

Harriman & Associates

TOWNSHIP OF NIPISSING



COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



- Prepared for: The Township of Nipissing
- Prepared by: Harriman & Associates

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Maintenance of Quality of Life through Incremental Growth”

After reviewing the information collected and talking to many residents in the Township of Nipissing, it is very clear that the families and residents of this “sleepy hollow” want to continue to maintain the high quality of life afforded them while at the same time allowing and even encouraging growth at a sustainable rate. The Strategic Plan developed for the Township of Nipissing attempts to provide that balance by celebrating and building on what is available in the Township and encouraging investment and growth at a comfortable rate.

Council’s involvement and support in the development of a mission statement, vision statement and value statement (Component #1) was an important first step toward the implementation of a Strategic Plan. Council now has to take the lead role in the implementation of a number of key themes and areas (Component #2). The themes include:

A. Economic Development

Goal: To sustain the current “quality of life” identifying partners and saleable products that could provide growth and development opportunities in the Township of Nipissing.

B. Municipal Services and Communications

Goal: To ensure the provision of effective communication and municipal services are maintained and continue to meet the needs of the community.

C. Marketing

Goal: To work positively toward creating a greater awareness by the community and public at large as to the amenities, services and opportunities that are available.

D. Recreation and Tourism

Goal: The community will work toward developing and enhancing the physical, social and environmental opportunities afforded by tourism and recreation.

Each of the themes generated a number of areas that reflected the quality of life in Nipissing Township as well as areas of improvement and the potential for incremental and sustainable growth.



The areas identified are:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Wind Power | 9. Communications |
| 2. Investment Readiness Strategy | 10. Image |
| 3. Nipissing Game Farm | 11. Identity |
| 4. History/Heritage Destinations | 12. Signage |
| 5. Housing | 13. Community Newsletter |
| 6. Land Fill Sites | 14. Trail Systems |
| 7. Infrastructure | 15. Facility Usage |
| 8. Administrative Services | 16. Volunteerism |

Under each area a number of objectives or “action statements” begin to describe how Council can move toward improvement in Nipissing Township. A total of 65 “action statements” support the direction Council may take over the next five years.

Finally, in order to get started, component #3 of the Strategic Plan identifies a “platform for action” and it provides guidelines that will go a long way toward implementation of the Plan. One step not identified in the Plan is a “priority” setting exercise. This activity will give Council an opportunity to prioritize the areas designating which ones should be addressed first. Given that many of the initiatives are manageable, the Township of Nipissing, by 2012 should be well positioned to deal with the positive spin offs expected from the completion of four laning highway No. 11 and “opening up” the region for potential investment opportunities.



STRATEGIC PLAN BACKGROUND

To provide a sense of direction and action, Nipissing Township Council recently initiated a “Community Development Process” to position itself positively over the next five years. That process involves two major pieces; one is a Human Resources Study and Review and the second is a Strategic Planning Process. An integral part of the latter is the development of a **Strategic Plan**.

The Strategic Plan would allow the Township to remain on track with respect to the mandate developed by Council. Elements of the mandate include:

- Carrying out an economic analysis to improve the economic outlook of Nipissing Township
- Developing a mission and vision statement supported by values deemed important in the Township.
- Identifying key themes and areas that help to define Nipissing Township.
- Developing action statements that assist in addressing the major themes/areas.
- Prioritizing the key areas so that Council can begin addressing them over the next five years.
- Looking at current service delivery models and making recommendations.
- Completing a Human Resources study (separate document due to its confidential nature).

Strategic Plans basically embrace three components:

Component (1)

A clearly defined purpose/direction or “mission” that is generally understood by all members of the Township. Along with this is a “vision” that can guide people so they can find their way within a shared mission

Component (2)

Clearly defined goals that must be met if the Township’s mission is to be served optimally.

Component (3)

A platform for an action plan through which the goals are met.



A Strategic Plan is not in and of itself, an action plan; rather it is a direction setter.

A successful Strategic Plan will enable the Township to avoid two major pitfalls. One is the “status quo” or resting on our laurels or drifting along and the other occurs when the Township tries to do everything all at once, to be all things to all people. The point of the Strategic Plan is to strike a balance to ensure everything is consistent with the mission.

To be successful, the implementation of the Strategic Plan involves making choices. How much can our available resources support at one time? What priorities must be addressed in order to serve our vision and/or the health of Nipissing Township? What should be addressed immediately? What has to be done first in order to facilitate follow-up initiatives? What can we defer? What partnerships need to be developed? As well, the plan has to address how these decisions will be implemented.

The consulting team of Harriman & Associates and Saad Consulting was retained to develop the plan and facilitate the process. The document entitled, “Township of Nipissing Community Strategic Plan April 27, 2007” is part of that process and is in response to the Township’s Request for Proposal. It will address the Strategic Plan part of the “Community Development Process”. The other major piece, the Human Resources document will be presented under separate cover.

COMPONENT #1

Nipissing Township Council currently is serving as the “Steering Committee” or “Strategic Planning Committee” and they have been involved in the development of the mission and vision statements as well as identifying core community values that reflect the quality of life in Nipissing Township.

