



# Lower Grand River Visitor Experience Strategy

FEBRUARY 2025

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# Preliminary Information

## Land Acknowledgement

We humbly acknowledge that Haldimand County sits on the ancestral land of many generations of Indigenous nations, who have been here since time immemorial.

Today, this land continues to be home to many Indigenous peoples, including the Six Nations of the Grand River and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, as well as non-Indigenous settlers from a variety of backgrounds. As a community, we have a shared responsibility for stewardship of the land on which we live and work. We are grateful for the opportunity to work together and to share the land we all call home.

Acknowledging reminds us that our living conditions are directly related to the abundant resources of the Indigenous peoples. We commit to continue learning, reflecting on our past, and working in allyship with Indigenous communities, toward respective community goals and objectives, in peace, respect and friendship.



# Context for this Work

The Lower Grand River Visitor Experience Strategy outlines a series of recommendations aimed at enhancing tourism and community engagement; however, it is understood that not all initiatives may be achievable in the short term. Staff will review and prioritize recommendations over time, taking into consideration resource availability, financial and budgetary constraints, organizational capacity, and alignment with broader County priorities. Implementation of achievable recommendations will occur gradually, over many years, as opportunities and resources allow.

Partnerships with community organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders will play a key role in delivering programs, developing content, and advancing planning efforts. Where possible, external grant funding will be pursued to support and accelerate progress. While some recommendations may have implications for County levels of service, capital investments, or staffing, any such commitments would require careful assessment and consideration within the context of existing resources and priorities. This strategy serves as a flexible framework, with the understanding that progress will depend on a combination of partnerships, funding opportunities, and the County's capacity to move initiatives forward over time.



## Disclaimer

KL Branding & Consulting Ltd. (KLB) has prepared this report as part of its responsibility to develop a Visitor Experience Strategy for Haldimand County. This assessment includes input from community partners, local businesses, and County staff, with recommendations aligned with Haldimand's goals to support sustainable tourism and economic growth.

Haldimand County and KLB are not liable for any losses resulting from the misuse or unintended use of this report.

The findings are based on current economic and business conditions as of October 2024, and any material changes may alter the analysis. The report should be considered in its entirety, as selecting portions without context could create a misleading interpretation.

This strategy is intended to serve as a framework for exploring potential opportunities and guiding future discussions. It does not constitute a commitment by the municipality to allocate capital funds, operational funding, or other financial resources toward any business case or initiative outlined herein. Furthermore, the strategy does not establish nor imply any formal partnerships, agreements, or obligations with external business entities or stakeholders. Any future decisions regarding funding or partnerships will be subject to separate processes, including appropriate approvals, detailed evaluations, and formal agreements.

This report does not provide legal or professional advice, and such guidance should be sought from qualified professionals.



## Executive Summary

The Haldimand County Visitor Experience Strategy (VES) outlines a comprehensive plan to activate and enhance tourism along the Lower Grand River, transforming it into a vibrant destination that celebrates Haldimand County's natural beauty and cultural heritage. Recognizing the river as a pivotal asset, the strategy aims to boost economic growth, enrich community life, and offer memorable experiences to visitors, all while preserving the area's unique environmental integrity.

Central to the VES is the activation of the Lower Grand River through a series of strategic initiatives. These include improving access to the riverfront, developing recreational activities such as boating and fishing, and promoting cultural and historical attractions connected to the experiences. Haldimand County seeks to attract a diverse range of visitors and encourage longer stays.

The implementation plan provides a clear roadmap to achieve these objectives, organized into short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations. In the short term (1-3 years), the focus will be on foundational steps: tourist feedback mechanism, fostering business support, enhancing engagement, and development target marketing initiatives. In the medium term (4-7 years), the plan will shift to promoting sustainable practices, alongside monitoring/adapting policies to ensure alignment with broader priorities. In the longer term (7+ years), focus will expand to infrastructure upgrades and all-season tourism development. It is understood that not all initiatives may be achievable immediately, and the review and prioritization of recommendations will be essential. Sustainability remains a cornerstone of the plan, ensuring that development respects and protects the natural environment for future generations.

An innovative feature of the VES is the “Business in a Box” model. This program offers turnkey business opportunities designed to stimulate entrepreneurship in the tourism sector along the river. By providing ready-to-launch business models—such as eco-tourism ventures, guided tours, cultural workshops, and recreational service providers—the initiatives lower barriers to entry for entrepreneurs and addresses gaps in the market. This approach not only enriches the visitor experience, but also fosters local economic development and job creation.

The Visitor Experience Strategy envisions the Lower Grand River as the heart of a thriving tourism industry in Haldimand County. By leveraging the river’s potential and implementing thoughtful, community-driven initiatives, the VES aims to create a sustainable tourism environment that benefits residents and visitors alike. The strategy balances economic growth with the preservation of Haldimand County’s natural and cultural assets, ensuring that the charm and authenticity of Haldimand County continue to shine.

In embracing this strategy, Haldimand County positions itself to become a must-visit destination, offering unique river-based experiences that highlight the best of what the region has to offer.

The VES sets the stage for a future where the Lower Grand River is not only a natural treasure, but also a catalyst for community pride and prosperity.

# Methodology

The development of the Lower Grand River Visitor Experience Strategy project is grounded in a methodical and inclusive approach designed to harness the full potential of the Grand River as a key asset for sustainable tourism development. Our methodology encompasses robust desk research and extensive community consultation, ensuring that the project's strategic direction is both data-driven and community-focused.



## DESK RESEARCH

The initial phase of the project involved comprehensive desk research, aimed at gathering existing data and insights on the environmental, cultural, and economic aspects of the Grand River and its surrounding areas. This research included reviewing historical documents, previous tourism studies, tourism target segments, environmental reports, and strategic plans from various related projects. By analyzing this wealth of information, the project team was able to identify key trends, opportunities, and challenges that form the foundation of our strategic planning.



## COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

Recognizing the importance of local knowledge and community input, the project incorporated a series of detailed community consultations. These engagements were designed to capture a wide range of perspectives from local residents, business owners, environmental experts, and Indigenous representatives. Methods used included online surveys [44 responses in total], 5 in-depth one-on-one interviews, and two targeted focus groups [30 participants in total]. Each consultation session was structured to facilitate open dialogue and gather substantive feedback on the community's vision and expectations for tourism development along the Grand River.





## INTEGRATING INSIGHTS INTO STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The insights gathered from both desk research and community consultations have been pivotal in shaping the strategic framework of the VES project. This framework prioritizes sustainability, cultural integrity, and economic viability, ensuring that tourism development enhances the quality of life for Haldimand County residents while preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the Grand River.



## RECOMMENDATIONS AND BUSINESS IN A BOX

Moving into the second half of the project, the focus shifted towards formulating strategic recommendations and developing 'Business in a Box' cases. These three (3) business cases provide ready-to-launch business models that support public-private-partnerships (PPPs) essential for the growth of river-related tourism. The 'Business in a Box' concept is designed to offer practical, scalable, and ecologically sensitive tourism solutions that align with the community's values and the strategic goals of the VES project.

By adhering to this comprehensive methodology, the VES not only aligns with best practices in sustainable tourism development but also ensures that the strategies and initiatives proposed are deeply rooted in community needs and environmental stewardship. This approach guarantees that the Grand River can be enjoyed by future generations while bringing socio-economic benefits to the local community.

# Essence of Place

Cradled by the winding Grand River, Haldimand County presents a landscape steeped in rich cultural heritage and pivotal historical milestones. Here, the river is not just a body of water but a life force, a host that shares its bounty and stories with those who spend time near or in its waters. Visitors are guests, welcomed by the river's embrace, as they connect with the land, its people, and its profound history.

The area boasts a harmonious blend of past and present, where historical sites like Ruthven Park National Historic Site coexist with newly introduced attractions like the Grand River Rafting Company. The County's "Essence of Place" is deeply rooted in its commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship. This is a place where the echoes of the Grand River's flow resonate with the ongoing efforts to protect and enhance its watershed and biodiversity. Community-driven conservation initiatives and the active role of the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) highlight a collective dedication to preserving the natural environment that defines the region's identity.

Moreover, Haldimand's essence is characterized by a strong sense of community and inclusivity, where both newcomers and long-standing residents contribute to a dynamic cultural tapestry. Local festivals, public art installations like those along The Public Art Tour Haldimand (PATH), and nearby Indigenous experiences such as the Grand River Champion of Champions Pow Wow, weave together a community narrative that celebrates diversity and unity.

Strategically, Haldimand County leverages its natural assets, historical richness, and vibrant community life to offer unique tourism experiences that invite visitors to not only explore scenic trails and waterways but to immerse themselves in a living history and engage with a community that embraces both innovation and tradition. Whether it's through leisurely river cruises, exploring the conservation areas, or participating in local cultural events, visitors are drawn into the heart of Haldimand, where the essence of place is palpable, and the river's legacy flows through every experience.

# Demographics<sup>1</sup>

Haldimand County, with a population of 49,216 according to 2021 census data, offers a growing opportunity for prospective businesses - especially those interested in tourism. The median age in the county is around 42 years, indicating an older-than-average population compared to the provincial standard. With a media household income of roughly \$81,000, Haldimand provides a stable economic base. Proximity to major urban centres and its scenic location along the Grand River make it an attractive location for both residents and visitors, especially those seeking a rural lifestyle with access to outdoor recreational activities and cultural sites.

The following section identifies key data from visitor communities likely to visit Haldimand County. Young Urban Adventurers from Toronto, Hamilton, and Kitchener-Waterloo are drawn to Haldimand's immersive, eco-conscious experiences, while Family Memory Makers from Brantford, London, and Buffalo seek accessible, family-friendly outdoor activities to create lasting memories. Heritage and Culture Enthusiasts from Hamilton, Toronto, and Buffalo/Niagara will appreciate Haldimand's rich historical and cultural offerings, as will Outdoor Adventure Seekers from active communities like Kitchener-Waterloo and Hamilton, who look for physical challenges in nature. Finally, Newcomer Explorers from diverse hubs such as the GTA and Hamilton find an inviting environment for cultural connection and integration in Haldimand's community events and heritage experiences.

These communities were selected based on proximity, size, their potential for tourism interest, economic influence, and the likelihood of seeking rural, nature-based, and cultural experiences.

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[1] Demographic data including from visitor communities are available from Statistics Canada (Statistics Canada).

# Target Visitor Communities

## TORONTO & GREATOR TORONTO AREA (GTA)

With a population that exceeds **6 million**, the Toronto and Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is the largest metropolitan area in Canada. As a major economic hub, it boasts a diverse population with high levels of disposable income, making it a key target market for tourism and business development. The proximity to Haldimand (about 1.5 hours by car) and the growing trend of urban residents in search of weekend getaways away from the busy lifestyle in the GTA make this area a strong source of potential visitors and customers.

## BRANTFORD

With a population of approximately **104,000** Brantford is a growing city located about 30 minutes from Haldimand County. Brantford has a strong manufacturing and educational presence with Wilfrid Laurier University's campus and the residents often seek nearby recreational experiences. Its proximity and community growth position Brantford as a key source of potential visitors and business opportunities, particularly for day trips and local tourism.

## LONDON

London, Ontario, is home to a population of approximately **430,000** people. The city has a well-established economy driven by education, health care, and manufacturing, and it is growing as a regional centre for arts and culture. Londoners often seek nature-based tourism and outdoor activities, making Haldimand's riverside setting along the Grand River an appealing destination. The distance from London to Haldimand is about 1.5 hours, providing an accessible day trip or weekend destination.



## HAMILTON

Hamilton, with a population of around **570,000**, is an important industrial and cultural hub located a 15-30 min drive from Haldimand County. Hamilton's revitalization, particularly in its arts and cultural sectors, positions it as a strong market for tourism. Additionally the city's residents seek outdoor recreation and unique cultural experiences, and are likely to be drawn to the natural and historical attractions in Haldimand along the Grand River.



## KITCHENER-WATERLOO

The combined population of Kitchener-Waterloo is over **575,000**. Known for its thriving technology sector and universities, this region also boasts an active outdoor community. Its residents are often interested in eco-tourism and a developing interest in sports tourism, which align well with Haldimand's scenic landscapes and recreational opportunities. Located about an hour from Haldimand, this area represents a growing marketing for short-stay vacations.

## BUFFALO, NY & NIAGARA FALLS (USA REGION)

Buffalo, New York, and the Niagara Falls region have a combined population of nearly 1 million. The cross-border proximity of these regions to Haldimand County offers significant potential to attract American tourists. Visitors from this region are likely to be drawn by the area's historical significance, scenic beauty, and opportunities for nature exploration. The Grand River's reputation can be key selling points for U.S.-based tourists looking for close-to-home travel destinations.

# About the Grand River

## History

The Grand River, which stretches approximately 280 kilometers, is a significant waterway in Southern Ontario, with a rich history that is deeply intertwined with the development of Haldimand County. The river has played a crucial role in shaping the region's cultural, economic, and environmental landscape. Recognized as a Heritage River, the Grand River is celebrating 30 years of this designation in 2024, underscoring its historical and cultural importance.

## Indigenous Heritage

The Grand River holds profound significance for the Indigenous peoples of the area, which includes the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the Six Nations of the Grand River, who unify all Haudenosaunee peoples under the Great Tree of Peace. Originally known as O Kenhionhata (Willow River), the river and its surrounding lands were integral to their way of life, providing a source of water, food, and transportation.<sup>2</sup> The Haldimand Tract, a strip of land along the Grand River, holds significant cultural and historical value for Six Nations.

It is the intention of this plan to ensure that Indigenous connection to the Grand River is identified, celebrated, and incorporated in the initiatives to develop activity on the river. This includes a cultural Indigenous experience as outlined in the business cases, as well as a concerted effort to engage in meaningful consultation with Indigenous communities and its citizens, whose traditional territory is within the Haldimand County catchment area, in the development of this plan. Consultation with Indigenous peoples on the river's importance, how their communities and members are choosing to activate the river, and social, cultural, and environmental considerations of the river formed a foundation for a number of the strategy's recommendations. This collaborative approach ensures that the river's legacy, significance, and future are shaped in harmony with the people who have historically and presently stewarded its waters.

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[2] <https://www.sixnations.ca/about>, Our History

## European Settlement and Development

European settlers began to establish themselves along the Grand River in the early 19th century. Haldimand County was named after Sir Frederick Haldimand, who issued the Haldimand Proclamation granting the land to the Six Nations.<sup>3</sup> The river was a vital artery for transportation and for commerce, facilitating the movement of goods and people. Settlements such as Caledonia, Dunnville, and Cayuga emerged along the riverbanks, benefitting from the fertile land and abundant natural resources.

