waterslide operation. This building contains leasible space, storage and washrooms. It is fully anticipated that this structure will be demolished prior to or upon redevelopment of the site. To the east the site is covered in asphalt. This area shares access functions with the Chateau Suites development to the east. To the west lays a narrow overland drainage

ditch or swale. This is where the site gently drains into the lake to the northwest.

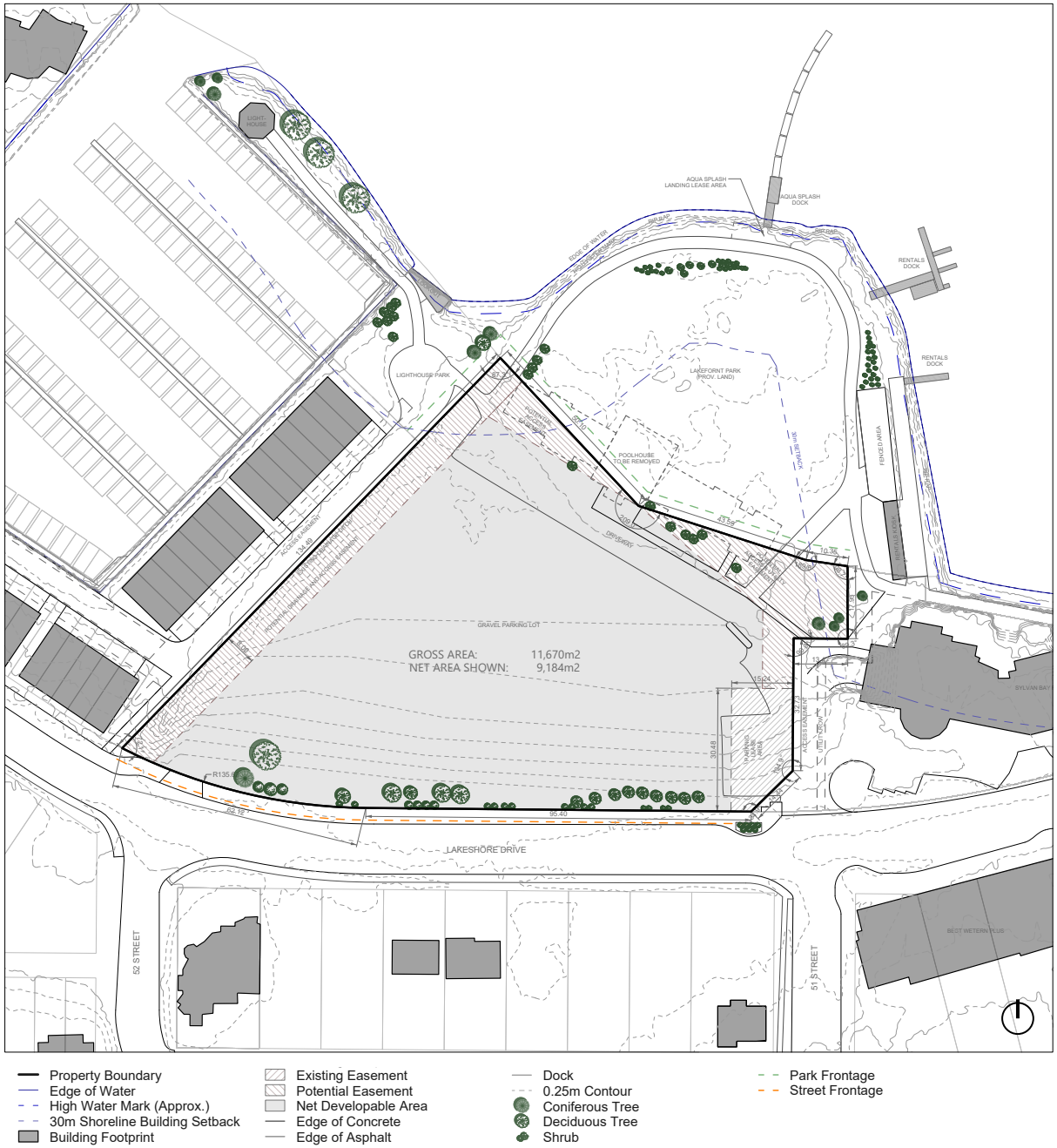
Power lines or transmission lines crossing the property

From the information provided, there are no electrical lines that provide electricity to adjacent developments passing through the site. It is believed at this time that the only electrical on the site provides power to the light poles in the parking lot and to the old poolhouse building. Because of this, we do not believe that the electrical infrastructure on site need to be considered as relevant to future development.

Easements/encroachments

The most important item registered on the parcel is the parking access caveat on the southeast corner of the site. This 50, x 100' area is identified in Caveat 082434336. It is dedicated space for parking for the Chateau Suites development to the east. Town representatives are inquiring about the nature of this caveat and for whom the parking stalls serve. Future development on the site should seek to have this caveat discharged, as it makes it more difficult for a future development to meet the Town's urban design and site planning objectives. This discharge could be achieved in a number of ways. If required, a future development could provide 8 stalls elsewhere on this site that would be dedicated to the Chateau Suites.

Site Plan



Right of way, transportation and access requirements

While there are no access requirements currently registered on the site as access easements, the east edge does have a shared access configuration with the Chateau Suites development.

Future development, however, will likely require that public access easements be created in two areas:

- Along the west edge, there will be a desire for an improved pathway connection betweent Lakeshore Drive and Lakefront/Lighthouse Parks. This connection could take the form of a 6-10m easement that either incorporates or removes the existing drainage swale.
- Along the eastern and northern edges, there will likely need to be an access easement to ensure public and maintenance vehicle access to Lakefront and Lighthouse Parks is provided. These two parks do not have any public road frontage and they will require a satisfactory means of public access.

Transportation access to the site can occur along Lakefront Drive, and should most likely be located at either the 51 or 52 Street intersections. The preference for which is the better point of access will depend on the nature of the proposed development. In any case, the quality of public access through the site to Lakefront and Lighthouse Parks should not be unduly diminished by the development's parking or loading access design.

Frontage and depth onto the road

The site has 158 metres of road frontage along Lakeshore Drive. Minus the existing parking caveat and the anticipated west edge access easement, there is 145metres of unencumbered frontage.

Due to the site's irregular shape, the parcel's depth relative to frontage is varied. Considering existing caveats and potential access easements, the site's developable depths range from 56-120m, which is deep enough to consider a wide variety of development forms.

Waterfront Access and Frontage

Similar to road frontage, the waterfront access and frontage is irregular. 133 metres along the site's northern and west boundaries have direct interface with either Lakefront and Lighthouse Parks. Due to the site's irregular shape and these parks' lack of road access, it is anticipated that access easements allowing for public and maintenance vehicle access will need to be put in place to ensure development does not compromise the public access and amenity potential of these spaces.

Stormwater management on site

Aside from the roughly 1.5 metre slope directly north of Lakeshore Drive, much of the site is exceptionally flat. Currently, there is gently sloping drainage to the west, were the existing ditch discharges water to the lake. There is a stormwater forcemain located on the south edge of the old poolhouse. This forcemain pumps water into the Town's stormwater infrastructure under Lakeshore Drive. Town representatives are currently investigating this asset to better understand it's condition and potential to be used in the future.

It is anticipated that future development on the site will either create new connections to the stormwater infrastructure under Lakeshore Drive or continue to use the existing infrastructure, with any/all necessary improvements, such as an oil and grit separator for the swale or a larger pump for the forcemain.

Current Zoning Constraints

The current land use designation for the site is Lakeshore Direct Control District (LDC). This zoning allows for a wide variety of uses, including most anticipated future uses. Residential uses are permitted, provided they are not located on the ground floor. The zoning also contains a 30 metre building setback from high water mark, and a requirement for public access along the lake shore. The current zoning is very flexible and allows for a wide variety of possible positive outcomes. There is no information of maximum heights or density.

Zoning Constraints

The land use designation, Lakefront District, is intended to more clearly direct development on the site. Overall, it is intended to steer development outcomes toward a large mixed use development with high quality integration along Lakeshore Drive and Lakefront/Lighthouse Park.

While many of the permitted uses have remained from the current designation, some changes have occurred to more clearly suggest a year-round tourism and recreation hub. One notable change is that residential uses above the ground floor have been removed explicitly, with only 'mixed-use development' remaining. Also, parking is mentioned as only being permitted underground.

The designation's Land Use Requirements most notably require a comprehensive development with no standalone single-use buildings. The maximum height is three stores. Developments are also expected to demonstrate how the following have been considered:

- Public pedestrian access along the lakeshore;
- Inclusion of public open space and gathering space within the site design;
- Water-related recreational day use;
- Winter use of the site and proposed public amenities;
- Improvements of the lake shore, if deemed necessary; and
- Preservation of scenic views across the land to the lake.

As previously mentioned, the draft zoning is crafted to clearly define the Town's desire for a large mixed use development on the site. It is also explicit in how a development will need to add public value, access and amenity in a manner that strengthens the lake front's tourism and recreation offering.

Forthcoming market analysis work will determine if this draft land use designation may potentially discourage smaller developments that would reflect current market conditions.

Neighbouring Parcel Zoning and Developments

East:
To the east of the site lays the Chateau Suites Mixed Use condominium complex. It is a 5-Storey concrete building with a single-loaded array of lake-facing residential units on the upper floors. Circulation to these units is on the southern facade. On the main floor, there are several retail uses that face the street, as well as a residential lobby that faces an internal vehicular drop-off layby. Along the lakefront there is a public promeade beside a roughly 1m high concrete wall with shared and private resident amenity space above.

This site is zoned Waterfront Commercial in the current and draft land use bylaws for the area.

West:
To the west lays the Water's Edge townhome development and The Launch at Sylvan Lake, which consists of a large marina, a boat launch available to the public and retail activities such as boating related accessories, and a cafe.

North:
To the north of the site lays two public parks: Lakefront Park and Lighthouse Park. These parks contain passive spaces such as walking paths, benches, pic-nic tables, and grassy gathering areas. The park also contains clusters of planting, a patio area near the old poolhouse and seasonal public washrooms.

There are two retail activities taking place in Lakefront Park along the shoreline and in the lake. Aqua Splash has a small dock and structure along the north edge and Sun Sport has a fenced area and a small kiosk building along the eastern edge.

Lighthouse Park also contains the lighthouse structure.

The current zoning for the area only pertains to Lighthouse Park. It is 'LDC-Lakeshore Direct Control District). Lakefront Park is not recognized as an area under the Town's jurisdiction in the zoning map.

The draft zoning for the area to the north is 'Lakefront' for Lakefront Park and 'Public Facility District' for Lighthouse Park

South:
To the south, across Lakeshore Drive lays several small empty parcels, three small older detached dwellings, and one small 3-storey multi-family building on the western edge. It appears attempts to consolidate multiple parcels for the purposed of a higher intensity development have been undertaken.

The current zoning for this area is W-DC Waterfront Direct Control District. The draft zoning for this parcel is Waterfront Commercial.

Appraisal

A property appraisal was completed at the time of this project. An up-to-date appraisal is recommended at the time that the Town prepares to solicit the site for private sector interest. Issuing a 'Request for Interest' will assist in determining the highest and best use of the site which is key to an appraisal methodology.

Market Trends Analysis

Retail Market Overview & Opportunities

Sylvan Lake's existing retail market provides a unique case study in market demands, with local and seasonal drivers influencing the market in different ways. The market has been studied multiple times by external consultants, while contemporary market data also provides valuable insights into the existing market and future opportunities.

Previous Market Studies

A pair of business and commercial lands studies have been conducted in recent years on the Sylvan Lake market. These studies have identified several key findings that in turn help inform and add context to the current market conditions and opportunity in the downtown area.

The **Business Survey Results and Analysis** was prepared by McSweeney in 2022. This study found a lack of available labour, cash flow issues, and supply chain challenges as the most limiting factors to Sylvan Lake's local businesses. These factors were exacerbated by the relatively small local population and seasonal nature of the economy. Beyond these key challenges, a lack of parking and lack of commercial spaces available for rent were also identified as key challenges to expanding the local business ecosystem.

Despite these challenges, some positives were also identified. The study highlighted the value of the overall attractiveness of Sylvan Lake with the downtown in particular recognized as an asset. The study also recognized that there exists a collectively held vision for downtown to become home to a wider variety of businesses, and that enhancing the local arts and culture amenities could help further support this growth.

The **Sylvan Lake Commercial Lands Study** was completed in 2020 by Urban Systems, and identified two main market observations:

- Focus is required on increasing business performance and infilling vacant space; and
- There is marked need for unique destination restaurants, local independent stores (clothing, accessories, health and beauty, specialty food stores, wellness and personal care, etc.).

These observations were informed by and further refined through a series of market analyses, including a review of the existing Downtown Businesses in Sylvan Lake. Presently, the Downtown is home to approximately 283,000 square feet of commercial space, of which 15,000 square feet were vacant in 2020. The study identified that businesses were primarily independents, with roughly 15% of all businesses catering towards the seasonal tourism market.

Importantly, as part of this downtown review, the study noticed a substantial disconnect between asking rents and quality of space - a potential cause in lagging investment in the core compared to what otherwise might be attainable. Market statistics highlighting this disconnect and market absorption rates is shown on the following page.

Despite these pricing inconsistencies, there remains demand for retail space, and it is anticipated through this study that Sylvan Lake will require 174,000 square feet of space by 2028. Specifically from a future-needs perspective, the study also identified the following:

- Retail program for the waterfront development could support +/- 30,000 sf of retail programming comprising a mix of approximately 15 store.
- Mix should be oriented towards specialty conveniences and retail with supporting quick service and full service food & beverage.
- Some categories like fashion, books & media and toys & hobbies will likely be contained within other store operations such as café or specialty.
- The overall market share of total target audience spending required to support retail program would be 1.4% which is reasonable and achievable.

Local Sylvan Lake Retail Market - Spaces for lease/sale

Active listings "On Market"

- Retail listings on market: 10
- Average sf: 1,790
- Average Lease Range $/psf: $16.80
  - Lowest $16
  - Highest: $18
- Average Sale Price: $428,000
  - Lowest: $119,000
  - Highest: $765,000
- Average DOM: 101 days
  - Shortest: 0 days
  - Longest: 203 days
- Average age: 28 years

Market Absorption

(Nov 2021 - 2023)

- 23 sales
- Avg Lease Range $psf: $12 - $15
- Average sale price: $903,333
  - Lowest: $450,000
  - Highest: $1,700,000
- Average DOM: 100
  - Shortest: 22 days
  - Longest: 214 days

Off Market*

(Nov 2021 – 2023)

- 20 listings
- Average sale price: $1,628,088
  - Lowest: $425,000
  - Highest: $3,000,000
- Average DOM: 138
  - Shortest: 36 days
  - Longest: 383 days

*Inc expired, terminated and withdrawn

Source: Prospects Mobile MLS – Sylvan Lake Stats, accessed Nov. 27, 2024

Local Sylvan Lake Market - Office/Mixed-Use Space for lease/sale

Active Listings "On Market"

- Mixed-Use listings on market: 7
- Office listings on market: 4
- Average sf: 3,482.50
- Average $/psf: $17
  - Lowest: $12
  - Highest: $25
- Average Sale Price: $2,196,730
  - Lowest: $602,400
  - Highest: $8,360,000
- Average DOM: 274 days
  - Shortest: 13 days
  - Longest: 845 days
- Average age: 23 years

Market Absorption

(Nov 2021- 2023)

- 28 sales
- Average $/psf: $15 - $16
- Average sale price: $390,725
  - Lowest: $182,500
  - Highest: $899,900
- Average DOM: 244 days
  - Shortest: 134 days
  - Longest: 469 days

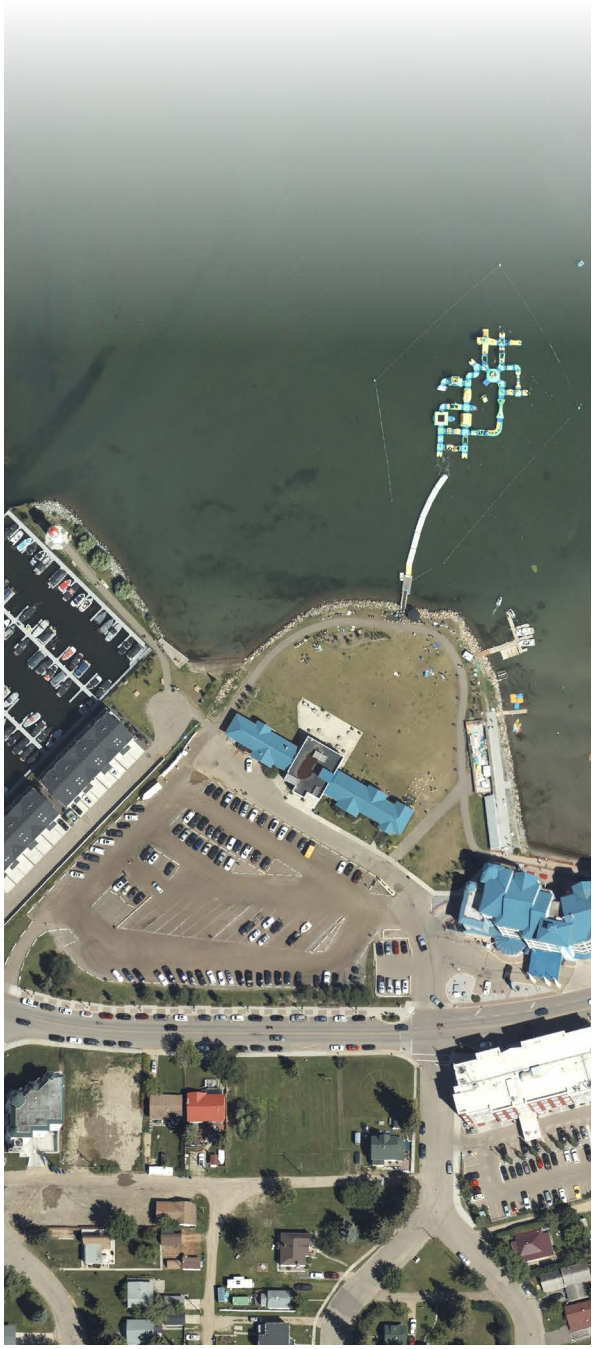
Off Market*

(Nov 2021- 2023)

- 76 listings
- Average sale price: $1,635,998
  - Lowest: $217,000
  - Highest: $8,360,000
- Average DOM: 280
  - Shortest: 6 days
  - Longest: 985 days

*Inc expired, terminated and withdrawn

Source: Prospects Mobile MLS – Sylvan Lake Stats, accessed Nov. 27, 2024



Current Retail Market Conditions

In terms of current retail market conditions, there exists substantial potential in the conveniences (day-to-day purchases), comparison goods and services, and leisure and entertainment sectors. The chart below provides a detailed summary of 2024 year-end retail trade area spending in Sylvan Lake.