Members of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee include:

1. Wendy Billingsley.....Mayor
2. Calvin Young.....Deputy Mayor
3. Pat Haufe.....Councilor
4. Dougal Culham.....Councilor
5. Leslee Lawrence Strauss.....Councilor

The results of their work include the following **Mission Statement, Vision Statement** and Nipissing Township **Values**. It should be noted that these statements include the key words and phrases identified during input from a variety of interviews with people and groups in the Township over the past several months and vetted with the Council.



MISSION STATEMENT

“The Township of Nipissing is dedicated to maintaining its rural Township atmosphere and its safe, healthy environment through the provision of effective and efficient government and planning so that all residents benefit.”

Note: A Mission Statement defines the business the community is in, for whom and how it will fulfill its business commitments.

VISION STATEMENT

“The Township of Nipissing is a proactive community that respects and protects its history while enhancing and embracing the needs of its citizens and the opportunities provided by its natural resources.”

Note: A vision statement defines the prescribed future of a community. It sets a target for a community to measure its goals, objectives and action plans.

VALUE STATEMENTS

The Township of Nipissing

- Values *culture and excellent customer service*
- Values *history and heritage*
- Values *quality services for all citizens*
- Values *open and transparent governance*
- Values *honesty and integrity*
- Values *inclusion and diversity (in all municipal activities)*
- Values *fairness and equality*
- Values *commitment to a team of creative problem solvers*
- Values *accountability to all citizens*
- Values *respect for the natural environment*



The premise of the Strategic Plan is built on the following assumptions. The Corporation of the Township of Nipissing was incorporated on February 10, 1888. On January 1, 1970, the Township of Nipissing annexed the unorganized Township of Gurd. Nipissing Township is a rural community with no major towns, business sections or centralized population. It promotes housing and tourism and this tells us the Township should promote its quality of life and growth from a different perspective. In Kelly Waterhouse's, September 2007 article in "Municipal World" entitled "Creating Destinations in Rural Communities", he says:-

"You've heard the expression, "If you build it they will come." What if you already have it and you just need to see it and build upon it? In rural Municipalities where the charm of small town life meets the struggle of economic viability, this is an issue of increasing importance. The trend for many rural communities acting mainly as local service centers has transformed into an opportunity to make these places into destinations for day-trippers and vacationers. Rural communities are recognizing the need to create themselves anew as destinations within destinations, building on already valued characteristics of their regions, to attract not only tourism dollars but new businesses and families."

Given that the Township is well past the century mark in age, it has amenities of significance it might be able to build on. Also, given the fact it doesn't have any so called "main" streets or "downtown", it has to look at other areas to attract people. The community might focus on a grass roots approach, a plan that includes community values, quality of life and a shared vision of the future. Waterhouse says it's about building a "culture" and "people are passionate about their places and spaces that need to be both preserved and promoted".

The past forms the basis for building a future. Community amenities can be anything from refurbished homes, public spaces and signage initiatives. It can include parks, unique facilities, spaces of commemoration and can incorporate the protection of lands for future park sites, trails and views. Heritage and cultural values become very important as they help to create a "point of differentiation". In summary, a community has to know who they are and what they have to offer. This forms the basis for developing a plan of action.

A number of things come into play when "promoting" and "building" your community. For example decision makers of successful communities today are those who think about how they can utilize the facilities and amenities in new and creative ways. When one talks about economic development, zoning, re-zoning and servicing Municipal lands to attract new industry come to mind. In the Township of Nipissing they could include a different perspective like parks, cemeteries, and the community cenotaph or civic space. This is where the grass roots approach comes in; build and market what you have including your past. The museum, the vast number of recreational tourist camps, the volunteer strengths and any Township service clubs or amenities are also untapped



resources. All the Township needs is to develop a partnership with organizations or businesses that see the need; this could be Council or someone that is passionate about the quality of life in Nipissing so that it can be marketed to ensure incremental growth that is sustainable resulting in expansion over a period of time.

The long term goal is about the multiplier effect for the Township at large. For every dollar spent, the Township could yield four or five times that in building or private investment. The multiplier effect is about building a culture according to Waterhouse and if Nipissing Township sees itself as a destination that means it believes in its inherent potential. You want people to stay there or move there so that businesses can expand. If that happens they invest in your community because they see the value of living in a “pristine”, quiet area with numerous attractions and potential.

To that end, component #2 in the development of the Strategic Plan is an attempt to identify major themes and areas that the Township can build on to maintain and enhance the wonderful quality of life that currently exists.

COMPONENT #2

This part of the process involved a number of information collecting activities that included talking to individuals in the Township, meeting with public focus groups, listening to the Township council, communicating by telephone and e-mail with a number of residents and researching the area using different websites. The consulting team summarized the information and a number of major themes emerged. They include:

- A. Economic Development**
- B. Municipal Services and Communication**
- C. Marketing**
- D. Recreation and Tourism**

Using the data collected through a variety of consultations and meetings, the consulting team then proceeded to develop the main **goal** for each of the four **themes**. Under each theme a number of **areas** were addressed and when analyzed further a number of **objectives** that would serve as **action statements** were identified. These action statements reflect the Township of Nipissing’s Mission, Vision and Value statements.



A. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal - *To sustain the current “quality of life”, identifying partners and saleable products that could provide growth and development opportunities in the Township of Nipissing.*

The following areas are significant and could result in providing sustainable growth opportunities in the Township.

- A.1. Wind Power**
- A.2. Investment Readiness Strategy**
- A.3. Industry (i.e. Nipissing Game Farm)**
- A.4. History and Heritage Destinations**
- A.5. Housing**

A.1. WIND POWER

Municipalities can play a key role by encouraging wind energy development. Data collected by the provincial government suggest that most areas in Ontario are suitable to wind energy farms.

Wind power is a renewable energy source with the potential to become a commercially viable source of energy in Ontario. Many Municipalities across the province are exploring the possibility of providing wind energy. Electricity from wind represents a multi billion dollar industry internationally. There is a similar potential in Canada but currently less than 1/10 of 1% of Canada’s energy is produced by wind. Further research is required in this area. It is our understanding from one of our focus group meetings that an area of the Township (lot # 8, concession 6) does have the wind requirements that would meet one of the conditions necessary to pursue wind as an alternative source of power. Further assistance can be provided by the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM) to determine if an area in the Township is eligible to undertake a feasibility study to determine viability.

Objectives:

A.1.1.

Identify a “champion” who is interested and would collect the necessary information to initiate exploration of wind power as an alternative source of energy.



A.1.2.

If the information warrants, secure funding to explore the viability of wind power within the Township of Nipissing through a “wind power study” with MNDM.

A.1.3.

Develop partnerships with other areas that are currently involved with different levels of government pursuing wind power as a source of energy.

A.2. INVESTMENT READINESS STRATEGY

The Provincial Government as part of the “Go North” initiative is promoting the need for all communities to better position themselves to be ready if and when development occurs. The initiative is to create an Investment Readiness Strategy that includes a current community profile and is registered on the Ontario Investment Service website. The community profile is a very powerful planning and marketing profile that highlights the assets of the community and is marketed world wide. Funding is available from the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines to undertake the strategy and have the information registered with the Ontario Investment Service website. The approximate funding available is about 80% from the Ministry and the balance from the Municipality. A strategy can be completed by qualified consultants for approximately \$6,000.00.

Objectives:

A.2.1.

Council will instruct the Clerk to prepare an application for consideration by the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines to undertake an Investment Readiness Strategy for the Municipality.

A.3. NIPISSING GAME FARM

An example of one great success story in the Township of Nipissing is the Nipissing Game Farm enterprise. The Nipissing Game Farm is set on 100 acres of northern Ontario farmland located near the shores of Lake Nipissing in the Township of Nipissing.

It is a completely integrated farm which handles quail from breeding to packaging. This includes hatching, growing the birds and a government inspected slaughter and processing plant. The birds and eggs are marketed directly to distributors and wholesalers around the world.



The Nipissing Game Farm was started in 1972 and has grown substantially over the past thirty-three years and has kept up with changing markets and conditions. The farm started with pheasant production and also chukar partridge. The farm now produces 40,000 to 50,000 quail per week and has specialized in quail only for the past nineteen years. It currently employs forty-five staff.

The products of fresh and frozen quail and fresh non fertile quail eggs are sent to their destinations throughout Canada and internationally by refrigerated transport.

Examples of other “success” stories that help to sustain and drive the economy in the Township include Becker’s Berry Patch, Homestead Furniture and Commanda Country Gardens, to name but a few. It’s these small but successful industries along with the numerous tourist lodge operations that make up the history and heritage of the area and help to describe what Nipissing Township is and what it looks like.

Objectives:

A.3.1.

Set up a task force to identify other success stories in the Township that sustains economic development.

A.3.2.

Include existing success stories as part of an overall marketing strategy.

A.3.3.

Develop a plan that allows for ongoing communication utilizing these success stories so that information is current and changes are properly documented.

A.4. HISTORY/HERITAGE DESTINATIONS

As mentioned earlier in this report the Township of Nipissing is unique in its own way, size, location, history, pristine wilderness and its abundance of water. Another unique feature of the Township is the Nipissing Museum which mentions a grass roots approach on its website. The museum is connected to the Voyageur Heritage Network (VHN) which is a non-profit organization made up of museums, historical societies, cultural groups and institutions in the following travel tourism areas, Rainbow Country, the Almaguin Nipissing Tourist Association (ANTA), the Algoma Country and the James Bay Frontier Tourism Travel area. The network is a “grass roots” self help organization whose purpose is to help member heritage and cultural groups develop and offer better services



to their communities. What's to prevent the group from marketing abroad? The sites and stories these attractions tell reflect a strong sense of charm and adventure that differentiates them from southern Ontario sites. The quality of the visit, not the size of the site, is the key to creating a marketable product. The VHN can serve as a tremendous resource to support success stories in the Township and it reflects the mission and vision statements.

