



# **10-YEAR DESTINATION LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

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PRESENTED BY



and collaborators

# Contents

## **INTRODUCTION.....4**

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The DLMP's purpose.....	5
Informing the DLMP.....	6
Tourism is.....	7
Understanding destination leadership & management.....	8
Considerations in current destination leadership & management.....	9
Destination leadership & management in Sylvan Lake.....	10
Community rights holders & interested parties.....	11

## **THE PRESENT STATE.....12**

---

Industry overview by the numbers.....	13
Local perceptions of tourism.....	14
Sylvan Lake's unique positioning.....	15

## **ABOUT THE DLMP.....16**

---

The DLMP's ambition.....	17
The DLMP's purpose.....	18
From 'local host' to 'regional host'.....	19
Overview: Destination Readiness Framework.....	20
10-year vision.....	21
Strategic alignment.....	22
Strategic pathways.....	23

## **THE STRATEGY.....24**

---

<b>PLACES &amp; CONNECTIONS.....</b>	<b>25</b>
Overview.....	26
Gaps.....	27
Destination Development and Placemaking.....	28
Downtown Revitalization.....	30
Visitor Management.....	32

## **VISITORS & EXPERIENCES.....35**

Overview.....	36
Gaps.....	37
Product Diversification & Expansion.....	38
Entrepreneurship & Business Support.....	41
Marketing.....	43

## **COMMUNITY, COLLABORATION & SUSTAINABILITY.....49**

Overview.....	50
Gaps.....	51
Community Impact & Integration.....	52
Destination Leadership & Management.....	54

## **MEASURING SUCCESS.....57**

---

Expected economic impact.....	58
Metrics and reporting.....	59

**INTRODUCTION**

# The DLMP's purpose

This Destination Leadership and Management Plan ("DLMP," "Plan", "Report") is a comprehensive, **10-year strategic plan for tourism development and investment in the Sylvan Lake community**. It intends to cultivate a thriving and purposeful tourism sector that leverages tourism for the whole community's benefit.

# Informing the DLMP

This DLMP is the result of a combination of efforts, as follows:

## 1. In-depth community engagement:



**25** intercept interviews at local events

**705**

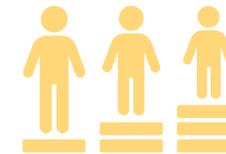
public survey responses;  
**70% from full-time and seasonal residents!**

**14** attendees at a dedicated 'Industry Night' for tourism and hospitality workers

## 2. Understanding global issues at a hyper-local level



climate change



systemic inequities



impacts of Covid-19

## 3. Desk research

- reviewing local, regional, provincial and national reports
- developing case studies

# Tourism...

Tourism's broad reach and ability to celebrate, preserve and derive economic benefit from place and people encourages the community to thrive and become richer, while also creating more opportunities to share the destination with visitors. Maximizing tourism's positive benefits has the potential to strengthen the Sylvan Lake community and way of life because tourism...

## ...is human-centric.

- Promotes cultural exchange
- Cultivates community cohesion and pride
- Fosters personal connections

## ...is adaptable.

- Caters to trends
- Adjusts to challenges
- Responds to different interests

## ...supports sustainable development.

- Fosters environmental responsibility and community well-being
- Drives long-term viability

## ...enhances resident connection & success.

- Improves local quality of life
- Creates possibilities for grassroots entrepreneurship
- Strengthens community resilience

## ...is an engine for economic growth.

- Increases local spending
- Positively impacts other sectors
- Creates new revenue channels
- Attracts new investment
- Creates employment opportunities

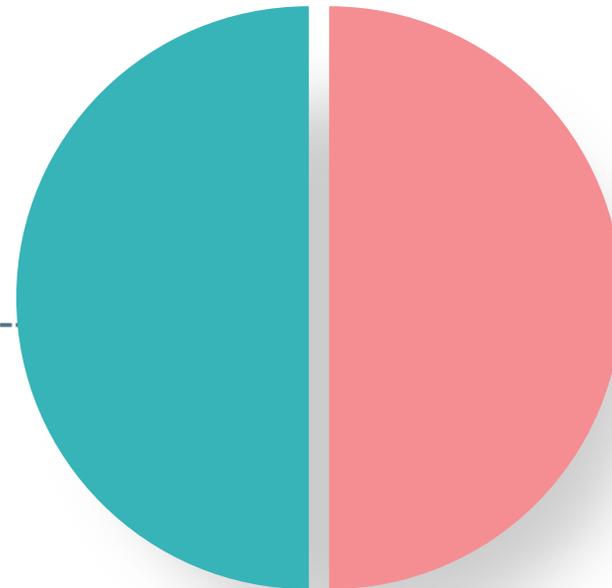
## ...embraces authenticity.