## Industrialization and Economic Growth

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Grand River was harnessed for its industrial potential. Mills, factories, and other industries sprang up along its banks, utilizing the river's water power.<sup>4</sup> This industrial growth contributed significantly to the economic development of Haldimand County. Central to this development was the Grand River Navigation Company, a series of canals and locks built in the early 19th century to improve the river's navigability and support the transportation of goods. Established by William Hamilton Merritt, founder of the Welland Canal, the system included six dams and eight locks extending navigation upstream to Brantford.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the success of the Grand River Navigation Company, the construction of the Welland Canal ultimately diminished its importance. The Welland Canal offered a more efficient route for transporting goods and that, in turn, led to the decline of the Grand River's canals and locks.<sup>6</sup>

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[3] <https://www.sixnations.ca/LandsResources/HaldProc.htm>, The Haldimand Treaty of 1784

[4] <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/grand-river>, Grand River

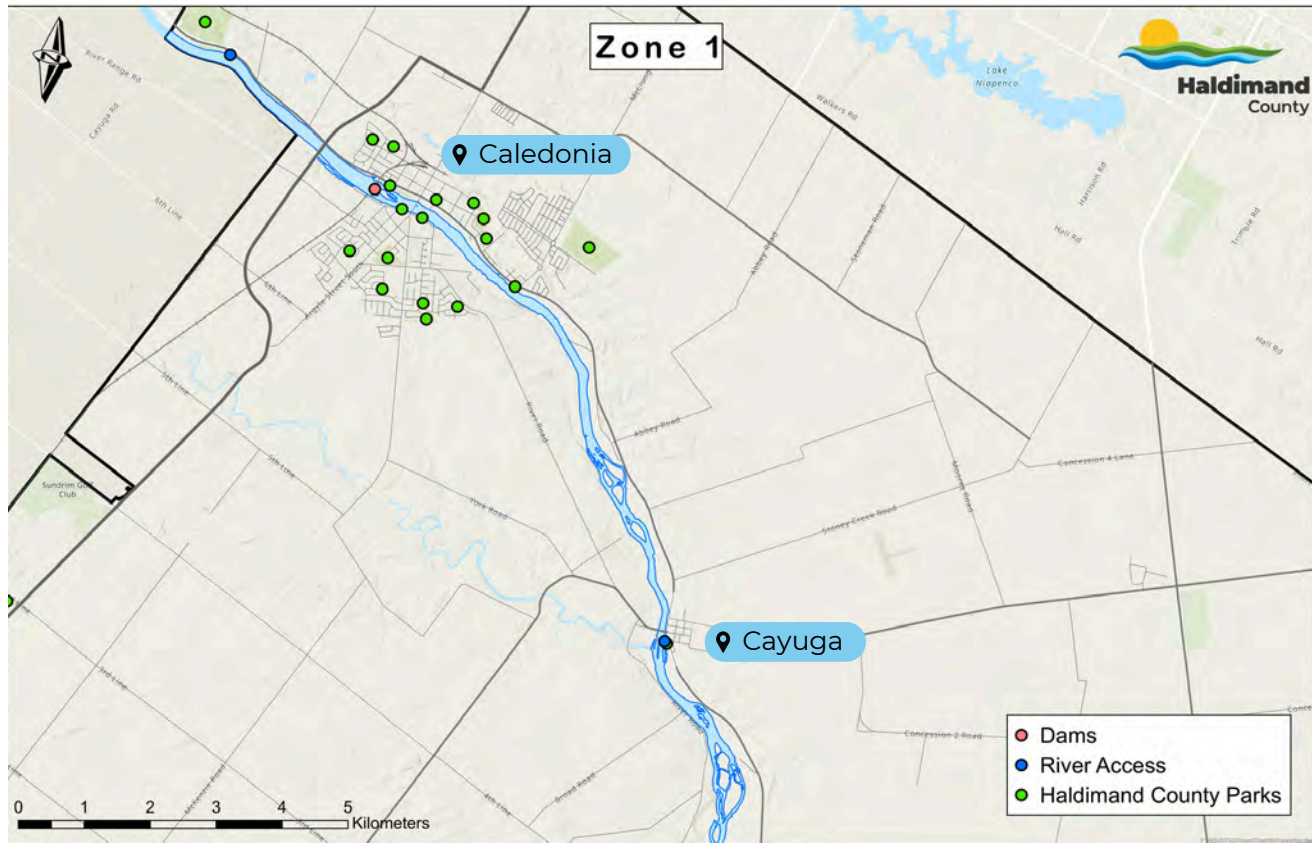
[5] <https://americancanalsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Grand-River-Navigation-ontario2.pdf>, Grand River Navigation Company

[6] <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/welland-canal-feature>, The Evolution of the Welland Canal

# River Zones/Maps

The Lower Grand River, as it passes through Haldimand County, is separated into three distinct zones. Each of these zones possesses unique ecological and watershed characteristics that distinguishes one from the other.<sup>7</sup>

## Zone 1: Six Nations to Caledonia



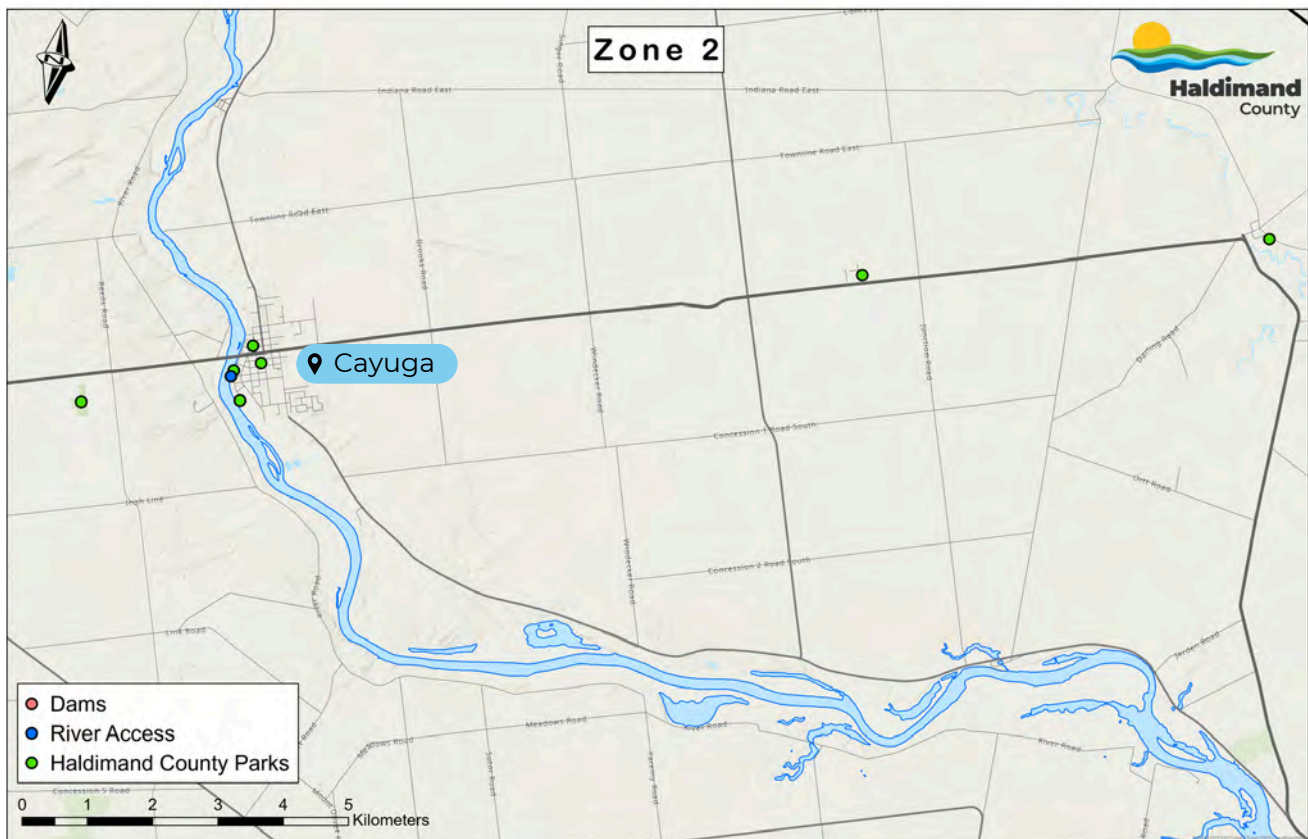
In this zone, the presence of the Caledonia Dam, constructed in 1980 by the Grand River Conservation Authority and currently maintained by them, plays a significant role in regulating river flow. Known historically as Dam #4, it was built downstream from the site of the original dam, which powered mills until the mid-20th century. Today, the dam includes fish ladders to support aquatic life migration and a clay blanket to manage water seepage. Under normal conditions, the river maintains moderate summer low flow, allowing for various recreational activities. However, during significant flood events, such as the one in 1974, the river can swell dramatically due to the controlled release from the dam, causing road closures and flooding of low-lying areas.

[7] [https://apps.grandriver.ca/waterdata/kiwischarts/rf\\_lowergrand.aspx#gsc.tab=0](https://apps.grandriver.ca/waterdata/kiwischarts/rf_lowergrand.aspx#gsc.tab=0) - Lower Grand River flows



This section of the Grand River is well-suited for a range of boating activities due to its generally deeper and wider stretches, although it is important to note that below the dam in Caledonia, the area is not suitable for motorized boating activities. Canoeing and kayaking are popular, with the moderate flow providing an enjoyable experience for both novices and experienced paddlers. Fishing enthusiasts will find ample opportunities to catch various species, with several reachable fishing spots along the riverbanks. The numerous parks and picnic areas along this section of the river are great for family outings, offering scenic spots for community events. However, visitors should be mindful of potential seasonal flooding, which can impact accessibility and safety.

## Zone 2: Caledonia to Cayuga



This zone also generally has moderate summer low flow, ensuring navigable waters for most recreational activities (excluding motorized boating). During floods, the water level can rise significantly, with historical records showing substantial increases that can lead to flooding of local infrastructure and low-lying areas.

Stretching from Caledonia to Cayuga, this zone of the Grand River provides excellent conditions for canoeing and kayaking. The river's moderate flow offers both relaxing and moderately challenging paddling conditions. Similar to zone 1, fishing, including fly fishing, is another popular activity in this section, with numerous opportunities to catch a variety of fish species. The main challenge with this area would be navigation as it can be tricky in areas with varying depths, particularly periods of low flow, and effective flood management is essential.

### Zone 3: Cayuga to Port Maitland



In the lower zone, the river typically has a steady summer low flow, but the water levels can rise significantly during floods, leading to potential flooding in backyards and other low-lying areas.

This stretch of the river is ideal for leisurely boating, due to its calm, wide waters, and direct access from Lake Erie. This zone is suitable for larger watercraft, including motor boats and pontoons, offering a relaxing experience on the water. The extensive wetlands and diverse habitats in this area support rich biodiversity which makes it a prime location for wildlife observation and bird watching.

However, visitors should be aware of variable water levels, especially during dry seasons, which can affect navigation for larger boats. Additionally, protecting the ecological balance and wildlife habitats is crucial and requires careful management and conservation efforts.

In this zone, the Dunnville Dam significantly influences river dynamics and local development. Originally built in 1829 to supply water for the Welland Canal and double as a bridge—the first upstream from Lake Erie—this structure fostered Dunnville's growth as a strategic port and milling hub on both the Grand River and the Welland Canal. The dam's presence continues to shape the water flow and recreational possibilities in the area. It features fish ladders to support aquatic biodiversity, allowing species to navigate the river while maintaining a healthy ecosystem. The surrounding area is home to significant biodiversity, contributing to its ecological importance. Under typical conditions, the river flow remains steady, supporting various water-based activities. However, the dam's regulation of water levels plays a crucial role during flood conditions, helping to mitigate potential flooding and maintain navigability and safety along this portion of the river.



# Water Access Points

Haldimand County currently has numerous access points within these three zones, as well as the potential to increase this current capacity with further infrastructure, making it an ideal destination for various water-based activities.

[See Appendix C for Water Access Map »](#)

## Governance

The governance of the Grand River is primarily managed by the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA)<sup>8</sup>. It is important to note that the GRCA does not own the river, and that river is also governed by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks<sup>9</sup> as well as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR)<sup>10</sup>. The GRCA does not oversee recreational activities, such as fishing on local waterways which would be regulated by the MNR through its Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary ([Fisheries Management Zone 16](#)). Instead, the GRCA works in partnership with 39 municipalities and two First Nations within the watershed to ensure comprehensive and cohesive management strategies.

Each municipality along the Grand River has its responsibilities and roles in governance. These include land-use planning, development approvals, and implementation of by-laws that align with environmental protection and sustainable development goals.

## About the Grand River Conservation Authority

The Grand River Conservation Authority has its origins dating back to the 1930s, driven by business leaders who saw the need to collaboratively manage the Grand River and its watershed to reflect the vitality and prosperity of their communities. Recognizing the adverse impacts of deforestation, wetland loss, and pollution—which escalated problems like flooding, drought, and public health risks—the leaders formed the Grand River Conservation Commission in 1934. This initiative led to significant watershed management projects, including the construction of multiple dams like the Shand Dam, which was the first in Canada built for flood control, water supply, and water quality improvement.

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[8] <https://www.grandriver.ca/en/who-we-are/Who-We-Are.aspx#gsc.tab=0>

[9] <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-environment-conservation-parks>

[10] <https://www.ontario.ca/page/fishing>

By the mid-20th century, the establishment of the Grand Valley Conservation Authority in 1948 under the Conservation Authorities Act further emphasized watershed-based management. The two organizations initially operated separately, focusing on different aspects of conservation and public resource use, until they merged in 1966 to form the unified GRCA. This body continued expanding its conservation efforts, developing new parks and managing water resources closely with local municipalities, reflecting a longstanding commitment to protecting and enhancing the Grand River watershed. Notably, in 2000, the GRCA received the prestigious Thiess International River prize for its outstanding management, emphasizing the global recognition of its successful conservation practices.<sup>11</sup>

## Ecology

Ecologically, the Grand River watershed is significant due to its size and biodiversity. Covering approximately 6,800 square kilometers, the watershed includes four major rivers—the Conestogo, Nith, Speed, and Eramosa.<sup>12</sup>

The Grand River is home to nearly 100 species of fish, making it one of the most biodiverse rivers in Ontario. Some of the most notable fish species include smallmouth bass, walleye, northern pike, and several types of trout.<sup>13</sup> The river also supports populations of rare and endangered species, such as the eastern sand darter and the black redhorse. The presence of these species indicates the relatively healthy state of the river's aquatic ecosystem.

The riverbanks and surrounding wetlands of the Grand River support a variety of plant species as well. These areas are crucial for maintaining the ecological balance, providing habitat and food for wildlife. The vegetation includes both common and rare plant species, with several wetlands along the river recognized as provincially significant for their diverse flora.

The watershed is also a haven for a variety of wildlife, including mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. Key mammal species include white-tailed deer, beavers, and raccoons. The river and its adjacent habitats are also critical for bird species, especially during migration periods. The watershed supports over 200 bird species, including several at-risk species such as the bald eagle and the cerulean warbler.

