

— Township of —

SEVERN

Economic Development Strategy

© 2024

Prepared by:



Township of Severn
Economic Development Strategy

Draft Report
March 15, 2024

Prepared by:
Explorer Solutions
550-925 Airport Rd.
Peterborough, ON K9J 0E7

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
1.0 Introduction	2
1.1 Economic Growth in the Township of Severn	2
1.2 Purpose of the Economic Development Strategy	2
1.3 Approach and Methodology	3
1.4 Drafting the Economic Development Strategy	4
2.0 Phase 1: Where Are We Now?	5
2.1 Community Comparisons	5
2.1.1 Demographic Summary	6
2.2 Document Reviews	7
3.0 Phase 2: Where Do We Want to Go?	8
3.1 Overview of Phase 2	8
3.2 Stakeholder Interviews	8
3.3 Community Survey	9
3.4 Focus Group Discussions	11
3.4.1 Focus Group #1: Manufacturing, Construction, Mechanical, Development	12
3.4.2 Focus Group #2: Small Businesses	13
3.4.3 Focus Group #3: Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy	14
3.4.4 Focus Group #4: Tourism and Recreation	15
3.5 Validation Workshop and Visioning Sessions	16
4.0 Phase 3: How Do We Get There?	17
4.1 Overview of Phase 3	17
4.2 SWOT Analysis	17
4.2.1 SWOT Analysis for the Township of Severn	17
4.2.2 Strengths	18
4.2.3 Weaknesses	18
4.2.4 Opportunities	19
4.2.5 Threats	20
4.3 Economic Development Strategic Priorities	21
4.3.1 Increase Support of Local Businesses	22
4.3.2 Balance Tax Base to Support a Diverse Community	23
4.3.3 Enhance and Promote Local Tourism	24
4.3.4 Match Lifestyle Amenities with Residential Growth	25
4.3.5 Safeguard Community Interests in Relation to the Aggregate Industry	27
Appendix A: List of Contributors	29
Appendix B: Implementation Plan	31

List of Figures

Figure 1. Age of community survey respondents. 9
Figure 2. Location of survey respondents. 10
Figure 3. Length of residency of survey respondents..... 10

List of Tables

Table 1. Community comparison summary..... 5
Table 2. Implementation Plan of the Objectives and Actions of Strategic Priority #1 31
Table 3. Implementation Plan of the Objectives and Actions of Strategic Priority #2 32
Table 4. Implementation Plan of the Objectives and Actions of Strategic Priority #3 33
Table 5. Implementation Plan of the Objectives and Actions of Strategic Priority #4 34
Table 6. Implementation Plan of the Objectives and Actions of Strategic Priority #5 36

Executive Summary

Purpose

In spring 2023, the Township of Severn contracted Explorer Solutions to create an economic development strategy (“**EDS**”).

The EDS is intended to serve as a guide that Severn can follow to enhance local residential and economic growth over the next five years. The EDS also provides Severn with practical recommendations for future growth initiatives.

Process

The recommendations in this EDS are based on the results of the following:

- site visits
- background research
- document reviews, statistical analyses, and market trend analyses
- community and stakeholder consultations

Findings

The results of the EDS development process show that Severn is committed to local residential and economic growth.

This EDS contains strategies designed to help Severn complete the following objectives:

- Attract investment.
- Build collaborative partnerships with external partners.
- Introduce more employment opportunities.
- Expand the local tourism sector.
- Improve the quality of life for residents.
- Increase the local tax base to support infrastructure development.
- Promote year-round economic consistency and growth.
- Support BARE (business attraction, retention, expansion) initiatives.

All strategies in the EDS are designed with financial viability and minimal environmental impacts in mind.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Economic Growth in the Township of Severn

The Township of Severn is facing challenges related to residential and employment growth. In recent years, residents from nearby regions (such as Orillia, Barrie, and the Greater Toronto Area) have started looking for affordable communities where they can live, work, and play. Businesses from those regions are also seeking affordable communities to locate their operations. Severn has experienced strong residential growth over the last decade, but limited business and commercial development continues to challenge the Township. Severn Township has yet to implement an economic development plan to promote itself as an ideal location for relocation and investment.

Severn recognizes that it needs to market itself as a viable location for new residents and businesses. This understanding is reflected in Severn Council’s 2023–2026 Strategic Plan.

The strategic plan is a three-year planning document that focuses on four main goals.

Strategic Plan Priorities

1. Complete an economic development strategy to enhance our capacity to attract and retain businesses.
2. Improve responsiveness, communications, engagement, outreach, and ease of access.
3. Advocate for affordable broadband to our residents and businesses.
4. Ensure we are prepared and can adapt to meet the housing demand and changing demographics with servicing, water, and roads.

Severn commissioned this EDS in response to the first objective in its strategic plan.

1.2 Purpose of the Economic Development Strategy

This EDS aims to support Severn’s strategic plan and provide the Township with a guide it can use to:

- Enhance community well-being and prepare for stable community growth.
- Help promote economic prosperity.
- Create a resilient and sustainable local economy.

1.3 Approach and Methodology

Explorer Solutions developed this EDS using a three-phase methodology.

Phase 1: Where are we now?

In this phase, Explorer Solutions conducted a baseline economic analysis.

An economic analysis examines specific community statistics. The results of the analysis identify which factors and trends are affecting the following areas:

- population
- demographics
- income
- education
- workforce
- industry
- business

This phase of the project also involved a series of document reviews. The reviews examined various administrative, legislative, and operational policies that influence Severn's governance structure and operations.

After completing Phase 1, Explorer Solutions created a preliminary report to summarize its findings. A copy of the preliminary report is available for download from the Township's website.¹

Phase 2: Where do we want to go?

In this phase, Explorer Solutions consulted with stakeholders using the following types of engagement:

- a series of one-on-one interviews
- a community survey
- a series of focus group discussions
- a pair of validation workshops and visioning sessions

¹ https://www.severn.ca/en/our-community/economic_development_strategy_.aspx

The results of the stakeholder engagement process helped identify Severn's main economic development needs.

Phase 3: How do we get there?

In this phase, Explorer Solutions consolidated its findings and produced a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis to provide a clear picture of Severn's economic development assets as well as its needs. The SWOT analysis also noted challenges Severn must address to position itself for sustainable economic growth.

Explorer Solutions used the results of the SWOT analysis to help develop and prioritize the recommendations in this EDS.



