

Town of Collingwood

DRAFT Community Based Strategic Plan 2024-
2028

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For more than 15,000 years, the First Nations walked upon, and cared for, the lands we now call home. Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Ojibwe, and many others who were families, friends, and communities, the way we are today. The Town of Collingwood acknowledges the Lake Simcoe-Nottawasaga Treaty of 1818 and the relationship it establishes with the original inhabitants of Turtle Island. We acknowledge the reality of our shared history, and the current contributions of Indigenous people within our community. We seek to continue empowering expressions of pride amongst all of the diverse stakeholders in this area. We seek to do better, and to continue to recognize, learn, and grow, in friendship and community, Nation-to-Nation.

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

On behalf of Council, I am pleased to introduce Collingwood's 2024-2028 Community Based Strategic Plan (CBSP).

This Plan is a vitally important document that sets out how we plan to transform our community and make it even better for everyone today and in the future.

Our last CBSP was completed in 2020, and much has changed since that time. Collingwood has quickly become one of Ontario's fastest-growing communities. Our scenic waterfront and natural environment, animated downtown, and year-round amenities and events make Collingwood an attractive place to live and visit for people of all ages. Our Town also serves as a regional hub for services, industry, employment, and recreation, and we take pride in the thriving business community that has found success in Collingwood.

But the ultimate source of Collingwood's strength is **our people**. Collingwood is home to a highly engaged community of residents, business owners, groups and organizations, who are passionate about our Town and want to actively and meaningfully contribute to its path forward.

As we developed this document, we looked to our community members to provide their input, with the goal of ensuring the final CBSP is comprehensive and reflective of the needs, aspirations, and priorities of the people we serve. All of Council would like to thank those who participated in the strategic planning process and whose feedback helped to shape this document from start to finish. Special thanks are also owed to the Strategic Plan Steering Committee (*Appendix A*), made up of local volunteers and experts who provided guidance and expertise at critical moments throughout this project.

It is fitting that our community is at the core of Collingwood's updated Strategic Plan. Our long-term vision is anchored by three pillars that speak to the type of community we wish to create and strengthen: **Sustainable, Connected, Vibrant**. This will be supported by a **Responsible** Town government that serves the public interest and is transparent and accountable in all it does.

It is our sincere privilege to serve the community of Collingwood, and we look forward to working with you in the years ahead to put this ambitious plan into action.

Mayor Yvonne Hamlin

Deputy Mayor Tim Fryer

Councillor Kathy Jeffrey

Councillor Deb Doherty

Councillor Brandon Houston

Councillor Chris Potts

Councillor Rob Ring

Councillor Christopher Baines

Councillor Steve Perry

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Collingwood is an active, vibrant, and picturesque community located on the southern shore of Georgian Bay. Among a multitude of natural and culture assets, the community offers residents and visitors a thriving downtown core filled with heritage buildings, unique shops, and restaurants and a lively waterfront that makes the Town an attractive location to live, work, visit, and recreate.

Collingwood is also a growing community. The Town is forecasted to grow from approximately 26,500 permanent residents today to over 32,000 by 2033 and 42,000 residents by 2051. Collingwood's strategic location as the urban node of the South Georgian Bay region with access to other urban centres in Ontario, including Barrie and the Greater Toronto Area, further position it for continued economic and commercial growth and success.

As it grows and evolves, Collingwood can build on its core strengths and successes to scale up and be even better than it is today. But also critical to effective and proactive planning is identifying key challenges, barriers, and gaps that must be addressed or mitigated to ensure that the Town continues on its positive trajectory and remains a livable and sustainable community where there is a strong sense of belonging and where people want and aspire to be. The CBSP is a critical tool that can support the Town in this effort.

What is the Community Based Strategic Plan?

Collingwood's CBSP is a guiding document that sets out the long-term vision for the community and the impactful actions we will take to achieve progress towards that vision over the next four years. It serves as a catalyst to think, be, and do better as we plan for the future.

This plan is a critical tool for the Town. It focuses on the big transformations we want to see in our community and provides a framework to guide Council as it makes decisions about what to prioritize and how best to allocate public resources.

The CBSP also guides the work of the Town, informing the annual budget process, staff operational plans and work plans, and large-scale future planning for the community in the form of master plans and other strategies.

While the CBSP maps out the key priorities and transformational changes we want to drive



forward, we remain committed to delivering the programs and services we know our residents rely on and that support quality of life in our community. These programs and services will continue to be subject to ongoing community input and engagement and decisions by Council.

