



Economic Development and Arts, Culture and Tourism Master Plan

September 2025





Economic Development and Arts, Culture and Tourism Master Plan

September 2025

Prepared by:



McSweeney and Associates

T: 1.855.300.8548

E: consult@mcsweeney.ca

W: mcsweeney.ca

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Goals and Actions	2
Economic Development Priority Actions	3
Economic Development Goals and Actions	4
Goal 1: Establish A Foundational Base to Support Economic Development.	4
Goal 2: Grow a Diversified Economy.	5
Goal 3: Connect And Communicate for Economic Success.	6
Arts, Culture and Tourism Priority Actions	7
Arts, Culture and Tourism Goals and Actions	8
Goal 4: Partner with Relevant Organizations.	8
Goal 5: Support and Educate.	8
Process Followed	9
Step 1: Discover	10
Current Status Review	10
Step 2: Define	14
Stakeholder Engagement	14
Step 3: Develop	15
Progress Summary and Draft Strategic Plan	15
Step 4: Deliver	16
Final Strategic Plan and Action Plan	16
Appendix One: Document Review	17
Appendix Two: SCOAR® Analysis	18

Executive Summary

The Township of Mapleton, located in Wellington County, is northwest of the Greater Toronto Area and approximately 40 km north of Kitchener-Waterloo. The Township supports a mostly agricultural and rural population of approximately 11,000 residents and includes three small hamlets (Drayton, Moorefield and Alma) that make up the "urban" centres of the Township. While the Township operates within a two-tier government structure, most services enjoyed by the residents and businesses of Mapleton are provided by the lower-tier municipality.

The process for the development of the Master Plan began by understanding the economic and social situation in Mapleton through a quantitative and qualitative analysis. Following the analysis, the remainder of the process involved transitioning from ideas to actions. This stage of the process began by identifying key themes arising from the qualitative and quantitative analysis. Stakeholders were then consulted again during a Working Session. Following this Working Session, Mapleton staff helped to develop, revise and refine the final actions. Council has final approval authority.

Mapleton strongly supports business retention and growth. This is seen through goals in the Township of Mapleton Strategic Plan Summary (notably seeking a "Prosperous and Diversified Economy") and in the Mapleton Community Improvement Plan (with goals including "Mapleton as a Business Friendly Community" and "Mapleton as an Inviting Destination"). These key Township documents along with the Economic Development and Arts, Culture and Tourism Master Plan solidifies their focus that "Mapleton Means Business".

This comprehensive Economic Development and Arts, Culture and Tourism Master Plan will help guide future decisions in economic development and arts, culture and tourism over the next five years.



Goals and Actions

The following are the Economic Development and Arts, Culture and Tourism actions that were created based on discussions with key stakeholders from the business community, local organizations, residents, Township of Mapleton staff and elected officials. There is a total of 30 doable and realistic actions under the following five goals:



Economic Development

Goal One : Establish a Foundational Base to Support Economic Development.	Goal Two: Grow a Diversified Economy.	Goal Three : Connect and Communicate for Economic Success.
---	--	--

Arts, Culture and Tourism

Goal Four : Partner with Relevant Organizations.	Goal Five: Support and Educate.
---	---------------------------------------





Economic Development Priority Actions

1. Deliver an overview to staff and council about the fundamentals of economic development and the role that everyone plays in supporting a business-friendly environment, so that the same message is relayed to residents, businesses and potential investors.
2. Make it easy for businesses to understand Mapleton's municipal processes (i.e., permit and development process) and programs (i.e., Community Improvement Plan) by:
 - a. Creating a 'concierge program' to act as a single point of contact, guiding businesses through the various stages of planning approvals for processes and programs.
 - b. Developing a Process Guide (i.e., step by step timeline guide) that outlines the permitting and development process.
3. Update the economic development web pages on the Township website with comprehensive and current business-focused information to assist investors in making an informed choice on locating and growing in Mapleton.
4. Establish an on-going formal business visitation program to build relationships between businesses (including the agriculture sector) and the Township, strengthen local business networks, support business retention and growth, and gain insight into the needs and opportunities of the business community. Coordinate with Wellington County Economic Development to have staff participate in the business visits to improve collaboration and reduce duplication.
5. Better connect with the business community through regularly-scheduled communications (i.e., newsletter) that provides relevant business information and celebrates the local business community.