1.4 Drafting the Economic Development Strategy

Explorer Solutions drafted the EDS using the following steps:

1. Conclude the three-phase project development process.
2. Begin drafting the EDS.
3. Send the draft EDS to Severn's EDS project team for review.
4. Update the EDS based on the EDS project team's comments (as applicable) and then submit the revised document to the EDS project team for a final review.
5. Finalize and present the draft EDS to the Corporate Services Committee.
6. Update the EDS based on feedback provided by the Corporate Services Committee and then submit the final EDS to Severn Council for approval and implementation.

2.0 Phase 1: Where Are We Now?

2.1 Community Comparisons

In this phase of the project, Explorer Solutions compared some of Severn's residential and economic statistics to the following regions:

- Township of Ramara
- Township of Oro-Medonte
- City of Orillia
- Province of Ontario

Table 1 presents a high-level summary of the residential and economic statistics Explorer Solutions examined.²

Table 1. Community comparison summary.

Statistic	Severn	Ramara	Oro-Medonte	Orillia	Ontario
Population	14,576	10,377	23,017	33,411	14,223,942
Pop. growth since 2016	8.3%	9.4%	9.4%	7.2%	5.8%
Avg. individual income	\$44,160	\$42,640	\$51,250	\$39,329	\$46,280

The purpose of the statistical comparisons was to gain a more complete picture of Severn's demographics. That data helps contextualize potential decisions, policies, and development strategies from a regional perspective.

² The information in Table 1 is based on the data recorded in Statistics Canada's June 2022 Canadian business counts.

A more detailed summary of the EDS community comparisons is provided in the preliminary report Explorer Solutions created for this project. A copy of the preliminary report is available for download from the Township's website.³

2.1.1 Demographic Summary

Explorer Solutions considered the following demographic statistics as it developed this EDS for Severn.



As of 2021,
Severn has 14,576
residents.



27% of Severn's
residents have a college
education.



90% of Severn's
residents
are homeowners.



54% of Severn's
residents
are employed.



20% of Severn's
residents
are self-employed.



20% of Severn's
residents
work from home.



12% of Severn's
residents work
in retail.



13% of Severn's
residents work in the
healthcare industry.



14% of Severn's
residents work
in construction.

³ https://www.severn.ca/en/our-community/economic_development_strategy_.aspx

2.2 Document Reviews

The second part of Phase 1 involved reviewing the following administrative, legislative, and operational documents:

- Severn Council 2023–2026 Strategic Plan (2023)
- Transportation Master Plan (2023)
- Draft Official Plan (2022)
- Recreation Master Plan (2022)
- Community Safety and Well-Being Plan (2021-2025)
- Ontario Lake Country BR&E Project (2016)
- County of Simcoe Official Plan (2023)
- Bill 23: More Homes Built Faster Act (2022)
- Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan (2020)
- Provincial Policy Statement (2020)

A summary of these documents and how they affect Severn's economy is provided in the preliminary report Explorer Solutions created for this project. A copy of the preliminary report is available for download from the Township's website.⁴

⁴ https://www.severn.ca/en/our-community/economic_development_strategy.aspx



3.0 Phase 2: Where Do We Want to Go?

3.1 Overview of Phase 2

Stakeholder Engagement

In this project phase, Explorer Solutions held engagement sessions with Severn's residents, community leaders, and economic development personnel.

The engagement process involved the following components:

- a series of one-on-one interviews
- an online survey for the general public
- two validation workshops and visioning sessions with Severn's Councillors and staff members
- four stakeholder group discussions

Approximately 300 people participated in the consultations and engagement sessions.

Site Visits

This phase of the project also included site visits. Representatives of Explorer Solutions spent time in Severn to observe the community's demographics firsthand.

3.2 Stakeholder Interviews

Context

Economic development projects often involve a series of stakeholder interviews. Conducting interviews is a way to gather diverse perspectives and encourage civic engagement. The results of stakeholder interviews help to ensure their project's goals align with the interests and expectations of local stakeholders.

Stakeholder Interviews for Severn

During this project, Explorer Solutions worked with Severn's municipal staff to contact and interview a select group of stakeholders. The interviewees answered open-ended questions designed to let them speak freely about their roles, concerns, expectations, and challenges.

As the interviews progressed, Explorer Solutions noted that many of Severn's stakeholders expressed similar concerns. The recommendations in this EDS give careful consideration to addressing those concerns.

3.3 Community Survey

Context

An online survey is a convenient way of engaging with project stakeholders. One benefit of online surveys is that they allow respondents to share their experiences and opinions anonymously. Another benefit is that online surveys are easy to distribute to a large number of potential respondents.

Municipalities use online surveys to gather important data about their residents and business owners. That data provides insights into demographics, interests, satisfaction levels, ideas, and preferences. A municipality can use survey results to guide its decisions and make sure it is acting in the best interests of its residents.

Community Survey for Severn

As part of the EDS development process, Explorer Solutions conducted an online public survey from September 11, 2023, to October 20, 2023. The survey included 45 questions that addressed a range of topical issues, concerns, and interests in Severn.

In total, **233 respondents** completed the survey. Of those respondents, 93 per cent indicated they are year-round residents of Severn, and 7 per cent indicated they are seasonal residents.

The following pie charts summarize general information about the survey respondents.

Figure 1 shows the age ranges of the survey respondents.

