

## Tourism Summary Report

Presented to: Invest Barrie, City of Barrie

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Date: September 1, 2016

## Summary of Tourism Roles

ORGANIZATION	ROLE						
	MARKETING				DEVELOPMENT		
	Tourism Website & Social Media	Tourism Printed Publications	Sector Marketing (e.g. golf, ski)	Product Development (including Festivals)	Industry Development	Destination Management (including Visitor Information)	Regional Collaboration
Tourism Barrie (TB)	X	X	X			X	
Tourism Simcoe County (TSC)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO 7)	X		X	X	X	X	
Barrie and District Chamber of Commerce					X		
Barrie Hotel Association					X		
Ontario Travel Centre							X
Access Barrie	X						
Invest Barrie	X			X	X	X	X

## **Current Status**

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### **DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Product Development (including Festivals)**

- Product development is outside of Tourism Barrie's scope of work due to resource limitations.
- Organizations with a mandate in product development for the City of Barrie have expressed difficulty connecting with partners in the City to explore opportunities.
- City-run festivals with tourism potential are planned for and marketed to residential audiences with no focus/mandate to attract tourists.
- There are festivals (internal and externally organized) that have the opportunity to grow to attract tourists; however there is no one responsible for nurturing this.

#### **Industry Development**

- The Chamber of Commerce has a mandate to develop businesses and has expressed an interest in developing tourism-focused workshops and training initiatives.
- Tourism Barrie provides networking events for its members including a Toast to Tourism, AGM and golf tournament.
- RTO 7 offers several industry development workshops and other learning opportunities and partnerships; however very few Barrie operators have participated in these to date.
- Invest Barrie regularly engages the business community to encourage growth and development; however hasn't specifically been working with the tourism sector.

#### **Destination Management (including Visitor Services)**

- There is no identified lead for tourism-related destination management for the City of Barrie, however destination management pertaining to culture and economic development is the responsibility of Invest Barrie.
- Tourism isn't reflected within City planning documents (e.g. active transportation, waterfront, downtown, etc.).
- Visitors to Barrie access visitor information through the Southshore Centre (managed by Tourism Barrie); as well as the Ontario Travel Centre and a summer pop-up information kiosk downtown. Additionally, Tourism Barrie's website acts as a conduit for informing visitors and is accessed regularly for visitor information.
- Invest Barrie has participated in MTCS Investment-related engagements to encourage investment in Barrie's waterfront.

## **Current Status**

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### **MARKETING**

#### **Tourism Websites and Social Media**

- Tourism Barrie offers a Barrie-specific visitor website translated into several languages.
- RTO 7 and Tourism Simcoe County also have Barrie sections on their respective websites.
- In addition to their main website, Tourism Barrie, RTO 7 and Tourism Simcoe County all have micro sites for tourism products they are marketing (e.g. cycling, beaches, ski, golf) through pay-to-play programs.
- RTO 7, Tourism Simcoe County, City of Barrie and Tourism Barrie all have dedicated staff resources for social media and website management.
- Tourism Barrie's website has been identified as an important marketing and visitor services tool for Barrie's tourism partners.
- Because of the pay-to-play nature of Tourism Barrie, assets important to the City's branding efforts (e.g. waterfront, downtown, festivals, and culture) may not always be a main focus of print and website activities.

#### **Tourism Printed Publications**

- Tourism Barrie produces two visitor guides (spring/summer and fall/winter); as well as other print pieces including City of Barrie tear maps and folded maps, supported by advertisers.
- Tourism Simcoe County produces a County map; as well as collateral material for marketing campaigns (e.g. paddling, golf) supported by advertisers.

#### **Marketing Campaigns**

- All Tourism Barrie marketing campaigns are pay-to-play with oversight and direction provided by participating stakeholders with a primary emphasis on overnight hotel stays.
- The majority of Tourism Barrie's marketing campaigns (e.g. ski) involve activity partners located outside of the City with Barrie hotels partnering for the overnight component.

## Current Status

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### REGIONAL COLLABORATION

- Regional collaboration is outside of Tourism Barrie's scope of work due to resource limitations.
- Simcoe County has identified Barrie as a significant potential partner for all tourism initiatives noting the City offers a unique urban experience, complimentary to rural products/businesses found in County
- The RTO is a partnership-driven organization and has \$336K partnership fund that leverages to \$1 million annually through regional collaboration.
- Tourism Simcoe County collaborates regionally to increase their tourism budget to \$1 million annually.
- Tourism Barrie doubles the City's contribution through pay-to-play advertising initiatives.
- Over the past 2 years, Tourism Barrie has partnered with the RTO on social media and videography projects; and Tourism Simcoe County has partnered with the RTO on tradeshow participation, conference development, workforce development, videography, strategic planning, social media, travel trade development, website development and research.
- Tourism Simcoe County seeks partnerships outside of their borders when complimentary to their objectives. This includes Grey and Bruce Counties, as well as tourism organizations with non-County partners (e.g. Lake Country represents 4 County municipalities and the City of Orillia).
- Tourism Simcoe County and Tourism Barrie have no planned joint projects in 2016 or 2017.
- Barrie is the largest urban centre in the region and has a significant number of hotels; however they are significantly underrepresented in regional tourism campaigns proportionate to the size of the City.