While full-time residents provide the overwhelming majority of spending in the Sylvan Lake retail market (roughly $492 million), the visitor market accounts for $47.5 million with seasonal residents adding $8.9 million more to this total.

Retail Market
$602.1 million

Conveniences & Day-to-Day
$221.4 million

Comparison Goods & Services
$249.9 million

Leisure & Entertainment
$130.7 million

Retail Spending by Merchandise Category		2024 Sylvan Lake Full Time Resident Household Spending	2024 Sylvan Lake Full Time Resident Annual Spending	2024 Sylvan Lake Seasonal Resident Household Spending	2024 Sylvan Lake Seasonal Resident Annual Spending	2024 Sylvan Lake Visitor Spending Share	2024 Sylvan Lake Visitor Annual Spending	Misc Inflow Factor	2024 Sylvan Lake Miscellaneous Inflow Annual Spending	TOTAL TRADE AREA Retail Spending
Convenience & Day-to-Day Goods/Services	Grocery & Convenience	$12,741	$124,045,749	$1,911	$2,232,823	15.0%	$7,200,733	25.0%	$13,773,135	$147,252,441
	Pharmacy	$1,346	$13,102,686	$202	$235,848	2.0%	$960,098	0.0%	$0	$14,298,632
	Alcohol & Tobacco	$988	$9,621,326	$148	$173,184	5.0%	$2,400,244	2.5%	$1,377,314	$13,572,067
	Personal Services	$4,436	$43,192,867	$665	$777,472	2.0%	$960,098	2.5%	$1,377,314	$46,307,750
	Health Care & Medical Services	$1,195	$11,636,367	$179	$209,455	1.0%	$480,049	3.0%	$1,652,776	$13,978,647
Comparison or Department Store Type Merchandise (DSTM) Goods/Services	Fashion & Accessories	$3,570	$34,757,623	$536	$625,637	1.5%	$720,073	0.5%	$275,463	$36,378,796
	Jewelry	$261	$2,537,011	$39	$45,666	0.5%	$240,024	2.0%	$1,101,851	$3,924,552
	Beauty & Personal Care	$2,384	$23,206,890	$358	$417,724	1.0%	$480,049	0.0%	$0	$24,104,663
	Home Furniture & Décor	$955	$9,294,950	$143	$167,309	1.0%	$480,049	1.0%	$550,925	$10,493,234
	Appliances & Electronics	$6,485	$63,137,194	$973	$1,136,469	0.0%	$0	0.5%	$275,463	$64,549,126
	Home Improvement & Gardening	$4,509	$43,903,437	$676	$790,262	0.0%	$0	5.0%	$2,754,627	$47,448,326
	Books & Media	$89	$862,417	$13	$15,523	1.0%	$480,049	0.0%	$0	$1,357,989
	Sporting Goods	$1,391	$13,543,459	$209	$243,782	5.0%	$2,400,244	2.0%	$1,101,851	$17,289,336
	Toys & Hobbies	$1,009	$9,821,124	$151	$176,780	5.0%	$2,400,244	1.0%	$550,925	$12,949,074
	Specialty Retail	$1,893	$18,425,888	$284	$331,666	15.0%	$7,200,733	10.0%	$5,509,254	$31,467,540
Leisure, Recreation & Entertainment Goods/Services	Quick Service F&B	$3,043	$29,629,366	$456	$533,329	20.0%	$9,600,977	20.0%	$11,018,508	$50,782,180
	Restaurants & Pubs	$4,259	$41,465,814	$639	$746,385	15.0%	$7,200,733	15.0%	$8,263,881	$57,676,813
	Arts & Entertainment	$653	$6,355,216	$98	$114,394	5.0%	$2,400,244	5.0%	$2,754,627	$11,624,482
	Fitness & Leisure	$555	$5,400,421	$83	$97,208	5.0%	$2,400,244	5.0%	$2,754,627	$10,652,500
	TOTAL CATEGORIES	**$51,760**	**$503,939,805**	**$7,764**	**$9,070,916**	**100%**	**$48,004,886**	**9.8%**	**$55,092,541**	**$616,108,148**
	TOTAL (excluding Health Care)	**$50,565**	**$492,303,438**	**$7,585**	**$8,861,462**		**$47,524,837**		**$53,439,764**	**$602,129,501**

Retail Opportunity

Using insights from the previously completed studies and current market conditions, it is possible to project a forward-looking supportable floorspace and retail mix through to 2029.

The chart in the bottom right of this page highlights the growth potential in each of the specific market segments, providing an overall view into the areas of focus that Sylvan Lake could help support through the proposed development project.

The most important finding from this forward-looking projection are that the waterfront development's retail program could support +/- 30,000 square feet of retail programming distributed across as many as 15 unique stores.

In order to foster a successful retail component to the development, this mix should be oriented towards specialty conveniences and retail with supporting quick service and full service food and beverage options - effectively a primarily leisure, recreation, and entertainment-oriented development while still supporting more nuanced retail uses within this mix.

Importantly, it is worth noting that some categories of retail with supportable market share growth can and likely will be provided within other store operations. For example, fashion, books, media, toys, and hobbies could all be supported within cafés or other specialty retailers. This manifests a more intense form of retail space provision, which has a downward pressure on the overall square footage required to meet Sylvan Lake's projected demand.

The final main takeaway from the projections is that the overall market share of total target audience spending required to support the retail program outlined for the waterfront development would be 1.2%. This is a reasonable and achievable target, especially in light of Sylvan Lake's sustained year-over-year growth.

2029

	Merchandise/Store Type Category	Total Floorspace	Supportable Market Share	Mini Anchors Avg GLA sf	Mini Anchors Units	Mini Anchors Total SF	Inline/CRU Tenants Avg GLA sf	Inline/CRU Tenants Units	Inline/CRU Tenants Total SF
Convenience & Day-to-Day Goods/Services	Grocery & Convenience	2,000	0.7%				2,000	1	2,000
	Pharmacy	-							
	Alcohol & Tobacco	1,250	4.8%				1,250	1	1,250
	Personal Services (incl Spa)	13,500	5.1%		1	10,000	1,750	2	3,500
	***Health Care & Medical Services								
Comparison or Department Store Type Merchandise (DSTM) Goods/Services	Fashion & Accessories	500	0.3%					n/a	500
	Jewelry	-							
	Health & Beauty	-							
	Home Furniture & Décor	-							
	Appliances & Electronics	-							
	Home Improvement & Gardening	-							
	Books & Media	250	3.2%					n/a	250
	Sporting Goods	1,500	1.5%				1,500	1	1,500
	Toys & Hobbies	500	0.7%					n/a	500
	Specialty Retail	2,500	2.4%				833	3	2,500
Leisure, Recreation & Entertainment Goods/Services	Quick Service F&B	3,000	2.1%				1,000	3	3,000
	Restaurants & Pubs	5,000	2.3%				2,500	2	5,000
	Arts & Entertainment	-							-
	Fitness & Leisure	-							
SUMMARY	**Total**	**30,000**	**1.2%**	**10,000**	**1**	**10,000**	**1,538**	**13**	**20,000**
	Percent of Total Retail Floorspace				**33.3%**			**66.7%**	
	***Health Care & Medical Services	1,500					750	2	1,500
	Total	**31,500**		**10,000**	**1**	**10,000**	**1,433**	**15**	**21,500**
	Percent of Total Floorspace				**31.7%**			**68.3%**	

****Health Care & Medical Services are estimated to comprise an additional 5% of total floorspace.*

Full Time Residential Market Overview & Opportunity

In addition to the retail market outlook, it is also important to look at the residential market context. With a growing population comes additional opportunities to support a more diverse mix of residential uses within a waterfront development, and the emerging trends from the regional Red Deer market and local Sylvan Lake conditions will continue to influence this opportunity.

Regional Red Deer Residential Market

The broader market surrounding Sylvan Lake is captured through the Red Deer Realtors Association. This group provides market data at a regional level, allowing for broad, cross-sectional insights into Central Alberta's market.

Over the past years, a strong regional outlook has emerged, with sales activity returning to and exceeding pre-pandemic levels through Central Alberta. The market remains relatively balanced, although sustained in-migration to Alberta from both domestic and international immigrants may shift this balance towards a seller's market.

With growing prices in the residential market, sales in the row and apartment product sector remain higher than the detached and semi-detached market. Despite this, sale prices remain highest in the detached and semi-detached sector.

The average number of days to sell remains near generational lows, with residential listings selling in the shortest duration of time on average since before the oil bust in late 2014 / 2015. The average selling price continues to escalate year-over-year, establishing new record highs with each report.

Depsite these highs, the Central Alberta market remains more affordable than the province's two largest metropolitan areas, providing a more affordable alternative option for those priced out of the Edmonton and Calgary markets.

Local Sylvan Lake Residential Market

The Sylvan Lake market largely reflects the trends being experienced in the Red Deer region, but leads the region in demand and relative activity in the market. The chart below highlights the relative change in average sales price for several municipalities in the Central Alberta market. Sylvan Lake historically has been the highest-valued market, while this has normalized against Red Deer County and Lacombe County in particular as of 2022.

Over the past several years the Sylvan Lake market has moved towards a more balanced growth condition, while the pace of price growth has remained relatively slow. Active listings usually reflect a 50% single detached, 20% townhome, 20% condo, and 10% apartment split, while the average number of days on the market remains in the 45-60 day range, shifting seasonally.

The chart on the following page provides a detailed overview of Sylvan Lake's Core Housing Region as well as projected demand through to 2032. Looking forward, the residential market demand for multi-unit housing is projected to grow to 825-1,042 units by 2029/2030, and almost 2,000 units cumulatively by 2034. This reflects an emerging market for this housing typology that has not historically been as prevalent in the Town, and an opportunity that the waterfront development could potentially leverage.

At a reasonable 10% of market share of regional market multi-unit demand, 102 to 124 housing units could be supportable by 2028/2029. Because of the AirBnb market, only a portion of multi-unit dwellings should be targeted for seasonal or part-time residents so as to not undermine the potential for a boutique hotel opportunity in the waterfront development.

The optimal count for multi-unit could exceed forecasts because of the site's favourable locational attributes, and a phased approach to development could allow for further future on-site residential opportunities to more strategically captured this market demand as the development proof-of-concept emerges over time.

Average Sale Price History

Central Alberta	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Average Sale Price ($)	303,039	320,492	318,308	308,667	313,604	299,820	295,232	308,629	346,213	349,260	361,960
Year-Over-Year	4.3%	5.8%	-0.7%	-3.0%	1.6%	-4.4%	-1.5%	4.5%	12.2%	0.9%	3.6%
Lacombe County	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Average Sale Price ($)	315,162	328,516	328,607	335,037	339,389	312,553	303,655	334,844	367,308	366,689	394,120
Year-Over-Year	15.7%	4.2%	0.0%	2.0%	1.3%	-7.9%	-2.8%	10.3%	9.7%	-0.2%	7.5%
Red Deer City	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Average Sale Price ($)	321,332	336,849	338,003	327,349	330,936	313,424	310,576	313,425	337,385	336,996	340,794
Year-Over-Year	4.6%	4.8%	0.3%	-3.2%	1.1%	-5.3%	-0.9%	0.9%	7.6%	-0.1%	1.1%
Red Deer County	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Average Sale Price ($)	332,396	343,783	332,357	319,546	330,363	306,043	317,969	323,406	373,190	377,513	379,894
Year-Over-Year	3.3%	3.4%	-3.3%	-3.9%	3.4%	-7.4%	3.9%	1.7%	15.4%	1.2%	0.6%
Sylvan Lake	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Average Sale Price ($)	323,514	345,010	332,879	326,562	331,770	316,071	314,938	321,053	344,011	362,747	354,210
Year-Over-Year	0.2%	6.6%	-3.5%	-1.9%	1.6%	-4.7%	-0.4%	1.9%	7.2%	5.4%	-2.4%

Source: CARA – Residential Market Update, accessed November 2024

Residential Multi-Unit Demand - Regional

Sylvan Lake Core Housing Region	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
(1) **City of Red Deer**	108,943	109,398	109,855	110,314	110,775	111,238	111,678	112,119	112,562	113,007	113,454
(2) **Red Deer County**	20,909	21,068	21,229	21,391	21,554	21,718	21,874	22,031	22,190	22,349	22,510
(3) **Lacombe County**	10,577	10,620	10,663	10,707	10,750	10,794	10,838	10,882	10,926	10,970	11,015
(3) Town of Sylvan Lake	17,744	18,011	18,282	18,558	18,837	19,121	19,390	19,663	19,940	20,220	20,505
(1) Avg Household Size	2.48	2.48	2.48	2.48	2.48	2.48	2.48	2.48	2.47	2.47	2.47
(2) Avg Household Size	2.66	2.66	2.65	2.65	2.64	2.64	2.63	2.62	2.61	2.60	2.59
(3) Avg Household Size	2.56	2.56	2.55	2.55	2.54	2.54	2.53	2.52	2.51	2.50	2.49
(4) Avg Household Size	2.47	2.46	2.45	2.44	2.43	2.42	2.40	2.39	2.37	2.36	2.34
(1) Households	43,929	44,103	44,278	44,453	44,629	44,806	45,043	45,281	45,520	45,761	46,003
(2) Households	7,861	7,933	8,007	8,081	8,155	8,231	8,319	8,407	8,497	8,588	8,680
(3) Households	4,132	4,155	4,179	4,203	4,228	4,252	4,285	4,318	4,352	4,386	4,420
(4) Households	7,184	7,324	7,468	7,614	7,762	7,914	8,076	8,242	8,410	8,582	8,758
(1) Annual Growth in Households		174	175	175	176	177	237	238	239	241	242
(2) Annual Growth in Households		73	73	74	75	75	88	89	90	91	92
(3) Annual Growth in Households		24	24	24	24	24	33	33	34	34	34
(4) Annual Growth in Households		140	143	146	149	152	162	165	169	172	176
(1) % Living in Non Single-Detached (Rental & For-Sale)	47.3%	48.2%	49.2%	50.2%	51.2%	52.2%	54.3%	56.5%	58.7%	61.1%	63.5%
(2) % Living in Non Single-Detached (Rental & For-Sale)	18.7%	18.7%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%
(3) % Living in Non Single-Detached (Rental & For-Sale)	13.6%	13.6%	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%	16.5%	16.5%	16.5%
(4) % Living in Non Single-Detached (Rental & For-Sale)	33.1%	33.4%	34.1%	34.1%	34.1%	34.1%	34.1%	34.1%	34.8%	34.8%	34.8%
(1) City of Red Deer											
Annual Demand for Non Single-Detached		84	86	88	90	92	129	134	141	147	154
Cumulative Demand for Non Single-Detached	-	84	170	258	348	440	569	703	844	991	1,145
% of Demand Anticipated from Outside Market	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	88	90	92	95	97	135	141	148	154	162
Cumulative Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	88	179	271	365	462	597	738	886	1,041	1,202
(2) Red Deer County											
Annual Demand for Non Single-Detached		14	14	14	14	14	16	17	17	17	17
Cumulative Demand for Non Single-Detached	-	14	28	42	56	70	86	103	120	137	154
% of Demand Anticipated from Outside Market	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	14	14	14	14	14	16	17	17	17	17
Cumulative Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	14	28	42	56	70	86	103	120	137	154
(3) Lacombe County											
Annual Demand for Non Single-Detached		3	4	4	4	4	5	5	6	6	6
Cumulative Demand for Non Single-Detached	-	3	7	11	15	19	24	29	35	41	47
% of Demand Anticipated from Outside Market	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	6	6	6
Cumulative Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	3	7	11	15	19	24	29	35	41	47
(3) Town of Sylvan Lake											
Annual Demand for Non Single-Detached		47	49	50	51	52	55	56	59	60	61
Cumulative Demand for Non Single-Detached	-	47	96	146	197	249	304	360	419	479	540
% of Demand Anticipated from Outside Market	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%
Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	52	54	55	56	57	61	62	65	66	67
Cumulative Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	52	106	161	217	274	334	396	461	527	594
TOTAL HOUSING REGION ANNUAL DEMAND FOR MULTI-UNIT HOUSING		**157**	**162**	**165**	**169**	**172**	**217**	**224**	**236**	**243**	**252**
TOTAL HOUSING REGION CUMULATIVE DEMAND FOR MULTI-UNIT HOUSING		**157**	**319**	**485**	**653**	**825**	**1,042**	**1,266**	**1,502**	**1,745**	**1,997**

Source: Statistics Canada, Manifold Data Mining Inc. 2024, CHMC and FBM

Seasonal/Recreational Residential Market Overview and Opportunity

In addition to the local residential market, Sylvan Lake is also home to a robust seasonal and recreational residential market. Since Q1 2023 Sylvan Lake's sales prices have increased by 14.9%, from $580,357 to $666,767, suggesting the Sylvan Lake market continues to grow even while certain other Alberta waterfront markets have declined (except Wabamun Lake).