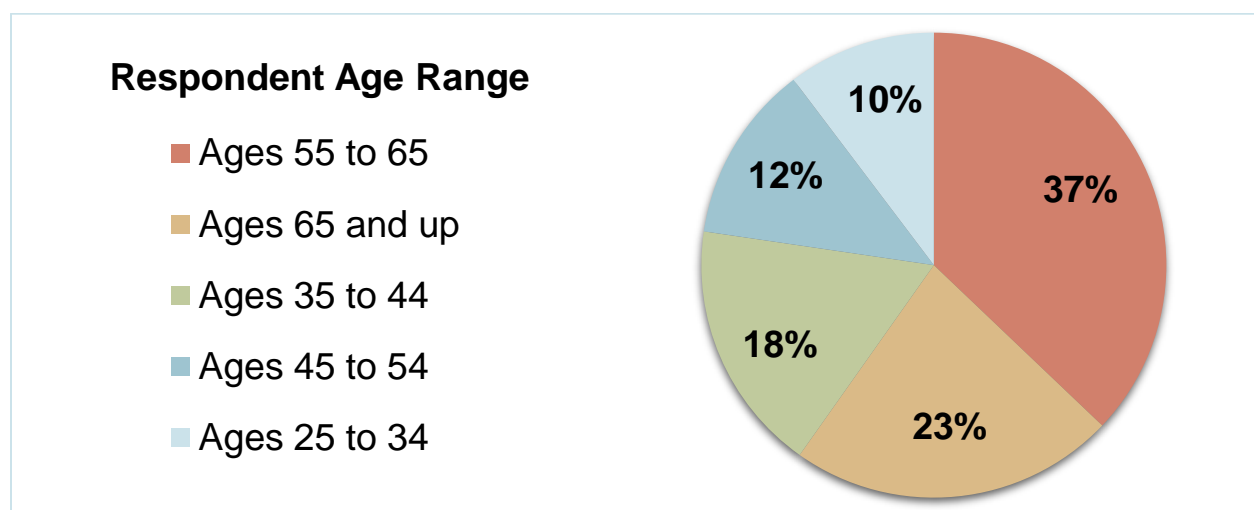


Figure 1. Age of community survey respondents.

Figure 2 shows where the survey respondents reside in Severn.

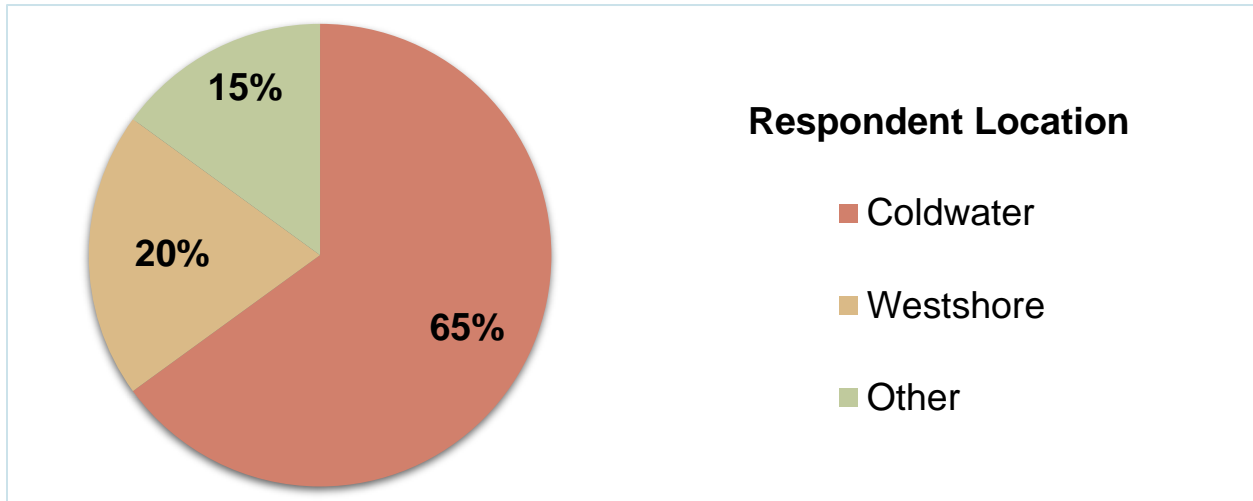


Figure 2. Location of survey respondents.

Figure 3 shows how long the survey respondents have lived in Severn.

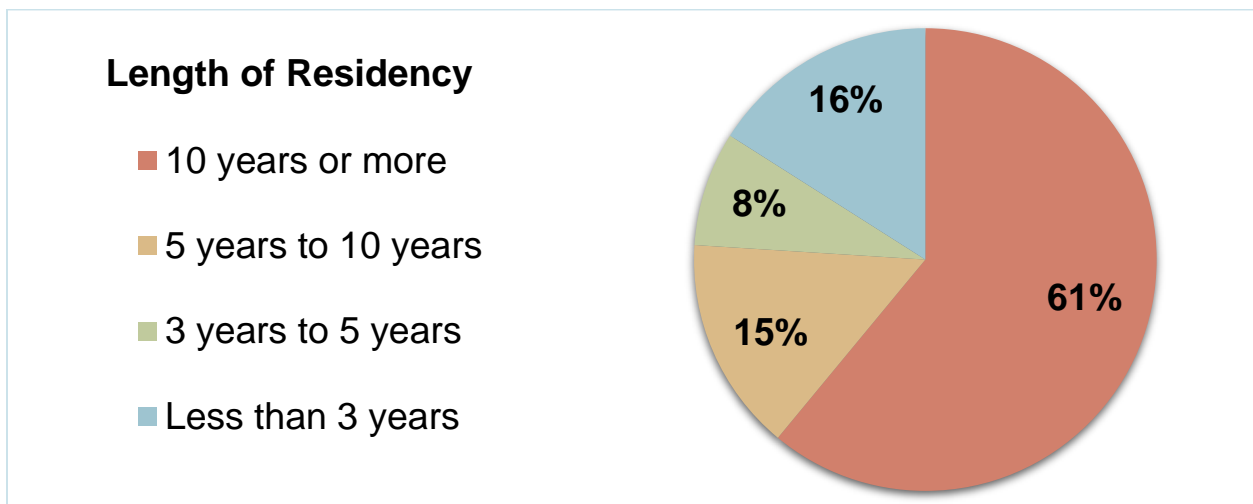


Figure 3. Length of residency of survey respondents.

According to the survey's results, Severn's top attributes are the following:

- 1**

Severn is a friendly community that offers its residents peace and quiet.
- 2**

Severn is located in a rural setting and a natural environment.
- 3**

Severn is located on the Trent-Severn Waterway.

3.4 Focus Group Discussions

Context

A focus group is a “demographically diverse group of people assembled to participate in a guided discussion.”⁵ In most cases, a focus group is led by a third-party facilitator. The facilitator’s role is to encourage open dialogue between participants and to record their insights and opinions.

EDS Focus Groups

This EDS incorporates the results of four focus group discussions.



Focus Group #1

Representatives of manufacturing, construction, mechanical, and development organizations.



Focus Group #2

Representatives of small businesses.



Focus Group #3

Representatives of the arts, culture, and creative sector.



Focus Group #4

Representatives of the tourism and recreation sector.

Each focus group discussion addressed the challenges, needs, and aspirations of Severn’s residents and business leaders. The discussions took place in Coldwater and Washago over the course of two days.

