

Growth Readiness Action Plan

Final Report 2022

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Executive Summary

Growth-ready municipalities are strategic in their planning. They create specific and actionable priorities to address essential municipal services and responsibilities in support of local growth. Economic expansion includes appropriate policy, private investment, the availability of land and housing, infrastructure to support the growth, adequate essential services, a solid financial foundation, and capacity for delivery. This plan has identified which steps the municipality can take to maximize future growth opportunities. To position themselves effectively and proactively, Greater Madawaska will focus on core municipal responsibilities in the areas of planning and development, infrastructure, and economic development.

Planning and Development

Ensuring an efficient and convenient development approvals process will create an optimal environment for developers, contractors and Internet and cellular service providers as new residential developments proceed, Highway 417 expands, and Internet and cellular coverage progresses. The Township should incentivize affordable housing developers with little to no development charges and building and planning fees. The Township can ensure all development approval policies and procedures are up to date and should consider removing barriers and red tape to make it easier for alternative developments, such as multi-unit homes and secondary suites.

Infrastructure

A comprehensive active transportation and trails plan can help the municipality invest its money wisely while connecting communities, expanding tourism, and creating a safer transportation system. Implementing a geographic information system (GIS) will improve efficiencies while managing community infrastructure and assets. Promoting Internet and cellular expansion projects in Greater Madawaska is essential to stay competitive while attracting new residents and businesses.

Economic Development

Supporting existing businesses is a primary tool to support growth and development, followed by effective planning to attract new businesses. Adequate staffing with proper knowledge and training needs to be in place. Since Greater Madawaska does not have an Economic Development Officer, existing staff need to be trained on growth plans, available lands, vacant properties, and economic development. A Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) is recommended to engage current businesses, and a marketing plan should be developed to effectively attract new residents and businesses. Partnerships will allow the community to pursue opportunities to expand tourism that might not be possible if working alone. The growth and development of Calabogie should be a priority since it is already an established hub. The development of the waterfront in the Village will create a destination for residents and visitors.

Introduction

Growth can pose a unique set of challenges for municipalities. Economic expansion includes appropriate policy, private investment, the availability of land and housing, infrastructure to support the growth, adequate essential services, a solid financial foundation, and capacity for delivery.

This Growth Readiness Action Plan is the first piece of a three-part project to assist the Township through future development.

1. Growth Readiness Action Plan – A strategy that responds to increased growth pressures in the municipality.
2. Development Standards – A set of standards for new development in the municipality.
3. Comprehensive Zoning By-law Update – A modern, consistent document that regulates land use throughout the Township.

In 2016, rural Ontario’s population growth accelerated as urban housing markets climbed. Recent population increases, likely brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, are slowing down, although rural populations will continue to see strong growth rates beyond the pandemic.¹

Municipal staff and Council need to be aware of the potential risks associated with growth and ensure they have the capacity and tools to manage growth-related risks effectively. By assessing Greater Madawaska’s readiness for growth, we can evaluate whether the Township is ideally positioned to support growth opportunities.

The main economic growth driver is the private sector. The Township’s responsibility is to create an environment that positively promotes the region and removes barriers so investors (both businesses and individuals) can create growth. This plan has identified which steps the municipality can take to maximize future growth opportunities. To position themselves effectively and proactively, Greater Madawaska will focus on core municipal responsibilities in the areas of planning and development, infrastructure, and economic development.

Most important factors that contribute to people moving to rural areas:

Personal Health, Ability to Work Remotely, and Rising Housing Prices

Statistics Canada, The Daily, January 14, 2021

¹ Rural Ontario Institute, Rural Ontario’s Population Growth During Covid 19, October 2021

Our Approach

This action plan was developed by a comprehensive analysis of completed plans and reports, demographics, and economic trends, and with the support of Township staff, Council, and key stakeholders, including government partners, businesses, and the public. A public online survey was completed by 261 respondents and 21 one-on-one phone interviews were conducted, followed by a planning session with Township staff.

Tourism

“There is so much potential for tourism growth here.”

Survey Respondent,
Online Survey, November 2021

Growth and Development Priorities for Stakeholders:

- ✓ Safe roads for walking and biking
- ✓ Trails and parks
- ✓ Affordable Housing
- ✓ Employment opportunities
- ✓ Restaurants, food markets
- ✓ Expand Internet/cell coverage
- ✓ Commercial development
- ✓ Outdoor recreation
- ✓ Tourism/hospitality
- ✓ Retail
- ✓ Support local businesses through economic development, infrastructure, and incentives

Three areas of focus were identified to address stakeholder priorities, Planning and Development, Infrastructure, and Economic Development. The actions in each area are prioritized with timeline, budget, and resource recommendations. These recommendations are supported by stakeholder engagement.



Survey Highlights



Services Needed

Shopping
Restaurants

88%
Of respondents want the Township to encourage more local food options, produce stands, and food markets.




Priority

Internet/Cellular
Commercial Development
Recreation
Affordable Senior's Housing

88%
Of respondents said 'Trails and Parks' were extremely or very important.

Nearly
1/2
Of respondents that own a business in Greater Madawaska have been in business for three years or less.

89%
Of respondents said 'Creating Safe Roads for Walking and Biking' was extremely or very important.

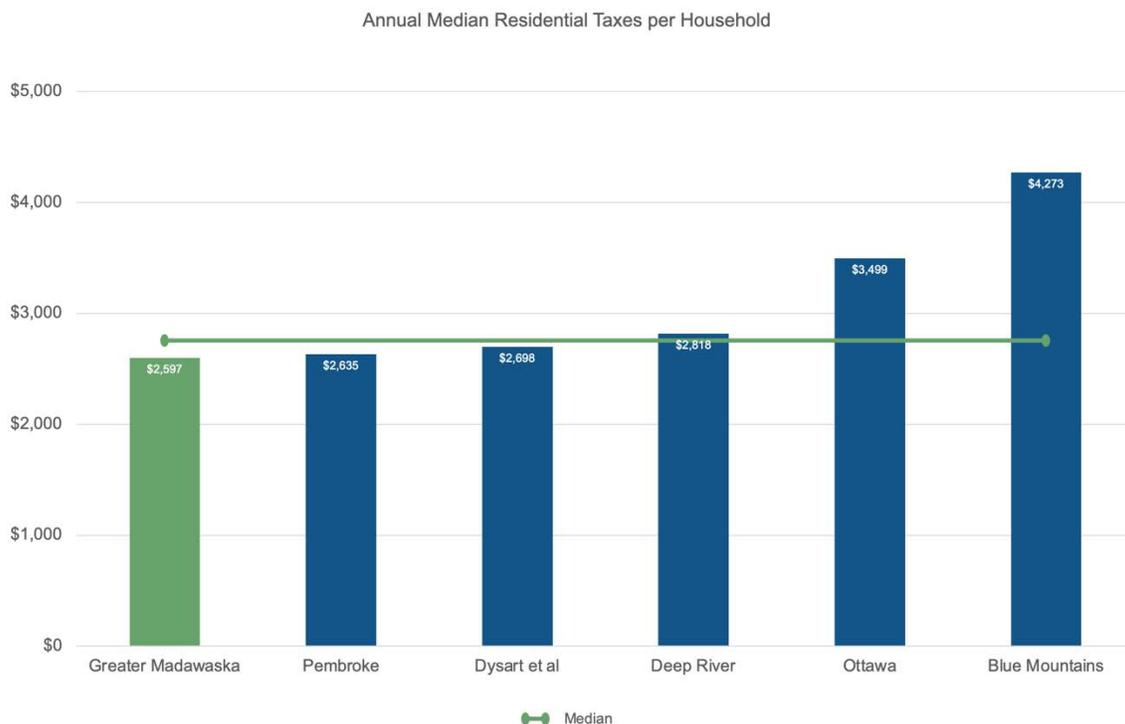
Over
87%
Of respondents said Greater Madawaska is a good or excellent place to live.



Competitive Advantages

The Township of Greater Madawaska has an abundance of lakes and rivers and beautiful mountain ranges in Calabogie, Griffith and Mount St. Patrick. The Township combines a slower-paced lifestyle with a vibrant year-round outdoor recreational lifestyle. It is a safe community compared to larger centers, and its proximity to Renfrew (20 mins.), Arnprior (30 mins.) and Ottawa (1 hr.) make it an ideal location.

The housing market in Greater Madawaska has risen sharply over the past two years. However, with the average home sale price of \$649,000², it is still lower than the Ottawa and Ontario averages of \$710,000³ and \$923,000⁴, respectively. Greater Madawaska also has a low residential tax rate compared to similar and neighbouring municipalities. The median rate per household is \$2,758, and Greater Madawaska's annual median rate is \$2,597.



Source: Municipal Financial Information Returns (FIR) 2019, 2020

² Cost of housing across Renfrew County up roughly \$110,000 in 2021, PembrokeToday.ca,

<https://www.pembroketoday.ca/2021/06/22/hot-real-estate-trend-continues-across-renfrew-county/>. June 2021

³ Ottawa's new normal: Annual house price gains topping 16 per cent, Ottawa Citizen, <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/ottawas-new-normal-annual-house-price-gains-topping-16-per-cent>. Jan 2022.

⁴ Ontario Housing Market Report, <https://wowa.ca/ontario-housing-market>, December 2021



As a community grows and begins to attract people and businesses proactively, it first needs to identify why someone would choose the community over another. Using Greater Madawaska’s competitive advantages in campaigns and promotional material can help drive growth. See Appendix A for creative samples using competitive advantages.



Winter Activities

Skiing
Snowboarding
Skating
Snowshoeing
Snowmobiling



Summer Activities

Boating
Canoeing/kayaking
Fishing
Biking/Hiking
Golf
Camping
Racetrack



Location

Proximity to
Ottawa, Renfrew, and
Arnprior



Quality of Life

Slower paced
Surrounded by nature
Lower cost of living
compared to Ottawa

Priority Areas

Planning and Development

A municipality needs to adequately administer bylaws and policies and provide residents, investors, and businesses with timely and reliable information. The development approvals process needs to be efficient and convenient to accommodate new residential development, the expansion of Highway 417, and the expansion of Internet and cellular coverage.

Policies need to be in place to accommodate the need for a wide spectrum of affordable housing, including single-family and senior housing. Many seniors prefer to age in place in private residences, and seniors who are open to moving to seniors' residences may not have appropriate options in a rural community.

Ontario is currently in a housing crisis. Housing has become too expensive for rental units and too expensive in rural communities and small towns. The average home price in Ontario is \$923,000⁵, while ten years ago, the average price was \$329,000.⁶ During that timeframe, average house prices rose 180%. In comparison, average incomes increased 38%.⁷ The province has set a goal to build 1.5 million homes over the next ten years.⁸ Greater Madawaska can position itself as a YIMBY (Yes In My Backyard) community that developers and contractors will want to work with.

The Township should encourage and incentivise developers with little to no development charges and little to no planning and building fees. The Township can ensure all development approval policies and procedure are up to date and they are leveraging the full suite of available tools, such as staff delegated authority. Consider an inclusionary zoning policy. This would require new residential developments to include affordable housing units, creating mixed-income housing.

Greater Madawaska should consider removing barriers and red tape to make it easier for alternative developments and increased opportunities, such as a multi-unit home with a shared kitchen and living space, and secondary suites.

⁵ Ontario Housing Market Report, <https://wowa.ca/ontario-housing-market>, December 2021

⁶ Global Property Guide, <https://www.globalpropertyguide.com/North-America/Canada/Price-History-Archive/canadian-housing-market-strong-127030>, September 2011

⁷ Report of the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force <https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-housing-affordability-task-force-report-en-2022-02-07-v2.pdf> February 2022

⁸ Housing Affordability Task Force report, Province of Ontario, Feb 8, 2022

Infrastructure

The Township not only needs to meet its current infrastructure needs, but it must also plan to accommodate future growth needs, and proper planning supports organized and realistic development.

A comprehensive active transportation and trails plan can help the municipality invest its money wisely. The majority of survey respondents (89%) said 'Creating Safe Roads for Walking and Biking' was extremely or very important. As the community grows, this will become more significant. Active transportation includes walking, cycling and other human-powered ways of getting around. An active transportation network will provide residents and visitors with on-road and off-road trails and active transportation corridors connecting the communities in Greater Madawaska. The active transportation and trails plan will create and improve opportunities to connect schools, parks, and villages, create new economic opportunities for existing and prospective businesses and expand tourism.

