



**Growth Standing Committee Meeting
Agenda**

**Tuesday, November 25, 2025, 4:30 p.m.
S.H. Blake Memorial Auditorium**

	Pages
1. Growth Standing Committee in the S.H. Blake Memorial Auditorium (Council Chambers) at 4:30 p.m. Chair: Councillor Giertuga	
2. Land Acknowledgement	
3. Disclosures of Interest	
4. Confirmation of Agenda WITH RESPECT to the Tuesday, November 25, 2025 Growth Standing Committee meeting, we recommend that the agenda as printed, including any additional information and new business, be confirmed.	
5. Minutes of Previous Meetings Minutes of the Growth Standing Committee, held on October 28, 2025, for information.	3 - 9
6. Reports of Administration	
6.1 Smart Growth Action Plan – Engagement Summary Report 377-2025-Growth seeking endorsement of the Growth Standing Committee relative to the Smart Growth Action Plan.	10 - 57

Correspondence received from Karl Skogstad dated November 15, 2025 requesting the opportunity to provide a deputation relative to the Smart Growth Action Plan.

WITH RESPECT to Report 377-2025, we recommend endorsement of the Standing Committee to forward the following recommendations to City Council;

WE RECOMMEND THAT City Council adopt the Smart Growth Action

Plan as presented;

AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

6.2 Vacant Dilapidated Buildings Program Update

58 - 71

Report 346-2025-Growth-Development Services presenting the Vacant & Dilapidated Buildings Program approach to the Growth Standing Committee for review and discussion.

6.3 Property Related Matter

Confidential report 2025CLS.042 (Realty Services) to be distributed separately to all Members of Council only.

Resolution to Recess and Resolve Into Closed Session

THAT we resolve into Closed Session in order to receive information that is relative to confidential report 2025CLS.042 (Realty Services) pursuant to the Municipal Act (Section 239 (2)):

(c) a proposed or pending acquisition or disposition of land by the municipality or local board;

(k) a position, plan, procedure, criteria or instruction to be applied to any negotiations carried on or to be carried on by or on behalf of the municipality or local board.

7. New Business

8. Adjournment



Growth Standing Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 28, 2025, 4:34 p.m.

S.H. Blake Memorial Auditorium

Present: Mayor Ken Boshcoff
Councillor Rajni Agarwal
Councillor Kasey Etreni
Councillor Trevor Giertuga
Councillor Dominic Pasqualino

Officials: Jeff Walters, Deputy City Clerk
John Collin, City Manager
Cynthia Cline, Acting City Solicitor
Keri Greaves, Commissioner - Corporate Services & City
Treasurer
Kerri Marshall, Commissioner - Growth
Cynthia Olsen, Director - Strategy & Engagement
Joel DePeuter, Director – Development Services
Matt Pearson, Senior Advisor – Growth
Devon McCloskey, Manager – Planning Services
Deanna Walker, Manager – Realty Services
Gordon Stover, Committee & Meeting Management System
Coordinator

1. Growth Standing Committee in the S.H. Blake Memorial Auditorium (Council Chambers)

Chair: Councillor Trevor Giertuga

2. Land Acknowledgement

Councillor Dominic Pasqualino provided a land acknowledgement.

3. Disclosures of Interest

4. Confirmation of Agenda

MOVED BY: Councillor Kasey Etreni

SECONDED BY: Mayor Ken Boshcoff

WITH RESPECT to the Tuesday, October 28, 2025 Growth Standing Committee meeting, we recommend that the agenda as printed, including any additional information and new business, be confirmed.

CARRIED

5. Minutes of Previous Meetings

Minutes of the Growth Standing Committee, held on September 23, 2025, for information.

6. Reports of Administration

6.1 Draft Smart Growth Action Plan

Report 333-2025 - Growth, presenting the Draft Smart Growth Action Plan to the Growth Standing Committee for strategic review and discussion.

Correspondence received from Charla Robinson, President - Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce on October 14, 2025 requesting to appear before Standing Committee.

Written deputation received from Denise Atkinson, CEO - Tipi Horse Connects on October 16, 2025 was distributed separately on Tuesday, October 28, 2025, for information.

Charla Robinson appeared before Committee, provided a deputation and responded to questions.

6.2 Request for Municipal Support Resolution – 579 Maureen Street (Versorium Energy Ltd.)

At the September 23, 2025 Growth Standing Committee Meeting, Chris Codd and Jeff Trynchy - Versorium Energy Ltd., and Frederic Lebel and Giorgio Spagarino - Enerflex, provided a deputation and overview of the proposed Versorium's Power

Generation Facility.

Report 317-2025 - Growth - Development Services - Planning Services seeking endorsement from Growth Standing Committee for a Municipal Support Resolution related to a proposed electricity generation facility.

Written deputation received from Margaret Woods MD on October 21, 2025, for information.

Correspondence received from Dr. Paul Berger on October 22, 2025 requesting to appear before Standing Committee.

Correspondence received from Karla Bailey, Synergy North Corporation on October 22, 2025 requesting to appear before Standing Committee.

Written deputation received from Emily Hunter, Environmental Defence Canada on October 21, 2025 was distributed separately on Friday, October 24, 2025, for information.

Correspondence received from Kiera Essex on October 23, 2025 requesting to appear before Standing Committee was distributed separately on Friday, October 24, 2025.

Written deputation received from Paul Filteau on October 26, 2025 was distributed separately on Tuesday, October 28, 2025, for information.

Written deputation received from Ed Shields on October 26, 2025 was distributed separately on Tuesday, October 28, 2025, for information.

Devon McCloskey, Manager - Planning Services and Joel DePeuter, Director - Development Services provided an PowerPoint presentation and responded to questions.

Dr. Paul Berger appeared before Committee, provided a PowerPoint presentation and responded to questions.

Karla Bailey, Vice-President - System Planning - Synergy North Corporation and Rene Gallant, President & CEO - Synergy North Corporation appeared before Committee, provided a deputation and responded to questions.

Kiera Essex appeared before Committee, provided a PowerPoint presentation and responded to questions.

It was consensus of Committee that Rene Gallant, President & CEO - Synergy North Corporation re-appear before Committee to respond to questions.

MOVED BY: Councillor Kasey Etreni
SECONDED BY: Councillor Rajni Agarwal

WITH RESPECT to Report 317-2025, we request endorsement of the Standing Committee to forward the following recommendations to City Council:

WE RECOMMEND THAT City Council pass the prescribed resolution (Exhibit A) to support the proposal from Versorium Energy Ltd. for development, construction, and operation of an electricity generation facility located at 579 Maureen Street;

AND THAT City Council designate the lands for Site Plan Control;

AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

CARRIED

6.3 Call for Proposals Update

Report 330-2025 - Growth - Development Services - Realty Services providing an overview of the development proposals received for the 10 Opportunity Sites as identified by Administration, for information only.

Confidential Memorandum from Mariah Maunula, Property Agent, dated October 28, 2025 was distributed separately to Members of Council, City Manager, City Solicitor and City Treasurer only on Friday, October 24, 2025.

Joel DePeuter, Director - Development Services and Deanna Walker, Manager - Realty Services appeared before Committee, provided a PowerPoint presentation and responded to questions.

7:00 p.m. Resolution

During discussion, the following resolution was passed:

MOVED BY: Councillor Kasey Etrene
SECONDED BY: Councillor Dominic Pasqualino

THAT the hour being 7:00 p.m., we continue with the business at hand.

CARRIED

Resolution to Recess and Resolve into Closed Session

MOVED BY: Councillor Dominic Pasqualino
SECONDED BY: Councillor Rajni Agarwal

THAT we resolve into Closed Session in order to receive information that is relative to Report 330-2025-Growth-Development Services - Realty Services and the associated Confidential Memorandum pursuant to the Municipal Act (Section 239 (2)):

(c) a proposed or pending acquisition or disposition of land by the municipality or local board;

(i) a trade secret or scientific, technical, commercial, financial or labour relations information, supplied in confidence to the municipality or local board, which, if disclosed, could reasonably be expected to prejudice significantly the competitive position or interfere significantly with the contractual or other negotiations of a person, group of persons, or organization;

(k) a position, plan, procedure, criteria or instruction to be applied to any negotiations carried on or to be carried on by or on behalf of the municipality or local board;

AND THAT the Growth Standing Committee – Open Session reconvene following the conclusion of Standing Committee – Closed Session to continue with business at hand.

CARRIED

Growth Standing Committee – Closed Session in the McNaughton Room at 7:13 p.m.

Present: Mayor Ken Boshcoff
Councillor Rajni Agarwal
Councillor Kasey Etrene
Councillor Trevor Giertuga
Councillor Dominic Pasqualino

Officials: Jeff Walters, Deputy City Clerk
John Collin, City Manager
Cynthia Cline, Acting City Solicitor
Kerri Marshall, Commissioner - Growth
Joel DePeuter, Director – Development Services
Deanna Walker, Manager – Realty Services
Mariah Maunula, Property Agent
Gillian Matson, Solicitor II

6.3.1 Growth Standing Committee - Closed Session

Chair: Councillor Trevor Giertuga

6.3.2 Disclosures of Interest

6.3.3 Reports of Municipal Officers

Call for Proposals Update

Confidential Memorandum from Mariah Maunula, Property Agent, dated October 28, 2025 relative to Report 330-2025 – Development & Emergency Services – Realty Services - Call for Proposals Update was distributed separately to Members of Council, City Manager, City Solicitor and City Treasurer on Friday, October 24, 2025.

John Collin, City Manager, Joel DePeuter, Director - Development Services and Deanna Walker, Manager - Realty Services responded to questions relative to the Confidential Memorandum.

At 7:43 p.m. the Closed Session concluded.

Growth Standing Committee – Open Session in the S.H. Blake Memorial Auditorium (Council Chambers) at 7:44 p.m.

Present: Mayor Ken Boshcoff
Councillor Rajni Agarwal
Councillor Kasey Etreni
Councillor Trevor Giertuga
Councillor Dominic Pasqualino

Officials: Jeff Walters, Deputy City Clerk
John Collin, City Manager
Kerri Marshall, Commissioner - Growth
Joel DePeuter, Director – Development Services
Gordon Stover, Committee & Meeting Management System
Coordinator

6.4 Growth Standing Committee – Open Session

Chair: Councillor Trevor Giertuga

The Deputy City Clerk advised that there were no further items.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Growth Standing Committee Report

REPORT NUMBER 377-2025-Growth-		
DATE		
PREPARED	November 14, 2025	FILE
STANDING		
COMMITTEE	November 28, 2025	
MEETING DATE		
SUBJECT		
Presentation of updated Smart Growth Action Plan		

PURPOSE – To seek endorsement of the Growth Standing Committee for the updated Smart Growth Action Plan.

WITH RESPECT to Report 377-2025, we recommend endorsement of the Standing Committee to forward the following recommendations to City Council;

WE RECOMMEND THAT City Council adopt the Smart Growth Action Plan as presented;

AND THAT any necessary by-laws be presented to City Council for ratification.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents an updated version of the draft Smart Growth Action Plan (Plan), outlining the feedback received during the second phase of public engagement on the Plan and suggested changes made in response to that feedback.

Feedback on the Plan was positive overall, with residents expressing enthusiasm for Thunder Bay’s potential for sustainable, inclusive growth and welcoming a stronger focus on collaboration to support it.

The hundreds of residents and stakeholder groups who provided feedback during this second phase of engagement called for more attention to a few themes in the Plan. These include the city’s waterfront, climate change, and community safety.

In addition, residents expressed interest in how the Plan will be implemented and how they can remain engaged in supporting it. Many citizens and community groups

expressed a desire to contribute to achieving the Plan's Actions – along with an expectation of regular public reporting, and clear metrics to track progress and measure success.

The changes to the Plan outlined in this report reflect the efforts of Administration, guided by Task Force Growth, to respond meaningfully to that feedback.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The following table summarizes significant changes to the draft Smart Growth Action Plan since presentation to the Growth Standing Committee on October 28, 2025:

Section	Updated Content
Integrating Environmental Stewardship	• The feature on Integrating Environmental Stewardship into the Plan on page 17 now specifically mentions the City's Climate Adaptation Strategy in addition to the Net Zero Strategy.
Readiness Pillar	• Addition of new Action, "Improved Accuracy of Population Counts"
	• "Building Infrastructure for Growth" Spotlight updated to explicitly mention climate goals as a consideration for infrastructure planning.
Attraction Pillar	• Addition of new Action, "Overall Waterfront Plan"
	• Action A8 updated to address climate risk reduction, including reference to green infrastructure.

A number of minor updates have also been made to address design, grammatical changes and improve clarity.

CONSULTATION

Summary of Public Engagement

A second round of public engagement on the Smart Growth Action Plan began on October 22, 2025, seeking feedback on the draft Plan presented to City Council the previous day. Several hundred residents participated in this process through a variety of engagement opportunities, including:

- Follow-up meetings with four Focus Groups
- Eight targeted stakeholder meetings
- Public survey (55 completed surveys)
- November 3, 2025 Town Hall Meeting
- Public Information Tables at three additional public events

The City's Growth team heard from young professionals, local businesses and business associations, the City's Indigenous Advisory Council, newcomer support staff, social services, law enforcement, and other groups.

The feedback received through this process was reviewed by Task Force Growth, which endorsed the recommended updates to the Plan outlined in this report.

This second round of engagement built on the first phase conducted in spring-summer 2025 that informed initial development of the Plan. Feedback received from members of City Council at the October 21, 2025 Council meeting and October 28, 2025 Growth Standing Committee meeting were also considered.

Feedback Themes

Public feedback on the Plan was generally positive, though residents and stakeholder groups raised some questions and suggested additional emphasis on a number of issues. High level themes of feedback received include:

- **Population Level**

The Growth Standing Committee raised the importance of establishing an accurate estimate of Thunder Bay's population, responding to documented concerns that current Statistics Canada estimates may fall significantly short.

Having an accurate population estimate is important for decision making and can impact levels of funding from other orders of government.

The updated draft Plan includes a new Action ("Improved Accuracy of Population Counts") responding to this feedback.

- **Waterfront Vision**

Respondents expressed the importance of expanding public access to Thunder Bay's waterfront. This included calls to include plans for a waterfront trail in the Plan, to unlock underused sites along the waterfront for public use, and to recognize cultural sites as anchors of waterfront development.

The updated draft Plan includes a new Action ("Overall Waterfront Plan") responding to this feedback.

- **Climate Change**

A desire for clearer articulation of how the Plan responds to climate change was expressed by some residents. This feedback linked climate readiness, infrastructure resilience and asset management, and modern urban standards to the City's investment readiness and long-term financial sustainability.

The updated draft Plan includes some modifications to address this feedback (see table above).

This feedback will be considered in future public communications about the Plan, highlighting the numerous Actions that support climate change mitigation and adaptation, including but not limited to: transforming transit, expanding active transportation, local green-energy generation, green-economy training, encouraging greater density through infill and downtown housing, green development standards, brownfield remediation, a city-wide retrofit program, and the repurposing of underutilized urban lands.

- **Community Safety & Well-Being**

Respondents stated strongly the need to address crime rates, and issues related to substance use in order to achieve Thunder Bay's potential for growth.

In addition to the existing Community Safety and Well-Being Plan and the Thunder Bay Drug Strategy, the Plan includes an Action related to updating the City's Community Safety & Well-Being Plan and a section exploring that work in greater detail, while several Attraction Pillar Actions (A2-A6, A8-A10) target the issues that shape perceptions of crime and disorder.

- **A.I. & Technology**

Thunder Bay's potential ability to play a role in the burgeoning field of Artificial Intelligence was raised. Several Actions under the Talent Pillar position the city for high-value sectors, while the "Artificial Intelligence" Action (R37) signals an openness to innovation in municipal government, developing a framework to strategically adopt A.I. solutions across City operations.

- **Implementation & Accountability**

Respondents wanted to know how the Plan will be funded and implemented, and how they can keep track of that implementation and evaluate its success.

To address this feedback, Administration will create a public dashboard tracking progress on the Plan and its performance indicators. A broader communications plan encouraging ongoing public engagement with the Plan is also being developed for the implementation phase.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

Funding the Smart Growth Action Plan will require a balanced approach that combines municipal commitment with external resources. The precise share of municipal contributions is not yet known, as many actions will be delivered through partnerships or supported by external funding sources, rather than funded directly by the City.

Wherever possible, the City will leverage grants and programs from other orders of government, as well as investments from industry and community partners, to maximize impact and reduce the local burden. Collaboration will be key, sharing costs, aligning resources, and pooling expertise to advance projects that benefit the whole community.

Although every action in this Plan is achievable within the ten-year timeframe, success will depend on working together across sectors to sustain momentum and bring this shared vision to life.

BACKGROUND

The Smart Growth Action Plan was included in the 2025-2027 City Manager's Workplan presented to City Council on February 10, 2025.

An initial presentation on the development of the Smart Growth Action Plan was delivered in a Non-Business Meeting on June 16, 2025.

A draft of the Plan was presented to City Council for information on October 21, 2025, and to the Growth Standing Committee on October 28, 2025.

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

Updated draft Smart Growth Action Plan

REPORT PREPARED BY

Matt Pearson, Senior Advisor for Growth – Growth Department
Ian Kaufman, Policy & Research Analyst – Growth Department

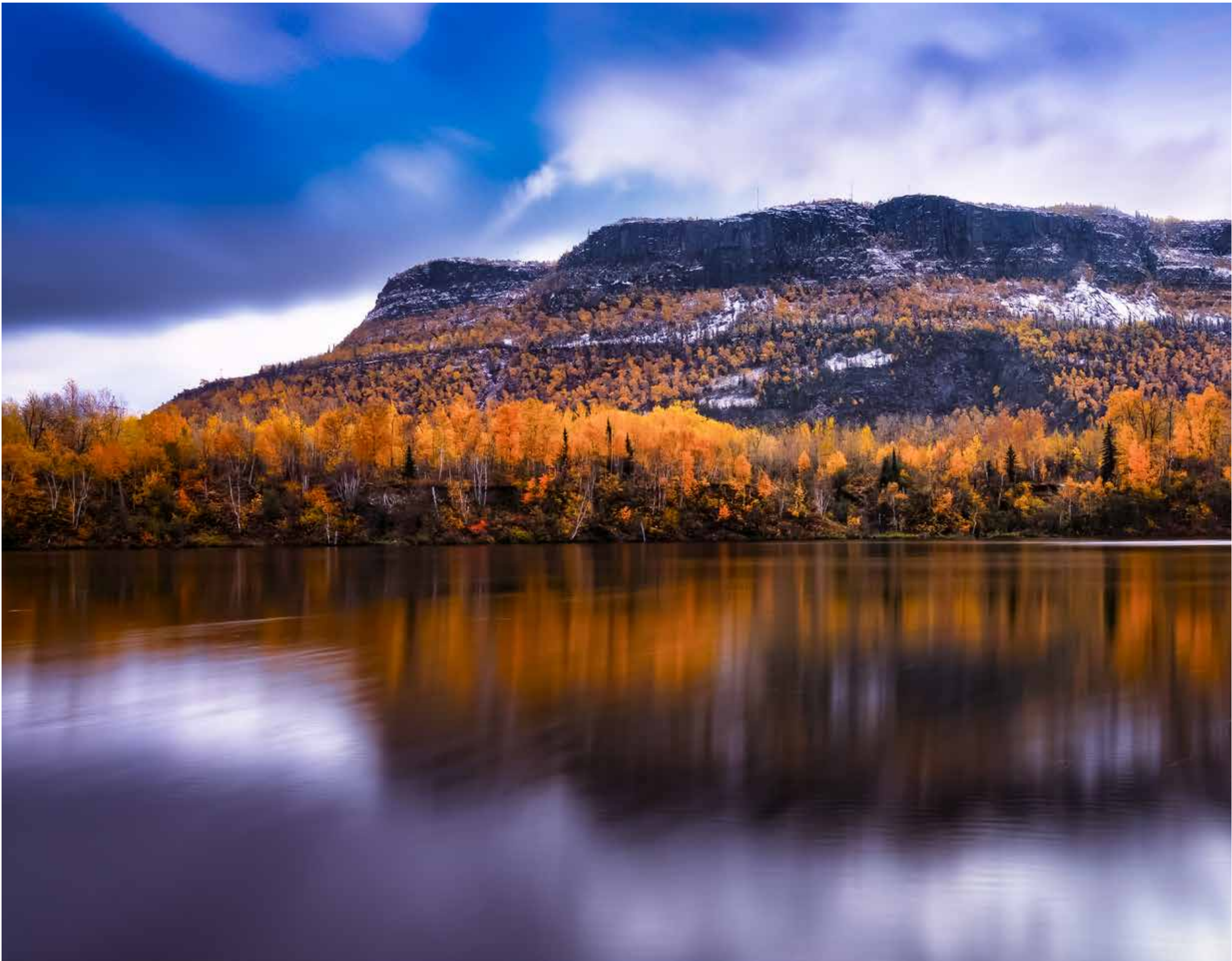
REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY

Kerri Marshall, Commissioner – Growth Department

Date (11/18/2025)

Smart Growth Action Plan

A 10-Year Roadmap for
Sustainable Growth in
Thunder Bay



© Jack Hamlin

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the land on which we have the privilege to live is the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe peoples and traditional territory of Fort William First Nation – signatory to the Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1850. This land, traditionally known as Anemki Wajiw, has been a place of gathering, learning, and exchange for thousands of years and remains sacred to its Indigenous stewards.