From an opportunities perspective, it is important to recognize Sylvan Lake's placement and value proposition within the broader Alberta market. Price and demand for recreational properties in Alberta continues to grow, especially in regions that are easily accessible from Calgary such as Sylvan Lake.

While national waterfront recreational property median prices decreased by 7.9% from 2022-2023, those in Alberta decreased only slightly by 0.7%. Two Alberta waterfront markets declined, Lac St. Anne by 2.9% and Pigeon Lake by 7.3%, while Wabamun Lake saw notable growth of 19.5%, comparable to Sylvan Lake's growth. Survey responses suggest the recreational property markets in Alberta have slowed ever so slightly compared to last year, with 33% of respondents perceiving slightly longer average days on market, while about half of respondents observe less inventory and half observe a stable inventory.

Demand outstrips supply due to a growing urban population in Edmonton area seeking nearby recreational properties while property turnover in Alberta waterfront communities is slow.

Accommodations/AirBnB Market Overview & Opportunity

As a recreational destination, accommodations form an important component of the Town's local economy and provision of housing. These accommodations are provided across a range of types and service-offerings, including traditional hotels and motels as well as short-term rentals through disruptive platforms such as AirBnb and VRBO.

Traditional Hotels and Motels

Today Sylvan Lake is home to roughly 214 traditional hotel and motel rooms. While the seasonal nature of Sylvan Lake's tourism industry drives demand in the warm summer months, overall annual occupancy rates in the Town remain around 61%.

Short-Term Rentals

Short-term rentals provide another approximately 137 accommodations for visitors to the Sylvan Lake area. Collectively these accommodations have an average occupancy of just over 50%, with the average visitor spending 3 days in Sylvan Lake.

The Airbnb market is currently quite healthy, which could have a cooling effect on the overall viability of a smaller boutique hotel operation. Because of this, multi-unit development should be marketed towards full-time residents rather than as seasonal income generating properties for investors.

Demand

With current annualized occupancy at 61%, the market must recover to an industry minimum of 65% to be appealing for any hotel operator. Using this metric, the chart on the following page demonstrates how 65 additional rooms could be supported at a 65% annualized occupancy rate by 2030.

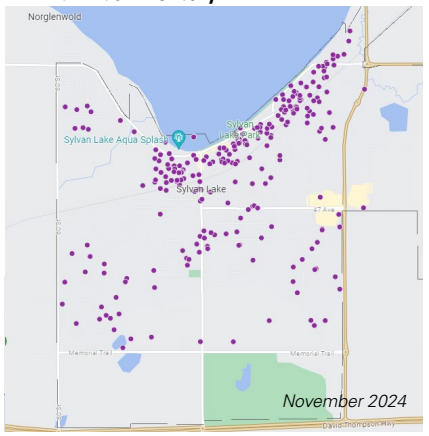
Given this horizon for successful absorption of 65 units, it is likely that the best approach for delivering a hotel as part of future waterfront development would be as part of a later phase in the project.

Sylvan Lake – Hotel/Motel Inventory

Hotel Property Name/Brand	Number of Rooms	Meeting Space (sq. ft.)	Annual Occupancy Average
UPPER UPSCALE			
n/a			
UPSCALE			
n/a			
UPPER MIDSCALE			
n/a			
MIDSCALE			
Best Western Chateau	72	1,255	53%
Days Inn	41	n/a	55%
ECONOMY			
INDEPENDENT			
Prairie Moon Inn	61	n/a	50%
Beachfront Resort	20	n/a	65%
Edgewater Inn	20	n/a	83%
CURRENT TOTAL	**214**	**1,255**	**61%**

Sylvan Lake STAR data – February 2024

AirBnb/Vrbo Inventory



Accommodations Demand – Sylvan Lake Waterfront

ACCOMMODATION ROOM DEMAND		2024	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	Forecasted Growth Per Annum 2024 - 2034
"Traditional Accommodations" Inventory (number of rooms)		214	214	214	214	214	214	214	214	214	214	214	214	0.00%
"AirBnB / Vrbo Accommodations" Inventory (120 available properties x avg 2.8 rooms)		339	343	346	350	353	357	360	364	367	371	375	379	1.00%
Projected Sylvan Lake Room Demand		127,178	129,960	132,811	135,733	138,729	141,800	144,948	148,175	151,484	154,876	158,353	161,918	2.44%
Room Demand														
Leisure	80%	102,161	104,817	107,542	110,338	113,207	116,151	119,170	122,269	125,448	128,710	132,056	135,489	2.86%
Commercial	20%	25,017	25,143	25,268	25,395	25,522	25,649	25,777	25,906	26,036	26,166	26,297	26,428	0.55%
Total	100%	127,178	129,960	132,811	135,733	138,729	141,800	144,948	148,175	151,484	154,876	158,353	161,918	
Projected Sylvan Lake Room Nights Supply		201,976	203,215	204,466	205,730	207,006	208,295	209,597	210,912	212,240	213,581	214,936	216,304	
Cumulative Annual New Sylvan Lake Room Demand		7	15	23	31	39	47	56	65	74	83	93	103	
Industry Standard Annual Occupancy Benchmark		65.0%												
Cumulative Annual New Sylvan Lake Waterfront Room Demand at 65% occupancy		5	10	15	20	25	31	36	42	48	54	60	67	

Source: FBM Demand Modelling based on current available inventory and occupancy statistics.

Note: Forecasted Occupancy as estimated by FBM reflecting historic average and industry standard given the Red Deer Market (Alberta Tourism) and AirBnB/Vrbo market (AirDNA).

Opportunity & Positioning Summary

Based on the market performance review as well as supply and demand considerations, the following program is deemed to be the most realistic and marketable opportunity for the Sylvan Lake Waterfront Site, with a base year of development targeted by 2027.

- **Multi-Unit Residential** – Minimum 100 units at a 10% market share by 2028 and assuming that most units would be full-time residential, but likely that demand is there for Seasonal or AirBnB/Vrbo inventory.
- **Retail/Commercial** – 30,000 square feet at an achievable 1.2% market share by 2027 of all segments' spending (full time resident, seasonal resident, visitor and miscellaneous inflow).
- **Hotel/Accommodations** – Maximum 65 rooms at a minimum 65% annualized occupancy by 2030. Demand forecasts factor in the current inventory of 214 hotel/motel rooms in addition to an estimated 336 AirBnB Available Rooms.
- **Event Space** – While not quantified, if a boutique hotel as envisioned is achieved, an event space would still be attractive. If the floorplate and design is provided in such a way that it could operate without a hotel, this event space could reasonably be supported by the projected economic conditions up to 10,000 square feet in bookable space.

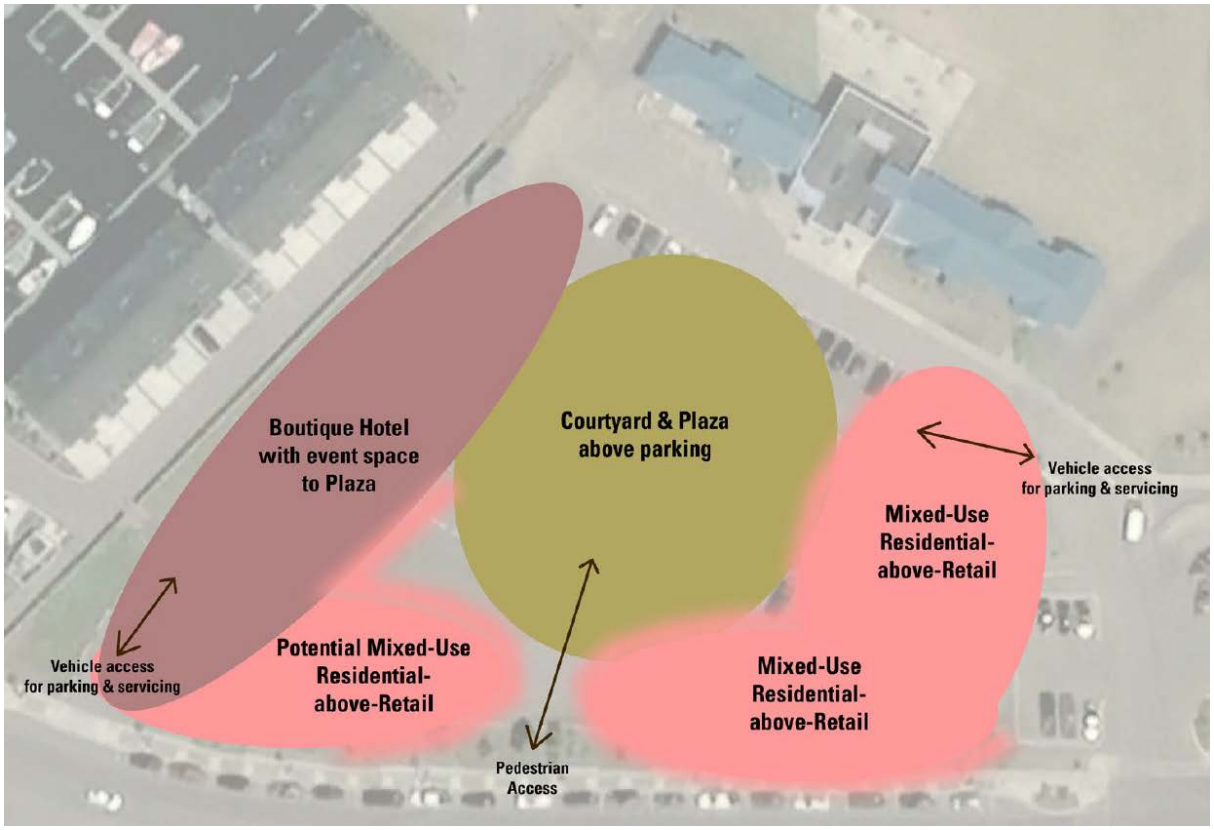
Additional Considerations

A conceptual layout as informed by the economic analysis is provided in the figure below.

Any proposed retail program should front Lakeshore Drive and the prominent corner of 51st Street with a pedestrian breezeway at the midpoint of the Lakeshore Drive frontage for access and views into the internal plaza/courtyard and lake with residential above the retail program.

Additionally, future phasing for a boutique hotel would be best placed at the west side of the site with frontage and servicing access to/from Lakeshore Drive, but also extending along the west side to create a buffer between the marina residential townhomes. This would better frame the internal courtyard and plaza experience to allow for maximum visibility to the activity spaces on land and water from all angles of the hotel and residential units.

Finally, spa and event space could be part of the future phased hotel development with ground floor presence opposite retail from the mixed-use residential and commercial component. However, it is possible that the spa concept could be a non-hotel operated concept with space taken in the initial retail program.



Opportunity Assessment

In order to test development forms that find balance between the Market Trends Analysis and the Town's site aspirations, three development cases have been created. These were created through discussions with project consultants and Town representatives. Each case responds to key market demand trend assumptions, desires for specific uses, and desired interfaces with external public amenities and streets.

The following pages describe the three development cases that seek to respond to the following questions through a number of ways. These ways have been structured as key performance criteria and are as follows:

Key Performance Criteria

1. Does the use mix suit the demographics and market potential of the site and area?
2. Does it maximize or optimize the potential use of the land?
3. Is it financially feasible that the recommended development option will be successful?
4. How does the development contribute to the downtown economy and Tourism by means of being an added asset or attractor.
5. Does it require changes to the Land Use Bylaw in order to support the development.

Site Aspirations

The overall project aspirations that underpin the three Cases are as follows:

- Creating a destination that adds tourism and recreation value to the lakefront and to the Town.
- Providing activation and public value along the street and lake-facing frontages.
- Providing high-quality public access and connectivity to Lakefront and Lighthouse Parks.
- Responding to current market conditions in a manner that is economically feasible.
- Capturing the site's longer-term potential.

Proforma vs. Cost Estimates

While individual proformas were requested for each Case, given their use complexity, the unknowns of potential partnerships (for the event centre), and the unknown financing, borrowing and revenue assumptions, it is too premature to speculate of the rates of return for each case. Within the limitations of what we know, we can speculate on the estimated total construction costs of each case. Using Altus's 2024 Canadian Cost Guide, which provided expected construction cost rates / m2 for different market areas across Canada we can calculate the construction costs for each case by simply inputing our areas per use type and then adding 18% of soft costs and 25% for contingency. Using this technique, each case includes an estimated construction cost table.

Parking Strategy (quantity and type)

The site is currently a large gravel parking lot that services general waterfront visitors in private vehicles, as well as boat trailer parking from the adjacent boat launch. Development on this parcel, at any level of density, will displace the current parking on site. This is simply a fact of developing sites with new uses. Moreover, development on this site and it's adjacent open spaces will create off-site parking demands in the general downtown area, as the vibrancy and activity of this location increases. This should not be seen as a problem. Instead, a district wide parking strategy that encourages visitors and those with boat trailers to park further away from the waterfront will needed. Simply put, an active and vibrant waterfront district cannot support ample surface parking on-site, especially for large vehicles with trailers. Parking should instead be encouraged on 50 Avenue and 53 Street. Additional public parking lots in close proximity to the lake should be avoided. Convenient drop-offs locations and clear way-finding strategies should instead be used to have people store their vehicles in areas on lower value.

For the future development on this site, parking requirements should be relaxed as much as possible, allowing commercial off-site parking on public streets to be expected. On-site parking should only be provided for staff, residents and hotel guests. Commercial uses should not be required to have dedicated on-site parking, but should be allowed to provide it, even at-grade, in lower density developments, providing it's location is positioned to have minimal impact on park uses and people traveling between Downtown and Lakefront Park.

Discounting Land

The three cases each include difference development densities and use mixes. For the two cases with lower densities, it would be likely that the Town would have to sell or lease the land at lower than market rate in order to attract the level of quality and use mix that is desired. This is especially the case for the lowest density case (Case #1), which includes a mix of uses that will positively contribute to the waterfront, but does not include any large GFA uses that will provide high value returns on investment. Spa ventures are generally unable to pay high values for their sites, the event centre will likely require non-market funding, and the remaining retail and food and beverage spaces will all be serving a market that relies on seasonal swells in uses with no on-site user generation. All of these factors, in absence of having a large high GFA anchor use (hotel or housing) will likely mean that lowest density development concept that provide positive outcomes for the area will require a discounted land value to attract investment.

Public or Quasi-Public Partnerships

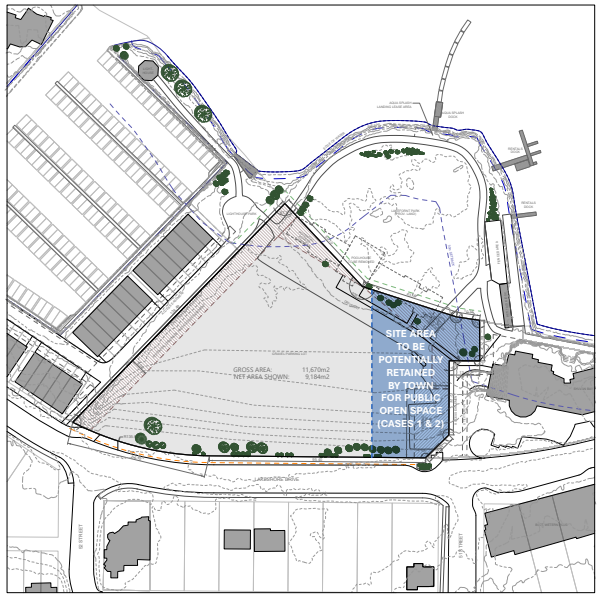
All three cases include interior elements that would likely require non-market involvement to fund and operate. These include simple spaces, such as public washrooms, and commercial retail units that would be expected to hold lessee s currently managed by the Town, as well as more complex spaces, such as the event centre. The event centre may be able to function on its own if it is part of a hotel complex, but in the cases where there is no hotel, such a facility would most likely not be supported entirely by the private sector, meaning capital and operational investment from a non-market entity (fully public or quasi-public) would be required, alongside a long-term partnership agreement. In soliciting development interest, these types of partnerships can be seen as a risk factor by the private sector, if they're not already well-defined. If the Town is interested in securing an event centre on the site within a lower density concept, it would be best if the town first developed a clear structure and draft agreement for this partnership and provide it as part of the investment solicitation package. Lower perceived potential risk factors will in this package will pave the way toward higher quality submission.

Funding Adjacent Public Space Investments

In a larger urban centres, and with significantly higher development densities, municipalities can often come to agreements where the private sector helps to fund adjacent capital investments into streets and open spaces. The more conventional and profitable a development is strongly impacts its ability to provide this type of off-site investment. Given this site's unique urban context, its desired high and irregular mix of uses, as well as its position within the market trends, we don't anticipate that any form development on this site, aside from higher density residential, would be able to provide notable funds for off-site improvements. Due to this, we anticipate that the adjacent public space improvements within Lakefront Park will need to be improved using funds from a different source. Given the high tourism and economic development role this open space plays, we see it best to seek funding grants through tourism and economic development grants at the Provincial and Federal levels. Other private sector investments may also be possible through sponsorship agreements. For example, a private entirety that employs many in the area, may be willing to provide a large sum toward the park's improvements if they get naming or branding rights within the space.

Adjusting the Parcel's Size

The subject parcel is large (2.88 ac gross / 2.27 ac net developable area). The site's configuration with its neighbours also creates a public open space gap between the waterfront public spaces and Downtown. For the low density scenarios, it would best if the town would entrain shrinking the size of the site and creating a linear public open space between Lakefront Park and Lakeshore Drive. This would likely increase the investor interest in the site (for low density scenarios) by removing largely undevelopable lands that also contain legal easement agreement complexities, and ensuring public space access between downtown and the Lakefront Park and Lakeshore Drive.