- Leans into unique characteristics of place
- Celebrates places, people and culture
- Creates memorable moments
- Preserves cultural connections
- Cultivates education and interpretation

# Understanding destination leadership & management

## DESTINATION LEADERSHIP

- a strategic and collaborative process of destination governance
- integrates a human-centric and humanity-centric lens into both the organization (i.e. structure) and operation (i.e. processes) of destination management
- is about understanding and tapping into the emotional, creative and ethical dimensions that characterize a place



## DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

- refers to the process of coordinating and managing operations, processes, resources and institutions that directly contribute to the quality and quantity of visitor experiences in the destination
- includes strengthening and promoting the image and awareness of a destination and the services available
- means addressing tourism challenges, including the negative impacts of tourism on the community

# Considerations in current destination **leadership and management**

## Community-based tourism (CBT)



Centres around the active involvement of local communities in planning, developing, and managing tourism activities and destinations



Aims to create a symbiotic relationship between travellers and the communities they visit, with both parties benefiting from the experience



Primary objective of CBT is to empower locals, economically and socially



Allows visitors to immerse themselves in the local life, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the host community's culture and environment

## Regenerative tourism



Seeks to make travellers responsible stewards of the planet and communities



Encourages people to be conscious of the consequences of their actions while travelling, and to actively contribute to improving the destinations they explore



Includes environmental stewardship, cultural respect and engagement, community empowerment, sustainable practices, education and awareness, and long-term planning

# Destination leadership & management in **Sylvan Lake**

How does this integrated approach manifest in the context of Sylvan Lake? Recognizing the importance of such a shift in destination governance, this integrated approach is the foundation upon which the DLMP has been developed. **The Plan:**

- is rooted in a **community-informed vision**, investing in tourism in a way that it contributes positively to the community
- weaves in the key ideas of **regenerative tourism** and aims to enrich the town's social, economic, and environmental fabric
- integrates the key concepts of **community-based tourism**, which places the people who live in Sylvan Lake at the heart of tourism-based decision-making
- highlights the importance of **raising awareness, fostering appreciation, and creating capacity** for the community's active participation in building & supporting the tourism industry as a vibrant, essential component of the local economy
- integrates **emotions, values, and inspiration**
- emphasizes the **long-term viability** and is as concerned with tomorrow as it is with today
- makes the case that **increased public and private sector investment** in the tourism leadership and management entity positions Sylvan Lake to compete more effectively in a highly competitive market
- acknowledges **the significant role** of the Town's tourism entity in **communicating the essence of Sylvan Lake** to attract investors and future residents, and to garner regional and provincial awareness & appreciation
- underscores the entity's role in **strengthening and coordinating various aspects** of community development—such as local economic development, infrastructure enhancement and cultural preservation—that directly and indirectly impact (and are impacted by) tourism

# Getting to know **community rights holders & interested parties**

While reading the Plan, these terms will continue to appear. So, what do they mean?



## **COMMUNITY RIGHTS HOLDERS:**

Refers to local community “stakeholders” including residents, local business owners, local groups, grassroots groups, and the Municipality.



## **INTERESTED PARTY/PARTIES:**

Refers to non-community entities connected to Sylvan Lake’s tourism development, primarily from a visitor economy perspective.

**THE PRESENT STATE**

# Industry overview by the numbers

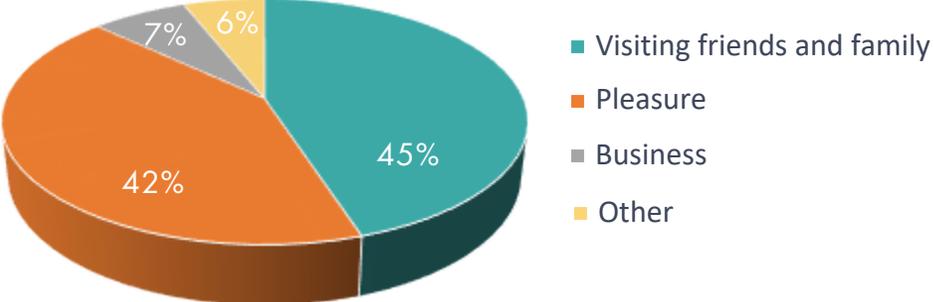


Parking fees, which are paid by visitors, generated more than \$500,000 for the Town in 2023.



Estimates related to aggregate spending of its 800,000 annual out-of-town visitors and other tourism-related expenditures in 2023 suggest tourism had an economic impact of about \$27.2 million.

Primary motivations for overnight visitors to Central Alberta:



## There are:

**39** enterprises in the accommodation and food services sector (not including short-term rentals)

**10** enterprises in the recreation and entertainment/"information and cultural industry"

**388** sites available at local campgrounds

**219** active short-term rental listings

**69** enterprises in the retail sector

Average **summer occupancy rates are between 80-85% in hotels and campgrounds and 72% in short-term accommodation rentals.**

Sylvan Lake falls within the **Central Alberta Tourism Alliance** and the Travel Alberta **'Olds to Lacombe'** Tourism Zone.