We also recognize the contributions of the Métis to this area, and that a diversity of Indigenous people now call this land home as well. As we acknowledge the deep history and ongoing presence of Indigenous communities on this land, we honour their distinct cultures, histories, and connection to the land. We are committed to walking together in the spirit of reconciliation and partnership, and to continual growth - in our understanding, in the strength of relationships, and in our shared responsibility to this land and its peoples.

We acknowledge that meaningful growth begins with honouring the truths of the past and listening, learning and acting in the present for the betterment of the future. By uplifting Indigenous voices and experiences, together we can grow a future rooted in respect, guided by reconciliation, and enriched by the shared strength and prosperity of the land and peoples.

Our actions must reflect our acknowledgement, and our paths forward be guided by the wisdom of those who have long cared for this land.

This plan will only succeed through working closely with Indigenous partners. True growth means building trust, listening with respect, and creating opportunities together so that the benefits are shared by all, grounded in respect for the land and peoples who have always been here.

Photo of the traditional lands known as Anemki Wajiw (Mount McKay)

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*Roundabout under construction
on Water Street.*



Community Voices: What Makes Thunder Bay Great

Planning for growth begins with recognizing what already makes Thunder Bay a place of pride. Through a recent community campaign, residents were invited to share what makes Thunder Bay great – in their own words. Awa Diakhate highlighted that the city’s greatest strength lies in the people who choose to call it home.

“Thunder Bay welcomed us like an old friend; with snowy sidewalks, kind neighbours, and endless skies. As newcomers from Africa, my family and I were searching for more than a new home; we were searching for a fresh start. And we found it here.

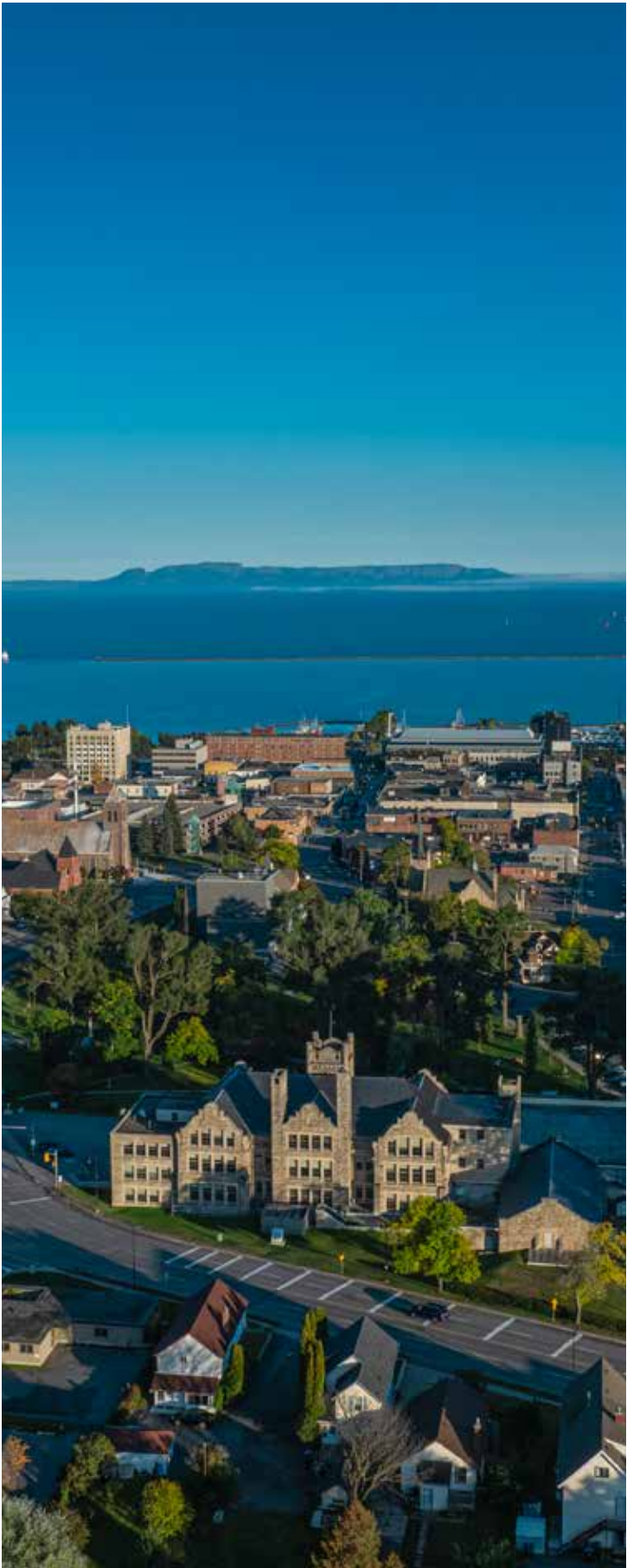
What makes Thunder Bay great isn’t just the nature (although it’s breathtaking), or the space (which feels like freedom), but the people. The small business owners who remember your name. The community centres filled with laughter and inclusion. The festivals that light up the heart of the city, one drumbeat at a time.

I love how this city celebrates diversity while staying rooted in authenticity. It’s a place where a Senegalese mom can create culinary events, start a new business, and dream BIG again. It’s a place where kids can grow with snow in their boots and kindness in their hearts.

To make it even better? Let’s keep opening doors. More support for immigrant entrepreneurs, more creative spaces for young people, and more cross-cultural events to learn from one another.

Thunder Bay is more than a dot on the map. It’s a land of rebirth, strong coffee, and stronger community. And I’m proud to call it home.”

- AWA DIAKHATE,
LOCAL RESIDENT



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Introductory Messages



Message from the Mayor

Thunder Bay’s future is built on collaboration, confidence, and community. The Smart Growth Action Plan is our commitment to grow with purpose and to make certain every resident and every business can share in that success. Our city stands at a defining moment. We are already seeing signs of progress in our economy, our housing supply, and our community life. Together, we can build on this momentum and create a more vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous Thunder Bay for generations to come.

- MAYOR KEN BOSHCOFF



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Learn more about Task Force Growth in Appendix A

Message from Task Force Growth

As leaders from across Thunder Bay’s institutions, businesses and community organizations, we believe in the power of collaboration to shape a stronger, more inclusive future for Thunder Bay.

We are proud to present the Smart Growth Action Plan as a practical, community-driven roadmap that focuses our collective efforts for the greatest impact. Task Force Growth was formed to bring together diverse voices and expertise, and has guided the development of this plan.

The organizations we represent are committed to taking action - through hiring, development, investment, and innovation - because meaningful growth requires leadership across our city.

The Smart Growth Action Plan is about more than numbers - it is about creating a city where everyone can thrive, making Thunder Bay an even better place to live today, and for generations to come.



John Collin
Chair and City Manager,
City of Thunder Bay

As City Manager and the Chair of Task Force Growth, I am honoured to be part of this dedicated group of local leaders. Through robust and thoughtful discussions, I am proud of our unwavering focus on guiding Thunder Bay to grow – for us today, and those who follow tomorrow. This community belongs to all of us – and shaping its future will take our collective effort. Whether you are a resident, business owner, builder or community leader – you have a role to play.



Kerri Marshall
Vice-Chair and Commissioner –
Growth Department, City of
Thunder Bay

It has been a privilege, as one of the Co-Chairs of Task Force Growth, to support the development of this Smart Growth Action Plan. The dedication of the Task Force, the engagement of community members, and the commitment of City Administration have brought this Plan to life, championing responsible development, enhancing community well-being, promoting environmental stewardship, and fostering strong partnerships.



Jamie Taylor
Vice-Chair and CEO –
Thunder Bay Community
Economic Development
Commission (CEDC)

Being one of the Co-Chairs of the Task Force Growth is an incredible opportunity to help shape Thunder Bay’s future. It also brings the CEDC’s focus of economic development to the table along with the many voices of the key stakeholders. The CEDC will do its part by attracting and retaining talent, sparking new investment, and welcoming visitors to experience our community. I look forward to working collaboratively to see our community grow. The future of our city belongs to all of us, and it will take our collective leadership and collaboration to bring it to life.

Let’s grow Thunder Bay – together!

Executive Summary

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the Plan is to chart a clear path for Thunder Bay to grow the local economy, population and attract new investments. Guided by Task Force Growth, this plan responds directly to years of slower growth compared to other cities. This Plan presents a bold and united vision for long-term prosperity, grounded in the belief that growth must be strategic, inclusive, and sustainable.

What is Smart Growth?

An intentional, inclusive, and sustainable approach to development that supports a strong economy, livable communities, efficient land use, and environmental stewardship.

Why growth matters

Growth supports the things the community cares about most:

Strong neighbourhoods

Reliable services

Local businesses

Good jobs

Welcoming spaces

Opportunities for all

...and the revenue to make it reality.

A SMART action is:

S

Specific:

Clearly defined and outcome oriented

M

Measurable:

Progress can be tracked and success evaluated

A

Achievable:

Realistic and attainable with available resources

R

Relevant:

Directly aligns with the Plan's goals and vision

T

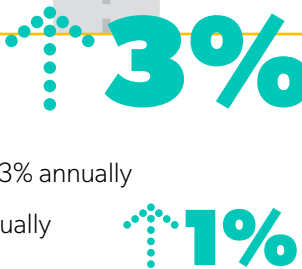
Time-bound:

Clear timeline for delivery

Targets

Grow the property tax base by 3% annually

Grow the population by 1% annually



Pillars

READINESS:

Preparing Thunder Bay to support growth with shovel-ready lands, resilient infrastructure, and clear processes.

ATTRACTION:

Enhancing the city's appeal by fostering active downtowns, welcoming public spaces, and a strong community identity.

TALENT:

Setting the groundwork for a city where skilled people choose to build their careers, graduates find opportunities, and workers are set up to thrive.

SMART GROWTH ACTION PLAN

Vision:

Thunder Bay is a flourishing city where people choose to live, work, and invest with confidence. With a robust economy, dynamic public spaces, and a strong sense of belonging, it is a place where everyone is valued and can thrive.

Mission:

Through collaboration and investment in smart growth, be a healthy and prosperous city.

Delivering Results

The Smart Growth Action Plan will be implemented through collaboration between the City, the CEDC, and community partners. Progress will be measured with clear performance indicators and regular public reporting, promoting accountability and driving lasting outcomes for Thunder Bay.

EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN SHAPING THE CITY'S FUTURE!

See Part 4: Call to Action

Key Considerations



Financial Sustainability



Inclusiveness



Environmental Stewardship



Innovation



Risk Management



“Thunder Bay is a vibrant city that seamlessly blends the tranquility of nature with the dynamism of urban life, making it an exceptional place to live, work, and grow.”

- WINNIE NGUYEN, LOCAL RESIDENT

The Current Growth Efforts section (page 18) highlights the many new initiatives already helping shape the community’s future.

By taking a smart, strategic approach to growth, Thunder Bay can revitalize neighbourhoods, unlock new housing and business development, and renew critical infrastructure. This will enhance quality of life, strengthen the local economy, improve social well-being, and eases the long-term financial burden on residents.

Growth is not without challenges. The CEDC’s Economic Growth Assessment and Strategy (2025) identifies several key issues that influence Thunder Bay’s ability to attract people, jobs, and investment, from aging infrastructure and demographic shifts to limited fiscal capacity and external perceptions. The Smart Growth Action Plan responds to these challenges through focused, achievable actions and key considerations that emphasize long-term thinking, inclusive decision-making, and financial and environmental responsibility.

A summary of the CEDC Economic Growth Assessment is included in Appendix B as a foundational input to the Plan.

Achieving this vision will require the active involvement of residents, businesses, and community partners. Everyone has a role to play in shaping the city’s future, from contributing ideas and initiatives to supporting local efforts and being ambassadors for Thunder Bay. This shared responsibility is further outlined in *Part 4: Call to Action*, which highlights the many ways the community can get involved and help turn this plan into reality.

Part 1: Why Growth, Why Now

The Smart Growth Action Plan presents a bold and united vision for long-term prosperity, grounded in the belief that growth must be strategic, inclusive, and sustainable. It is about building on what makes Thunder Bay great, addressing challenges with purpose, and shaping a future where growth supports a high quality of life for everyone.

A growing city generally refers to a city experiencing significant expansion. It is a place where the population is increasing and the economy is flourishing, often leading to new construction, job opportunities, and increased demand for services and new infrastructure. Growth can be organic, driven by natural population

increase and economic development, or it can be influenced by external factors like immigration and the expansion and relocation of businesses and institutions.

Being resilient and competitive, the city has an opportunity to grow, not just in population, but through investment and economic development. Growth is key to maintaining strong services by expanding the tax base, attracting and keeping skilled workers by creating new opportunities, generating new revenue to reinvest in the community, and supporting long-term affordability for residents. In recent years, growth has been modest – from 2016 to 2021, Thunder Bay’s population increased by just 1.3%, compared to 5.8% across Ontario and

5.2% nationally. A growing population makes a city more attractive for business investment, as it signals a strong workforce, building vibrancy and confidence in investment opportunities.

Over the past decade, Thunder Bay’s property tax base has grown by 7.8%, well below the 31.8% rise in inflation over the same time period. As a result, the City has relied on increasing municipal taxes to keep pace with the rising cost of services. This imbalance has significantly limited the City’s financial capacity to maintain services, infrastructure, and community amenities.

Thunder Bay remains relatively affordable, but this advantage is under pressure. Rising home prices and limited rental options are making it harder, especially for young people, new residents, and older adults, to find suitable housing.

Yet the opportunity is clear: we are seeing early positive signs that growth is happening. With revitalization of both downtown cores underway, new housing construction and renewed interest in larger commercial-industrial investments, Thunder Bay has a strong foundation for growth.



What Smart Growth Means for Thunder Bay

Smart Growth is a forward-looking approach to planning and development that helps communities grow in dynamic, inclusive and sustainable ways. This approach emphasizes efficient land use, environmental stewardship, and creating complete, connected, and liveable neighbourhoods.

Modest, well-managed growth can bring real benefits. It supports municipal services, enables infrastructure renewal, and attracts new investment. Growth also helps by drawing in new residents – new neighbours, new opportunities, and new workers who can enter the workforce as others retire.

Growth is not an end goal, it is a means to support the things the community cares about most. This includes strong neighbourhoods, social services, local businesses, good jobs, a healthy environment, welcoming spaces, and opportunities for all.

Here is what the Smart Growth Action Plan can mean for Thunder Bay:

- **For residents**, this Plan is an investment in a shared future, helping to make Thunder Bay a place where families can succeed and neighbourhoods flourish. It is about creating a community where people feel connected, supported, and at home.
- **For new and prospective residents**, the Plan positions Thunder Bay as a city of opportunity - a place to build a career, start a business, raise a family, or find belonging in a welcoming community.
- **For businesses and industry**, it showcases Thunder Bay's advantages - a strategic location, a growing workforce, and affordable costs - creating the conditions to grow, innovate, and invest with confidence.
- **For community partners**, it invites collaboration - aligning efforts across sectors to help shape a welcoming, inclusive, and forward-looking city.

In short, smart growth helps build a Thunder Bay that works better for everyone - a city where people choose to stay, return, or arrive, because they see a future here.



Indigenous Economic Impact in Thunder Bay

The Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission, in partnership with Fort William First Nation, the Anishnawbe Business Professional Association, and the Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund, is proud to share the Indigenous Economic Impact Analysis for the City of Thunder Bay.

Developed by Indigenous Community Engagement, this report highlights the significant contributions of Indigenous peoples, communities, businesses, and governments to our local economy. The findings provide valuable data to guide business development, employment, education, and training initiatives - while strengthening the path toward economic reconciliation across Northwestern Ontario and beyond.

KEY FINDINGS

INDIGENOUS SPENDING DIRECTLY CONTRIBUTED \$411 MILLION TO THUNDER BAY'S GDP IN 2020. THIS CONTRIBUTION WAS 6.5% OF METROPOLITAN THUNDER BAY'S 2020 GDP.

INDIGENOUS SPENDING CONTRIBUTES \$1.55 BILLION TO THUNDER BAY'S ECONOMY.

EVERY \$1 MILLION IN INDIGENOUS SPENDING RESULTS IN 7 FULL TIME JOBS IN THUNDER BAY.

DIRECT INDIGENOUS SPENDING IN THUNDER BAY CREATED 3,134 FTE JOBS IN 2020.

Read the [full report here](#) (scan the QR code):



A Plan with Purpose

The Smart Growth Action Plan provides a clear framework designed to support growth in Thunder Bay’s population, job opportunities, and tax base over the next 10 years. As a living document, it will be reviewed every two years and adjusted to respond to emerging needs, changing economic conditions, and social pressures.

The Plan is informed by the CEDC’s Economic Development Growth Assessment and Strategy, which has identified Thunder Bay’s key challenges and opportunities. That strategy has projected modest growth in Thunder Bay’s population. The Smart Growth Action Plan aims to improve on those numbers through deliberate, targeted actions that support population growth.

The Smart Growth Action Plan also includes specific actions to strengthen investment attraction and support services, spaces, and opportunities.

The Plan will help to:

- Attract and guide investment where it can have the greatest impact
- Sustain services, attract talent and grow the tax base
- Enhance community safety and well-being
- Provide a clear roadmap to move from vision to action through practical, inclusive, and sustainable growth
- Support Indigenous economic development

“ Here, the daily grind is a distant memory. No soul-crushing 1.5-hour commutes, no more waking up super early praying you don’t get stuck in traffic morning or evening for 3 extra hrs. Instead, I get to enjoy the luxury of time! ”

- KEVIN MACDONALD

Vision & Mission

To help shape a collective and strategic path forward, Task Force Growth informed a vision and mission for the Plan.

Vision: Thunder Bay is a flourishing city where people choose to live, work, and invest with confidence. With a robust economy, dynamic public spaces, and a strong sense of belonging, it is a place where everyone is valued and can thrive.

This means:

- A city that is doing well in many areas including its economy, the environment and social well-being
- A city where people can find affordable housing and high quality of life
- A city with a strong and diverse economy with job opportunities and support for local business
- A city where people feel connected to their community
- A city where all people have the opportunity to succeed

Mission: Through collaboration and investment in smart growth, be a healthy and prosperous city.

This means:

- A city where people and organizations work together to make better decisions and investments
- A city that invests in infrastructure like roads, transit, housing and green spaces
- A city that supports people’s physical and mental well-being through clean air, water, active transportation, and health services

Key Considerations

Five key considerations shaped the development of this Plan, helping to balance short-term opportunity with long-term value. These lenses shape each action and inform an approach that is responsible, inclusive, and future-focused.

- 

Financial Sustainability: Focuses on long-term value, cost efficiency and responsible investment, so Thunder Bay remains affordable and prosperous.
- 

Inclusiveness: Growth must be accessible to all residents and informed by a diverse set of voices. Equity is essential in planning new neighbourhoods, engaging with communities, and supporting local businesses.
- 

Environmental Stewardship: Prioritizes responsible land use and the protection of natural systems to support long-term climate resilience.
- 

Innovation: Embraces new ideas, digital tools, creative policies, and partnerships. Growth benefits from fresh thinking and cross-sector collaboration. This includes exploring emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), which can help improve service delivery, planning, and decision-making.
- 

Risk Management: Highlights the importance of proactive planning, flexibility, thoughtfully assessing risks, and adjusting course when needed. Growth brings uncertainty, but risk can be managed without losing momentum.

Together, these considerations provide the foundation for a balanced and thoughtful approach to smart growth in Thunder Bay.



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Growth Targets

Building on the vision and mission, this Plan identifies two key targets to guide growth over the next decade:

- Grow the property tax base by 3% annually
- Grow the population by 1% annually

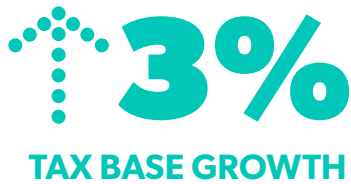
Property tax base growth refers to increases in Thunder Bay’s total property assessment value driven by new developments, redevelopment, and major improvements. Expanding the tax base generates new tax revenue. Achieving a targeted 3% annual increase will help the City keep pace with inflation and rising costs while limiting additional tax burden on existing residents.

To reach this target, Thunder Bay will need to grow its population by approximately 1% each year. These targets are connected; a growing population supports a growing tax base, and vice versa.

Achieving this level of growth will not happen all at once. This Plan is designed to unfold over the next 10 years, focusing on steady and manageable growth. The goal is not to match the growth rates of fast-growing cities, but to achieve steady, sustainable growth that Thunder Bay can support.

Snapshot of Growth

Thunder Bay’s total property tax assessment is just under \$12 billion (as of 2025). To achieve the 3% annual growth target, the City would need approximately \$350 million in new assessment value each year.



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Building a More Balanced Tax Base

Thunder Bay’s tax base is built on a strong residential foundation, with homes making up approximately 84% of total property assessment. While continued residential growth is important, a tax base that is heavily reliant on residential properties places more financial responsibility on residents to fund city services and infrastructure.