Case #1:

Nordic Spa and Associated Lakefront Uses

This is a multi-tenant commercial development that includes:

- a small-to-medium sized nordic spa, averaging 50-80 visitors per day (Kananaskis Spa is 180+ visitors per day),
- a 10,000 ft^2 event centre capable of hosting events for 200-250 people,
- street and lake fronting retail units, and
- food and beverage space that serves the nordic spa, the event centre and the public, via frontage onto the lake facing open spaces.

This 3,000-4,500m^2 commercial development would add approximately 60-80 full-time equivalent positions to the town.

Case #1 would take advantage of the site's exceptional lake and park facing location, adding a retail uses, food services, event space and a destination nordic spa experience to the Town. Because this case does not include uses on upper floors, it is anticipated that some surface parking as well as parking count relaxations would be required.

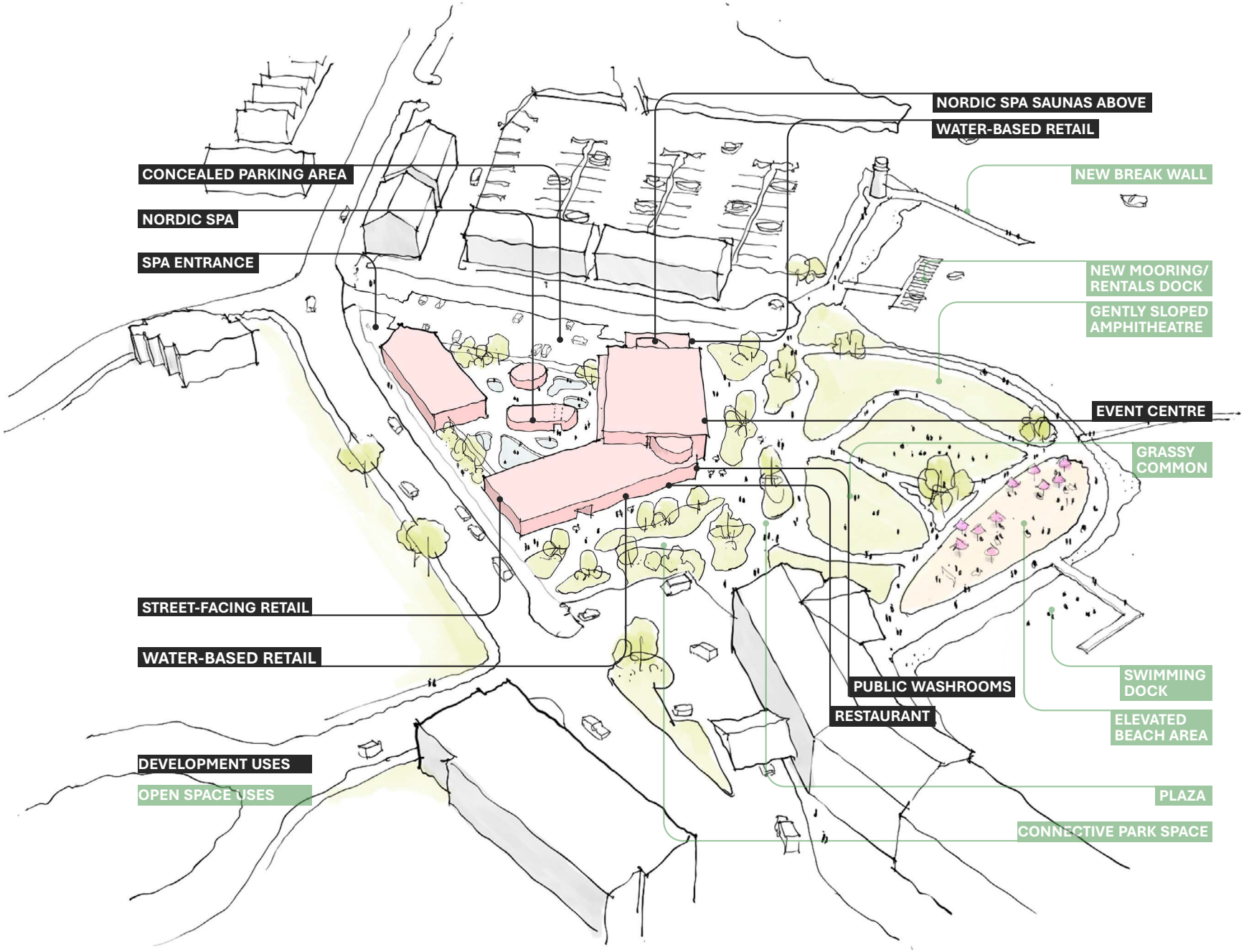
This case represents a lighter investment scenario in a manner that still yields high levels of draw to the site and waterfront.

Key Performance Criteria

1. Does the use suit the demographics and market potential of the site and area? - Partially. A spa, with retail, food and beverage, and an event centre would serve the area and it's population (resident and visitor) well, but the density is low.
2. Does it maximize or optimize the potential use of the land? - No. This option elects to use a smaller area of the site. It also does not include significant floor area on upper floors.
3. Is it financially feasible that the recommended development option will be successful? - Yes. Providing the Town doesn't require a high cost for the land. Spa's are generally unable to pay high amounts for their land costs, and the event centre would most likely require a public partnership and funding to be possible.
4. How does the development contribute to the downtown economy and Tourism by means of being an added asset or attractor. - Case 1 adds two important uses (spa + event space) to the waterfront, new public open spaces that connect the waterfront to Downtown and new retail space.
5. Does it require changes to the Land Use Bylaw in order to support the development. - No changes are needed.

Case 1: Cost Estimate

Hard Costs:	Area	Rate/m2	Cost
Spa - Interior	700	$ 5,000	$ 3,500,000
Spa - Exterior	1700	$ 3,000	$ 5,100,000
Event Centre	1000	$ 6,500	$ 6,500,000
Commercial Spaces	1200	$ 2,800	$ 3,360,000
Site Improvements	2400	$ 1,500	$ 3,600,000
Total			**$ 22,060,000**
Soft Costs (15%):			**$ 3,309,000**
Contingency (25%):			**$ 6,342,250**
Total			**$ 31,711,250**


NORDIC SPA SAUNAS ABOVE
WATER-BASED RETAIL
CONCEALED PARKING AREA
NORDIC SPA
SPA ENTRANCE
NEW BREAK WALL
NEW MOORING/
RENTALS DOCK
GENTLY SLOPED
AMPHITHEATRE
EVENT CENTRE
GRASSY
COMMON
STREET-FACING RETAIL
WATER-BASED RETAIL
PUBLIC WASHROOMS
RESTAURANT
SWIMMING
DOCK
ELEVATED
BEACH AREA
DEVELOPMENT USES
OPEN SPACE USES
PLAZA
CONNECTIVE PARK SPACE

Case #2:

Destination Hotel and Associated Uses

This is a large mixed-use commercial development that includes:

- a 60-90 room hotel,
- an event centre capable of hosting events for 200-250 people,
- street and lake fronting retail units,
- a small-to-medium sized nordic spa, averaging 50-80 visitors per day,
- food and beverage space that serves the hotel, the nordic spa, the event centre and the public, via frontage onto the lake facing open spaces, and
- one floor of underground parking throughout for staff and guests. Some surface parking as well.

This 8,000-11,000m^2 development would add approximately 80-110 full-time equivalent positions to the town.

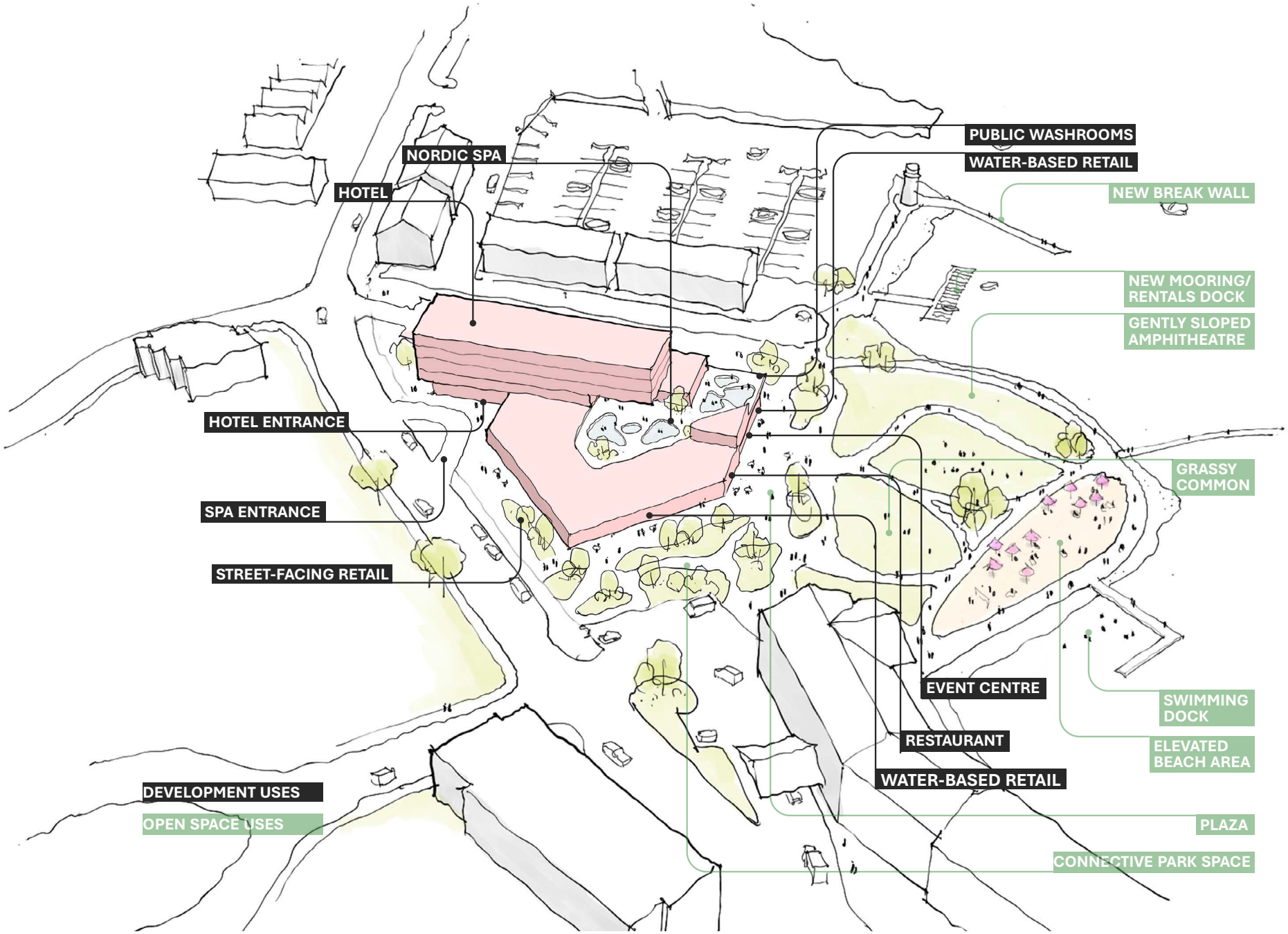
Case #2 would add high value hotel space, attached to a uniquely positioned medium-sized event facility that opens onto lakefront open spaces. This development would take full advantage of the site's exceptional lake and park facing location, adding retail uses, food services, accommodations, event space and a destination nordic spa experience to the Town.

Key Performance Criteria

1. Does the use suit the demographics and market potential of the site and area? - Yes. The hotel, small-spa, event centre and retail areas would all work in a synergistic manner. That said, the site is large enough to fit a much larger hotel, so shrinking the size of the site may make it more appealing.
2. Does it maximize or optimize the potential use of the land? - No. But it is much better than Case 1. This Case provides a medium sized hotel and associated uses, but the site could be more densely developed to best exploit it's potential.
3. Is it financially feasible that the recommended development option will be successful? - Somewhat, Yes. But predicting the hotel market is small and seasonal communities is very difficult. This is one potential development outcome, but only potential investors can confirm if there is sufficient demand and interest to create such a facility.
4. How does the development contribute to the downtown economy and Tourism by means of being an added asset or attractor?- Case 2 adds a major mixed amenity addition containing multiple important uses (hotel, spa, event space and commercial) to the waterfront. The project would greatly increase the Town's appeal for small corporate events and weddings for other celebration. The new public open spaces would also connect the waterfront to Downtown and new retail space.
5. Does it require changes to the Land Use Bylaw in order to support the development. - No changes are needed.

Case 2: Cost Estimate

Hard Costs:	Area	Rate/m2	Cost
Hotel	6025	$ 3,400	$ 20,485,000
Spa - Interior	420	$ 5,000	$ 2,100,000
Spa - Exterior	950	$ 3,000	$ 2,850,000
Event Centre	1000	$ 6,500	$ 6,500,000
Commercial Spaces	1200	$ 2,800	$ 3,360,000
Underground Parkin	3600	$ 2,000	$ 7,200,000
Site Improvements	3200	$ 1,500	$ 4,800,000
Total			**$ 47,295,000**
Soft Costs (15%):			**$ 7,094,250**
Contingency (25%):			**$ 13,597,313**
Total			**$ 67,986,563**


NORDIC SPA
HOTEL
HOTEL ENTRANCE
SPA ENTRANCE
STREET-FACING RETAIL
PUBLIC WASHROOMS
WATER-BASED RETAIL
NEW BREAK WALL
NEW MOORING/ RENTALS DOCK
GENTLY SLOPED AMPHITHEATRE
GRASSY COMMON
EVENT CENTRE
SWIMMING DOCK
RESTAURANT
ELEVATED BEACH AREA
WATER-BASED RETAIL
PLAZA
CONNECTIVE PARK SPACE
DEVELOPMENT USES
OPEN SPACE USES

Case #3:

Large Mixed Use Development

This is a large mixed-use commercial development that includes:

- Two mixed-use multi-family buildings (one could be a hotel),
- an event centre capable of hosting events for 200-250 people,
- street and lake fronting retail units,
- food and beverage space that serves the event centre and the public, via frontage onto the lake facing open spaces, and
- at least one floor of underground parking throughout for staff and residents and guests

This 13,000-16,000m^2 development would add approximately 50-110 full-time equivalent positions to the town and increase the population within walking distance of downtown and the waterfront areas. It includes 150-175 new multi-family units. However, if one building were to be a 100-125 room hotel, the residential unit count would be 75-95.

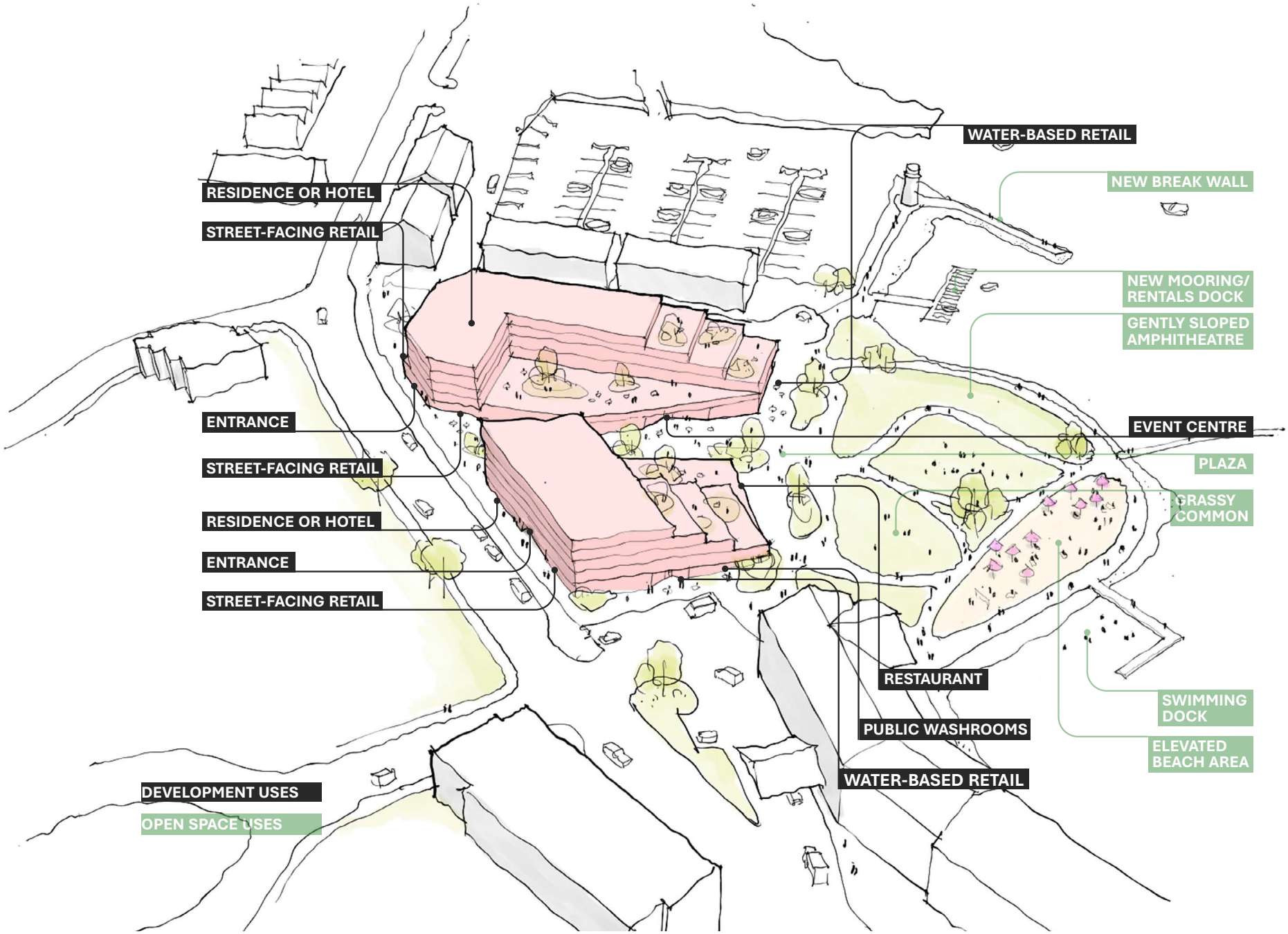
Case #3 would add significant residential and/or hotel space to the area, as well as a uniquely positioned medium-sized event facility that opens onto the lake facing open spaces within an urban plaza. This development would take advantage of the site's exceptional lake and park facing location, adding a retail uses, food services, housing and/or accommodations, and an event space to the Town.

