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The Ottawa region is the traditional and unceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin people, who have stewarded, travelled and inhabited these lands for millennia. We acknowledge the enduring presence of all First Nations, Métis and Inuit on this land.
INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has been the most significant disruption to global travel and tourism in our industry’s history. Profound changes in travel patterns, significant changes in the economics of the industry, and shifts in consumer behaviour have been witnessed as a result, which has created new market opportunities and an uneven recovery across various segments of the industry.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also accelerated the need for broader alignment with the community. Pure growth in visitation can no longer be the primordial goal, and the shift in focus towards the wellbeing and safety of local communities—urban, rural and Indigenous—has taken on new urgency.

The overarching goal of this Destination Stewardship Plan is to explore and understand these shifts in order to develop a shared vision for the long-term future of tourism in Ottawa, and how various organizations across the destination can work together in order to ensure tourism in Ottawa not only recovers, but thrives long-term to the benefit of industry stakeholders and local residents alike.

Fortunately, overall perceptions of Ottawa by both visitors and residents are very positive. Our destination is perceived as historical, clean, beautiful, safe, and welcoming—characteristics that are more desirable than ever in choosing a place to live or visit for business or leisure. Residents also recognize the importance of tourism to the Ottawa economy and agree that the industry has a positive impact on quality of life in the city.

At the same time, labour shortages, the loss of international air service, a reduction in downtown office occupancy, a corresponding reduction in business travel, and the impact of the Freedom Convoy are just some of the significant headwinds for Ottawa to overcome.

This Destination Stewardship Plan provides a roadmap for the management and marketing of tourism in Ottawa moving forward based on an analysis of these and other key trends, an assessment of our tourism assets and experiences, a market analysis to identify the types of visitors Ottawa is best suited to attract, and an engagement plan to better understand community aspirations. This Plan not only considers the product and programming that will be required to achieve our vision to be one of Canada’s most visited, vibrant, and valued urban destinations, but the policies and actions that will minimize the impact of tourism on our environment and the quality of life for both local residents and those that work in the travel and tourism industry—helping to ensure the long-term sustainability of our destination for generations to come.
In 2019, Ottawa attracted more than 11 million visitors, who generated a total of $2.2 billion in spending. With more than two years of COVID-19 now behind us, some of the potential long-term effects are becoming clearer while others are still emerging.

The objectives of this Destination Stewardship Plan were to not only help chart a path to recovery in the short-term, but to also identify the types of visitors, experiences, policies and assets Ottawa should develop to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of our destination.

In 2021, Ottawa Tourism engaged Resonance Consultancy to lead this planning process on behalf of our broader community of stakeholders, including some within economic development sectors, policy development, business, education, and the non-profit sectors, all of whom see benefit when Ottawa’s visitor economy is thriving. A variety of research and stakeholder engagement activities were conducted by Resonance to inform the vision and to shape the recommendations within this Destination Stewardship Plan.

For current context, interviews with more than 100 stakeholders were conducted. The primary purpose of these discussions was to identify participant opinions, aspirations and ideas for the future of the destination. Overall, discussions focused on the trends impacting Ottawa and its tourism industry and the threats and opportunities they represent, destination and tourism industry actions and activities, as well as issues and opportunities needed to inform and direct governance, management, funding, planning and development of infrastructure and events in a manner that supports sustainable destination development and community goals and objectives.

To better understand who the current Ottawa visitor is, how they compare to Canadian travellers in general and what types of travellers the destination should market to in the future, a Canadian traveller study was developed in partnership with Leger. The study was designed to assess the demographic and psychographic characteristics of previous visitors to Ottawa, how Ottawa is perceived by both past visitors and Canadian travellers in general, and identify the motivating factors that drove previous visitors to select Ottawa as their destination of choice.

A survey of local residents was also conducted to explore how quality of life for residents can be balanced with the quality of the visitor experience, and how Ottawa can responsibly grow a tourism industry for the benefit of all. It also identified key contributors to local quality of life and opportunities for the tourism industry to play a role in enhancing these elements of the destination.

Lastly, an assessment was conducted to benchmark the supply-side of the destination in terms of both the quantity and quality of accommodations, infrastructure, events and experiences offered versus competing destinations in order to determine how well suited (or not) the destination is positioned to respond to current and potential future market trends.

The insights generated by these various research and engagement activities informed a visioning process that brought together leaders from Ottawa Tourism, the City of Ottawa and other key stakeholders to identify and prioritize key focus areas for the development, management and stewardship of Ottawa as a destination and the corresponding strategies and actions required in each of these areas.
Ottawa, Canada’s Glowing Heart, brings Canadians together and draws us to the warmth of being with one another. As the physical, political and spiritual heart of the nation, there is a part of each of us represented here—all our hometowns and communities, all our customs, from coast to coast to coast. There are reflections and recognition: Indigenous, French, English, along with a thousand other origin stories, a sea to sea of new languages. There is Reconciliation.

Ottawa is a meeting of the hearts and a meeting of the minds—visitors, yes, and also the many conferences and associations that choose Canada’s capital to engage, exchange and inspire one another. We come together in Ottawa to the warmth of a shared fire that’s a very Canadian pride—in our museums, our arts, our architecture. Ingenious. Inspirational. Enriching.

Every season is glorious, each an invitation to come outside and feel warm-cold-exhilarated-humbled in the elements, on a pathway, a canal, a river, on a bike or on foot—always surrounded by nature.

There are neighbourhoods of character and colour in Ottawa, from ByWard Market to Manotick; there are cultures ripe for celebration and immersion. And there is a region to explore, rural roots to uncover, a deep connection to the land on our doorstep.

Ottawa brings Canadians together to a capital that’s always striving, always working toward Canadian ideals, always aiming to lead the world. We want to be more accessible so more visitors from Canada and the world can discover us. We’re leading by example, building the high quality and welcoming hospitality of the next generation and leading the country to a greener future. And we’re always game, determined to play with the best of them, joyfully as a community and fiercely as competitors on the world stage.

Ottawa is a meeting of ideas and a meeting of imaginations. Of practices and policies created and meaningful ideas.

**Ottawa is Canada’s Glowing Heart.**
A key approach to the development of this Destination Stewardship Plan was to identify and analyze the perceptions, needs and interests of local residents, prior visitors and Canadian business and leisure travellers in general in order to understand who visits Ottawa and why.

Canadian traveller survey results indicate that the main reason for Ottawa visitors’ last trip to Ottawa is leisure holiday/vacation (40%), followed by visiting family or friends (29%). Overall perceptions of Ottawa are positive, with three-quarters of past visitors awarding an “excellent/good” rating. Those aged 18-34 and 55-64 have more positive perceptions than those in other age groups. Those who travelled to Ottawa as a couple also have more positive opinions. In terms of personality, Ottawa is perceived mainly as historical, clean, beautiful, safe, and welcoming.

But the visitor of the future may be different than the one we’ve seen in the past. As such, a trends analysis was also conducted by Resonance to identify emerging new consumer and business travel trends that the Destination Stewardship Plan should also consider and respond to. This research was paired with an assessment and benchmarking of Ottawa’s tourism infrastructure, assets, and experiences against competing destinations in order to identify Ottawa’s current strengths, areas where we need to improve, and potential opportunities we can develop. Based on this analysis and our vision for the destination, four key target audiences were identified that have the greatest future market potential for Ottawa.