Economic Development Goals and Actions

Local economic development is about making a community a good place to invest. There are foundational items that need to be in place to have an effective economic development program. It is important to have Township staff and elected officials on the same page regarding processes, policies and creating a welcoming business environment. The Township's business-friendly approach will establish Mapleton as a municipality that understands that business is crucial to the well-being of the community and offers an environment to support and grow business.

The following actions are to be completed over the next five years.

Goal 1: Establish A Foundational Base to Support Economic Development.

Actions:

1. Review the purpose of the Economic Development Committee of Council and their role in implementing the Master Plan.
2. Develop a Commercial and Industrial Land and Building Inventory of available space for sale or lease and ensure it is consistently updated Collaborate with 'Invest in Wellington' by providing them with local intelligence on Mapleton's available lands, etc. to support investment.
3. Understand and promote available business support programs, including training programs and federal or provincial incentives (i.e., Wellington-Waterloo Community Futures, Business Centre Guelph Wellington CFDC, Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin).
4. Produce a Community Profile that builds on the Community Handbook but provides additional information that



Economic Development and Arts, Culture and Tourism Master Plan

businesses, investors and realtors require in order to make an informed decision on the Mapleton's assets.

Goal 2: Grow a Diversified Economy.

Actions:

1. Explore opportunities and incentives to stimulate industrial investment on existing industrial lands.
2. Support on-farm diversified-use opportunities (i.e., showcase opportunities during business visitation meetings, provide marketing support, and promote local success stories).
3. In order to have a solid understanding of the types of businesses that are interested in locating in the Township develop a formalized tracking system for industrial and commercial investment enquiries.



Goal 3: Connect And Communicate for Economic Success.

Actions:

1. Continue engaging with local business support organizations to ensure that the Township staff understands what these organizations offer and that the Township gives the best advice possible to businesses (i.e., Wellington-Waterloo Community Futures, Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin, Wellington County Economic Development, Wellington Federation of Agriculture, Business Centre Guelph Wellington).
2. Continue to collaborate with the Mapleton Chamber of Commerce to help to map out their roles and responsibilities to maximize support and reduce duplication of efforts.
3. Continue to coordinate with provincial, county and other government programs on the development of a 'Buy Local' program to promote products grown and/or produced in Mapleton.
4. Partner with the downtown businesses to develop a program to create vibrant commercial downtown cores in Drayton, Alma, and Moorefield.
 - a. Partner with the downtown businesses to promote and beautify the downtowns.
 - b. Put in place land use policies that will encourage retailers to locate on the ground floor and provide locations in new developments for commercial services.
 - c. Improve walkability in the downtowns by providing pedestrian amenities in the downtowns (i.e., benches, trees, sidewalks).
 - d. Educate businesses on the availability of funding through Wellington County and Township of Mapleton Community Improvement Plans to encourage them to take advantage of these funds.
 - e. Partner with the downtown businesses and local musicians and artists to create opportunities to activate the downtowns. (i.e., food trucks, night markets, arts events).
 - f. Create visible indicators of arts and culture in all downtown cores (i.e., public art installations, live music).



Arts, Culture and Tourism Priority Actions

1. Work with the arts community to determine if there is interest in establishing an arts council and if so, define its role and responsibilities to elevate the arts and culture in Mapleton.
2. Work with the arts community to host an annual networking meeting to bring the creative community together to improve visibility and increase collaboration and idea sharing.
3. Undertake a cultural mapping exercise to build a comprehensive inventory of all the tangible and intangible cultural assets in Mapleton.
4. Create a digital “arts hub” that provides centralized information on and for the arts and culture sector. (i.e., marketing opportunities, resources, directory of local artists, musicians and creatives).
5. Partner with arts, culture and tourism operators to produce unique day trip packages to promote local attractions.



Arts, Culture and Tourism Goals and Actions

Art and culture and tourism contribute significantly to the economy by creating jobs and stimulating economic growth while fostering a sense of belonging and improving quality of life. The following actions are to be completed over the next five years.

Goal 4: Partner with Relevant Organizations.

