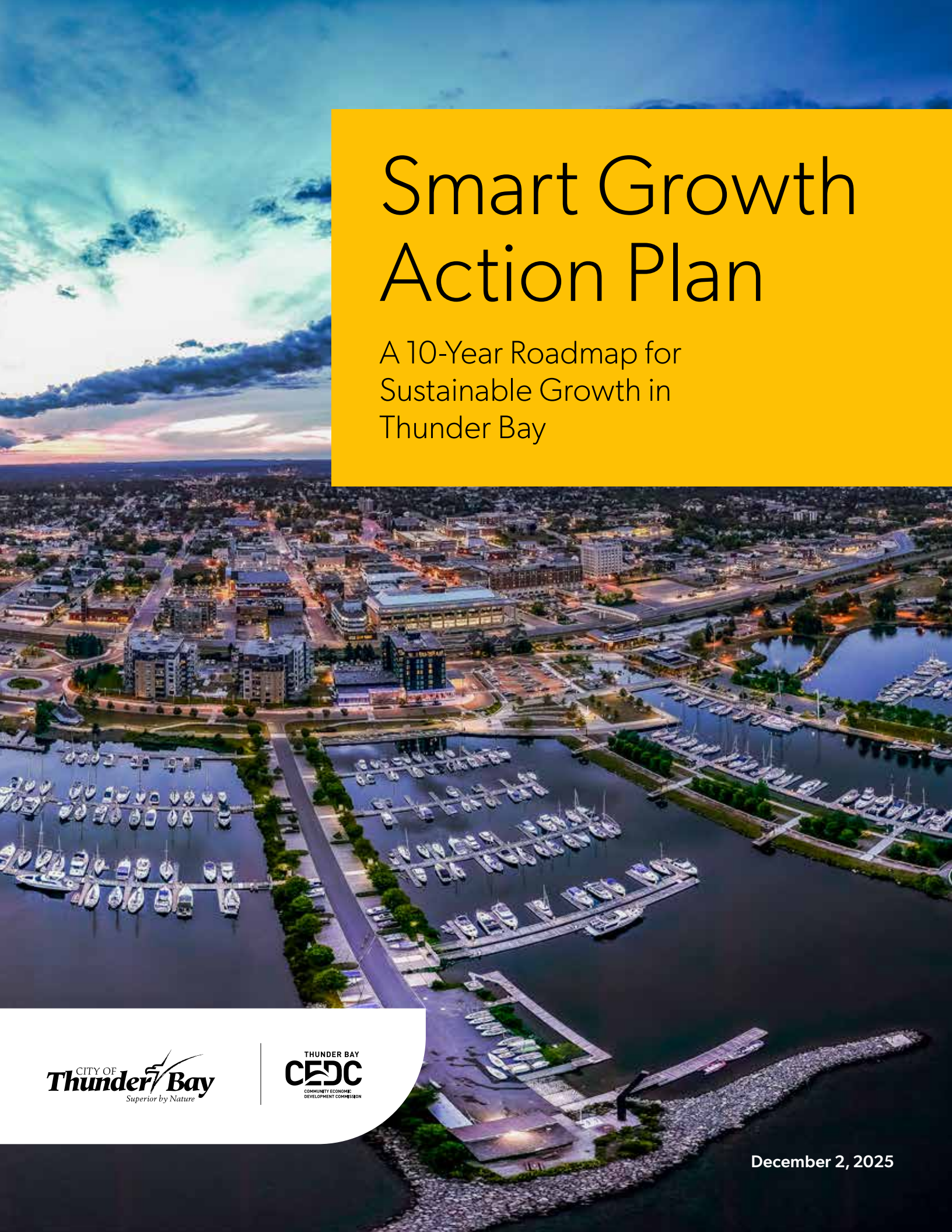
Smart Growth Action Plan

A 10-Year Roadmap for Sustainable Growth in Thunder Bay



CITY OF Thunder Bay
Superior by Nature

THUNDER BAY CEDC
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

December 2, 2025



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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 Waijw (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 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.

