

<b>TO</b>	Council
<b>DATE</b>	February 23, 2026
<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	Communications and Strategic Projects
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	<b>Scugog Tourism Visitor Growth Plan Update</b>
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	CSP-2026-001

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide a clear overview of the activity related to the development of the new Scugog Visitor Growth Plan including a summary of the plan, early phase implementation and seek council endorsement for the Scugog Visitor Growth Plan.

### KEY FINDINGS

- Central Counties Tourism in partnership with Scugog Tourism and Durham Tourism hosted facilitated sessions through the Steering Committee.
  - The plan builds on tourism success and action items and reflects cross-sector objectives and goals.
  - A Vision, Mission and five Strategic Pillars were developed including objectives, goals, and resourcing needs to enhance visitor experience and advance tourism as an economic driver.
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### STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The new Scugog Visitor Growth Plan aligns and supports key directions in the [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#):

- **Strategic Direction #3 – Economic Development and Tourism:** Create, attract, and retain employment opportunities and promote tourism.
  - Objective #3: Promote tourism and attract people to Scugog to enhance the local economy.

## RECOMMENDATION

1. **THAT** Report CSP-2026-001, Scugog Tourism Visitor Growth Plan Update, be received for information; and,
2. **THAT** the Scugog Visitor Growth Plan is endorsed.
3. **THAT** staff be directed to lead the implementation of the plan, strengthen and seek cross-sector partnerships to deliver on the actions and assist with grant opportunities.

## BACKGROUND

The Township of Scugog welcomed an estimated 573,000 daily visits in 2024, with downtown Port Perry alone drawing over 73,000 tourists. Tourism accounts for 25% of all downtown visits and represents a significant economic driver for local businesses. These figures reinforce the importance of advancing a coordinated Visitor Growth Plan to support economic vitality, enhance visitor experiences, and strengthen community benefits.

The Plan was developed through four facilitated sessions with a cross-sector Steering Committee, supported by Central Counties Tourism, and is structured around five strategic pillars: Embrace, Manage, Connect, Entice, and Champion. Each pillar includes objectives, goals, and action items with associated timing, resources, and cost ranges.

## DISCUSSION

The number of visitors to Scugog continues to grow each year, due in large part to the Township's continual implementation of its Community Tourism Plan. The previous plan connected key stakeholders from tourism operators to municipal partners along with a dedicated Tourism Advisory Committee to ensure that tourism and the visitor experience was at the heart of our work. It was time to build on our successes, and a refresh of the plan ensured that momentum would not be lost on growing visitation to all Scugog in the coming years.

Staff wish to thank the individuals who made up the Steering Committee and appreciate them devoting their time to support the development. The Steering Committee was comprised of members from local tourism businesses, arts and culture, agricultural and farm markets, food and beverage, accommodations, entertainment, municipal staff, regional staff and two members of Council. The development of this plan was facilitated by Chuck Thibeault and Lisa John-Mackenzie from Central Counties Tourism (RTO6). Individuals provided feedback through four facilitated sessions and homework surveys. The facilitated sessions were interactive with clear objectives to support the development of the plan. Through the sessions and surveys, the group:

- Discussed the value of the visitor economy as an economic driver.
- Ranked the tourism assets and reviewed the current visitor landscape, including attractions, businesses, infrastructure, customer service, and marketing.

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- Evaluated Scugog’s tourism readiness – challenges and opportunities.
- Developed the final vision, mission, objectives, and goals of the plan.

The Township of Scugog’s Visitor Growth Plan outlines a four-year roadmap focused on strengthening tourism readiness, increasing visitation, and enhancing collaboration between businesses, residents, and municipal/regional partners. The plan is built around five strategic pillars—Embrace, Manage, Connect, Entice, and Champion—with detailed objectives and action items supporting each.

1. EMBRACE: Acknowledge and support Scugog as a tourism town.
2. MANAGE: The plan has clear leadership, and the stakeholders understand their roles.
3. CONNECT: Take an “all of Scugog” approach to destination development.
4. ENTICE: Tell compelling stories of Scugog to motivate visitation.
5. CHAMPION: Advocate for policies that support destination growth.

For each pillar, the group identified goals and specific action items with considerations made for timing, costs, and resources required.

## **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The Plan identifies cost categories ranging from staff time only to actions that will require larger investments depending on the initiative. Many early-phase actions fall within low-cost categories, enabling implementation to begin while long-term resource needs—such as a dedicated tourism role—would be assessed through the upcoming budget cycle, and staff will investigate grant opportunities or partnership opportunities for shared resources.

## **ENGAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The Plan sets out short-term, medium-term, and long-term timing for each of the actions within the pillars, together with ongoing work. Partnerships amongst the group will be cultivated, and advocacy work to upper levels of government will be paramount to move forward higher investment initiatives, develop grant funding applications and implement action items.

The Township will focus on establishing roles and responsibilities, alignment with leadership and governance for strengthening communication across the sectors and in a united approach. This includes reinstating the Tourism Advisory Committee and developing a centralized communications hub that enables businesses to stay informed and aligned, creating a business case for a dedicated tourism role.

Early actions should also emphasize stakeholder engagement—launching resident and business communications about the value of tourism, hosting networking sessions, and supporting “open for business” initiatives to match peak visitation patterns. Alongside these efforts, initial marketing and visitor experience enhancements such as investigating the activation of dedicated Scugog Tourism social channels, integrating wayfinding improvements, and rolling out visitor information tools (QR codes, interactive maps). These

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first phase steps lay the organizational and operational foundation needed to successfully roll out the more complex actions across the four year plan.

Highlights of activities by pillar include:

### **1. Embrace – Strengthening Tourism Awareness and Support**

The plan identifies activities that build resident and business understanding of tourism’s value, including:

- Regular communication on visitation and economic impacts.
- Business networking and community events that highlight tourism success stories.
- Visitor surveys and programs encouraging residents to experience Scugog as tourists.
- Initiatives to keep businesses open during peak visitation times, supported by visitation data.

### **2. Manage – Establishing Coordinated Tourism Leadership**

This pillar outlines the need for:

- Assessing resources and preparing a business case for a dedicated tourism position.
- Creating a centralized tourism communications hub.
- Reinstating a cross-sector Tourism Advisory Committee and aligning efforts with regional partners.

### **3. Connect – Linking Visitors to Experiences Across Scugog**

Highlighted actions include:

- Business familiarization tours and rural-to-downtown integration efforts.
- Participation in the Wayfinding Plan and improved directional signage.
- Visitor information tools such as interactive maps, QR codes, decals, and seasonal ambassadors.

### **4. Entice – Marketing, Storytelling and Visitor Attraction**

Key activities focus on:

- Annual marketing and communications planning.
- Dedicated “Visit Scugog” channels separate from corporate communications.
- Website strategy, content updates, and promotional toolkits.
- Development and promotion of tourism routes and itineraries.

### **5. Champion– Advocacy and Policy Support**

The plan emphasizes:

- Transit and transportation analysis (noting some work led by Planning/other departments).
- Strengthening downtown’s retail mix and supporting revitalization.
- Policies supporting small business growth and encouraging use of incentive programs.

## **ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS**

None.

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**ATTACHMENTS**

**Attachment No. 1 – Scugog Visitor Growth Plan**

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Authored by:

Approved by:

Lori Bowers  
Director Communications & Strategic Projects

Warren Mar  
Chief Administrative Officer

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