- **Local Residents**
- **Active Adventurers**
- **Sophisticated Explorers**
- **Business Travellers**

By looking at Ottawa from the perspective of these audiences, strategies and actions were then identified to cater to the needs and interests of these specific groups. This market driven approach provides focus to the planning process and will also help inform future marketing efforts as well.
Local Residents

Understanding the aspirations of the local community with respect to how Ottawa is positioned and developed as a destination to live, work and play is critical to the success of the Destination Stewardship Plan. Local residents perceive Ottawa as historical, and value its beauty, cleanliness, safety, and quality of life, as well as its outdoorsy lifestyle.

Ottawa’s nature and parks, outdoor activities, local neighbourhoods, restaurants, sights and landmarks, museums, events and festivals are some of the most important aspects that attract residents to live, work, or study in Ottawa. In comparison, tours, nightlife, accommodation, and spectator sports are the least important factors residents consider in deciding to live/work/study in the area. Local residents rate both air and train connectivity as very important, but satisfaction with these services is low which suggests that improvements in these areas should be prioritized.
Active Adventurers

Active Adventurers share a keen interest in outdoor sports, engaging with nature, and health and fitness activities. They take fewer vacations per year to farther destinations, and they aren’t particularly interested in family or multi-generational vacations. Active Adventurers also enjoy athletic competitions and more extreme forms of leisure.

Ottawa offers more outdoor activities than any other urban destination in Canada and nearly 1/3 of past visitors to the city fit the profile of an Active Adventurer. As such, Ottawa is well positioned to cater to and expand its reach with this particular market segment. Based on Ottawa’s current product offerings, the promotion of the extraordinary outdoors to visitors is an opportunity to position Ottawa as one of Canada’s most active cities and leverage these assets with additional programming and events for visitors and residents alike that celebrate the great outdoors.
neighbourhoods, museums, and nature and parks are very important as part of the visitor experience. Arts and culture are also more important to Sophisticated Explorers compared to Canadian travellers in general, however their level of satisfaction with these types of experiences in Ottawa is lower than in other areas. As a result, the development of arts and culture experiences (non-institutional, other than museums) is a clear opportunity to connect with this audience.

Sophisticated Explorers take fewer but longer vacations per year, with the highest average vacation spend of any type of Canadian leisure travellers. They are more likely to enjoy sightseeing, visiting cultural attractions, learning new things and attending cultural events.

Nearly 20% of past visitors to Ottawa fit the profile of a Sophisticated Explorer. For these visitors, accommodation, sights and landmarks, dining/restaurants, flight connectivity, interesting
As a result, Ottawa has an opportunity to become the national hub for annual association meetings and events as they consolidate their operations. At the same time, a backlog of international meetings in gateway cities means Ottawa has an opportunity to grow its share of the international meetings market as well.

Business Travellers

Historically, midweek business travel, business meetings, and convention business filled rooms, restaurants and shops in Downtown Ottawa. However, the pandemic has reshaped corporate travel policies and schedules while new hybrid models are influencing corporate event strategies.

As a result, Ottawa has an opportunity to become the national hub for annual association meetings and events as they consolidate their operations. At the same time, a backlog of international meetings and events in gateway cities means Ottawa has an opportunity to grow its share of the international meetings market as well.
Ottawa is many things to many different people and will always attract a wide variety of visitors from across the nation and around the world. Based on the vision we are seeking to achieve and the audiences we are seeking to attract, eight key experience principles have been prioritized to guide and inform our planning, management and marketing of Ottawa as a destination. These include:

1. **We Bring Canadians & Visitors Together**

Ottawa is Canada’s civic heart, and the place where Canadians and visitors gather, meet and celebrate together. Moving forward, we’re also endeavouring to make it as joyful a destination as it is dignified, as much a place of small and varied civic activity as it is a destination for signature national events.

2. **We Honour Our Heritage**

We’re working not only to bring the past to life, but to bring it to now. Indigenous art and experiences that come out from the walls of institutions and that can be more interactive, touched and felt; French Canadian heritage becomes an experience for all the senses.

3. **We Voice Reconciliation**

In the light of awareness and in the spirit of true Reconciliation, Ottawa is committed to connecting Indigenous communities, both locally and nationally, and their history to Canadians and the world.
4

We Live For The Great Outdoors

Ottawa gives Canadians’ love of outdoor activity a chance to shine all year round by providing opportunities for passive and active movement and outdoor enjoyment in order to appeal to visitors, locals and groups of every level of fitness and ability.

5

We Host Sports

Ottawa has ambitions to attract some of the country’s best athletes and grow the city’s reputation in national and international competitions by becoming a training centre for certain elite sporting activity. This central sporting hub can also serve to provide the resources for residents to reach their personal bests as well.

6

We Celebrate Community

Ottawa is committed to making the different and diverse neighbourhoods of the city part of the visitor experience. Events and festivals in neighbourhoods on a more consistent basis can help build visitation and economic benefit to different parts of the city and encourage repeat visitation.

7

We Love Our Terroir

Ottawa is surrounded by land and farmers growing a new crop of ideas about community, nourishment and feeding the future. This contemporary rurality is part of the Ottawa experience, increasingly attached to wellbeing, and appealing to visitors of all kinds.

8

We Value Sustainability

Ottawa will take a triple bottom line approach to the development and management of tourism with a commitment to reduce the impact of tourism on our planet, enrich the lives of people who work in our industry and generate a fair profit for our stakeholders, partners and the community we serve.
Based on the vision, target audiences and experience principles developed, a total of 41 corresponding strategies and 150 actions have been identified. Some of these can be implemented and acted on immediately, while others will be pursued and implemented over the long-term. Others yet will evolve and be revised over time.

The goal of this Destination Stewardship Plan is not to provide a definitive checklist, but rather a living working document that will focus our energies, resources and collective action on those areas that have the potential to generate the most significant impact on the quality of the visitor experience, resident’s quality of life, and the contribution of tourism to Ottawa’s economy over time. Of course, as evidenced by the pandemic, unforeseen events and changes in the marketplace means that Ottawa must be flexible to adapt and respond to these changes as they occur.

In the pages that follow, each experience principle is elaborated on and an overview of each corresponding strategy is explained with a list of actions identified. These strategies and actions are the basis of an accompanying Action Plan that will be shared with relevant parties that assigns responsibility for each, recommends what organization should take the lead on each action item, with a timeframe for implementation/completion.
Ottawa is Canada’s civic heart, and the place where Canadians and visitors gather, meet and celebrate together. Moving forward, we’re also endeavouring to make it as joyful a destination as it is dignified, as much a place of small and varied civic activity as it is a destination for signature national events.

Whether it’s Bluesfest, the Tulip Festival, or Canada Day, major events offer a unique opportunity to connect visitors with residents in Ottawa. The research suggests that events and festivals are an important driver of visitor demand and quality of life for Ottawa residents. Events are important drivers of visitation to the destination, and perhaps more importantly, residents list festivals and events as one of the key contributors to quality of life in the city.
Position Ottawa As A National & Regional Connectivity Hub

The pandemic has been the most disruptive event for the airline industry in history and Ottawa has lost several international routes as a result. Ottawa must also compete with gateway airports in Montreal and Toronto. Restoring these international connections will take some time as international travel volume recovers and new more fuel-efficient aircraft are delivered over the next few years. At the same time, Ottawa currently enjoys both good national air and regional rail connectivity and has an opportunity to leverage this connectivity and its capacity to attract more flights with regional carriers in order to offer one of the most connected and easily accessible destinations within Canada.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Support airport expansion and investment to establish Ottawa as a strong regional hub with both traditional and emerging carriers.
2. Advocate for efficient, rapid and frequent rail service between major central Canadian cities.
Anchor Ottawa As A Centre For National, Regional, & International Business Events

Ottawa enjoys strong domestic air and regional rail connectivity as well as a highly regarded convention centre facility. As business meetings and events are restored, Ottawa can leverage these assets and its position as the nation’s capital to attract and host meetings and events on a recurring basis (annually or biennially), particularly with associations and organizations that are based in Ottawa. In addition, the cancellation and rescheduling of international business events over the past two years has limited the future meeting space available in many gateway cities, creating an opportunity for Ottawa to attract new international events.