In total, stakeholders representing a mix of **29 businesses and organizations** participated in the focus group discussions.

The following subsections summarize the focus group discussions from a high-level perspective. Each summary provides a list of participants and an overview of the topics and findings that resulted from the participants’ conversations.

⁵ Oxford English Dictionary.

3.4.1 Focus Group #1: Manufacturing, Construction, Mechanical, Development

Challenges and Struggles

Focus Group #1 noted that it is difficult and time-consuming to obtain specific approvals—such as permits for infrastructure upgrades—in Severn. Most of the challenges stem from Severn’s staffing levels and lengthy legislated planning and development processes.

Long-Term Vision

Focus Group #1 expressed a desire for the Township to collaborate with developers and diversify Severn’s industry presence in order to attract younger residents to the area. The group thinks Severn should focus on a branding campaign to distinguish itself and the amenities it offers. In addition, the group believes that Severn should aim to develop a balanced community that offers residential and workplace accommodations and prioritizes affordable housing.

Severn needs to **retain existing residents and become a destination for new residents and tourists**. The community should focus on becoming self-sustainable while preserving its beautiful main streets that evoke an inviting small-town atmosphere.

Learning from Other Communities

Focus Group #1 thinks Severn should focus on streamlining its approval process by clarifying roles and accepting online submissions. The group also thinks Severn should reduce its dependence on peer reviews.

Going forward, Focus Group #1 thinks Severn should try to find ways of expediting projects by looking to similar communities for inspiration.

Trades and Workforce

Focus Group #1 noted that developers in Severn currently rely on external labour for large-scale housing projects. However, the group thinks the Township should explore ways of building the local workforce and engaging local tradespeople in those projects.

Infrastructure and Community Development

Focus Group #1 thinks Severn is identifying gaps in essential services and is trying to establish a clear vision of the type of community it aims to become.

3.4.2 Focus Group #2: Small Businesses

General Issues and Challenges

Focus Group #2 noted that Severn's local businesses struggle to recruit and retain employees. The issues stem from a lack of affordable housing in Severn, the Township's vast geographic area, and limited transportation options.

From a promotional standpoint, there are few highway signs that promote Severn's businesses effectively. By installing such signs, Severn could increase its number of visitors. Severn also faces competition from businesses in nearby communities, and some of the Township's businesses are affected negatively by weather and seasonal conditions.

Various internet connectivity issues and supply chain issues also have significant impacts on Severn's local businesses.

Vision for the Community

Focus Group #2 thinks Severn should promote a coordinated shop-local program. Doing so should help entice customers to shop at local businesses. In addition, Severn should focus on business investment attraction. If Severn attracts more business investment, this may lead to the creation of higher-paying jobs for the Township's residents. Businesses may also be able to expand local recreational opportunities and service offerings.

Ideally, Focus Group #2 wants Severn to become a community where people can both live and find meaningful employment.

Community Needs

Focus Group #2 knows that community events can support local businesses. For instance, Severn can consider initiatives such as a welcome wagon concept for newcomers.

Going forward, Severn needs to find ways of establishing and promoting a comprehensive mix of **local goods, services, practitioners, and restaurants**, as well as a social space for people to meet.

Supply Chain Challenges

Focus Group #2 notes that although Severn's residents may prefer to shop local, many small businesses have closed or must source their merchandise from elsewhere. As a result, businesses face high shipping costs and limited delivery options, especially

regarding goods that require storage or refrigeration. To help alleviate some of those supply chain costs, businesses could participate in a cooperative purchasing program (for business clusters) or participate in a coordinated / common Less-than-Truckload Freight (LTL) shipment offering.

3.4.3 Focus Group #3: Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy

Community and Boundaries

Focus Group #3 believes that art transcends geographical boundaries. The group thinks that inclusive and diverse events will attract attendees, regardless of whether the events take place in a smaller community.

Focus Group #3 expressed a desire to collaborate with other neighbouring communities to develop and promote arts and culture events in Severn. The discussions focused on the benefits that can result from a grassroots approach to events led by volunteers.

Personnel and Monetary Challenges

Focus Group #3 noted that it is difficult to promote artistic and cultural events due to a lack of staff and volunteers. Moreover, many of the current staff members and volunteers are experiencing a sense of burnout. The group also emphasizes the importance of getting businesses to support artistic and cultural events across multiple townships and, if necessary, pushing for support from higher levels of government.

Focus Group #3 also noted that it is difficult to host artistic and cultural events because many people expect the events to run free of charge. This leads to various funding issues, including a lack of resources.

Focus Group #3 thinks that there should be **a local cultural manager to oversee an arts service organization** and focus on securing grants and building partnerships.

The group proposed funding the cultural manager position with monetary contributions from the neighbouring communities that benefit from that sector.

Marketing and Promotional Challenges

Focus Group #3 identified issues related to free advertising options and budgets for studio tours. The group thinks Severn should focus on providing public education about its arts and culture opportunities. The group also thinks Severn should implement strategies to attract art buyers and promote events in the community.

Collaboration and Networking

Focus Group #3 stressed the importance of encouraging artists to collaborate and organize events. The group suggested a list of specific individuals and organizations Severn should consider connecting with when they prepared to do so.

3.4.4 Focus Group #4: Tourism and Recreation

Tourism Offerings

Focus Group #4 would like to see enhanced tourism advertising by the Township, as well as more collaboration with the Trent-Severn Waterway and local small businesses.

Focus Group #4 would also like Severn to provide details about reinstated passenger train services, proposed train station amenities, and motorcoach services.

Approval Process

Focus Group #4 would like Severn to introduce a streamlined approval process for various permits and similar requests.

Recreational Sites and Amenities

Focus Group #4 believes that Severn has high-quality snowmobile, walking, and cycling trails. However, there is a shortage of outdoor equipment rentals available for those activities.

Focus Group #4 noted other **recreational sites, services, and amenities** Severn should consider establishing. Examples include providing opportunities for overnight camping, attracting a larger workforce for the service industry, and enhancing Severn's existing parks.

Focus Group #4 also thinks a centralized event platform is a reasonable request.

3.5 Validation Workshop and Visioning Sessions

On December 6, 2023, Explorer Solutions led a validation workshop and visioning session with Severn's Councillors and staff members. Participants used the session as a chance to discuss Severn's goals. By the end of the session, the participants came to a consensus regarding the Township's strategic priorities and objectives.