Actions:

1. Continue to work closely with Wellington County on their arts and culture initiatives (i.e., Culture Days) to help to elevate arts and cultural assets in Mapleton.
2. Work with Wellington-Waterloo Community Futures to determine funding opportunities that support the arts and culture sector and promote those opportunities to local arts and culture stakeholders.
3. Work with Drayton Entertainment to explore opportunities to expand the use of the Drayton Festival Theatre to showcase local arts and culture (i.e., musicians, dance, art exhibits/presentations).

Goal 5: Support and Educate.

Actions:

1. Provide education and outreach to the arts, culture and tourism sector on grant programs available to support their operations and growth.
2. Increase awareness and visibility of cultural events or experiences locally (i.e., shared calendar of events, better signage, and a more robust online presence).
3. Review municipal by-laws and policies to ensure they are supportive in the development of additional festivals and events in the community (i.e., fireworks, food vending services, noise curfews, etc.).
4. Define and promote the type of in-kind support that Mapleton can provide to local artists, festivals, and events (i.e., reduced rental fees for venues, waived permits, loaned supplies or equipment).
5. Explore the development of a Mapleton-branded Wayfinding Sign Program and align it with the Wellington County tourism signage program to help guide visitors and residents effectively throughout the township.



Process Followed

The Strategic Plan was completed over a four-month period between June and September 2025. Throughout the process there was considerable opportunity for input from the public, discussions and verification of the final document, to ensure that it considered the critical actions required for the success of Mapleton, with final approval from staff and elected officials.

STEP 1: DISCOVER

Current Status Review.

- » Document Review.
- » Employment/Industrial Land Review.
- » Community Analysis.
- » Situational Economic Analysis.
- » Informal Investment Readiness Assessment.

STEP 2: DEFINE

Stakeholder Engagement.

- » One-on-one Interviews.
- » Online Survey.
- » Focus Groups.
- » Staff Priority Setting Session.

STEP 3: DEVELOP

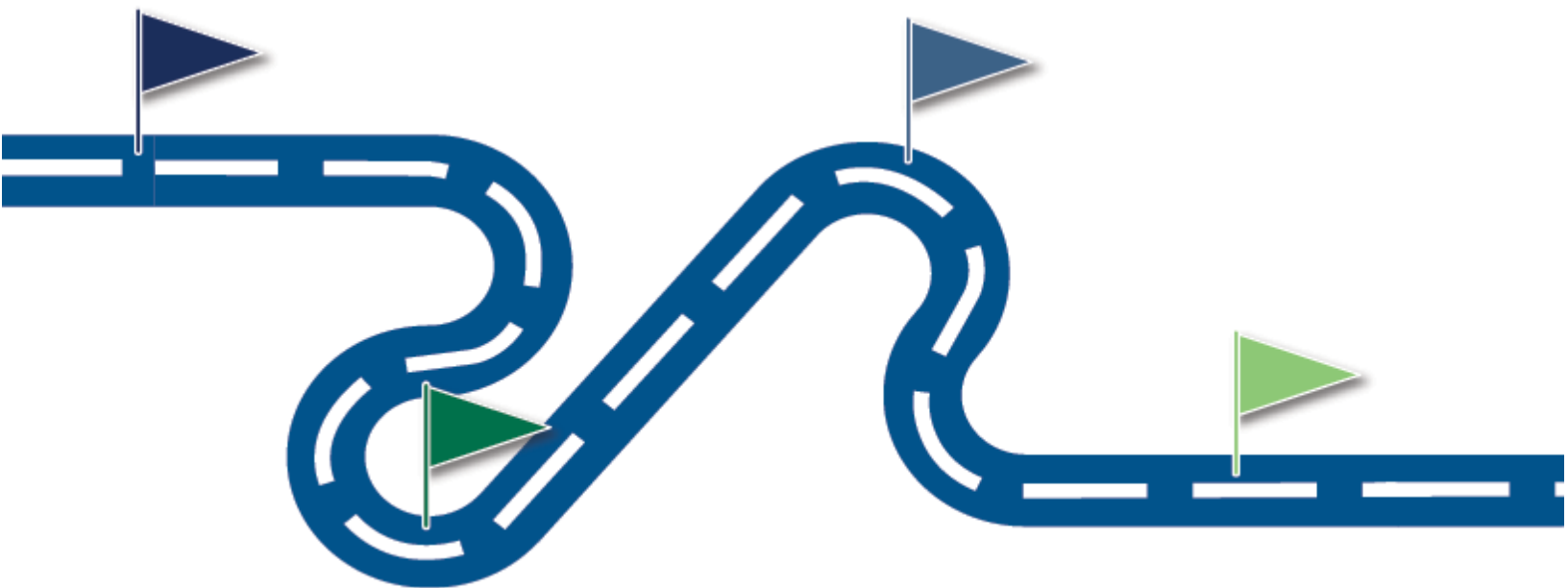
Strategic Development & Implementation Plan.