**Actions:**

1. Position Ottawa as a ‘must do’ national association destination, either annually or on a fixed rotation basis.
2. Align meetings and business event development with domestic and regional air connectivity.
3. Help scale business events with measured growth potential.
4. Align international meetings and business events development with target industry clusters identified in the City of Ottawa's new economic development plan.
Develop An Innovative Hosting Experience

While the size, location and quality of a city’s convention centre is key to attracting and hosting business events, meeting planners are increasingly looking for “out-of-the-box” opportunities to host off-site events in their site selection process. Ottawa offers a variety of public institutions and venues within walking distance of the convention centre that could host innovative off-site events.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Identify opportunities to develop new venues for offsite events in character neighbourhoods within walking distance of convention facilities.
2. Expand partnerships with museums, university campuses and remarkable venues to be adapted for corporate offsites.
3. Collaborate with Ottawa Tourism as part of the development process of key infrastructure projects.
4. Advocate with partners about event policies to expand types of activations on public lands and in public buildings.
1.4

Develop New & Unique Outdoor Gathering Spaces

Outdoor events and gatherings not only resonate with visitors from outside the city, but can also be a key driver of visitation by residents from the surrounding area. However, parks and public spaces are typically not designed with the infrastructure and utilities required to host events and gatherings. Planning for and investing in the infrastructure and utilities required to facilitate the programming of these spaces will not only support the expansion and growth of current festivals and events, but the creation of additional programming and activities in the future.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Identify potential outdoor gathering spaces that can be used as four-season venues.
2. Identify underused sites, with supporting infrastructure, to complement convention facilities, other meeting venues, and major hotels.
3. Advocate as part of new developments and revitalization plans for design and infrastructure standards that include relevant programming infrastructure in order to accommodate future event operations.
4. Continue to streamline application processes for access and street programming, especially downtown where space is relatively limited.
While the pandemic has paused or restricted the offering of major events and festivals over the past two years, these will continue to be an important driver of visitation to Ottawa in the future. They also help support and develop Ottawa’s identity as a gathering place for Canadians and visitors from around the world.

While Ottawa traditionally offers numerous festivals and events throughout the year, there is an opportunity to expand both the length and breadth of some events in terms of their geographic footprint in the city in order to enhance their economic impact and participation by local residents.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Expand and extend existing events across the city to bring more vibrancy and celebration.
2. Increase the event length of marquee events in order to maximize and extend their programming, exposure and local impact.
3. Connect overlapping celebrations and festivals together to increase visibility citywide.
4. Connect events to Ottawa’s key landmarks and character neighbourhoods.
5. Emphasize pageantry and promotion of events throughout the city and coordinate the promotion with independent organizations and venues.
6. Support major festivals to increase capacities and community impact.
7. Implement Ottawa Tourism’s Festival Strategy to support the events industry, and focus new initiatives around off-season programming.
We’re working not only to bring the past to life, but to bring it to now. Celebrating and showcasing Indigenous art and experiences in a more interactive way that can be touched and felt; French Canadian heritage becomes an experience for all the senses.

Ottawa is a must-visit destination for Canadians to learn about the history of the country and better understand their heritage. Such a journey is offered throughout the number of National Museums of Canada in the city, but further cohesion and promotion are needed to entice more Canadians to visit Ottawa on a more frequent basis to enjoy unique arts and culture.

At the same time, Canadian culture and heritage is about much more than what can be housed within the walls of our museums. It lies within the architecture of our built environment, our city’s artists, creators and makers, and the music and stories performed throughout the city.
Create A Cultural Corridor & Promote Ottawa “Beyond The Seat Of Government”

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), cultural tourism among affluent international travellers has been rapidly on the rise and was forecast (pre-COVID) to increase by 15% over the next few years. These travellers often seek attractions and products that enable them to experience historic, culinary, and cultural features of destinations; whether within the four walls of a museum/institution or across the fabric of the city.

While Ottawa is indeed the hub for major national cultural museums, including the National Gallery and the Canadian Museum of History, there is untapped potential in fostering increased cultural tourism in Ottawa beyond monuments and Parliament Hill through building closer partnerships with local cultural groups, Indigenous communities, and community organizations. By diversifying partners and cultural tourism products, Ottawa may offer new entry points to cultural tourism for new audiences with different values and different ways of engaging with culture during travel.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Create a cultural tourism strategic plan.
2. Develop and enhance cultural tourism product offerings.
3. Enhance visibility and quality of market-ready cultural tourism products.
4. Connect cultural assets within the cultural corridor in partnership with relevant stakeholders and government entities.
5. Connect relevant stakeholders who could package different types of experiences together.
Showcase Our Heritage, Architecture & Landmarks

A key feature of Ottawa’s cultural tourism landscape is the city’s historic architecture and urban fabric, which date back to the 1800s and features a diverse range of Gothic Revival, Beaux-Arts, Modernist, and Post-Modernist styles. Architecture as a motivation for travel and tourism, or “architourism”, will likely continue to offer Ottawa opportunities to extend visitor dwell time, particularly amongst niche affluent segments, if enriched as a product through marketing, capital investments, and strong preservationist programs. In addition, the careful preservation and promotion of historic architecture can help generate iconic images that may be employed to differentiate Ottawa from other Canadian city destinations and position the destination favourably in the minds of potential visitors.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Promote and celebrate heritage preservation programs and projects across the city.
2. Develop an inventory of significant heritage buildings and places.
3. Highlight, promote, and improve access to key architectural landmarks.
4. Identify opportunities to support and expand sightseeing tours.
2.3

Make Music Part Of Ottawa’s Brand

As the music industry and the concert and event promotion sectors continue to rebound following the pandemic, it is important that the tourism industry help support its return and growth to build upon the overall brand of Ottawa. In recent decades, music as an experience and as a travel motivator has grown rapidly in popularity, and as consumers emerge from the pandemic, many will regain comfort with engaging in in-person entertainment and music events/concerts/festivals can serve as a great entry point to a new destination.

It is important to note that music fans and concert-goers are likely to travel from farther afield (often even internationally, depending on popularity of performers/acts) and are therefore more likely to invest more money both inside and outside music/performance venues. In particular, millennials make up a key segment with 40% of U.S. 20-29 year olds saying they are interested in attending a music festival outside of their own country, according to a 2018 survey by travel agency, eDreams.

Beyond big and popular music events like Coachella and Lollapalooza, popular music cities such as Nashville, Austin, and New Orleans have demonstrated that fostering a year-round thriving music scene through weekly/monthly concerts and other artistic and cultural events has even greater impact on the city brand and on annual spending on lodging, dining, and the arts.

**ACTIONS:**

2. Elevate the visibility and integration of the local music industry within the broader destination context.
3. Identify areas where music can be included within existing product clusters and niches.
4. Use the local music scene as a go-to resource for programming.
5. Celebrate Ottawa’s diverse music culture, artists, and genres.
In the light of awareness and in the spirit of true Reconciliation, Ottawa is committed to connecting Indigenous communities, both locally and nationally, and their history to Canadians and the world.