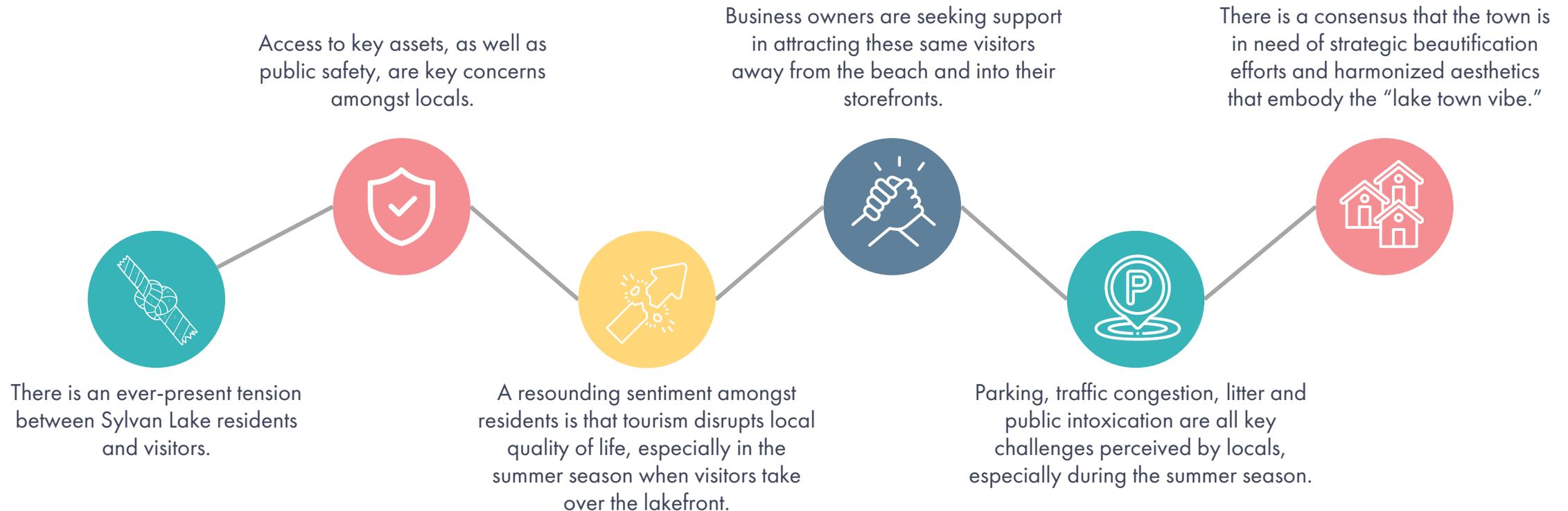
The Town of Sylvan Lake has **one full time position dedicated to tourism** as the Tourism Marketing & Development Coordinator within the Recreation, Culture and Tourism department.

Top 5 activities for visitors to Central Alberta:



# Local perceptions of tourism

The following is a summary of key insights gathered from the project's in-depth engagement process:



**Through strategic engagement and collaboration, there is an opportunity for Sylvan Lake to channel this tension and sense of ownership into community-building initiatives that support the needs of locals and visitors alike.**

# Sylvan Lake's unique positioning

A combination of factors position Sylvan Lake to become the gem of Central Alberta, and a hub to neighbouring communities and experiences. These factors include:



an ideal location in the heart of the region



the lake as a key natural attraction



access to an urban centre, steps from the key natural attraction



a healthy ecosystem



direct connections to nature and outdoor experiences



vibrant festivals and events

**ABOUT THE DLMP**

# The DLMP's ambition

The Sylvan Lake DLMP is dedicated to harnessing tourism as a means of sustainable, equitable community development, enhancing Sylvan Lake as an inclusive place to live, work, create, invest and visit.

**The Plan places community collaboration, participation and leadership at its core, positioning tourism as a key local economic driver while preserving the town's distinct local character and natural environment.**

# The DLMP's purpose



Establishes **actionable directions** for Sylvan Lake's tourism administration across short-term (1-2 years), mid-term (3-5 years), and long-term (6-10 years) phases, **focused on enhancing Sylvan Lake's tourism readiness** and **building a sustainable, equitable and locally-managed visitor economy**;



**Provides direction** for Sylvan Lake to **excel as a prime "Local Host"** while building the capacities required to become a competitive, **trendsetting "Regional Host"**; and



Steers Sylvan Lake's tourism administration to more **robustly tap into inter- and intra-provincial visitor markets**, sowing the seeds to position Sylvan Lake as a **"National Host."**

# From 'local host' to 'regional host'

How do we define  
Sylvan Lake as a Local  
Host, and what does it  
look like in its evolution  
to a Regional Host?

## Local host

The destination offers attractions and experiences that cater to the community's assets, both in high season and shoulder season, and is fully equipped to draw visitors from drive-market communities. While the focus is on one-day trips and short visits, the destination has infrastructure for longer stays such as weekend getaways. It also has established foundational capacities to participate in regional tourism development and marketing initiatives.

## Regional host

The destination has advanced to the level of being fully prepared to host visitors from across the region and beyond, for short and long stays year-round. It acts as a prominent regional leader in tourism and marketing initiatives, and has initiated province-wide marketing efforts. As a regional leader, it collaborates with DMOs, tour operators and/or other travel intermediaries operating across the region and within other regions within the province.

## Overview:

# Destination Readiness Framework

To measure Sylvan Lake's evolution from a Local Host to a Regional Host, an extensive, customized Destination Readiness Framework outlines conditions that need to be met in order for Sylvan Lake to fall into a particular level of destination readiness. It also provides an in-depth assessment of the current state, further validating its current position as 'Local Host.' Criteria are organized across the following primary categories:



Infrastructure & Attractions



Heritage, Culture, and  
Community Vibe



Tourism Products and  
Experiences



Visitor-Related Facilities,  
Amenities, and Services



Community Engagement,  
Leadership, and Partnership



Visitor Management, Health  
& Safety



Market Reach/Market  
Establishment



Market Preparedness &  
Tourism Entrepreneurship



Marketing & Communication



Workforce and Training



Tourism Economic Impact



Destination Management  
and Leadership



Strategic Partnerships



Environmental Impact  
Management, Sustainability  
& Resilience

# 10-year vision: **Connect, inspire & be the force of good with and in the community.**

In the heart of Central Alberta, Sylvan Lake emerges as a premier, **year-round destination** for **one-day and multi-day visits**, welcoming visitors of all ages, abilities, and origins from across the province and beyond. Visitors seek to experience the town's **blend of local lake town charm and vibrant culture**.

Harnessing its unique qualities and strategic location, Sylvan Lake continues to grow as the **magnet attraction for experiencing Central Alberta's** local charms and tastes in one cohesive experience. It stands as a leader and trendsetter for tourism initiatives in the region.