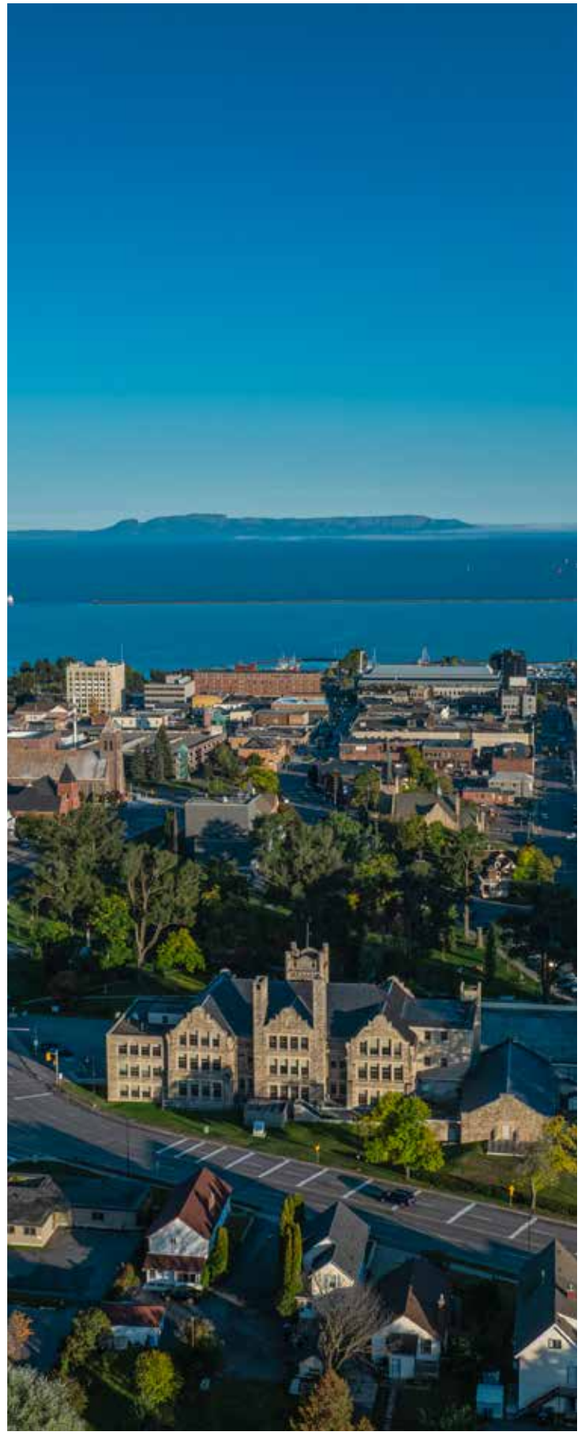
I love how this city celebrates diversity while staying rooted in authenticity. It's a place where a Senegalese mom can create culinary events, start a new business, and dream BIG again. It's a place where kids can grow with snow in their boots and kindness in their hearts.

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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Back Row (L-R): Jamie Taylor - Thunder Bay CEDC, Sean Davies - Maintair Aviation Services, Denise Atkinson - Tipi Horse Connects, Raechel Reed - Fort William BIA, Matt Pearson - City of Thunder Bay, Rene Gallant - Synergy North, Adam Rose - RJ Burnside & Associates, John Collin - City of Thunder Bay, Cheryl St. James - Fort William First Nation, Paul Norris - Tbaytel.

Front Row (L-R): Kerri Marshall - City of Thunder Bay, Charla Robinson - Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Andrew Bishop - Thunder Bay Pulp & Paper, Jack Mallon - Royal LePage, Karl Skogstad - Lakehead University, Kara Pratt - Waterfront District BIA.

Not Pictured: Janine Black - St. Joseph's Care Group, Brian Davey - Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund, Michael den Haan - Lakehead University, Chris Heikkinen - Port of Thunder Bay, Graham Ingham - Thunder Bay Airport, Jessica Logozzo - Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, Nathanael Moulson - NDRM Advisory Services, Michelle Salo - Confederation College, Gillian Siddall - Lakehead University, John Stephenson - FormStudio Architects.

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 Vice-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 Vice-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 and 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

3%

Grow the property tax base by 3% annually

Grow the population by 1% annually

1%

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.