The need for diversity and inclusion is key to building a more sustainable, equitable and representative society that the tourism industry must embrace for the future. In the spirit of true Reconciliation, Canadian tourism organizations have a renewed sense of commitment to take actions that are meaningful to Indigenous communities, their tourism businesses and the visitors eager to connect with them.

As a result, Indigenous experiences are of growing interest to Canadian and international travellers, which helps create sustainable employment for Indigenous communities while enriching travellers’ experiences through the sharing of culture, history and tradition. Research conducted by the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) and Destination Canada shows that one in three Canadians are interested in Indigenous experiences and that historically, international visitors have an even higher level of interest (37%). With domestic travel on the rise, there’s an opportunity to build stronger connections with Indigenous Peoples, their communities and cultures through Indigenous tourism experiences in Ottawa.
Position Ottawa As A National Centre For Indigenous Art & Culture

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Canada committed to in 2016, says Indigenous Peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions. A year before, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission made specific calls to action in order to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation. In the spirit of true Reconciliation, advocacy should be done around the creation of a new Indigenous-led National Centre for Indigenous Art & Culture that offers a mix of exhibition and event spaces to celebrate the past, present, and future of Canada’s Indigenous Peoples.

ACTIONS:

1. Engage with national organizations to explore the opportunity to celebrate all Indigenous Peoples in Ottawa.
2. Develop a common vision for a National Indigenous Art & Culture Centre in Ottawa.
3. Support the conceptualization and development of national-scope initiatives that foster understanding and learning relating to Truth and Reconciliation, as led by Indigenous proponents.
Establish A Coordination Role With Algonquin & Urban Indigenous Partners In The Development Of Indigenous Tourism In Ottawa

Recognizing the value of Indigenous tourism as an opportunity to create memorable experiences for visitors, Indigenous tourism development efforts need to be scaled up, with a focus on growing and leveraging Ottawa’s Indigenous tourism assets to position Ottawa as a destination of choice for Indigenous tourism on both national and international scales.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Lead the development of an Indigenous tourism plan in partnership with Algonquin and urban Indigenous partners organizations.
2. Work in partnership with Indigenous tourism associations to develop opportunities in Ottawa.
4. Support the celebration of Indigenous history and culture in Ottawa.
Support The Development Of Indigenous Tourism Experiences & Activities

Indigenous tourism experiences will be elevated by stimulating visitor awareness and understanding of the intrinsic spirituality and authenticity of Indigenous culture as we celebrate the rich stories of the Algonquin who lived in these territories since time immemorial, and other First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who call this region home.

We will seek to create an enticing calendar of Indigenous tourism experiences and events that encourages year-round visitation, including winter and shoulder months, highlighting budding Indigenous entrepreneurs and local Indigenous experiences.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Advocate at all levels of government to ensure that the Indigenous tourism industry is well supported in Ottawa.
2. Prioritize Indigenous tourism development to support Indigenous tourism experiences.
3. Collaborate with educational institutions to deliver Indigenous tourism and culinary programs.
4. Promote Indigenous tourism businesses and the positive community and cultural impacts.
5. Leverage marketing resources with provincial and territorial organizations to raise awareness of Ottawa’s Indigenous tourism businesses and experiences.
6. Promote authentic Indigenous tourism that showcases the unique and immersive experiences offered in Ottawa.
Ottawa gives Canadians’ love of outdoor activity a chance to shine all year round by providing opportunities for passive and active movement and outdoor enjoyment in order to appeal to visitors, locals and groups of every level of fitness and ability. Outdoor activities are an increasingly significant driver of tourism demand. With more outdoor activities and experiences available in Ottawa than any other urban destination in Canada, they are also a major competitive advantage for Ottawa compared to other destinations and are currently an under-promoted aspect of the Ottawa visitor experience.

Both the visitor and community surveys suggest that access to nature serves as a significant driver of visitor demand and is a key quality of life asset for residents. Maintaining, enhancing and increasing the accessibility of outdoor activities year-round is an important consideration to create, develop and enhance outdoor recreation for the benefit of both Ottawa visitors and residents.
Position Ottawa As Canada’s Most Active City

Ottawa is an active city. In fact, Ottawa has the third highest level of participation in outdoor activities of any city in Canada and the highest of any city in Central or Eastern Canada, with 78% of Ottawa residents reporting that they participate in outdoor activities close to home according to Statistics Canada. With the appreciation of nature and participation in outdoor activities rising as a result of the pandemic, Ottawa has an opportunity to leverage its year-round access to, and participation in, outdoor activities to attract more active adventurers to the city.

ACTIONS:

1. Integrate the great outdoors as part of Ottawa’s positioning.
2. Develop a year-round inventory of outdoor events to promote the outdoors and to engage with key audiences.
3. Develop a campaign around Ottawa’s urban adventure lifestyle and experiences.
Develop & Enhance Unique Outdoor Experiences In Ottawa

While outdoor activities such as skating on the Rideau Canal are widely known and recognized as “signature” Canadian experiences, most others are not. Identifying and packaging other unique outdoor activities will help foster and establish Ottawa’s identity and reputation as a leading destination for outdoor recreation. At the same time, developing more events centred around outdoor activities such as running, skating, biking and water sports, can act as a driver of visitation in shoulder seasons and low-demand periods.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Conduct an outdoor experience audit in the area with the goal of determining activities, organizational and community-wide opportunities, as well as gaps that may limit growth.
2. Explore, consider, develop and launch new outdoor activities, experiences, events and festivals that increase the opportunities for residents and visitors to connect with the natural environment.
3. Develop flexible infrastructure and facilities to deliver a year-round experience.
4. Support the ecosystem of outdoor activity operators and the commercialization of outdoor experiences.
4.3

Build A Destination Activity Centre

While many outdoor activities are free and easy to access for local residents, barriers to participation in terms of awareness and access to equipment for visitors is much higher. Most aspects of the travel journey from booking flights to hotels to restaurants are easily accessed and booked via digital platforms, but the booking of tours and activities is not. To enhance awareness and access to tours and activities for visitors, Ottawa should plan and build a destination activity centre—either physically, digitally, or both—that allows visitors to research and book these tours and activities.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Assess the feasibility of a centralized activity booking platform to centralize all outdoor activities available in the area.
2. Develop a digital hub to book outdoor activities.
Develop A Shared Vision & Development Plan For The Waterways

Stakeholders have suggested that additional planning, development, activation and access to the riverfront and canal system could deliver additional resident and visitor activities, enhance the quality of life and have an important economic impact. Both the Zibi and LeBreton Flats projects are initial opportunities to enhance waterfront experiences and introduce new types of attractions in Ottawa. Further investments could transform the river system into a new destination for outdoor water activities.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Improve and advocate for better visitor access to the shorelines, riverbanks, canal and river systems from adjacent neighbourhoods.
2. Advocate for more flexibility by federal oversight agencies to permit increased access and programming along the water’s edge.
3. Include waterways as part of the city’s event strategy to bring residents and visitors in contact with the water and enhance resident perception of the waterfront.
4. Explore opportunities to develop new experiences and transportation options along the waterways.
Embrace Winter

While visitors to most Canadian cities only participate in outdoor activities in the summer or fall, Ottawa is a place to play outside year-round. Skating on the Rideau Canal is the most obvious example, but both alpine and cross-country skiing are readily accessible.

Ottawa’s Winterlude festival demonstrates how the city not only embraces winter, but celebrates it. Ottawa should invest in the development and expansion of Winterlude activities beyond the weekends in order to further develop this event. There is also an opportunity to expand its reach geographically with programming in more neighbourhoods.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Diversify winter activities to program the city winter round.
2. Invest in climate resilient opportunities and solutions to sustain winter programming and activities.
3. Expand winter programming across the city in character neighbourhoods.
Make The Trails & Pathways More Accessible To Visitors

The Capital Pathway is a network of over 220 km of off-road multi-use pathways. Currently this complex network is used mostly by residents. A smaller, curated and programmed network that can be easily accessed in close proximity to key clusters of accommodations and transportation would help make the network a more identifiable part of the visitor experience.