- » SCOAR®.
- » Working Session.
- » Strategic Action Planning Session.
- » Draft Strategy.
- » Implementation Plan.

STEP 4: DELIVER

Present the results.

- » Final Strategy.
- » Presentation to Council.



Economic Development and Arts, Culture and Tourism Master Plan

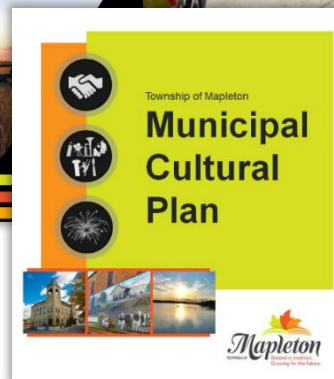
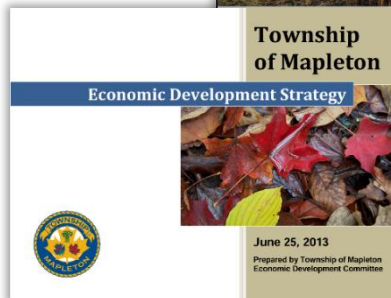
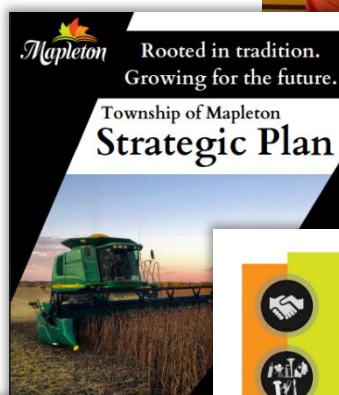
Step 1: Discover

Current Status Review

To begin the process, an in-depth review of the current situation in the Township of Mapleton was undertaken, to gain an understanding of the history of the municipality and the Township's economic profile. The development of a Community and Situational Analysis, a document review, along with an Industrial and Employment Land Review and Informal Investment Readiness Assessment helped to establish a better understanding of the Township of Mapleton.

Document Review

A document review was conducted to understand the local climate and economic realities impacting the Township of Mapleton. This review included local documents, county documents, and development strategies related to economic development and arts, culture and tourism. It allowed for a better understanding of the findings from the project's quantitative data analysis and qualitative conversations with local stakeholders. Documents reviewed can be found in Appendix A.



Informal Investment Readiness Assessment and Employment/Industrial Land Review

An Informal Investment Readiness Assessment was undertaken to identify its current state of investment readiness. Along with this assessment, a review of the current industrial and employment lands was undertaken to determine if there are any barriers for investment.

The basic tools and assets required for investors was reviewed including the economic development website, investment marketing tools, employment lands, and the handling of the site selection request process.

Highlights:

- Challenges to investment:
 - Limited serviced industrial lands are available to support economic growth.
 - Limited locations to open a commercial business.
- Strengths for investment:
 - The Township has invested in a comprehensive Community Improvement Plan.
 - There are two industrial parks located in Mapleton, one in Drayton and one in Moorefield.
 - There is one point of contact for investment.

Attracting and growing investment is not a quick endeavour. It requires a long-term program that is proactive with a clear understanding of the end goal.

The results of the Informal Investment Readiness Assessment and the Employment/Industrial Land Review were provided to the staff as a separate, internal document to help to provide direction and better understand what is needed by the municipality to retain, grow and attract business investment.