An example of a heritage destination could be the Commanda Heritage Center, (formerly the Commanda Store Museum). This facility has had financial struggles as it is owned and operated by a community based volunteer, non-profit organization, the Gurd and Area Historical Society. The store recently received a financial donation of \$1,000.00 from the Township. With this positive financial support, it should be included in the marketing strategy to raise its profile.

Objectives:

A.4.1.

Utilize the VHN network to market success stories identified in Nipissing Township.

A.4.2.

Pursue funding opportunities through Rural Economic Development Funds, Ontario Trillium Fund and Community Futures Development Initiatives to create a Project Coordinator position to market regional success stories.

A.5. HOUSING

When the Township completed the official plan in 1997 a number of assumptions were made that formulated the policies within the plan. An assumption that the character of the community would primarily be rural in nature with seasonal/permanent residential uses and commercial tourist uses along the water bodies within the community is still reasonably accurate today. The exception to this assumption is that the demand for permanent residences is greater than seasonal. Another assumption is that tourism is the main economic activity. This has not changed and will continue to be a factor in the local economy. The construction of new residential development or the conversion of existing residential units will continue to dominate the economy. These assumptions were based on demand factors that continue to apply pressure on the existing supply of developable lands. In 1997 it was recognized this community provides residences for people who commute to North Bay. This is an economic factor that is still true today and is a strength to build upon as a community.



As the community grows so do the demands to accommodate the growth which can be significant. The policies within the Official Plan rightly state that new developments should not have a negative impact on the community. The challenge lies in recognizing the appropriate form of development with the slightest impact.

The Township is experiencing a healthy building activity with building permits and activity being up over last year. The volume of new residential building activity has increased over last year supporting the finding of an increased population shift. In an effort for the community to be “open for business” the Municipality must include development friendly policies that encourage and promote residential development. The current policies within the Official Plan can be softened to accommodate more development through subdivisions and consent applications.

Objectives:

A.5.1.

Develop a strategy to investigate further potential development opportunities.

A.5.2.

Review existing policies to make sure they are current and in line with provincial legislation.

A.5.3.

Identify potential “target” markets for future housing development.

A.5.4.

Determine the types of housing that the market would require so they could be incorporated into the Township’s plans.

A.5.5.

Review all policies within the Official Plan to ensure they are geared to proactive growth and development and are not seen as being restrictive.

B. MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Goal - *To ensure the provision of effective communication and municipal services are maintained and continue to meet the needs of the community.*



The following areas were identified as significant in order to deliver first rate Municipal services.

B.1. Landfill Sites

B.2. Infrastructure

B.3. Administrative Services

B.4. Communications

B.1. LANDFILL SITES

The Township of Nipissing has two landfills. The larger one is located at Wolf Lake and is opened Saturday and Sunday 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. and Thursday from 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

The smaller landfill site is located on Hwy 654 at Sunset Cove Road and is called the Bear Creek landfill site. This landfill site is opened Friday and Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. and Wednesday from 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. This landfill site, due to its size, is under consideration to expand to accommodate more garbage.

The landfill sites are managed by one individual who shares his time at both locations and has two days a week off that are staggered to accommodate demands. Both landfill sites have recycling bins that are open with the same hours of the dump operation. The Municipality does not provide garbage pickup. A private contractor in the south end of the community collects garbage for individuals who arrange payment directly to him.

Both landfills are closed on statutory holidays to allow the manager some relief. This has caused some grief in the past with people coming to the gate only to find it locked on a stat holiday.

Objectives:

B.1.1.

Post signage to clearly identify the hours of operation at key locations in the Township.

B.1.2.

Develop a plan that will include recycling of metal products.



B.1.3.

Develop a plan that will include the creation of a composting area.

B.1.4.

Develop a strategy to communicate with the public special circumstances involving hours of operation at special times of the year.

B.2. INFRASTRUCTURE

The two main types of infrastructure are “physical” and “technological”. The physical infrastructure includes main roads and bridges. Information shared with the consulting team by the different rate payers in the community indicated a high degree of satisfaction and those responsible were praised for their efforts. The major highway system that connects the Township is in good shape and well maintained. It is our understanding that response time given certain conditions is very good and people are generally pleased. The downside of this is the distance people have to travel. Things are spread out over a fairly large area. The Township is rural in nature and even though the road system is good, distance to major highways such as Highway 11 south to Highway 400 takes time.

Another key piece of infrastructure that is an important asset for investment readiness and economic development is technology. This includes high speed internet and advanced telecommunications and is briefly dealt with later in the report.

Objective:

B.2.1.

Council continues to support the current infrastructure so that the current high level of satisfaction is maintained.

B.3. ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

There are two major areas that fall under administrative services. One is from a human resource perspective and will be dealt with by consultant, Bob Young. The other involves the operational component which deals with technical information such as planning. To support the planning aspect because of the continued demand and to provide a level of service to accommodate and facilitate the development process, a number of areas need to be addressed. Currently the Municipality is represented by the “Joint Almaguin Planning Board”.



This Board is empowered to hear all planning applications and to make decisions on behalf of the Municipality. The Municipality has a council member and community resident as voting members. Each application is submitted through the Municipal office to the secretary-treasurer of the Joint Planning Board for processing. Historically, the process and communication have differed causing concern from council and the community. The lack of information and control on all applications has become an administrative challenge. The idea of a planning committee for the Township might be an alternative to address the situation.