Explorer Solutions held an additional workshop and visioning session on January 24, 2024. This session involved the same participants as the first session. The goal of the extra session was to streamline the strategic priorities and objectives identified by the previous round of discussions. Participants also used the additional session to craft a vision statement to guide Severn's economic development efforts:

“Severn strives for economic growth and development activities that balance fiscal and environmental responsibility to ensure a sustainable future.”

Overall, Severn's new economic development vision statement and list of strategic priorities align with its goal of creating opportunities for its community and welcoming investments that complement and respect the Township's rural character.



4.0 Phase 3: How Do We Get There?

4.1 Overview of Phase 3

In this phase, Explorer Solutions analyzed the findings from the stakeholder engagement sessions and developed a series of strategies to improve Severn's economic development efforts.

4.2 SWOT Analysis

4.2.1 SWOT Analysis for the Township of Severn

A SWOT analysis is a method of identifying an organization's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as its external opportunities and threats.

The SWOT analysis for this EDS is based on two main sources. The first source is findings obtained during the document review portion of the project. The second source is the comments that Severn's Councillors, staff, and residents provided throughout the project's stakeholder engagement process.

Overall, the SWOT analysis for this EDS aims to identify factors that are helping or hindering Severn's economic competitiveness. Relevant findings from the analysis are presented in the following subsections.



4.2.2 Strengths

The SWOT analysis identified the following strengths:

- Severn is located in close proximity to several prominent communities, including Orillia, Barrie, and the Greater Toronto Area.
- Severn is located near several prominent post-secondary institutions, including Georgian College and Lakehead University.
- Severn has access to several bodies of water, including Georgian Bay, Lake Couchiching, and the Trent-Severn Waterway. This location makes it easy for Severn to support water activities, and the Township currently has 18 boat launches.
- Severn has an abundance of walking trails and cycling routes.
- Severn has many heritage attractions, including buildings, museums, parks, and a one-of-a-kind marine railway.
- Most of Severn's residents own their homes.
- Examples of grassroots entrepreneurship are evident in Severn.
- Severn is committed to supporting **local residential and economic development**.
- Severn contains a mix of industrial, commercial, and rural businesses.
- Severn has two unique downtowns/main streets (Coldwater and Washago).
- Severn has a strong community-led arts and culture offering.
- Residential developers in Severn are willing to consider diversifying developments based on the needs of the community.

4.2.3 Weaknesses

The SWOT analysis identified the following weaknesses:

- The lifestyle amenities in Severn do not match the Township's residential growth projections.
 - Severn contains a significant number of old/aging assets, including lifestyle amenities.
 - There are minimal diverse recreational programs available for all age groups.
 - Severn has limited marketing that promotes the assets the Township can offer.
-

-
- Severn must adhere to the Provincial Planning Act and the Ontario Building Code. This can lead to delays in permit approvals and the development process.
 - Severn has a low number of visitor accommodations.
 - Severn has a limited skilled-trade workforce.
 - Severn provides minimal support for its small businesses.
 - There are **few incentives to entice developers** to come to Severn.
 - Severn has a lack of elementary schools and no secondary schools.
 - Although Severn promotes artistic and cultural events, many of those events are for niche markets.
 - Due to a lack of ridership, there is a lack of public and publicly accessible transportation in Severn.

4.2.4 Opportunities

The SWOT analysis identified the following opportunities:

- Severn can install signage along Highways 11, 12, and 400 to promote its local businesses. Doing so can help attract visitors to the Township.
 - Severn can purchase strategic parcels of industrial land, which it can use to support business investment and attraction. This allows the Township more control over the types of industrial activity it wishes to attract.
 - If Severn investigates municipally initiated zoning by-law amendments (where appropriate), it can attract new investments and provide opportunities for local businesses to expand.
 - If Severn attracts diverse housing projects, it can help the Township increase its capacity to expand and diversify the local residential base.
 - If Severn **enhances its lifestyle amenities**, it can help the Township attract families, young professionals, skilled workers, and seniors.
 - Increasing collaboration with its external partners can help Severn expand its market reach.
 - Severn could implement a business visitation program. Doing so can help the Township support the retention and expansion needs of its local businesses.
 - Severn can encourage businesses in its downtown core and other areas to offer standardized hours of operations. If the businesses in those locations keep the
-

same hours, it will make shopping more convenient for the Township's residents and visitors.

- Severn can create a business directory that identifies which goods and services are available in the community. Severn can also create a directory that showcases the attractions, and experiences the Township offers to residents and visitors.
- Severn can consider revitalizing the main streets in Coldwater and Washago. Doing so could help support business retention and expansion while also promoting the areas as tourist destinations.
- Severn can promote job opportunities in its local skilled trades, hospitality, and retail sectors. Doing so could help attract new residents to the Township.
- Severn can expand its presence in the arts sector. Finding ways to let residents share their stories and promote their art can help Severn promote inclusivity and culture.
- Severn can expand its presence in the arts and culture sector by increasing the number of accessible and inclusive events it offers. Doing so can help attract more visitors to Severn.

4.2.5 Threats

The SWOT analysis identified the following threats:

- There are many areas in Severn that lack high-speed internet services.
- Severn has an older/aging population (due to the high number of retirees in the community).
- Severn has a relatively small workforce (due to the high number of retirees in the community).
- Severn's demographics do not show high levels of diversity.
- Severn has limited affordable housing for low-income residents.
- It is very difficult for residents in Severn to find available, affordable housing.
- There is limited land in Severn that is available for development.
- The infrastructure restraints in Severn conflict with the Township's residential growth needs.
- Opportunities to improve the speed of the development approval process in Severn is limited due to legislated regional and provincial requirements.

4.3 Economic Development Strategic Priorities

The recommendations in this EDS are designed to support five economic development strategic priorities identified by Council.

Economic Development Strategic Priorities for Severn

1. Increase support of local businesses.
2. Balance Severn's tax base to support a diverse community.
3. Enhance and promote local tourism.
4. Match lifestyle amenities with residential growth.⁶
5. Safeguard community interests in relation to the aggregate industry.

Each priority is further detailed in the implementation plan (see Appendix B). The plan includes a corresponding set of objectives and specific actions for each priority, as well as planned outcomes, budget estimates, and a proposed timeline for each action.