Key Performance Criteria

1. Does the use suit the demographics and market potential of the site and area? - Yes. The residential (condo, rental, or short-term tern)or hotel component, and higher density adds a critical mass to the site and to the demand, making the site appeal to larger, more sophisticated developers. The event centre and retail areas would all work, though the event centre would need an separate operator.
2. Does it maximize or optimize the potential use of the land? - Yes. Of the three, this Case, does the best at realizing the development density and revenue potential of the land. It would require that the Town accept that private residences be located along the waterfront though.
3. Is it financially feasible that the recommended development option will be successful? - Yes. Though, due to the site's irregular shape and edge conditions, it would be an atypically complex development for the central Alberta market, meaning the market appeal for such a project would be smaller than if the site were elsewhere in town.
4. How does the development contribute to the downtown economy and Tourism by means of being an added asset or attractor? - Case 3 adds major development density and population to the site, along with new commercial spaces positioning within a new urban plaza. This development would add urban vitality and activity to the waterfront, effectively extending Downtown to Lakefront Park.
5. Does it require changes to the Land Use Bylaw in order to support the development. - No changes are needed.

Case 3: Cost Estimate

Hard Costs:	Area	Rate/m2	Cost
Residential	15000	$ 3,400	$ 51,000,000
Event Centre	1000	$ 6,500	$ 6,500,000
Commercial Spaces	4400	$ 2,800	$ 12,320,000
Underground Parkin	7000	$ 2,000	$ 14,000,000
Site Improvements	4500	$ 1,500	$ 6,750,000
Total			**$ 90,570,000**
Soft Costs (15%):			**$ 13,585,500**
Contingency (25%):			**$ 26,038,875**
Total			**$ 130,194,375**


WATER-BASED RETAIL
NEW BREAK WALL
RESIDENCE OR HOTEL
STREET-FACING RETAIL
NEW MOORING/
RENTALS DOCK
GENTLY SLOPED
AMPHITHEATRE
ENTRANCE
EVENT CENTRE
STREET-FACING RETAIL
PLAZA
GRASSY
COMMON
RESIDENCE OR HOTEL
ENTRANCE
STREET-FACING RETAIL
RESTAURANT
SWIMMING
DOCK
PUBLIC WASHROOMS
ELEVATED
BEACH AREA
WATER-BASED RETAIL
DEVELOPMENT USES
OPEN SPACE USES

Additional Opportunities:

Lighter and Smaller Investments

The three cases presented are intended to act as examples of developments that would satisfactorily meet the Town's planning, economic development and tourism objectives. Any development application that seeks to inject similar vibrancy and amenity to the site should be welcomed and entertained by the Town.

If perceived market conditions do not warrant developments of similar level of investment, the Town should be interested in considering lighter intensity developments that still seek to activate the site and draw visitors to the area. These developments could include but not be limited to retail, market, and food and beverage activations using simple, light or modular structures that can host multiple tenants and activate the adjacent open spaces.

These projects often require either a very well-funded and staffed third party entity to run the operations, programming, and management. In the absence of this type of entity notable funding and staffing is required from the municipality. These projects rarely operate purely on private sector investment. They also often wholly or largely seasonal, limiting maximal revenues and activations to the warmer months. Lastly, these projects typically do not correspond with larger capital budgets to deal with significant site issues related to drainage, servicing or access. They are generally interim in nature and should be seen as a light touch approach until a larger development vision is accepted. While their capital costs are generally low, their operational costs are typically higher than initially anticipated. Making these project fufill their placemaking potential requires significant efforts on multiple fronts.

In all future development scenarios, the Town must remain open to act as a proactive partner in ensuring the adjacent open spaces (private and public) work in-concert with the development, maximizing the potential for a vibrant amenity-rich waterfront experience and drawing residents and visitors alike to the area.

Key Performance Criteria

1. Does the use suit the demographics and market potential of the site and area? - No. This will involve the intentional under development of the site to satisfy the desire to activate it. This type of approach will likely succeed in the busy season and struggle or need to fully close in winter, which will make it require public investment to fund.
2. Does it maximize or optimize the potential use of the land? - No. But if the likely timing of the larger developments shown in the previous cases are determined to be a long term play, this type of site activation could help fill the gap by activating the site in a shorter term manner.
3. Is it financially feasible that the recommended development option will be successful? - No. As previously mentioned this would likely be heavily reliant on seasonal usage. Winter activations could be possible, during festivals and major events, but this type of development would likely be seasonal and require public finding to operate, program, and manage.
4. How does the development contribute to the downtown economy and Tourism by means of being an added asset or attractor?- It would contribute activation and vibrancy to the site, creating a space for diverse programming and waterfront commercial and cultural activation.

The table below assumes a medium-large scale 10-container project with retail, food and beverage, and washroom containers alongside a stage, large deck structure, and adjacent modest but effective site improvements between the street and the park (pathways, planting, etc.). This concept was developed after a conversation with a group that runs a new similar seasonal project in Calgary (River Hall).

Additional Opportunities: Cost Estimate

Hard Costs	Area (m2)	Rate/m2	Each	Rate	Cost
F&B Container*			3	$ 40,000	$ 120,000
Retail Container**			6	$ 30,000	$ 180,000
Washroom Container			1	$ 50,000	$ 50,000
Cold Storage Trailer (lease)			1	$ 40,000	$ 40,000
Unifying Signage			1	$ 40,000	$ 40,000
Decking	350	$ 175			$ 61,250
Stage			1	$ 30,000	$ 30,000
Custom Furnishings			30	$ 2,000	$ 60,000
Site Improvements-low***	3,650	$ 75			$ 273,750
Site Improvements-High****	500	$ 250			$ 125,000
Servicing Requirements*****			1	$ 50,000	$ 50,000
Total					**$ 1,030,000**
Soft Costs (25%)					$ 257,500
Contingency (25%)					$ 257,500
Total					**$ 1,545,000**

Operations	Monthly	Annual******
Programming	$ 5,000	$ 20,000
Stage tech	$ 5,000	$ 20,000
Site supervision	$ 5,000	$ 20,000
Social media/marketing	$ 5,000	$ 20,000
Janitorial	$ 10,000	$ 40,000
IT	$ 1,000	$ 4,000
Management	$ 8,000	$ 32,000
Total	**$ 39,000**	**$ 156,000**

* Container is painted, has side openings with canopy and has plumbing and mech.

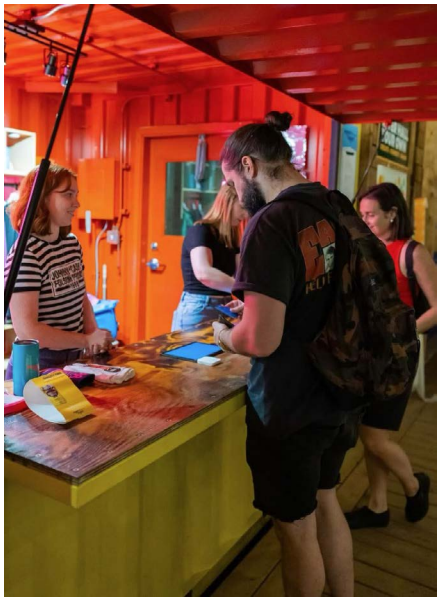
** Container is painted, has glass bifold doors on one end, minor heating and air ventilation.

*** Basic site work such as turf, compacted fines and areas of shrubs and trees.

**** More robust site work such as concrete pads, sidewalks and decoratively painted asphalt.

***** Includes all the necessary tie-ins between the containers and the site's sanitary and water.

****** Assumes 4 months of operation.

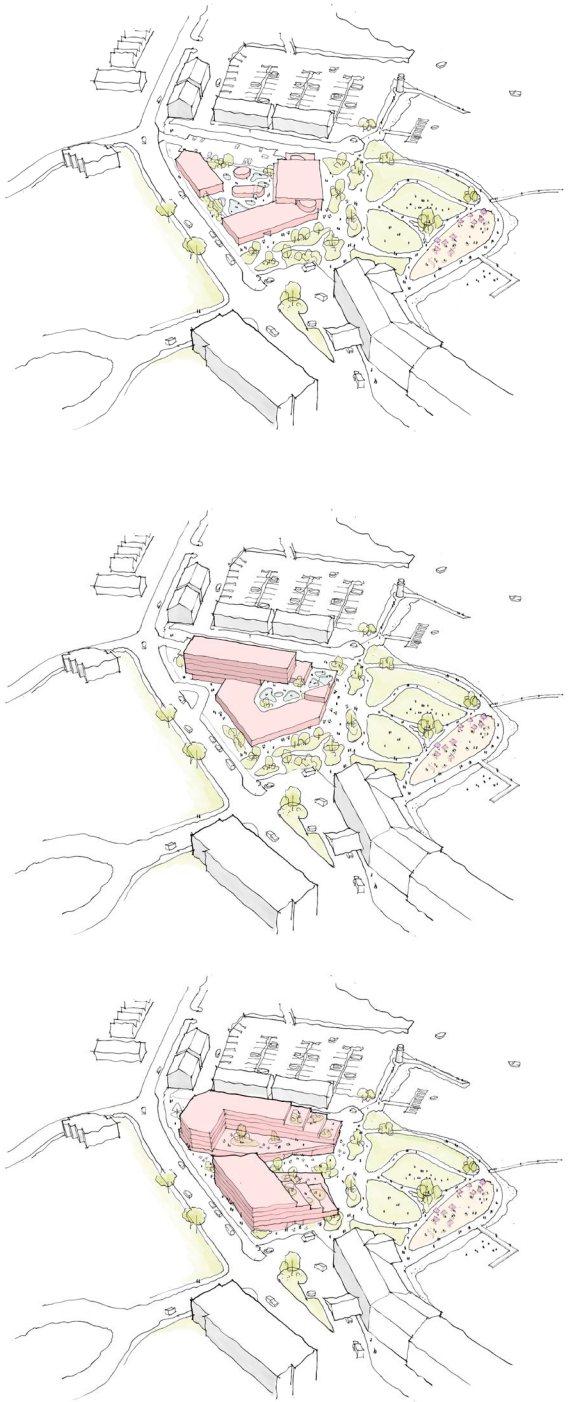


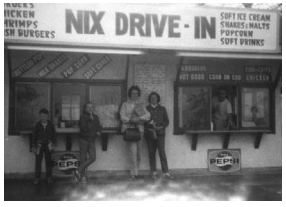
Les Jardineries
BAR

Conclusion

The Town of Sylvan Lake has an important decision to make that will forever impact its waterfront.

The the development cases presented in this document should be seen as possibilities along a spectrum of development density and intensity. They are the result of a collaborative process with Town representatives, urban designers, urban planners, and market analysis experts, and are intended to communicate aspirational development attributes that would add significant value to the Town and the connecting spaces between Downtown and the waterfront. At the same time, these cases must also be in general alignment with what is attractive from the private sector. The cases all lean towards being aspirational, so they can act as an guide in how the area and its adjacent open spaces can be transformed to create a more vibrant and active urban waterfront in this location. They are only hypothetical examples of possible manifestations of what current market research sees as potential outcomes. Given the evolving nature of the market, the Town should remain opportunistically open to a wide variety of develop forms and uses on the site, providing they embolden the connection between Downtown and the waterfront and add amenity, vibrancy and activity to the area.





All photos taken from Sylvan Lake Archives.

Sylvan Lake Real Estate Preliminary Market Trends, Demand & Positioning

Retail
Residential
Accommodations

FBM
architecture
interior design
planning

Prepared for:
O2 Planning + Design
For Town of Sylvan Lake
Development Feasibility of
Former Waterslide Site

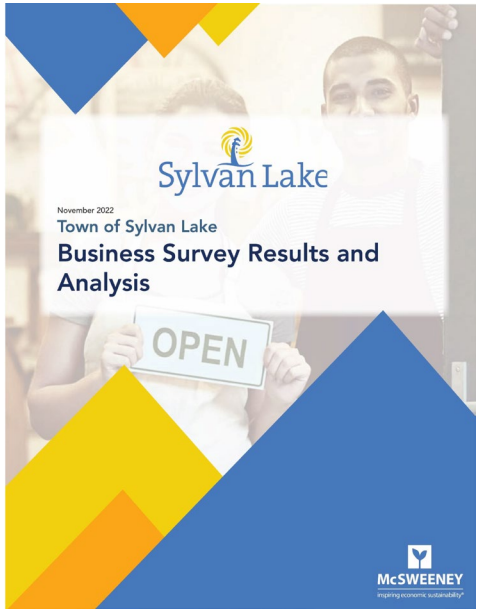
December 2024
(rev 002 April 2025)

Part 1
Retail Market
Overview & Opportunity

Observations

Business Survey Results & Analysis (2022)

- Lack of available labour, cash flow, and supply chain challenges as being most limiting to their business
- Drawbacks to operating a business include the relatively small population and the seasonal nature of the economy
- Location and overall attractiveness of downtown is an asset
- Lack of parking and a lack of commercial spaces for rent
- Vision for downtown to be home to a wider variety of businesses and enhancing the local arts and culture opportunities



Commercial Lands Study (2020)

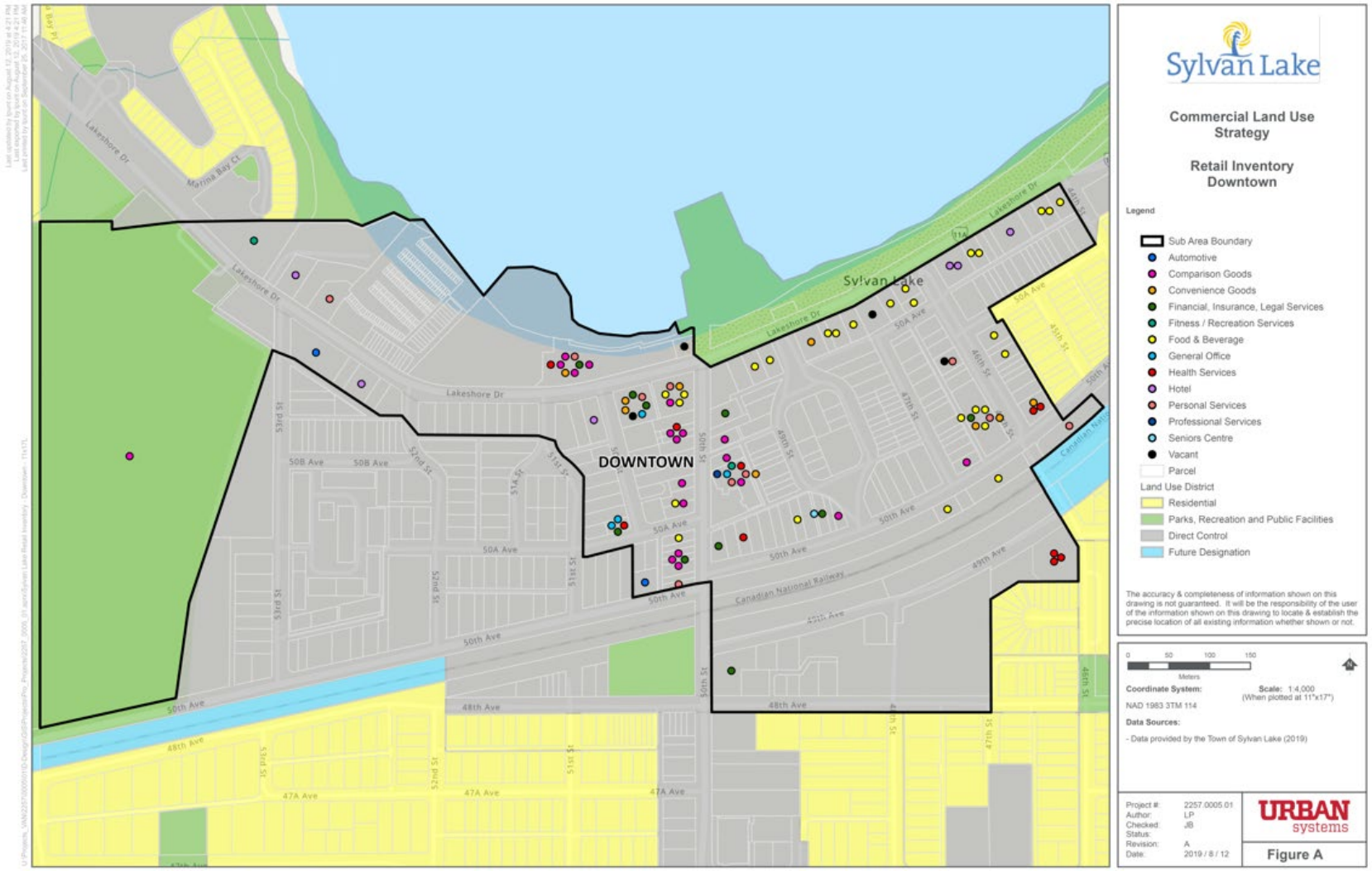
- Focus on increasing business performance and infilling vacant space
- Need for unique destination restaurants & local independent stores (clothing, accessories, health & beauty, specialty food stores, wellness & personal care)