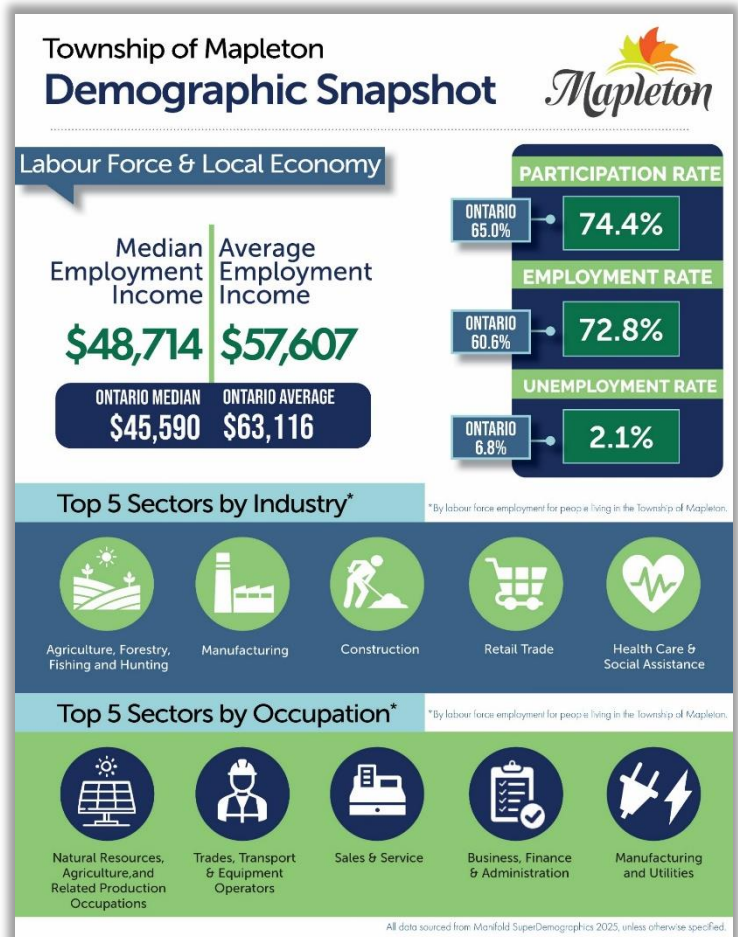
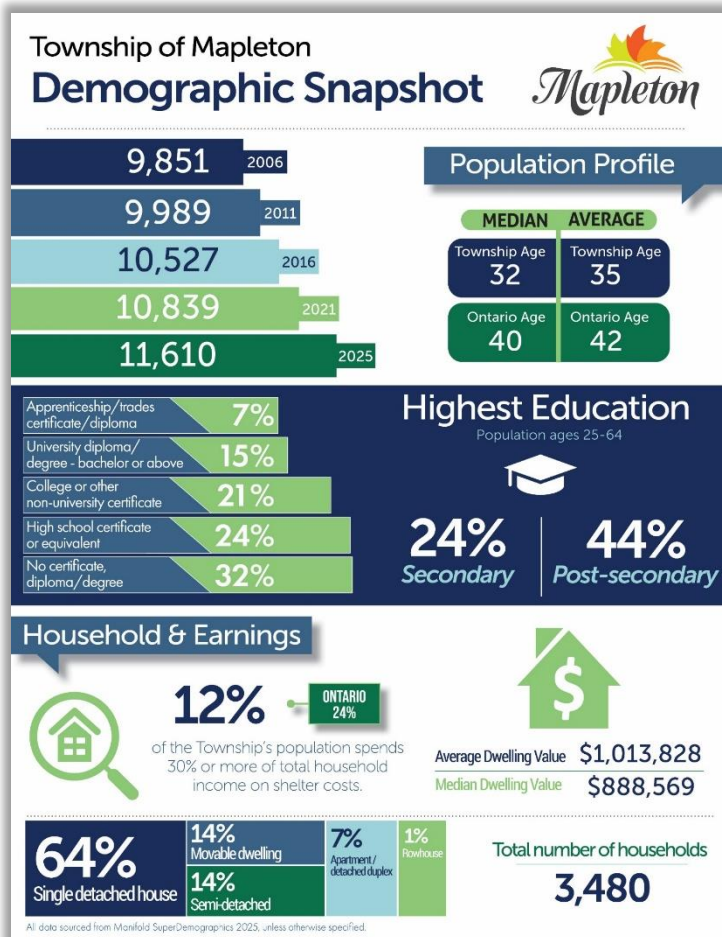


Economic Development and Arts, Culture and Tourism Master Plan

Community and Situational Analysis

The Community and Situational Analysis began with an assessment of the people that make up the Township, to provide a snapshot of the local population and highlight potential future opportunities, alongside an analysis of housing and income levels to profile the Township's "livability." The local labour force and economic picture were further profiled, presenting data on business counts, labour engagement rates, overall jobs and sales figures by industry, and export/supply chain data per sector. Finally, community assets were highlighted, showcasing the Township's strong quality of life, and social service assets. The Community and Situational Analysis can be requested from the Township offices.