This document uses the following five budgetary categories for the estimated costs associated with each action:

- Minimal: less than \$10,000
- Low: \$10,000 to \$25,000
- Moderate: \$25,000 to \$50,000
- High: \$50,000 to \$100,000
- Maximum: greater than \$100,000

⁶ A lifestyle amenity is a feature of a community that contributes to the quality of life of its residents. Such amenities may include parks and open spaces, walking and biking trails, recreation and fitness facilities, and retail and commercial businesses.

4.3.1 Increase Support of Local Businesses

Objectives and Actions

1. Seek Council approval on the EDS to establish an EDO in Severn.
2. Supported by an EDO, establish an economic development advisory committee (“**EDAC**”) in Severn to provide economic development intelligence to Council.
 - Establish committee and develop processes, goals, and objectives.
3. Establish a structured business stewardship program and outreach plan to support all Severn-based businesses.
 - Establish and regularly update a business directory of all businesses located within the Township and prioritize the number and order by which businesses are to be contacted based on established criteria.

Planned Outcomes

The planned outcomes for this strategic priority are:

- the creation of a Council-approved EDO position.
- the creation of an EDO-led EDAC.
- the creation of a Township-wide business directory.
- the creation of a business stewardship program to support local businesses.
- the creation of an outreach plan that an EDO can use to meet with local businesses annually.

Estimated Budget Implications

Maximum (greater than \$100,000)

- Fulfilling this strategic priority will require Severn to hire and compensate an EDO will require a **maximum** budget (greater than \$100,000).
- Allocating a portion of the Township's annual budget to support other items led by the EDO will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).

4.3.2 Balance Tax Base to Support a Diverse Community

Objectives and Actions

1. Encourage economic development in Severn.
 - Ensure relevant marketing material to support business investment attraction remains current.
 - Streamline the permit process to make it easier for businesses to set up and maintain operations.
2. Update Severn's zoning and land-use policies to make it easier for businesses to set up and maintain operations.
 - Update by-laws to support new home-based business opportunities, permitted uses, and housing types to increase density in designated settlement areas (as appropriate).

Planned Outcomes

The planned outcomes for this strategic priority are:

- the creation of updated marketing materials to attract business investment.
- the implementation of a streamlined permit process.
- the creation of updated by-laws that support new home-based business opportunities, allow additional building uses, and allow a variety of housing types to increase density in designated settlement areas (as appropriate).

Estimated Budget Implications

Maximum (greater than \$100,000)

- Streamlining Severn's permit process will require a consultant to perform a third-party review of processes. This will require a **moderate** budget of (\$25,000 to \$50,000).
- Updating the Township of Severn Zoning By-law and related policies will require a **moderate** budget (\$25,000 to \$50,000) due to the cost of engaging the Township's planning consultants and undergoing the public consultation process required by the Planning Act.
- Allocating a portion of the Township's annual budget to support other items led by the EDO will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).

4.3.3 Enhance and Promote Local Tourism

Objectives and Actions

1. Market Severn as a major tourism and cultural destination.
 - Establish and maintain an inventory of Severn's tourism and cultural assets and keep all direct and indirect channel partners⁷ informed about updates to the inventory.
 - Expand Severn's online events calendar to include all tourism and cultural activities.
2. Ensure that Severn has the services and amenities needed to attract and support cultural events and festivals.
 - Establish a working group within Severn's Culture and Recreation Advisory Committee that includes residents, artists, and community leaders who can actively contribute ideas, organize events, and provide guidance.
 - Promote the availability of Township-owned spaces for artists to create, rehearse, and showcase their work.

Planned Outcomes

The planned outcomes for this strategic priority are:

- the creation of a list that contains an inventory of all tourism and cultural assets in Severn.
- the creation of a list that contains an inventory of all direct and indirect channel partners in Severn.
- the creation of an expanded events calendar (posted on Severn's website) that includes the dates of all local tourism and cultural activities.
- the formation of a working group to help attract and support cultural events and festivals in Severn.
- the creation of updated marketing materials to promote the availability of spaces in Severn that artists can use to create, rehearse, and showcase their work.

⁷ Examples of direct channel partners include groups and/or organizations that Severn pays to undertake work on its behalf. Indirect channel partners may include community groups and/or organizations that help support the sharing of community information.

Estimated Budget Implications

Moderate (\$25,000 to \$50,000)

- Establishing, maintaining, and keeping channel partners apprised of Severn's inventory of tourism and cultural assets will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).
- Expanding Severn's online events calendar will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).
- Establishing a working group within the Township's Culture and Recreation Advisory Committee will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).
- Promoting the availability of Township-owned spaces to artists will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).

4.3.4 Match Lifestyle Amenities with Residential Growth

Objectives and Actions

1. Expand Severn's arts and culture scene.
 - Allocate a portion of the Township's annual budget to support cultural initiatives as partners, demonstrating a commitment to the arts and community enrichment.
 - Assess the feasibility of investing in outdoor facilities or spaces with unique and attractive settings to serve as venues for performances and cultural events.
 2. Work with local housing developers to identify ways of incorporating lifestyle amenities into development plans.
 - Initiate discussions with housing developers during the planning stages of a subdivision to encourage lifestyle amenities be incorporated into plans.
 - Establish a parkland dedication By-law in the Township's new Official Plan. The by-law should mandate the conveyance of land for park or other public recreational purposes as a condition of development or redevelopment.
 - Work with developers to establish long-term maintenance plans for shared amenities.
 3. Develop a marketing strategy and outreach campaign to educate residents and visitors about the lifestyle amenities in Severn.
 - Create engaging content that showcases the Township's amenities, events, and community spirit.
 - Collaborate with local businesses, cultural organizations, and community groups to collectively promote lifestyle amenities.
 - Encourage local businesses to offer discounts or promotions tied to the use of lifestyle amenities.
-

- Establish and maintain a community ambassador program where enthusiastic residents promote the Township and its amenities.
- Implement surveys and comment forms to gather insights from residents and visitors and determine issues related to local amenities.

Planned Outcomes

The planned outcomes for this strategic priority are:

- a demonstrated commitment by the Township to support arts and community enrichment as a partner.
- an increased number of arts and cultural events resulting from an increased number of outdoor spaces.
- an increased probability of lifestyle amenities incorporated into residential developments.
- an increased probability of green spaces, conservation areas, and sustainable design practices incorporated into subdivision developments.
- a series of agreed-upon long-term maintenance plans for shared amenities.
- an increased level of awareness among the partners that promote Severn's lifestyle amenities.
- the promotion of community events that encourage resident participation and increase the level of public awareness about the lifestyle amenities in Severn.
- the formation of partnerships with local businesses to promote nearby lifestyle amenities to support business retention.
- the creation of a community ambassador program to promote awareness of Severn's lifestyle amenities and increase visitor traffic.
- the creation of new programming based on the insights gained from surveys completed by residents and visitors.