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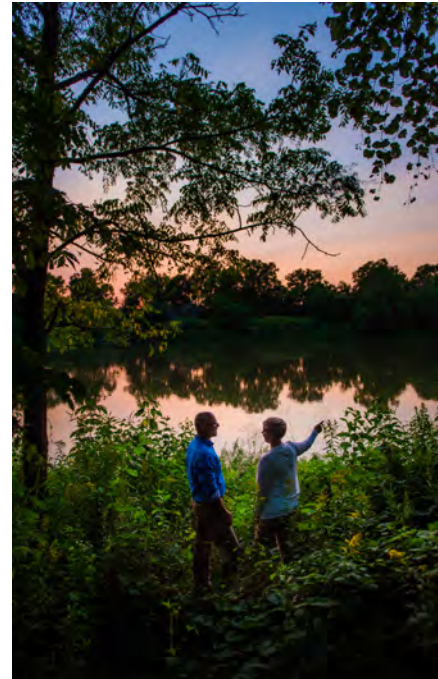
[1] <https://chrs.ca/en/rivers/grand-river>

[2] <https://www.grandriver.ca/en/our-watershed/Our-Watershed.aspx#gsc.tab=0>

[3] <https://www.anglersatlas.com/place/723165/grand-river>

# Target Segments

To create a more tailored interpretation of visitor profiles specific to the Grand River, the strategy uses a blend of consumer behaviour insights, regional data, and market segmentation research, specifically focusing on visitor motivations and interests that would apply directly to this region's unique cultural, natural, and historical attractions. Explorer Quotient (EQ) profiles and Prizm segments identified for this project can be found in [Appendix A](#). The blended approach below considers a combination of outdoor recreational appeal, cultural experiences, and family-friendly activities.



## Process

### I. Data from Explorer Quotient (EQ) by Destination Canada

The EQ segmentation tool offers in-depth profiles of travellers based on their values, motivations, and behaviours. The strategy leveraged these insights to identify core visitor motivations, such as adventure, cultural immersion, and relaxation. For instance, EQ's Rejuvenators and Cultural Explorers were instrumental in shaping the profiles of Urban Escapists and Cultural Enthusiasts, respectively.

### II. Tourism Data from Ontario's Southwest, the Province of Ontario, and Haldimand County Tourism's 2024 Tourism Marketing Plan

Market segments such as Young Urbanites, Flourishing Families, and Mature & Secure, outlined in Ontario's Southwest reports, provided valuable demographic information. These profiles helped refine key attributes such as age, income, and household structure, leading to a better understanding of visitor preferences like short-stay vacations or culturally enriching experiences. For example, Day-Trippers align closely with Flourishing Families, who seek accessible, affordable activities.

See [Appendix A](#) for more information on these segments.

### III. Grand River-Specific Activities and Interests:

Data from local tourism organizations and the Grand River Conservation Authority highlighted the popular activities that attract visitors, such as canoeing, hiking, and visiting Indigenous cultural sites. This shaped the Adventure Seekers and Cultural Enthusiasts segments, where physical exploration and cultural learning are primary motivations.

| SEGMENT                          | DEMOGRAPHICS<br>(Age Range, Household Income, Education Level, Family Structure)  | TRAVEL MOTIVATIONS  | KEY WORDS  |
|----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Young Urban Adventurers          | Age Range: 25-40; Predominantly single or young couples without children; High proportion of renters in metropolitan areas (Toronto, Hamilton); Highly educated (University degree or higher) | Seeking immersive, authentic experiences like kayaking, paddleboarding, or cycling; Interested in engaging with Indigenous heritage and local festivals; Eco-conscious, looking for sustainable tourism options   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immersive</li> <li>Adventure</li> <li>Off-the-beaten-path</li> <li>Eco-conscious</li> <li>Explore</li> </ul>                  |
| Family Memory Makers             | Age Range: 35-50; Couples with young children; Primarily homeowners; Higher-than-average household income; Interested in education-driven experiences for their children                      | Prioritizing family memories through wildlife spotting, riverboat tours, or petting zoos; Seeking outdoor activities like fishing, easy hiking, or canoeing; Interested in cultural learning experiences for kids | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Together</li> <li>Memories</li> <li>Learning</li> <li>Family-friendly</li> <li>Adventure-lite</li> <li>Discovery</li> </ul>   |
| Heritage and Culture Enthusiasts | Age Range: 50-65; Couples, some with grown children, empty nesters; High homeownership; Highly educated (University degree or higher); High disposable income                                 | Drawn to the historical and Indigenous significance of the Grand River; Interested in cultural festivals, heritage sites, and guided tours; Seeking authenticity and deeper cultural engagement                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heritage</li> <li>Legacy</li> <li>Authentic</li> <li>History</li> <li>Culture</li> <li>Learning</li> <li>Tradition</li> </ul> |

|                           |  |   |   |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|
| Outdoor Adventure Seekers | Age Range: 30-50; Both singles and couples, generally active and health-conscious; Likely moderate to high income  | Motivated by physical challenges and the natural beauty of the Grand River; Interested in white-water rafting, zip-lining, hiking, and canoeing; Appreciate sustainable adventure facilities and nature photography | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adventure</li> <li>Thrill</li> <li>Outdoors</li> <li>Physical Challenge</li> <li>Natural Beauty</li> <li>Adrenaline</li> </ul> |
| Newcomer Explorers        | Age Range: 25-45; Recent immigrants or relocated individuals; Mix of family structures; Mid-range household income | Motivated by learning about local culture, especially Indigenous traditions; Interested in community events, outdoor experiences, and building connections; Seeking to integrate into the local environment         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community</li> <li>Discovery</li> <li>Connection</li> <li>Learning</li> <li>Belonging</li> <li>Integration</li> </ul>          |







## Personas

The following personas provide a diverse and comprehensive representation of the target audiences for the Grand River activations, each reflecting a different travel segment. These personas were designed to reflect the unique characteristics, motivations, and travel behaviours of individuals who are likely to visit the area. From young urban professionals seeking adventure and cultural immersion to families looking to create lasting memories, each profile is tailored to showcase a blend of demographics, cultural backgrounds, and lifestyle preferences. The personas also incorporate a focus on inclusivity, ensuring that a broad spectrum of visitors, regardless of age, background, or accessibility needs, can find meaningful and enjoyable experiences in the region.





## YOUNG URBAN ADVENTURERS

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**Name:** Lina Rodriguez

**Age:** 29

**Occupation:** Marketing Executive

**Location:** Toronto, Ontario

### BACKGROUND

Lina is a first-generation Canadian with Colombian roots. She lives in downtown Toronto and often feels overwhelmed by the fast-paced city life. She has a university degree and works in a high-pressure corporate environment.

### INTERESTS

Lina enjoys staying active through outdoor activities like cycling and paddleboarding. She is eco-conscious and prefers sustainable travel options that allow her to explore new cultures. Lina loves visiting places off the beaten path, where she can unwind and engage with the local community. She is also a food enthusiast, seeking out unique culinary experiences that highlight local and sustainable ingredients, particularly those that connect with cultural traditions and regional specialties.

### MOTIVATIONS

Lina seeks authentic, immersive travel experiences where she can learn about Indigenous cultures and explore hidden natural gems. She enjoys weekend getaways to the Grand River to disconnect from city life, connect with nature, and savour the region's distinctive food offerings.

### TRAVEL HABITS

Lina travels with her partner, occasionally joining small groups for guided eco-tours, adventure-based experiences, and culinary tours that allow her to immerse herself in both the natural and cultural richness of the area. She sometimes prefers to rent electric vehicles for her travels and chooses public transportation whenever it's available, aligning with her commitment to sustainable practices.



## FAMILY MEMORY MAKERS

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**Name:** Sanjay and Priya Patel

**Age:** 42 (Sanjay), 40 (Priya)

**Occupation:** Sanjay - IT Consultant;  
Priya - School Teacher

**Location:** Oakville, Ontario

### BACKGROUND

Sanjay and Priya are a Southeast Asian-Canadian couple with two young children, ages 8 and 5. They prioritize family time and believe in introducing their children to both nature and culture early on. They are homeowners with a higher-than-average household income and enjoy taking family-friendly trips.

### INTERESTS

The Patels are particularly interested in educational trips that are fun for their children. They enjoy visiting wildlife reserves, participating in family-oriented outdoor activities like fishing and canoeing, and learning about Indigenous cultures through interactive storytelling sessions.

### MOTIVATIONS

They value meaningful family experiences where their children can learn and explore safely. The Patels are drawn to the Grand River for its wildlife, easy hiking trails, and family-friendly parks.

### TRAVEL HABITS

They prefer short trips over long vacations due to their busy schedules. Weekend excursions are planned around kid-friendly activities, often opting for guided experiences that include educational components.



## HERITAGE AND CULTURE ENTHUSIASTS

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**Name:** Mark and Elaine Johnston

**Age:** 63 (Mark), 60 (Elaine)

**Occupation:** Retired Engineer (Mark), Retired History Teacher (Elaine)

**Location:** Burlington, Ontario

### BACKGROUND

Mark and Elaine are empty nesters who have always valued culture and history. With their children grown, they now have the time and resources to explore their passions, including local heritage sites and cultural festivals. Both have a deep appreciation for authentic experiences that teach them about the past.

### INTERESTS

They enjoy visiting museums, attending historical tours, and learning about the rich cultural legacy of places they visit. The couple is particularly drawn to Indigenous history and enjoys visiting heritage trails and cultural centres that honour local traditions.

### MOTIVATIONS

Mark and Elaine are motivated by their desire to learn and engage with local histories. They look for meaningful interactions, such as guided tours and workshops that offer in-depth understanding of the Grand River's Indigenous and ecological legacy.

### TRAVEL HABITS

The couple takes several trips each year, typically driving to regional destinations. They prefer slower-paced, educational travel that allows them to absorb the cultural richness of a place.



## OUTDOOR ADVENTURE SEEKERS

---

**Name:** Dante Wong

**Age:** 37

**Occupation:** Freelance Photographer and Outdoor Guide

**Location:** Vancouver, British Columbia

### BACKGROUND

Dante is an adventurous, active individual with a passion for exploring the outdoors. He frequently travels across Canada to capture breathtaking landscapes for his photography business. Dante has experience in various adventure sports and prefers destinations that offer adrenaline-pumping activities such as white-water rafting, mountain biking, and hiking.

### INTERESTS

Dante is highly motivated by physical challenges and enjoys river-based activities like canoeing and fishing, as well as camping in remote areas. He appreciates regions that offer eco-conscious, sustainable adventure facilities. Dante also uses his trips as opportunities for wildlife photography and documenting the natural world.

### MOTIVATIONS

Dante is driven by his need to explore new terrains, push his physical limits, and capture natural beauty through his photography. He often seeks destinations that offer unique adventure experiences in well-preserved, natural settings like the Grand River.

### TRAVEL HABITS

Dante prefers long weekends or week-long trips, traveling solo or with other outdoor enthusiasts. He typically camps or stays in eco-lodges to minimize his environmental impact while exploring new locations.



## NEWCOMER EXPLORERS

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**Name:** Fatima Hassan

**Age:** 33

**Occupation:** Community Health Worker

**Location:** Mississauga, Ontario

### BACKGROUND

Fatima is a recent immigrant from Pakistan who relocated to Mississauga with her family two years ago. She is in the process of building a new life in Canada, and much of her focus is on exploring the local culture, establishing a social network, and ensuring her children adapt well. Fatima works as a community health worker, helping other newcomers integrate into the Canadian healthcare system.

### INTERESTS

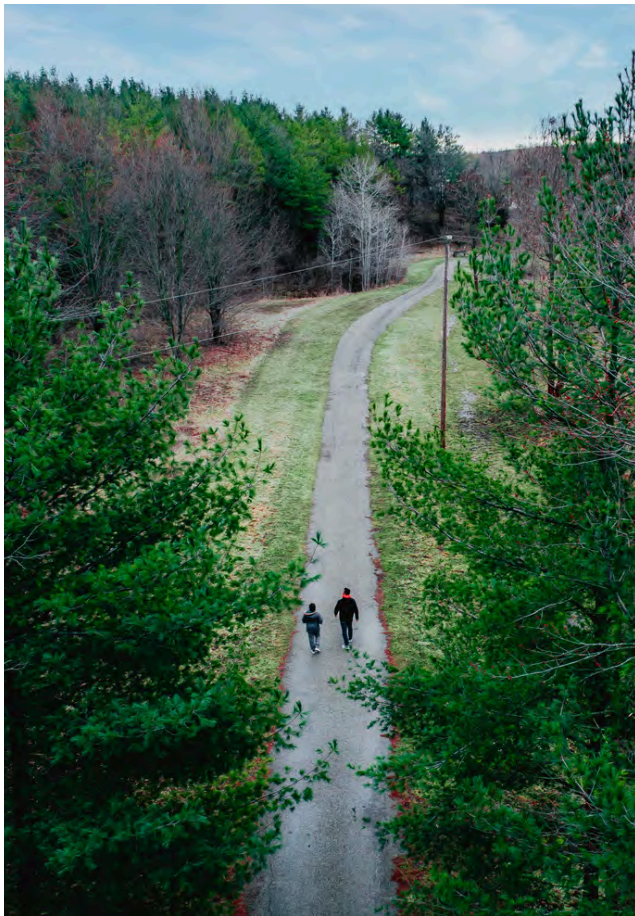
Fatima enjoys attending local community events, cultural festivals, and exploring outdoor spaces where her family can relax and learn about their new home. She is particularly interested in learning about Indigenous cultures and traditions and often seeks activities that will help her family feel more connected to their new community.

### MOTIVATIONS

Fatima is motivated by a desire to learn about local history and nature, especially Indigenous traditions connected to the Grand River. She wants to integrate into Canadian society while exposing her children to the natural beauty and cultural diversity of the region.

### TRAVEL HABITS

Fatima prefers day trips or weekend getaways with her family, often opting for guided tours or community-driven events. She appreciates affordable, enriching experiences that help her feel more connected to her local environment and community.



## Interpreting Target Segments

Visitors are drawn to the Grand River for its combination of natural beauty, outdoor recreation opportunities, and rich cultural history. Nature and outdoor activities are a significant attraction, especially for Young Urban Adventurers and Outdoor Adventure Seekers, who are captivated by the chance to engage in physically engaging activities such as kayaking, paddleboarding, cycling, or hiking. These visitors typically come from large metropolitan areas like Toronto or Hamilton, seeking a peaceful escape from urban life to immerse themselves in nature, away from the crowds.

Cultural and heritage experiences are also a key motivator, especially for Heritage and Culture Enthusiasts. These visitors are drawn to the region's Indigenous history, cultural festivals, and historical landmarks. They enjoy participating in immersive, authentic experiences, such as visiting local art galleries, museums, and Indigenous heritage trails, all of which allow them to explore the Grand River's cultural and ecological legacy. These experiences foster a deeper connection with the area and encourage repeat visits, especially when visitors can engage meaningfully with local traditions.