The following images present the Demographic Snapshot as profiled in the Community and Situational Analysis.

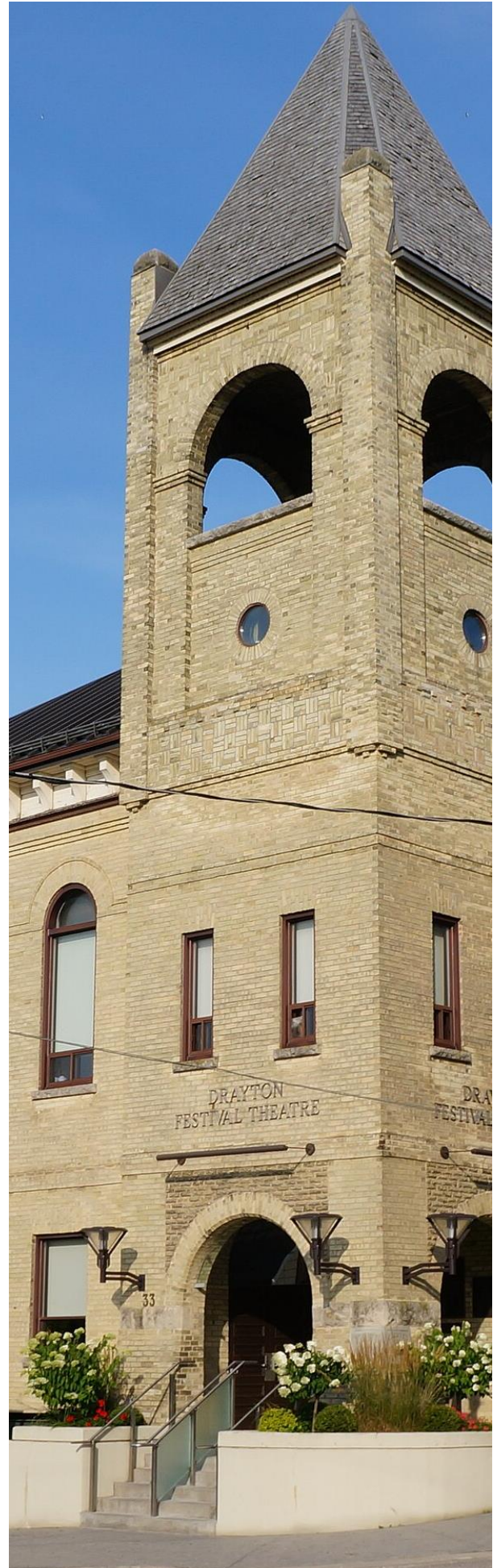


Economic Development and Arts, Culture and Tourism Master Plan

Strategic Understanding of the Township

In reviewing documents produced by and for the Township of Mapleton and County of Wellington there is a strong approach to municipal development and that the Township is taking proactive steps to improving livability and business growth. For example, the Township of Mapleton Community Improvement Plan (CIP) has two goals: “Mapleton as a Business Friendly Community” and “Mapleton as an Inviting Destination” and addresses five Community Improvement Plan Areas including Urban Centres, Agriculture, Hamlet, Industrial, and Licensed Home Child Care by providing nine financial incentive programs. The CIP further encourages physical improvements to privately owned lands and building by stimulating economic growth.

The document review has shown a positive alignment between the goals and desired outcomes of Township staff and the data analyzed within the Community and Situational Analysis, as well as the consultative findings. Specifically, the data analyzed suggests that the community has a strong income base, an engaged labour force, and is generally affordable for residents. Moreover, many businesses and residents enjoy the small-town appeal that the Township offers and are the core aspects of what make the Township an inviting place to live remains.