SYLVAN LAKE COMMERCIAL LANDS STUDY

Town of Sylvan Lake
January 2020

Sylvan Lake Downtown Businesses

- 283,000 sf total
- 15,000 sf vacant (2020)
    - F&B 67,000 sf (23.7%)
    - Alcohol 10,000 sf (3.5%)
    - Convenience 6,000 sf (2.1%)
    - Commercial vacancies reduced from 31 in 2021 to 15 in 2024
- FSR F&B 23,000 sf
- QSR F&B 34,000 sf
- Pubs F&B 10,000 sf
- Primarily independents
- 15% of businesses geared towards seasonal tourism market
- Disconnect between asking rents and quality of space
- 65% of town's older inventory is downtown
- 174,000 sf of new demand **2028**



Local Sylvan Lake Retail Market - Spaces for lease/sale

Active listings "On Market"

- Retail listings on market: 10
- Average sf: 1,790
- Average Lease Range $/psf: $16.80
  - Lowest $16
  - Highest: $18
- Average Sale Price: $428,000
  - Lowest: $119,000
  - Highest: $765,000
- Average DOM: 101 days
  - Shortest: 0 days
  - Longest: 203 days
- Average age: 28 years

Market Absorption

(Nov 2021 - 2023)

- 23 sales
- Avg Lease Range $psf: $12 - $15
- Average sale price: $903,333
  - Lowest: $450,000
  - Highest: $1,700,000
- Average DOM: 100
  - Shortest: 22 days
  - Longest: 214 days

Off Market*

(Nov 2021 – 2023)

- 20 listings
- Average sale price: $1,628,088
  - Lowest: $425,000
  - Highest: $3,000,000
- Average DOM: 138
  - Shortest: 36 days
  - Longest: 383 days

*Inc expired, terminated and withdrawn

Source: Prospects Mobile MLS – Sylvan Lake Stats, accessed Nov. 27, 2024

Local Sylvan Lake Market - Office/Mixed-Use Space for lease/sale

Active Listings "On Market"

- Mixed-Use listings on market: 7
- Office listings on market: 4
- Average sf: 3,482.50
- Average $/psf: $17
  - Lowest: $12
  - Highest: $25
- Average Sale Price: $2,196,730
  - Lowest: $602,400
  - Highest: $8,360,000
- Average DOM: 274 days
  - Shortest: 13 days
  - Longest: 845 days
- Average age: 23 years

Market Absorption

(Nov 2021- 2023)

- 28 sales
- Average $/psf: $15 - $16
- Average sale price: $390,725
  - Lowest: $182,500
  - Highest: $899,900
- Average DOM: 244 days
  - Shortest: 134 days
  - Longest: 469 days

Off Market*

(Nov 2021- 2023)

- 76 listings
- Average sale price: $1,635,998
  - Lowest: $217,000
  - Highest: $8,360,000
- Average DOM: 280
  - Shortest: 6 days
  - Longest: 985 days

*Inc expired, terminated and withdrawn

Source: Prospects Mobile MLS – Sylvan Lake Stats, accessed Nov. 27, 2024

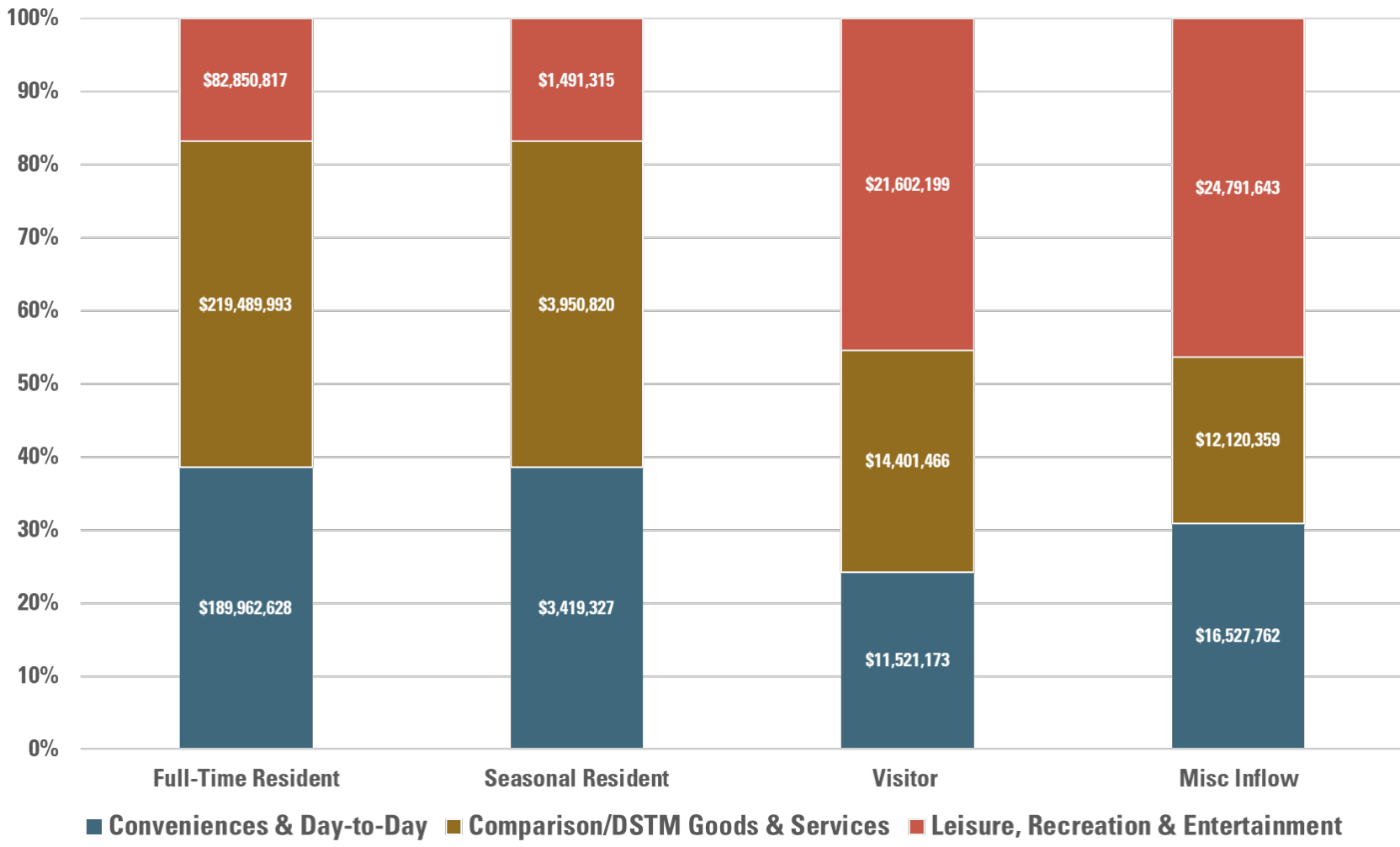
Retail Trade Area Spending by Segments – 2024 est y/e Summary Highlights

Retail market potential
$602.1 million

Conveniences & Day-to-Day potential
$221.4 million

Comparison Goods & Services potential
$249.9 million

Leisure & Entertainment potential
$130.7 million



Retail Trade Area Spending by Segments – Detail by Segments (est 2024 y/e)

Full Time Residents
$492.3 million
82%

Seasonal Residents
$8.9 million
1%

Visitors
$47.5 million
8%

Misc Inflow
$53.4 million
9%

Retail Spending by Merchandise Category		2024 Sylvan Lake Full Time Resident Household Spending	2024 Sylvan Lake Full Time Resident Annual Spending	2024 Sylvan Lake Seasonal Resident Household Spending	2024 Sylvan Lake Seasonal Resident Annual Spending	2024 Sylvan Lake Visitor Spending Share	2024 Sylvan Lake Visitor Annual Spending	2024 Misc Inflow Factor	2024 Sylvan Lake Miscellaneous Inflow Annual Spending	TOTAL TRADE AREA Retail Spending
Convenience & Day-to-Day Goods/Services	Grocery & Convenience	$12,741	$124,045,749	$1,911	$2,232,823	15.0%	$7,200,733	25.0%	$13,773,135	$147,252,441
	Pharmacy	$1,346	$13,102,686	$202	$235,848	2.0%	$960,098	0.0%	$0	$14,298,632
	Alcohol & Tobacco	$988	$9,621,326	$148	$173,184	5.0%	$2,400,244	2.5%	$1,377,314	$13,572,067
	Personal Services	$4,436	$43,192,867	$665	$777,472	2.0%	$960,098	2.5%	$1,377,314	$46,307,750
	Health Care & Medical Services	$1,195	$11,636,367	$179	$209,455	1.0%	$480,049	3.0%	$1,652,776	$13,978,647
Comparison or Department Store Type Merchandise (DSTM) Goods/Services	Fashion & Accessories	$3,570	$34,757,623	$536	$625,637	1.5%	$720,073	0.5%	$275,463	$36,378,796
	Jewelry	$261	$2,537,011	$39	$45,666	0.5%	$240,024	2.0%	$1,101,851	$3,924,552
	Beauty & Personal Care	$2,384	$23,206,890	$358	$417,724	1.0%	$480,049	0.0%	$0	$24,104,663
	Home Furniture & Décor	$955	$9,294,950	$143	$167,309	1.0%	$480,049	1.0%	$550,925	$10,493,234
	Appliances & Electronics	$6,485	$63,137,194	$973	$1,136,469	0.0%	$0	0.5%	$275,463	$64,549,126
	Home Improvement & Gardening	$4,509	$43,903,437	$676	$790,262	0.0%	$0	5.0%	$2,754,627	$47,448,326
	Books & Media	$89	$862,417	$13	$15,523	1.0%	$480,049	0.0%	$0	$1,357,989
	Sporting Goods	$1,391	$13,543,459	$209	$243,782	5.0%	$2,400,244	2.0%	$1,101,851	$17,289,336
	Toys & Hobbies	$1,009	$9,821,124	$151	$176,780	5.0%	$2,400,244	1.0%	$550,925	$12,949,074
	Specialty Retail	$1,893	$18,425,888	$284	$331,666	15.0%	$7,200,733	10.0%	$5,509,254	$31,467,540
Leisure, Recreation & Entertainment Goods/Services	Quick Service F&B	$3,043	$29,629,366	$456	$533,329	20.0%	$9,600,977	20.0%	$11,018,508	$50,782,180
	Restaurants & Pubs	$4,259	$41,465,814	$639	$746,385	15.0%	$7,200,733	15.0%	$8,263,881	$57,676,813
	Arts & Entertainment	$653	$6,355,216	$98	$114,394	5.0%	$2,400,244	5.0%	$2,754,627	$11,624,482
	Fitness & Leisure	$555	$5,400,421	$83	$97,208	5.0%	$2,400,244	5.0%	$2,754,627	$10,652,500
	TOTAL CATEGORIES	**$51,760**	**$503,939,805**	**$7,764**	**$9,070,916**	**100%**	**$48,004,886**	**9.8%**	**$55,092,541**	**$616,108,148**
	TOTAL (excluding Health Care)	**$50,565**	**$492,303,438**	**$7,585**	**$8,861,462**		**$47,524,837**		**$53,439,764**	**$602,129,501**

Retail Trade Area – Supportable Floorspace & Mix (2029)

Retail program for the waterfront development could support +/- 30,000 sf of retail programming comprising a mix of approximately 15 store.

Mix should be oriented towards specialty conveniences and retail with supporting quick service and full service food & beverage.

Some categories like fashion, books & media and toys & hobbies will likely be contained within other store operations such as café or speciality.

The overall market share of total target audience spending required to support retail program would be 1.2% which is reasonable and achievable.

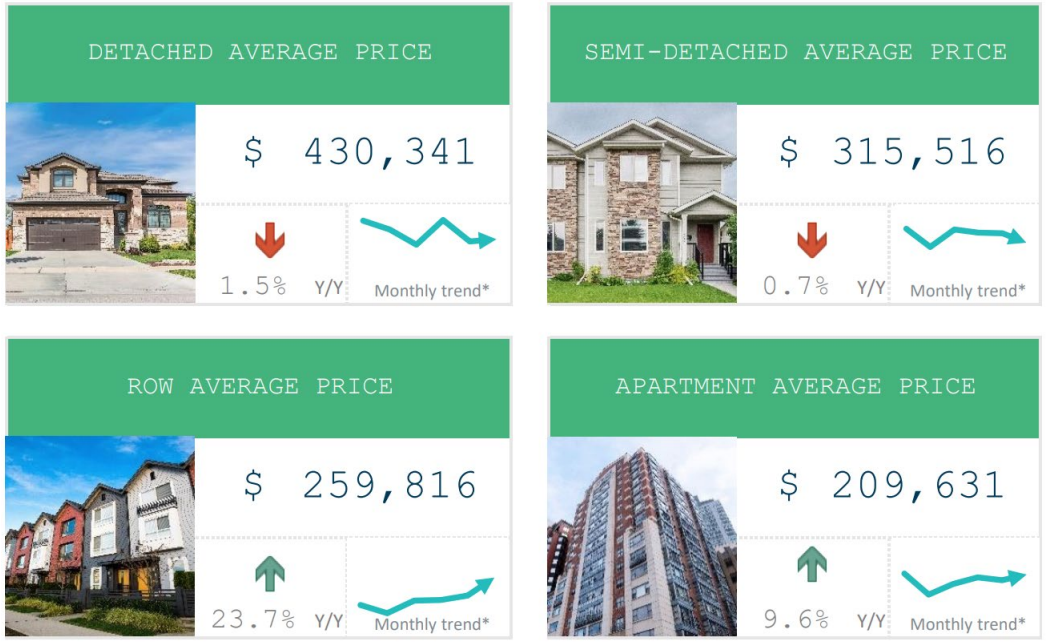
2029

	Merchandise/Store Type Category	Total Floorspace	Supportable Market Share	Mini Anchors Avg GLA sf	Mini Anchors Units	Mini Anchors Total SF	Inline/CRU Tenants Avg GLA sf	Inline/CRU Tenants Units	Inline/CRU Tenants Total SF
Convenience & Day-to-Day Goods/Services	Grocery & Convenience	2,000	0.7%				2,000	1	2,000
	Pharmacy	-							
	Alcohol & Tobacco	1,250	4.8%				1,250	1	1,250
	Personal Services (incl Spa)	13,500	5.1%		1	10,000	1,750	2	3,500
	***Health Care & Medical Services								
Comparison or Department Store Type Merchandise (DSTM) Goods/Services	Fashion & Accessories	500	0.3%					n/a	500
	Jewelry	-							
	Health & Beauty	-							
	Home Furniture & Décor	-							
	Appliances & Electronics	-							
	Home Improvement & Gardening	-							
	Books & Media	250	3.2%					n/a	250
	Sporting Goods	1,500	1.5%				1,500	1	1,500
	Toys & Hobbies	500	0.7%					n/a	500
	Specialty Retail	2,500	2.4%				833	3	2,500
Leisure, Recreation & Entertainment Goods/Services	Quick Service F&B	3,000	2.1%				1,000	3	3,000
	Restaurants & Pubs	5,000	2.3%				2,500	2	5,000
	Arts & Entertainment	-							-
	Fitness & Leisure	-							
SUMMARY	**Total**	**30,000**	**1.2%**	**10,000**	**1**	**10,000**	**1,538**	**13**	**20,000**
	Percent of Total Retail Floorspace				**33.3%**			**66.7%**	
	***Health Care & Medical Services	1,500					750	2	1,500
	Total	**31,500**		**10,000**	**1**	**10,000**	**1,433**	**15**	**21,500**
	Percent of Total Floorspace				**31.7%**			**68.3%**	

Part 2
Full Time Residential Market Overview & Opportunity

Regional Outlook – City of Red Deer

- Continued healthy sales activity
- A seller's market for all four housing types (S/NL >60%)
- Red Deer's S/NL is even higher than Alberta's YTD (80% vs 72%)
- Share of sales in multi-unit formats (row, semi-detached, apartment) continues to increase compared to single-detached
- Average days to sell (2023): 43 days (still lowest since 2015)
- Average selling price (October 2024): $363,528 (down 2.8% Y/Y)
- Units sold (2023): 1,842 (7% decrease from 2022 but still higher than most annual totals since 2015)



*Monthly trend data is based on seasonally adjusted data, where the prior 6 months is displayed

Data source: Pillar 9

Year-to-Date October 2024

	Sales		New Listings		Inventory		S/NL	Months of Supply		Average Price	
	Actual	Y/Y%	Actual	Y/Y%	Actual	Y/Y%	Ratio	Actual	Y/Y%	Actual	Y/Y%
Detached	992	0%	1306	0%	177	-15%	76%	1.78	-15%	$447,322	9%
Semi	167	-1%	170	-17%	21	-29%	98%	1.24	-28%	$334,108	12%
Row	239	-9%	274	-4%	27	-35%	87%	1.12	-29%	$237,631	5%
Apartment	225	16%	280	17%	45	-4%	80%	2.00	-18%	$200,890	9%
Total Residential	1623	0%	2030	0%	269	-17%	80%	1.66	-18%	$370,631	8%

Data Sources: AREA – City of Red Deer Monthly Statistics, October 2024
CARA – Residential Market Update, accessed November 2024