Sylvan Lake's tourism leadership—Visit Sylvan Lake—has leveraged tourism as a catalyst for **sustainable community economic development** and has set a data-driven tourism development model. The Town incubates open **innovation and collaboration**, placing **community quality of life and leadership, environmental stewardship, and equitable sharing** of tourism's benefits at the forefront of tourism decision-making.

Tourism businesses have established a **strong local industry**, collaborating **closely with the Town administration** to boost visitation and **public, private and community partnership & investment**.

Offering **authentic and iconic experiences**, they provide unique ways to connect visitors to the lake and the natural surroundings that sustain the community, to places that define its charm, and to people & stories that differentiate Sylvan Lake as a place to visit and community to belong to.

Sylvan Lake flourishes as an **inclusive community** for living, visiting, working, investing, creating and playing.

# Strategic alignment

The Sylvan Lake 10-year vision for tourism growth is solidly informed by, and aligns with, the shared priorities and visions for tourism development at the national, provincial and regional levels, including focuses on:



Community well-being, prosperity, safety, and quality of life



Community building, environmental sustainability, and cultural integrity



Growth and diversification of tourism benefits



Promotion and support of anti-racism, inclusivity and equity



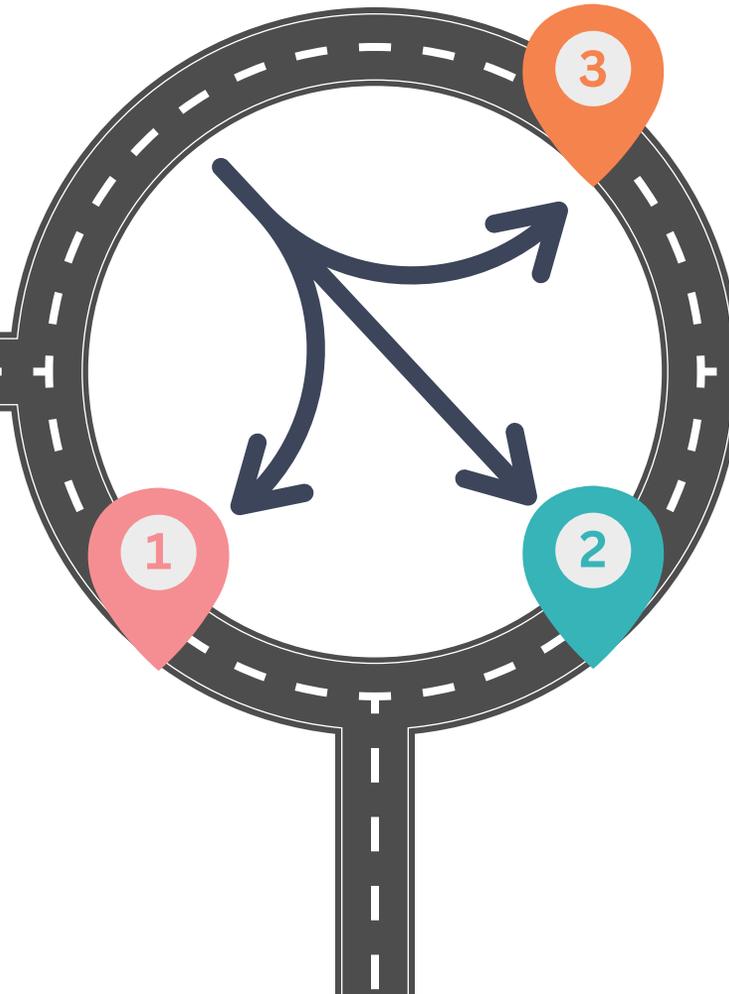
Enriching and enhancing visitor experiences

# Strategic pathways

Strategic directions, recommendations and actions, guided by the **Destination Readiness Framework** and in pursuit of the **Outcome and Impact Statements**, are organized into three distinct categories:

## Places & Connections

is presented first as it addresses the critical infrastructure and spatial dynamics that are foundational to Sylvan Lake as a place to live, work and visit.



## Community, Collaboration and Sustainability

shifts the focus to the community-centric essence of this plan, capitalizing on the assets and collaborative efforts laid out in the preceding themes. It emphasizes the importance of community leadership, collaboration and organizational capacity in cultivating a resilient and vibrant destination. It is rounded out by exploring paths for environmental and financial sustainability in the evolution of the Town's tourism sector.

## Visitors and Experiences

turns to the dynamic interplay between visitors and places. It follows 'Places and Connections' to highlight what can be done with space, infrastructure and storytelling to enhance the local tourism narrative and the quality of interactions people can have with the town, as both locals and visitors.

The following pages highlight the **Strategic Directions** and **Recommendations** within each **Strategic Pathway**. For actions tied to each recommendation (the “how”), refer to the full DLMP Report.

# THE STRATEGY

# PLACES & CONNECTIONS

# Overview: Places & Connections

'Places and Connections' speaks to:

Destination Development and Placemaking

Downtown Revitalization

Visitor Management

...and considers:

- Preparing and enhancing physical spaces for enhanced connectivity and visitor experiences.
- The value of attractive and harmonized public spaces.
- The social and economic function of the place, such as a sense of belonging and emotional attachment, and opportunities & barriers for learning, sharing, innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Leveraging placemaking and the interconnections of public art, beautification, activation and wayfinding to improve the sense of place and visitor experience.