Estimated Budget Implications

Maximum (greater than \$100,000)

- Allocating a portion of the Township's annual budget to support cultural initiatives will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).
- Assessing the feasibility of investing in outdoor facilities or spaces will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).
- Initiating discussions with housing developers during the planning stages of subdivision development will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).

-
- Establishing a parkland dedication By-law in the Township's new official plan will require a **high** budget (\$50,000 to \$100,000).
 - Working with developers to establish long-term maintenance plans for shared amenities will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).
 - Creating engaging content that showcases the Township's amenities, events, and community spirit will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).
 - Collaborating with external partners and groups to collectively promote lifestyle amenities will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).
 - Encouraging local businesses to offer discounts or promotions tied to the use of lifestyle amenities will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).
 - Establishing and maintaining a community ambassador program will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).
 - Gathering feedback to determine issues related to local amenities will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).

4.3.5 Safeguard Community Interests in Relation to the Aggregate Industry

Objectives and Actions

1. Optimize Severn's zoning and planning regulations to promote environmental protection and sustainable aggregate operations.
 - Promote the opportunity for residents to comment on new operations at each proposed site, changes to approved land uses, and share ideas on how best to increase each site's biodiversity and environmental sustainability.
2. Maintain a defined haul route network to support the aggregate industry in Severn while ensuring the network safeguards the Township's residents and visitors⁸.
 - Seek public feedback from residents and businesses affected by haul routes and discuss results with aggregate operators.
3. Install prominent signage along major roadways and exit ramps to help truck drivers navigate.
 - Collaborate with provincial agencies to ensure that Township road signage is clear, visible, and follows established design standards.

⁸ Section 5.4 of Severn's 2023 Transportation Master Plan Update details the Township's transportation goals and objectives. The document indicates that the Township plans to "continue to provide adequate truck routes for carrying aggregate from quarries to the marketplace and mitigate impacts to the community from haul route non-compliance and traffic violations through police enforcement."

- Educate residents about the purpose of signage and the importance of adherence to designated haul routes.

Planned Outcomes

The planned outcomes for this strategic priority are:

- an increased level of public engagement to ensure community members provide their opinions during the public engagement process.
- a list of public comments and recommendations that Severn can reference while meeting with aggregate operators to resolve issues experienced by residents and businesses affected by hauling routes.
- the safe use of Township roads by truck drivers, residents, and visitors.
- an increased level of public awareness about the purpose of road signs and the importance of adhering to designated hauling routes.

Estimated Budget Implications

Moderate (\$25,000 to \$50,000)

- Promoting opportunities for resident feedback and comment will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).
- Seeking public feedback from residents and businesses affected by haul routes will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).
- Collaborating with provincial agencies to ensure adherence of Township road signage will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).
- Educating residents about the purpose of signage and the importance of adherence to designated haul routes will require a **minimal** budget (less than \$10,000).

Appendix A: List of Contributors

Explorer Solutions thanks the following stakeholders for their contributions to this project:

- Arts Orillia
- Backwoods Maple Syrup
- Barrie Welding and Machine
- Canadian Tire
- CBM Aggregates
- Chippewas of Rama First Nation
- Coldwater Developing
- Coldwater Ice Cream
- Coldwater Studio Tour
- Copperpot Nuts Inc.
- Councillors of the Township of Severn
- Cummings Canvas Co.
- Golden Palace Chinese Restaurant
- Halton Asphalt
- Hewitts Farm Market and Bakery
- John White General Contracting
- Kayak-ity-Yak Inc.
- LIV Communities
- Lock 42 Grill
- Maple Grove Syrup
- Metalwear
- Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
- Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
- Ministry of Transportation
- Muskoka Wrench
- Nelson Aggregates

- Northbrook Farm Weddings and Events
- Ontario Northland
- Orillia and Lake Country Tourism
- Orillia Community Development Corporation
- Orillia District Snowmobile Club
- Puzzles and Pastimes
- SEGBAY Chamber of Commerce and Tourism
- Severn Timber Mart
- Simcoe County District School Board
- Simcoe County Economic Development Office
- Staff of the Township of Severn
- Sustainable Orillia
- Tea Lake Association
- Tourism Simcoe County
- Washago Pickleball Club
- Watson's Coldwater Rental



Appendix B: Implementation Plan

Strategic Priority #1. Increase Support of Local Businesses

Strategic Priority #1 is supported by three objectives and a total of three actions as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Implementation Plan of the Objectives and Actions of Strategic Priority #1

Objective	Action	Planned Outcome	Budget Estimate	Implementation
Seek Council approval on the EDS to establish an EDO in Severn.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The creation of a Council-approved EDO position. 	Maximum (> \$100,000)	During Q3 of 2024
Supported by an EDO, establish an economic development advisory committee (“EDAC”) in Severn to provide economic development intelligence to Council.	Establish committee and develop processes, goals, and objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The creation of an EDO-led EDAC. 	Minimal (< \$10,000)	During Q1 of 2025
Establish a structured business stewardship program and outreach plan to support all Severn-based businesses.	Establish and regularly update a business directory of all businesses located within the Township and prioritize the number and order by which businesses are to be contacted based on established criteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The creation of a township-wide business directory. The creation of a business stewardship program to support local businesses. The creation of an outreach plan that an EDO can use to meet with local businesses annually. 	Minimal (< \$10,000)	Annually during Q4

Strategic Priority #2. Balance Tax Base to Support a Diverse Community

Strategic Priority #2 is supported by two objectives and a total of three actions as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Implementation Plan of the Objectives and Actions of Strategic Priority #2