How to read our plan:

The CBSP begins with our strategic vision, mission, and values – these are the guiding forces behind an organization.

- ▶ The **strategic vision** articulates *our direction* for the future – it answers the question: what does Collingwood want to be?
- ▶ The **mission** sets out *our purpose* as a Town and our role as an order of government.
- ▶ **Values** inform *our approach* to everything we do, from decision-making to delivering Council-approved programs and services.

These higher-order and longer-term elements of the Plan are complemented by strategic pillars, goals, and actions that will guide the Town for the next four years as we make progress on transforming our vision into reality.

- ▶ **Strategic pillars** are *our core areas of focus* and transformation.
- ▶ **Goals** set out the *outcomes* we hope to achieve.
- ▶ **Actions** that speak to the *initiatives and projects* the Town will undertake to achieve progress on its goals.

STRATEGIC PLAN AT A GLANCE

OUR COMMUNITY VISION

Sustainable, Connected, Vibrant

Collingwood is an inclusive community that offers a healthy and active lifestyle in a beautiful waterfront setting, anchored by a responsible government, strong business network, and historic, animated downtown.

MISSION & VALUES

Working together to provide excellent services, progressive and accountable decision-making, and advocacy and collaboration.

Leadership

Integrity

Respect

Excellence

Financial

PILLARS & GOALS

	SUSTAINABLE	CONNECTED	VIBRANT
Our Community	1. Encourage more housing options that meet community needs 2. Support integrated and people-scaled development that enhances livability 3. Work with partners to take action on climate change	1. Foster belonging through arts, culture, and events 2. Promote Collingwood as a centre for healthy and active living 3. Support a community that is safe and well	1. Grow and diversify Collingwood's economy 2. Build our local labour force 3. Enhance the downtown and waterfront as a place to be
Our Government	RESPONSIBLE		
	1. Continuously drive operational and organizational excellence 2. Maintain the Town's strong financial health and assets	3. Champion local, regional, and intergovernmental collaboration and advocacy 4. Promote a healthy local democracy	

VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

OUR COMMUNITY VISION

Sustainable, Connected, Vibrant

Collingwood is an inclusive community that offers a healthy and active lifestyle in a beautiful waterfront setting, anchored by a responsible government, strong business network, and historic, animated downtown.

MISSION

Working together to provide excellent services, progressive and accountable decision-making, and advocacy and collaboration.

VALUES

Leadership	Integrity	Respect	Excellence	Financial Stewardship
We are courageous in making the decisions needed to support and better our community.	We are honest and transparent in our decisions and actions, ensuring accountability and safeguarding public trust.	We cultivate a caring and inclusive community where residents, volunteers, municipal staff, and elected officials are all treated with empathy and dignity.	We strive to provide high quality services and always seek opportunities to improve our efficiency, effectiveness, and customer service.	We effectively manage our financial resources in the interests of maintaining the Town's long-term financial health.

PILLAR #1: Sustainable

We grow with intention, with a focus on creating a livable community that serves the needs of today and builds for our future.

OUR GOALS

1. Encourage more housing options that meet community needs

Key Actions:

- ▶ Invest in and implement the Town's approved Affordable Housing Master Plan to provide more housing across the continuum with a focus on housing for middle income households.
- ▶ Consider opportunities within the Comprehensive Zoning By-law to encourage the development of diverse housing options to meet community needs.
- ▶ Explore feasibility for programs and investments in partnership with Simcoe County, the provincial and federal governments, and non-profits and charities to expand housing options in Collingwood.

2. Support integrated and people-scaled development that enhances livability

Key Actions:

- ▶ Explore options and partnerships to improve local transit and increase ridership.
- ▶ Explore options for better transportation connections between Collingwood and the rest of Ontario.
- ▶ Prioritize the speed and safety related components of the Master Mobility & Transportation Plan to support a people-centric approach to transportation.
- ▶ Maintain, renew, and enhance our natural heritage assets, including urban forests, that support livability and quality of life in our Town.

3. Work with partners to take action on climate change

Key Actions:

- ▶ Continue to implement the Greener Collingwood Corporate Climate Change Action Plan to achieve the Town's 2030 target.
- ▶ Develop a Community Climate Action Plan, including examination of incentives for greatest reduction in GHGs.
- ▶ Enhance emergency management and stormwater planning in the Town to help mitigate and adapt to the impacts of a more volatile climate and external environment.

- ▶ Develop municipal Green Building Targets and encourage more energy and water efficient initiatives for new developments.

PILLAR #2: Connected

We foster well-being, belonging, and understanding through spaces, places, and activities.