If a planning committee is struck it will provide council and the community with a level of comfort that applications are being heard in a timely fashion with the defined time frames in the Planning Act and the decisions are supported by the Official Plan policies and Provincial policies.

Objectives:

B.3.1.

Ensure that all planning applications are accompanied with an appropriate “Planning Report” to provide assurances the application complies or does not comply with the Official Plan and Provincial Policy Statement.

B.3.2.

Council appoints a Planning Committee to review all applications and provide a resolution to Council and the Joint Planning Board.

B.3.3.

Develop a procedure that clearly outlines timelines and follow up for all planning applications.

B.4. COMMUNICATIONS

Upon review of the information collected, a number of statements centered on the area of communications that related to the operations of the Township through Council. First, there was the concern that high speed internet is still not fully functional within the area. When it is operating effectively, the communication improves substantially especially in terms of delivery and response time. High speed internet can be a powerful tool that affects not only the community, but provides major information support from basically any resource available outside the area.

A second area centers on the flow of information. How does information find its way into the community? Does information find its way into the community? What



mechanisms do we have in place that allows members of the community to respond to information sent to them? How can we ensure the public is aware of important information? These are some of the questions that Council might want to consider so that the public's confidence around information flow is maintained.

A third area involved the public's understanding or lack of understanding regarding Council policies and procedures. Again, the discussion centered on how the Township can make certain the information on policies and procedures is available to the public so they can see where Council is in the procedure and what policy is being followed.

Public awareness is an area that Council might want to look at in an effort to enhance its current level of communication with the rate payers. There are a number of action statements below that could go a long way toward keeping the public informed.

Objectives:

B.4.1.

Develop a plan so Council can set aside time to review procedural by-laws that can be updated in accordance with Provincial regulations.

B.4.2.

Explore the possibility of professional development opportunities for Council members to support them in their Municipal role.

B.4.3.

Investigate the possibility of public information sessions regarding the formal operation and procedures of Council.

B.4.4.

Establish a Council newsletter that is sent out to the public keeping them informed about what is happening at Council meetings.

B.4.5.

Explore the possibility of effectively using the media to get the "big news" items out to the public through radio, television and newsprint.

B.4.6.

Continue to advocate the need for full access to high speed internet.



B.4.7.

Develop a process that can track where information goes, when it leaves, if it arrives and if follow-up is necessary.

B.4.8.

Identify and liaise with outside agencies from provincial and local or district levels to provide training and support for volunteers and staff in the Township.

C. MARKETING

Goal – to work positively toward creating a greater awareness by the community and public at large as to the amenities, services and opportunities that are available.

Because of the wonderful lifestyle that the Township of Nipissing offers and the soon to be completed four lane highway 11 from Southern Ontario, coupled with the fact the Muskoka, Huntsville area is rapidly filling up, this leaves the Near North, including Nipissing Township, as one of the next big recreational areas and marketing becomes an important theme. The following areas were mentioned by several people as important when marketing Nipissing Township.

C.1. Image

C.2. Identity

C.3. Signage

C.4 Community Newsletter

C.1. IMAGE

When the Township looks at its image, it is looking at its reputation and what the Township looks like. Nipissing Township is a quiet enclave surrounded by areas that already have a reputation that they are marketing through a variety of communication networks. You have North Bay/Callander on one side and the Almaguin countryside on the other with Nipissing Township quietly nestled between the two. The Township includes well over one hundred tourist camp opportunities that most people aren't aware exist. The reputation isn't out there and the conundrum centers on how much the Township wants people to know



about them and what kind of an image they want “out there”. Our information sessions made it quite clear that the Township is a quiet area where the air is clear and clean with lots of room and wide open spaces. Traffic is not “clogging” the streets and there is room for everyone. The geography is welcoming and the seasons offer a relationship with nature that is quite peaceful and, in many ways, rewarding. The Township would like to grow but incrementally, based on good planning and environmentally controlled initiatives that can improve the economy and protect what the Township has. The Township wants to be known for looking at what they have and improving on it so it becomes an attractive draw.

The question then becomes “How does Council begin to describe the image?” and secondly, “How does the Township get it out to different target groups?”

Objectives:

C.1.1.

Identify a “champion” who can explore the positive attributes that begin to describe what the Township could look like.

C.1.2.

Ensure the descriptions of what Nipissing Township looks like are represented in a well developed marketing strategy.

C.1.3.

Investigate with other regions what similarities or differences can be identified and marketed through a co-operative initiative based on government funding support.

C.1.4.

Develop a partnership with the Almaguin Nipissing Travel Association along with the tourism industry, to promote the image of the Township.

C.1.5.

Build an inventory of all the products that include businesses, municipal services, tourism related amenities and artisans of the Township.