# What gaps must be addressed in Sylvan Lake, when it comes to these considerations?

- There is limited publicly-owned infrastructure available for watercraft, and no publicly-owned launch within town limits.
- The Visit Sylvan Lake brand has not been physically operationalized throughout the town.
- Downtown lacks a visible and palpable identity, which impedes its success as a tourism asset.
- There is a lack of harmonized aesthetics that embodies and demonstrates a unique sense of place.
- There is a gap in place-based activations (programming, placemaking) that echo the charm, heritage, stories and people.
- Parking spaces are not well distributed.
- There is a lack of designated parking for RVs, buses, boat trailers, etc.
- There are limitations to the use and appeal of existing infrastructure (Pogadl Park, Pocket Park, Centennial Park, Sylvan Lake Park/Baby Beach, Lakefront Park, Lighthouse Park, Festival St., library parking lot).
- There is a lack of attractive, inclusive and interactive heritage designations and storytelling initiatives/installations around town.
- Public art and installations in Sylvan Lake lack strategic thought and interactivity.
- There is a lack of place-based initiatives/installations that showcase local Indigenous culture and perspective.
- There is a lack of comprehensive wayfinding and signage that connects major assets and attractions throughout the town.
- Town infrastructure lacks walkability and cyclability.
- There is no uniquely dedicated and active year-round Visitors Centre.
- There is a lack of visitor information infrastructure.
- Major attractions and visitor services do not adhere to comprehensive accessibility standards.

Strategic Direction:

# Destination Development and Placemaking (DDP)

Embrace placemaking as a **comprehensive framework** for approaching **public art, beautification, activation and wayfinding** as interconnected solutions to Sylvan Lake's destination development, further supported by **design, planning and policy interventions**.

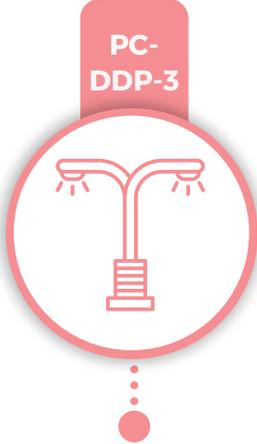
# Recommendations: Destination Development and Placemaking



Maintain the visual, emotional and perceptual connections to the lake for the whole town.



Invest in the enhancements of infrastructure, amenities and facilities connected to the lake experience.



Use placemaking to enhance the infrastructure of underutilized or unused open public spaces, Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPs) and vacant lots for recreational experience development (in particular, iconic events).



Invest in adding, redistributing and refining wayfinding infrastructure to enhance visibility and create connections between parking, walkable routes, town attractions and supporting services.



Use placemaking to reflect and promote the local stories, history and legacy throughout the town, while creating visitor attractions.



Customize a community-centric Placemaking Framework for Public Art.

Strategic Direction:

## **Downtown Revitalization (DR)**

Invest in downtown revitalization to **improve attractiveness** and create a **harmonious & engaging experience** throughout.

# Recommendations: Downtown Revitalization

PC-  
DR-1



Invest in harmonizing the visual and architectural aesthetics to reflect the essence of the Visit Sylvan Lake brand: a small, connected and vibrant lakeside community.

PC-  
DR-2



Invest in the improvements and enhancements of downtown infrastructure, amenities and facilities.

PC-  
DR-3



Enable activation strategies to encourage business piloting, and starting small and adaptive (incrementalism).

PC-  
DR-4



Implement measures that encourage the use of vacant spaces and the adaptive reuse and repurposing of retail & commercial spaces, downtown.

PC-  
DR-5



Define a regional/provincial campaign to attract prospective entrepreneurs.

Strategic Direction:

## **Visitor Management (VM)**

Leverage **placemaking, downtown revitalization and program-based activations** for effective **visitor management**.

# Recommendations: Visitor Management

PC-  
VM-1



Implement creative solutions to peak-season parking challenges and future high-demand periods.

PC-  
VM-2



Implement shuttle connections to, from and within Sylvan Lake.

PC-  
VM-3



Improve interpretation of wayfinding, placemaking and visitor information assets.

PC-  
VM-4



Enhance Visitor Information hubs.

PC-  
VM-5



Enhance accessible experiences and connections.

# Recommendations:

## Visitor Management (con't)

PC-  
VM-6



Enhance accessibility in tourism businesses and service.

PC-  
VM-7



Use festivals and events to encourage visitor traffic beyond the lakefront and downtown.

PC-  
VM-8



Use wayfinding and placemaking to influence visitor behaviour.

PC-  
VM-9



Use community programming to influence visitor behaviour.



# **VISITORS & EXPERIENCES**

# Overview: Visitors & Experiences

'Visitors & Experiences' speaks to:

Entrepreneurship and Business Support

Labour

Visitor Management, Impacts and Experience Quality

Product Development, Expansion and Diversification

Marketing & Storytelling

...and considers:

- Conflicts and risks that arise between visitors and the community.
- Activating physical spaces and place-based programs to create visitor experiences.
- The role of local entrepreneurship and a creative spirit as a driving force for community-centric tourism development.
- Strategies for cultivating an effective entrepreneurial ecosystem in Sylvan Lake, with a focus on fostering grassroots initiatives and local business development catering to the visitor economy.
- Maximizing the positive impact of visitation through community-centric visitor management and sustainable product development.
- Creating new experiences by fostering local grassroots entrepreneurship.
- Opportunities for experience development, from a local and regional perspective.
- Thoughtfully connecting with guests, attracting new visitors and influencing visitor behaviour through storytelling.