Key Considerations

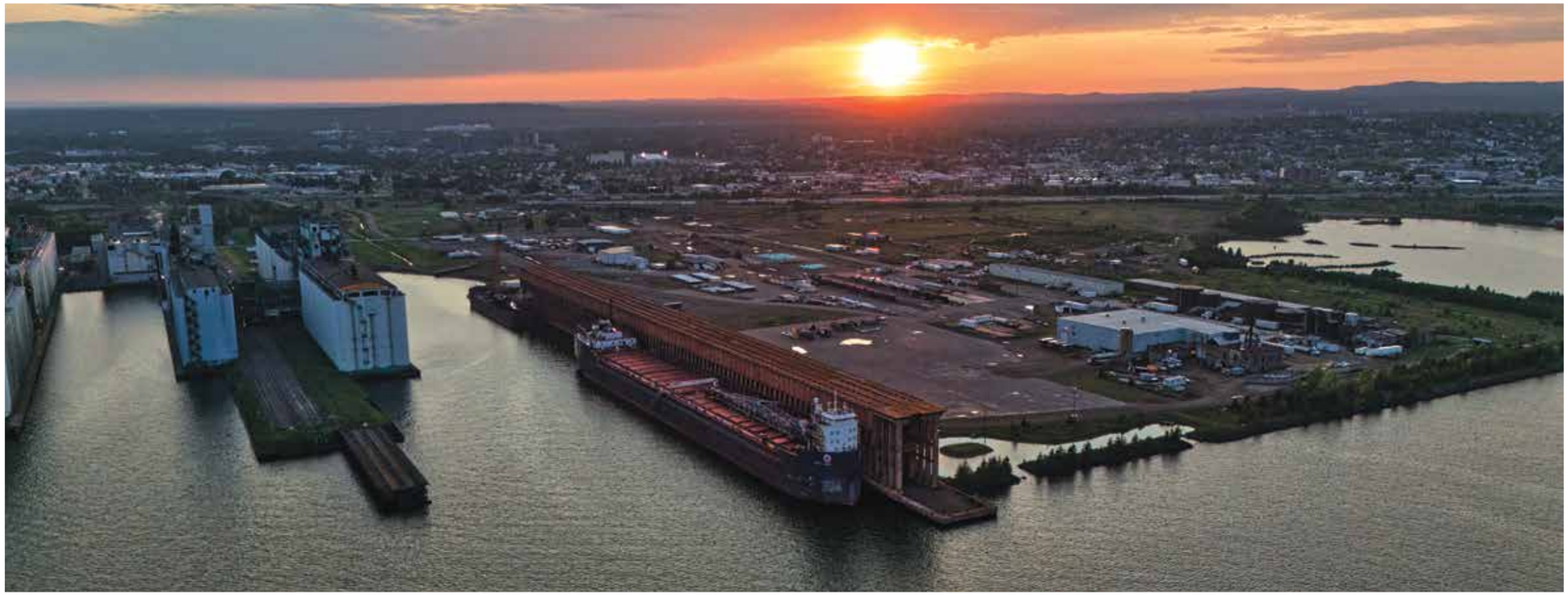
- Financial Sustainability
- Inclusiveness
- Environmental Stewardship
- Innovation
- Risk Management

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



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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.

> "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 ease 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 and Strategy 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.



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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**, the 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**, the Plan 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**, the Plan 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):

Anishnawbe Business Professional Association · Fort William First Nation · nadf Supporting Indigenous Prosperity · Thunder Bay CEDC Community Economic Development Commission

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 hours. 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.

3%
TAX BASE GROWTH

1%
POPULATION GROWTH

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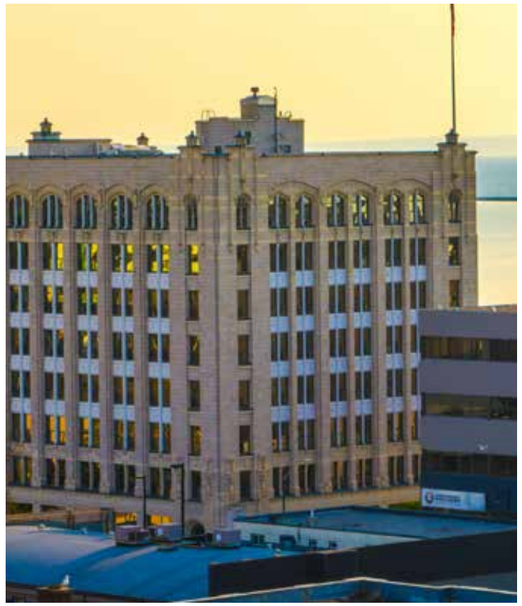

Building a More Balanced Tax Base

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 build 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 City, 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.



