



TOWN OF WASAGA BEACH

2024 ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES OF ONTARIO CONFERENCE



The longest freshwater beach in the world.

Mayor's Message

This year, the Town of Wasaga Beach is celebrating its 50th birthday. As we look back upon 50 years of transformation and growth and reflect on our rich history, we are looking forward to what our community can achieve and become over the next 50 years.

We are standing at a fork in the road.

We can do things the way they've been done for 50 years, or challenge ourselves and our partners to do things differently, work together differently, and achieve radically different results – results that will build a more resilient Wasaga Beach and a stronger Ontario.

We are here at AMO to talk about our vision for the future of Wasaga Beach, explain how it supports provincial priorities, and connect with partners who will help us turn this vision into reality.

Since its incorporation in 1974, Wasaga Beach has continued to evolve from a playground for the GTA to one of Ontario's most iconic tourism destinations.

Today, Wasaga Beach is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Ontario with a growth rate 4 times higher than the provincial average. We are now the largest community in the south Georgian Bay region.

Fortunately, successive Councils have invested wisely over the years so that we are unique, an outlier in our region, in that our water and sewer capacity sits at 50% with sufficient reserves to support future growth. We are well-positioned to help deliver on the Province's bold housing targets.

We are proud to be unique among all other Ontario municipalities in another way, in that we are home to Ontario's first and most highly visited urban Provincial Park, which is located in our downtown and across 25% of our geographic land area.

Every year, almost 2 million people visit Wasaga Beach to enjoy our community, our magnificent 14-kilometre sandy beach, our sports and live music programming, and Wasaga Beach Provincial Park. This includes one of Canada's most significant national historic sites, Nancy Island.

Our population of almost 25,000 is shifting and growing, becoming younger and more diverse, on course to double in the next 30 years.

As a result, in part, of our Council's renewed focus and continued investments in festivals and special events programming, tourism in Wasaga Beach has bounced back and is up 20% over 2019 levels – and at its highest level in almost a decade. More people from the GTA are visiting Wasaga Beach for sport and live-music-related recreation than ever before.

We know Wasaga Beach is unique and we're building on what sets us apart.

The Town of Wasaga Beach's summer live music lineup is unlike any other live music lineup in Ontario, Canada – it takes place under the stars on the sandy shores of the longest freshwater beach in the world. In 2023, the Town's annual Memories of Summer concert attracted almost 15,000 people to our spectacular beachfront for a live music experience you won't find anywhere else in the province.

In February 2024, the launch of the Town's first winter sport and music festival was a huge success, thanks to the Town's \$60 million investment in a new twin-pad, NHL-size arena and library which opened earlier this year. Over 6,000 people attended from outside our community.

We're working smart, thinking creatively, and building partnerships to get things done.

The Town is partnering with FRAM Building Group and Sunray Group of Hotels to reimagine our iconic beachfront and build 1000+ mixed-use residential units and a world-class hotel in our downtown, near Beach Area 1. We expect shovels in the ground in summer 2025.

The Town is partnering with the Ontario Ministry of Education, Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board, County of Simcoe, Canadore College, Lakehead University and Farsight Homes to build a new state-of-the-art high school, community hub and theatre that is right next door to our new arena and library, and in walking distance to the beachfront. This project will leverage over \$60 million of existing municipal infrastructure to save taxpayers money and get shovels in the ground faster. We expect construction to begin in early 2025.



Today, we are focused on forming new partnerships.

We want to reinvent our beachfront; reinvigorate our main street; deliver a bold tourism strategy that includes more sports and live music festival programming than ever before; establish a closer, more innovative and collaborative relationship with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, Ministry of Sport and Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks; strengthen our economy; build more homes faster; get shovels in the ground on affordable housing; make life better for our full-time residents; and help ignite tourism in Southern Georgian Bay and South Central Ontario.

We know our goals are achievable, but we can't do it alone.

We look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,
Brian Smith, Mayor
Town of Wasaga Beach

The longest freshwater beach in the world.