# Objectives

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## 1. Clearly define Tourism Barrie's , City of Barrie's and the County of Simcoe's role in Tourism

### RATIONALE

- Tourism Barrie is described as "Barrie's official tourism organization"; which implies they are responsible for all tourism-related activities when, in fact, they only undertake marketing-related work.
- Tourism Barrie is often reluctant to allow outside organizations access to City tourism businesses for work that is the organization feels they should be doing.
- Tourism Barrie has limited time and staff resources to undertake product development, industry development, destination management and regional collaborative activities.
- The City has a current role in destination building related to cultural growth and building a creative economy; tourism development is likely to be complimentary to this work.
- The City has a current role in regional culture, live music and economic development; regional tourism collaboration is likely to be complimentary to this work.
- The County has the mandate to work regionally; has expressed a willingness to work with City partners; and has staff and financial resources to support the work required to build collaborative regional marketing campaigns.

## 2. Develop a House of Brands approach to destination marketing

### RATIONALE:

- Using a House of Brands approach would afford the opportunity for each organization responsible for promoting Barrie to have their unique, yet complimentary identity while aligning to the overall brand developed by the City of Barrie to best reflect the community and its unique assets
- Invest Barrie markets the City of Barrie as a destination for business growth and innovation; Tourism Barrie markets the City for tourists; both are marketing externally, however, there is not a consistent City brand.
- There is a need for more interaction and better alignment amongst entities marketing the destination externally to insure brand cohesion and a common brand look and feel moving forward.
- As the branding process develops, there are likely to be City assets that will require more emphasis in external tourism marketing efforts. Acknowledgement and buy-in to this by all external marketing partners will be critical.

### **3. Insure visitors and residents can access visitor information easily**

#### **RATIONALE:**

- There is a need to review the City's social media procedures to afford City festival staff flexibility to promote and respond to visitor enquiries on social media by transferring social media responsibility to festival staff.
  - o The City of Barrie does not have a budget to market tourism festivals externally; nor do they have a budget to partner with Tourism Barrie to market City festivals externally.
  - o Therefore, City events staff relies on the power of social media to engage tourism markets to come to their events. Presently, City of Barrie marketing staff current manages all enquiries and content for festival-related social media requirements.
  - o Festival staff has the resources to respond in the evenings and on weekends, as this is when these events typically occur and the majority of visitor enquiries are received.
- There are several visitor centres and visitor websites offering visitor information services throughout the City of Barrie and surrounding area; however it is unclear which method is most efficient in influencing travel.
  - o A cost-benefit analysis of each visitor information method will determine how best to reach the largest number of visitors.
  - o The OTIC has a Toronto desk located within it. There is an opportunity to assess this same partnership in Barrie.

### **4. Develop a creative, innovative destination**

#### **RATIONALE:**

- Tourism entrepreneurship is a cornerstone to diversifying a destination, attracting new markets and extending length of stay.
- The RTO 7 has a product development specialist that has the mandate to assist City tourism stakeholders to create unique, innovative tourism experiences; which is complimentary to Invest Barrie's mandate to grow the cultural economy and encourage innovation.
- The Chamber of Commerce and RTO 7 have a common interest and will be exploring partnership opportunities to provide professional development opportunities to the City's tourism sector.
- Tourism should be a consideration in City department planning processes to explore partnerships and determine new product and market opportunities. (E.g. early involvement in festival planning could result in coordinated marketing strategy and more visitors to the festival through leveraged RTO funds; early involvement in active transportation plan could result in leveraged RTO funds for wayfinding signage).

## 5. Improve regional partnerships and avoid duplication

### RATIONALE:

- Partnerships are critical to reaching new market and developing new products in a time effective, fiscally responsible manner.
- Tourism Barrie has pulled back from regional partnerships in recent years citing limited financial/staff resources.
- Tourism Barrie and Tourism Simcoe County have separate marketing campaigns with several of the same partners. Collaboration on campaigns will create a larger benefit to businesses, create organization efficiencies and will reduce duplication.
- The City of Barrie has the largest density of hotel room nights in their respective region (RTO 7). As such, Barrie could be a significant partner around RTO 7 planning and partnership tables along with the Counties of Grey, Bruce and Simcoe.
- There are several RTO 7 and MTCS partnership opportunities that are untapped for the City of Barrie:
  - Way finding signage (downtown, interpretative)
  - Product development planning and assistance
  - Customer service training
  - Cycling-related product work
  - International travel trade initiatives
  - Investment attraction partnership to leverage Barrie's creative economy
  - Media hosting program
  - Festival data collection and marketing
  - Operator experience development
  - Shared data and research tools (e.g. Environics)
  - Regional conference participation
  - Image bank and videography
- A conservative estimate of \$200 – 250K in unrealized leveraged opportunities (grants, shared resources, partnership funding, in-kind support, operator support) are potential for private and public stakeholders in the City of Barrie annually through RTO 7, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport; the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership; as well as other tourism partnerships.