© City of Thunder Bay

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



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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:

- **R15 – Shovel-Ready Opportunities:** Increasing the availability of shovel-ready commercial and industrial lands enables faster, strategic development. This aligns with smart growth by focussing development in areas already serviced by infrastructure and encouraging coordinated and sustainable land-use.
- **R14 – Industrial Park/Hubs:** Developing an industrial park and/or a network of well-serviced hubs will create a flexible and scalable framework for business attraction. This supports sector clustering and responds to emerging business needs.
- **R7/R12 – Neebing and Strathcona Industrial Lands:** Declaring surplus and marketing City owned industrial lands on Neebing Avenue and Strathcona Avenue will help unlock development opportunities in serviced or partially serviced areas.
- **R9 – Intercity Development:** Targeted incentives to support infill in this commercial and light industrial area will help unlock underutilized land and strengthen this centrally located economic hub.

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.

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.



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

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.



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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.

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.



© City of Thunder Bay

Bare Point Water Treatment Plant filtration system.

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.

> "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**

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

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.



© City of Thunder Bay

Aerial view of Innova Park.

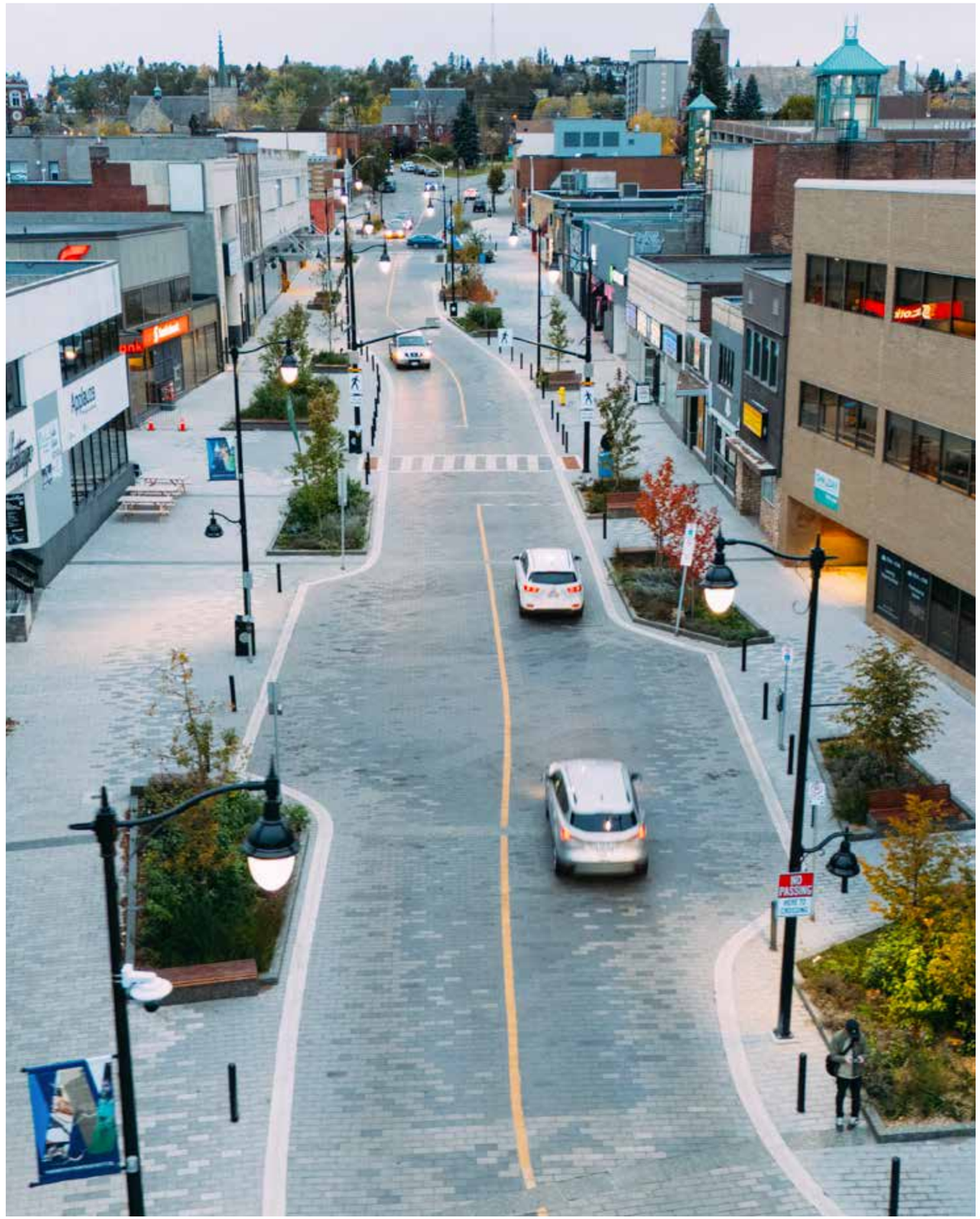
A key driver of business attraction is having land that is available, serviced, and ready for development. The City's actions to activate commercial and industrial lands (see Spotlight: Activating Lands) lay this groundwork by preparing development-ready sites. Building on that foundation, the focus 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.