For Family Memory Makers, the Grand River region offers an ideal setting for family-friendly activities, providing a range of opportunities to create lasting memories. Families are motivated by the chance to spend quality time together through educational and entertaining experiences, such as wildlife spotting, petting zoos, and interactive cultural learning sessions that engage children in Indigenous history. These visitors value outdoor activities that are suitable for all ages, including fishing, easy hiking trails, and family-friendly parks, which help build meaningful and fun experiences for both parents and children.

The strategy also identified Newcomer Explorers—recent immigrants or individuals who have relocated to the area. They are drawn to Haldimand County by their desire to learn about the local culture, integrate into the community, and participate in outdoor activities that connect them to their new surroundings. This group appreciates guided tours and events that familiarize them with the local environment and traditions, helping them feel a sense of belonging in their new community.

The Business-in-a-Box business cases were developed using these personas to create highly targeted opportunities for growth, ensuring that the region's offerings align with the specific motivations and needs of each segment. This approach ensures that the tourism strategy is not only relevant to the visitors' interests but also fosters sustainable business development in Haldimand County by tapping into diverse traveller profiles. By understanding these nuanced visitor types, the plan can create a variety of tailored experiences—from eco-conscious adventure tours to culturally immersive festivals—that resonate deeply with the target audiences.



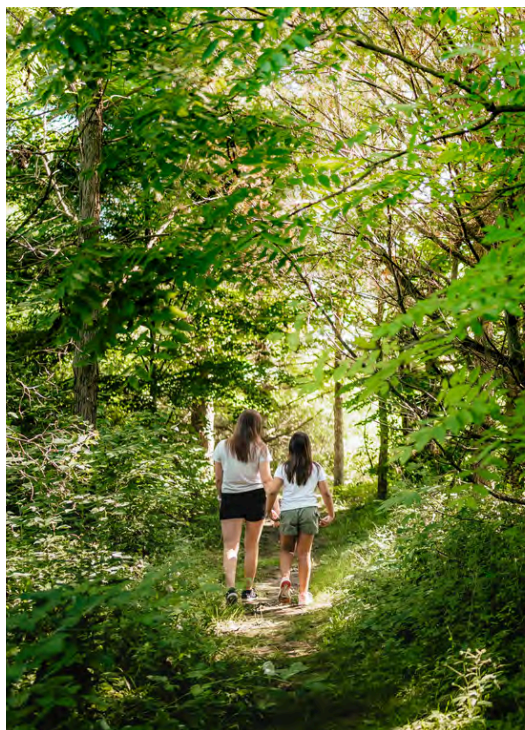


# Comparative Analysis

To create a more tailored interpretation of visitor profiles specific to the Grand River, the strategy uses a blend of consumer behaviour insights, regional data, and market segmentation research, specifically focusing on visitor motivations and interests that would apply directly to this region's unique cultural, natural, and historical attractions. Explorer Quotient (EQ) profiles and Prizm segments identified for this project can be found in [Appendix A](#). The blended approach below considers a combination of outdoor recreational appeal, cultural experiences, and family-friendly activities.

The following locations were analyzed for their strengths and weaknesses, which can be viewed in full in [Appendix B](#):

- [Elora & Fergus](#)
- [Paris](#)
- [Brantford](#)
- [Chatham-Kent](#)
- [Guelph](#)



## Community Assets and Stakeholders

Below is a sampling of Haldimand County's diverse businesses and stakeholders that contribute to the area's thriving tourism landscape, highlighting the many operations that directly or indirectly support tourism in the region. This list is not exhaustive but offers a glimpse into the robust offerings that enhance visitor experiences.

# Programming and Attractions

Haldimand County boasts a wide range of attractions and programming that showcase the area's rich cultural, historical, and natural assets, many of which are connected to the Grand River. The Riverside Exhibition Centre, operated by the Caledonia Agricultural Society since 1878, is a central hub for community events drawing over 150,000 visitors annually and promoting agricultural education, including the Caledonia Fair, in a scenic riverfront setting. Nature enthusiasts are drawn to the Taquanyah Conservation Area, a haven for hikers and birdwatchers, overseen by the Grand River Conservation Authority.

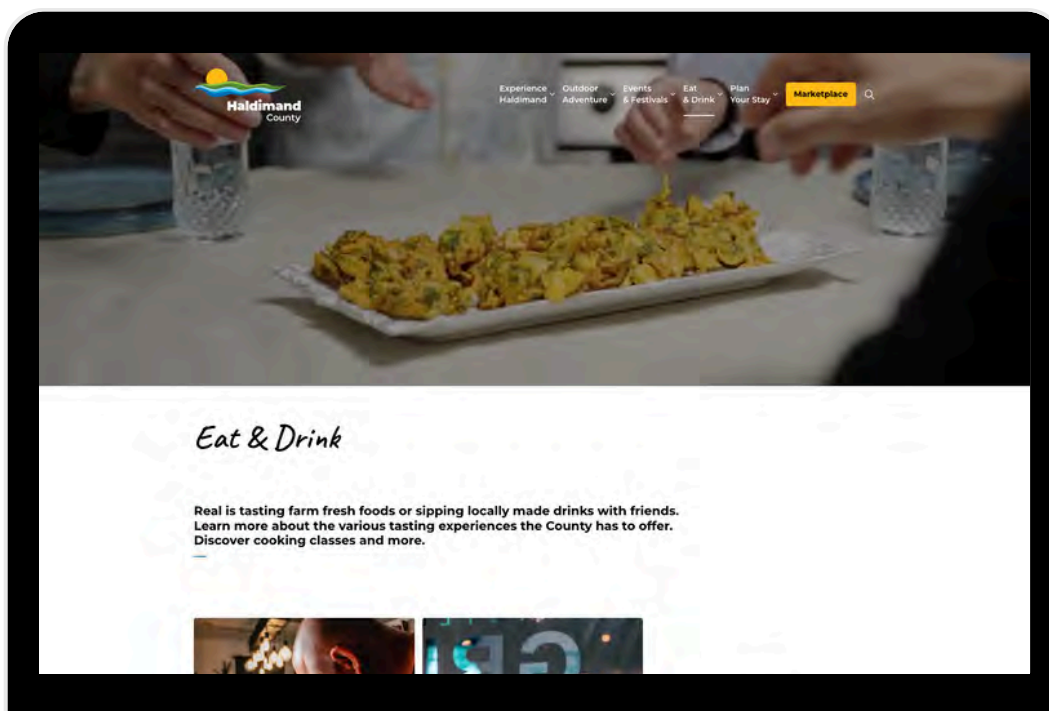
Cultural tourism is also a focal point in Haldimand, highlighted by The PATH (Public Art Tour Haldimand), which showcases local artists and their work throughout the County, fostering community engagement through public art. History buffs can explore landmarks such as the Caledonia Grand Trunk Station, a historic site that host tours, and the Cayuga Library and Heritage Centre, which offers a deep dive into local history and heritage through its programs. Additionally, provincially-designated Edinburgh Square Heritage and Cultural Centre, located in the former Caledonia Town Hall, provides educational exhibits on local industries like gypsum mining, while Ruthven Park National Historic Site invites visitors to explore its 19th-century mansion, gardens, and trails. Visitors can learn about the area's connection to Black history and the Underground Railroad through a visit to the Canfield Black Settlement Marker, just a few miles from the Grand River. In Port Maitland East Park, a memorial cairn celebrates the history of the Grand River Naval Depot and Cemetery, Feeder Canal and Lock, and the commercial fishing industry.

For those seeking more interactive experiences, Grand River Dinner Cruises offers scenic dinner cruises, blending local history and ecology with dining and entertainment. Meanwhile, thrill-seekers can enjoy the excitement of Toronto Motorsports Park, which hosts a variety of racing events. Outdoor enthusiasts can also visit the Port Maitland Pier and Lighthouse, where the Grand River meets Lake Erie, providing picturesque views and fishing opportunities. Finally, Haldimand's vibrant calendar of events and festivals, including the Dunnville Mudcat Festival, Caledonia Fair, and Hagersville Summer's End Festival, ensures there is always something for everyone to enjoy year-round.

# Food and Beverage

For a comprehensive list of food-related offerings, please visit [Tourism Haldimand's Noteworthy Food & Drink website](#).

Haldimand County's food and drink scene showcases diverse dining experiences along the scenic Grand River. In Caledonia, Argyle Street Grill offers a hearty, welcoming vibe, while Passmore's in Dunnville provides a retro, family-friendly atmosphere for any meal. Dunnville's Minga Cafe focuses on organic, locally-sourced food and fair-trade coffee in a community-centred space, while Debb's Cuisine on Queen delivers cozy, farm-to-table food. Hippos at Mohawk Marina in Lowbanks features laid-back seasonal outdoor dining with Lake Erie waterfront views, and the historic Oasis Drive-In in Caledonia has been a local classic since 1927. Fisherville's Fisherville Hotel & Tavern established in 1853, is renowned for its farm-to-table meals and craft beer. In Cayuga, Twisted Lemon provides an upscale dining experience with a seasonal, locally-sourced menu, while the Carolinian Café is vibrant, local, fresh, and energizing. Meanwhile, the Queen's Merritt Room in Dunnville combines rich ambiance with ghost stories. For a unique experience, Grand River Marina & Cafe in Dunnville pairs BBQ with riverfront activities, and Plank Road in Hagersville offers a vibrant dining adventure with locally sourced ingredients and craft beer.



# Accommodations

Haldimand County offers a variety of accommodations that cater to different preferences, from cozy year-round stays to scenic seasonal retreats, many of which are located along or near the Grand River. Year-round options include the charming Carrousel Bed & Breakfast in Cayuga, known for its quaint ambiance and homemade breakfasts. Visitors can also enjoy the comfort of Dunnville’s Riverview Motel, Country Inn Motel, or Dunnville Inn Bed & Breakfast, each offering home-like and affordable options for both short and extended stays. For those seeking a touch of luxury, Twisted Lemon Boutique Inn offers stylish accommodations alongside its renowned dining, while Cayuga’s Broecheler Inn focuses on comfortable accommodations and personalized service. Door25 stands out for its unique and functional stays, offering exceptional, personalized guest experiences along the shores of Lake Erie.

Seasonal accommodations provide equally inviting stays, such as Maitland Shores RV Resorts & Marina, perfect for boating enthusiasts with its direct river access, and Bruce’s Landing RV Resort, which offers a peaceful, wooded setting ideal for nature lovers. The Grand River RV Resort combines spacious RV sites with scenic views and outdoor activities, while Sun Retreats Cayuga is a family-friendly destination with amenities like a heated pool and mini-golf, making it a perfect spot for seasonal vacations.



# Indigenous Experiences

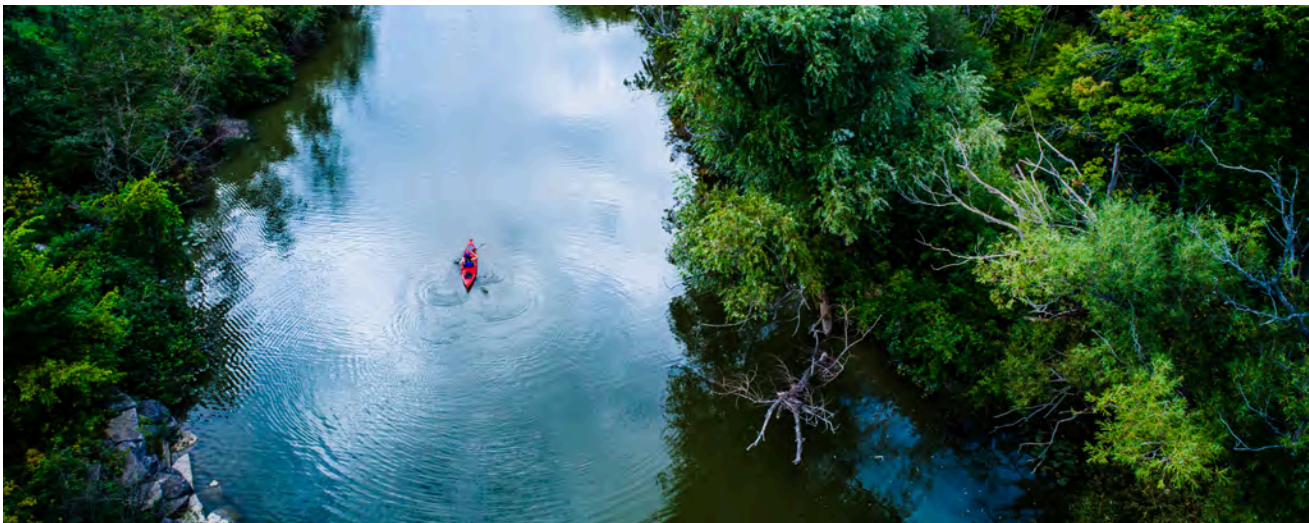
Haldimand County’s proximity to Six Nations of the Grand River enriches the region’s cultural tourism offerings, as many Indigenous-led events and experiences are held on-reserve just minutes from the County. These events not only draw visitors to the area but also encourage longer stays, immersing them in the region’s rich Indigenous culture. It’s important to note that all of these tourism experiences are led by Indigenous communities and peoples, ensuring they are culturally genuine and respectful of local traditions.

The region highlights the history, culture, and traditions of the Haudenosaunee and other Indigenous peoples along the Grand River. Visitors can explore the Six Nations Territory through guided tours, offering visits to cultural landmarks, craft shops, and hands-on activities like archery and paddling, with future plans for Indigenous culinary experiences. For a deeper understanding of Indigenous history, the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford provides exhibitions and programs on Indigenous art and culture, including tours of the former Mohawk Institute Residential School, a significant site of remembrance.

Cultural celebrations such as the annual Grand River Champion of Champions Pow Wow at Chiefswood Park bring Indigenous traditions to life with vibrant dance, drumming, and singing competitions. Additional events like Bread and Cheese Festivities, Tom Longboat Day, and the Six Nations Fall Fair celebrate Haudenosaunee culture, offering visitors opportunities to engage with local artisans and purchase authentic crafts. The Grand River Water Walk & Ceremonies honour traditional Anishinaabe practices, while the Two Row on the Grand canoe paddle promotes peace and mutual respect between Indigenous and settler communities, embodying the spirit of the Two Row Wampum Treaty.

Haldimand County is also in close proximity to the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, featuring events like the Three Fires Homecoming Pow Wow and Traditional Gathering.

These Indigenous-led experiences not only create a powerful cultural connection for visitors but also foster economic opportunities for local communities, drawing a diverse range of visitors to the region and contributing to its economic and cultural vitality.



## Outfitters

Haldimand County's Outfitters provide a range of outdoor experiences, allowing visitors to explore the region's rivers and lakes through expert-led adventures. Hall'em In Sport Fishing, led by Captain James Hall, offers hands-on fishing charters across Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, catering to all experience levels with the added perk of local restaurants preparing your fresh catch. Fishmaster Ultimate Charters, based in Dunnville, specializes in guided fishing trips on the Grand River and Lake Erie, targeting a variety of species.