OUR GOALS

1. Foster belonging through arts, culture, and events

Key Actions:

- ▶ Build capacity to support and enhance Collingwood's lively arts and culture scene, including potential development of an Arts Centre.
- ▶ Encourage and support events, festivals, and celebrations that bring people together, foster inclusion, and showcase the richness of our culture, diversity, heritage, and community.

2. Promote Collingwood as a centre for healthy and active living

Key Actions:

- ▶ Determine future recreational programming and facility needs and explore creation of a Multi-Use Recreation Facility.
- ▶ Prioritize the active transportation components of the Master Mobility & Transportation Plan and encourage a network of walkable, bikeable, and accessible communities.

3. Support a community that is safe and well

Key Actions:

- ▶ Continue to support the hospital board in advancing progress on a new state-of-the-art regional hospital in Collingwood and explore future opportunities for the existing hospital site.
- ▶ Advocate for expanded access to primary care physicians, medical specialists, and mental health services and resources for those who need them.
- ▶ Collaborate with the County of Simcoe and community agencies and partners to expand or support homelessness prevention initiatives.
- ▶ Plan for the capital and operational resources for an additional fire hall.

PILLAR #3: Vibrant

We are home to a dynamic and resilient economic ecosystem, driven by design and continuous learning and powered by people.

OUR GOALS

1. Grow and diversify Collingwood's economy

Key Actions:

- ▶ Refresh and implement the Town's 2020-2025 Economic Development Action Plan to align on key areas for economic growth and investment attraction.
- ▶ Continue to encourage the Town's position as a regional centre for economic activity in South Georgian Bay.
- ▶ Complete and implement the Tourism Master Plan and continue to support four-seasons tourism, building on and leveraging Town assets and amenities and those of its neighbours.
- ▶ Update Town policies and practices to make it easier to do business in Collingwood.

2. Build our local labour force

Key Actions:

- ▶ Work with Simcoe County and other partners to identify and address current and projected skills gaps across industries the South Georgian Bay region and related strategies and action plans.
- ▶ Enhance the vibrancy of Georgian College and attract a university to provide more opportunities for residents to stay, learn, and grow in Collingwood.
- ▶ Explore opportunities for more experiential learning opportunities at and within the Town to support youth with "on the job" training and mentorship.

3. Enhance the downtown and waterfront as a place to be

Key Actions:

- ▶ Complete and implement the Downtown Visioning Master Plan to guide the evolution of the downtown area to 2051, including fostering greater connection to and integration with the waterfront.
- ▶ Leverage the ongoing Terminals Point redevelopment project to create a world-class landmark for the community, while respecting public access to the waterfront and the heritage and natural features of the site.

- ▶ Implement the Waterfront Public Realm Plan as opportunities arise to enrich public space and bring a people-centric focus to Collingwood's waterfront, including a potential new piazza.

PILLAR #4: Responsible

We commit to service excellence through collaboration, continuous improvement, and fiscal prudence.

OUR GOALS

1. Continuously drive operational and organizational excellence

Key Actions:

- ▶ Manage Town services such that each has clear levels of service and appropriate resourcing and implement periodic service reviews to ensure optimization.
- ▶ Strive to be an Employer of Choice to ensure that the Town can attract and retain the talent and expertise required to implement Council's decisions and strategic priorities.
- ▶ Ensure the Town is prepared for and exploring opportunities to leverage AI and other emerging technologies to support better and more efficient services.
- ▶ Explore opportunities to enhance the Town's alignment with and evaluation of progress against key targets in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly SDG11.

2. Maintain the Town's strong financial health and assets

Key Actions:

- ▶ Implement a multi-year financial forecast, including the 10-Year Capital Plan, to assess future financial health and identify potential risks.
- ▶ Consider options, including user fees, grants, public-private partnerships, and other innovative funding sources to increase and diversify Town revenues and balance affordability for our tax base.

3. Champion local, regional, and intergovernmental collaboration and advocacy

Key Actions:

- ▶ Develop a framework for a complete community, considering factors and services not generally delivered by local government (e.g., school spaces, long term care, sufficient electricity and other energy sources, hospital and health care, child care, animal rescue, etc.) and identify the stakeholders and sectors that should be involved in solutions.
- ▶ Build partnerships across the South Georgian Bay region to share knowledge and resources in pursuit of collective goals.