C.2. IDENTITY

Identity is similar in some ways to image, but a subtle difference is that it reflects our individuality or personality. It is important to have a descriptive nature as to what the Township looks like. The Township knows who it is and what it has to



offer. There is a strong sense of community and people enjoy living in the Township and are happy and friendly as well as passionate about this area. The Township can offer excellent locations for building a home or business, excellent road services, a low tax base, a strong volunteer base and a strong network of community support. The Township treasures certain amenities such as its history as expressed through the local museum and homes that families have passed on from one generation to the next. In short, the quality of life, municipal services and access to the natural environment are products that make the Township desirable.

Objectives:

C.2.1.

Designate a “champion” to describe the personality of Nipissing Township so that it can be incorporated into an effective marketing strategy.

C.2.2.

Set up a task group that could identify a target audience that would enjoy the products we have available.

C.2.3.

Forge an alliance between Council and private property owners to develop a marketing strategy that would include “image” and “identity” of the Township of Nipissing for audiences in southern Ontario.

C.2.4.

If the Township, through various funding initiatives, is successful in being able to hire a Project Coordinator, designate the areas of “image” and “identity” to be part of his/her responsibilities.

C.3. SIGNAGE

There is an old saying, “If you don’t know where you are going, then you aren’t lost”. That quote from Alice in Wonderland could reflect Nipissing Township. A number of people expressed signage as an issue. In fact, the consulting team, when traveling the Wasi Road, is always trying to figure out where the Township begins and where Callander ends.

It appears that road signs, navigation signs and route signs are lacking and it does make it difficult for people to find their way. Increased signage would not only give the appearance of a proud and promising area, but provide people with



a more accurate sense of direction. The consulting team feels this is an area that can be addressed with minimal costs relative to the potential outcome – attracting more people. A couple of action statements might solve this situation fairly quickly.

Objectives:

C.3.1.

Complete an application with the proper provincial ministry to erect signage at key boundary lines and other areas that will provide direction.

C.3.2.

Explore the possibility of any navigational signs that will improve the awareness of the waterway system within the Township boundaries.

C.3.3.

Explore the possibility of signage with the appropriate provincial ministry that might recognize the Township's age, which is well over a century.

C.3.4.

Provide signage to promote areas that are considered "heritage" in nature.

C.4. COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

The idea of a community newsletter has been mentioned elsewhere in this report. Under the theme of "marketing" this area allows the Township to be a little more specific. A number of residents did not seem to be aware of a number of things that are involved in Council meetings. They indicated that communication should be reviewed to ensure the right information is available and people are aware of what is happening. The whole idea of educating the public, keeping them properly informed and providing information ahead of time helps to keep the citizenry up to date. Any time you can have effective two way communication it goes a long way toward building a more open dialogue between members of the public and Council. There are a number of things Council might want to consider so that communication is viewed as open, timely and accurate.

Objectives:

C.4.1.

Develop a communication strategy to keep people informed as to what is happening at Council meetings.



C.4.2.

Provide an annual forum for people to discuss issues relevant to the community.

C.4.3.

Provide workshops on “How Council operates” or “What procedures are in place for public presentations” so the public has a better understanding of what the roles and responsibilities for Council are as well as the procedures for effective meetings.

C.4.4.

Build a community newsletter that is sent to the residents on a regular basis keeping them informed of Council’s work and what has been completed along with what’s currently on the agenda.

C.4.5.

Review the tracking system so that any resolution or recommendation can be followed from beginning to end.

D. RECREATION AND TOURISM

Goal - The community will work toward developing and enhancing the physical, social and environmental opportunities afforded by tourism and recreation.

Community input identified the following areas that would enhance the quality of life in Nipissing Township.

D.1. Trail Systems

D.2. Facility Usage/Recreation Programs

D.3. Volunteerism

D.1. TRAIL SYSTEMS

The development of trails in Nipissing Township has been a topic of discussion for some time. The opportunity for trail development in and about the area has potential in that the area could lend itself quite nicely to a four seasons trail system. Snowmobile trails, walking trails and hiking trails all have potential for the area. Trail development is taking place on both sides of Nipissing Township but



the general feeling of the residents is that they don't want trail development "in their backyard". Discovery Routes has funds available for trail development and to develop identified trails located within Nipissing Township that would allow for a completion of a total loop throughout the area. Currently trail development is taking place from Callander to the Nipissing Township boundary. As well, trail development is taking place beyond the border at the Commanda end of the Township. The lack of a desire for trail development does not only apply to snowmobile trails, but also ATV users as well. Liability and a general lack of respect for property have led to this sentiment. Discovery Routes is open to discussing the issues and offering alternatives for consideration by Council and residents. Currently Discovery Routes have funds in place for trail development and would like to close the loop by developing a trail system designated for Nipissing Township. The recommendation of the consulting team would be that discussions with the Discovery Routes be re-opened in order to become apprised of the options available as well as to ascertain what can be done to protect the private property from abuse.

Objectives:

D.1.1.

Consideration is given to reopen discussions with Discovery Routes to determine if there are alternatives to the current stalemate.

D.1.2.

Explore potential funding options with Discovery Routes if satisfactory alternatives can be found to pursue year round trail development.

D.1.3.

Market the area if a solution is found that will connect the trail systems between the adjoining municipalities.