For those looking to explore the water more leisurely, Byng Island Conservation Area in Dunnville offers canoe and kayak rentals, along with access to Canada's largest outdoor pool. Grand River Rafting provides memorable paddling adventures, including their signature trip along Steamboat Alley, where steamships once navigated the Grand River. Known for exceptional customer service, Grand River Rafting partners with Haldimand County to offer seamless river access and adventure to guests arriving primarily from the GTHA.

## Regional Tourism Organizations

Haldimand County benefits from the support of Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) that work to enhance the visibility and appeal of the region. RTO 1 focuses on promoting Southwestern Ontario, including Haldimand, through marketing, partnerships, and support for local tourism businesses, highlighting attractions like the Grand River, historic sites, and cultural events. RTO 3, covering nearby Hamilton and Halton (including Oakville, Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton, County of Brant, Brantford, Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation), collaborates with local operators to promote the region's history, outdoor adventures, and cultural offerings, with connections to Haldimand through shared river activities. RTO 4, which includes Waterloo, Perth, Huron, and Wellington counties, emphasizes a holistic, experience-driven approach to tourism, including joint projects to evaluate usage and awareness of the Grand River, helping shape sustainable tourism growth in the region.

# Consultation Overview

The consultation process was designed to comprehensively gather and integrate community perspectives into the VES project research phase. This included engaging stakeholders through a variety of mediums including five 1:1 interviews, an internal focus group with municipal staff, the Business Development and Planning Advisory which includes representatives from Haldimand Council, an external stakeholders focus group, two Indigenous community consultations as well as insights garnered from an online survey issued by Six Nations Tourism, and an online survey facilitated by Haldimand Economic Development and Tourism with 44 respondents. This inclusive strategy ensured the capture of a wide array of views from various segments of the community, including local residents, business owners, environmental experts, municipal employees, Council members, and Indigenous representatives. The objective was to establish a robust foundation for future development initiatives and recommendations that are economically viable, environmentally sustainable, and culturally respectful.



# Overall Key Consultation Themes

Each section below contains a quantifiable percentage based on how frequently and prominently topics recurred throughout the overall consultation process. Each theme is a key element of the stakeholders' feedback and concerns about future tourism development along the Grand River.

## SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (30%)

A significant portion of the discussions emphasized the importance of integrating sustainable practices to protect and enhance the natural environment of the Grand River. This included talks on regenerative tourism, conservation efforts, and minimizing ecological impacts.

- Integration of sustainable and regenerative practices to protect the river's natural habitat, such as creating buffer zones, restoring native vegetation, and sustainable infrastructure using materials and designs that blend with the natural environment.
- Importance of building strong partnerships with environmental bodies such as: Grand River Conservation Authority to align tourism initiatives with conservation goals; Friends of the Grand; and collaborations with the University of Guelph to focus on water quality and ecosystem health.
- Need for educational campaigns to promote environmental stewardship among tourists and local stakeholders, including educational signage, responsible fishing practices, culturally sensitive practices and guided eco-tours.
- The importance of ecological protection, advocating for the integration of traditional knowledge in river management and emphasizing practices that leave no trace to protect the environment for future generations.
- Necessity of developing sustainability guidelines to help new tourism businesses minimize their environmental impact.
- Importance of mentorship for newcomers on sustainable operations and budget management.
- Discussed the GRCA's approach, which does not include specific sustainability guidelines but assesses each proposal on a case-by-case basis focusing on aspects like erosion and habitat sustainability.
- All activities along the river must consider regulations concerning flood plains and hazard zones, requiring necessary buffer zones.
- Noted that while the GRCA does not own the river and does not regulate activities like outfitters directly using the water, any physical development or alteration of the watercourse and shoreline is strictly regulated.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSIVITY (25%)

These discussions highlighted the need for engaging a broad spectrum of the community, including Indigenous groups, in the tourism development process. There was a strong focus on ensuring that the local community benefits from tourism and that development efforts are inclusive of all community voices.

- Improving infrastructure to accommodate all visitors, including those with differing abilities, with accessible pathways, adequate signage, and accessible facilities.
- Review of current by-laws, proposing amendments to support safer and more inclusive tourism experiences.
- Improve collaborations between businesses and stakeholders ensuring inclusivity and comprehensive engagement, and enhance synergies between new and existing enterprises.
- Explore strategies for engaging local communities in tourism development, proposing a structured approach to engagement through regular community meetings, roundtable discussions, shared promotional activities, and mutual support for local businesses and tourism-related initiatives and to ensure all community voices are heard.
- Integration of First Nations perspectives in projects, acknowledging past shortcomings and the current efforts to improve meaningful involvement and knowledge translation.
- Continuing to ensure archaeological studies at new project sites, which must be approved by chiefs' councils.
- Support on-going initiatives like the Grand River community play, which actively incorporates First Nations by co-creating and sharing stories.
- Desire for respectful and effective collaboration, noting past successful collaborations and expressing interest in cultural exchanges and cross-promotion.
- Advocated for the use of Facebook groups and direct personal interactions for community engagement and feedback.
- Several suggestions pointed towards developing more community-driven venues and events, such as live music at farmers' markets, food trucks, and culturally themed events.
- The enhancement of community spaces such as game tables by the river and more engaging adult fitness opportunities along walking paths were proposed.

- Addressed common issues such as etiquette at busy boat launches, associated parking problems, and public misconceptions about the GRCA's control over the river.
- Proposed enhancing interpretive signage and kiosks along the river and lake areas, including narrated storytelling signs that cater to accessibility needs.
- Advocated fostering partnerships with private property owners (e.g., fairgrounds, Byng Island, Sun Resorts, private campgrounds) to expand parking and signage, helping visitors navigate and understand local offerings.

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS (20%)

Concerns about infrastructure, particularly the need for better accessibility to the Grand River and its surrounding areas, were prominent. This theme encompassed discussions on enhancing transportation, access points, and facilities to accommodate a growing number of tourists and residents alike.

- Critical infrastructure improvements necessary include enhancing access roads, expanding parking facilities, improving access, enhanced washroom access and upgrading maintenance of waterfront amenities.
- Identified the need for emergency services preparedness.
- Highlighted the Grand River's natural beauty and cultural stories as primary attractions, noting the current lack of adequate signage and infrastructure that complicates access and diminishes the visitor experience.
- Storytelling using modern tools like QR codes to connect visitors with the history and culture of the area;
- Identified immediate priorities for the visitor experience strategy such as developing comprehensive marketing strategies, and implementing sustainable tourism practices.
- Importance of infrastructure that accommodates seasonal variation were widely requested such as floating docks that adjust to different water levels. Current docks require upgrading, and better accessibility, and additional development is needed on the trails for hiking and biking.
- Public transit improvements were suggested to enhance accessibility in and out of the municipality.
- Enhanced use of the river through additional boat, canoe, and kayak launches, and possibly vendor spaces for casual dining like ice cream stands were discussed.

- Need for improved boat parking facilities, particularly in tourist-heavy areas, including mooring spots, where visitors can dock boats and easily access nearby restaurants or shops.
- Increasing public access to amenities such as drinking water dispensers and sunscreen dispensers in outdoor activity areas.
- Developing specialized launches for kayaks in addition to regular boat launches to cater to non-motorized watercraft enthusiasts.
- Suggested creating a comprehensive visitor map of the Grand River to aid in navigation and enhance the overall visitor experience.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES (15%)**

This theme involved discussions on how tourism can be leveraged as a vehicle for economic growth. There was a focus on creating job opportunities, supporting local businesses, and developing tourism products that can attract a wider audience.

- Noted the Grand River's potential to anchor new tourism businesses.
- Discussed marketing strategies, including leveraging digital marketing, improving online presence, and using innovative advertising methods to attract a broader audience.
- Discussed funding models and sustainability challenges, highlighting the use of seed funding for projects and leveraging larger funds through programs like the Tourism Relief Fund.
- Explored economic opportunities related to tourism, advocating for equitable and beneficial economic structures that support community development.
- Specific ideas for economic growth included local farm/orchard tours, paddling access points, and a focus on supporting grassroots businesses, particularly in agriculture.
- Leverage accommodations at the municipal level by providing clear processes, mentoring, and addressing common pitfalls to facilitate an increase in roofed accommodations.
- Discussed how user fee impacts at conservation areas like Byng Conservation Area could be managed by exploring funding models that balance operational costs with public access needs.
- The utilization of regional tourism organizations to provide additional support and resources.

- Respondents identified the underutilization of riverfront and waterfront areas, suggesting more restaurants, boat tours, and public docks to enhance tourism.
- Noted a perceived lack of water-based activities offered, with potential for expansion in areas such as paddling, canoeing, kayaking, and waterskiing.
- Investment in downtowns to make them more attractive for businesses and tourism, especially along waterfronts.
- Focus on areas with the most tourism potential, enhancing infrastructure and community assets one area at a time to encourage private sector involvement.
- The need for specialized insights into regulatory matters concerning the Grand River Conservation Authority, leading to focused discussions with GRCA experts.
- Encouraged utilizing spaces like LaFortune Park more effectively, promoting existing attractions such as disc golf.

### CULTURAL HERITAGE AND EDUCATION (10%)

These discussions were about emphasizing and integrating the rich cultural heritage of the area, especially the history and contributions of Indigenous peoples, into the tourism offerings. There was also a focus on educational programs that could inform visitors and locals about the historical and ecological significance of the region.

- Talked about the need for educational campaigns to promote environmental stewardship among tourists and local stakeholders, including educational signage, QR codes, and guided eco-tours. (This can also contribute to Cultural Heritage and Education as it educates visitors on the ecological importance of the region.)
- Discussed the integration of First Nations perspectives in projects, acknowledging past shortcomings and the current efforts to improve meaningful involvement and knowledge translation.
- The Grand River's historical significance as a traditional roadway in the 1800s and its importance for providing authentic cultural experiences for visitors.
- Expressed a strong desire to revitalize paddling and water culture, with suggestions for a summer-long paddle camp.
- Some respondents suggested pursuing treaty-based collaborations, particularly rooted in the Two Row Wampum tradition.

- Further highlighted the river's significance as a Heritage River and its personal connection to the Six Nations community, with respondents advocating for cultural education on the Haldimand Tract and Two Row Wampum agreements.
- Proposed storytelling projects along "Steam Boat Alley" between York and Cayuga to enrich visitor engagement with historical context.
- Cultural and artistic activities were mentioned as underrepresented, with calls for greater recognition and integration of local artists and historical features, particularly the history of Six Nations and land treaties.
- Promotion of local history, nature spots, and combining these with dining and accommodation to enrich the tourist experience was suggested.



# SWOT Analysis



## STRENGTHS

- Rich Natural Resources: The Grand River and surrounding landscapes offer diverse recreational activities, attracting outdoor enthusiasts.
- Cultural and Historical Attractions: Strong heritage sites including Indigenous and historical European settlements enhance educational tourism.
- Existing Tourism Support Infrastructure: Some developed accommodations, dining options, and event venues which cater to current tourist needs.
- Community Engagement: High local involvement ensures tourism development aligns with community values and sustainability goals.
- Proximity to Major Urban Centres: Located near cities like Toronto and Hamilton, facilitating easy access for a large potential visitor base.
- Variety of Recreational Activities: Activities such as boating, fishing, hiking, and bird watching cater to a wide range of interests.
- Event Hosting Capabilities: Capability to host large events in collaboration with partners, attracting both local and external visitors.



## WEAKNESSES

- Limited Tourist Facilities: Insufficient accommodations and other hospitality-related options may deter tourists.
- Seasonal Activity Limitations: Many current activities and attractions are season-dependent, which could limit shoulder-season tourism.
- Inadequate Marketing Strategies: Current marketing efforts made by the County may not effectively reach or engage potential tourists, especially younger demographics and international tourists.
- Infrastructure Wear and Tear: Aging infrastructure at key tourist spots may lead to safety concerns, a less appealing visitor experience, or prevent operators from developing new tourism offerings.

- Navigational Challenges: Inadequate signage and information leading to key attractions (i.e. wayfinding) can deter first-time visitors.



## OPPORTUNITIES

- Development of Eco-Friendly Tours: Leveraging the natural environment to promote eco-tourism, such as bird-watching tours, guided ecological trails, and river-related and adjacent activities.
- Cultural Program Expansion: Enhancing the visibility and accessibility of Indigenous and settler history through interactive experiences and learning programs.
- Partnerships with Local Businesses: Creating packages that include dining, accommodations, and activities to enhance the overall tourist experience.
- Technology Integration: Implementing apps, virtual reality, or augmented reality experiences to offer immersive historical or natural tours.
- Attracting International Tourists: Developing language-specific materials and targeted marketing campaigns to attract tourists from abroad as well as newcomer Canadians.
- Differentiation from Larger Destinations: Highlighting the Grand River's unique features and craft high-yield tourism experiences
- Year-Round Tourism Development: Creating shoulder-season activities to attract visitors throughout the year.
- Accommodation Offerings: There is great potential to entice STRs (short-term rentals) and more large-scale accommodation providers (ie. hotels or motels) to service tourism-related visitation.



## THREATS

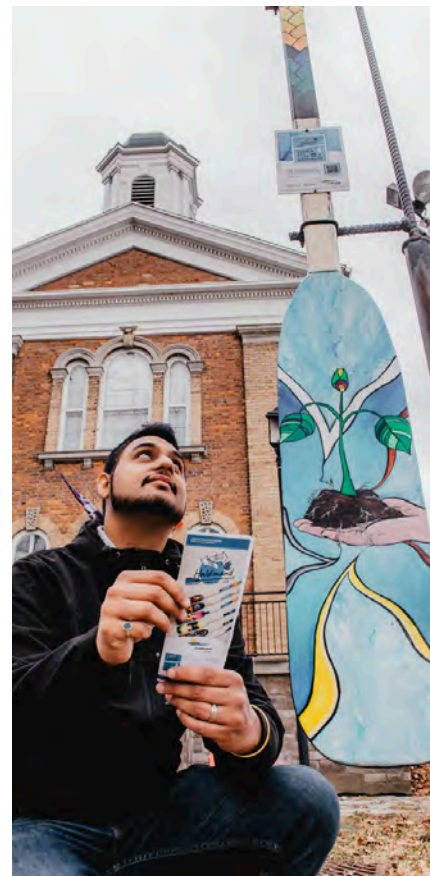
- Environmental Impact Concerns: Increased tourism could lead to environmental degradation if not managed sustainably.
- Economic Volatility: Economic downturns can reduce discretionary spending on travel and tourism.

- Competitive Pressures: Nearby destinations with similar offerings may draw potential visitors away.
- Climate Change Effects: Changes in climate patterns could affect the viability and attractiveness of outdoor activities, as well as the viability of the river itself.
- Regulatory Changes: New environmental or land-use regulations could restrict tourism development or increase operational costs.
- Reputation Management Risks: Negative incidents, reviews, or public perception challenges could undermine the area's appeal as a desirable tourist destination, affecting visitor numbers and local business growth.