4. Promote a healthy local democracy

Key Actions:

- ▶ Continue to enhance communications efforts to increase public awareness of Town decisions, policies, and financial information.
- ▶ Continue to expand opportunities for community members, including a focus on youth, to more actively and positively engage and participate in local government.
- ▶ Consider initiatives to increase voter engagement and turnout in local elections.
- ▶ Review the governance and structure of Town Council to encourage more people to run for elected office and encourage greater diversity in all of its forms on Council.

HOW WE WILL IMPLEMENT THE PLAN

The 2024-2028 Community Based Strategic Plan will serve as the Town's compass in the years ahead. At the same time, many of our strategic goals will stretch beyond the horizon of the CBSP and require sustained attention, effort, and investment over time. Our focus for the next four years is to move the dial forward and foster progress through the actions that we have identified.

To put this plan into action and remain accountable and transparent to our community, we will:

- ▶ **Create an annual implementation plan:** For every year of the CBSP, we will bring forward recommended projects and initiatives that will help us advance our strategic actions and goals through the Town's annual Operational Plan. We will also bring forward requests, as needed, for the necessary resources to implement these initiatives for Council's consideration as part of the annual budget process.
- ▶ **Monitor and report on our progress:** We are committed to continuing to enhance how we measure and assess our performance and impact on the community, including with regard to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and its key targets and indicators. We will bring forward an annual report to Council that will summarize our progress against the CBSP, which will enable us to create a baseline and improve what and how we measure over time.
- ▶ **Celebrate and communicate our successes:** We will share our achievements and the progress we make on our goals with our residents, partners, and stakeholders. In line with our priority to continue to foster a healthy democracy, we will continue to actively and transparently communicate and engage with our community members, so they understand what the Town is doing and how we are working responsibly and in the public interest to best meet their wants and needs.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In October 2023, the Town of Collingwood embarked on the creation of a new multi-year Community Based Strategic Plan. True to its name, community consultation and feedback from residents, businesses, and Town Council and staff was front and center in this process.

Over the course of six months, we engaged with hundreds of individuals and groups through multiple channels to gather input on their priorities for the future of Collingwood:



1:1 Interviews

Conducted 24 interviews with Steering Committee members, members of Council, and Town Department Heads.



Pop-Ups

Facilitated 6 community pop-ups at various Town locations and events and directly engaged 250+ residents.



Focused Discussions

Presented to 9 Town Committees, Boards, Task Forces. Facilitated 2 community-focused sessions – with community partners / agencies and sports and arts groups.



Surveys

Disseminated a staff survey (90 responses) and Forum Research facilitated a Market Research Survey (400 phone responses, 481 online responses).

To guide and support the strategic planning process, the Town was fortunate to work closely with a panel of local representatives and experts on the Strategic Plan Steering Committee.

In parallel with the consultation process, we also completed a detailed [Findings Report](#) and SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis that reviewed the Town's internal and external environment and key trends and issues at a local, regional, and global level that should be considered as Collingwood plans for the future and the community it aspires to be.

Insights drawn from the research and consultation served as the foundation for the creation of the 2024-2028 CBSP, including the pillars, goals, and actions within the plan. The next section articulates some of these key findings and themes.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Collingwood is growing and contending with the opportunities and challenges that accompany growth

While the Official Plan sets out the overall vision for future growth, the Town is also at an important juncture in defining what the community will look like in the years ahead, with several exciting projects on the horizon that have the potential to transform Collingwood, including the redevelopment of Terminals Point and the Poplar Health and Wellness Village.

At the same time, the Town must ensure that it is making the appropriate investments in infrastructure and services – such as transit and active transportation, water and wastewater infrastructure, community facilities and spaces, among others – to support this growth and enable Collingwood’s continued success as a community. This also means prioritizing and focusing on what is needed to foster an integrated, complete, and people-centric community, leveraging the Town’s existing strengths and assets while also holding true to those elements and characteristics that make the Collingwood lifestyle so special.

Housing is an essential component of a truly livable community and, like many other municipalities, is a top concern in Collingwood and among residents. The Town has made considerable efforts to address the availability and affordability of housing in Collingwood through its approved Affordable Housing Master Plan, but there is also more work ahead to try to meet the full range of housing needs in the community, including continued collaboration with the County, other levels of government, and community and non-profit agencies.

A caring, dedicated, and engaged community is at the core of Collingwood

People are what make Collingwood great. The Town is home to a multi-generational and actively engaged community full of residents with an array of educational and professional backgrounds eager to provide their time, expertise, and passion to support the Town. There is a strong sense of civic pride, and people care deeply about each other and the wider community.

But the community is also evolving in step with growth. As Collingwood becomes more diverse and demographics shift over time, it will be important that the Town continue to prioritize inclusivity and belonging by providing services and spaces that are welcoming of all people, regardless of their gender, sex, age, ethnicity, ability, and income level. This includes a focus on enhancing the ability to attract, engage, and retain younger generations of people to help lead the future of the Collingwood.

Celebrating and encouraging healthy and active living and community well-being

Collingwood has a lot to offer. Its natural surroundings in South Georgian Bay – including the Niagara Escarpment, lake, woodlands, trails, and greenspaces – are essential to quality of life, and the Town delivers a range of programming and amenities to capitalize on these assets and help residents and visitors explore and stay active. Opportunities for social connection – through events, festivals, public spaces, arts, and culture – are also key to the healthy lifestyle on offer in Collingwood.

But there is also significant work and investment required in the years ahead to continue to support a community where everyone is healthy, safe, and happy. Key community assets will need to be scaled up to meet the demands of growth, including the need for a new hospital, enhanced active transportation infrastructure, new or expanded schools, a new recreational facility, and an arts centre.

Further, like many other Ontario municipalities, community needs in Collingwood are changing and becoming more acute, with a rise in visible homelessness, poverty, and mental health and addiction challenges. While these issues are not squarely within the jurisdiction of municipalities to address, as the order of government closest to the people, the Town still has a crucial role to play in helping advocate for improved funding and supports for vulnerable community members.

A strong, diversified, and prosperous economy

Collingwood is a place where people can live and work – approximately two-thirds of residents also work in Town. Although tourism remains a critical industry, Collingwood boasts strong manufacturing, healthcare, professional services, and ‘green’ sectors, with the knowledge-based economy also expected to see considerable growth. Collingwood’s network of local businesses and entrepreneurs is also a success story, thanks to ongoing supports and services provided by the Town and its partners.

But critical to a resilient and robust local economy are workers. As elsewhere in Ontario, employers in many sectors in Collingwood are struggling to fill vacancies and attract the talent and people they need. Enhancing local and regional workforce development will require an integrated approach that addresses the interrelated challenges impacting or exacerbating the labour shortage, such as housing availability and affordability, transit, and the availability of local education and training programs.

Building on the success of the downtown and waterfront...with big plans ahead

As a busy commercial centre and place where the community can come together, Collingwood’s downtown is a critical feature of its identity and character. The forthcoming Downtown Visioning Master Plan will establish a long-term vision to ensure the downtown remains a vital artery in Collingwood, including opportunities to leverage its unique historic buildings and overall feel, support and grow diverse local businesses, and enhance placemaking and public realm.

The future of the downtown also includes better connectivity with the Town’s world-class waterfront, which continues to undergo transformation into a more accessible and lively place to visit. Revitalization of the iconic Terminals Point will further position the waterfront as a major destination for residents and visitors alike.

Working towards a more sustainable future

Residents and the Town have demonstrated a deep commitment to championing sustainability and all its social, economic, cultural, and environmental facets. A key area of interest is aligning the Town’s activities and goals with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and notably SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, which strives to advance the role of small cities and towns as drivers of local, regional, and national sustainability. As part of this effort, the Town is working to do its part and reduce emissions from its own fleet, infrastructure, and services. But there is also more to do to support the wider community in adopting more

sustainable ways of living and ensuring that the Town is ready to adapt and mitigate against the impacts of climate change and more extreme weather events.

A Town government focused on acting in the best interests of the community

Council and staff are dedicated to acting with transparency, accountability, respect, and integrity as they work collaboratively to serve the community. As the Town looks forward, it will be important to continue to invest in the people, tools, and technologies needed to meet shifting resident expectations and the pressures on services and infrastructure associated with growth.

At the same time, the Town must also serve as the voice and champion of the community in those areas that reach beyond the jurisdiction and control of municipal government, such as healthcare, education, and social services. This means convening and advocating other governments and partners at the local, regional, provincial, and national levels to identify opportunities to better collaborate to deliver on community priorities and shared goals.

APPENDIX A – Steering Committee Members

Mayor Yvonne Hamlin

Deputy Mayor Tim Fryer

Councillor Kathy Jeffery

Councillor Christopher Potts

Tim Cormick, BIA Representative

Susan Nicolson, Ex-Officio

Rosalyn Morrison, Ex-Officio

Larry Law, Community Member

Mark Palmer, Community Member

Dave Ohrling, Community Member

Sonya Skinner, Staff Member

Sara Almas, Staff Member

Shelby Verkindt, Staff Member

Christa Carter, Staff Member