D.2. FACILITY USAGE/ RECREATION PROGRAMS

An interesting phenomenon exists in the Township in that the Commanda Community Center serves as a hub of activity for the residents in the immediate area while the community center located at the Fire Hall is virtually unused. There is a move across the country to get people to become more active due to a number of health related issues nation wide. Getting active from a physical as well as a social approach is essential if we are to improve the overall quality of life.



Upon review, history seems to play a major role for activity and use in the two community centers. Operated as a private not-for-profit facility, the Commanda Community Center has served as the hub of activity for several years. Many of the residents in the area grew up using programs and services offered at this facility. The responsibility of maintaining the facility and developing and maintaining programs has been passed from generation to generation and is a way of life in the area. There is a strong sense of community surrounding this facility and the residents take great pride in planning recreational programs when making use of “their facility”.

At the other end is the community center located at the Fire Hall. While being a very functional facility, it is not used as effectively as the Commanda facility. Geographical location, lack of a volunteer presence and an overall lack of interest in using the facility contribute to its infrequent use. There are also costs to maintain the facility and even though numerous attempts have been made to use the facility, response has been limited.

A key issue that appears to be missing is the lack of programs and services identified by the citizens. In order to better utilize community based facilities, including the fitness center, there needs to be a process developed to identify what the citizens actually want in terms of recreational programs and services. There are a number of options to be considered in terms of programs that could contribute to the overall quality of life for the residents. They include:

1. Needs assessment to determine potential programs that could be offered at the facility based upon community needs.
2. Initiate discussions with the school board to determine the possibility of offering programs at the school based on the needs assessment.
3. Develop a joint use agreement with the school board to gain access to the facility at little or no cost.
4. Find an alternative use for the community center at the Fire Hall that would generate revenue and reduce operating costs to the municipality.

An integral part of determining the future use of the community center at the Fire Hall is to determine the community’s desire to participate in programs and make the community center a hub of community recreation. The location of the municipally operated community center was raised many times during the information gathering process. Its location, simply put, is not conducive to ease of access or use by the citizens. Citizens do not relate to this facility as the “hub” of recreation or social inclusion for their area.

Besides indoor facilities such as the community halls, there are outdoor facilities with potential. A good example of this is the South Bay Provincial Park. This park is obviously a wetlands protected park that currently is only accessible by boat or



all terrain vehicles in the summer time or snow machines in the winter. Again, it is another example of what the Township of Nipissing has in its backyard that is almost unknown. As the four laning of highway 11 nears completion and families, cottagers and park tourists move into the uninhabited areas of the Near North there is unlimited marketing potential for the Township.

Objectives:

D.2.1.

Investigate the possibility of provincial funding to carry out a Recreation Needs Study to ascertain the level and types of programs and services residents need by scheduling a meeting with the Ministry of Health Promotion and the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit.

D.2.2.

Discuss the viability of the existing recreation center adjacent to the Fire Hall continuing in its current form and if it is not cost efficient, look at alternatives such as sharing significant events at both centers throughout the year.

D.2.3.

Explore the possibility of developing partnerships with neighboring communities and seek ways that the community centers can serve as gathering places for the larger community.

D.2.4.

Explore the possibility of future park development that could result in overnight camping for families during vacation times.

D.2.5

Utilize the strength of South Bay Provincial Park by working together with the appropriate agencies and partners to develop a marketing strategy that would attract recreational tourists as well as families.

D.3. VOLUNTEERISM

During our visitation sessions the consulting team was continually surprised at the commitment, enthusiasm and energy residents of the Commanda community demonstrated. They were proud of the history that was created with the Center and there was evidence that the overall quality of life was enhanced as a result of the programs and services offered at the Center over the past sixty plus years.



On the other hand, the community center at the Fire Hall hasn't had the kind of support demonstrated by the residents of Commanda. Efforts have been made to try and emulate the support shown by Commanda residents, but with very little success. In order to create a gathering place at the Fire Hall, volunteerism, recruitment and training have to be explored further. Since the Township has an established recreation committee, this might be an avenue that could lead to the development of new initiatives and programs at the Fire Hall Community Center.

A key part of any needs assessment is to develop a strategy that would address volunteer recruitment, retention, training and recognition. The community will never be in a position to hire a full time Recreation Coordinator, but in order to determine community needs and to develop a volunteer base that could sustain the programs and services; it would be recommended that the Township develop a Terms of Reference for an interim "Quality of Life Coordinator". Funding options are available from programs such as the Province of Ontario Community In Action Fund or NOHFC. The position would be for a one year period and would be responsible for:

1. Carrying out a needs assessment
2. Developing programs as identified from the needs assessment
3. Implementing programs and developing a marketing strategy
4. Developing a volunteer training program to provide sustainability

The existing recreation committee does not appear to be as functional as it should be. There is a lack of an overall mandate, clear expectations, an annual planning process linked to the budget process and a recruitment program to increase participation on the committee. By addressing these issues, the Township would develop a committee that is functional, increases citizens' participation and develops programs that meet preconceived community needs. It needs to be noted that the geographic layout of Nipissing Township is also a deterrent to community-wide programs and services as transportation plays a large role in access to any programs that are available.