# What gaps must be addressed in Sylvan Lake, when it comes to these considerations?

- The town lacks authentic Indigenous experiences.
- There is limited reach to high-value visitors seeking to connect with the community and enjoy responsible recreational experiences.
- There is a lack of diverse, Town-facilitated one-day and multiple-day paid visitor experiences and tourism products for exploring Sylvan Lake.
- There is no iconic experience to establish Sylvan Lake as a gem in Central Alberta
- There is a gap in strategic distribution of visitor-facing products and experiences throughout the town and throughout the year.
- Public and private recreational assets (infrastructure and experiences) are not strategically utilized to diversify and enrich offerings for high-value visitors and year-round activation.
- There is a lack of evidence of Town partnerships with community rights holders, including business owners and grassroots organizations, in creating visitor experiences & products.
- Emerging and existing entrepreneurs do not have a clear development pathway that speaks to sector specific needs (including non-profits, grassroots), nor is there a comprehensive Town-led support system for entrepreneurs to start and/or grow their visitor-related businesses.
- There is a gap in business diversification downtown and a gap in overall market preparedness, impacting the overall destination appeal and visitor experience
- Within the broad environmental context, there are gaps in policy and affordability to support entrepreneurial and grassroots activities.
- There are gaps in data that can inform labour projections and support workforce development, particularly as it relates to hospitality-related retail businesses.

Strategic Direction:

## **Product Diversification and Expansion (PDE)**

Invest in ongoing **Town-led, co-led and Town-enabled tourism product diversification and expansion**, increasing **year-round visitor spending** and **enhancing the visitor experience**.

## Recommendations:

# Product Diversification and Expansion

VE-  
PDE-1



Expand VSL's capacity for product development.

VE-  
PDE-2



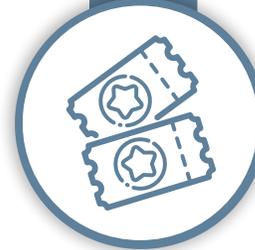
Expand capacity for non-weather-dependent products & experiences, to enhance local tourism sector resiliency and sustainability.

VE-  
PDE-3



Invest in supporting local recreational facilities and venues to attract small-scale business events, meetings and retreats.

VE-  
PDE-4



Enhance Town capacity for supporting, co-facilitating and co-investment in events with external organizers, utilizing Sylvan Lake private and public recreational facilities, amenities and services.

VE-  
PDE-5



Invest in establishing Sylvan Lake as a host or co-host for sport, leisure and cultural events, focusing on shoulder season opportunities.

## Recommendations:

# Product Diversification and Expansion (con't)

VE-  
PDE-6



Invest in facilitating Indigenous land-based experiences, using Sylvan Lake's natural assets and recreational infrastructure.

VE-  
PDE-7



Invest in VSL-led packaged experiences, in collaboration with local industry and grassroots community groups, activating underutilized town assets.

VE-  
PDE-8



Activate the town's assets (public and private) via VSL-led events, festivals and tournaments in different seasons, targeting high-value markets.

VE-  
PDE-9



Invest and co-invest in creating an iconic festival (series) that positions Sylvan Lake as the gem of Central Alberta.

VE-  
PDE-10



Pilot a VSL leadership structure for community events.

Strategic Direction:

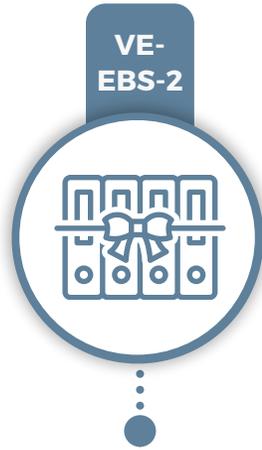
## **Entrepreneurship & Business Support (EBS)**

Establish a **multi-faceted tourism entrepreneurship support system**, using a community-centric approach, to enable **high-quality, year-round visitor experiences** within the local industry.

# Recommendations: Entrepreneurship & Business Support



Launch a pilot of the Tourism Partnership Accelerator (TPA), as the evolution of the existing Tourism Partnership Program (TPP) and an amalgamation of various Town-led business support initiatives—TEDI, TPP, the Façade Improvement Grant and the Recreation Culture & Tourism Micro Grant.



Establish the 'Capacity Building for Product Development' component of the TPA that accommodates availability and varying stages of market preparedness.



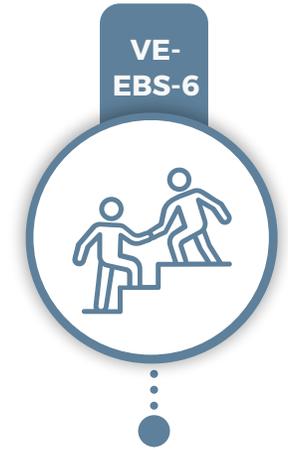
Establish the 'Testing and Piloting' component of the TPA.



Integrate VSL online channels (i.e., website, social media) as part of the TPA.



Conduct regular evaluations of the TPA's performance to understand impacts on visitor experience development.



Enhance, advance and refine the TPA program.



# **MARKETING**

# What specific gaps must be addressed as it relates to **tourism marketing** in Sylvan Lake?

- The purpose of VSL marketing and communication channels, and Town of Sylvan Lake marketing and communication channels should be further distinguished
- There is a fractured approach to marketing and promotion.
- There is a limited view of marketing as a promotional activity, which misses key components such as program- and place-based activations.
- There is limited budget and capacity for effective destination marketing.
- There is no dedicated events marketing strategy.
- There is a lack of collaborative marketing and sales opportunities between the Town and local & regional partners.
- There is a lack of trip planning tools available via Sylvan Lake channels.
- There is a lack of calls to action within marketing activities.
- There is a lack of cohesion in the customer journey that connects all points of visitor interactions
- The Municipality views VSL as a “communications channel,” rather than recognizing and enabling Visit Sylvan Lake’s growth potential, ability to influence visitor consumer behaviour, ability to showcase local and authentic sense of place and culture, and future potential for revenue generation.