Objective	Action	Planned Outcome	Budget Estimate	Implementation
Encourage economic development in Severn.	Ensure relevant marketing material to support business investment attraction remains current.	• The creation of updated marketing materials to attract business investment.	Minimal (< \$10,000)	Annually during Q2 and Q4
	Streamline the permitting process to make it easier for businesses to set up and maintain operations.	• The implementation of a streamlined permit process.	Moderate (\$25,000 to \$50,000)	Complete in 2026
Update Severn's zoning and land-use policies to make it easier for businesses to set up and maintain operations.	Update by-laws to support new home-based business opportunities permitted uses, and housing types to increase density in designated settlement areas (as appropriate).	• The creation of updated by-laws that support new home-based business opportunities, allow additional building uses, and allow a variety of housing types to increase density in designated settlement areas (as appropriate).	Moderate (\$25,000 to \$50,000)	Complete in 2025

Strategic Priority #3. Enhance and Promote Local Tourism

Strategic Priority #3 is supported by two objectives and a total of four actions as presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Implementation Plan of the Objectives and Actions of Strategic Priority #3

Objective	Action	Planned Outcome	Budget Estimate	Implementation
Market Severn as a major tourism and cultural destination.	Establish and maintain an inventory of Severn's tourism and cultural assets and keep all direct and indirect channel partners informed about updates to the inventory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The creation of a list that contains an inventory of all tourism and cultural assets in Severn. The creation of a list that contains an inventory of all direct and indirect channel partners in Severn. 	Minimal (< \$10,000)	As required
	Expand Severn's online events calendar to include all tourism and cultural activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The creation of an expanded events calendar (posted on Severn's website) that includes the dates of all local tourism and cultural activities. 	Minimal (< \$10,000)	As required
Ensure that Severn has the services and amenities needed to attract and support cultural events and festivals.	Establish a working group within the Township's Culture and Recreation Advisory Committee that includes residents, artists, and community leaders who can actively contribute ideas, organize events, and provide guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A listing of relevant events to attract event organizers 	Minimal (< \$10,000)	Commence in 2027-Q1 and meet quarterly
	Promote the availability of Township-owned spaces for artists to create, rehearse, and showcase their work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The creation of updated marketing materials to promote the availability of spaces in Severn that artists can use to create, rehearse, and showcase their work. 	Minimal (< \$10,000)	As required

Strategic Priority # 4. Match Lifestyle Amenities with Residential Growth

Strategic Priority #4 is supported by three objectives and a total of ten actions as presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Implementation Plan of the Objectives and Actions of Strategic Priority #4

Objective	Action	Planned Outcome	Budget Estimate	Implementation
Expand Severn's arts and culture scene.	Allocate a portion of the Township's annual budget to support cultural initiatives as partners.	• A demonstrated commitment by the Township to support arts and community enrichment as a partner.	Minimal (< \$10,000)	Annually
	Assess the feasibility of investing in outdoor facilities or spaces with unique and attractive settings to serve as venues for performances and cultural events.	• An increased number of arts and cultural events resulting from an increased number of outdoor spaces.	Minimal (< \$10,000)	Annually during Q3 and Q4
Work with local housing developers to identify opportunities for lifestyle amenities to be incorporated into plans.	Initiate discussions with housing developers during the planning stages of a subdivision to encourage lifestyle amenities be incorporated into plans.	• An increased probability of lifestyle amenities incorporated into residential developments.	Minimal (< \$10,000)	As required
	Establish a parkland dedication By-law in the Township's new Official Plan. The by-law should mandate the conveyance of land for park or other public recreational purposes as a condition of development or redevelopment.	• An increase in park or other public recreational purposes incorporated into development or redevelopment projects.	High (\$50,000 to \$100,000)	During Q3 and Q4 of 2024
	Work with developers to establish long-term maintenance plans for shared amenities.	• A series of agreed upon long-term maintenance plans for shared amenities.	Minimal (< \$10,000)	As required

Objective	Action	Planned Outcome	Budget Estimate	Implementation
Develop a tailor-made marketing strategy and outreach campaign to educate residents and visitors on local lifestyle amenities.	Create engaging content that showcases the Township's amenities, events, and community spirit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An increased level of awareness among the partners that promote Severn's lifestyle amenities. 	Minimal (< \$10,000)	Establish in 2026 and update annually in Q4
	Collaborate with local businesses, cultural organizations, and community groups to collectively promote lifestyle amenities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The promotion of community events that encourage resident participation and increase the level of public awareness about the lifestyle amenities in Severn. 	Minimal (< \$10,000)	Ongoing
	Encourage local businesses to offer discounts or promotions tied to the use of lifestyle amenities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The formation of partnerships with local businesses to promote nearby lifestyle amenities in order to support business retention. 	Minimal (< \$10,000)	Ongoing
	Establish and maintain a community ambassador program where enthusiastic residents promote the township and its amenities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The creation of a community ambassador program to promote awareness of Severn's lifestyle amenities and increase visitor traffic. 	Minimal (< \$10,000)	Commence in 2026 and update annually in Q1
	Implement surveys and comment forms to gather insights from residents and visitors and determine issues related to local amenities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The creation of new programming based on the insights gained from surveys completed by residents and visitors. 	Minimal (< \$10,000)	Annually during Q2 and Q3

Strategic Priority # 5. Safeguard Community Interests in Relation to the Aggregate Industry

Strategic Priority #5 is supported by three objectives and a total of six actions as presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Implementation Plan of the Objectives and Actions of Strategic Priority #5

Objective	Action	Planned Outcome	Budget Estimate	Implementation
Optimize zoning and planning regulations to guide and promote environmental protection and sustainable aggregate operations.	Promote the opportunity for residents to comment on new operations at each proposed site, changes to approved land uses, and share ideas on how best to increase each site's biodiversity and environmental sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An increased level of public engagement to ensure community members provide their opinions during the public engagement process. 	Minimal (< \$10,000)	As required
Maintain a defined haul route network to support the aggregate industry in Severn while ensuring the network safeguards the township's residents and visitors.	Seek public feedback from residents and businesses affected by haul routes and discuss results with aggregate operators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A list of public feedback and recommendations that the Township can reference while meeting with aggregate operators to resolve issues experienced by residents and businesses affected by hauling routes. 	Minimal (< \$10,000)	As required
Install prominent signage along major roadways and exit ramps to help truck drivers navigate.	Collaborate with provincial agencies to ensure that Township road signage is clear, visible, and follows established design standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The safe utilization of Township roads by truck drivers, residents and visitors. 	Minimal (< \$10,000)	As required
	Educate residents about the purpose of signage and the importance of adherence to designated haul routes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An increased level of public awareness about the purpose of road signs and the importance of adhering to designated hauling routes. 	Minimal (< \$10,000)	Annually during Q2