Discussions with residents indicated that volunteerism outside the community centers was alive and well as many were willing to volunteer for a variety of things whether it was opening their home to families that required some help because of a tragedy or fundraising initiatives to support the purchase of equipment for the local Fire Hall. It struck the consultant team that the high level of support for each other in the Township was a strength that should be utilized in order to continue providing a lifestyle that would attract families to the area.



Objectives:

D.3.1.

Identify one or two “champion” volunteers responsible for the success of the Commanda Community Center who might be able to develop a plan on how to include the Community Centre at the Fire Hall to become a gathering place for more social interaction.

D.3.2.

Create an Awards Night to celebrate volunteers for a variety of reasons.

D.3.3.

Meet with the neighboring health units to see if they can provide support or services in volunteer recruitment or training.

D.3.4.

Discuss the possibility of hiring an interim “Quality of Life Coordinator” who could carry out the above-mentioned mandate.

D.3.5.

Review the mandate of the recreation committee so that it is clear and current, reflecting the mission and value statements of the Strategic Plan.

D.3.6.

Explore other uses of the facility adjacent to the Fire Hall.

D.3.7.

Develop a database of community needs, community volunteers and facility usage including the school.

COMPONENT #3

Now that the Township of Nipissing has developed a mission statement (Component #1) and a number of goals (Component #2) that will serve to move toward accomplishing the mission statement, the last major piece of the Strategic Plan is a platform for action (Component #3)



This part of the plan includes the following sections:

- a. Platform for action statement.
- b. Beginning implementation phases.
- c. Example of committee guidelines.
- d. Council's role.
- e. A monitoring mechanism.

1. Platform for Action Statement

Putting Nipissing Township's Strategic Plan to work will be a highly participatory exercise involving several existing committees such as the Museum Board and the Recreation Board along with some newly created committees, special purpose task groups and "champions". Overall responsibility for ensuring the Plan's implementation rests with the Nipissing Township Council. The Council will change its role to that of an implementation committee once it approves the Strategic Plan.

2. Beginning Implementation Phases

The first step toward implementation should be the identification of local "champions" and working committees best suited to pursue each of the Plan's objectives, what action has to be taken and appropriate timelines. A starting point for Council might be to refer to the "priority" setting exercise and review those areas that ranked high on the list.

3. Example of Committee Guidelines

It will be the responsibility of each committee, task force or "champion" to develop a report that will contain certain information. Below is a possible guide to provide direction to those responsible.

- A list of objectives/action statements
- A reasonable timeline
- A costing component
- Strategies that will enable the objectives to be met
- A brief rationale



4. Council's Role

Since Council will be responsible for the implementation of the Strategic Plan, they have tremendous responsibilities and commitment ahead. The consulting team recommends that Council appoint someone to coordinate the committee work and monitor the progress of different work groups making sure that progress reports are brought to Council as information. That individual would also be responsible to ensure the committee's final report is presented to Council.

Financial resources are extremely important to the timely and effective implementation of any Strategic Plan. Therefore, when Council begins its budget deliberations it might want to consider areas of the Strategic Plan. They should also understand that they might have to participate in some cost sharing measures regarding staffing, if partial funding is successfully obtained from the appropriate ministry for certain initiatives. In short, recommendations from some of the committees could influence the budget and resource allocations and Council will have to prioritize accordingly. The Township of Nipissing Council might want to host a round table discussion with all the federal and provincial funding agencies to heighten their awareness of the direction the Council is taking toward the year 2012. This would also provide an opportunity to identify potential funding sources for the projects.

5. A Monitoring Mechanism

The key here is to put a process in place for progress reports on the different projects. This should be done at least once a year for larger audiences and maybe twice a year for Council. Who does the reporting would be decided by Council. It could be the Mayor, a Councilor or the person assigned to oversee the projects. The reports would obviously include an assessment of the progress on the different projects including a brief financial picture and update on whether the projects are following the timelines provided.

There are a number of statements in the "Blue Sky Region Investment Readiness Profiles and Analysis/2007" prepared by Precision Management Catalysts that could reflect the Township of Nipissing. They include:

- a. "A key strength in most areas in this region is their high quality tourism and recreation". Again, Harriman & Associates and Saad Consulting have attempted to highlight this in a number of areas throughout the report.
- b. "For economic purposes it is sometimes better to partner with neighboring communities to develop the critical mass". This would be beneficial to Nipissing Township so they could have the numbers in terms of people and/or the resources required to sustain certain initiatives.



- c. “Taking incremental steps is important”. Nipissing Township is off to a great start. It now has a Strategic Plan that will provide direction for the next five year period 2007 – 2012. The strength of the Plan is that it recognizes what the community has and builds on it. Council now has the opportunity to develop a process that is incremental and allows for reflection on implementing many of the recommendations put forth by Harriman & Associates and Saad Consulting. The next five years are the building blocks for 2013 – 2018 and the Township of Nipissing has positioned itself to retain its wonderful quality of life yet grow proportionately keeping things in balance and providing families from southern Ontario with a viable option to relocate.



APPENDIX 1

Nipissing Township Priority Setting Activity (see attached).



APPENDIX 2

Platform for Action Descriptors Related to Priority (see attached).