Step 2: Define

Stakeholder Engagement

The consultation process used to develop the Economic Development Strategic Plan ensured a range of community support and active engagement. Participants included key stakeholders from the community, business, culture, tourism, local organizations, Township staff and elected officials.

Community Consultation

The consultation process included interviews, a community online survey and four focus groups. The discussions were based on six open-ended questions that captured the essence of the economic, and arts, cultural and tourism vision of Mapleton.

There was also a staff priority setting session held with Township staff to discuss constraints, capacity, and opportunities within the Township.



The consultation process included one-on-one phone interviews, an online survey, and in-person focus groups.

Step 3: Develop

Progress Summary and Draft Strategic Plan

SCOAR® Analysis



Once the background research and initial consultations were completed, the 'developing' process began with a summation of the findings of the initial consultations and data analysis, presented through a Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results (SCOAR®) Analysis. The SCOAR® was used as the fundamental basis to determine the three themes and can be found in **Appendix Two**.

Working Session

Key community stakeholders engaged in a 2.5-hour working session to review findings from the previous consultative work and begin to draft realistic and doable actions. Participants included representation from: local businesses; tourism, culture; and Township staff and elected officials.

The Strategic Working Session provided an opportunity for participants to begin to develop a set of draft strategic actions that would form the base of the Strategic Plan.

The themes reflected the current and future needs of the Township were agreed upon by staff. These themes were the basis of the discussions during the working session. They were reinforced from the stakeholder consultation (interviews, online survey and focus groups) and supported by background research (strategic document review, Community Analysis).

Theme 1: Diversifying The Economy: being business friendly and ready for investment.

Theme 2 - Growing the Arts, Culture and Tourism Sector: understanding the tourism sector and arts and culture in Mapleton.



Economic Development and Arts, Culture and Tourism Master Plan

Strategic Directions and Action Planning Session

Upon completion of the external consultation process, a draft set of strategic priority actions were prepared for review. To ensure that the actions aligned with the aspirations and vision of the Township of Mapleton, a virtual strategic planning session was held with Economic Development staff. This session refined the actions and ensured that staff feels comfortable in the to deliver on the actions presented.

Implementation Plan

An Implementation Plan was provided to the Economic Development staff. The Implementation Plan is an internal 'living' documents that lays out each of the actions and provides detailed information on the lead and partners, financial implications and timelines. The Implementation Plan will be used as a working document to develop the Economic Development staff's workplan over the next five years.

Step 4: Deliver

Final Strategic Plan and Action Plan

The Economic Development and Arts, Culture and Tourism Master Plan was presented to the Township of Mapleton Council in September 2025 for approval.



Appendix One: Document Review

The following documents have been reviewed to help to better understand the Township of Mapleton and to provide additional background to the development of the Master Plan.

- County of Wellington Economic Development Action Plan (2023)
- Experience Wellington Tourism Strategy (2023)
- Township of Mapleton Community and Situational Analysis (2025)
- Township of Mapleton Community Improvement Plan (2019)
- Township of Mapleton Community Improvement Plan (2025)
- Township of Mapleton Cultural Plan (2015)
- Township of Mapleton Design Guidelines and Standard Drawings (2023)
- Township of Mapleton Economic Development Strategy (2013)
- Township of Mapleton Municipal Cultural Plan (2015)
- Township of Mapleton Strategic Plan (2023-2026)
- Township of Mapleton Urban Design Guidelines Alma, Drayton and Moorefield (2017)



Appendix Two: SCOAR® Analysis



The SCOAR® (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) is a detailed analysis of the current situation involving statistical analysis of the local economy, regional competitive outlook, trends and forecasts, investment readiness assessment, strengths/weaknesses/opportunities review using the McSweeney exclusive SCOAR® analysis.

The SCOAR®, is the summary of the findings from the quantitative background research (strategic document review, Community and Situational Analysis) and qualitative stakeholder research (interviews, online survey and focus groups) portion of the Township of Mapleton process.

The qualitative research included consultations with representatives from local businesses, community, regional organizations, staff, elected officials, and residents interested in the well-being of the Township of Mapleton.

Strengths

A beautiful, safe community made up of excellent farmland, dotted with small towns: that are proud of their community with a strong work ethic, offering small-town charm and agricultural roots.

Diverse agriculture sector: comprised of diversified farms, livestock based, class 'A1' farmland, dairy farms, unique agritourism businesses, and other on-farm businesses that support agriculture.