Implementing a geographic information system (GIS) to improve efficiencies and to allow departments to manage community infrastructure and assets better, estimate future growth demands, and share, collect, and analyze critical physical and cultural municipal data.

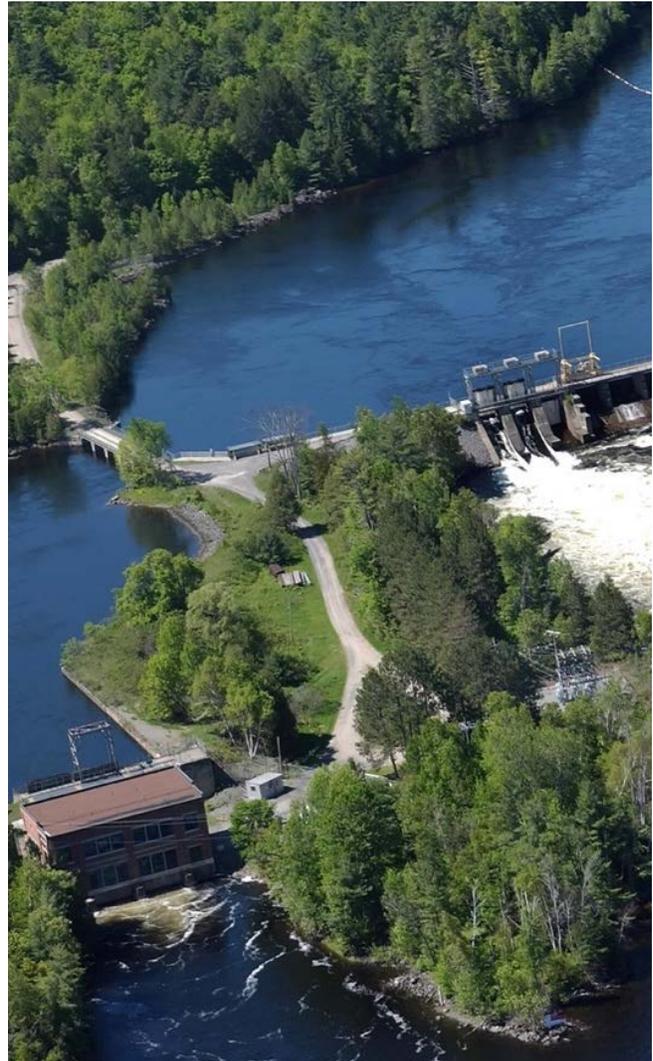
Promoting Internet and cellular expansion projects in Greater Madawaska is essential to stay competitive while attracting new residents and businesses. The Township can add expansion projects to the Township website, social media, and email.



Economic Development

Supporting existing businesses is a primary tool to support growth and development, followed by effective planning to attract new businesses. Promoting the area, businesses, and attractions also plays a vital role in growth planning. Economic development creates employment and income for residents and revenues for the municipality to fund services and programs while creating whole communities where residents can work close to home and have a better work-life balance.

To ensure that service delivery is maintained as the community grows, adequate staffing with proper knowledge and training needs to be in place. Since Greater Madawaska does not have an Economic Development Officer, existing staff need to be trained on growth plans, available lands, vacant properties, and economic development in general. A properly trained staff member can be the primary contact for investors and report on and follow up on investment inquiries. Putting this into place will increase the investment success rate.



The current community profile requires further development as it can be a powerful tool for prospective investors. If this information is not readily available, investors will quickly look elsewhere. A Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) is recommended to engage current businesses and a marketing plan should be developed to effectively attract residents and businesses. The Township should develop partnerships with government and tourism organizations that allow the community to pursue opportunities to expand tourism that might not be possible if working alone.

The growth and development of Calabogie should be a priority for Greater Madawaska since it is already an established hub. The development of the waterfront in the Village will create a destination for residents and visitors. Transforming underused waterfront lands has significant economic benefits, including attracting new businesses and creating jobs, encouraging private sector investment, impacts on the construction industry, expanded opportunities for residents, increases in tourism, and new or expanded festivals and events.

Recommendations

Priority Area - Planning and Development (PD), Infrastructure (I), Economic Development (ED)

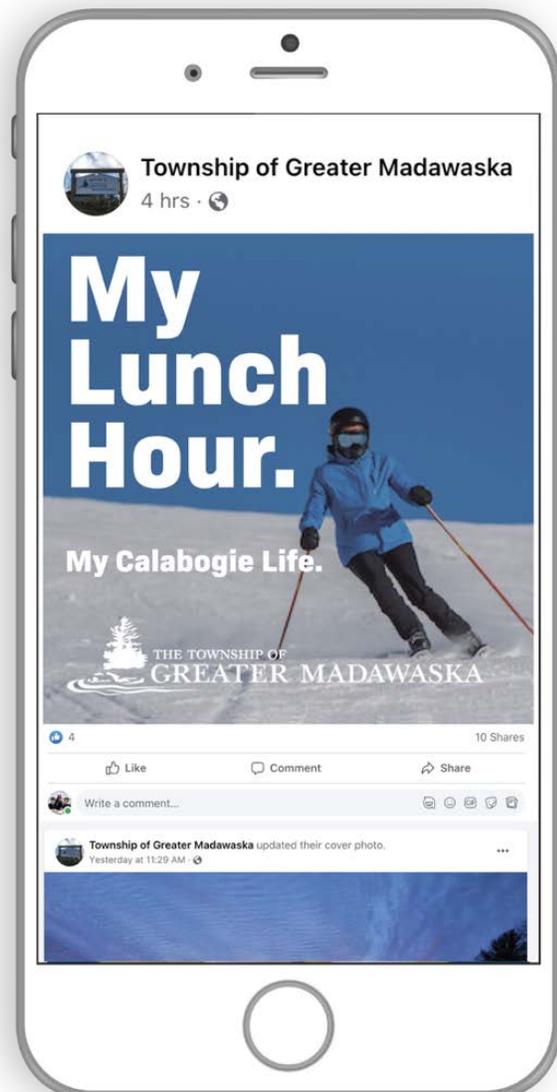
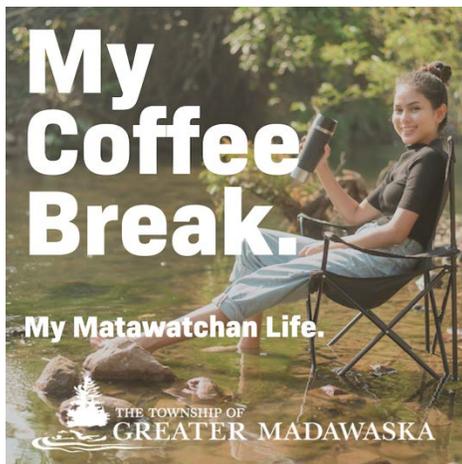
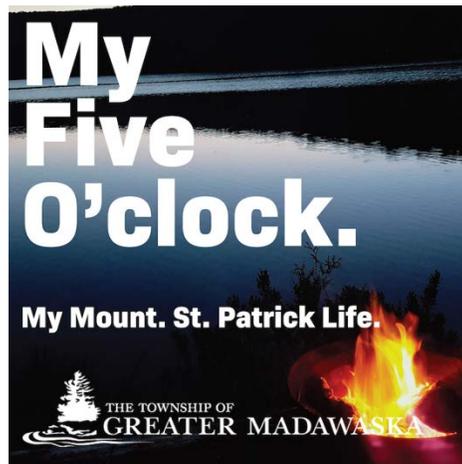
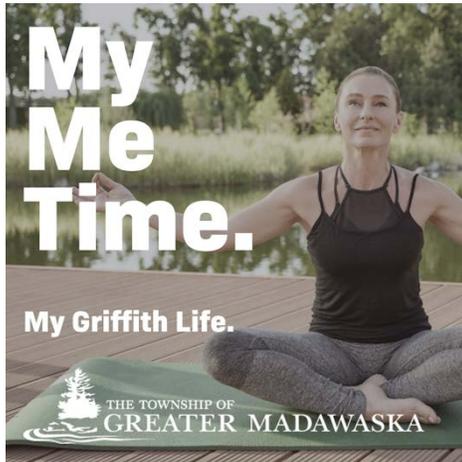
Priority Area	Action Item	Timeline	Lead & Resources
PD	1. Ensure adequate staffing for Planning and Building.	2022	Lead: Township Staff
PD	2. Ensure the development approvals process is efficient and timely to accommodate housing developments, secondary suites, and Hwy 417 expansion.	2022	Lead: Township Staff Resource: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
PD	3. Simplify all permit application documents and create timelines for the application process.	2022	Lead: Township Staff Resource: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Township Staff
PD	4. Ensure there are no barriers to shared housing/co-housing and co-living arrangements.	2022	Lead: Consultant Resource: Township Staff, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Township Staff
PD	5. Consider eliminating development charges and planning and building fees for priority developments (Affordable housing, Internet/cellular expansions, Highway 417 expansion).	2022	Lead: Township Staff Resource: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Township Staff
PD	6. Investigate the addition of an inclusionary zoning policy that would require new residential developments to include affordable housing units, creating mixed-income housing.	2022	Lead: Township Staff Resource: Consultant, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Township Staff

Priority Area	Action Item	Timeline	Lead & Resources
ED	<p>7. Use the current Planning and Development Technician as an economic development point of contact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide education and training on growth and economic development. • Assign as the primary contact for potential developers/investors 	2022	<p>Lead: Township Staff Resources: Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO), Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade</p>
ED	<p>8. Provide education and training to existing staff on growth and economic development.</p>	2022	<p>Lead: Township Staff Resources: Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO), Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade</p>
I	<p>9. Add a page to the Township website with new Internet and cellular projects. Promote projects on social media, and through email.</p>	2022	<p>Lead: Township Staff Resources: Internet Service Providers and Cellular Providers</p>
ED	<p>10. Conduct a Waterfront Development Plan in the Village of Calabogie Budget Recommendation: \$50,000</p>	2023-2028	<p>Lead: Consultant Resources: Township Staff, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), Ottawa Valley Tourist Association, County of Renfrew</p>
I	<p>11. Leverage GIS software for data management of Township-owned assets and services. Budget Recommendation: \$5,000-10,000 annually</p>	2023	Township Staff
ED	<p>12. Expand the current Community Profile. Create a visually appealing profile that can be added to the website and emailed to prospective investors. Profile can include demographics, investment successes, labour profile, and other relevant data. Budget Recommendation: \$3,000</p>	2023	Township Staff, Consultant, Graphic Designer, see appendix A for creative samples

Priority Area	Action Item	Timeline	Lead & Resources
ED	13. Develop a Marketing Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Resident attraction (work from home professionals) b) Business attraction Budget Recommendation: \$15,000-25,000	2023	Lead: Consultant Resource: Township Staff, Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing, CMHC, Health Force Ontario, Chamber of Commerce, Ottawa Valley Tourist Association, Renfrew County CFDC, RT011, see appendix A for creative samples
ED	14. Conduct a Business Retention and Expansion plan to engage with existing businesses. Budget Recommendation: \$20,000	2024	Township Staff, Consultant, County, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)
ED	15. Examine options to create partnerships with government, businesses, and tourism organizations to pursue tourism opportunities. Priorities should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Shoulder season activities, b) Farmer's market, local food produce stands. 	2024	Township staff, County of Renfrew, Neighbouring Municipalities, Chamber of Commerce, Ottawa Valley Tourist Association, RT011, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)
I	16. Complete an Active Transportation and Trails plan. Budget Recommendation: \$40,000	2025	Township Staff, County, Algonquin Trail Advisory Committee, Cycling Clubs and Active Transportation Groups, Local Businesses, Ottawa Valley Cycling and Active Transportation Alliance (OVCATA), Renfrew/ UOV OPP Detachment, Renfrew/County Public Health, MTO, Ottawa Valley ATV Club/OFSC District 6
I	17. Continue to support Internet and cellular companies on local area expansions.	Ongoing	Township Staff, County, Internet and Cellular Service Providers, Canwisp, Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN), Ministry of Infrastructure

Appendix A – Creative Samples

Attraction Campaign Using Competitive Advantages



Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all participants of the Growth Readiness Action Plan including the residents, businesses and organizations that completed the survey and interviews.

Report prepared by
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