Table & Graphic Source: AREA – City of Red Deer Monthly Statistics, October 2024

Local Outlook – Town of Sylvan Lake

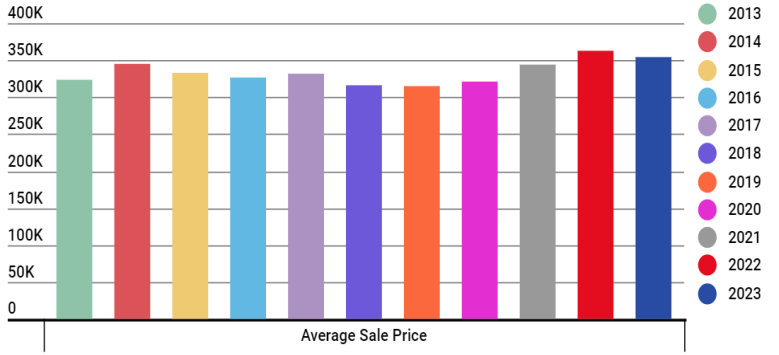
- Average sale price (2023): $354,210 (2.4% decrease from 2022)
- Average days to sell (2023): 47 days (still very lose to last year's 10-year low of 45 days with a 4% increase)
- Units sold (2023): 453 (15% decrease from 2022)

Average Sale Price History

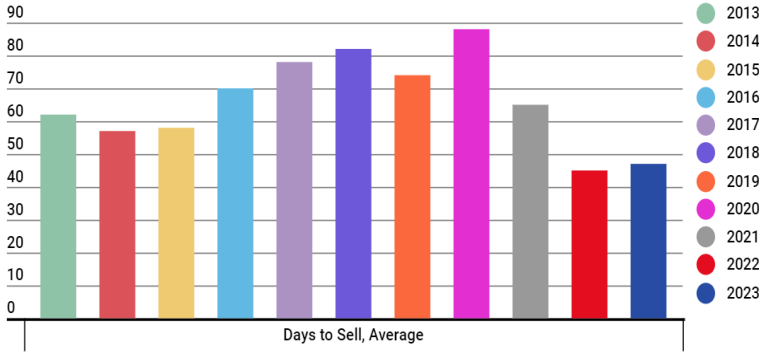
Central Alberta	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Average Sale Price ($)	303,039	320,492	318,308	308,667	313,604	299,820	295,232	308,629	346,213	349,260	361,960
Year-Over-Year	4.3%	5.8%	-0.7%	-3.0%	1.6%	-4.4%	-1.5%	4.5%	12.2%	0.9%	3.6%
Lacombe County	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Average Sale Price ($)	315,162	328,516	328,607	335,037	339,389	312,553	303,655	334,844	367,308	366,689	394,120
Year-Over-Year	15.7%	4.2%	0.0%	2.0%	1.3%	-7.9%	-2.8%	10.3%	9.7%	-0.2%	7.5%
Red Deer City	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Average Sale Price ($)	321,332	336,849	338,003	327,349	330,936	313,424	310,576	313,425	337,385	336,996	340,794
Year-Over-Year	4.6%	4.8%	0.3%	-3.2%	1.1%	-5.3%	-0.9%	0.9%	7.6%	-0.1%	1.1%
Red Deer County	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Average Sale Price ($)	332,396	343,783	332,357	319,546	330,363	306,043	317,969	323,406	373,190	377,513	379,894
Year-Over-Year	3.3%	3.4%	-3.3%	-3.9%	3.4%	-7.4%	3.9%	1.7%	15.4%	1.2%	0.6%
Sylvan Lake	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
Average Sale Price ($)	323,514	345,010	332,879	326,562	331,770	316,071	314,938	321,053	344,011	362,747	354,210
Year-Over-Year	0.2%	6.6%	-3.5%	-1.9%	1.6%	-4.7%	-0.4%	1.9%	7.2%	5.4%	-2.4%

Source: CARA – Residential Market Update, accessed November 2024

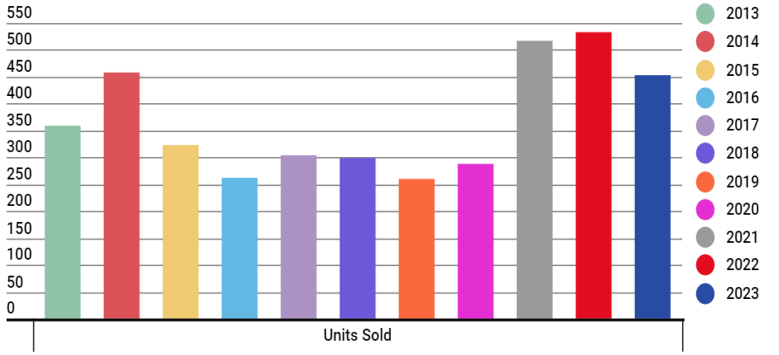
10 Year Average Sale Price



10 Year Average Days to Sell



10 Year Average Units Sold

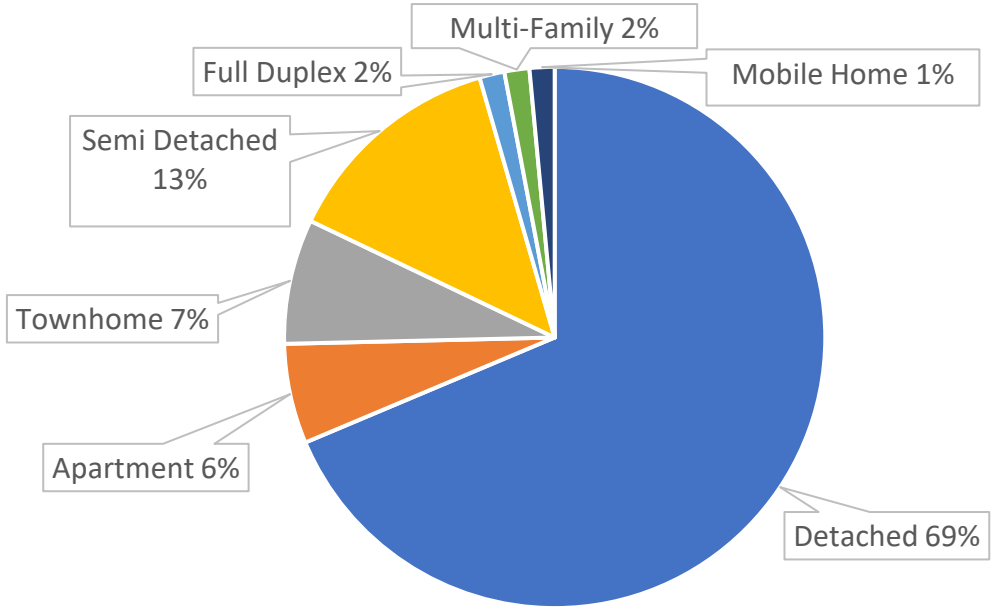


Sylvan Lake – Residential Market

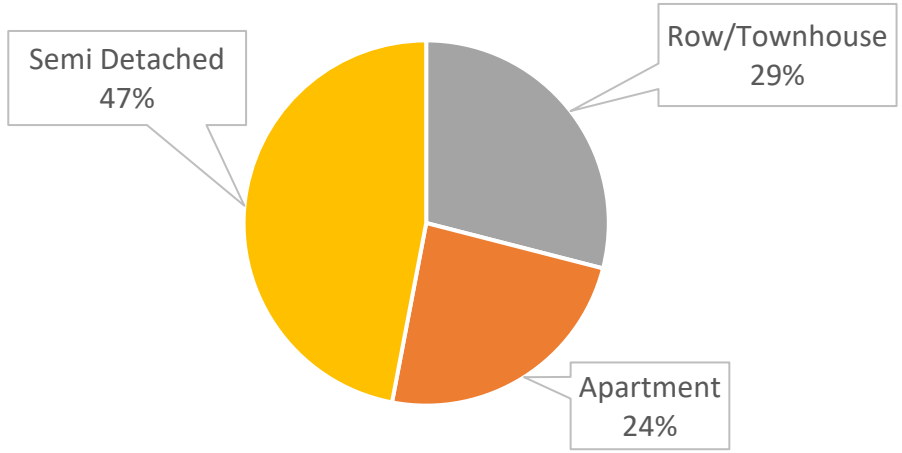
Market overview
- 67 active residential listings (excluding land)
- Average price: $795,791 (for all real estate)
- Seeing market move toward more balanced conditions and pace of price growth slow

Active multi-unit listings
- 18 multi unit dwellings*
- Average sf: 1,213
- Average price: $389,024
- Average DOM: 40 days
  - Shortest: 5 days
  - Longest: 152 days
- Average age: 8.5 yrs

Current Residential Listings



Current Multi-Unit Listings



Source: RE/MAX Central – Sylvan Lake Real Estate Statistics, accessed Nov. 27, 2024

Source: Prospects Mobile MLS – Sylvan Lake Stats, accessed Nov. 27, 2024

*Includes apartments, row/townhouses, and semi-detached

Only one Multi-Family Apartment building is listed for sale at time of market update, listed for $2.4 million and located at 1, 4747 50 Street, Sylvan Lake, AB (Downtown)

Source: RE/MAX Central – Sylvan Lake Real Estate Statistics, accessed Nov. 27, 2024

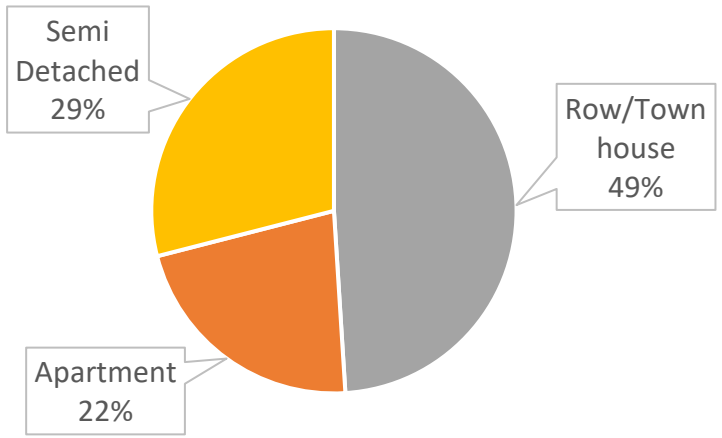
Sylvan Lake – Multi-Unit Properties Sold

Market Absorption: Past 3 Months
Sept – Nov 2024
- Average price: $308,062
  - Lowest: $180,000
  - Highest: $465,000
- Average DOM: 42 days
  - Shortest: 1 day
  - Longest: 213 days

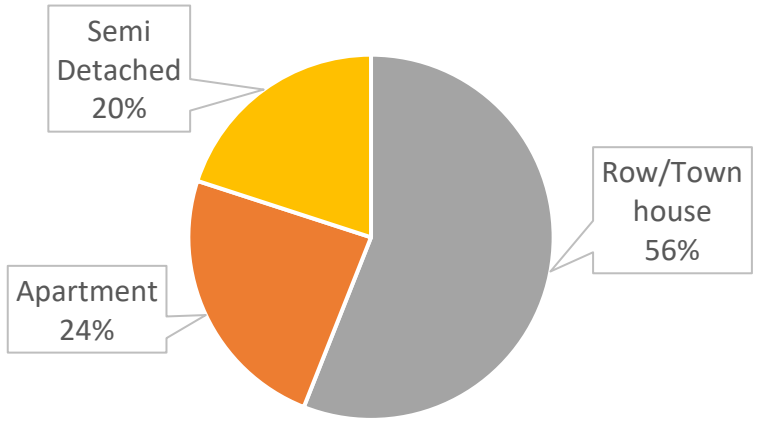
Market Absorption: Past 2 Years
Nov 2022 - 2024
- Average price: $282,107
  - Lowest: $119,900
  - Highest: $690,000
- Average DOM: 48 days
  - Shortest: 1 day
  - Longest: 308 days

Off Market*: Past 2 Years
Nov 2022 – 2024
- Average price: $323,813
  - Lowest: $119,900
  - Highest: $675,000
- Average DOM: 100 days
  - Shortest: 1 day
  - Longest: 367 days

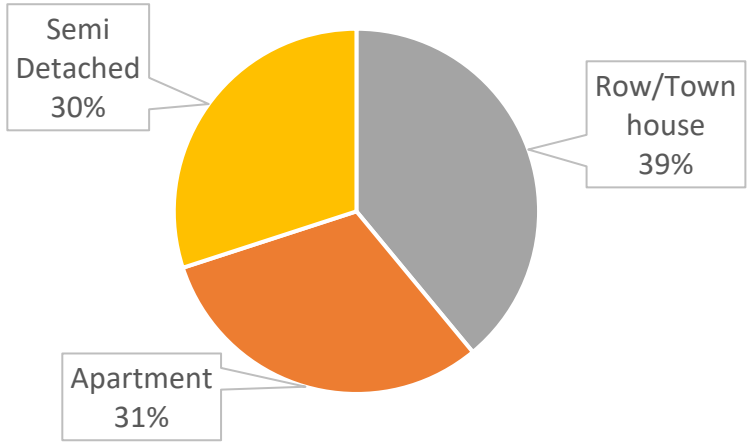
Multi-Unit Sales (3 months)



Multi-Unit Sales (2yrs)



Multi-Unit off market (2yrs)



Source: Prospects Mobile MLS – Sylvan Lake Stats, accessed Nov. 27, 2024

**includes expired, terminated, and withdrawn*

Residential Multi-Unit Demand - Regional

Total regional market demand for multi-unit housing is estimated to be in range of 825 to 1,042 units by 2029/2030

Sylvan Lake Core Housing Region	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
(1) City of Red Deer	108,943	109,398	109,855	110,314	110,775	111,238	111,678	112,119	112,562	113,007	113,454
(2) Red Deer County	20,909	21,068	21,229	21,391	21,554	21,718	21,874	22,031	22,190	22,349	22,510
(3) Lacomb County	10,577	10,620	10,663	10,707	10,750	10,794	10,838	10,882	10,926	10,970	11,015
(3) Town of Sylvan Lake	17,744	18,011	18,282	18,558	18,837	19,121	19,390	19,663	19,940	20,220	20,505
(1) Avg Household Size	2.48	2.48	2.48	2.48	2.48	2.48	2.48	2.48	2.47	2.47	2.47
(2) Avg Household Size	2.66	2.66	2.65	2.65	2.64	2.64	2.63	2.62	2.61	2.60	2.59
(3) Avg Household Size	2.56	2.56	2.55	2.55	2.54	2.54	2.53	2.52	2.51	2.50	2.49
(4) Avg Household Size	2.47	2.46	2.45	2.44	2.43	2.42	2.40	2.39	2.37	2.36	2.34
(1) Households	43,929	44,103	44,278	44,453	44,629	44,806	45,043	45,281	45,520	45,761	46,003
(2) Households	7,861	7,933	8,007	8,081	8,155	8,231	8,319	8,407	8,497	8,588	8,680
(3) Households	4,132	4,155	4,179	4,203	4,228	4,252	4,285	4,318	4,352	4,386	4,420
(4) Households	7,184	7,324	7,468	7,614	7,762	7,914	8,076	8,242	8,410	8,582	8,758
(1) Annual Growth in Households		174	175	175	176	177	237	238	239	241	242
(2) Annual Growth in Households		73	73	74	75	75	88	89	90	91	92
(3) Annual Growth in Households		24	24	24	24	24	33	33	34	34	34
(4) Annual Growth in Households		140	143	146	149	152	162	165	169	172	176
(1) % Living in Non Single-Detached (Rental & For-Sale)	47.3%	48.2%	49.2%	50.2%	51.2%	52.2%	54.3%	56.5%	58.7%	61.1%	63.5%
(2) % Living in Non Single-Detached (Rental & For-Sale)	18.7%	18.7%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%
(3) % Living in Non Single-Detached (Rental & For-Sale)	13.6%	13.6%	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%	16.5%	16.5%	16.5%
(4) % Living in Non Single-Detached (Rental & For-Sale)	33.1%	33.4%	34.1%	34.1%	34.1%	34.1%	34.1%	34.1%	34.8%	34.8%	34.8%
(1) City of Red Deer											
Annual Demand for Non Single-Detached		84	86	88	90	92	129	134	141	147	154
Cumulative Demand for Non Single-Detached	-	84	170	258	348	440	569	703	844	991	1,145
% of Demand Anticipated from Outside Market	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	88	90	92	95	97	135	141	148	154	162
Cumulative Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	88	179	271	365	462	597	738	886	1,041	1,202
(2) Red Deer County											
Annual Demand for Non Single-Detached		14	14	14	14	14	16	17	17	17	17
Cumulative Demand for Non Single-Detached	-	14	28	42	56	70	86	103	120	137	154
% of Demand Anticipated from Outside Market	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	14	14	14	14	14	16	17	17	17	17
Cumulative Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	14	28	42	56	70	86	103	120	137	154
(3) Lacomb County											
Annual Demand for Non Single-Detached		3	4	4	4	4	5	5	6	6	6
Cumulative Demand for Non Single-Detached	-	3	7	11	15	19	24	29	35	41	47
% of Demand Anticipated from Outside Market	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	6	6	6
Cumulative Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	3	7	11	15	19	24	29	35	41	47
(3) Town of Sylvan Lake											
Annual Demand for Non Single-Detached		47	49	50	51	52	55	56	59	60	61
Cumulative Demand for Non Single-Detached	-	47	96	146	197	249	304	360	419	479	540
% of Demand Anticipated from Outside Market	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%
Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	52	54	55	56	57	61	62	65	66	67
Cumulative Total Demand for Non Single-Detached Housing in the Market	-	52	106	161	217	274	334	396	461	527	594
TOTAL HOUSING REGION ANNUAL DEMAND FOR MULTI-UNIT HOUSING		**157**	**162**	**165**	**169**	**172**	**217**	**224**	**236**	**243**	**252**
TOTAL HOUSING REGION CUMULATIVE DEMAND FOR MULTI-UNIT HOUSING		**157**	**319**	**485**	**653**	**825**	**1,042**	**1,266**	**1,502**	**1,745**	**1,997**

Source: Statistics Canada, Manifold Data Mining Inc. 2024, CHMC and FBM

Residential Multi-Unit Demand – Sylvan Lake Waterfront

At a reasonable 10% market share of regional market multi-unit demand, 102 to 124 housing units could be supportable by 2028/2029.