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

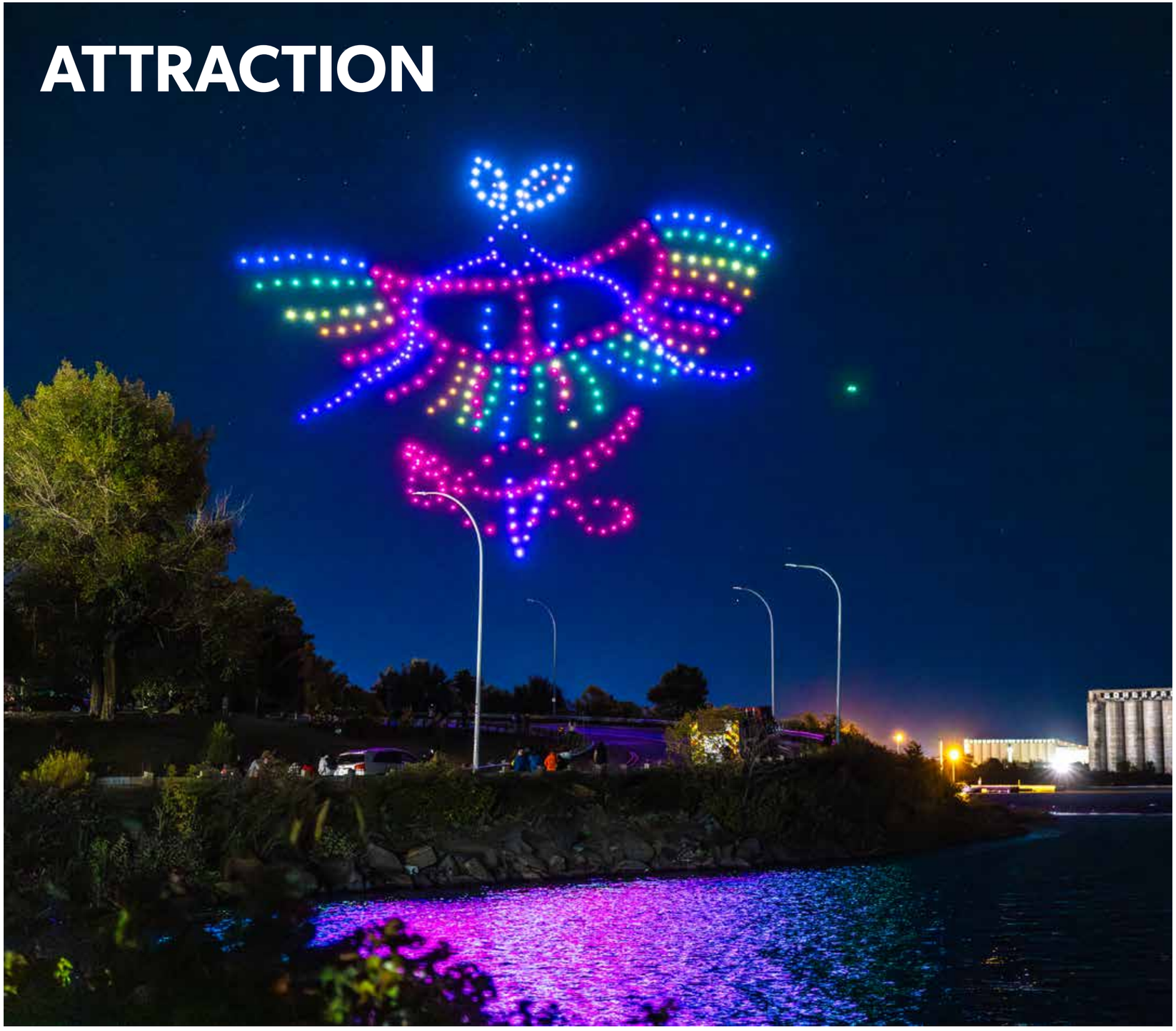


© Scott MacKay

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:



© Epica Pictures

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 South & North 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.

> “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, as guided by Report R178/2016 (Engineering & Operations).	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:



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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.

> "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.



© Chondon Photography



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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:



© CEDC

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.

Community Safety & Well-Being



© City of Thunder Bay

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.

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



© CEDC

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:



© CEDC

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.

> "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**

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

Spotlight:



© CEDC

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.

