

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF GEORGINA

REPORT NO. SI-2024-0004

FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF COUNCIL

April 10, 2024

SUBJECT: Georgina Tourism and Wayfinding Strategy

1. RECOMMENDATION:

1. That Council receive Report No. SI-2024-0004 prepared by the Economic Development and Tourism Division, Strategic Initiatives Department dated April 10, 2024, respecting the proposed Georgina Tourism and Wayfinding Strategy.
2. That Council endorse Attachment 1 of Report No. SI-2024-0004 as the Town's Tourism and Wayfinding Strategy.

2. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Tourism and Wayfinding Strategy for the Town of Georgina. This Strategy outlines the objectives, types of signage being proposed and direction for a phased implementation of tourism and wayfinding signage across the municipality.

3. BACKGROUND:

The Tourism and Wayfinding Strategy strives to honour the rich culture of the Town of Georgina by ensuring that key tourism attractions and cultural and economic hubs are easily found by both visitors and residents. A tourism wayfinding strategy is one of the pillars of enhancing the economic growth of local businesses, promoting tourist travel throughout the community, and enhancing the Town's aesthetic appeal through the implementation of clear and uniform signage.

The Town of Georgina has made progress in creating unique sign identifiers for its main communities and park facilities. The development of the Municipal Signage Guidelines in 2014 helped to ensure a consistent design for community and wayfinding signage installed throughout the Town. Before proceeding with additional signage, updates to the signage designs are required to ensure signage is appropriately sized for the various locations and road speeds to ensure legibility.

In 2012 and 2016, the Economic Development and Tourism Division participated in an information sharing exercise between communities (First Impressions Community

Exchange program (FICE)), and it is noted that through this program, additional tourism wayfinding signage was suggested to direct visitors to key points of interest.

In 2019, the Town of Georgina in collaboration with the Georgina Chamber of Commerce and supported by Central Counties Tourism created a three-year Community Tourism Plan. One of the actions for the Town was to increase wayfinding signage throughout Georgina to improve the visitor experience and heighten awareness of key tourist locations.

In 2022, the Town of Georgina partnered with Central Counties Tourism to develop a municipal-wide directional tourism signage strategy. This strategy outlines the need and benefits of a comprehensive community-wide wayfinding system designed to cater to the requirements of residents, visitors, and businesses. The tourism wayfinding signage intends to drive additional traffic to private/public tourist destinations and historic business areas in order to increase the economic impact of these visitors.

Staff are aware of the concerns with the ongoing maintenance of existing signage and Town Staff have been working to ensure that community signage is inventoried, and a maintenance/repair program is in place. The Community Services Department has also been working to ensure all park signage is updated and maintained regularly.

4. ANALYSIS:

Georgina's proximity to the lake and its tourism assets have established Georgina as a four-season tourism destination that has a year-round impact on the local economy. The tourism sector employs approximately one out of every 10 jobs in Georgina.

Tourism wayfinding differs from traditional municipal signage in that it is meant to provide a quick, visual cue to nearby points of interest and easily direct people travelling through the area to these locations. This can be conveyed through words or symbols.

In late 2022, a dedicated Tourism Wayfinding Working Group was formed. This Working Group was led by Central Counties Tourism and included representatives from the Town, Georgina Chamber and the community. This collaboration resulted in the development of the Georgina Tourism and Wayfinding Strategy document (Attachment 1).

Four meetings were held with the Tourism Wayfinding Working Group between September and December 2022. An integral part of the working group's contribution to this project was their knowledge and expertise on daily traffic flow and patterns.

Town staff provided an inventory of existing municipal community and wayfinding signs, along with their existing signage guidelines. Key points of interest, preferred in-town routes of travel, along with desired end-of-route parking locations, were also

identified. Additionally, signage locations and required signage approvals were reviewed.

The Tourism and Wayfinding Strategy is expected to deliver the following key benefits:

- Boost the local economy through increased spending within the Town by directing traffic to historic business areas.
- Control the path of travel for visitors to increase the economic impact of pass-thru traffic.
- Increase visitation to key public and private tourism attractions and assets.
- Enhance the overall image of the Town of Georgina as a destination with a consistent and attractive design standard for tourism wayfinding signage.
- Improve sense of community, pedestrian safety, and place-making while mitigating interference with regulatory traffic signage
- Provide gateway signage from major corridors, including waterways, and a connection to outlying assets via scenic driving routes.
- This wayfinding does not include regulatory road signs, facility, or park signs.

The signage strategy will be implemented in a phased approach based on the following factors; a) outstanding signage installations/replacements and previously purchased marquee signage b) signage having the greatest economic impact and brand exposure, c) paths most travelled and or required for first-time users, d) address specific problems and needs. The proposed tourism signage is not intended to identify individual businesses but to direct traffic to major business districts or tourism assets using standardized symbols and verbiage.

Staff are currently working on the implementation of Phase 1 & 2 as noted below, and are in the process of preparing a detailed 3-year implementation plan and determining the budget requirements necessary to support this implementation plan.

Phase 1 Q2 2024 – Q3 2024	➤ Create and release RFP for updating of signage guidelines and proceed with Phase 2 signage installation proposed in Phase 2 ➤ Educate current tourism operators about additional signage opportunities such as the Canadian TODS program, York Region Tourism Directional Sign Program and York Region Farm Fresh Tourism Signage Programs.
Phase 2 Q3 2024 – Q4 2024 \$43,000	➤ Prepare updated signage guidelines and signage designs. ➤ Install marquee signage previously purchased (locations to be confirmed pursuant to the Tourism and Wayfinding Strategy). ➤ Install outstanding Community signage for (Belhaven, Pepperlaw (Lake Ridge & Pepperlaw Road)). ➤ Commence with updates to tab signs as reflected in the Tourism and Wayfinding Strategy ➤ Prepare a budget to support signage installations in 2025

Although the Economic Development and Tourism Division will lead the implementation of the Tourism and Wayfinding Strategy, support will be required from the Operations and Infrastructure Division and the Procurement Division. Consultation with and approvals from York Region will also be required as many of these signs will be installed on the Regional road allowance.

5. RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

This report is aligned with the Corporate Strategic Plan's goal to diversify our local economy through:

- a) supporting investment attraction, job creation, business retention and expansion, including within our agricultural sector and,
- b) continuing to support Georgina's tourism sector as an economic driver.

6. FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY IMPACT:

During the 2023 Budget Process, Council approved a business case for the enhancement and implementation of tourism and wayfinding signage and allocated a budget of \$50,000 for this purpose. A portion of this budget was utilized for regular maintenance and repairs to existing signage. The balance of the budget will be utilized to commence Phase 1 and 2 of the implementation plan as noted above.

A budget will be prepared to deliver signage beyond 2024. Staff in consultation with the Town's Grant Specialist are also investigating opportunities to leverage grant funds to support the implementation of the strategy.

7. PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND NOTICE REQUIREMENTS:

There are no statutory requirements to provide notice of this report, however, all members of the working group have been provided with a copy of this report and were provided with an opportunity to review the strategy in advance of this Council meeting.

8. CONCLUSION:

The Georgina Tourism and Wayfinding Strategy identifies signs that will guide visitors to the various points of interest identified by the working group. Once the plan is approved, the Economic Development and Tourism staff will be responsible for working with the Town's Procurement Division to retain the services required to prepare updated signage designs and install the proposed signage.

APPROVALS

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