Because of the AirBnB market, only a portion of multi-unit dwellings should be targeted for seasonal or part-time residents to not hinder potential boutique hotel opportunity.

Optimal unit count for multi-unit could exceed forecasts because of site's favourable locational attributes.

Opportunity for phasing may allow for future on-site residential opportunities.

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Housing Region Cumulative Demand (units)	0	157	319	485	653	825	1,042	1,266	1,502	1,745	1,997
Sylvan Lake Waterfront Marketshare	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%
Cumulative Sylvan Lake Waterfront Feasible Multi-Unit Residential	0	8	16	24	33	41	52	63	75	87	100
With an estimated annual Vacancy Rate of 2%	*0*	*8*	*16*	*24*	*32*	*40*	*51*	*62*	*74*	*86*	*98*

Sylvan Lake Waterfront Development Feasible Cumulative Multi-Family Units 10% Marketshare

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Housing Region Cumulative Demand (units)	0	157	319	485	653	825	1,042	1,266	1,502	1,745	1,997
Sylvan Lake Waterfront Marketshare	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Cumulative Sylvan Lake Waterfront Feasible Multi-Unit Residential	0	16	32	48	65	82	104	127	150	175	200
With an estimated annual Vacancy Rate of 2%	*0*	*15*	*31*	*47*	*64*	*81*	*102*	*124*	*147*	*171*	*196*

Sylvan Lake Waterfront Development Feasible Cumulative Multi-Family Units 15% Marketshare

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Housing Region Cumulative Demand (units)	0	157	319	485	653	825	1,042	1,266	1,502	1,745	1,997
Sylvan Lake Waterfront Marketshare	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
Cumulative Sylvan Lake Waterfront Feasible Multi-Unit Residential	0	24	48	73	98	124	156	190	225	262	300
With an estimated annual Vacancy Rate of 2%	*0*	*23*	*47*	*71*	*96*	*121*	*153*	*186*	*221*	*257*	*294*

Part 3
Seasonal/Recreational Residential Market Overview and Opportunity

RE/MAX 2024 Recreational Market Overview & Outlook – Summary Highlights

Sylvan Lake: Average sale price increased by 14.9% between Q1 2023 and Q1 2024, suggesting the Sylvan Lake market continues to grow even while certain other Alberta waterfront markets have decline (except Wabamun Lake) (see next slide).

Market Comparable

Winnipeg Interlake Region, MB: Average price for Waterfront single-family properties' average price grew from $367,500 in 2022 to $382,500 in 2023 (4.1% growth), while non-waterfront prices dropped by 1.6% from $244,000 to $240,000.
(Royal LePage 2024 Spring Recreational Report)

REGION	AVERAGE SALE PRICE		Y-O-Y	NUMBER OF SALES		Y-O-Y	YEAR-END 2024 AVG. PRICE ESTIMATE*	YEAR-END 2024 AVG. PRICE ESTIMATE*	YEAR-END 2024 UNIT SALES ESTIMATE*	MARKET TYPE
	Q1 2023 (Jan.1–Mar.31)	Q1 2024 (Jan.1–Mar.31)	(+/- %)	Q1 2023 (Jan.1–Mar.31)	Q1 2024 (Jan.1–Mar.31)	(+/- %)	(+/- %)	($)	(+/- %)	
Whistler, BC	$1,633,855	$1,756,473	7.5%	114	117	2.6%	N/A***	N/A***	N/A***	Balanced
Tofino, BC*****	$0	$1,001,116	--	0	3		-10.0%	$901,004	-10.0%	Buyer's
Ucluelet, BC*****	$764,000	$676,703	-11%	6	6	0.0%	10.0%	$744,373	10.0%	Buyer's
Edmonton Lakes, AB	$388,772	$477,104	22.7%	18	23	27.8%	5.0%	$500,959	3.0%	Balanced
Canmore, AB	$962,619	$1,040,422	8.1%	101	121	19.8%	10.0%	$1,144,464	5.0%	Seller's
Sylvan Lake and Central Alberta, AB	$580,357	$666,949	14.9%	40	37	-7.5%	5.0%	$700,296	-3.0%	Seller's
Muskoka, ON	$1,487,265	$1,412,237	-5.0%	46	45	-2.2%	3.0%	$1,454,604	5.0%	Balanced
Haliburton County, ON	$816,112	$968,794	18.7%	24	34	41.7%	6.0%	$1,026,922	8.0%	Balanced
Peterborough, ON	$465,000	$898,000	93.1%	1	9		33.0%	$1,194,340	50.0%	Buyer's
The Kawarthas, ON	$465,000	$898,000	93.1%	1	9		33.0%	$1,194,340	50.0%	Buyer's
Southeast Georgian Bay, Honey Harbour and Port Severn, ON******	$1,272,917	$906,967	-28.7%	4	9	125.0%	N/A***	N/A***	N/A***	Buyer's
Lake Huron Area (Bayfield and Goderich), ON	$730,507	$672,690	-7.9%	35	30	-14.3%	-5.0%	$639,056	-10.0%	Balanced

Source: RE/MAX 2024 Recreational Market Overview & Outlook

Royal Lepage 2024 Spring Recreational Property Report – Alberta Summary Highlights

While national waterfront recreational property median prices decreased by 7.9% from 2022-2023, those in Alberta decreased only slightly by 0.7%. Two Alberta waterfront markets declined, Lac St. Anne by 2.9% and Pigeon Lake by 7.3%, while Wabamun Lake saw notable growth of 19.5%, comparable to Sylvan Lake's growth (see previous slide).

Survey responses suggest the recreational property markets in Alberta have slowed ever so slightly compared to last year, with 33% of respondents perceiving slightly longer average days on market, while about half of respondents observe less inventory and half observe a stable inventory.

Demand outstrips supply due to a growing urban population in Edmonton area seeking nearby recreational properties while property turnover in Alberta waterfront communities is slow.

	Single-Family			Single-Family Waterfront			Standard Condominium		
	2022 ($)	2023 ($)	% Change (2023/2022)	2022 ($)	2023 ($)	% Change (2023/2022)	2022 ($)	2023 ($)	% Change (2023/2022)
National	**$653,200**	**$646,600**	**-1.0%**	**$1,168,300**	**$1,075,500**	**-7.9%**	**$426,600**	**$420,300**	**-1.5%**
Alberta	**$1,183,400**	**$1,238,900**	**4.7%**	**$608,700**	**$604,700**	**-0.7%**	**$603,500**	**$633,100**	**4.9%**
Canmore	$1,494,500	$1,560,000	4.4%	-	-	-	$649,000	$685,000	5.5%
Lac St. Anne	$327,600	$290,000	-11.5%	$534,700	$519,300	-2.9%	-	-	-
Pigeon Lake	$366,300	$417,000	13.8%	$639,500	$592,500	-7.3%	$263,000	$245,000	-6.8%
Wabamun Lake	$439,800	$675,300	53.5%	$820,200	$979,900	19.5%	-	-	-

Source: Royal LePage 2024 Spring Recreational Property Report

Part 4
Accommodations/AirBnB Market Overview & Opportunity

Accommodations – Traditional Hotel/Motel

Hotel/Motel
- 214 rooms

Estimated annualized occupancy for Sylvan Lake's accommodations (excluding campgrounds) is 61% with healthy occupancy in summer months.

Sylvan Lake – Hotel/Motel Inventory

Hotel Property Name/Brand	Number of Rooms	Meeting Space (sq. ft.)	Annual Occupancy Average
UPPER UPSCALE			
n/a			
UPSCALE			
n/a			
UPPER MIDSCALE			
n/a			
MIDSCALE			
Best Western Chateau	72	1,255	53%
Days Inn	41	n/a	55%
ECONOMY			
INDEPENDENT			
Prairie Moon Inn	61	n/a	50%
Beachfront Resort	20	n/a	65%
Edgewater Inn	20	n/a	83%
CURRENT TOTAL	214	1,255	61%

Sylvan Lake STAR data – February 2024

Other markets of note:

Red Deer (as of Sept 2022)
YTD Occupancy – 49.4%
YTD ADR - $108.39

Drumheller (as of Sept 2022)
YTD Occupancy – 60.1%
YTD ADR - $151.45

Edson (as of Sept 2022)
YTD Occupancy – 41.9%
YTD ADR - $133.54

Bonnyville (as of Sept 2022)
YTD Occupancy – 49.3%
YTD ADR - $92.68

Hinton (as of Sept 2022)
YTD Occupancy – 60.8%
YTD ADR - $150.07
Alberta Tourism Market Monitor – Nov 2022

Travel Alberta notes staff shortages continue to challenge hotels in the province.

Source: Travel Alberta, Hotel Performance, Oct 1, 2024,
industry.travelalberta.com/research/tourism-indicators/hotel-performance

Accommodations – AirBNB / Vrbo

Total Current Active Listings – 137 (2024)

Average Annual Revenue - $38.3 K (2024)

Average ADR - $301.3 per night (2024)

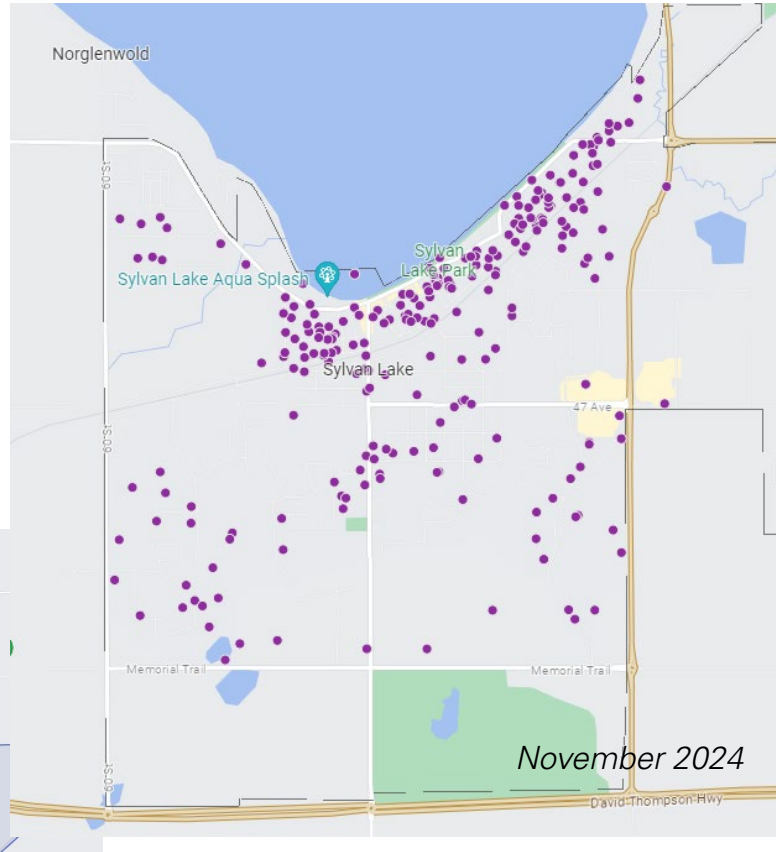
Occupancy Rate – 52% (2024)

Average Length of Stay – 3 days (2023)

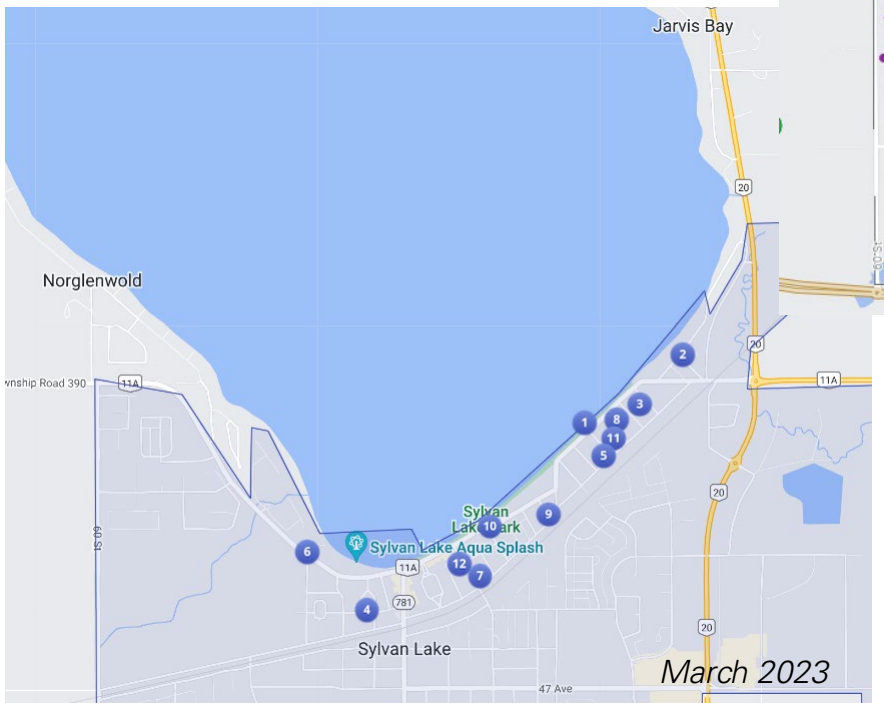
Rental Channel – AirBnB 70% / Vrbo 11% / both 19% (2023)

Source: AirDNA Market Minder

AirBnb/Vrbo Inventory



AirBnb/Vrbo Top Listings



AirBnB market is quite healthy but, a smaller boutique hotel operator will not want to have a large STR market on-site so balance is needed whereby multi-unit should be market to full time residents.

Accommodations Demand – Sylvan Lake Waterfront

With current annualized occupancy at 61% the market must recover to an industry minimum of 65% to be appealing for any hotel operator.

75 rooms could be supported at full occupancy by 2032 with a realized occupancy of 65% resulting in annualized 55 rooms.

2030 timeline suggests that phasing of a hotel would likely be the best approach.

The AirBnB/Vrbo market continues to be a factor but is subject to fluctuations itself in availability, units on market and ADR rates.

ACCOMMODATION ROOM DEMAND		2024	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	Forecasted Growth Per Annum 2024 - 2034
"Traditional Accommodations" Inventory (number of rooms)		214	214	214	214	214	214	214	214	214	214	214	214	0.00%
"AirBnB / Vrbo Accommodations" Inventory (120 available properties x avg 2.8 rooms)		339	343	346	350	353	357	360	364	367	371	375	379	1.00%
Projected Sylvan Lake Room Demand		127,178	129,960	132,811	135,733	138,729	141,800	144,948	148,175	151,484	154,876	158,353	161,918	2.44%
Room Demand														
Leisure	80%	102,161	104,817	107,542	110,338	113,207	116,151	119,170	122,269	125,448	128,710	132,056	135,489	2.86%
Commercial	20%	25,017	25,143	25,268	25,395	25,522	25,649	25,777	25,906	26,036	26,166	26,297	26,428	0.55%
Total	100%	127,178	129,960	132,811	135,733	138,729	141,800	144,948	148,175	151,484	154,876	158,353	161,918	
Projected Sylvan Lake Room Nights Supply		201,976	203,215	204,466	205,730	207,006	208,295	209,597	210,912	212,240	213,581	214,936	216,304	
Cumulative Annual New Sylvan Lake Room Demand		7	15	23	31	39	47	56	65	74	83	93	103	
Industry Standard Annual Occupancy Benchmark		65.0%												
Cumulative Annual New Sylvan Lake Waterfront Room Demand at 65% occupancy		5	10	15	20	25	31	36	42	48	54	60	67	

Source: FBM Demand Modelling based on current available inventory and occupancy statistics.

Note: Forecasted Occupancy as estimated by FBM reflecting historic average and industry standard given the Red Deer Market (Alberta Tourism) and AirBnB/Vrbo market (AirDNA).

Part 5
Opportunity & Positioning Summary

Summary Demand Allocation

Based on the market performance review as well as supply and demand considerations, the following program is deemed to be the most realistic and marketable opportunity for the Sylvan Lake Waterfront Site, with a base year of development targeted over a 5-year horizon to 2029.

- Multi-Unit Residential – Minimum **100 units at a 10% market share by 2028** and assuming that most units would be full-time residential, but likely that demand is there for Seasonal or AirBnB/Vrbo inventory.
- Retail/Commercial – **30,000 sq. ft. at an achievable 1.2% market share by 2027** of all segments' spending (full time resident, seasonal resident, visitor and miscellaneous inflow).
- Hotel/Accommodations – **Maximum 65 rooms at a minimum 65% annualized occupancy by 2030**. Demand forecasts factor in the current inventory of 214 hotel/motel rooms PLUS an estimated +/- 350 AirBnB Available Rooms.
- Event space – While not quantified, if a boutique hotel as envisioned is achieved, an event space would still be attractive and if the floorplate and design is such that it could operate without a hotel, could be up to 10,000 sq. ft.

Summary Positioning & Phasing Components

- Retail program should front Lakeshore Drive and the prominent corner of 51st St with a pedestrian breezeway at the midpoint of the Lakeshore Dr frontage for access and views into the internal plaza/courtyard and lake with residential above the retail program.
- Future phasing for a boutique hotel would be best placed at the west side of the site with frontage and servicing access to/from Lakeshore Drive but also extending along the west side to create a buffer between the marina residential townhomes. This would better framing the internal courtyard and plaza experience to allow for maximum visibility to the activity spaces on land and water from all angles of the hotel and residential units.
- Spa and Event space could be part of the future phased hotel development with ground floor presence opposite retail from the mixed-use residential and commercial component. However, it is possible that the spa concept could be a non-hotel operated concept with space taken in the initial retail program.