Strategic Direction:

## **Marketing & Communications (M)**

Invest in **expanding VSL organic and paid marketing efforts**, to increase regional brand awareness, influence visitor behaviour, enhance community buy-in to tourism efforts, and **attract high-value visitors to Sylvan Lake year-round**.

# Recommendations: Marketing & Communications

VE-  
M-1



Invest in enhancing the Visit Sylvan Lake web platform.

VE-  
M-2



Invest in enhancing VSL's e-mail marketing and communications capabilities to strengthen year-round engagement and personalize messaging to unique audience segments and prospective partners.

VE-  
M-3



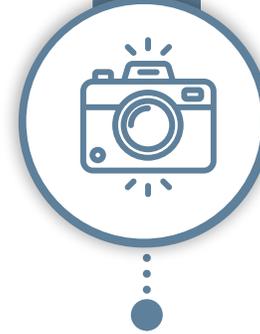
Develop a robust VSL Content Calendar, mapping-out content needs (photos, videos, text) for organic marketing activities on each VSL marketing platform (website, social media, B2B email newsletter, B2C email newsletter, Visitors' Guide).

VE-  
M-4



Develop theme-based itineraries that facilitate collaboration and partnership among local tourism and hospitality businesses.

VE-  
M-5



Invest in ongoing capture of polished and refined photo and video assets, featuring the lake town vibe throughout the seasons, and the diversity of the community & visitors.

# Recommendations: Marketing & Communications (con't)

VE-  
M-6



Develop organic campaigns and initiatives to encourage locals and visitors to share user-generated content (UGC).

VE-  
M-7



Develop an annual Campaign Calendar to schedule, manage and develop VSL marketing campaigns.

VE-  
M-8



Invest in developing VSL-branded tourism marketing campaigns focused on engaging and attracting high-value travellers; small scale business events; meetings & retreats organizers; sport & recreation clubs and organizations; and others, as value becomes apparent.

VE-  
M-9



Invest in developing VSL-branded marketing assets, campaigns and initiatives dedicated to influencing and managing visitor behaviour, and promoting responsible travel & tourism.

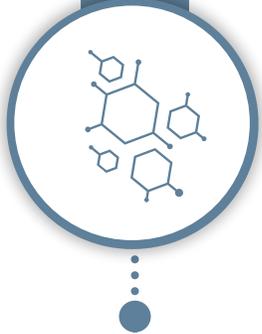
VE-  
M-10



Invest in developing VSL-branded marketing assets, campaigns and initiatives targeting entrepreneurship and local business development.

# Recommendations: Marketing & Communications (con't)

VE-  
M-11



Develop organic and paid in-destination campaigns and initiatives to enhance community cultural connection, community stewardship and local understanding of & involvement in the tourism sector.

VE-  
M-12



Develop funnels for cooperative marketing investments from local and regional partners.

VE-  
M-13



Expand VSL's capacity for tourism marketing.



# **COMMUNITY, COLLABORATION & SUSTAINABILITY**

# Overview: **Community, Collaboration & Sustainability**

'Community, Collaboration and Sustainability' speaks to:

Community Impact and Integration

Environmental Impacts and Consideration

Organizational Capacity and Growth

...and considers:

- Community perceptions of the value creation (positive impact) and value destruction (negative impact) roles of tourism.
- The community's impact and integration in tourism, from a cultural standpoint, including community identity, shared values and the intended outcomes valued by community rights holders.
- The role of community collaboration and partnership in tourism development, and support required from the Town.
- Socio-economic constructs needed to nurture community leadership and grassroots initiatives.
- Solutions to address gaps in organizational capacity for destination leadership and management, for effective implementation of this DLMP.
- Revenue-generation opportunities to support the effective implementation of this DLMP.
- Environmental protection and preservation for sustainable tourism development.

# What gaps must be addressed in Sylvan Lake, when it comes to these considerations?

- There is an opportunity to enhance information-sharing channels, whereby the Town can provide the community with updates about tourism-related initiatives, opportunities and investments.
- Current policies and bylaws do not effectively facilitate community-centric practice in tourism development.
- There is a gap in accessible and inclusive engagement channels for community rights holders and visitors to participate actively in the conversation in tourism-related decision-making.
- Knowledge, funding and communications barriers prevent community participation and investment in tourism-related initiatives.
- There is limited VSL staff capacity to effectively lead and carry out the DLMP implementation plan and actively leverage strategic partnership opportunities.
- Tourism initiatives are being led by non-tourism departments with limited involvement from the tourism department
- There are no PPCP strategies currently in place for capital pooling and investment in destination development.
- The current organizational structure disconnects tourism-related initiatives from one another; there is a lack of intradepartmental collaboration at the Town level to maximize the impacts of community-centric tourism and destination development initiatives.
- There is a gap in preparedness within the Town and among tourism experiences and services to address the needs of an ever-more culturally diverse visitor base.
- A lack of physical infrastructure, resources and tools—including funding — hinders the successful implementation of the DLMP.
- There are no systems in place for ongoing tourism-related data collection.

Strategic Direction:

## **Community Impact & Integration (CII)**

Enable mechanisms to utilize tourism for **building capacities** in **participatory decision-making, co-investment, partnerships, project building, community cultural exchange, and environmental stewardship.**

## Recommendations:

# Community Impact & Integration (CII)

CCS-  
CII-1



Create accessible, inclusive and interactive information-sharing channels for updates about tourism-related initiatives, opportunities and investments.

CCS-  
CII-2



Create accessible and inclusive engagement channels for community rights holders and visitors to participate in tourism-related decision-making.

CCS-  
CII-3



Implement strategies to reduce barriers to participation, encourage active engagement and lower the risk of partnership and investment in tourism-related initiatives.

CCS-  
CII-4



Identify and implement community-centric strategies to encourage PPCP for capital pooling and investment in destination development.

CCS-  
CII-5



Invest in community-centric visitor management, and environmental & cultural stewardship.

Strategic Direction:

# **Destination Leadership and Management (DLM)**

Establish **regulations, structure, processes and resources** for effective destination leadership and management, specifically regarding: **organizational capacity; revenue; funding & co-investment models; bylaws & policies; collaboration; sustainability; and metrics & reporting.**

## Recommendations:

# Destination Leadership and Management

CCS-  
DLM-1



Invest in reenvisioning organizational roles and responsibilities and collaboration, and expanding the tourism team to lead community-centric tourism and destination development.

CCS-  
DLM-2



Invest in securing infrastructure, resources and tools for the tourism administration entity to implement the DLMP.

CCS-  
DLM-3



Adopt and/or refine policies related to the physical development of the town, to support the implementation of the DLMP.

CCS-  
DLM-4



Implement policy and practice to support the development of a multifunctional lakefront recreational zone (including Centennial Park, Sylvan Lake Park, Lighthouse Park and Lakefront Park), that prioritizes community appeal.

CCS-  
DLM-5



Implement policy and practice to facilitate a community-centric approach in tourism development.

CCS-  
DLM-6



Create diverse revenue streams for tourism development investments, as recommended in the DLMP.

## Recommendations:

# Destination Leadership and Management

CCS-  
DLM-7



Utilize strategic partnerships with key tourism players at local and regional levels to realize the DLMP's vision for Sylvan Lake, to be a destination leader in Central Alberta.

CCS-  
DLM-8



Enhance existing policies, regulations and practices to manage and monitor the environmental impact of tourism development at a local level.

CCS-  
DLM-9



Enhance capacity to lead regional collaboration for implementing the Sylvan Lake Cumulative Effects Management System (CEMS) framework and for environmental initiatives focused on tourism impact management.

CCS-  
DLM-10



Develop guidelines and initiatives for environmentally sensitive practice & messaging in tourism product development and marketing.

CCS-  
DLM-11



Implement a context-specific Tourism Impact Measurement Framework (TIM) aligned with DLMP priorities to understand, measure and monitor tourism economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts and to inform respective tourism decision-making.

**MEASURING SUCCESS**

# What **economic impact** can **Sylvan Lake** expect to see as a result of implementing the DLMP?

An estimated 966,000 visitors visited Sylvan Lake in 2024, expected to grow to 1.3 million by 2034. Initially, growth is largely attributable to day trippers. In the later years of the plan (2030-3034), the destination will be more attractive to overnight visitors, so while day trip visitors continue to increase steadily on an annual basis, the overnight visitor segment will begin to grow at a more rapid rate. **Here's the dollars and cents of it all:**

	2024	From 2025 - 2034 (Cumulative)
<b>GDP generated by visitor spending</b>	\$44.9 million	\$606 million
<b>FTEs supported by tourism economic activity</b>	608	8,435
<b>Collective earnings - direct labour income (tourism)</b>	\$26.4 million	\$368 million
<b>Municipal taxes generated by tourism economic activity</b>	\$1.3 million	\$18 million

# Metrics & reporting

Success of this DLMP and efforts recommended within is measured in three parts:

## Part 1: Tourism Impact Measurement Framework (TIM)

- A structured approach for the Town of Sylvan Lake's tourism administration
- Seeks to monitor and report on the big picture, including the overall socio-economic value of the local tourism economy
- Covers the following key impact areas:
  - Economic Impact
  - Entrepreneurship & Small Business Development
  - Visitor Satisfaction
  - Community Satisfaction
  - Environmental Impact

## Part 2: DLMP Performance Measurement & Reporting Guidelines

- A basis for the Town of Sylvan Lake's tourism administration (VSL) to measure and monitor intermediate outcomes of implementing DLMP recommendations, actions and project deliverable
- Focuses on the immediate feedback of VSL's progress regarding implementing the DLMP
- Includes:
  - Future Planning, Evaluation, and Reporting of DLMP Progress
  - Evaluating VSL Industry Partnership Initiatives
  - Evaluating VSL Events and Tourism Products
  - Evaluating VSL-Led/Co-Led Pilot Projects for Place Enhancement
  - Evaluating Tourism Partnership Accelerator (TPA)
  - Evaluating Impacts of Marketing and Communications
  - Evaluating VSL-Led Initiatives for Community Participation

## Part 3: Evaluating Evolution From 'Local Host' to 'Regional Host'

- Refers to the robust and customized 'Destination Readiness Criteria for Tourism' to determine the Town's progress in evolving from a 'Local Host' to a 'Regional Host'
- Provides an understanding of the impacts of the DLMP from a Destination Readiness perspective



Refer to the complete DLMP document for more details and a complete action plan.