Economic Development and Arts, Culture and Tourism Master Plan

Sustainable population growth is supported by growing infrastructure capacity: upgraded municipal water and wastewater infrastructure, once completed, will support the continued growth of Drayton.

Location and proximity to larger urban centres: is within a one-hour drive of Kitchener Waterloo, Guelph, Orangeville and the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Drayton Festival Theatre defines the community by the theatre's success: and is the premier cultural draw in the Township.

Township of Mapleton supports business by: working closely with investors that are interested in investing in Mapleton, and by providing funding through the Community Improvement Plan.

Established communication channels: through social media and bi-monthly newspaper advertisements supporting local businesses and communication efforts.

Challenges

Reputation as a bedroom community: with approximately 72% of residents work outside of Mapleton.

Limited housing options: with relatively high housing prices and there are limited options other than single-detached housing.

Township infrastructure continues to be improved to support population and business growth: but until the water and wastewater infrastructure is completed growth can't occur.

Availability of requirements needed by business: with limited availability of serviced vacant employment lands and buildings and access to employees due to small population.

Disconnect between the agricultural sector and new residents to the community: with many of whom commute out of the community and do not understand that value of agriculture and farming to the municipality.

Externally in the community there is a perceived disconnect: between the businesses and the Township and internally between departments: The role of economic development for many is unclear. There is an economic development committee that is in place but not utilized to its full capacity.



Economic Development and Arts, Culture and Tourism Master Plan

Arts Culture and Tourism offerings are limited: with the Drayton Festival Theatre being seasonal, there is difficulty finding arts and cultural assets that are available in the community year-round, and what is available isn't very well documented communicated.

Communications by the Township to local businesses: is perceived to be limited, the website is challenging to navigate regarding information on business development, economic development and tourism initiatives.

Opportunities

Becoming a complete community: Ensuring availability of housing diversity (price and dwelling types), childcare, health care, and a diverse mix of business to support residents.

Having places where businesses can locate: including shovel ready lands available for industrial businesses, commercial land for development and/or buildings for lease in the downtown for commercial (i.e., retail specifically).

Providing additional support and exposure to the arts and culture sector: by helping 'tell the story of Mapleton', creating a cultural hub using the Drayton Festival Theatre as the focus and including more arts and culture programs and space to hold these programs.

Defining Economic Development roles and responsibilities: focusing on the key economic development fundamentals including business retention and expansion, building business relationships and developing better connections to the business community.

Continue encouraging businesses, residents and the township to 'buy local first': would help to keep more local dollars in the community.

Creating a long-term vision for Mapleton and improving brand awareness: to attract visitors, investors, and potential residents who are interested in continuing Mapleton's strong community focus.

Enhancing Downtown cores: through beautification, an increased mix of diverse businesses, availability of commercial properties to open a business, and improving infrastructure that makes them pedestrian friendly.



Economic Development and Arts, Culture and Tourism Master Plan

Enhancing partnerships: working with other organizations and other levels of government (i.e., County of Wellington, the CFDC, etc.) to help businesses with workforce training, entrepreneurship, programs, etc.

Helping to diversify and strengthen the agriculture sector: by supporting agritourism initiatives and on farm businesses.

Existing communication efforts could be better leveraged: as there appears to be a gap between what is available and what is actively sought or accessed.

Aspirations

- To have a sustainably growing population.
- To have vibrant pedestrian friendly urban centres with a strong mix of diverse businesses to support residents and visitors.
- To have a core asset inventory of all tourism related businesses that could help to build tourism activities for multiple days and seasons.
- To have a diversified economy including industrial, commercial and retail business types.
- To keep the agriculture sector strong with a mix of on-farm businesses and have maintained the existing farmland.
- To have a strong arts, culture and tourism sector that tells the story of Mapleton and celebrates the community.

Results

The Township of Mapleton will be a vibrant community showcasing its best assets of small-town and rural living. It will support local businesses by building networks, providing commercial and industrial locations to invest in, and be known for its unique tourism destinations. People will know Mapleton for all that it has to offer for both residents and visitors.





Township of Mapleton
7275 Sideroad 16
Drayton, Ontario, N0G 1P0

P: 519-638-3313
mapleton.ca