Attracting more commercial and industrial investment, in addition to residential growth, is vital to building a more balanced and sustainable revenue mix. These properties typically contribute more in taxes than they require in municipal services, helping fund public services, reduce pressure on residential taxes, and bolster the local economy.

A more diversified tax base will help Thunder Bay weather economic shocks, invest in public services, and maintain long-term affordability for residents.



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Integrating Environmental Stewardship into the Plan

Environmental stewardship is a key consideration of the Plan. By embedding environmental considerations included in the City’s Net Zero Strategy and Climate Adaptation Strategy into land development, housing infrastructure, and service delivery, the Plan promotes efficient resource use, resilient infrastructure, and compact, connected communities. These approaches help reduce environmental impact, strengthen climate resilience and climate change mitigation, supporting long-term community well-being.

Environmental stewardship is integrated in an inclusive way across the Plan – guiding growth decisions so they support both economic opportunity and environmental sustainability. This approach creates the conditions for growth that is sustainable and competitive.



Current Growth Efforts

Thunder Bay has already taken meaningful steps to position itself for long-term growth, and there are positive signs these efforts are beginning to pay off. The City has launched several key initiatives aimed at making it easier to invest, build and do business here, while community partners are launching and expanding numerous projects that set a strong foundation for growth. From new policies and financial tools to redevelopment projects and strategic investments in public lands, these actions build momentum and signal to the community that growth is a key priority.

The following list highlights some of the recent and ongoing work to support and accelerate growth across Thunder Bay:

- **The new One-Stop Development Shop** opened summer of 2025 - making it faster and easier to do business in Thunder Bay.
- The new **North Core Streetscape** stretches of Red River Road and Court Street have heightened the appeal of Thunder Bay's North Core and will support expanded opportunities for markets and events.
- **Improvements to Thunder Bay's waterfront** include an expansion of the Marina Park festival area to better support concerts and other events.
- **Plans to reimagine the Pool 6 lands** will build on these waterfront improvements, transforming this unique site into a space that supports public use and future investment.
- The **continued success of housing programs** will increase the supply and affordability of housing by making it easier to build, offering financial incentives like the Housing CIP, and unlocking new lands for infill housing.
- **A new Financial Policy for Growth** will guide how we fund and manage growth in a sustainable way, using revenue from new growth to support growth-related initiatives.
- The CEDC is **expanding a lifestyle-focused marketing effort** to highlight Thunder Bay's short commutes, vibrant food and arts scene, after-work experiences, and unparalleled access to nature.
- The **demolition of Victoriaville Mall** is underway - opening the door for new investment and revitalization in the South Core.
- The **Create. Connect. Grow. Culture Plan** will support downtown revitalization and inclusive economic development through investments in culture, creativity, and community vibrancy.
- The **City-Wide Growth Community Improvement Plan (CIP)** offers incentives to support industrial and commercial growth.
- The **new Tbaytel Multiplex** is under construction and will provide expanded year-round recreation and sport tourism opportunities.

- The **Welcoming Community Action Plan** will help newcomers feel at home, connecting them with the information, services, and supports they need to thrive.
- A new **welcome package** will be a comprehensive resource to help new workers and their families settle in the community, including guidance on housing, schools, services, and community life.
- Providing **business succession** assistance to support the continuity of local businesses through new programs and services that help with succession planning.
- The **Thunder Bay Airport is expanding capacity** to enhance customer service and support growth, with expansions to parking, food and drink options, security, and the check-in and departure areas.
- Residents and businesses will have access to **state-of-the-art connectivity** with Tbaytel expansions of fibre technology and high-capacity 5G wireless.
- Charting a course to **more sustainable and efficient local buildings** with a feasibility study examining green development guidelines.
- The Thunder Bay Youth Transitional Housing project on Junot Avenue is part of an **expansion of transitional housing**, supporting Indigenous youth with 58 available units.
- **The Port of Thunder Bay is meeting growing demand** and improving cargo handling efficiency by reconfiguring its Project Cargo Terminal.
- Lakehead University's new Collaborative Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Program will train 20 northern students each year, **improving access to veterinary care** for residents and the agricultural sector.
- The upcoming completion of the **Rogers Tennis Dome** at Chapples Park will boost year-round recreation and sport tournament opportunities.
- Planning is underway for **major upgrades to the Thunder Bay Expressway and construction of the Northwest Arterial**, improving road safety and opening opportunities for housing development in the northern area of the city.
- Supporting Thunder Bay's housing goals, the development of lands along Central Avenue will **unlock the potential for over 1,260 new homes**, leveraging nearly \$20 million in provincial funding.
- **The Fort William BIA is exploring expanding its boundaries**, bringing more retail and business addresses into the district, broadening the storefront mix, and strengthening coordinated efforts on marketing, safety, and beautification in the South Core.

Part 2:

From Vision to Action

Realizing the vision set out in this Plan requires a focused commitment and clear path forward. Grounded in community input and collaboration, the Plan reflects the voices of residents, business owners and community partners, highlighting what matters most to the community now and into the future.

Pillars for Growth

This Plan is built around three strategic pillars: Readiness, Attraction, and Talent. These pillars reflect the interconnected roles of the Municipality, community partners, and residents in enabling smart, sustainable growth.

01

READINESS



Focus on the foundational work planning, infrastructure, and internal coordination that prepares the city for growth.

02

ATTRACTION



Focus on making Thunder Bay more vibrant, welcoming and competitive.

03

TALENT



Focus on the importance of attracting, developing, and retaining a skilled and diverse workforce.



The Spirit Garden at Prince Arthur's Landing.

Each pillar includes a set of SMART actions designed to drive measurable progress towards the Plan's goals of increasing tax assessment and population growth. These actions follow a structured approach – making each one specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound - and clearly aligned with the Plan's overall direction.

A SMART action means:

- S Specific:**
Clearly defined and outcome oriented.
- M Measurable:**
Progress can be tracked and success evaluated.
- A Achievable:**
Realistic and attainable with available resources.
- R Relevant:**
Directly aligns with the Plan's goals and vision.
- T Time-bound:**
Clear timeline for delivery.

The Smart Growth Action Plan places a deliberate emphasis on concrete action over analysis. While it is grounded in strategy and long-term vision, its primary purpose is to drive action through clear, practical steps that can be tracked, measured, and refined over time.

This Plan moves beyond high-level approaches to identify over 100 specific actions the City and its partners can take to support population growth, job creation, and a strong, growing, balanced tax base.

How to Read the Actions

Action items have been sorted by pillar and given a timeline of:

- Short-term (1-3 years)
- Medium-term (4-6 years)
- Long-term (7-10 years)

Each action item has a designated **Lead Organization**, but success will depend on collaboration among multiple partners. Leads may shift during the implementation phase.

The full list of SMART actions organized under each pillar is included in Appendix C.

READINESS



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Multi-residential units
under construction.



Readiness: Building a Growth Ready City

Readiness means making sure Thunder Bay has the conditions needed to support growth, including shovel-ready lands, resilient infrastructure and clear processes that come together to fuel growth and opportunity. It is about preparing Thunder Bay to welcome and enable sustainable long-term growth.

To support readiness, this pillar focuses on areas such as:

- Supporting commercial and industrial development to strengthen the local economy
- Expanding diverse housing options to meet current and future needs
- Streamlining processes to make development more efficient and responsive
- Promoting sustainable and inclusive growth that reflects community values
- Delivering City services that support growth
- Investing in infrastructure that enables growth

To highlight areas of focus within this Plan, several groups of actions are presented as *Spotlight Actions* to complement each pillar’s action lists. These sections showcase how specific actions work together to address a critical theme, such as housing, land readiness, or infrastructure. Rather than listing actions in isolation, the Spotlights draw connections, illustrate the impact of coordinated efforts, and demonstrate how the Plan translates vision into measurable change. They are intended to help readers see how targeted initiatives can advance multiple goals at once.

Spotlight:

Activating Lands for Commercial and Industrial Growth

Industrial and commercial lands are essential drivers of a strong economy. They support businesses, create jobs, and shape the character of cities. Advancing smart growth means strategically unlocking and optimizing these lands to attract investment, align development with existing infrastructure, and meeting the evolving needs of the community.

The following actions highlight how the Plan will activate development-ready industrial and commercial lands. Each action supports smart growth principles such as strategic infill, land optimization, and encouraging business to move quickly from interest to investment:

- R42 – Infrastructure Capacity for Growth:** This action assesses the capacity of current municipal and non-municipal infrastructure, including the Water Treatment Plant to identify where upgrades are needed to support new development. Findings will guide future investments and be integrated into the City’s Asset Management Plan.
- R45 – Expressway Upgrades & the Northwest Arterial:** Improving regional transportation networks will help to unlock new growth areas. This action supports planning and investment in highway and road infrastructure that will expand access to residential, commercial, and industrial lands.
- R8 – Strategic Industrial Development of Mission & McKellar Islands:** Focused on enabling large-scale employment growth, this action evaluates servicing needs and secondary access options for these high-potential industrial areas.
- R43 – Energy Capacity & Independence:** Recognizing that power is a critical growth enabler, this action explores solutions to expand and modernize Thunder Bay’s energy infrastructure through renewable projects, transmission upgrades, and partnerships with First Nations, industry, and institutions.

Together, these actions help to bring industrial and commercial lands online in an efficient and strategic way, creating space for business growth and job creation, while supporting a well-planned community.



© CEDC

Table 1: Readiness Action List

Readiness: Focus on Preparing for Growth				
Name		Action	Timeline	Lead
Supporting Commercial & Industrial Development				
R1	City-Wide Growth Community Improvement Plan	Implement the recently approved city-wide Growth Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to support investment attraction opportunities.	Short	CTB
R2	Commercial Land Needs Study	Conduct a long-term commercial land needs assessment, including a retail gap analysis, to guide future land use planning and support competitiveness for retail and service-based growth.	Short	CTB/CEDC
R3	Industrial Land Intensification Strategy	Work with active industrial and public sector property owners to develop opportunities to intensify their lands.	Short	CEDC
R4	Underutilized Commercial/Industrial Properties	Support the repurposing of underused privately-owned and City-acquired properties, enabling redevelopment through incentives, partnerships, by-laws and/or other planning tools. This includes revitalizing aging commercial areas into mixed-use neighbourhood hubs.	Short	CTB
R5	Innova Business Park Review	Take a fresh look at Innova Business Park development guidelines in alignment with CEDC priorities, current and emerging opportunities, and address constraints to accelerate development in the Park.	Short	CTB
R6	Central Avenue Lands	Develop a vision and construct municipal services, such as road and water services for the Central Avenue lands to open opportunities for residential and commercial uses.	Short	CTB
R7	Neebing Avenue Industrial Lands	Declare City-owned industrial lands on Neebing Avenue as surplus and market for sale to support near-term economic development.	Short	CTB
R8	Strategic Industrial Development of Mission & McKellar Islands	Prepare Mission and McKellar Islands for future industrial and employment growth by assessing development potential and identifying infrastructure needs.	Short	CTB
R9	Intercity Development	Develop specific initiatives to enhance the light industrial and commercial footprints in the Intercity area.	Short	CTB
R10	Industrial Land Opportunities	Market the new range of distinct industrial and commercial development opportunities.	Medium	CEDC

Spotlight:

Advancing Smart Growth Through Housing

Housing is the building block of communities - it shapes neighbourhoods, attracts investment, and influences how efficiently the city grows. Advancing smart growth means creating housing options that are affordable, well-located, and aligned with existing infrastructure and community needs.

The following actions provide a snapshot of how the Plan will take a targeted, collaborative approach to increase housing supply and choice. Each action supports smart growth principles such as infill development, land optimization, downtown revitalization, and compact urban form:

- **R17 – Infill Housing in Urban Serviced Areas:** Encouraging housing in areas already connected to roads, water, and sewer infrastructure helps reduce sprawl, lower infrastructure costs, and create neighbourhoods that are more walkable and transit-friendly.
- **R22 – Underutilized Residential Properties:** Bringing tax-acquired and underused residential properties back into productive use adds housing supply, improves neighbourhood aesthetics.
- **R19 – Public Lands for Housing:** Working with partners to identify and unlock surplus lands for housing, particularly affordable and missing middle options, demonstrates leadership in maximizing public assets and enabling smart, coordinated growth.
- **R18 – Increase Housing in the Downtown Cores:** Encouraging housing development in the downtown cores supports economic vitality, walkability, and long-term affordability. This action promotes higher-density, mixed-use living close to jobs, transit, and services.

Together, these actions help deliver more housing where it makes the most sense - strengthening neighbourhoods, improving livability, and supporting a more sustainable future for Thunder Bay.



Photo of the construction of an 18-unit apartment building being constructed along Algoma Street. This project was a successful recipient of funding through the Housing Accelerator Fund program.

© Kirvan Photography



Brownfield Development: The redevelopment or reuse of previously developed land, often former industrial or commercial sites that may be underused, vacant, or contaminated. Brownfield projects typically require remediation or infrastructure upgrades but can revitalize established areas and make more efficient use of existing services.

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Readiness: Focus on Preparing for Growth

	Name	Action	Timeline	Lead
R11	Burwood Road Growth Opportunities	Expand the Burwood Road municipal utility services to enable the highest and best use of the lands.	Medium	CTB
R12	Strathcona Avenue Industrial Lands	Declare City-owned industrial lands on Strathcona Avenue as surplus and market for sale to support economic growth.	Medium	CTB
R13	Brownfield Redevelopment Strategy	Develop a comprehensive strategy that strengthens brownfield redevelopment through policy, incentives and partnerships.	Medium	CTB
R14	Industrial Park/ Hubs	Construct an industrial park and/or a network of strategically located well-serviced industrial hubs in collaboration with the private sector.	Medium	CTB
R15	Shovel-Ready Opportunities	Establish shovel-ready lands through site certifications.	Medium	CTB
Housing				
R16	Housing Mix and Affordability	In collaboration with other levels of government, the District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (DSSAB), developers, employers, and housing partners, develop action plans to improve housing mix and affordability.	Short	CTB
R17	Infill Housing in Urban Serviced Areas	Explore new and expanded incentives and policies to encourage housing development in the areas connected to municipal services - where roads, water, and other infrastructure is already in place.	Short	CTB
R18	Increase Housing in the Downtown Cores	As part of the revitalization efforts for the downtown cores, expand incentives, policies, and partnerships to support higher-density housing.	Short	CTB
R19	Public Lands for Housing	Identify additional opportunities to unlock underused public lands for housing.	Short	CTB
R20	Build Canada Homes	Leverage the federal Build Canada Homes initiative to unlock and accelerate housing development through all available programs, partnerships, and investment tools.	Short	CTB
R21	Secondary Plan Approval	Explore methods to improve the Secondary Plan processes (for example, subdivision plans).	Short	CTB

Spotlight:

Building Infrastructure for Growth

As Thunder Bay plans for more people, businesses, and housing, it must also prepare foundational systems such as water, wastewater, energy, and telecommunications for growth. This involves both preserving existing infrastructure and investing in upgrades and capacity expansion where future demand is expected.

With a significant infrastructure funding gap, the City must balance day-to-day renewal needs with long-term strategic investments that enable growth. By aligning infrastructure planning with economic, climate, and population goals, leveraging the potential of natural assets, Thunder Bay can lay the groundwork for a more resilient, connected, and opportunity-ready city.

The following actions highlight how Thunder Bay is advancing infrastructure readiness across key sectors:

- **R42 – Infrastructure Capacity for Growth:** This action assesses the capacity of current municipal and non-municipal infrastructure, including the Water Treatment Plant to identify where upgrades are needed to support new development. Findings will guide future investments and be integrated into the City's Asset Management Plan.
- **R45 – Expressway Upgrades & the Northwest Arterial:** Improving regional transportation networks will help to unlock new growth areas. This action supports planning and investment in highway and road infrastructure that will expand access to residential, commercial, and industrial lands.
- **R8 – Strategic Industrial Development of Mission & McKellar Islands:** Focused on enabling large-scale employment growth, this action evaluates servicing needs and secondary access options for these high-potential industrial areas.
- **R43 – Energy Capacity & Independence:** Recognizing that power is a critical growth enabler, this action explores solutions to expand and modernize Thunder Bay's energy infrastructure through renewable projects, transmission upgrades, and partnerships with First Nations, industry, and institutions.

Together, these actions aim to close the gap between today's infrastructure and tomorrow's growth needs.



Bare Point Water Treatment Plant filtration system.

© City of Thunder Bay

Readiness: Focus on Preparing for Growth				
	Name	Action	Timeline	Lead
R22	Underutilized Residential Properties	Bring more housing to market by identifying and promoting underused residential properties to intensify their number of housing units.	Medium	CTB
R23	Launch a City-Wide Retrofit Program	Implement a city-wide retrofit program to help residents make their homes more energy efficient (such as insulation upgrades or energy-efficient heating systems), reducing costs and emissions in line with the Net-Zero Strategy.	Medium	CTB
R24	Innovative Housing Models	Develop and share educational resources – such as guides, workshops, or demonstration events – to showcase sustainable, lower-cost, and alternative housing models.	Medium	CTB
R25	Sustainable & Inclusive Neighbourhood Demonstration Project	Plan and launch a demonstration project that showcases best practices in sustainable, inclusive, and mixed-use neighbourhood design.	Medium	CTB
R26	Privately Held Lands for Housing	Develop policies and tools including changes to the tax system to encourage the redevelopment of privately held vacant lands for housing.	Long	CTB
Streamlined Development Process				
R27	One-Stop Development Shop	Improve the development experience for residents and builders by launching a One-Stop Development Shop to streamline approvals, enhance customer service, and provide clear online tools and guidance materials to help navigate the process more easily.	Short	CTB
R28	Inventory of Public Lands	Develop and maintain a public inventory and map of public lands available for residential, commercial, and industrial development.	Short	CTB
R29	Land Disposal Process	Streamline the City's process for marketing and selling surplus lands.	Medium	CTB
R30	Site Plan Control Process	Review the Site Plan Control process and implement city-wide changes to make it more efficient, effective, and clear, while continuing to guide how new development fits into the community.	Medium	CTB
R31	Archaeological Management Plan	Complete an Archaeological Management Plan.	Short	CTB

“ The city with a giant heart also has GIANT entrepreneurs. Our people have proven many times, if they do not bring it to us, we will do it ourselves. ”

- MICHAEL DAVIS, LOCAL RESIDENT

Artificial Intelligence

This includes assessing opportunities to enhance service delivery, improve decision-making, streamline workflows, and support data-driven planning, digital services, public engagement tools, and economic development.

Spotlight:

Driving Investment Attraction to Grow the Local Economy

A strong and resilient economy depends on the ability to attract, retain, and expand business investment. Investment attraction strengthens Thunder Bay’s tax base, creates local employment, and improves commercial and industrial strength.

Advancing smart growth through investment attraction means positioning Thunder Bay as investment-ready, while strategically targeting sectors and opportunities that deliver the greatest long-term value to the community.

A key driver of business attraction is having land that is available, serviced, and ready for development. The City’s actions to activate commercial and industrial lands (see Spotlight: Activating Lands) lay this groundwork by preparing development-ready sites. Building on that foundation, the focus now shifts to proactively pursuing new investment and aligning opportunities with Thunder Bay’s strengths.

- **R5 – Innova Business Park Review:** A fresh review of development guidelines will confirm alignment of Innova Business Park with current market opportunities and CEDC priorities. Updating policies and removing barriers will help accelerate development and attract businesses to this important hub.
- **R1 – City-Wide Growth Community Improvement Plan (CIP):** Implement the recently approved city-wide CIP to provide targeted incentives that support business attraction. This tool complements land activation efforts by encouraging strategic development in commercial and industrial areas.
- **A14 - Targeted Investment:** Developing a sector-based strategy for investment attraction will allow Thunder Bay to focus on high-potential industries, strengthen existing clusters, and pursue opportunities where the city has competitive advantages.

This approach reflects smart growth by aligning investment attraction with efficient land use, long-term sustainability, and community benefit.

Together, these actions build the foundation for a stronger and more diversified economy. By aligning land readiness with targeted investment attraction, the City will strengthen its role as a competitive business destination, expand its commercial and industrial tax base, and create new employment opportunities for residents.

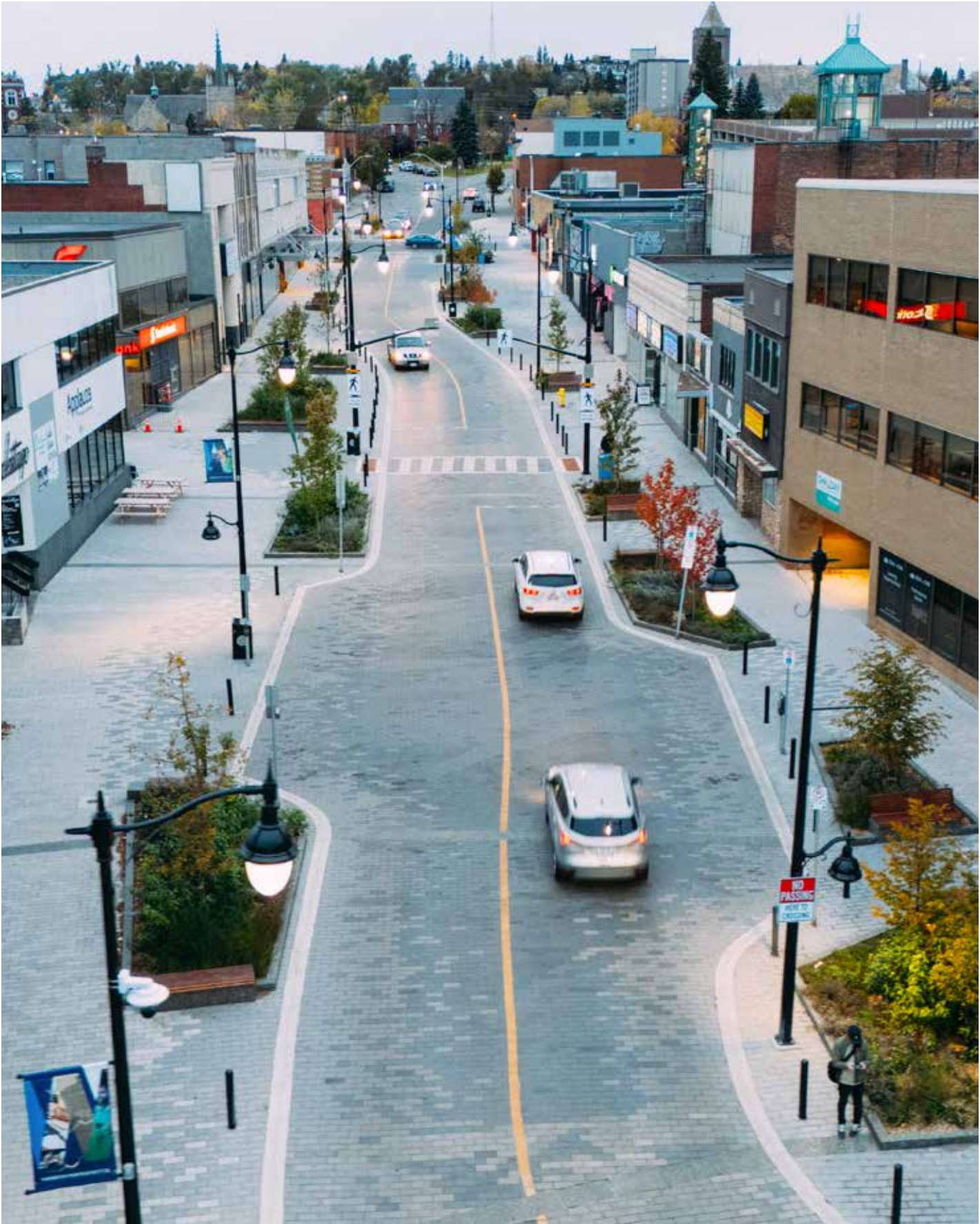


Aerial view of Innova Park.

© City of Thunder Bay

Readiness: Focus on Preparing for Growth

Name		Action	Timeline	Lead
Sustainable & Inclusive Growth				
R32	Coordinated Community Response to Homelessness	Work with partners and other orders of Government to implement the long-term solutions to address homelessness.	Short	CTB
R33	Green Development Standard	Recognizing recent changes to Provincial legislation, explore possible options for Green Development Standards.	Short	CTB
R34	Potential for Urban Reserve Partnerships	Engage with Fort William First Nation and other Indigenous partners to explore the potential for a mutually beneficial urban reserve.	Long	CTB
Growth-Ready City Services				
R35	City Development Standards to Support Growth Opportunities	Review City standards, including the Engineering & Development Standards and Parks & Open Spaces Design Guidelines to identify opportunities to support growth.	Short	CTB
R36	City Grants Alignment with Growth Objectives	Review municipal grant and funding programs for alignment with the City’s growth objectives and adjust as needed.	Short	CTB
R37	Artificial Intelligence	Develop and implement a framework to adopt artificial intelligence (AI) solutions across municipal operations.	Short	CTB
R38	Improved Accuracy of Population Counts	Explore new ways to accurately reflect the population of Thunder Bay, in collaboration with Statistics Canada where possible.	Short	CTB
R39	City By-Law Review	Conduct a growth-focused review of municipal by-laws to identify opportunities to support growth.	Medium	CTB
R40	Official Plan & Zoning By-Law Review	Conduct a review of the City’s Official Plan and Zoning By-law to identify further updates that support increased housing density, infill, mixed-use development, and targeted growth.	Medium	CTB
R41	Development Charges	In consultation with the development community, complete background studies and prepare a policy framework to support the potential introduction of Development Charges, with implementation no earlier than 2030.	Medium	CTB

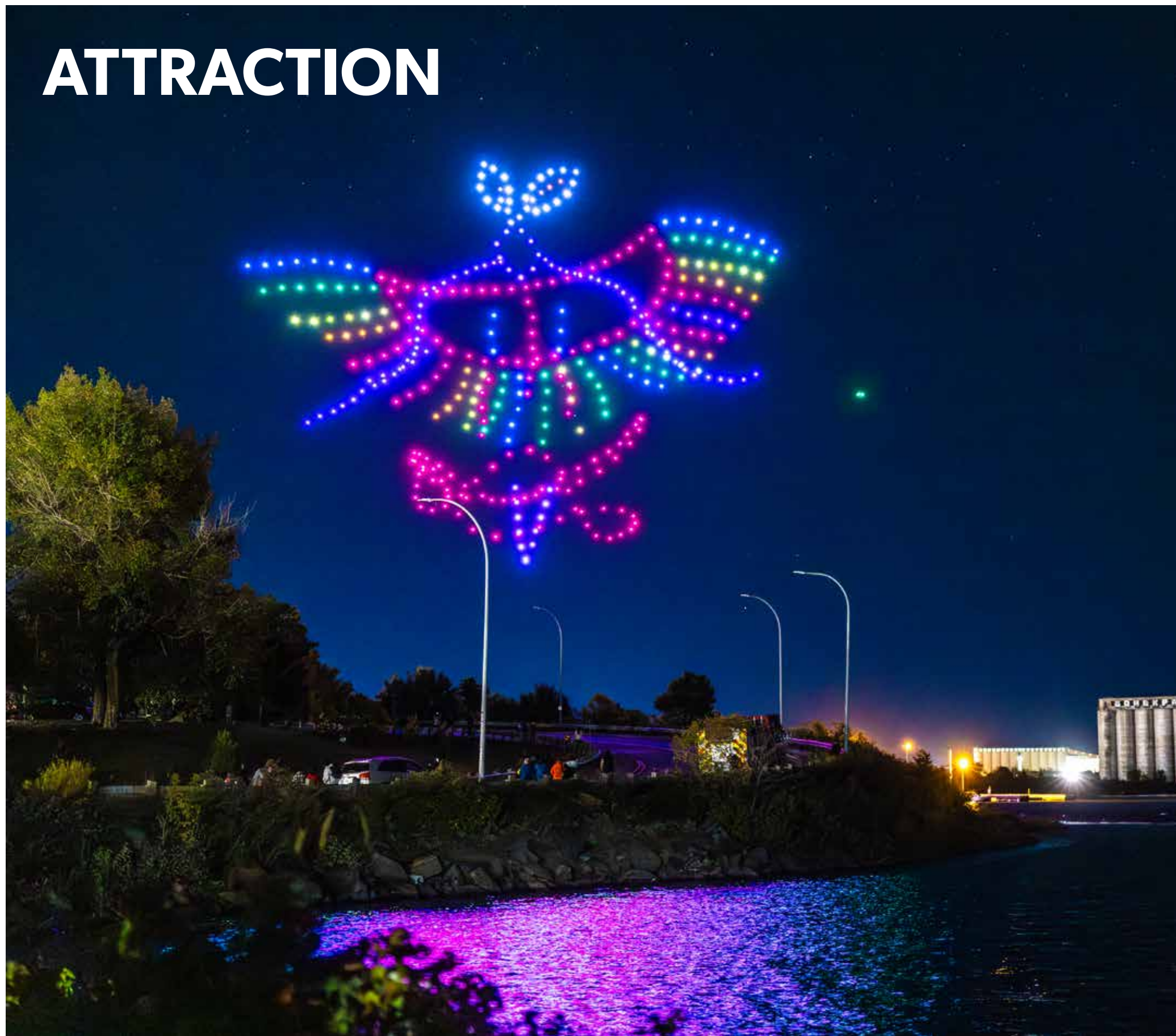


© Scott Mackay

Reconstructed Red River Road streetscape.

Readiness: Focus on Preparing for Growth				
Name		Action	Timeline	Lead
Growth-Enabling Infrastructure				
R42	Infrastructure Capacity for Growth	Assess the capacity of existing municipal and non-municipal infrastructure, including the Water Treatment Plant, to support future growth, integrate growth objectives into the City’s Asset Management Plan, and identify future upgrades needed in overall capacity or to address localized servicing gaps.	Short	CTB
R43	Energy Capacity & Independence	Assess current and future energy needs to support growth and identify priority areas for investment in energy infrastructure. Explore innovative solutions to improve local energy capacity and independence including: - Renewable energy, including solar power and biomass projects - Grid enhancement and modernization, including transmission - Expanding existing generation capacity - Partnerships with First Nations, industry, and educational institutions.	Short	Synergy North
R44	Business Event Hosting Capacity	Evaluate opportunities to grow Thunder Bay’s capacity to host business events - including options that support cultural programming and other non-business events.	Short	CEDC
R45	Expressway Upgrades & the Northwest Arterial	Continue to work with the Provincial Government to advance upgrades to the Thunder Bay Expressway, alongside the planning and development of the Northwest Arterial.	Medium	CTB
R46	Sleeping Giant Parkway to Central Avenue	Construct a road extension of Sleeping Giant Parkway to Central Avenue to support improved connectivity - enabling further .development along the waterfront.	Medium	CTB
R47	Feasibility of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)	Collaborate with regional partners, Indigenous communities, and energy experts to assess the potential of SMRs as a sustainable, low-emission energy source to support growth.	Medium	Synergy North
R48	Ground Level Rail Crossing (Red River Road at Prince Arthur’s Landing)	Work with the railway to potentially construct a ground level pedestrian rail crossing at the base of Red River Road into Prince Arthur’s Landing to support accessibility to public places and connectivity.	Long	CTB

ATTRACTION



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Drone show image of a jingle dress dancer.



Attraction: An Inviting Place to Live, Visit, Invest, and do Business

Attraction is about making Thunder Bay a place where people want to be. It means creating active downtowns, welcoming public spaces, and a strong community identity that inspires pride and connection. It is about bringing the community together to strengthen the appeal of Thunder Bay - making it a city where people choose to live, connect, visit, invest, and build a future.

To support attraction, this pillar focuses on areas such as:

- Revitalizing the downtown and waterfront areas to bring life to key public spaces
- Enhancing the city's image and beautification to promote community pride and appeal
- Building a welcoming community that embraces diversity
- Offering events and recreation opportunities for all
- Taking action to improve community safety and wellbeing
- Improving transportation options to increase accessibility, connectivity and mobility
- Promoting a high quality of life through thoughtful planning and community-focused initiatives

Spotlight:

Creating Vibrant Community Spaces that Draw People In

The character of a city is often expressed through its public spaces. A strong community is demonstrated in the vitality of its streets, the quality of its gathering places, and the pride of its residents.

Through the Attraction Pillar, the Plan supports both transformative capital projects and everyday enhancements that make Thunder Bay more welcoming and inclusive.

The following actions highlight how the Plan is working to strengthen the appeal of public spaces. Each aligns with smart growth principles, promoting thoughtful urban design, walkable destinations, and inclusive public spaces that enhance, community pride and economic vitality.

- A2/A3 - Revitalization Plans for the North & South Cores:** Downtowns are the cultural and economic hearts of the city. Revitalization plans for the North and South Cores will support local business, renew infrastructure, and encourage housing and public uses such as events and markets. This action will help create complete, connected neighbourhoods that attract investment and activity.
- A5 - Pool 6 Lands Development:** Building on past studies and community input, this action will transform the former Pool 6 lands into a dynamic waterfront destination that supports recreation, tourism, and economic activity, positioning it as a landmark asset.
- A9 - City-Wide Beautification Strategy:** Consistent investment in public realm improvements – including graffiti removal, litter cleanup, public art, and landscaping improvements elevates the appearance and pride in public spaces. This action will prioritize key image routes, downtowns, and civic entry points.

Together these actions reinforce a shared goal: to build a city that is visually compelling, inclusive and alive with activity - a place where people want to live, invest, visit and connect.



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“ My family and I were warmly welcomed here. We built a new life surrounded by nature, kindness, and the warmth of new friends. Thunder Bay’s sunsets over Lake Superior remind me every evening that we made the right choice. ”

- LIZZIE GONZALEZ, LOCAL RESIDENT

Table 2: Attraction Action List

Attraction: Focus on Making Thunder Bay More Inviting				
	Name	Action	Timeline	Lead
Downtown & Waterfront Revitalization				
A1	Reimagine Victoriaville	Complete the demolition of the Victoriaville Mall, developing a vibrant public space that supports retail and cultural spaces.	Short	CTB
A2	South Core Revitalization Action Plan	Recognizing the previous work done on this initiative and leveraging the demolition and reimagining of Victoriaville Mall, develop an action plan to revitalize Thunder Bay’s south core.	Short	CTB
A3	North Core Revitalization Action Plan	Recognizing the previous work done on this initiative and leveraging the recent improvements to Red River Road, Court Street, and the Waterfront, develop an action plan to enhance Thunder Bay’s north core.	Short	CTB
A4	Overall Waterfront Plan	Develop an overall waterfront plan that builds on current successes and guides future effort. Plan to include but not limited to: the new Art Gallery and Science North facilities, the Pool 6 development, the re-alignment of Marina Park, and a renewed effort to continue the development of a waterfront trail.	Short	CTB
A5	Pool 6 Lands Development	Develop a vision and action plan for the Pool 6 lands, building on the CEDC’s Highest and Best Use Study and recent public engagement.	Short	CTB
A6	Waterfront Buildings	Explore options to maximize the use of municipally owned buildings located at Prince Arthur’s Landing to promote public use of the waterfront.	Short	CTB
A7	Marina Park Festival Area	Complete the renewal and enhancement of the Marina Park festival area.	Medium	CTB
A8	Parking Strategy	Review the City’s parking strategy by evaluating parking availability, accessibility, pricing, and the impact on local businesses.	Medium	CTB
City Image				
A9	City-Wide Beautification Strategy	Develop and implement a city-wide beautification strategy to improve cleanliness and appearance through litter cleanup, graffiti removal, landscaping, green infrastructure, public art and other enhancements; Prioritize actions that support public use and climate risk reduction.	Short	CTB

Spotlight:

Transforming Public Transit to Connect a Growing City

Mobility is a cornerstone of sustainable urban growth. A reliable, inclusive transit system supports access to employment, education, healthcare, and social connection - especially for those without access to a vehicle.

Transit emerged as a leading public priority through consultations on the Smart Growth Action Plan. Residents highlighted the importance of making transit more efficient, accessible, and responsive to their needs.

Highlighted Action:

- **A35 - Thunder Bay Transit:** Transit service changes to better meet a growing community's needs, including closing service gaps, optimizing routes, improving rider experience. Thunder Bay transit should be a safe, reliable, convenient, and affordable option for residents of all ages and backgrounds while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Reliable public transit strengthens the local workforce by connecting people to jobs efficiently and affordably. For employers, especially in sectors with shift work or non-traditional hours, strong transit options help attract and retain staff by making it easier for workers to arrive on time and ready to contribute. A well-connected transit system supports business continuity and expands the talent pool available to employers.

Although listed under the Attraction Pillar, this action contributes across all three pillars:

- **Readiness:** Aligns mobility infrastructure with areas targeted for growth.
- **Talent:** Improves access to jobs, education and services.
- **Attraction:** Strengthens connectivity and quality of life.

These efforts will help shape a transit system that connects people to opportunity, and supports a growing, inclusive and vibrant city.



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“What I love the most about Thunder Bay is the pace of life. It's unhurried in the best way – people take time to connect.”
- SUSHITA GURUNG, LOCAL RESIDENT

Attraction: Focus on Making Thunder Bay More Inviting

	Name	Action	Timeline	Lead
A10	Vacant & Dilapidated Building Program	Implement a program to bring vacant, underused and dilapidated buildings back into productive use through a mix of incentives, regulations, and partnerships.	Short	CTB
A11	Façade Improvement	Enhance the current initiatives available for façade improvement throughout the city.	Short	CTB
A12	Branding the City	Develop and launch a refreshed city brand and marketing strategy.	Short	CTB
A13	Thunder Bay Lifestyle Promotion Campaign	Grow the CEDC lifestyle-focused marketing campaign, highlighting Thunder Bay's short commutes, vibrant food and arts scene, after-work experiences, and access to nature.	Short	CEDC
A14	Targeted Investment	Develop a sector strategy for business development, expansion and investment attraction.	Short	CEDC
A15	Urban Design Guidelines	Implement Urban Design Guidelines prioritizing improvements to the north-south civic connection along Memorial Avenue.	Medium	CTB
Welcoming Community				
A16	Welcoming Community Action Plan	Develop and implement a Welcoming Community Action Plan focused on making new residents feel at home and connecting them with the information, services, and supports they need to thrive.	Short	CTB
A17	Newcomer Welcome Centre	Building on existing community programs and services, provide comprehensive, centralized supports for new residents through a newcomer welcome centre. The centre will offer orientation, housing and employment navigation, language and cultural support, and connection to local programs.	Short	Thunder Bay Multicultural Association
A18	Supporting First Nations Youth	Support coordination among youth-serving partners and leaders to assist First Nation youth relocating to Thunder Bay for schooling.	Short	CTB
A19	Indigenous Naming & Design	Collaborate with Indigenous communities to develop a policy to reflect cultural diversity in place naming, public space design, and storytelling.	Short	CTB
A20	Indigenous Cultural Spaces	Find opportunities to support the creation of more Indigenous public spaces, such as cultural centres and healing lodges.	Short	

Spotlight:

Fostering Recreation & Culture

Recreation and cultural experiences play a central role in defining the city's identity. They enrich daily life, strengthen community pride, and showcase the diversity and creativity of the community.

Through engagement on this Plan, residents expressed pride in Thunder Bay's lively food scene, diverse event offerings, and unique cultural festivals - including free waterfront concerts.

The Attraction Pillar includes strategic investment in recreation and culture by renewing public infrastructure and bolstering support for community events. These actions help make Thunder Bay a more inclusive and appealing place to live, work and visit. They also support smart growth by maximizing the value of public assets, activating public spaces, and enhancing quality of life.

The following actions provide a snapshot of how the Plan will support a vibrant cultural life and renew community infrastructure to meet evolving needs. Each supports smart growth by fostering connections, increasing access, and encouraging thoughtful use of space:

- **A31 – Recreation & Parks Master Plan:** A new plan will review parks and recreation infrastructure and services and respond to evolving community needs. This includes exploring opportunities for indoor activities for all ages, including gymnasium and court sports.
- **A33 – Major Event Arena:** A new large-capacity event arena will boost Thunder Bay's ability to attract premium concerts and cultural events, as well as major sporting competitions, supporting tourism, economic activity and civic pride.
- **A29 – Local Festivals & Events:** To support community-driven events, funding will be expanded and permitting and vendor support will be reviewed and improved.

Along with other actions under the Attraction Pillar, these steps build on existing success to support cultural life. Inviting public spaces and diverse programming will help draw people in, activate downtown areas, and stimulate surrounding investment.



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© Tourism Thunder Bay

Attraction: Focus on Making Thunder Bay More Inviting

	Name	Action	Timeline	Lead
Events & Recreation				
A21	Recreation and Tourism Attractions	Encourage the development of privately-owned major attractions, bringing together recreation, tourism, and business activity.	Ongoing	CEDC
A22	Tourism Master Plan	Develop a Tourism Master Plan focussing on local and regional tourism assets.	Short	CEDC
A23	Multi-Use Indoor Turf Facility	Complete construction of the multi-use indoor turf facility to support a variety of sports, events, functions and recreational activities.	Short	CTB
A24	Centennial Botanical Conservatory	Complete the revitalization of the Centennial Botanical Conservatory to enhance its educational, environmental, cultural and aesthetic value.	Short	CTB
A25	Cultural Event Promotion	Celebrate Thunder Bay's diverse population and multicultural heritage by expanding promotion of local festivals, events, and cultural spaces to residents and visitors.	Short	CTB/Partners
A26	Event Equipment Lending Program	Review the fee structure, usage policies, and maintenance plan for the City's recreation and event equipment.	Short	CTB
A27	Sport Tourism Strategy	Develop a Sport Tourism Strategy to guide future investment and initiatives, to support an increased number of successful regional and national sporting events.	Medium	CEDC
A28	Event-Hosting Strategy	Update the City's Event-hosting Strategy to help attract major cultural, entertainment, and sporting events.	Medium	CTB
A29	Local Festivals & Events	Expand event and vendor support and work to improve permitting processes to help local festivals and events grow.	Medium	CTB
A30	Annual Thunder Bay Showcase	Explore the opportunity to launch an annual showcase highlighting local music, food, arts, Indigenous cultures, and sport, positioning the event as a signature attraction.	Medium	CTB
A31	Recreation & Parks Master Plan	Develop an integrated recreation and parks master plan focusing on additional opportunities for indoor court sport and year-round activities for all ages.	Medium	CTB
A32	Arena Renewal Plan	Develop an arena renewal plan to modernize and right-size arenas.	Medium	CTB
A33	Major Event Arena	Plan for a new major event arena, with capacity to host major sporting competitions, concerts, and community events with a target seating capacity of 5000.	Long	Public-Private Partnership

Spotlight:

Welcoming Community

Thunder Bay's future growth depends in large part on attracting and retaining new residents to the city, whether they are coming from northern communities, elsewhere in Canada, or from around the world.

New residents can face significant barriers integrating into the community. To help make all feel welcome and set up for success, actions under the Attraction Pillar focus on expanding new resident services and cultural supports, as well as building a welcoming culture.

- **A16 – Welcoming Community Action Plan:** A plan developed in collaboration with local services will identify gaps and actions to make new residents feel at home and provide easy access to the information, services, and supports they need to thrive.
- **A17 – Newcomer Welcome Centre:** Building on existing community services, a welcome centre supports new residents by helping them integrate into the community, find relevant services, and make employment and social connections. Making Thunder Bay a place people want to stay supports smart growth and the goals of this plan.

Through public consultation and meeting with focus groups, this plan addresses the growing demand in services new residents require to succeed in Thunder Bay.



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Community Safety & Well-Being

Growth cannot be sustained without safety and well-being as a focus. For Thunder Bay to thrive, every resident must feel secure, connected, and supported. The City of Thunder Bay's Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan sets this foundation by identifying challenges residents face, and by guiding supports that help people live with dignity, stability, and opportunity. The Smart Growth Action Plan builds on this foundation so that equity, belonging, and opportunity remain central as Thunder Bay grows.

Community safety is both a measure of progress and a necessary condition for growth. Safe streets and welcoming spaces attract new residents and visitors, support vibrant business districts, and enable young people to see their future here. Safety and well-being are essential across every pillar: readiness, attraction, and talent. Together, the CSWB Plan and the Smart Growth Action Plan will move Thunder Bay toward a more resilient, inclusive, and welcoming future.

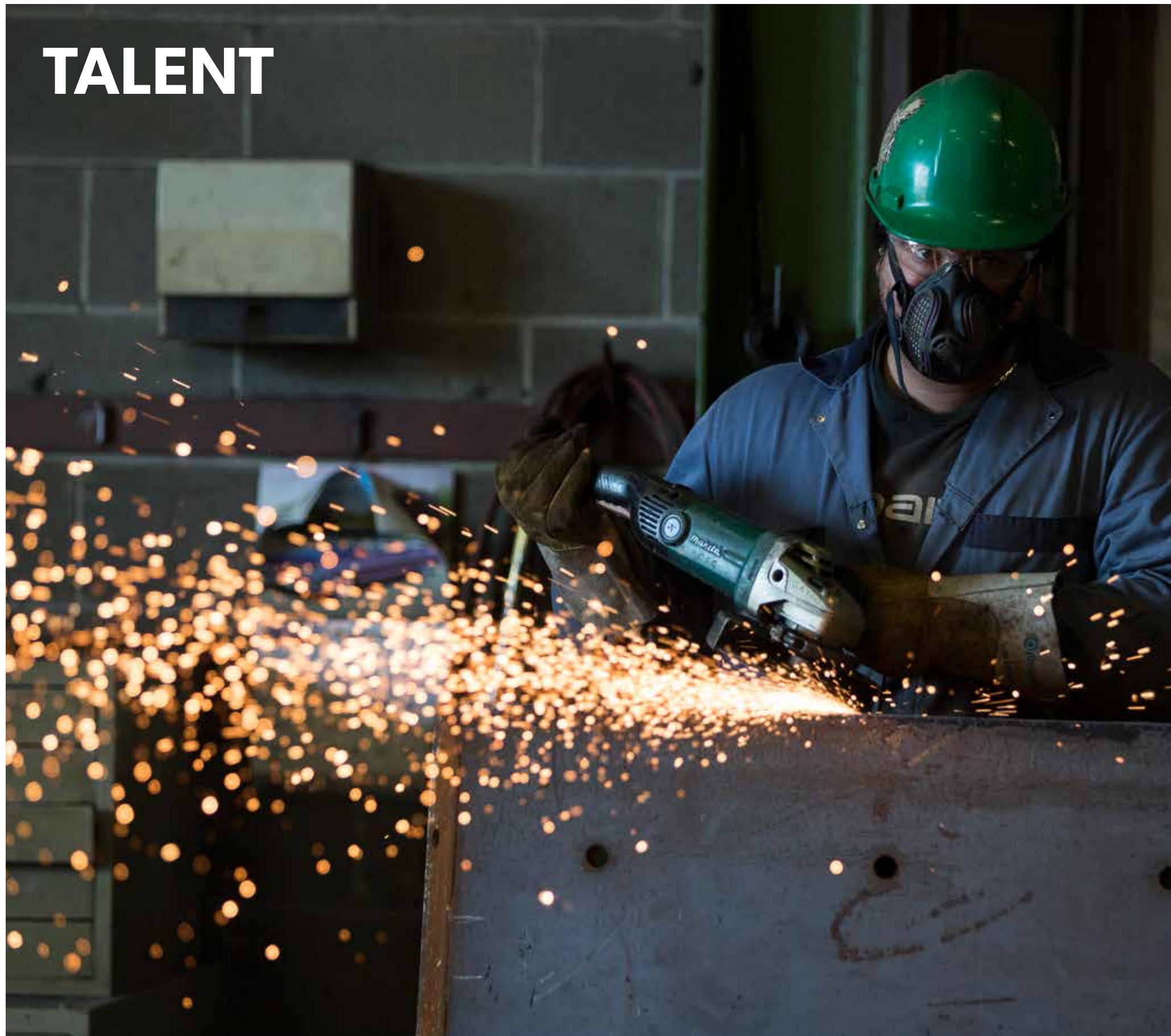


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Attraction: Focus on Making Thunder Bay More Inviting

Name	Action	Timeline	Lead	
Transportation				
A34	Active Transportation Network	Expand and connect Thunder Bay’s sidewalks, trails, and bike routes to support mobility, sustainability, and community well-being.	Ongoing	CTB
A35	Thunder Bay Transit	Transform Thunder Bay Transit to better meet community needs by addressing service gaps, optimizing routes, and enhancing the rider experience.	Short	CTB
A36	New Transportation Options	Explore alternative forms of transportation that could fill the gap between public transit and car ownership, such as car sharing, micro transit, e-bikes, e-scooters, and mobility hubs.	Short	CTB
A37	Airport Access & Regional Connectivity	Work with partners to improve flight access, explore international connections, and develop logistics hubs to support tourism, trade, and business growth across the region.	Medium	Thunder Bay Airport
Quality of Life				
A38	Digital Connectivity	Tbaytel to support all new developments with Fibre and 5G.	Ongoing	Tbaytel
A39	Public WiFi	Tbaytel to assess public WiFi coverage and invest in larger venues determined in conjunction with the city.	Short	Tbaytel
A40	Community Safety & Well-Being Plan	Update the Community Safety & Well-Being Plan to develop enhanced, evidence-informed substance use and crime-prevention strategies.	Short	CTB
A41	Childcare Capacity Action Plan	Work with the Thunder Bay DSSAB and community partners to create a childcare action plan that increases access to affordable spaces, grows the local childcare workforce, and supports innovative models like employer-supported care.	Short	CTB
A42	City-Led Health Clinic	Explore the opportunity and business case for a City-led medical centre that would host family doctors and other medical services, to improve local healthcare access.	Medium	CTB
A43	Veterinary Care	Explore strategies to improve access to veterinary care in Thunder Bay, building on Lakehead University’s new Collaborative Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Program.	Medium	Confederation College / Lakehead University

TALENT



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A worker at Coastal Steel Construction.



Talent: Developing and Retaining a Skilled and Diverse Workforce

Talent is about building a city where people see a future for themselves. It means creating a Thunder Bay where people choose to build their careers, where graduates find opportunities, and local talent and people new to Thunder Bay are set up to succeed. This pillar focuses on growing a strong and diverse workforce to drive sustainable growth and prosperity.

To support talent, this pillar focuses on areas such as:

- Attracting and retaining talent to grow a resilient, future-ready workforce
- Strengthening education and training opportunities across sectors
- Promoting careers in the skilled trades to support a growing sector
- Identifying and supporting talent gaps in key growth sectors

Spotlight:

Attracting and Retaining People Who Power Growth

A strong economy depends on people - skilled, motivated, and connected. Thunder Bay must compete for new talent while also retaining and supporting those who already live and work here.

The Talent Pillar focuses on strengthening attraction and retention of new residents by addressing key gaps in visibility, support, and quality of life. These efforts are essential to growing a resilient and diverse workforce that can help drive sustainable prosperity.

The following actions highlight a full-circle approach to workforce growth - drawing people in, helping them stay, and building the connections they need to succeed.

- **T1 – Employment Opportunity Promotion:** By increasing visibility through targeted outreach, and partnerships, the CEDC will support efforts to attract and retain a diverse workforce.
- **T2 – Welcome Guide:** New workers and their families will be better supported through a centralized resource that provides guidance on housing, schools, community services, and integration.
- **T14 – Economic Immigration Pathways:** Advocate for partnerships with federal and provincial governments to expand immigration pathways that bring skilled new residents to the region.
- **T15 – Healthcare Recruitment Efforts:** Targeted recruitment in high demand sectors helps support Thunder Bay's health services.

Together, these actions reinforce a smart, inclusive approach to growth, cultivating a strong local workforce, making Thunder Bay a place where people choose to build their careers.



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Table 3: Talent Action List

Talent: Focus on Building a Skilled & Diverse Workforce				
Name		Action	Timeline	Lead
Attraction & Retention				
T1	Employment Opportunity Promotion	Increase the visibility of local job opportunities through targeted outreach and partnerships with employers.	Ongoing	CEDC
T2	Welcome Guide	Develop a Welcome Guide to help new workers and their families settle in Thunder Bay by providing information on housing, schools, services, and community life.	Short	CEDC
T3	International Credentials/ Experience	Explore opportunities and partnerships to support employers and hiring managers in understanding international credentials and work experience.	Short	CEDC
T4	Young Professional Networks	Partner with community organizations, employers, and educational institutions to support young professional networks and expand opportunities for connection, skill-building, and community involvement.	Short	Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce
T5	Spousal Job-Matching Program	Explore the feasibility of a spousal job-matching program to help attract and retain talent relocating to Thunder Bay.	Medium	CEDC
Education & Training				
T6	Post-Secondary Program Alignment	Align and enhance local post-secondary program offerings, working with economic and employment agencies to identify labour force gaps and future job opportunities.	Ongoing	Confederation College / Lakehead University
T7	Youth Development & Entrepreneurship	Expand youth development and entrepreneurship opportunities.	Short	CEDC / Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce
T8	Research Partnerships & Co-op Placements	Grow research partnerships and create more co-op and experiential learning placements, helping students connect with local businesses and find opportunities within Thunder Bay.	Short	Confederation College / Lakehead University
T9	Career Pathways	Strengthen pathways to local careers for post-secondary students and recent graduates by exploring programs like a talent accelerator, mentorships, bursaries, and work placements aimed at increasing graduate retention and filling workforce gaps in key sectors.	Medium	Confederation College / Lakehead University

“What truly sets this city apart is its diversity and rich cultural landscape. Through school, community events, and friendships, I was constantly learning about different cultures, traditions, and ways of life... It makes Thunder Bay a place where everyone can feel seen and valued.”

- VANESSA NICHOLS, LOCAL RESIDENT

Spotlight:

Growing Local Talent to Power Long-Term Growth

Attracting new workers is essential, but so is investing in the people who already call Thunder Bay home. Long-term success depends on how residents are supported to grow, adapt, and thrive in a changing economy.

Through the Talent Pillar, the Plan focuses on workforce development actions that empower residents - particularly youth, students, and underrepresented groups - through education, partnerships, and inclusive access to opportunity.

The following actions demonstrate how Thunder Bay will grow its future workforce from within, helping residents gain the skills and pathways to succeed.

- **T9 - Career Pathways:** Strengthening local career pathways, including internships, job placements, and early-career opportunities that align with fields of study will help with retention. Building strong connections between education and employment helps students build careers - and lives - in Thunder Bay.
- **T8 - Research Partnerships & Co-op Placements:** Strengthening collaboration between post-secondary institutions and local businesses will expand experiential learning, helping students develop in-demand skills and local networks.
- **T10 - Skilled Trades Career Promotion:** Hands-on workshops, apprenticeships, and partnerships with trade unions and Indigenous organizations will help reduce barriers and grow a skilled labour force in key industries.
- **T13 - Indigenous Talent Pathways Programs:** By creating training-to-employment pipelines for Indigenous youth and community members, this action supports inclusive workforce development.

These initiatives reflect a commitment to growing Thunder Bays future from within, creating a skilled, diverse, and resilient workforce that can support long-term growth and innovation.



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Talent: Focus on Building a Skilled & Diverse Workforce

	Name	Action	Timeline	Lead
Skilled Trades				
T10	Skilled Trades Career Promotion	Promote and deliver skilled trades career opportunities by partnering with employers, trade unions, educators, and Indigenous and newcomer organizations to offer hands-on workshops, reduce barriers, and connect job seekers to apprenticeships and employment in key growth sectors.	Medium	Training Institutions
T11	Skilled Workforce Training Program	Establish a local skilled workforce training program such as Common Core focused on key industries including mining, collaborating with local trade unions, educational institutions, and Indigenous organizations.	Medium	Training Institutions
T12	Green Economy Training	Build a future-ready workforce by advocating for the development of local green economy training programs.	Long	Confederation College
Key Sectors & Strategic Opportunities				
T13	Indigenous Talent Pathways	Support Indigenous talent pathways that create training-to-employment opportunities for Indigenous youth and other community members, with a focus on key growth sectors.	Short	Confederation College
T14	Economic Immigration Pathways	Advocate for expanded economic immigration pathways to attract newcomers and fill local labour gaps.	Short	CEDC / Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce / CTB
T15	Healthcare Recruitment Efforts	Review healthcare recruitment efforts in partnership with health, long-term care and education organizations to help meet current and future staffing needs.	Short	Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre / CEDC / St. Joseph's Care Group
T16	Business Succession	Enhance business succession planning through new programs and services delivered through the CEDC.	Medium	CEDC
T17	Differentiated recruitment and retention solutions for Northwestern Ontario	Advocate for differentiated recruitment and retention solutions that will attract and keep Health Human Resources in the City and the region. Including streamlined licensing and training pathways for internationally trained healthcare professionals to help address local shortages.	Medium	CTB

Part 3:

Delivering Results

Achieving real progress will require strong leadership, broad collaboration, and a commitment to results. Bringing this Plan to life will involve leadership from the City, the CEDC, and a wide range of community partners. Some of the identified actions are already in progress, while others will require additional planning, coordination, or investment.

Role of the City of Thunder Bay

As the Plan moves forward, the City will integrate priority actions into capital planning, infrastructure investment, policy development, and service delivery - helping to position Thunder Bay for sustainable growth.

The City drives sustainable growth by:

- Delivering and planning infrastructure and policy frameworks that guide and manage growth
- Modernizing development approvals and creating the conditions for a strong workforce and economy.
- Setting a vision for a resilient, inclusive and attractive Thunder Bay, welcoming investment, supporting residents and building long-term prosperity

Role of the CEDC

The Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC) is the city's lead economic development agency, guided by an independent board. As champions for local growth anchored in three pillars – Business, Community, and Tourism – with clear strategies to raise Thunder Bay's profile as a place to do business, invest, live, work, and visit. We developed an Economic Growth Assessment (Appendix B) to help inform both the Smart Growth Action Plan and help us to advance our own 2026–2030 Strategic Action Plan. We are committed to delivering on the priorities of the City's Smart Growth Action Plan, playing a central role in attracting investment, supporting business expansion, and welcoming new residents and visitors – while the City creates the policies and environment that make growth possible.

We advance sustainable growth by:

- Attracting investment, innovative businesses, visitors, and new residents to our thriving community
- Building a dynamic and inclusive local economy centered on natural resources, workforce development, tourism, community resilience, and business support

Role of Task Force Growth

Task Force Growth will continue into the implementation phase as a strategic advisor and champion of collective progress. Its ongoing role will include:

- Providing leadership and coordination to maintain momentum across sectors
- Providing insight and guidance on implementation progress and potential barriers
- Tracking outcomes and help develop shared indicators to measure impact
- Promoting collective participation by encouraging engagement across the community

The City and Task Force Growth will continue to engage the public and stakeholders through implementation.

Tracking Progress

To monitor and evaluate the success of the Plan, the City has established a comprehensive framework of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Performance Indicators (PIs). These include both leading and lagging indicators that offer clear, measurable insights into progress toward key growth objectives.

KPIs such as Annual Population Growth and Annual Property Tax Base Growth provide tangible benchmarks to track progress in achieving key targets. Additionally, the Tax Base Balance KPI is a way to measure progress in strengthening the commercial and industrial tax base, a key signal of economic and employment growth.

To complement these core measures, performance indicators (PIs) have been identified within the Plan's action items. These serve as early signals to determine whether efforts are advancing desired outcomes.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

These are top-level indicators that align with growth goals of **Population** and **Tax Base** growth:

Table 4: Key Performance Indicators

Category	Goal / Indicator	Target	Source
Primary Outcome (KPI)	Annual Population Growth (Leading Indicator)	1% annually	Statistics Canada
Primary Outcome (KPI)	Annual Property Tax Base Growth (Lagging Indicator)	3% annually	Municipal Property Assessment Corporation
Primary Outcome (KPI)	Tax Base Balance (Residential vs. Commercial/Industrial Mix)	Improving	Municipal Property Assessment Corporation

Reaching these targets will not be achieved overnight. Growth takes time, and the Smart Growth Action Plan is designed to build momentum gradually. Early years will focus on establishing baselines and putting the right tools in place, while major housing, development, and investment projects mature. Over seven to eight years, these efforts are expected to compound, moving Thunder Bay toward the 3% target in new assessment growth and 1% target in population growth in a steady and sustainable way.

Performance Indicators (PIs)

Performance Indicators are specific measures used to track progress towards our KPIs. They serve as reference points that help monitor whether actions are moving in the right direction. Importantly, performance indicators are not intended to be complete data sets, rather they act as a signal. By highlighting trends, changes, or shifts, they will allow the Smart Growth Action Plan to adjust actions as needed without requiring the exhaustive measurement of every possible variable.

Below is a list of Performance Indicators that help determine if the Smart Growth Action Plan is on track:

Table 5: Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Supporting Data (if relevant)	Source
Number of Development Applications Submitted	Infill Applications	CTB
Inquiries for Commercial/Industrial Lands		CTB, CEDC
Building Permits Issued for Infill and Retrofit Projects	Total number of permits	CTB
Growth Investments by COTB		CTB
CIP Applications Submitted	Funds Awarded	CTB
Event Attendance	Total Events	CTB
Marketing Campaign Reach and Engagement		CEDC
Tourism Centre Visits		CEDC
Public Transit	Ridership, Satisfaction, On Time Performance	CTB
Hotel Occupancy Night Stays	Total night stays	CEDC
Total Number of Students	High School, Post Secondary, Trade Schools	CTB
Students Enrolled in Key Employment Sectors		CTB
Number of People Employed		Statistics Canada
Labour Force Participation Rate		Statistics Canada
Unemployment Rate		Statistics Canada
Youth Unemployment		Statistics Canada
Business Starts		Statistics Canada
Housing Starts by Type	Total housing	CTB, Statistics Canada
New Commercial – Industrial Floor Space Created	Total units, sq feet	CTB
Housing Affordability Index		Statistics Canada
Rental Vacancy Rate		Statistics Canada
Average Rental Cost		Statistics Canada
Average Home Price	By Type	Statistics Canada

Average Days on Market – Housing Sales		Multiple Listing Service
Infrastructure Gap		CTB
Newcomer Welcome Centre Clients Served		Thunder Bay Multicultural Association
Public Realm Enhancements Completed		CTB
Child Care Spaces	Total spaces, new spaces	CTB
Resident Satisfaction Survey		CTB
Crime Severity Index		Statistics Canada
Perception of Safety		CTB
Household Income		Statistics Canada
Health Workforce Growth		Statistics Canada
Business Confidence Index		Thunder Bay Ventures, Lakehead University
Total Number of Air Passengers		Thunder Bay Airport
Total Value of Construction	By Sector	CTB

Success of the Plan will be measured by more than numbers. While key performance indicators such as tax base and population growth are priority metrics, progress will also be reflected in the lived experiences of residents - whether neighbourhoods feel stronger, services are improved, and public spaces are more welcoming. These qualitative measures are equally important and will influence how the Smart Growth Action Plan is assessed.

“What makes Thunder Bay truly great is the strong community spirit. There are many volunteer groups where you can meet people, connect and give back. Everyone supports one another. That is what makes this city feel like family.”

- ABHIRAM GIRI, LOCAL RESIDENT



© CEDC



Viking Polaris in the Thunder Bay harbour.

Financing the Plan

Funding and financing the Smart Growth Action Plan will require a balanced approach that combines municipal commitment with external resources. The precise share of municipal contributions is not yet known, as many actions will be delivered through partnerships or supported by external funding sources rather than funded directly by the City. Wherever possible, the City will leverage grants and programs from other orders of government, as well as investments from industry and community partners, to maximize impact and reduce the local burden.

Collaboration will be key, sharing costs, aligning resources, and pooling expertise to advance projects that benefit the whole community. Although every action in this Plan is achievable within the ten-year timeframe, success will depend on working together across sectors to sustain momentum and bring this shared vision to life.

Monitoring & Reporting

To keep the community informed and engaged, the City will:

- Track progress using clear metrics tied to each action and pillar.
- Publish annual progress updates, including highlights, challenges, and upcoming priorities.
- Adjust course as needed, based on performance, feedback, and changing conditions.
- Renew and update this Plan every two years.

Progress will be reported to City Council on an annual basis and will be shared with the community on the City's website.

These efforts will help to keep the Smart Growth Action Plan a living, accountable and impactful document – a tool the entire community can count on.

Part 4: Call to Action

The Smart Growth Action Plan is not just a roadmap – it is a call to action. Success will take leadership, collaboration, and commitment across sectors and throughout the community.

Everyone has a role to play in building a more vibrant, inclusive, and resilient Thunder Bay.

What You Can Do

Whether you are a resident, community leader, business owner, or institutional partner, there are ways to get involved and help shape the city's future.

For All

- Be proud to call Thunder Bay home.
- Stay up to date through social media outlets including Visit Thunder Bay, Thunder Bay Lifestyle, the CEDC, the City of Thunder Bay, and community partners.
- Be an ambassador: Help promote Thunder Bay as a welcoming, affordable place to live and work.

For Residents

- Stay informed - Learn more at thunderbay.ca/smartgrowth and follow the City's updates.
- Share your ideas - Participate in ongoing engagement opportunities and town halls.
- Support local - Choose local businesses and services to help grow the local economy.

For Community Organizations

- Align your efforts - Consider how your programs and investments can advance Smart Growth goals.
- Collaborate across sectors - Explore opportunities to partner with other institutions, businesses, and Indigenous organizations.
- Support equity and inclusion in hiring, outreach, and service delivery.

For Businesses & Employers

- Take advantage of programs and partnerships that support growth.
- Get involved - Join working groups, contribute data or insights, or help mentor the next generation of talent.

Your efforts matter.
Thank you for helping shape
Thunder Bay!

Community Voices: What Makes Thunder Bay Great

As we look to the future, Thunder Bay’s greatest asset remains its people. The Smart Growth Action Plan is a roadmap for progress—but the heart of this city is built by residents who contribute, connect, and care. This community reflection captures the values that will guide our path forward.

“Thunder Bay is where worlds meet – urban energy, small-town warmth, surrounded by untamed wilderness. It’s a place of learned self-sufficiency, foraging, exploring and fishing before sunset. One minute, you’re in a city with urban opportunity and diversity; the next, you’re surrounded by the soothing silence of taiga forest and mother nature with the call of loons across clean, clear water.

Thunder Bay is comprised of families from different cultures and roots – grounded in tradition, resilience, and a shared respect for land and one another. That build character and resilience. Thunder Bay shapes hearts in deeper ways – through the enduring presence and teachings of the local Indigenous peoples whose understanding and wisdom have long nurtured this land. The Anishinaabe teachings continue to resonate and influence how we live and how we see the future of this place we call home.

Here, we don’t just consume – we contribute. Local markets thrive with unique handmade goods and local harvested foods. People walk more slowly, grow their own, and build strong roots. Our community balances growth with preservation, innovation with tradition. It’s a place where you can thrive, not just live.

Thunder Bay isn’t just a place. It’s a feeling – a blend of strength and deep-rooted connection. Pride in knowing who you are, and the peace of knowing where you come from.

This city teaches that smart, sustainable living isn’t a plan – it’s a way of life. Where cultures meet, land is honoured, and the future is built not in haste, but with care, respect, and community at its heart.”

- JOE BENVENUTO,
LOCAL RESIDENT



Appendices

Appendix A: Task Force Growth

The development of the Smart Growth Action Plan has been guided by the Task Force Growth, made up of 25 community leaders and institutional partners who possess a range of expertise on economic and community growth.

Task Force members’ wealth of experience and passion for the community has been crucial in developing this plan, contributing perspectives from diverse sectors like business, education, health and social services, Indigenous economic development, transportation and utilities.

The Task Force Growth was formed in January 2025 with an initial two-year mandate. The Task Force will continue to meet after this plan is approved to review progress, provide input on implementation, and respond to emerging issues as they arise.

The City of Thunder Bay expresses sincere gratitude to members of the Task Force Growth for their continued collaboration to grow Thunder Bay.

Membership List

Chair – John Collin City of Thunder Bay	Rene Gallant Synergy North	Raechel Reed Fort William BIA
Vice-Chair – Jamie Taylor Thunder Bay CEDC	Chris Heikkinen Port of Thunder Bay	Charla Robinson Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce
Vice-Chair – Kerri Marshall City of Thunder Bay	Graham Ingham Thunder Bay Airport	Adam Rose RJ Burnside & Associates
Denise Atkinson Tipi Horse Connects	Jessica Logozzo Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre	Michelle Salo Confederation College
Andrew Bishop Thunder Bay Pulp & Paper	Jack Mallon Royal LePage	Gillian Siddall Lakehead University
Janine Black St. Joseph’s Care Group	Nathanael Moulson NDRM Advisory Services	Karl Skogstad Lakehead University
Brian Davey Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund	Paul Norris Tbaytel	John Stephenson FormStudio Architects
Sean Davies Maintair Aviation Services	Matt Pearson City of Thunder Bay	Cheryl St. James Fort William First Nation
Michael den Haan Lakehead University	Kara Pratt Waterfront District BIA	

Smart Growth Action Plan City Team

Joel DePeuter Ian Kaufman Cynthia Olsen Stephanie Reid Julie Wiejak Michelle Williams

THUNDER BAY CEDC
ECONOMIC GROWTH ASSESSMENT
2025

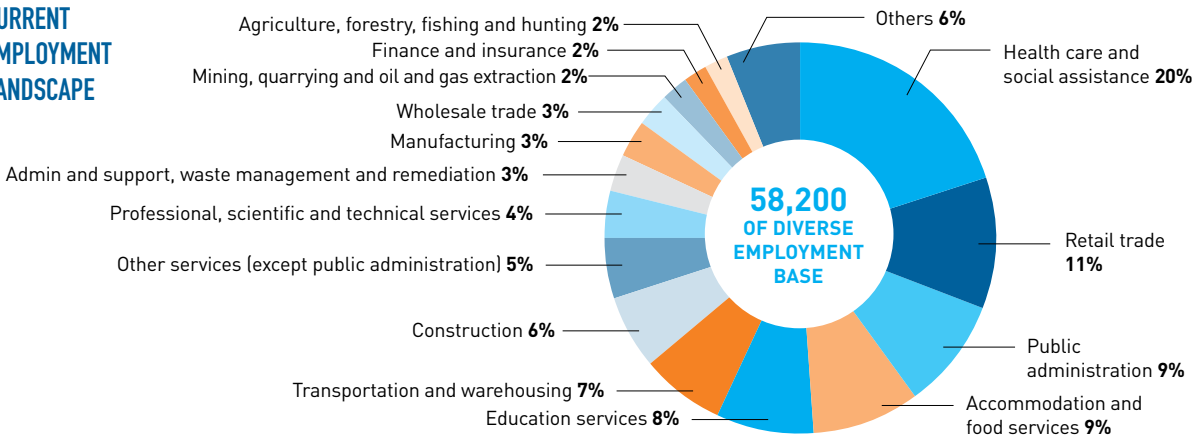
THUNDER BAY
CEDC
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC) conducted an Economic Growth Assessment and Strategy with Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. This study provides strategic recommendations grounded in fact-based analysis to ensure Thunder Bay is investment ready, competitive, and well positioned in key growth sectors over the next five years and beyond.

Thunder Bay's Strategic Assets and Value Proposition

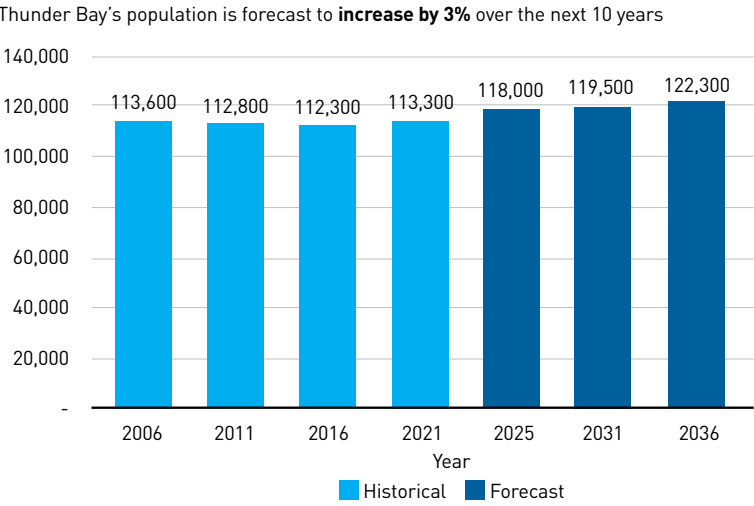
- Regional centre with a strong and diverse industrial market, office and retail commercial market, and institutional sector represented by a wide range of industry sectors and business sizes
 - Wide range of transportation assets – major highways, rail links, major airport, and port facilities
- High concentration of post-secondary institutions
 - Businesses and entrepreneurs have access to a variety of capital and financial incentives, as well as business support

CURRENT
EMPLOYMENT
LANDSCAPE

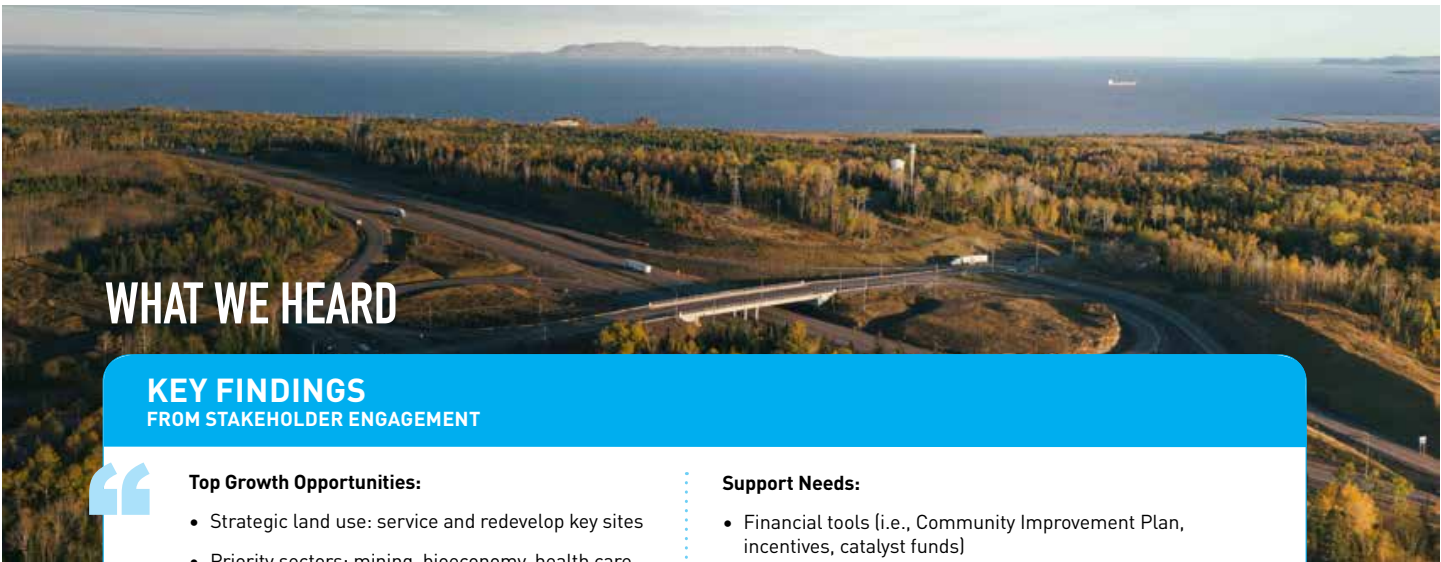
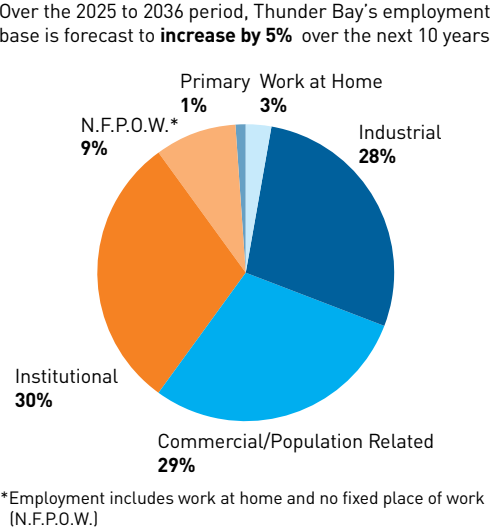


WITHOUT TARGETED ACTIONS, GROWTH IS LIMITED

THUNDER BAY'S POPULATION GROWTH OUTLOOK



THUNDER BAY'S EMPLOYMENT GROWTH OUTLOOK



WHAT WE HEARD

KEY FINDINGS
FROM STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- Top Growth Opportunities:**

 - Strategic land use: service and redevelop key sites
 - Priority sectors: mining, bioeconomy, health care, tourism, education
 - Quality of life: downtown revitalization, cultural and tourism development
- Barriers to Growth:**

 - Land: lack of shovel-ready land
 - Workforce shortages: skilled trades, health care, STEM (Science, technology, engineering and mathematics), aging population
 - Reputation and infrastructure: image issues, aging system
- Support Needs:**

 - Financial tools (i.e., Community Improvement Plan, incentives, catalyst funds)
 - Workforce training and immigration supports
 - Business mentorships, streamlined approvals, small and medium-sized enterprises support
- Top Economic Development Priorities:**

 - Investment and business attraction
 - Workforce and talent development
 - Land and infrastructure readiness
 - City image and quality of life
 - Sector-specific growth (e.g., mining, tourism, bioeconomy, health)

SWOC ASSESSMENT

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
- Diverse economic base - Presence of post-secondary institutions - Role as a Regional Centre and transportation hub - Vibrant tourism sector	- Infrastructure and energy gaps - Labour force shortages - Negative external perceptions - Land availability and servicing
OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
- Regional and local natural resources - Leveraging education and health institutions - Strategic site redevelopments - Quality of life improvements - City branding and promotions - Expanding tourism potential	- Housing market choice - Financial and investment challenges - Aging population



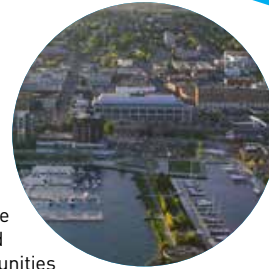
EMPLOYMENT LAND AREAS HIGHLIGHT

- Large and diverse existing Employment Land Area is 2,000 hectares - light industrial, medium industrial, heavy industrial, business park
- Development activity on Employment Land Area increasing
- Innova Business Park key area for City-owned employment lands
- Limited market choice of vacant industrial lands available for development and sale within Employment Land Areas
- Thunder Bay has an insufficient supply of development-ready vacant light and heavy industrial Employment Land Area to accommodate anticipated growth through 2036

COMMERCIAL AREAS HIGHLIGHT

Retail Market:

- Thunder Bay is Northwestern Ontario's regional shopping hub
- E-commerce impact is limited due to strong in-person retail demand from rural and Indigenous communities



Office Market:

- Dominated by public sector and health care institutions
- Stable market due to limited regional broadband and in-person services needs

Accommodations Sector:

- The hotel sector is performing well, with strong demand for additional developments in the City over the short term

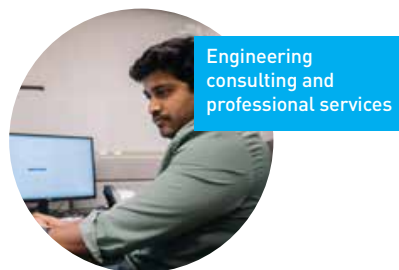
THUNDER BAY'S GROWTH POTENTIAL TARGET SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES



Mining and mining support activities



Transportation equipment manufacturing



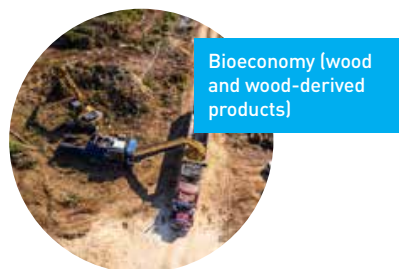
Engineering consulting and professional services



Transportation and warehousing/logistics



Medical equipment manufacturing and health sciences



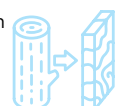
Bioeconomy (wood and wood-derived products)

REGIONAL AND LOCAL GROWTH DRIVERS

Growing Importance of Critical Minerals: lithium mining and processing



Diversification of forestry sector value add activities



Growing Importance as a Regional Centre in natural resources services, retail trade, government, health and social services, and transportation



Diversification of Economy, expanding opportunities in "knowledge-based" sectors



All Season Tourism



ECONOMIC GROWTH ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Employment Lands Strategic Recommendations

- ✓ Plan for employment uses under a new provincial policy framework
- ✓ Expand supply and market choice of development-ready Employment Land Areas that align with market demand/needs
- ✓ Strategically plan for new development-ready Employment Land Areas – priorities include Strathcona and Neebing lands
- ✓ Encourage intensification and promote redevelopment and revitalization of existing Employment Land Areas

Commercial Lands Strategic Recommendations

- ✓ Undertake a Commercial Study to assess the long-term designated commercial land requirements
- ✓ Continue to unlock the development potential of Thunder Bay's Pool 6 Waterfront Lands
- ✓ Embrace the evolving use of commercial lands
- ✓ Support maintaining institutional office uses in the strategic cores

Economic Development Strategic Recommendations

- ✓ Targeted sector development that builds on Thunder Bay's value proposition
- ✓ Promote Thunder Bay as a four season tourism destination
- ✓ Elevate quality of place to enhance Thunder Bay's economic competitiveness
- ✓ Strengthen investment attraction initiatives



Appendix C: Action Items

Table 6: Full action list

Readiness: Focus on Preparing for Growth				
Name		Action	Timeline	Lead
Supporting Commercial & Industrial Development				
R1	City-Wide Growth Community Improvement Plan	Implement the recently approved city-wide Growth Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to support investment attraction opportunities.	Short	CTB
R2	Commercial Land Needs Study	Conduct a long-term commercial land needs assessment, including a retail gap analysis, to guide future land use planning and support competitiveness for retail and service-based growth.	Short	CTB/CEDC
R3	Industrial Land Intensification Strategy	Work with active industrial and public sector property owners to develop opportunities to intensify their lands.	Short	CEDC
R4	Underutilized Commercial/Industrial Properties	Support the repurposing of underused privately-owned and City-acquired properties, enabling redevelopment through incentives, partnerships, by-laws and/or other planning tools. This includes revitalizing aging commercial areas into mixed-use neighbourhood hubs.	Short	CTB
R5	Innova Business Park Review	Take a fresh look at Innova Business Park development guidelines in alignment with CEDC priorities, current and emerging opportunities, and address constraints to accelerate development in the Park.	Short	CTB
R6	Central Avenue Lands	Develop a vision and construct municipal services, such as road and water services for the Central Avenue lands to open opportunities for residential and commercial uses.	Short	CTB
R7	Neebing Avenue Industrial Lands	Declare City-owned industrial lands on Neebing Avenue as surplus and market for sale to support near-term economic development.	Short	CTB
R8	Strategic Industrial Development of Mission & McKellar Islands	Prepare Mission and McKellar Islands for future industrial and employment growth by assessing development potential and identifying infrastructure needs.	Short	CTB
R9	Intercity Development	Develop specific initiatives to enhance the light industrial and commercial footprints in the Intercity area.	Short	CTB

Readiness: Focus on Preparing for Growth				
Name		Action	Timeline	Lead
R10	Industrial Land Opportunities	Market the new range of distinct industrial and commercial development opportunities.	Medium	CEDC
R11	Burwood Road Growth Opportunities	Expand the Burwood Road municipal utility services to enable the highest and best use of the lands.	Medium	CTB
R12	Strathcona Avenue Industrial Lands	Declare City-owned industrial lands on Strathcona Avenue as surplus and market for sale to support economic growth.	Medium	CTB
R13	Brownfield Redevelopment Strategy	Develop a comprehensive strategy that strengthens brownfield redevelopment through policy, incentives and partnerships.	Medium	CTB
R14	Industrial Park/Hubs	Construct an industrial park and/or a network of strategically located well-served industrial hubs in collaboration with the private sector.	Medium	CTB
R15	Shovel-Ready Opportunities	Establish shovel-ready lands through site certifications.	Medium	CTB
Housing				
R16	Housing Mix and Affordability	In collaboration with other levels of government, the District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (DSSAB), developers, employers, and housing partners, develop action plans to improve housing mix and affordability.	Short	CTB
R17	Infill Housing in Urban Serviced Areas	Explore new and expanded incentives and policies to encourage housing development in the areas connected to municipal services - where roads, water, and other infrastructure is already in place.	Short	CTB
R18	Increase Housing in the Downtown Cores	As part of the revitalization efforts for the downtown cores, expand incentives, policies, and partnerships to support higher-density housing.	Short	CTB
R19	Public Lands for Housing	Identify additional opportunities to unlock underused public lands for housing.	Short	CTB
R20	Build Canada Homes	Leverage the federal Build Canada Homes initiative to unlock and accelerate housing development through all available programs, partnerships, and investment tools.	Short	CTB
R21	Secondary Plan Approval	Explore methods to improve the Secondary Plan processes (for example, subdivision plans).	Short	CTB

Readiness: Focus on Preparing for Growth				
	Name	Action	Timeline	Lead
R22	Underutilized Residential Properties	Bring more housing to market by identifying and promoting underused residential properties to intensify their number of housing units.	Medium	CTB
R23	Launch a City-Wide Retrofit Program	Implement a city-wide retrofit program to help residents make their homes more energy efficient (such as insulation upgrades or energy-efficient heating systems), reducing costs and emissions in line with the Net-Zero Strategy.	Medium	CTB
R24	Innovative Housing Models	Develop and share educational resources – such as guides, workshops, or demonstration events – to showcase sustainable, lower-cost, and alternative housing models.	Medium	CTB
R25	Sustainable & Inclusive Neighbourhood Demonstration Project	Plan and launch a demonstration project that showcases best practices in sustainable, inclusive, and mixed-use neighbourhood design.	Medium	CTB
R26	Privately Held Lands for Housing	Develop policies and tools including changes to the tax system to encourage the redevelopment of privately held vacant lands for housing.	Long	CTB
Streamlined Development Process				
R27	One-Stop Development Shop	Improve the development experience for residents and builders by launching a One-Stop Development Shop to streamline approvals, enhance customer service, and provide clear online tools and guidance materials to help navigate the process more easily.	Short	CTB
R28	Inventory of Public Lands	Develop and maintain a public inventory and map of public lands available for residential, commercial, and industrial development.	Short	CTB
R29	Land Disposal Process	Streamline the City’s process for marketing and selling surplus lands.	Medium	CTB
R30	Site Plan Control Process	Review the Site Plan Control process and implement city-wide changes to make it more efficient, effective, and clear, while continuing to guide how new development fits into the community.	Medium	CTB
R31	Archaeological Management Plan	Complete an Archaeological Management Plan.	Short	CTB

Readiness: Focus on Preparing for Growth				
	Name	Action	Timeline	Lead
Sustainable & Inclusive Growth				
R32	Coordinated Community Response to Homelessness	Work with partners and other orders of Government to implement the long-term solutions to address homelessness.	Short	CTB
R33	Green Development Standard	Recognizing recent changes to Provincial legislation, explore possible options for Green Development Standards.	Short	CTB
R34	Potential for Urban Reserve Partnerships	Engage with Fort William First Nation and other Indigenous partners to explore the potential for a mutually beneficial urban reserve.	Long	CTB
Growth-Ready City Services				
R35	City Development Standards to Support Growth Opportunities	Review City standards, including the Engineering & Development Standards and Parks & Open Spaces Design Guidelines to identify opportunities to support growth.	Short	CTB
R36	City Grants Alignment with Growth Objectives	Review municipal grant and funding programs for alignment with the City’s growth objectives and adjust as needed.	Short	CTB
R37	Artificial Intelligence	Develop and implement a framework to adopt artificial intelligence (AI) solutions across municipal operations.	Short	CTB
R38	Improved Accuracy of Population Counts	Explore new ways to accurately reflect the population of Thunder Bay, in collaboration with Statistics Canada where possible.	Short	CTB
R39	City By-Law Review	Conduct a growth-focused review of municipal by-laws to identify opportunities to support growth.	Medium	CTB
R40	Official Plan & Zoning By-Law Review	Conduct a review of the City’s Official Plan and Zoning By-law to identify further updates that support increased housing density, infill, mixed-use development, and targeted growth.	Medium	CTB
R41	Development Charges	In consultation with the development community, complete background studies and prepare a policy framework to support the potential introduction of Development Charges, with implementation no earlier than 2030.	Medium	CTB

Readiness: Focus on Preparing for Growth				
Name		Action	Timeline	Lead
Growth-Enabling Infrastructure				
R42	Infrastructure Capacity for Growth	Assess the capacity of existing municipal and non-municipal infrastructure, including the Water Treatment Plant, to support future growth, integrate growth objectives into the City’s Asset Management Plan, and identify future upgrades needed in overall capacity or to address localized servicing gaps.	Short	CTB
R43	Energy Capacity & Independence	Assess current and future energy needs to support growth and identify priority areas for investment in energy infrastructure. Explore innovative solutions to improve local energy capacity and independence including: - Renewable energy, including solar power and biomass projects - Grid enhancement and modernization, including transmission - Expanding existing generation capacity - Partnerships with First Nations, industry, and educational institutions.	Short	Synergy North
R44	Business Event Hosting Capacity	Evaluate opportunities to grow Thunder Bay’s capacity to host business events - including options that support cultural programming and other non-business events.	Short	CEDC
R45	Expressway Upgrades & the Northwest Arterial	Continue to work with the Provincial Government to advance upgrades to the Thunder Bay Expressway, alongside the planning and development of the Northwest Arterial.	Medium	CTB
R46	Sleeping Giant Parkway to Central Avenue	Construct a road extension of Sleeping Giant Parkway to Central Avenue to support improved connectivity - enabling further .development along the waterfront.	Medium	CTB
R47	Feasibility of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)	Collaborate with regional partners, Indigenous communities, and energy experts to assess the potential of SMRs as a sustainable, low-emission energy source to support growth.	Medium	Synergy North
R48	Ground Level Rail Crossing (Red River Road at Prince Arthur’s Landing)	Work with the railway to potentially construct a ground level pedestrian rail crossing at the base of Red River Road into Prince Arthur’s Landing to support accessibility to public places and connectivity.	Long	CTB

Attraction: Focus on Making Thunder Bay More Inviting				
Name		Action	Timeline	Lead
Downtown & Waterfront Revitalization				
A1	Reimagine Victoriaville	Complete the demolition of the Victoriaville Mall, developing a vibrant public space that supports retail and cultural spaces.	Short	CTB
A2	South Core Revitalization Action Plan	Recognizing the previous work done on this initiative and leveraging the demolition and reimagining of Victoriaville Mall, develop an action plan to revitalize Thunder Bay’s south core.	Short	CTB
A3	North Core Revitalization Action Plan	Recognizing the previous work done on this initiative and leveraging the recent improvements to Red River Road, Court Street, and the Waterfront, develop an action plan to enhance Thunder Bay’s north core.	Short	CTB
A4	Overall Waterfront Plan	Develop an overall waterfront plan that builds on current successes and guides future effort. Plan to include but not limited to: the new Art Gallery and Science North facilities, the Pool 6 development, the re-alignment of Marina Park, and a renewed effort to continue the development of a waterfront trail.	Short	CTB
A5	Pool 6 Lands Development	Develop a vision and action plan for the Pool 6 lands, building on the CEDC’s Highest and Best Use Study and recent public engagement.	Short	CTB
A6	Waterfront Buildings	Explore options to maximize the use of municipally owned buildings located at Prince Arthur’s Landing to promote public use of the waterfront.	Short	CTB
A7	Marina Park Festival Area	Complete the renewal and enhancement of the Marina Park festival area.	Medium	CTB
A8	Parking Strategy	Review the City’s parking strategy by evaluating parking availability, accessibility, pricing, and the impact on local businesses.	Medium	CTB
City Image				
A9	City-Wide Beautification Strategy	Develop and implement a city-wide beautification strategy to improve cleanliness and appearance through litter cleanup, graffiti removal, landscaping, green infrastructure, public art and other enhancements; Prioritize actions that support public use and climate risk reduction.	Short	CTB
A10	Vacant & Dilapidated Building Program	Implement a program to bring vacant, underused and dilapidated buildings back into productive use through a mix of incentives, regulations, and partnerships.	Short	CTB

Attraction: Focus on Making Thunder Bay More Inviting				
	Name	Action	Timeline	Lead
A11	Façade Improvement	Enhance the current initiatives available for façade improvement throughout the city.	Short	CTB
A12	Branding the City	Develop and launch a refreshed city brand and marketing strategy.	Short	CTB
A13	Thunder Bay Lifestyle Promotion Campaign	Grow the CEDC lifestyle-focused marketing campaign, highlighting Thunder Bay’s short commutes, vibrant food and arts scene, after-work experiences, and access to nature.	Short	CEDC
A14	Targeted Investment	Develop a sector strategy for business development, expansion and investment attraction.	Short	CEDC
A15	Urban Design Guidelines	Implement Urban Design Guidelines prioritizing improvements to the north-south civic connection along Memorial Avenue.	Medium	CTB
Welcoming Community				
A16	Welcoming Community Action Plan	Develop and implement a Welcoming Community Action Plan focused on making new residents feel at home and connecting them with the information, services, and supports they need to thrive.	Short	CTB
A17	Newcomer Welcome Centre	Building on existing community programs and services, provide comprehensive, centralized supports for new residents through a newcomer welcome centre. The centre will offer orientation, housing and employment navigation, language and cultural support, and connection to local programs.	Short	Thunder Bay Multicultural Association
A18	Supporting First Nations Youth	Support coordination among youth-serving partners and leaders to assist First Nation youth relocating to Thunder Bay for schooling.	Short	CTB
A19	Indigenous Naming & Design	Collaborate with Indigenous communities to develop a policy to reflect cultural diversity in place naming, public space design, and storytelling.	Short	CTB
A20	Indigenous Cultural Spaces	Find opportunities to support the creation of more Indigenous public spaces, such as cultural centres and healing lodges.	Short	
Events & Recreation				
A21	Recreation and Tourism Attractions	Encourage the development of privately-owned major attractions, bringing together recreation, tourism, and business activity.	Ongoing	CEDC

Attraction: Focus on Making Thunder Bay More Inviting				
	Name	Action	Timeline	Lead
A22	Tourism Master Plan	Develop a Tourism Master Plan focussing on local and regional tourism assets.	Short	CEDC
A23	Multi-Use Indoor Turf Facility	Complete construction of the multi-use indoor turf facility to support a variety of sports, events, functions and recreational activities.	Short	CTB
A24	Centennial Botanical Conservatory	Complete the revitalization of the Centennial Botanical Conservatory to enhance its educational, environmental, cultural and aesthetic value.	Short	CTB
A25	Cultural Event Promotion	Celebrate Thunder Bay’s diverse population and multicultural heritage by expanding promotion of local festivals, events, and cultural spaces to residents and visitors.	Short	CTB/Partners
A26	Event Equipment Lending Program	Review the fee structure, usage policies, and maintenance plan for the City’s recreation and event equipment.	Short	CTB
A27	Sport Tourism Strategy	Develop a Sport Tourism Strategy to guide future investment and initiatives, to support an increased number of successful regional and national sporting events.	Medium	CEDC
A28	Event-Hosting Strategy	Update the City’s Event-hosting Strategy to help attract major cultural, entertainment, and sporting events.	Medium	CTB
A29	Local Festivals & Events	Expand event and vendor support and work to improve permitting processes to help local festivals and events grow.	Medium	CTB
A30	Annual Thunder Bay Showcase	Explore the opportunity to launch an annual showcase highlighting local music, food, arts, Indigenous cultures, and sport, positioning the event as a signature attraction.	Medium	CTB
A31	Recreation & Parks Master Plan	Develop an integrated recreation and parks master plan focusing on additional opportunities for indoor court sport and year-round activities for all ages.	Medium	CTB
A32	Arena Renewal Plan	Develop an arena renewal plan to modernize and right-size arenas.	Medium	CTB
A33	Major Event Arena	Plan for a new major event arena, with capacity to host major sporting competitions, concerts, and community events with a target seating capacity of 5000.	Long	Public-Private Partnership

Attraction: Focus on Making Thunder Bay More Inviting				
Name		Action	Timeline	Lead
Transportation				
A34	Active Transportation Network	Expand and connect Thunder Bay’s sidewalks, trails, and bike routes to support mobility, sustainability, and community well-being.	Ongoing	CTB
A35	Thunder Bay Transit	Transform Thunder Bay Transit to better meet community needs by addressing service gaps, optimizing routes, and enhancing the rider experience.	Short	CTB
A36	New Transportation Options	Explore alternative forms of transportation that could fill the gap between public transit and car ownership, such as car sharing, micro transit, e-bikes, e-scooters, and mobility hubs.	Short	CTB
A37	Airport Access & Regional Connectivity	Work with partners to improve flight access, explore international connections, and develop logistics hubs to support tourism, trade, and business growth across the region.	Medium	Thunder Bay Airport
Quality of Life				
A38	Digital Connectivity	Tbaytel to support all new developments with Fibre and 5G.	Ongoing	Tbaytel
A39	Public WiFi	Tbaytel to assess public WiFi coverage and invest in larger venues determined in conjunction with the city.	Short	Tbaytel
A40	Community Safety & Well-Being Plan	Update the Community Safety & Well-Being Plan to develop enhanced, evidence-informed substance use and crime-prevention strategies.	Short	CTB
A41	Childcare Capacity Action Plan	Work with the Thunder Bay DSSAB and community partners to create a childcare action plan that increases access to affordable spaces, grows the local childcare workforce, and supports innovative models like employer-supported care.	Short	CTB
A42	City-Led Health Clinic	Explore the opportunity and business case for a City-led medical centre that would host family doctors and other medical services, to improve local healthcare access.	Medium	CTB
A43	Veterinary Care	Explore strategies to improve access to veterinary care in Thunder Bay, building on Lakehead University’s new Collaborative Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Program.	Medium	Confederation College / Lakehead University

Talent: Focus on Building a Skilled & Diverse Workforce				
Name		Action	Timeline	Lead
Attraction & Retention				
T1	Employment Opportunity Promotion	Increase the visibility of local job opportunities through targeted outreach and partnerships with employers.	Ongoing	CEDC
T2	Welcome Guide	Develop a Welcome Guide to help new workers and their families settle in Thunder Bay by providing information on housing, schools, services, and community life.	Short	CEDC
T3	International Credentials/ Experience	Explore opportunities and partnerships to support employers and hiring managers in understanding international credentials and work experience.	Short	CEDC
T4	Young Professional Networks	Partner with community organizations, employers, and educational institutions to support young professional networks and expand opportunities for connection, skill-building, and community involvement.	Short	Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce
T5	Spousal Job-Matching Program	Explore the feasibility of a spousal job-matching program to help attract and retain talent relocating to Thunder Bay.	Medium	CEDC
Education & Training				
T6	Post-Secondary Program Alignment	Align and enhance local post-secondary program offerings, working with economic and employment agencies to identify labour force gaps and future job opportunities.	Ongoing	Confederation College / Lakehead University
T7	Youth Development & Entrepreneurship	Expand youth development and entrepreneurship opportunities.	Short	CEDC / Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce
T8	Research Partnerships & Co-op Placements	Grow research partnerships and create more co-op and experiential learning placements, helping students connect with local businesses and find opportunities within Thunder Bay.	Short	Confederation College / Lakehead University
T9	Career Pathways	Strengthen pathways to local careers for post-secondary students and recent graduates by exploring programs like a talent accelerator, mentorships, bursaries, and work placements aimed at increasing graduate retention and filling workforce gaps in key sectors.	Medium	Confederation College / Lakehead University

Talent: Focus on Building a Skilled & Diverse Workforce				
Name		Action	Timeline	Lead
Skilled Trades				
T10	Skilled Trades Career Promotion	Promote and deliver skilled trades career opportunities by partnering with employers, trade unions, educators, and Indigenous and newcomer organizations to offer hands-on workshops, reduce barriers, and connect job seekers to apprenticeships and employment in key growth sectors.	Medium	Training Institutions
T11	Skilled Workforce Training Program	Establish a local skilled workforce training program such as Common Core focused on key industries including mining, collaborating with local trade unions, educational institutions, and Indigenous organizations.	Medium	Training Institutions
T12	Green Economy Training	Build a future-ready workforce by advocating for the development of local green economy training programs.	Long	Confederation College
Key Sectors & Strategic Opportunities				
T13	Indigenous Talent Pathways	Support Indigenous talent pathways that create training-to-employment opportunities for Indigenous youth and other community members, with a focus on key growth sectors.	Short	Confederation College
T14	Economic Immigration Pathways	Advocate for expanded economic immigration pathways to attract newcomers and fill local labour gaps.	Short	CEDC / Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce / CTB
T15	Healthcare Recruitment Efforts	Review healthcare recruitment efforts in partnership with health, long-term care and education organizations to help meet current and future staffing needs.	Short	Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre / CEDC / St. Joseph's Care Group
T16	Business Succession	Enhance business succession planning through new programs and services delivered through the CEDC.	Medium	CEDC
T17	Differentiated recruitment and retention solutions for Northwestern Ontario	Advocate for differentiated recruitment and retention solutions that will attract and keep Health Human Resources in the City and the region. Including streamlined licensing and training pathways for internationally trained healthcare professionals to help address local shortages.	Medium	CTB

Appendix D: Community Engagement

The Smart Growth Action Plan is built on feedback from a diverse range of people across Thunder Bay. The City of Thunder Bay thanks everyone who took the time to provide their input and share their challenges, hopes, and ideas for growth.

Initial public input was gathered through focus groups, town halls, targeted meetings, and a public survey. As this Plan is a living document, engagement will continue as the actions are implemented. Ongoing dialogue with residents, businesses, and community partners will help evaluate progress, identify emerging opportunities, and maintain the Plan’s relevance as the community’s needs evolve over the next decade.



To connect with the growth team, please find us online at thunderbay.ca/smartgrowth

Appendix E: Glossary

Affordable Housing: Housing that is deemed affordable when a household spends no more than 30% of its gross income on shelter costs, including rent or mortgage, utilities, and taxes. Affordability varies based on local incomes and housing markets.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): A field of technology focused on creating systems capable of simulating human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, analyzing data, and recognizing patterns.

Assessment Growth: The year-over-year increase in the total property tax assessment base, measured as a percentage. Assessment growth reflects how much new assessment value has been added to the tax base, providing a key indicator of financial capacity to fund municipal services and infrastructure.

Brownfield Development: The redevelopment or reuse of previously developed land, often former industrial or commercial sites that may be underused, vacant, or contaminated. Brownfield projects typically require remediation or infrastructure upgrades but can revitalize established areas and make more efficient use of existing services.

Capital Projects: Large-scale municipal investments in physical assets such as roads, water systems, public facilities, and parks. Capital projects are typically funded through the City’s capital budget.

City of Thunder Bay (City): Refers to The Corporation of the City of Thunder Bay, including its departments, programs, and municipal services.

city (lowercase): Refers to the entire community of Thunder Bay, including residents, businesses, institutions, and partners.

Community Improvement Plan (CIP): A tool under the Ontario Planning Act that allows municipalities to offer financial incentives and programs to support revitalization, redevelopment, and community growth.

Diverse Housing Options: A range of housing types, sizes, and price points that meet the needs of residents at different life stages and income levels. Diverse housing options support inclusivity, affordability, and a balanced growing community.

Development Approvals: The formal municipal process by which applications for development (e.g., rezoning, subdivisions, site plans) are reviewed and approved, ensuring they meet zoning, policy, and infrastructure requirements.

Greenfield Development: The development of previously undeveloped land, usually located at the urban fringe or in rural areas. Greenfield sites generally offer fewer constraints for development but require new infrastructure and services, and they can contribute to urban sprawl if not carefully managed.

Housing Community Improvement Plan (CIP): A municipal planning tool provided by the Ontario Planning Act that allows the City to offer grant funding to housing projects that add density and contribute to a more diverse housing stock.

Infill Development: New development within established neighbourhoods or previously developed areas, typically on vacant or underused lots, to make better use of existing infrastructure and services.

Infrastructure Deficit (Infrastructure Gap): The infrastructure deficit, also called the infrastructure gap, refers to the underfunding of maintenance, renewal, and replacement of public infrastructure. It reflects the difference between what is required to keep infrastructure in good condition and the resources currently available, leading to a backlog of needed work.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Measurable values used to track progress toward defined objectives. In this Plan, KPIs relate to population growth, tax base growth, and other outcomes.

Missing Middle Housing: Medium-density housing types – such as duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, and low-rise apartments – that fall between single-detached homes and high-rise buildings. These types increase housing diversity and affordability.

Resilient Infrastructure: Public infrastructure that is designed, built, and maintained to withstand and adapt to changing conditions, including climate impacts, extreme weather, and evolving community needs. Resilient infrastructure ensures long-term reliability, safety, and sustainability.

Resilience: The ability of a community to withstand, adapt to, and recover from extreme events while continuing to function effectively. Extreme events can include but are not limited to storms, floods, heatwaves, power outages, global pandemics, and economic recessions.

Shovel-Ready Land: Lands that are fully serviced and zoned, with infrastructure in place, and are ready for immediate development.

SMART Actions: Strategic actions that follow SMART criteria – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound – for accountability and results.

Smart Growth: An intentional, inclusive, and sustainable approach to development that supports a strong economy, livable communities, efficient land use, and environmental stewardship.

Strategic Pillars: The three core areas that organize the Plan’s actions: Readiness, Attraction, and Talent.

Sustainability: The ability to maintain or support something over the long term. This involves making decisions and taking actions that balance environmental health, economic strength, and social well-being so that current and future generations can thrive.

Tax Base: The total assessed value of all taxable properties in the city from which property tax revenue is generated to fund municipal services.

Tax Base Balance: The proportion of the tax base made up of residential, commercial, and industrial properties. A more balanced mix supports financial sustainability.

Tax Ratios: The relationship between the municipal tax rate for the residential class and the tax rates for other property classes.

Task Force Growth (TFG): A group of local leaders from diverse sectors guiding the development and implementation of the Smart Growth Action Plan through collaboration and oversight.

Vision and Mission: The guiding aspirations and purpose of the Plan. The Vision describes the desired future state; the Mission outlines how it will be achieved.





Hello,

Please note the following response to Speak to City Council has been submitted at Saturday November 15th 2025 2:39 PM with reference number 2025-11-15-007.

- **What would you like to speak to Council about:**
The Smart Growth Action Plan
- **Is this an item scheduled on a current agenda?:**
Yes
- **If yes, please provide report title or number.**
Not sure.
- **Provide as much information as you can about the matter you would like to speak to:**
I believe the Growth Standing Committee is slated to meet on November 25th for a follow-up discussion of the Smart Growth Action Plan. As a member of the task force that helped create the plan, I would like to speak to advocate for the committee supporting the plan.
- **Provide specific actions you would like Council to take:**
I would like the council to approve the plan and support its implementation.
- **Have you already been in contact with City staff in regards to the subject matter of your deputation request?**
Yes
- **Who did you speak to in City Administration? What was the outcome?**
I spoke to Matt Pearson about the plan. There was no outcome to speak of, as I wasn't asking him to do anything.
- **Please select the date of the meeting:**
Standing Committee - Tuesday, November 25 2025
- **Please choose**
Dr
- **First name:**
Karl
- **Last name:**
Skogstad
- **Email:**
karl.skogstad@gmail.com

- **Phone:**
(807) 356-0119
- **Please note the names of the presenters that will be attending with you:**
None
- **Please indicate how you intend to participate in the meeting.**
In Person

Standing Committee Report

REPORT NUMBER 346-2025-Growth-Development Services

DATE

PREPARED

October 30, 2025

FILE

STANDING

COMMITTEE

November 25, 2025

MEETING DATE

SUBJECT

Vacant & Dilapidated Buildings Program Approach

PURPOSE –Receive Feedback of Standing Committee - Growth

The purpose of this report is to present the Vacant & Dilapidated Buildings Program approach to the Standing Committee - Growth (Committee) for review and discussion. The creation of this program is a milestone under the Housing Accelerator Fund and will help strengthen neighbourhood vitality, support community engagement, and unlock new housing opportunities on underutilized properties.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2025, the City was awarded up to \$2.077 million through the Housing Accelerator Fund to launch and implement a Vacant & Dilapidated Buildings Program. Vacant, abandoned, and dilapidated properties negatively impact public health and safety, property values, and economic development. Not only will a program support the revitalization of underused properties for the purposes of housing, it will also support the City's wider growth objectives. As such, the creation of this program is Action A9 in the draft Smart Growth Action Plan and a Tier 2 Action in the City Manager's Workplan.

There are 59 known or suspected vacant buildings within the city in various states of dilapidation. The City has a variety of existing tools that can be deployed to begin responding to these vacant buildings.

A Vacant Building Response Plan has been developed with the intention of creating a sustainable framework for municipal response to vacant buildings, accelerating response times, and incentivizing property owners to act. The Response Plan is broken down into three phases and includes 12 actions, many of which have already begun.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Project Background

In March 2025, the City was awarded up to \$2.077 million through the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) to launch and implement a Vacant & Dilapidated Buildings Program to directly incentivize 64 additional housing units. This initiative aligns with the HAF Best Practices, which includes implementing disincentives or other strategies to encourage development of vacant, underdeveloped, or idle land.

Vacant, abandoned, and dilapidated properties negatively impact public health and safety, property values, and economic development. When unmonitored, vacant buildings begin to deteriorate, becoming unsightly, attracting trespassers and vermin, increasing fire risk, and in some instances, affecting the integrity of neighbouring structures. Program definitions are outlined in Appendix A.

Scope

The Vacant & Dilapidated Buildings Program will address vacant buildings in Thunder Bay and fulfil the funding requirements outlined in the City of Thunder Bay's amended HAF Contribution Agreement with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

The program will provide tools and a process by which the City can manage and resolve the impacts of vacant buildings and incentivize the reuse or redevelopment for the purposes of housing.

The program will apply to all vacant buildings; however, municipal response will differ based on the building's state of dilapidation. Administration will prioritize buildings based on their state of dilapidation with most resources being allocated to remediate unsafe properties with an emphasis on the downtown cores.

Objectives

1. Prepare a Strategy and create a comprehensive program that:
 - Accelerates the timeline associated with addressing vacant or dilapidated buildings,
 - Optimizes municipal resources through a coordinated response plan,
 - Includes measurable service levels to monitor impact, and
 - Provides tools and opportunities for owners to address their vacant, underutilized, and/or derelict properties.
2. Inventory vacant buildings and prioritize action based on their reuse or redevelopment potential.
3. Address at least two high-priority vacant and dilapidated buildings during the HAF program period (as a condition of funding).

HAF Milestones

Table 1. Milestones and timelines outlined in the HAF-CMHC Contribution Agreement.

Milestone	Description	Timeline
1	By-law Review and Assessment	Jun 01, 2025 – Dec 31, 2025
2	Develop and Launch Program	Jan 01, 2026 – Jun 30, 2026
3	Acquire and Address Priority Buildings	Jan 01, 2026 – Aug 31, 2026

Current Scenario

A review of the City’s existing tools and “business as usual” action on vacant buildings was completed to inform the program approach outlined in this report. Findings from this review are summarized below and in Appendix B.

Status of Known Vacant Buildings

There are 59 known or suspected vacant buildings within the city (Table 2), however, it is anticipated that there are vacant buildings not on the vacant building list. Data inquiries have been made to determine whether utility statistics can be used to generate an aggregate estimate of the number of existing vacant buildings.

Exterior condition assessments of vacant commercial, institutional, mixed-use, and residential buildings are being completed by Building Services. These inspections are intended to provide a snapshot of the general condition of the building and determine if there are any immediate safety concerns or property standards concerns. Without an interior building assessment, it is difficult to determine the overall condition of the building and further assessments will be required.

Table 2. Existing use and location breakdown of known vacant buildings.

Existing Use	North	South	Total
Commercial	6	4	10
Industrial	5	2	7
Institutional	0	1	1
Mixed-Use	0	1	1
Residential	18	22	40
Total	29	30	59

The assessed value of these properties is over \$27.7 million. 53% of the buildings are in tax arrears and 8 have met the tax sale threshold (2 years of arrears). Prior to their respective vacancies, these buildings supported 59 dwelling units. Based on lots sizes and current zoning, these properties could support a minimum of 234 dwelling units. 8 of these properties are in the Downtown Neighbourhood Zone (DN) and do not have a required minimum or maximum number of homes, therefore, these properties could support a much higher number of units.

As of October 30, 2025, 65% of the known vacant buildings have been inspected (34). Initial inspections reveal that of the inspected buildings, 41% are in poor condition, 26% are in fair condition, and 32% are in good condition. 1 of the 34 buildings is an immediate safety concern, and 70% of buildings have property standards concerns.

Vacant Building Response Plan

A response plan has been developed with the intention of:

- Creating a sustainable framework for municipal response to vacant buildings,
- Accelerating response times, and
- Incentivizing property owners to act.

The Phases are summarized below. Specific actions, timelines, and status is included in Appendix C.

Phase One: Implement Existing Tools

Ongoing monitoring can assist with holding property owners accountable for their vacant buildings by discouraging long-term vacancies and ensuring property standards are maintained to minimize the impacts on the surrounding neighbourhood. As such, Phase One focuses on an enhanced approach using existing tools.

Phase Two: Review Implementation and Recommend Changes

Phase Two will be informed by the implementation of Phase One and include a review of additional tools that could support ongoing response. Each vacant building has a unique scenario, so property specific response plans will be created and implemented in Phase Two.

Phase Three: Launch Public Program

Phase Three will consist of a public education campaign to raise awareness of the complaint process and registration process.

Next Steps

Administration will continue to implement the Vacant Building Response Plan, with the intent of wrapping up data collection and building prioritization by the end of the year. This will provide additional data to inform the review of other financial tools that could support ongoing response. Following the review and assessment, Administration will return to the Standing Committee – Growth to provide a recommendation on whether tools like progressive fees, inspection fees, and the Administrative Monetary Penalty System are appropriate for Thunder Bay.

CONSULTATION

The Mayor's Taskforce on Building More Homes Advisory Committee received a presentation on the Vacant Building Response Plan at their meeting on November 19, 2025.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

The Vacant & Dilapidated Buildings Program has received up to \$2.077 million in funding through the HAF to support this work for the first two-year period. A financial allocation plan (Table 3) has been developed for the first two HAF installments. The final installment is conditional upon meeting the housing supply growth target of 1,755 homes and has not been included in the plan. Should the City meet the target, the final installment will be used to support further remediation work.

Table 3. Funding allocation plan for Vacant & Dilapidated Buildings Program.

Category	2025	2026	2027	Total
Building remediation	\$ 100,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 500,000
Consulting services	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 20,000
CIT process upgrades	\$ 65,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 65,000
Land acquisition	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 300,000
Marketing	\$ -	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 20,000
Public meetings	\$ -	\$ 15,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 25,000
Staff remuneration	\$ -	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 400,000
Training	\$ -	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 50,000
Subtotal	\$ 285,000	\$ 550,000	\$ 545,000	\$ 1,380,000
HAF Advances	\$ 692,333	\$ 692,333	\$ -	\$ 1,384,666

A review of response pathway financial scenarios was completed to assess potential sources of additional funding. Nine response pathways were identified (i.e., ways the City can take direct action on a vacant and/or dilapidated building), and under the current scenario the following funding sources are available:

- Annual departmental operating budgets,
- Land Development Account, and
- Vested Property Rehabilitation Reserve Fund.

These funding sources have allowed the City to address vacant and dilapidated buildings at a rate of 1-2 small buildings per year. In addition to creating a framework to manage vacant buildings beyond the lifetime of the HAF, funding has been allocated to land acquisition and remediation to increase the estimated number of buildings the City can address in 2026 & 2027 to 2-3 small buildings per year.

Based on these rates, a long-term source of funding will be required to remediate the 59 known vacant buildings over the next decade. There is some revenue generation potential with the Vacant & Dilapidated Buildings Program should inspection fees, registration fees, or other fee/fine based tools set and adopted by Council (Phase Two), as well as the surplus and sale of lands that have been vested and remediated by the City.

BACKGROUND

On March 20, 2025, the City of Thunder Bay received an additional \$2,077,000 through the Housing Accelerator Fund to support the creation of a Vacant & Dilapidated Buildings Program. Thunder Bay's Housing Supply Growth Target was adjusted to reflect this additional funding. The revised target is as follows:

- By February 2027:
 - 1,755 permitted housing units.
 - 429 missing middle housing units.
 - 328 other multi-unit housing units.
 - 20.61% are affordable units (362).

On February 29, 2024, it was announced that Thunder Bay was approved for up to \$20.7 million through the Housing Accelerator Fund.

By-laws 95/2022 and 96/2022 were adopted by City Council on September 12, 2022, following Report R 106/2022 (Development & Emergency Services/Licensing & Enforcement) Committee of the Whole – July 25, 2022, and Referral of Report R 106/2022 Committee of the Whole August 22, 2022.

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

Appendix A. Program Definitions

Appendix B. Exiting Municipal Tools

Appendix C. Vacant Building Response Plan

REPORT PREPARED BY

Summer Stevenson, Project Manager – Development Services

REPORT SIGNED AND VERIFIED BY

Corporate Report 346-2025-Growth-Development Services

Kerri Marshall, General Manager - Growth

Date (11/14/2025)

Appendix A. Program Definitions

“Dilapidated” refers to a structure which through neglect lacks necessary repairs or otherwise is in a state of decay or partial ruin to such an extent that the structure is a hazard to health, safety, or welfare of the general public; or, a vacant structure which is unfit for human occupancy due to the lack of necessary repairs and is considered uninhabitable and is a hazard to the health, safety, and welfare of the general public.

“Remediation” can refer to:

- Repair of conditions that are in violation of municipal by-laws, which includes but is not limited to vegetation removal, debris removal, fencing, or window boarding,
- Repair of conditions to return the structure to a safe condition, or
- Demolition of a structure deemed unsafe or dilapidated.

“Safe Condition” means a condition that does not pose or constitute an undue or unreasonable hazard or risk to life, limb, or health of any person on or about the property and includes a structurally sound condition (BL 96/2022).

“Vacant Building” means a building that is neither owner-occupied through an agreement, for a period of ninety (90) days or more and shall include partially vacant buildings and a vacant or partially vacant building that is occupied by unauthorized persons but does not include a new building that has not yet obtained an occupancy permit (BL 96/2022).

Appendix B. Existing Municipal Tools

Existing Enforcement Tools

The City has two existing tools regarding the standards and control of vacant buildings: the Municipal Standards for Property By-law (BL 95/2022), and the Vacant Building Security By-law (BL 96/2022). The Municipal Enforcement Services (MES) section is responsible for administering and enforcing both By-laws. The Building Services section currently maintains the list of vacant buildings identified by complaint and conducts semi-annual inspections of known buildings under BL 96/2022. This list is distributed to MES and Fire Services semi-annually to support further inspections.

Except in extreme cases of building deterioration (i.e. large fire, obvious unsafe conditions), property standards are typically inspected upon complaint. With complaint-based enforcement, deficiencies related to Property Standards at vacant buildings and overall building condition may deteriorate further before action is taken.

These by-laws allow the City to:

- Require that all property within the City of Thunder Bay is maintained and repaired to the standards outlined in BL 95/2022 and BL 96/2022.
- Enter and inspect properties, at reasonable times, to require compliance.
- Issue Defect Notices, Orders, and penalties, and carry out remediation efforts if required for compliance and safety.
- Establish a Vacant Building Registry and require owners to register properties that are vacant for ninety (90) days or longer.
- Charge fees for registration of a Vacant Building and any subsequent inspections of Vacant Buildings or Unoccupied Buildings.

Stantec Consulting Ltd. was retained to complete an existing policy review, comparator analysis, and gap analysis. A review of five comparator municipalities (St. Catharines, London, Sudbury, Saint John, and Sault Ste. Marie) was conducted to examine the strategies employed by other municipalities of similar size and objectives. Thunder Bay is in line with comparators for standards within the respective By-laws, and consistent with identified best practices.

Existing Financial Tools

In addition to the authority given in BL 96/2022, the Municipal Act, Building Code Act, and Fire Protection and Prevention Act contain provisions for cost recovery.

- ***Municipal Act, 2001.*** Under Section 446, costs of municipal work at the owner's expense can be added to the tax roll and collected like property taxes. Under Section 398, fees and charges imposed by a municipality on a person are considered a debt and may be added to the tax roll and collected like property taxes. In the event of nonpayment, the City can register a non-priority lien on title and collect as a lienholder. However, if the property goes into tax sale, these **costs are not recoverable** through the tax sale process.
- ***Building Code Act, 1992.*** Under Section 15, costs of municipal work due to an Unsafe Building Order or Emergency Orders (immediate danger) can be added to the tax roll and collected like property taxes. If the costs are confirmed by a judge, they are given priority lien status. If a property goes into tax sale, these **costs are recoverable** if the property sells. If the property moves through the tax sale process and does not sell and the City takes ownership, the cost is written off.
- ***Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997.*** Under Section 38, certain costs related to immediate threat to life (Section 15), Order to Close Premises (Section 31) or Inspection Orders (Section 21 & 33) can be added to the tax roll with priority lien status. If a property goes into tax sale, these **costs are recoverable** if the property sells. If the property moves through the tax sale process and does not sell and the City takes ownership, the cost is written off.

Other Existing Tools

Community Improvement Plans

The City has adopted three Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) with various incentives to encourage revitalization and redevelopment of lands and building within the City being the Growth Community Improvement Plan (2025), the Housing Community Improvement Plan (2024) and Strategic Core Area Community Plan (revised 2024).

The following existing grants impact vacant or underutilized buildings:

- **Tax Grant Rebate:** Provides tax increment grants to property owners who rehabilitate their downtown properties to an extent that results in a property value increase.
- **Construction Assistance Grant:** Provides funding to property owners who undertake revitalization programs in a one-time grant.
- **Commercial Conversion Grant – Main Floor:** Encourages redevelopment of existing main floors space to a commercial use and could be used to provide financial support to rehabilitate vacant commercial properties into viable commercial units for prospective tenants.

- **Residential/Office Conversion – 2nd Floor:** Encourages property owners to create new second storey or higher residential units and could be used to provide financial support to rehabilitate vacant units into viable residential/office uses for prospective tenants.
- **Multi-Unit Residential Grant:** Provides financial incentives to those who wish to construct multi-unit residential buildings at maximum density.
- **Housing Rehabilitation and Conversion Grant:** For the rehabilitation of existing residential units to meet the Ontario Building Code, or the conversion of a commercial/mixed-use building space into diverse residential units.
- **Brownfield Rehabilitation Grant:** Provides financial incentives to undertake environmental studies on brownfield sites within the City to allow additional lands to become available for employment development.

Property Acquisition

If a vacant and dilapidated building has progressed through the tax sale process and was not successfully sold, the City can choose to vest the property and remediate for future use or sale. This process takes a minimum of four years (from the first year of tax arrears) and is guided by the Tax Sale Vesting Policy.

The City can also choose to purchase a vacant and dilapidated property and remediate for future use or sale. This is guided by the Real Property – Administration, Acquisition, Development and Disposal suite of policies.

Appendix C. Vacant Building Response Plan

Table 4. Timeline and status of Phase One actions.

Description	Actions	Timeline	Status
Collect data to inform work	- Determine the number of known vacant buildings - Complete exterior inspections to determine building condition - Identify additional sources of data to support prioritization	Q3 – Q4 2025	In Progress
Prioritize list of known vacant buildings	- Create a priority response matrix - Establish internal Steering Committee - Rank list of known vacant buildings using priority response matrix	Q4 2025	In Progress
Operationalize the Vacant Building Security By-law	- Create an online Vacant Building Registry application form - Establish internal process in AMANDA to register, review, and monitor new and existing vacant buildings. - Create online vacant building complaint form	Q3 2025 – Q2 2026	In Progress
Proactively enforce the Municipal Standards for Property By-law	- Led by MES - Growth can support training efforts to build capacity	Ongoing	Ongoing
Assign a Building Code Enforcement Officer	Duties to include: - Inspect known vacant buildings on a regular schedule - Liaise with MES and Fire Services to inspect buildings received by complaint - Coordinate with the Chief Building Official (CBO) to issue orders under the Ontario Building Code - Maintain inspection and correspondence records in AMANDA	Q1 2026	Not Started
Assign a temporary Vacant Building	Duties to include: Liaise with Building Services, MES, and Fire Services to coordinate and monitor joint enforcement	Q1 2026	Not Started

Program Coordinator	• Monitor and track complaints • Coordinate and monitor the Vacant Building Registry • Add new buildings to the Vacant Building Registry in collaboration with property owners & City departments • Coordinate internal Steering Committee meetings • Develop response plans for priority buildings • Coordinate and monitor the implementation of response plans • Conduct public education • Support the development of Phases Two and Three		
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Table 5. Timeline and status of Phase Two actions.

Description	Actions	Timeline	Status
Review and assess additional tools that could support ongoing response	• Review and assess tools, including but not limited to progressive fees, inspection fees, and the Administrative Monetary Penalty System • Present findings and recommendations to Standing Committee – Growth and City Council	Q4 2025 – Q2 2026	In Progress
Create property specific response plans	• Liaise with Steering Committee to create response plans for priority buildings	Q4 2025 – Q1 2026	Not Started
Implement property specific response plans	• Execute response plans and maintain accurate records in AMANDA	Q2 – Q4 2026	Not Started
Monitor implementation and refine processes as required	• Review implementation records and monitor with Steering Committee • Propose changes to property specific response plans as required	Ongoing	Not Started

Table 6. Timeline and status of Phase Three actions.

Description	Actions	Timeline	Status
Launch education campaign for the public	• Create campaign to raise awareness of the complaint process for vacant buildings • Establish a webpage with a complaint form and information on municipal response	Q3 2026	Not Started
Launch education campaign for vacant property owners	• Create campaign to raise awareness for registration process for vacant buildings • Targeted communication with owners of known vacant properties	Q3 2026	Not Started