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 CTB		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, square 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



© Michael Hull

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

Vice-Chair – Jamie Taylor
Thunder Bay CEDC

Vice-Chair – Kerri Marshall
City of Thunder Bay

Denise Atkinson
Tipi Horse Connects

Andrew Bishop
Thunder Bay Pulp & Paper

Janine Black
St. Joseph's Care Group

Brian Davey
Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund

Sean Davies
Maintair Aviation Services

Michael den Haan
Lakehead University

Rene Gallant
Synergy North

Chris Heikkinen
Port of Thunder Bay

Graham Ingham
Thunder Bay Airport

Jessica Logozzo
Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre

Jack Mallon
Royal Lepage

Nathanael Moulson
NDRM Advisory Services

Paul Norris
Tbaytel

Matt Pearson
City of Thunder Bay

Kara Pratt
Waterfront District BIA

Raechel Reed
Fort William BIA

Charla Robinson
Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce

Adam Rose
RJ Burnside & Associates

Michelle Salo
Confederation College

Gillian Siddall
Lakehead University

Karl Skogstad
Lakehead University

John Stephenson
FormStudio Architects

Cheryl St. James
Fort William First Nation

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

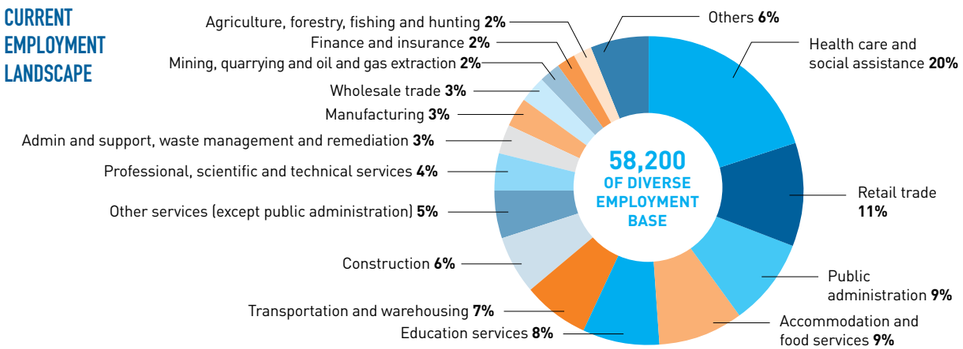
THUNDER BAY CEDC
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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