ACTIONS:

1. Connect the visitor experience to the trail network through trail maps, visitor guides, and equipment rentals.
2. Activate the Capital Pathway Strategic Plan through experiences and events.
3. Connect outdoor activities and experiences to key nodes via multi-modal transportation options.
4. Develop and promote materials to educate visitors on how to responsibly experience and access the Rideau Canal and the river system.
5. Ensure Capital Pathways are included in the destination-wide wayfinding initiative to ensure access to existing pathways for visitors as well as residents.
Ottawa has ambitions to attract some of the country’s best athletes and grow the city’s reputation in national and international competitions by becoming a training centre for certain elite sporting activity. This central sporting hub can also serve to provide the resources for residents to reach their personal bests as well.

Spectator sports might not be as important as other drivers to visitors and residents, but sports events and competitions play an increasingly important role for tourism, as sports tourism is a significant and growing market for destinations around the world. Similar to national conferences, Ottawa has the status to host national competitions especially if supported by strategic investments to respond to the latest trends. With more infrastructure investment and new facilities, sports tourism could become an important component of the leisure tourism business in the future, especially with key partners such as the House of Sport, the Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group and local universities and colleges.
Position Ottawa As The Centre For Canadian Sports

The development of competitive sport is one of the broad objectives of Canada’s sports policy. When it comes to tourism, sports are a significant driver of visitation. In 2020, an analysis by Sports Tourism Canada found that sports tourism generated more than $7.4 billion of visitor spending in Canada in 2019, with Ontario capturing the largest share at $2.45 billion.

There are currently 64 National Sports Organizations in the country that are funded by Sport Canada—33 of which are located in the Ottawa area. While Ottawa is home to more sports organizations than any other city in the country, it only ranked 8th when it comes to hosting national championships according to the 2019 Global Sport Impact Canada report produced by the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance.

As the nation’s capital, Ottawa has an opportunity to leverage relationships with national sports organizations to develop itself as the national centre for Canadian sports in order to attract and host more sports events, while also increasing participation in many of these sports by local residents. With more infrastructure investment and new facilities, sports tourism could become an important component of Ottawa’s leisure tourism business in the future, especially with key partners such as the House of Sport at the RA Centre, the Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group and local universities and colleges.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Work with the House of Sport to strengthen Ottawa’s positioning as the centre for Canadian sports.
2. Develop a partnership framework to facilitate the bid process for sporting events, and coordinate initiatives between different organizations to attract national-level events.
3. Support the development of amateur sports leagues in Ottawa.
Support The Development Of A New Arena/Events Centre For Sports, Entertainment, Cultural & Recreational Purposes At LeBreton

Facilities such as an arena and/or event centre can be a strong catalyst for visitation to a city centre by residents and visitors alike. As we’ve seen with the successful revitalization of Lansdowne, these facilities can also act as a catalyst for the creation of a vibrant mixed-use entertainment district. Developing a new arena and event centre in LeBreton Flats will not only provide a venue for sporting events, but create a new space for the hosting of concerts, performances and other events that Ottawa is currently not able to host. This will create a significant new driver of visitation to the city centre throughout the year that will support both existing retail, restaurants and hotels in downtown Ottawa as well as new ones planned as part of the nearby Zibi development.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Advocate for the development of a new arena/event centre as part of the LeBreton Flats redevelopment, integrated and connected to downtown and surrounding neighbourhoods.
2. Support the development of all-season outdoor amenities and a well-programmed network of open spaces as part of the LeBreton Flats redevelopment plan.
Develop & Enhance Facility Standards To Host National & International Sports Competitions

While sports tourism is a driver of significant visitation and expenditure in Canada, facilities in Ottawa are either lacking or no longer meet international standards to host competitions for many of the sports of the national sports organizations that reside in Ottawa. For example, there are no facilities in Ottawa that meet the standards required to hold international swimming or diving competitions. In 2021, the City of Ottawa began the process to address this by seeking expressions of interest from parties to collaborate in the development of a new aquatic sports complex.

In order to position and develop Ottawa as a centre for sports, it will be necessary to upgrade and develop facilities such as these that meet international standards. At the same time, these facilities can be important contributors to the development of Canadian athletes while also increasing the availability of recreational facilities for local residents.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Consult with sports partners to align new municipal, private, and institutional facility improvements with market needs and growth opportunities in sports.
2. Prioritize investment based on the assessment of current destination capacity in terms of sports standards and spectator capacity.
3. Support long-term investment in new facilities with a strategic perspective to allow for more flexibility and expand capabilities for spectators based on growth potential.
4. Support the development of a new multi-sports complex, and position the facility as a host for national and international competitions.
5. Support the next phase of redevelopment of Lansdowne (Lansdowne 2.0) to further enhance and expand the precinct's hosting capabilities.
6. Collaborate with development partners to advise on hospitality capacity and demand.
7. Collaborate with local post-secondary institutions to co-develop new sports facilities.
Celebrate Sports In The Community

According to the Centre for Canadian Ethics in Sport, participation in community sport “serves as a generator of social capital, creating benefits across a broad spectrum of societal goals including child and youth development, crime prevention, economic development, environmental sustainability and social inclusion for all Canadians.”

Developing and celebrating sports is not only good for business, but has far reaching benefits for the local community as well. Ottawa can celebrate sports in the community by supporting and developing additional sports-oriented programming and events that attract participation by the local community and visitors alike.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Explore the development of water sports events along waterways.
2. Expand winter activation and facilities to host sporting activities during the winter.
3. Market existing events as potential spectator sports opportunities for locals and visitors to encourage a more participatory approach to sports.
Ottawa is committed to making the different and diverse neighbourhoods of the city part of the visitor experience. Events and festivals in neighbourhoods on a more consistent basis can help build visitation and economic benefit to different parts of the city and encourage repeat visitation.

Ottawa is more than downtown, and surrounding character neighbourhoods represent an opportunity for Ottawa to be more authentic and drive visitors away from some of the clichés of the Ottawa experience. Such an ambition requires communities and neighbourhoods to play a larger role in developing and marketing their own tourism experiences, in partnership with the City offices and agencies. Locally, the LRT expansion will better connect neighbourhoods together as well as key transportation hubs within the destination. Such a development will create new opportunities and development areas for visitors and residents alike. In addition to major capital projects, the interconnection with Gatineau and surrounding areas is a key consideration to expand product offerings and improve overall access.
Reinforce The ByWard Market As A Key Tourism Anchor For The City

Home to over 600 local brands and vendors, the ByWard Market has built a strong reputation as a premier incubator for local and regional products, entrepreneurs, and artists. With approximately 50,000 visitors per weekend during its peak visitor months, the ByWard Market is also a key tourism anchor and historic landmark that should be further leveraged to attract visitors who are particularly interested in shopping, dining, and cultural experiences. Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ByWard Market is facing growing socio-economic challenges. The redevelopment of the ByWard Market is a catalyst opportunity to further invest in the area and improve both the visitor experience and the quality of life.

In 2020, a public realm plan was established by the City of Ottawa for the ByWard Market, which outlined conceptual designs and capital investment projects that would redesign ByWard Market’s public spaces for pedestrians to safely and comfortably traverse the area, for businesses to better market and sell products/services, and for local communities to engage in learning, people watching, dining and performance arts. As the ongoing public realm planning efforts advance, the neighbourhood will need to simultaneously establish a public realm maintenance and governance model that will ensure capital improvements remain well-managed and continuously programmed, with quality events and programs year-round to keep audiences and consumers engaged.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Implement the ByWard Market Public Realm Plan.
2. Designate and support the ByWard Market as a special experience improvement district.
3. Collaborate with partners to support and celebrate the ByWard Market 200th anniversary.
Develop Catalyst Attractions & Signature Destinations

One of the best things about travelling is wandering around a destination and experiencing unique attractions and participating in authentic cultural activities. While Parliament Hill, the ByWard Market, and the national museums are incredibly important attractions to the destination, discerning international travellers are often looking for experiences that stand out in the highly competitive tourism marketplace and that enable them to engage in a specific activity that taps into their personal passions. This trend or behaviour is increasingly known as ‘experience tourism’.

In order to build on Ottawa’s performance in the category of ‘Attractions’, it is important to not only ensure the city offers a diverse set of places/attractions to visit, but also things to do upon arrival to extend visitor dwell time—whether attending a concert at a rooftop venue with views of the city, participating in a culinary or wine tasting lesson, ziplining over the Ottawa River, or celebrating the Summer Solstice with Indigenous communities.

To grow experience tourism, Ottawa will need to build on the City’s preceding efforts to create a nightlife strategy (ongoing), music strategy (2018), and support the development of catalyst attractions and signature experiences that help visitors and even local residents connect with the destination on a deeper emotional and personal level.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Enhance Ottawa’s neighbourhood product offering by supporting the development of catalyst attractions and unique activities.
2. Support the City’s Nightlife Economy Strategy.
3. Advocate for the development of programming infrastructure as part of public redevelopment projects.
Support Programming In Character Neighbourhoods

Ottawa, like many other urban tourism destinations, offers visitors a breadth of experiences across its unique character neighbourhoods. One of the key features of a visitor’s experience in such neighbourhoods is the ability to immerse in local culture through live activities, events, and celebrations. Visitor participation in a well-designed and managed event, festival, or program can often leave a long-lasting impression and create memorable and shareable moments inducing new visitors and recurring trips.

While the development of neighbourhood tourism creates an opportunity to disperse out-of-market visitors during peak seasons to undiscovered attractions/places across the city—building equity beyond just the city centre—it may also influence growth in local travellers and explorers. Through COVID-19, many consumers were forced to re-examine the value of local communities and learned to shop small and explore local. By building upon existing programs and events in each character neighbourhood, new opportunities may be created to attract and retain local and regional visitors who are increasingly looking for new reasons to experience and support their own city.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Support year-round neighbourhood events and festivals.
2. Assist BIAs and incorporated business associations with programming opportunities in character neighbourhoods.
3. Leverage and expand local neighbourhood events to reach new audiences, including visitors.
Ottawa is surrounded by land and farmers growing a new crop of ideas about community, nourishment and feeding the future. This contemporary rurality is part of the Ottawa experience, increasingly attached to wellbeing, and appealing to visitors of all kinds.

Just as the pandemic increased interest and participation in outdoor activities, it has also heightened travellers’ interest and participation in culinary and agritourism. The Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC) defines culinary tourism as “any tourism experience where a person interacts with food and drink that reflects the local cuisine, heritage, or cultures of a place.” Globally, the culinary tourism market is expected to grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate of around 16.3% during 2022-2028.

The City of Ottawa is unique among Canadian cities with close to 80% of the land in the city designated as rural area—more than any other city in Canada. About 40% of this rural area is farmland with more than 300,000 acres farmed by 1,200 producers of a variety of agricultural products. These producers represent a unique opportunity for Ottawa to not only offer exceptional farm-to-table cuisine in the restaurants within its urban area, but to bring the table, and its visitors, to the farm with the development of more agri-tourism routes and experiences.

Terroir: the conditions in which a food is grown or produced and that give the food its unique characteristics
7.1 Develop & Position Ottawa As A Leading Culinary Destination In Ontario

As competition between destinations increases, unique local and regional cultural heritage has become increasingly important to attract visitors. Culinary tourism contributes to promoting and branding destinations, maintaining and preserving local traditions and diversities, and harnessing and rewarding authenticity. Ottawa is already positioned as the destination where visitors can experience and connect with the essence of Canada. The city’s culinary heritage and the people tell the story of Canadian values. The Canadian Agriculture and Food Museum, as the world’s only working farm in the heart of a capital city, along with popular markets for visitors and locals alike such as the ByWard Market and Lansdowne Farmer’s Market, are a testimony to Ottawa’s rich culinary heritage. The development of a concerted strategy around culinary tourism is a clear opportunity to support and promote Ottawa’s assets both in urban and rural areas.

With dining experiences and access to nature as the most important activities for visitors when choosing a city to visit on vacation, Ottawa has a unique opportunity to develop and promote the region and its environs as a premier, year-round culinary tourism destination, with diverse offerings of local foods and experiences for visitors and locals. Such a position will ensure culinary tourism is a meaningful and sustainable contributor to local economies by advancing, promoting and enabling the actors, businesses and social enterprises involved in the local food economy.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Develop a culinary tourism strategy.
2. Build a stronger value proposition for culinary tourism in Ottawa.
3. Identify types of partners associated with successful product mixes supporting culinary tourism in urban and rural destinations.
4. Increase awareness of Ottawa’s agritourism destinations and culinary experiences amongst consumers.
5. Nurture the development of a local food culture that brings the community together through a celebration of local, seasonal and culturally diverse food.
6. Build a strong culture of collaboration and innovation and develop connections between the agri-food, culinary and tourism sectors through the establishment of an industry-driven food industry collective.
Ottawa’s culinary scene is about as diverse as Canada itself, featuring authentic experiences from Canadian cuisine and ethnic foods to historic markets and a network of farms. Such diversity has inspired Ottawa chefs, makers, and farmers to create expected and unexpected culinary experiences. Based on Ottawa’s geography, communities have the opportunity to grow culinary tourism by leveraging the history, heritage, and culture behind the experiences. The development potential is clear considering that the Ottawa region is home to more farms than Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, and Calgary combined.

According to the community, unique dining and culinary experiences define Ottawa as a place to live, and the quality of these experiences are highly regarded. Culinary tourism adds value to the visitor experience by connecting producers and chefs, featuring the culinary talent of the city, and creating new and memorable experiences that enable the visitor to see, touch, smell, hear, and taste Ottawa. Ottawa offers a variety of experiences that could be further developed and endorsed to satisfy growing visitor demand and public institutions and venues within walking distance of the convention centre could host innovative off-site events.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Advocate for and encourage culinary entrepreneurship in Ottawa.
2. Develop market-ready regional culinary tourism products and partnerships.
3. Support different cultural groups to celebrate and feature their food traditions through an array of community cultural events throughout the year.
Over the past decade, consumers have transitioned to seeking unique cultural experiences, where visitors and locals alike immerse themselves in the cuisine and lifestyle of a culture. Media coverage of local cuisine and culinary events has become a critical factor for visitors when choosing their next destination, particularly for cities. Culinary events and food festivals are prevalent for those passionate about food experiences globally, and were identified by industry stakeholders as an opportunity to reach new audiences.