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## From Research to Recommendation

The goals of this Visitor Experience Strategy are to position Haldimand County as a premier, sustainable tourism destination that showcases the natural, cultural, and recreational appeal of the Grand River. By building on findings from research and consultation, the Strategy aims to create a safe, accessible, and enjoyable experience that benefits residents, supports local businesses, and respects the river's ecological significance. The following recommendations further prioritize improving infrastructure, fostering sustainability, promoting inclusive engagement, and supporting local collaboration—each intended to enhance the visitor journey while preserving the county's unique assets.





# Recommendations

## LEGEND

### SHORT TERM (1-3 YEARS)

- **Recommendation 1:** Implement a Tourist Feedback Mechanism
- **Recommendation 2:** Foster Local Business Support and Collaboration
- **Recommendation 3:** Enhance Interactive Digital Engagement
- **Recommendation 4:** Enhance Marketing Focused on the River

### MEDIUM TERM (4-7 YEARS)

- **Recommendation 5:** Promote Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Practices
- **Recommendation 6:** Monitor and Adapt Policies to Support Tourism Growth

### LONG TERM (7+ YEARS)

- **Recommendation 7:** Enhance Access and Infrastructure
- **Recommendation 8:** Strengthen All-Season Tourism



# RECOMMENDATION 1:

## Implement a Tourist Feedback Mechanism

Gathering visitor feedback is crucial for continuous improvement. Considering budget constraints, the municipality can implement cost-effective methods to collect feedback without relying on expensive digital kiosks or tablets.

### 1.1 ESTABLISH FEEDBACK CHANNELS



#### PROVIDE PLATFORMS

A

#### Online Surveys:

- **Feedback Forms:** Reintroduce simple, mobile-friendly feedback forms on the municipality's tourism website. These forms were previously in place, and reinstating them will provide valuable visitor insights, enhancing our ability to continuously improve the tourism experience.
- **Cost-Effective Signage:** Place durable signs at key locations with QR codes linking to the online survey. Printing QR codes is inexpensive and accessible to most visitors with smartphones.

B

#### Physical Feedback Methods:

- **Suggestion Boxes:** Install secure suggestion boxes at visitor centres, popular attractions, and accommodations.
- **Feedback Cards:** Provide printed feedback cards with prompts to guide visitors in sharing their experiences.
- **Feedback through Local Businesses:** Re-establish partnerships with restaurants, accommodations, and tour operators to gather visitor feedback using provided forms. This was done pre-COVID but had limited uptake. To improve engagement, consider incentives like co-marketing opportunities, 'community champion' recognition, or digital feedback options for easier collection.

## 1.2 SHARE FEEDBACK WITH STAKEHOLDERS



### REGULAR REPORTING

A

#### Data Sharing:

- Compile Feedback / Aggregate Responses: Collect and analyze feedback from various channels to identify common themes and areas for improvement.
- Quarterly Reports: Share summarized feedback with local businesses and tourism stakeholders through email newsletters or meetings.
- Actionable Recommendations: Highlight key suggestions and encourage businesses to adapt their offerings accordingly.

## RECOMMENDATION 2:

### Foster Local Business Support and Collaboration

Haldimand County can strengthen the local tourism industry by encouraging collaboration among businesses and providing support that enhances the visitor experience along the river. By facilitating partnerships and offering resources, Haldimand County helps create a vibrant, interconnected network of services that benefit both visitors and the local economy.

## 2.1 ENCOURAGE COLLABORATIVE MARKETING



### FACILITATE NETWORKING EVENTS

A

#### Business Workshops:

- Organize workshops and networking events leveraging the existing Tourism Network Meetings where local businesses can connect, share ideas, and develop joint marketing strategies.
- Collaboration Opportunities: Encourage a variety of businesses, such as outfitters, restaurants, accommodations, and cultural attractions to create package deals and itineraries combining river activities with dining and lodging.
- Expert Sessions: Include sessions on marketing trends, digital promotion, and customer engagement to help businesses enhance their outreach.



## PROMOTE EXISTING BUSINESS TOOLKIT

- A Accessibility:**

Ensure that all local businesses are aware of the Business Toolkit available on the municipality's website.
- B Content Highlights:**
  - Marketing Resources: Provide templates, branding guidelines, and tips for effective promotion.
  - Operational Guidance: Include information on customer service best practices and operational efficiency.
- C Promotion Strategies:**
  - Communication Channels: Use newsletters, social media, and local media to highlight the toolkit.
  - Demonstrations: Offer brief presentations or webinars on how to utilize the toolkit effectively.

## 2.2 SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF ITINERARY-BUILDING TOOLS



## ASSIST IN PLATFORM DEVELOPMENT

- A Collaborative Grants:**
  - Funding Support: Help local businesses secure funding or grants to develop itinerary-building apps or online platforms.
  - Continued Information Sharing: Keep businesses informed about available grants or funding opportunities.
  - Continued Application Assistance: Provide guidance on grant applications, including letters of support or partnerships if appropriate.
  - Customizable Itineraries: Allow visitors to plan trips combining river activities, dining options, cultural experiences, and accommodations.
  - Business Listings: Feature local businesses, enhancing their visibility to potential visitors.
  - Improved Visitor Planning: Simplifies trip planning, making the destination more attractive.
  - Business Exposure: Increases opportunities for local businesses to attract customers.

## 2.3 EXPLORE OPTIONS FOR SHORT-TERM RENTALS (STRS)



### SIMPLIFY PROCESSES

#### **A Compliance Support:**

- **Advisory Services:** Offer support services or contacts for property owners looking to explore alternative accommodation options. This can be facilitated through partnerships and resources like an alternative accommodation strategy.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Encourage property owners to share their insights or concerns to inform future discussions around alternative accommodations.

#### **B Clear Guidelines:**

- **Exploratory Approach:** Explore the potential of the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) or related processes and research what other municipalities are doing. This could include conducting a best practices review of nearby counties to understand their approach and identify possible opportunities for Haldimand County.

#### **C Educational Resources:**

- **Workshops and Webinars:** Offer regular sessions to provide property owners with guidance on best practices for STRs, focusing on topics such as regulatory compliance, safety standards, hospitality management, and marketing strategies.
- **Online Tools:** Develop resources like checklists, templates, and FAQs to assist owners in meeting current standards and regulations.



## 2.4 SECURE PRIVATE INVESTMENT FOR BUSINESS CASES



### BUSINESS CASE MARKETING & OUTREACH

#### **A Promotional Materials Creation:**

- Produce high-quality, visually appealing investor presentations, brochures, and digital assets that summarize key opportunities within each business model.
- Create investor-focused content (e.g., investor pitch materials) that clearly articulate the financial and community benefits of each “Business in a Box” model.

#### **B Targeted Investor Engagement:**

- Develop investor personas to tailor marketing materials, ensuring they resonate with potential backers (e.g., angel investors, venture capitalists, local businesses).
- Identify key regional and national investment events (e.g., tourism expos) to present the business cases and attract investors.

#### **C Discussions:**

- Host invite-only events to present the business models to a curated list of investors, interested in tourism and development.
- Organize smaller, intimate roundtable discussions for potential investors to meet with local business owners to discuss opportunities in more detail.

#### **D Showcase Investor Success Stories:**

- Present detailed case studies of successful tourism projects that attract investment, highlighting the community impact, financial success, and long-term sustainability.
- Collaborate with local media, industry publications, and tourism platforms to feature success stories of investments that have contributed to the Lower Grand River’s tourism ecosystem.



## INVESTOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

### **A Relationship Management:**

- Assign a dedicated liaison within EDT to work directly with potential investors, answering their questions, offering resources, and guiding them through the process.
- Track investor interactions and follow-ups to ensure timely and targeted communication to foster long-term relationships.

### **B Collaborative Investment Opportunities:**

- Partner with local chambers of commerce, industry associations, etc. to jointly pitch investment opportunities and align efforts to attract funding.
- Explore existing networks of local investors and initiate discussions.

### **C Local Investment Ambassadors:**

- Identify local community leaders, business owners, and influencers to act as ambassadors, helping to establish trust and credibility with potential investors.

### **D Utilize Concierge and Advisory Roll:**

- Utilize the Development Concierge Team to provide personalized logistical support (e.g., zoning, planning, financial) for interested investors.
- Set up a feedback initiative consisting of investors who can provide ongoing input and guidance.



## RECOMMENDATION 3:

### Enhance Interactive Digital Engagement

Haldimand County can significantly enrich the visitor experience by supporting the development of interactive digital tools that provide deeper engagement with the river's historical, cultural, and ecological aspects. By facilitating partnerships and providing infrastructure support, Haldimand empowers private entities to create innovative digital experiences without directly producing content.



#### FACILITATE PARTNERSHIPS

##### **A Pilot Programs:**

- **Testbed Initiatives:** Support pilot projects that trial new technologies, such as augmented reality (AR) tours or interactive maps, to gauge visitor interest and effectiveness.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Collect data and feedback from these pilots to inform future developments.

##### **B Training and Education:**

- **Workshops for Businesses:** Provide training sessions on the benefits and use of digital technologies in tourism leveraging the existing tourism network. Educate businesses on how to integrate digital tools into their services effectively.

##### **C Recognition Programs:**

- **Celebration of Excellence:** To encourage the adoption of innovative digital tourism initiatives, Haldimand County can collaborate with local business organizations to establish recognition programs that celebrate excellence in this area. Highlight successful projects through municipal channels to increase visibility.



#### INSTALL QR CODE SIGNAGE

##### **A Information Access:**

- **Strategic Placement of QR Codes:** Install QR codes at historically significant sites, ecological hotspots, private tourism locations/hotspots, public art installations, and along trails.



- **Ease of Use:** Ensure QR codes are placed at a height and location that is easily accessible to all visitors, including those using mobility devices.
- **Historical Content:** Provide detailed information about historical events, landmarks, and figures associated with the location.
- **Cultural Insights:** Share stories, traditions, and perspectives from Indigenous communities and local cultures.
- **Ecological Information:** Offer insights into local wildlife, plant species, conservation efforts, and environmental significance.
- **Interactive Elements:** Include multimedia content such as videos, audio narrations, virtual tours, or AR experiences.

#### **B Collaboration with Content Providers:**

- **Historians and Cultural Organizations:** Partner with museums, historical societies, and Indigenous groups to curate accurate and meaningful content.
- **Environmental Groups:** Collaborate with conservation organizations for ecological information.
- **Third-Party Contributions:** Allow private entities or community groups to submit recommendations via an intake form on the tourism website.
- **Quality Assurance:** Establish guidelines to ensure content is appropriate, accurate, and aligns with municipal standards.

#### **C Maintenance and Updates:**

- **Regular Audits:** Schedule periodic checks to ensure QR codes are functional and the linked content is accessible.
- **Content Relevance:** Update content to reflect new findings, events, or changes in the area.
- **Durable Signage / Weatherproof Materials:** Use materials resistant to weathering, vandalism, and wear to prolong the lifespan of the signage.
- **Design Consistency:** Ensure all signage follows Haldimand County Comprehensive Signage Strategy approved designs, and maintains Haldimand County Branding Guidelines to enhance recognition and aesthetics.

**D Accessibility and Inclusivity:**

- Multilingual Support: Consider opportunities to offer content in multiple languages on Haldimand tourism website to cater to international visitors and diverse communities.
- Easy Language Selection: Consider opportunities to implement user-friendly interfaces for language selection.
- Accessible Content / Alternative Formats: Explore alternative formats such as audio descriptions, transcripts, and captioned videos to enhance accessibility for visitors with hearing or visual impairments.
- User Interface Design: Ensure digital platforms are compatible with assistive technologies like screen readers.

## RECOMMENDATION 4:

### Enhance Marketing Focused on the River

To maximize the tourism potential of the Grand River, Haldimand County can develop and implement targeted marketing strategies that highlight river-based attractions and experiences. By producing consistent and engaging promotional materials and supporting local businesses through digital marketing efforts, the municipality can attract more visitors and indirectly boost the local economy.

#### 4.1 DEVELOP TARGETED MARKETING STRATEGIES



#### HIGHLIGHT RIVER ATTRACTIONS

**A Brochures and Maps:**

- Design Comprehensive Guides: Build on existing brochures and maps by enhancing visuals and details to better showcase all river-based activities, attractions, access points, and amenities.
- Activities: Include information on boating, fishing, hiking trails along the river, wildlife viewing spots, and guided tour options.

- Attractions: Highlight historical sites, cultural landmarks, parks, and scenic viewpoints along the river.
- Amenities: Mark locations of facilities such as washrooms, parking areas, picnic spots, and accessible access points.
- Distribution / Visitor Information: Make brochures available at local destinations including libraries, visitor centres, B&B/cottages, restaurants, and retail outlets.
- Events and Trade Shows: Distribute materials at tourism expos, community events, and regional trade shows (i.e. Southern Ontario Tourism Conference, Ontario Tourism Summit, Tourism Week programming, etc.).

**B Online Content:**

- Tourism Website Enhancement / Dedicated River Section: Create a comprehensive section on the municipality's tourism website dedicated to the Grand River, featuring interactive maps, itineraries, and attraction listings.
- Engaging Media: Use high-quality photos, videos, and virtual tours to provide an immersive preview of the river experience.
- Visitor Testimonials: Include stories and reviews from past visitors to build credibility and appeal.
- Downloadable Digital Brochures and Maps: Offer downloadable versions of promotional materials, in accessible formats, for easy access and printing by potential visitors.
- Itinerary Suggestions: Provide sample itineraries catering to different interests (e.g., adventure seekers, family outings, cultural enthusiasts).





## DIGITAL MARKETING SUPPORT

### A Social Media Promotion:

- Regular Updates: Post consistently about river-related events, activities, and attractions on municipal social media channels (e.g., Facebook, Instagram).
- Visual Content: Share captivating images and videos showcasing the beauty and activities of the river throughout different seasons.
- Engagement: Encourage followers to share their own experiences and photos using designated hashtags (e.g., #DiscoverGrandRiver).
- Feature Local Businesses / Spotlight Series: Regularly feature local businesses that offer river-related services, such as outfitters, tour guides, restaurants with river views, and accommodations near the river.
- Collaborative Campaigns: Partner with businesses for social media contests or promotions that incentivize sharing and engagement.
- Targeted Ads: Use social media advertising tools to target specific demographics and regions likely to be interested in river experiences.
- Event Promotion: Boost posts about upcoming river events or festivals to increase visibility and attendance.

### B Email Marketing:

- Subscription Incentives: Encourage website visitors to sign up for a tourism newsletter by offering exclusive content.
- Content Delivery: Send regular newsletters featuring river activities, upcoming events, travel tips, and special offers from local businesses.

## 4.2 SUPPORT BRANDING INITIATIVES



## CONSISTENT BRANDING

### A Unified Messaging:

- Style Guide / Brand Development: *The Grand River Style and Signage Guide*, combined with *Haldimand County's Corporate Brand Guidelines*, to provide a comprehensive framework for visual identity and messaging that reflects the river's significance to the community. This approach prevents redundancies and ensures a unified theme throughout promotional materials.

- Core Theme: Build on a central theme that encapsulates the Grand River's importance, consistent with both the *Grand River Style and Signage Guide* and Corporate Brand Guidelines (e.g., "Experience the Heartbeat of Haldimand – The Grand River Awaits").

**B Implementation Across Materials (Business Adoption):**

- Partner Resources: Share branding assets from both the *Grand River Style and Signage Guide* and Corporate Brand Guidelines with local businesses, encouraging them to incorporate the unified messaging into their marketing materials.
- Co-Branded Materials: Provide co-branding templates and opportunities for businesses participating in promotional campaigns, ensuring a seamless and consistent brand presence across the County.

## RECOMMENDATION 5:

### Promote Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Practices

Haldimand County can play a crucial role in promoting sustainability and environmental stewardship along the Grand River by implementing policies, providing infrastructure, and guiding private businesses towards eco-friendly practices. This approach not only preserves the natural beauty and ecological integrity of the river but also enhances the visitor experience by aligning with the growing public interest in sustainable tourism.

#### 5.1 FACILITATE ECOLOGICAL PRESERVATION EFFORTS



**COLLABORATE  
WITH  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
AUTHORITIES**

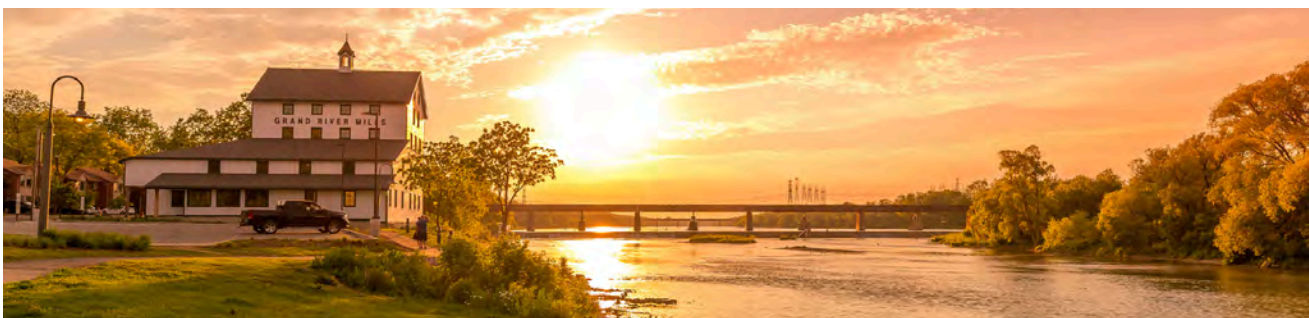
**A Work with the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA):**

- Regular Consultations: Establish a schedule for regular meetings with the GRCA to align municipal infrastructure projects with conservation efforts. This ensures that any development along the river is ecologically sound.

- **Integrated Management Plans:** Utilize the GRCA's existing watershed management plans that aim to balance tourism development with habitat protection, water quality, and flood control.
- **Impact Studies:** Continue to require thorough environmental impact assessments for any new infrastructure projects near the river to identify and mitigate potential ecological risks.
- **Mitigation Strategies:** Develop strategies in partnership with the GRCA to minimize negative impacts on wildlife habitats, such as creating wildlife corridors or restoring native vegetation.
- **Habitat Protection / Sensitive Areas Identification:** Acquire any existing or future mapping which identify ecologically sensitive zones, including wetlands, breeding grounds, and habitats of endangered species.
- **Buffer Zones:** Ensure that buffer zones around sensitive areas are identified and protected through existing feature identification and protection policies. These buffers will vary in size based on the sensitivity level of each feature.

**B Collaborate with Other Environmental Organizations:**

- **Non-Profit Partnerships / Engagement:** Building on various programs already implemented through the Community Development and Partnerships Division, partner with local environmental groups to support conservation projects, educational programs, and volunteer initiatives like river clean-ups.
- **Academic Institutions / Research Opportunities:** Encourage universities and colleges to conduct ecological research along the river, providing valuable data for conservation efforts.





## DEVELOP SUSTAINABILITY GUIDELINES

**A**

### **Guidelines for Businesses:**

- **Best Practices Manual Creation:** Develop a comprehensive manual outlining sustainable practices for tourism operators, including waste management, energy efficiency, water conservation, and responsible wildlife interactions.
- **Workshops:** Host workshops and training sessions to educate businesses on implementing these practices.
- **Online Resources:** Make the guidelines available online for easy access and reference.
- **Eco-Friendly Certification:** Establish a municipal certification (or partner with existing certification bodies such as Green Step) for businesses that meet sustainability criteria, offering marketing benefits and public recognition.
- **Financial Incentives:** Support businesses in their efforts to secure and apply for third-party grants that encourage eco-friendly practices, such as using low-impact dock materials, implementing waste reduction systems, offering reusable or biodegradable products, installing solar-powered lighting, or adopting sustainable landscaping to minimize riverbank erosion. These efforts will help promote responsible tourism development while preserving natural resources.
- **Recognition Programs:** Publicly acknowledge businesses and community groups that demonstrate exceptional commitment to sustainability through recognition programs or special listings on municipal platforms. This could also include a stewardship program, such as recognizing areas maintained by these groups (e.g., "This park/area maintained by...")

**B**

### **'Green' Construction and Development Standards:**

- **Materials:** Encourage the use of sustainable, non-toxic, and locally sourced materials in construction projects.
- **Design:** Promote designs that minimize environmental impact, such as permeable pavements, green roofs, and energy-efficient buildings and that comply with Ontario Building Code Regulations. If located in a conservation regulated area additional measures may be required depending on the authority having jurisdiction.

- Energy and Water Efficiency Standards: Set minimum requirements for energy efficiency and water conservation in new developments.

## 5.2 INSTALL EDUCATIONAL SIGNAGE



### EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

#### **A** Informative Plaques and Signs:

- Biodiversity Education / Species Information: Provide information on local flora and fauna, including identification guides and interesting facts.
- Ecosystem Importance: Explain the role of different species and habitats in maintaining ecological balance.
- Conservation Messaging: Highlight issues like invasive species, pollution, and climate change effects on the river ecosystem.
- Visitor Actions: Suggest ways visitors can minimize their impact, such as staying on trails, not feeding wildlife, and proper waste disposal.

#### **B** Interactive Elements:

- Digital Content: Link to videos, audio tours, or augmented reality experiences that provide in-depth information.
- Multilingual Support: Explore offering content in multiple languages, including Indigenous languages of the region, to cater to both international and domestic visitors.
- Educational Trails / Themed Walks: Create self-guided trails focusing on specific themes like birdwatching, native plants, or historical land use, building off of the Historical Storyboard installations through the Capital Projects Program (CPP).

#### **C** Design and Placement:

- Aesthetic Integration / Natural Materials: Explore using materials that blend with the environment, such as wood or stone, to minimize visual disruption.
- Durability: Ensure signs are weather-resistant and vandal-proof to reduce maintenance costs.



**C Design and Placement:**

- Aesthetic Integration / Natural Materials: Explore using materials that blend with the environment, such as wood or stone, to minimize visual disruption.
- Durability: Ensure signs are weather-resistant and vandal-proof to reduce maintenance costs.
- Strategic Locations (High-Visibility Areas): Place signs where they are most likely to engage visitors, such as near access points, along trails, and at scenic overlooks.

## 5.3 ENCOURAGE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES



### IMPLEMENT POLICIES

**A Waste Management:**

- Increase Receptacles (Strategic Placement): Continue existing strategy of maintaining waste and recycling bins (recycling receptacles to be installed and managed by a third party) in high-traffic areas, picnic spots, and along popular trails.
- Collection Schedule: Currently, a seasonal scheduling approach is in place, with distinct "tourist season" and "shoulder-season" schedules for garbage receptacle management within the BIA area. Audits are underway to evaluate and measure the actual usage of each garbage receptacle during both seasons. Once completed, the results will provide valuable data to optimize waste management practices and align services with actual demand.

**B Visitor Management:**

- Capacity Limits / Sensitive Areas: Encourage operators to implement visitor caps in ecologically sensitive zones to prevent habitat degradation.
- Permitting Systems: To help control river traffic, consider requiring outfitters who provide equipment rentals to manage and stagger the flow of patrons, particularly during peak seasons. While this approach won't address independent visitors, it establishes a foundation for monitoring visitor patterns and can inform any future systems, like permits or timed entries, should they become necessary.

- Zoning Regulations: Haldimand County staff will continue to support the appropriate approval authority to identify these areas where they are publicly accessible / County owned lands.

**C Sustainable Transportation Initiatives:**

- Bike Paths and Walking Trails: Develop and promote existing infrastructure that encourages visitors to explore without vehicles.
- Shuttle Services: Explore potential opportunities with transit providers to offer seasonal transit solutions.

## RECOMMENDATION 6: Monitor and Adapt Policies to Support Tourism Growth

Haldimand County plays a crucial role in shaping the regulatory environment and securing resources that facilitate sustainable tourism development. By regularly reviewing policies and actively seeking funding opportunities, the municipality ensures that tourism growth aligns with community goals, environmental stewardship, and economic prosperity.

### 6.1 REVIEW REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

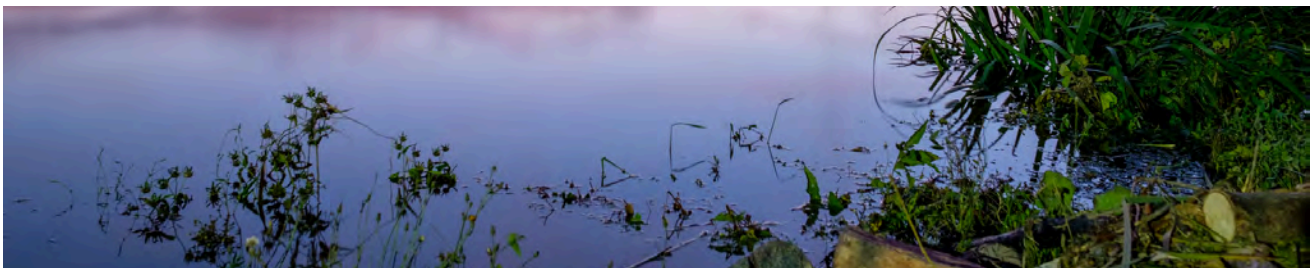


#### ASSESS BYLAWS AND REGULATIONS

**A Policy Audits:**

- Regular Reviews: Continue practices of systematic audits of existing by-laws, zoning by-laws, and permit requirements to identify any regulations that may inadvertently hinder tourism development or the growth of river-related activities.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Consider consulting with local businesses, community members, Indigenous groups, and tourism operators to gather feedback on how current regulations impact them.

- **Interdepartmental Collaboration:** Work alongside the Development Concierge Team to involve relevant municipal departments (e.g., planning, environmental services, building & enforcement, economic development) where possible to assess regulations from multiple perspectives.
- **Benchmarking:** Compare municipal policies with those of similar jurisdictions that have successfully fostered tourism growth, identifying best practices.
- **Flexibility:** Consider examining zoning by-laws and regulations to ensure they allow for diverse tourism-related uses, such as accommodations, eateries, and recreational facilities near the river.
- **Diverse tourism-related uses:** Consider adjustments that promote diverse tourism-related uses, and create vibrant, multifunctional spaces attractive to tourists.
- **Streamlining Processes:** Identify opportunities to simplify and expedite permit applications for businesses and event organizers, in alignment with existing processes for nonprofits and community groups undertaking similar activities, including a Community Planning Permit System under the Planning Act.
- **Transparency:** Ensure that requirements are clearly communicated and accessible, reducing confusion and administrative burden.
- **Propose Adjustments As Required / Amend By-laws:** Consider proposing amendments to by-laws that are outdated or unnecessarily restrictive, aligning them with current tourism objectives, community needs, and existing processes.
- **Create New Policies:** Develop new regulations that facilitate tourism growth, such as supporting efforts to obtain third-party grants and promoting these opportunities to private businesses, and encouraging innovation in tourism ventures.



## RECOMMENDATION 7: Enhance Access and Infrastructure

Haldimand County can play a pivotal role in enhancing the visitor experience by improving access to the river and upgrading infrastructure. These improvements support both public and private tourism initiatives by providing the necessary foundation for businesses to operate effectively and for visitors to enjoy the river safely and comfortably.

### 7.1 IMPROVE RIVER ACCESS POINTS



#### UPGRADE EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

A

#### Boat Launches and Docks:

- **Assessment of Current Facilities:** A comprehensive audit of County-owned boat launches and docks along the river was completed in 2020, providing a high-level review and costing for required repairs, upgrades, or expansions. This audit included an evaluation of structural integrity, safety compliance, and usability. In addition to the completed audit it is recommended:
- **Continued Evaluation:** As needed, continue to evaluate all existing County owned boat launches and docks along the river to identify areas needing repairs, upgrades, or expansion by conducting a technical assessment. This will include checking for structural integrity, safety compliance, and usability. Notable works already completed or planned include upgrades at Port Maitland (Cairn Side), with a capital project for docks and ramps scheduled for 2025, as well as recent upgrades at Wingfield in 2024 and the Cayuga boat launch that was recently completed.
- **Safety Enhancements:** Promote safety, including non-slip surfaces, accessibility requirements, proper railings, and adequate lighting for early morning or evening use.
- **Capacity Expansion (Widening and Lengthening Docks):** Where feasible, expand docks to accommodate more boats and reduce congestion during peak times.

- **Multi-Use Design:** Design docks and launches to accommodate various types of watercraft, including canoes, kayaks, paddleboards, and small motorboats.
- **Eco-Friendly Materials:** Use sustainable and durable materials that minimize environmental impact, such as recycled plastics or sustainably sourced wood.
- **Minimize Shoreline Disruption:** Implement construction methods that protect the riverbank and aquatic habitats.

## **B Washroom Facilities**

- **Place in High-Traffic Areas:** To enhance visitor experience, install washrooms (i.e. permanent or portable) at popular access points and along trails where visitors spend significant time, informed by surveys and audits of high-usage areas identified by current river users, outfitters, and similar sources. Currently there are permanent or portable facilities installed in Dunnville, Cayuga, and Caledonia, Port Maitland, and York Park.
- **Accessibility:** Continue to support the development facilities that are easily accessible to all visitors, including those with mobility challenges.
- **AODA Compliance:** When upgrading/replacing new and current facilities, where possible, consider facilities that meet or exceed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act standards, including features like wide doorways, grab bars, and accessible sinks.
- **Family-Friendly Amenities:** Consider including changing tables and family restrooms to accommodate visitors with young children. Consider installing fold-out changing tables in all restrooms and creating family restrooms with child-height fixtures and stroller-friendly access to enhance convenience for visitors with young children.
- **Sustainability Features:** Incorporate water-saving fixtures, energy-efficient lighting, and possibly composting toilets in areas without sewer connections.
- **Portable Washrooms and Sinks:** Where cost prohibits, utilize temporary seasonal portable washroom facilities in high-traffic visitor areas.