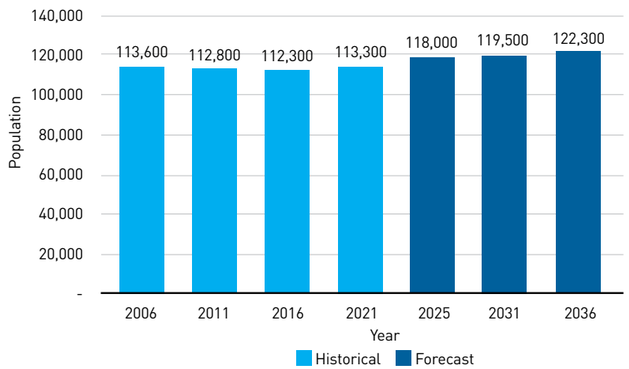
CURRENT EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE



WITHOUT TARGETED ACTIONS, GROWTH IS LIMITED

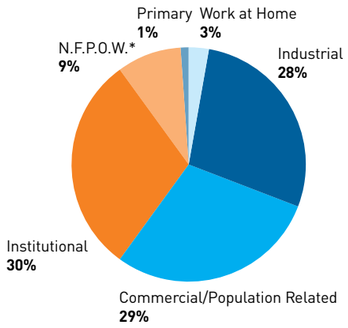
THUNDER BAY'S POPULATION GROWTH OUTLOOK

Thunder Bay's population is forecast to **increase by 3%** over the next 10 years

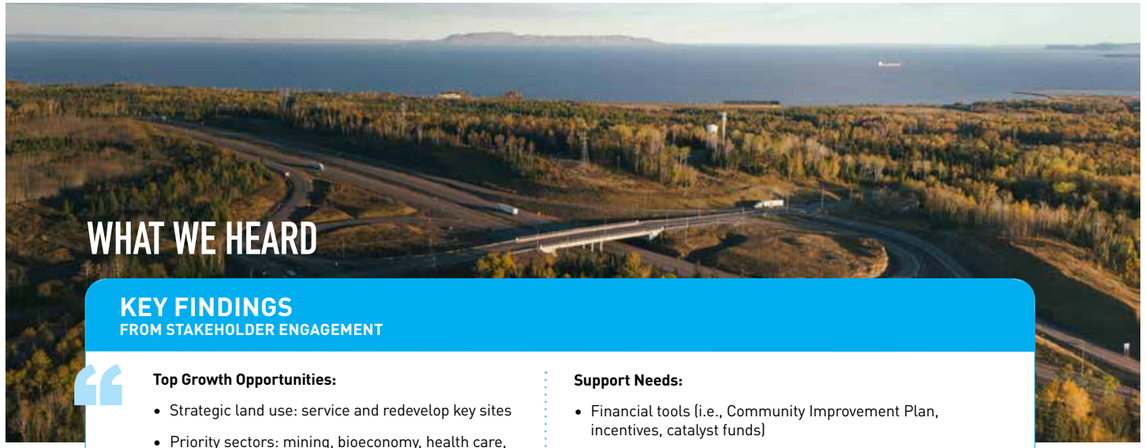


THUNDER BAY'S EMPLOYMENT GROWTH OUTLOOK

Over the 2025 to 2036 period, Thunder Bay's employment base is forecast to **increase by 5%** over the next 10 years



*Employment includes work at home and no fixed place of work (N.F.P.O.W.)



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

- Diverse economic base
- Presence of post-secondary institutions
- Role as a Regional Centre and transportation hub
- Vibrant tourism sector

WEAKNESSES

- Infrastructure and energy gaps
- Labour force shortages
- Negative external perceptions
- Land availability and servicing

OPPORTUNITIES

- Regional and local natural resources
- Leveraging education and health institutions
- Strategic site redevelopments
- Quality of life improvements
- City branding and promotions
- Expanding tourism potential

CHALLENGES

- 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

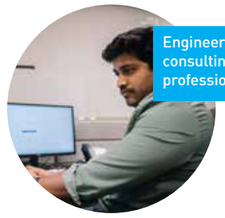
TARGET SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES



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

THUNDER BAY CEDC COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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
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-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

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, as guided by Report R178/2016 (Engineering & Operations).	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.



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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.


ANGER


CITY OF
Thunder Bay
Superior by Nature
THUNDER BAY
CEDC
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION