

VISIT THE COUNTY

2026 Strategic Plan

Context

Visit The County's priorities were first informed by the 2021 Destination Development Strategy commissioned by municipal staff, and further shaped through input from Council and other interest holders. Together, this provided the inaugural 2022 Board with a clear starting point for understanding the County's tourism priorities and the needs of stakeholders, visitors, and residents. This Strategic Plan builds on what was prioritized and delivered in previous years, and reflects the key opportunities for growth and development identified for 2026 through feedback from Council, residents, tourism operators, and visitors.

PILLAR 1: GROW TOURISM REVENUES (Destination Visitor Economy)

Goal 1: Grow overnight stays

Tactics

- Drive feeder market growth from Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal via targeted campaigns with influencers and targeted PR.
- Refine and expand shoulder-season offerings (Countylicious, Winter Wellness, Arts Trail, Taste Trail) with clear, bookable value propositions and multi-stop itineraries that motivate visitors to stay longer.

Measures

- Room nights/overnight stays (YoY; by quarter), average length of stay, and shoulder/off-season demand indicators.

Goal 2: Grow year-round demand (reduce seasonality)

Tactics

- Deliver seasonal/shoulder campaigns that encourage longer, multi-stop trips: Winter Wellness, Spring Countylicious, Fall Countylicious, Holidays in The County.
- Drive more visitation in the shoulder season from Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal via targeted campaigns with influencers and targeted PR.
- Highlight different accommodation options through social storytelling.
- Build runway for VTC owned Winter Wellness Campaign 2026-27 and continue Arts Trail & Taste Trail development/industry engagement (multi-year product build).

Measures

- Room nights/overnight stays (YoY; by quarter), average length of stay, and shoulder/off-season demand indicators.

Goal 3: Increase visitor spending (total economic impact and per-visitor spend)

Tactics

- Target Destination Canada traveller segments Refined Globetrotters and Culture Seekers.

- Use signature programming and culinary products to drive higher-value trips (Spring & Fall Countylicious; local storytelling/PR).
- Improve conversion pathways via website implementation and clearer referrals to operators/booking tools
- Launch consumer newsletter.
- Share learning with operators that support packaging and value (e.g., Accommodators webinar re: Data & MAT).

Measures

- Moneris *consumer spending trends*
- Visitor-reported spend: average spend per trip from Visitor Experience Survey.
- AirDNA ADR increases YOY

Goal 4: Expand geographic reach in priority feeder markets (Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal)

Tactics

- Target priority markets through seasonal campaigns and partner distribution
- Grow always-on audiences via consumer newsletter + short-form content; leverage regional channels (e.g., RTO9 Destination Discovery webinar).

Measures

- Visitation/overnights from priority markets (YoY) and market mix: Environics Visitor View & Visitor Experience Survey

PILLAR 2: HOST VISITORS

Goal: Deliver excellent visitor information services that enhance satisfaction and encourage repeat visitation

Tactics

- Partner with Regent Theatre Info Centre and deliver visitor services readiness resources.
- Update County Ambassador training; run Season Launch and key industry webinars (incl. Social Media & AI; Data & MAT).
- Implement website improvements and communicate changes to industry to support trip planning and referrals.
- Drive foot traffic to the Info Centre via boosted social media and website resources

Measures

- Visitor Experience Survey/satisfaction indicators;
- Visitor services usage: info centre traffic, inquiry volume, and response time (tracked weekly in-season).
- Digital trip-planning outcomes: planning-page engagement, outbound operator referral clicks, and social link clicks to planning content (tracked monthly).
- Social visitor-service KPIs: reach and engagement on update/discovery posts, saves/shares, and click-through to planning content (tracked monthly).

PILLAR 3: ENRICH THE LIVES OF RESIDENTS

Goal 1: Improve community outcomes and quality of life related to tourism

Tactics

- Deliver Community Engagement Plan; launch Community Web Pages for transparency and access.
- Deliver Community Partnership Fund streams to support community-led initiatives and shared value.
- Establish a resident sentiment measurement approach and feedback loop to monitor tourism impacts and guide responsive actions.

- Deliver a year-round operator support program: industry newsletter, partner channels, webinars, and targeted data-sharing, alongside signature initiatives (Countylicious, Winter Wellness, Arts Trail, Taste Trail) that increase qualified traffic to participating businesses and amplify their unique offerings, leading to measurable growth and improved profitability.
- Promote VTC programs and partner events to Prince Edward County residents year-round, highlighting local experiences and businesses through targeted storytelling and timely calls-to-action that encourage local participation.

Measures

- Community engagement signals; survey results and documented response actions.

Goal 2: Promote an inclusive and welcoming community culture through inclusive leadership

Tactics

- Host an annual strategic community day for listening, planning, and guidance with diverse community voices (e.g., All Welcome Here, BOQ Pride, youth representatives, Accessibility Committee, Indigenous and cultural groups).
- Develop a Culture & Belonging action plan aligned with marketing, partnerships, and product development.
- Embed accessibility, inclusion, and reconciliation considerations into all VTC programs (Countylicious, Taste Trail, Arts Trail).

Measures

- Measurable inclusion/accessibility indicators where feasible; partner uptake of practices and learning opportunities.
- Participation in inclusivity-focused certifications / learning (counts)
- Website engagement with relevant content (e.g., Indigenous content pages)

Goal 3: Strengthen community understanding and support for the visitor economy

Tactics

- Use Community Web Pages and community-facing communications to explain actions, impacts, and benefits of tourism; share operator/community-benefit stories.

Measures

- Community page engagement on VTC website
- Engagement on community-facing content: social engagement + website referrals.
- Resident sentiment measurement approach (TBD) + baseline established

Goal 4: Promote a more environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable tourism sector

Tactics

- Design and develop a regenerative tourism product for launch in 2027, including a regenerative tourism pilot with local operators (and pursue funding to support delivery).
- Publish operator tools: PEC Sustainable Tourism Checklist + Sustainability Resource Hub (hosted via website implementation and promoted through industry channels).
- Track key sustainability indicators annually and report progress over time (community-wide where feasible).
- Strengthen sustainability through programs: add Countylicious local sourcing requirements (County producers) and use Arts Trail/Taste Trail participation incentives to reduce barriers to sustainability/accessibility/inclusion certifications.
- Highlight leading operators through storytelling/earned media and share learning opportunities via partner workshops/webinars.
- Deliver nature and conservation storytelling that attracts high-value visitors (e.g., birding, winter wildlife)

Measures

- Number of operators accessing/using checklist/resources

- Workshop/webinar attendance
- Website engagement with sustainability hub/resources
- Define and report a small set of sustainability indicators annually (baseline + trend)
- Industry newsletter open rates and CTR