Global culinary events are a powerful tool that have the ability to promote Ottawa and connect visitors to the city’s culture. Ottawa is in a position to attract and support the development of a series of global culinary events to showcase the very best of Ottawa’s local culinary talent and tastes of place while supporting the sustainable recovery and growth of the local culinary tourism industry.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Build a network of stakeholders to support a strong culinary ecosystem.
2. Attract an internationally recognized culinary event series to the city to elevate its profile.
Organize Seasonal Culinary Events

According to the World Food Travel Association, 80% of travellers research food and drink options while traveling to a new destination. Simply put, unique and memorable food and drink experiences are essential components of travel for most people today, both for Canadians and international visitors. The top four food-travel activities are: eating at gourmet restaurants, dining at a famous bar/restaurant, enjoying street food, and enjoying an overall remarkable dining experience.

From emerging Indigenous experiences to traditional farmers’ markets, the exploding Canadian ethnic cuisine, and everything in between, Ottawa has a wonderful, diverse culinary scene. From a multi-day street festival showcasing the best restaurants in Ottawa to gatherings focused on a particular township, the possibilities are abound with local cuisine and culture. Beyond the city centre, seasonal culinary events in Ottawa’s countryside are the perfect getaway for visitors—and locals—to reconnect with nature and dive deeper into the city’s culinary scene. With culinary experiences being equally enjoyed by locals, the development of new culinary events is an opportunity for Ottawans to explore their own backyard and for tourism to contribute to the well-being of the community.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Develop a culinary leadership group to guide and facilitate the organization of events with governing bodies and partner cities.
2. Partner with well-known food and beverage businesses to host a Restaurant Week or similar multi-day, food-focused event.
3. Engage with Indigenous communities to celebrate their culinary heritage.
4. Expand culinary events to rural communities.
In rural regions, tourism constitutes an important lever for economic development and growth. It is often articulated around local gastronomy, farming, culture, and outdoor activities, and provides significant opportunities for rural towns and businesses to diversify income opportunities and participate in local supply chains. Across the country, rural communities are developing partnerships to develop intermodal networks in order to improve regional connections around local destinations.

According to recent surveys, residents acknowledge the value of Ottawa's proximity to nature and access to outdoor experiences, while Canadian visitors also identify similar features as a priority on vacation. From West Carleton-March to Rideau-Goulbourn, Osgoode to Metcalfe, Greely, and Cumberland, Ottawa's countryside is dotted with agritourism and culinary experiences. Over 800 km of bicycle pathways make it easy to tour Ottawa's neighbourhoods and quaint villages by bike, with visitors eager to discover historic farms and immersive culinary experiences. Ottawa's countryside is growing in popularity as consumers seek to reconnect with nature, discover local traditions, and immerse themselves in local culture and cuisine.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Build an inventory of tourism-ready rural destinations and experiences to assess market potential.
2. Develop seasonal tours of local farms to highlight farm-to-table offerings in Ottawa.
3. Connect main events with satellite events in surrounding rural communities.
4. Adapt rural experiences and activations to connect to multiple transportation options from road to cycling.
5. Promote rural businesses, products and experiences as part of the destination.
Ottawa takes a triple bottom line approach to the development and management of tourism, with a commitment to reduce the impact of tourism on our planet, enrich the lives of people who work in our industry and generate a fair profit for our stakeholders, partners and the community we serve.

Sustainable tourism is firmly positioned in Canada’s 2030 Agenda National Strategy. Achieving this agenda at the city level requires a clear implementation framework, adequate financing and investment in technology, infrastructure and human resources. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.” Tourism contributes, directly or indirectly, to the ambitious set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, in particular, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production, and sustainable use of resources.
CONNECTING PROSPERITY, PLANET & PEOPLE

With new national climate change policies, a sustainable approach is integral to the Destination Stewardship Plan. Ottawa has the potential to lead the way in Canada at scale by introducing new sustainable frameworks. As a capital city, Ottawa is a symbol of the transition on the international stage. Already perceived as green and clean by the community, the implementation of sustainable practices will only contribute to initial perceptions of the city.

The triple bottom line basis goes beyond the singular bottom line profit and considers costs and benefits environmentally and socially as well as economically, and seeks to find a suitable balance between the three dimensions to ensure long-term sustainability. To support the planning process, a better understanding of Ottawa’s current carbon footprint is required in order to target, monitor, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions linked to tourism. The Destination Stewardship Plan calls for a framework that measures the sustainability of tourism development by connecting prosperity, planet, and people.

Overall, sustainable tourism development and a successful triple bottom line framework will require the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building.

PROSPERITY
The objective is to ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

PLANET
The objective is to make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

PEOPLE
The objective is to respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
8.1 Grow The Tourism Industry’s Economic Impact

The tourism industry plays an important role as a driving force of economic development for the City of Ottawa and the surrounding region. It contributes directly to local Ottawa employment and the economy in the region, and pre-pandemic, represented 43,570, representing 43,570 direct, indirect, and induced jobs and more than $3 billion in total direct economic output. Because of its interdependence with other sectors of the economy, it is difficult to measure the total impact of tourism on attracting talent, companies, and investment. While the industry’s contribution to the economy is already recognized by more than 3-in-4 residents, a consistent and concerted measurement framework to track both direct and indirect impact is key to further realize the industry’s value to the city’s economy and the vibrancy of downtown amongst all stakeholders.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Measure and communicate the economic impact of the industry on Ottawa’s economy.
2. Measure the economic impact of events through the Event Impact Calculator to support existing and new programs.
3. Acknowledge and communicate the role of tourism in supporting downtown revitalization and renewal.
Tourism and economic development support Ottawa’s vibrant, resilient economy, economic diversity and employment. Both support Ottawa’s global reputation, encourage businesses to invest and operate in the region, and support entrepreneurship, innovation and placemaking. Such an impact requires transdisciplinary collaboration between different departments to further support economic development in Ottawa. Already, the “Canada in One City” narrative centralized attraction programs, while the ThinkOttawa program is bringing more conferences and events to the city through strategic partnerships. At the community level, sustainable and concerted tourism development will bring long-term and shared socio-economic benefits.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Grow the influence of tourism as a key contributor to economic development across the city.
2. Align meeting and conference sales efforts with top industry sectors.
3. Leverage the ThinkOttawa program to encourage more academic and industry leaders to advocate for Ottawa as a destination for national and internal meetings and conferences.
4. Collaborate with economic development stakeholders to advance economic priorities, growth, and prosperity.
8.3

Support Ottawa’s Brand Essence, Canada In One City

Since 2017, Ottawa Tourism and the City of Ottawa have been collaborating to define and develop a brand strategy for the city based on Ottawa’s Place DNA™. The unified destination vision for Ottawa “Canada In One City”, supported by the City of Ottawa, the Ottawa Board of Trade, Invest Ottawa, and Ottawa Tourism, will improve the city’s overall reputation and ultimately attract more visitors, residents, talent, and investment. Building off of this momentum, there is an opportunity to further expand these shared programs framed around: we live in a truly Canadian community, we work or invest where talent thrives, and we love to play in “Otta-wow”.

ACTIONS:

1. Engage with public and private partners to expand the reach and the impact of the “Canada In One City” brand essence for tourism, economic development, talent attraction and investment promotion.
Transition Towards A Net Zero Destination

Following the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP26 in 2021, Canada committed to reducing emissions by 40% to 45% from 2005 levels by 2030, as well as achieving net zero by 2050 through the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act. To meet the targets enshrined in the ‘Glasgow Declaration for Climate Action in Tourism’, supported by the UNWTO, all travel and tourism-related emissions will need to be measured and disclosed in the spirit of destination stewardship. For consistency, it is important that methodologies and tools are aligned to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) guidelines on measurement, reporting and verification, and that they are transparent and accessible.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Approve a sustainable transition pledge for the industry.
2. Measure and monitor the destination's carbon footprint by introducing a carbon footprint calculator for the industry.
3. Define a roadmap towards reducing carbon emissions to meet national and provincial goals, and align with the City’s Climate Change Master Plan.
4. Assess carbon offset programs and options for destinations.
Advocate For More Sustainable Practices

Sustainable tourism is the result of a collaborative effort between industry stakeholders to raise awareness and to adhere to new sustainable standards for the industry. Today, many stakeholders in Ottawa require information and guidance in adopting new practices based on minimal knowledge internally. From expanding community representatives on tourism planning and development committees and boards to raising awareness of the necessity of sustainable development within the region, Ottawa is the industry’s North Star to transition towards a cleaner and brighter future.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Create a platform to inform stakeholders about sustainable practices, initiatives, and programs.
2. Integrate tourism in other development agendas, through participating in projects and partnerships outside the tourism industry.
3. Support and encourage the tourism sector to develop sustainable tourism products and seek certification.
4. Introduce and support industry pilot projects.
8.6

Develop A Clean & Circular Economy For The Industry

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation defines the circular economy as “a systems solution framework that tackles global challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution.” Accelerating the transition to a circular economy is recognized as an opportunity for new jobs and environmental sustainability—at a time when the industry is in critical need of both. As the Ottawa economy rebounds from the COVID-19 downturn, the circular economy provides a framework for achieving tourism climate action commitments and nurturing a prosperous and equitable future for residents and businesses. The adoption of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) practices within the industry will play a significant role in accelerating Ottawa’s transition towards sustainability and help to build a diverse and resilient local economy.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Develop an inventory of responsible local partners and suppliers to guide industry purchases and encourage operators to improve their sustainability.
The consistent integration of sustainability in all aspects of communication is particularly important to address the visitor attitude-behaviour gap based on destination priorities and consumption patterns. Consistently integrating sustainability into communications also provides an opportunity to set a destination standard and address the issue actively and consistently with both visitors and locals.

To reinforce Ottawa’s sustainable commitment, it is essential that stakeholders also know what to communicate to different target groups and help them communicate better with their consumers. Such communications will convey Ottawa’s values and empower visitors to act more sustainably through their choices, as well as create an open dialogue which will not only resonate locally but also among the visitors.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Improve communication about the sustainable choices visitors can make and the sustainable experiences they can have.
2. Develop and update the inventory of certified partners and experiences.
3. Educate visitors on how to preserve the natural environment in Ottawa.
While total employment across the Canadian economy has recovered to pre-pandemic levels, tourism employment remains significantly impacted. Uncertainties heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic have driven labour shortages to a critical level. Canada’s tourism industry was experiencing incredible growth pre-pandemic. In 2019 (June), the industry accounted for 826,700 tourism jobs in Ontario compared to 758,200 in 2022 (June), according to TourismHR Canada.

Post-pandemic, as demand for tourism services and products increases and international travellers return, reattracting the displaced workforce is a key priority for the sector. The pathway to the industry’s recovery presents a complex challenge for Ottawa, as well as an opportunity to rethink the future of tourism work for employers and workers. As the composition of the population changes, the needs and demands of travellers will evolve, as will the structure of the sector’s workforce. A strategic approach to skills development is essential to create an attractive, productive and sustainable sector, aligned with government initiatives which support the skills development and training of workers, and provide incentives for employers to hire and retain them.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Study and assess Ottawa’s tourism workforce including needs, requirements, forecast of labour supply and demand, skills, education and training, and career pathways.
2. Support Ottawa Talent Recovery Plan and assist other initiatives in support of the tourism sector as informed by workforce statistics.

**OTTAWA DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP PLAN 60**
Advocate For Talent Wellbeing

Despite the tourism industry’s significant contribution to employment and economic growth, it continues to face decent work challenges, and the impacts of COVID-19 have accelerated and intensified long-standing workforce challenges in the tourism sector. Today, employees look for more than financial compensation and expect other benefits that support work-life balance. It is essential that employee wellbeing is a priority for a rapid recovery of the sector based on inclusive, resilient, and sustainable labour standards.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Advocate to advance labour standards and improve liveability for the tourism industry’s workforce.
2. Develop a campaign to shift industry perception and attract new vocations.
Sustainable tourism has the potential to advance urban infrastructure and universal accessibility, promote regeneration of areas in decay, and preserve cultural and natural heritage—assets on which tourism depends. Today, 3-in-5 residents (61%) believe tourism has a positive impact on community quality of life. With a focus on community involvement and participation and tourist satisfaction, experiences which contribute to both residents’ and tourists’ happiness and wellbeing must be supported, hence leading to better quality of life outcomes.

When unchecked, rapid tourism growth can lead to significant impacts on sensitive cultural, heritage and environmental sites, as well as the day-to-day lives of residents, often resulting in negative perceptions or even resentment towards visitors. A harmonious relationship between residents and visitors is an opportunity to prepare residents to welcome tourism activity within each community.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Create coherence between marketing, targeting potential travellers, travellers’ behaviour and consumption during their visit and sustainable destination development.
2. Ensure facilities developed for visitors also benefit locals.
3. Conduct a regular analysis of the locals’ view on tourism and tourism development.
4. Use marketing as a tool to engage with the community on the importance of tourism for the city and its impact on the economy and local quality of life.
Focus On Accessibility

Accessibility in tourism is a social right, regardless of background, age, gender, or motricity. It provides opportunities for all types of people to take part in tourism activities, and “refers to the adaptation of environments and of tourism products and services so as to enable access, use and enjoyment by all users” according to the UNWTO. At the provincial level, the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario has assembled an Accessible Tourism Package with insights and best practices for making Ontario a more accessible destination for tourists, employees and business owners, in partnership with the Government of Ontario.

Accessibility for all is a key goal for Ottawa in the long-term. Such a focus involves a collaborative process among all stakeholders in tourism to plan for access to information, travel arrangements to the destination, local transportation, accommodation, and more. To ensure that accessible tourism is developed in the long-term, tourism facilities, products, and services will need to go beyond ad hoc services to adopt the principle of universal design. By doing so, Ottawa will attract a wider range of visitors, and encourage a more multigenerational focus, while catering to older demographics—also a larger segment of the Sophisticated Explorers audience group.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Advocate for physical, financial, and social accessibility within the destination.
2. Support the development of an accessibility plan to improve overall access to the destination for all.
3. Support the development and improvement of accessible tourism products, services and activities to ensure every person can participate in experiences.
Steward Equity, Diversity & Inclusion In The Industry

Ottawa is an inclusive and diverse destination that welcomes all visitors with open arms. As such, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is a key component of tourism sustainability. While more than 86% of DMOs (Destination Marketing Organizations) say they are committed to diversity and inclusion, only a small percentage have completely delivered on their pledge, according to a 2022 Skift survey. As Ottawa’s third largest employment sector, a community-driven approach and strategy for EDI in the local tourism industry is needed. By building a culture of equity that promotes inclusion and diversity, the city can further drive innovation, creativity and competitive advantage in the workplace and across the supply chain, while making the tourism sector meaningful to current and future employees—and as result to visitors.

**ACTIONS:**

1. Incorporate diversity, equity and inclusion into strategic planning.
2. Represent the diversity in the community and visitors through all marketing and communication channels.
3. Introduce a diversity and inclusion training program for the industry, and develop an industry inclusion toolkit to inform all stakeholders.
4. Engage proactively with partners in the creation of diversity and inclusion initiatives and goals.
Ottawa Tourism would like to thank all stakeholders, residents and community partners involved in the development of this Destination Stewardship Plan.