WEST WASAGA SECONDARY PLAN

OUR ASK

That the Province supports the Town of Wasaga Beach's West Wasaga Secondary plan by:

- **Collaborating** with the Town to re-imagine Beachwood Road so that it can become more urban and more compatible with the vision that the Town has for this once thriving corridor.
- **Providing** capital funding to fix flooding issues along Beachwood Road that were caused by the Highway 26 By-Pass.

Why is this important?

Wasaga Beach is one of Ontario's fastest growing municipalities. Provincial support for the Town's West Wasaga Secondary Plan will accommodate future growth in a strategic, coordinated way that will help the Town develop into a complete community, attract jobs and investment, and protect the Town's only Employment Lands. This will achieve the shared goals of the Town and Province to attract jobs and investment, meet bold housing targets and build a stronger Ontario.

Our Opportunity

- In 2003 the Province began construction on the Highway 26 By-Pass between Collingwood and Wasaga Beach which was opened in 2012. The By-Pass has resulted in flooding and economic losses – in some cases bankruptcy – for small businesses located on the former highway.
- We would like to collaborate with the Province to fix flooding issues that have resulted from the construction of the Highway 26 By-Pass, and change standards along Beachwood Road to help the Town develop it in a way that aligns with the West Wasaga Secondary Plan.
- Beachwood Road is now an urban corridor, not a major highway, and it needs to be re-imagined and re-designed as such. The Town wishes to collaborate with the Province to achieve this.
- The West Wasaga Secondary Plan is a holistic plan that will support the economic revitalization of this once economically thriving area that connected tourism and traffic traveling from the GTA through Wasaga Beach and on to Collingwood. With provincial support, it will breathe new life into the Beachwood Road corridor to make it more vibrant and urban in nature, and more compatible with the Town's vision for these lands as we work to build a more complete community.

Our Challenges

- Because Beachwood Drive is under MTO jurisdiction, the Town cannot proceed without MTO planning and approvals support.
- Development charges (DCs) will cover some of these costs. The Town is seeking other funding sources to cover the balance.

NOTE: The project cannot be initiated without confirmation of external funding and MTO support.

OUR ASK

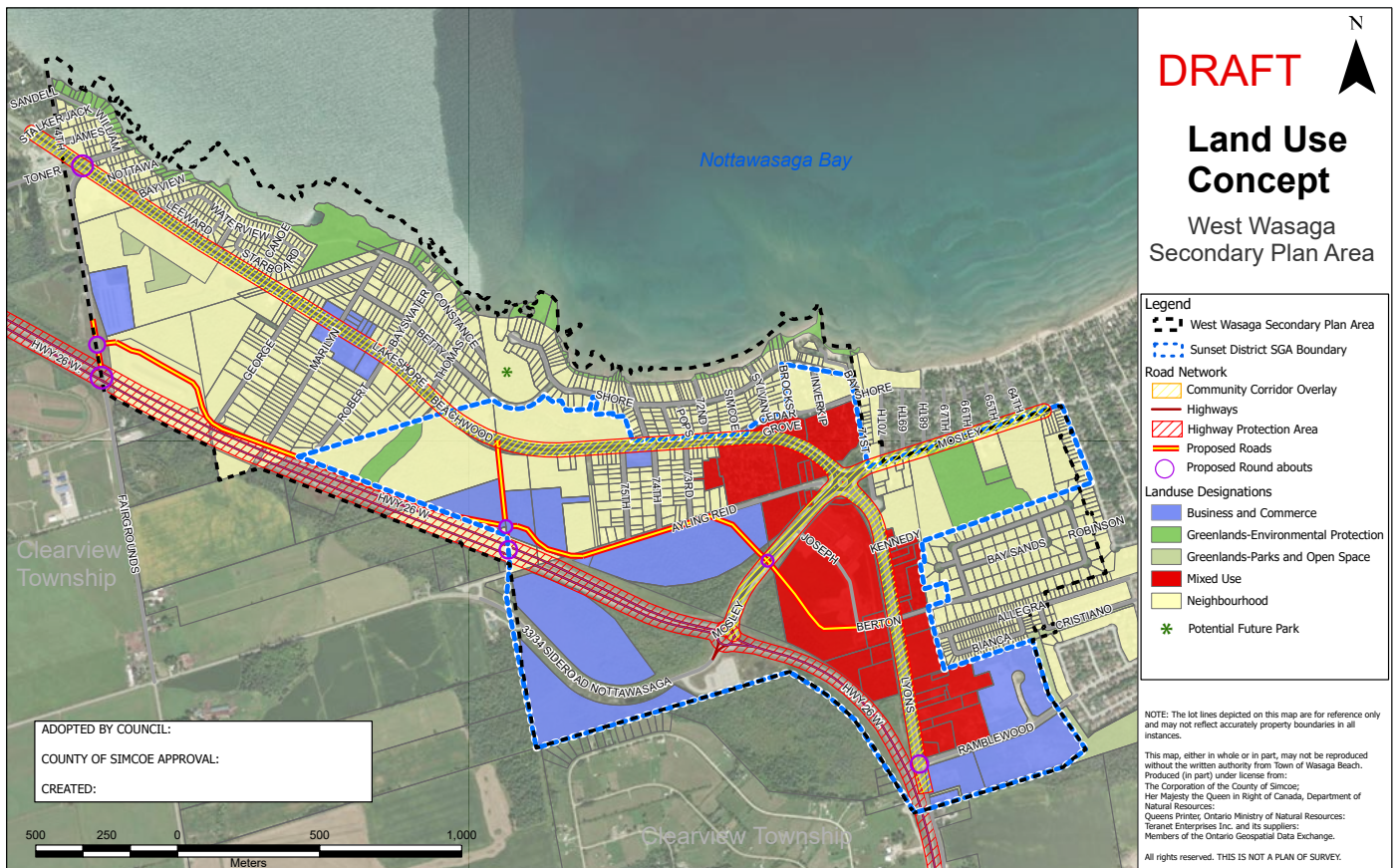
That the Province and Minister of Transportation support the Town’s West Wasaga Secondary Plan and efforts to attract jobs and investment, by saying “no” to any future By-Passes that could sterilize the Town’s only Employment Lands and negatively impact jobs and economic opportunities in our community.

Our Opportunity

- The Town is in the process of developing its Business Park and has an application for a new major employer that could bring more than 350 jobs and other economic spin-offs to Wasaga Beach.
- The Town is concerned about the impact of any potential new By-Pass that may impact the Employment Lands where this new employer is considering investing.

350

A new major employer plans to bring more than 350 jobs to Wasaga Beach



Our Challenges

- The Town is aware that the South Georgian Bay Mayors and CAOs Forum is advocating for an MTO study regarding the feasibility of a second By-Pass that could impact the Town of Wasaga Beach.
- The Town of Wasaga Beach is a member of the South Georgian Bay Mayors and CAOs Forum, however, we do not support any further By-Passes within Wasaga Beach or within proximity to Wasaga Beach that will result in negative impacts for our municipality.
- We are aware that one of the paths for a second, proposed By-Pass would, if approved, sterilize the Town's only Employment Lands and negatively impact jobs and economic opportunities in our community.
- The Town is deeply concerned about further By-Pass discussions and wants to ensure that no further highway expansions will occur in the vicinity of the Town's Business Park or Employment Lands that will negatively impact the employment vision of the Town or the Town's business attraction efforts.

Total Impact

Provincial support to re-imagine Beachwood Road, fix the flooding issues, and say "no" to any new By-Passes that would divert more people and investment away from Wasaga Beach, will:

- **Help** revitalize the Town's once thriving, now derelict Beachwood Road corridor.
- **Strengthen** the local economy and local employment for current and future residents and businesses.
- **Protect** the Town's only Employment Lands.
- **Help** attract millions in new investment and over 350 jobs within the next 12 months.
- **Support** the Province's Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan by mitigating negative environmental, economic and human health impacts associated with uncoordinated growth.
- **Ensure** the Town remains open for business.



ALIGNING WITH PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES

Supports the Province's budget commitment for infrastructure projects, and is in alignment with the government's priority of job creation, building a stronger economy and investing in infrastructure that will ensure municipalities can continue to support Bill 23 and future growth.