## DEVELOP ACCESSIBLE LAUNCH AREAS

- A AODA Compliance (Accessible Launch Ramps):**
  - Design Features: Install ramps with handrails, slip-resistant surfaces, and sufficient width to accommodate mobility devices.
  - Transfer Systems: Where feasible, provide equipment like transfer benches to assist individuals with limited mobility in getting into watercraft.
  - Any new accessible launch ramps will need to be directly linked to an accessible pathway and ideally close to accessible washrooms as well.
  
- B Floating Docks and Adaptive Equipment:**
  - Floating Docks: Use seasonally removable docks that adjust to changing water levels, maintaining consistent access.
  - Adaptive Kayaks and Canoes: Encourage private operators to offer adaptive equipment, and consider options for providing storage facilities for such equipment at access points.
  
- C Signage and Information:**
  - Clear Instructions: Post signs with information on accessible routes, facilities, and emergency procedures.
  - Visual and Tactile Aids: Use braille and raised lettering on signs, and tactile ground surface indicators for those with visual impairments.

## 7.2 EXPAND PARKING FACILITIES



## INCREASE CAPACITY NEAR KEY ACCESS POINTS

- A Assess Current Parking Needs:**
  - Data Collection: Use visitor statistics, peak time observations, and feedback to determine where parking may be insufficient.
  - Future Projections: Consider anticipated growth in visitor numbers when planning expansions, while understanding that immediate action may not be feasible due to budget constraints.

## **B Parking Lot Expansion (when opportunities arise):**

- **Augment Parking:** Explore opportunities to optimize existing parking in high-demand areas near river access points by focusing on on-site improvements or spatial (property) expansion. Building on past efforts, such as the 2019 Port Maitland parking lot expansion, this approach will prioritize enhancing the current parking infrastructure, particularly when refurbishment opportunities arise. However, due to footprint limitations, there may be constraints in some areas along the river, and the potential for further expansion will need to be evaluated carefully as per the Boat Launch Feasibility Study. This approach ensures that parking capacity can be maximized without actively seeking additional property acquisitions.
- **Design Considerations / Efficient Layout:** Explore low-cost options to optimize parking space, such as angled or perpendicular parking. Note: Defined parking spaces can be more difficult in gravel parking lots.
- **Accessibility:** Include designated accessible parking spaces close to pathways and facilities in accordance with the County's Accessible Design Standards.
- **Lighting and Security:** Install adequate lighting and consider surveillance to enhance safety.
- **Boat Trailers:** Include designated spaces for vehicles pulling boat trailers to accommodate boating visitors at launch sites.

## **C Environmental Considerations:**

- **Green Spaces:** Incorporate landscaping with native plants to improve aesthetics and provide shade.

## **D Signage and Wayfinding:**

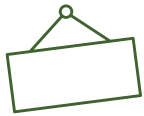
- **Directional Signs:** Clearly indicate parking areas from main roads.
- **Capacity Indicators:** Use signage to direct visitors to alternative parking when lots are full.



### ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION ENCOURAGEMENT

- A Bicycle Parking:** Build on existing bike racks by conducting an audit to identify enhancement opportunities and additional locations, especially near river access points, to further encourage cycling.
- B Transportation Business Development:** Explore opportunities to encourage the development of transportation businesses, such as private shuttle services, cabs, or bike rentals, to enhance access to river areas and reduce parking demand.

## 7.3 ENHANCE SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING



### INSTALL CLEAR DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

- A Consistent Branding:**
  - Design Standards: Incorporate signage guidelines from the *Grand River Access Point Standards Manual* to maintain the Grand River's place identity within Haldimand County. Designs must align with the *Haldimand County Comprehensive Signage Strategy* and be approved by the Signage Implementation Committee. All signage will be consistent colors, fonts, and symbols that reflect Haldimand County's branding.
  - Visibility: Ensure signs are easily readable, with high-contrast lettering and reflective materials for nighttime visibility.
- B Strategic Placement:**
  - Roadside Signs: Install signs on major routes leading to river access points.
  - Within Parks and Trails: Place signs at key junctions to guide visitors. Ensure signage is at or near the primary entrance to the destination with good visibility from the road or travel route.
  - Consider multiple access points with regard to travel modes.
- C Multilingual Information:**
  - Inclusivity: Explore providing information in multiple languages if catering to international visitors or diverse communities in specific locations.





## WAYFINDING SYSTEMS

### A **Maps and Information Boards:**

- At River Access Points: Install boards with maps showing the river, trails, facilities, and points of interest.
- Trail Markers: Continue to use consistent markers along trails near river access points indicating distance and direction.

### B **Digital Integration:**

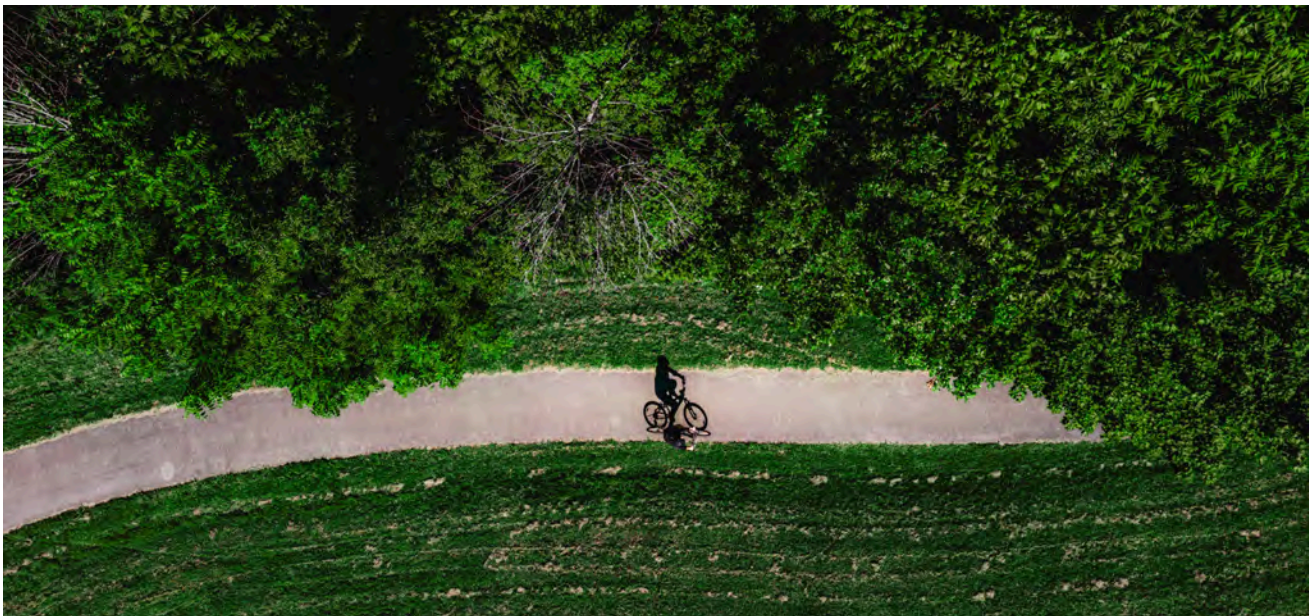
- QR Codes: Continue usage of QR codes on signs linking to online resources, maps, or apps. Consider potential data dead zones but note that expanding cell tower coverage may improve connectivity in the future.
- Mobile Apps: Encourage the development and promotion of existing apps that provide navigation and real-time information, as these tools greatly enhance visitor experience by offering easy access to directions, amenities, and points of interest.



## REGULATORY AND SAFETY SIGNAGE

- ### A **By-laws and Regulations:**
- Clearly display any rules, such as fishing regulations, permitted activities, and environmental protections near public river access points.

- ### B **Emergency Information:**
- Provide emergency contact numbers and locations of safety equipment.



## RECOMMENDATION 8: Strengthen All-Season Tourism

Haldimand County can enhance all-season tourism by promoting activities and events that highlight the river's appeal throughout the year. By focusing on river-related all-season opportunities and facilitating partnerships, the municipality encourages consistent visitor engagement and supports local businesses during slower periods.

### 8.1 PROMOTE ALL-SEASON OPPORTUNITIES



#### MARKETING SUPPORT

#### **A** Develop Targeted Marketing Campaigns:

- Highlight All-Season River Activities (e.g., Spring Thaw Events): Feature events that celebrate the river's spring rejuvenation, such as nature walks to observe wildlife awakening or workshops on river conservation.
- Use Multiple Channels (Digital Platforms): Utilize social media, the municipality's tourism website, and newsletters to reach potential visitors with engaging content about all-season river experiences.
- Traditional Media: Leverage local newspapers, radio stations, and regional magazines to promote all-season attractions.

#### **B** Collaborate with Local Businesses and Organizations:

- Joint Promotions: Partner with local tour guides, environmental groups, and cultural organizations to create compelling all-season offerings centred around the river.
- Content Creation: Support the development of high-quality photos, videos, and stories that showcase the unique beauty and activities of the river during the shoulder season.

## 8.2 ENCOURAGE ACCOMMODATION AND EXPERIENCE PACKAGES



### FACILITATE PARTNERSHIPS

#### **A Connect Businesses:**

- **Networking Opportunities:** Organize sessions where accommodation providers can collaborate with tour operators, restaurants, and cultural attractions to create all-season packages featuring river experiences. This should be leveraged within the existing Tourism Network Meetings held quarterly each year.
- **Online Collaboration Platform:** Provide an online forum or bulletin board where businesses can post ideas and seek partners for package development. These can be hosted on social media platforms like Facebook groups, or integrated into the municipality's website.

#### **B Support Package Development:**

- **Package Ideas:** Offer suggestions for shoulder-season packages and itineraries, such as a "Winter River Retreat" combining cozy accommodations, guided river walks, and local dining.
- **Marketing Assistance:** While tourism packages and itineraries are already in place on the municipality's tourism website and through social media channels, it is recommended building on this established approach to further enhance visibility and consistency in outreach, ensuring a stronger alignment with tourism branding efforts.



# Appendices

- [Appendix A: Travel Segments](#)
- [Appendix B: Comparative Analysis](#)
- [Appendix C: Water Access Map](#)



# Appendix A:

## Travel Segments

The identified target segments—Urban Escapists, Day-Trippers, Adventure Seekers, Cultural Enthusiasts, and Newcomers—come from a combination of consumer insights derived from market research and specific tools like Destination Canada's Explorer Quotient (EQ) profiles. Haldimand County attracts visitors from neighboring regions, urban centres, and a growing segment of international tourists and newcomers to Canada. Understanding these segments helps in creating targeted strategies and enhancing visitor experiences.

| VISITOR SEGMENTS | PROFILE   | INTERESTS  | MOTIVATIONS   |
|------------------|---|--|---|
| Urban Escapists  | Individuals, couples, and families from dense urban areas who seek occasional retreats to less crowded, more tranquil environments. They typically reside in metropolitan cities like Hamilton and Toronto and look for weekend or short-stay destinations. | Engaging in activities that provide a respite from city noise and pace, such as visiting parks, nature reserves, scenic drives, wellness retreats, and quiet beach fronts. | The primary motivation for urban escapists is to temporarily disconnect from the stresses of urban life. They seek peaceful settings where they can relax, rejuvenate, and engage in leisure activities that are not readily available in their urban settings, such as star-gazing, bird-watching, and enjoying uninterrupted natural scenery. |

[14] [https://www.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/2013-01-01/Tools\\_ExplorerQuotient\\_Profiles\\_2015\\_EN.pdf](https://www.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/2013-01-01/Tools_ExplorerQuotient_Profiles_2015_EN.pdf)

|                      |   |  |   |
|----------------------|---|--|---|
| Day-Trippers         | Residents from nearby towns and communities within a few hours drive. This group includes both young adults and families looking for accessible, affordable excursions that do not require overnight stays. | Activities include exploring local markets, attending unique small-town festivals, enjoying waterfront parks, and experiencing short local trails. They are also interested in artisan shops and local culinary delights that reflect the local culture. | Day-trippers are motivated by the convenience and simplicity of short journeys that offer a change of scenery and a break from routine. They look to maximize their leisure time without the logistical and financial commitment of longer vacations. Their trips are often spontaneous, driven by the desire for immediate and brief leisure opportunities.  |
| Adventure Seekers    | Active individuals and groups passionate about the outdoors and seeking thrilling experiences. This segment includes both seasoned adventurers and those looking to try new outdoor activities.             | Engaging in challenging physical activities such as rock climbing, white-water rafting, backcountry hiking, and mountain biking. They are also drawn to nature photography, wildlife spotting, and participating in guided adventure tours.              | Driven by the thrill of exploration and a desire to push their physical limits, adventure seekers look for destinations that offer unique and challenging environments. They are motivated by the need for personal achievement and the exhilarating connection with nature. Additionally, they seek destinations that offer well-preserved natural settings and reliable adventure sport facilities. |
| Cultural Enthusiasts | Typically well-educated and culturally sophisticated visitors with a deep appreciation for history, arts, and local traditions.   | Participating in cultural and historical tours, attending local theatre productions, visiting museums and art galleries, and exploring heritage sites.   | Cultural enthusiasts are driven by a desire to enrich their understanding and appreciation of different cultures and historical contexts.   |

|                      |   |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|---|
| Cultural Enthusiasts | This group spans all ages but often includes older adults and retirees who have more time to engage in cultural immersion.  | They are often interested in learning about the local artisan crafts and culinary specialties unique to the area.                       | They seek immersive experiences that allow them to learn about the area's history and contribute to the preservation and appreciation of local arts and culture. They are also motivated by the opportunity to meet and interact with local artists and historians. |
| Newcomers            | Recent arrivals to the area or country, including immigrants and individuals relocating from other parts of Canada, who are looking to establish connections and familiarize themselves with their new community. | Local community events, language and cultural orientation sessions, essential services, and social gatherings that help build networks. | Integrating into the community, understanding local customs and traditions, finding essential services and resources, building a social network, and feeling a sense of belonging in their new environment.   |

## TARGETED VISITORS: HIGH YIELD MARKET SEGMENTS<sup>15</sup>

Identified by Ontario's Southwest and the Province of Ontario:

| MARKET SEGMENT  |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| YOUNG URBANITES   | FLOURISHING FAMILIES  | MATURE & SECURE  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age Range 30-34</li> <li>• 38.2% single</li> <li>• 32% couples no children at home</li> <li>• 51.9% rent an apartment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age Range 55-59</li> <li>• 56% couples with children at home</li> <li>• 27% couples without children</li> <li>• 85% own a home</li> <li>• 36.8% University Degree or Higher</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age range 60-64</li> <li>• 45.5% couples</li> <li>• 24% single person household</li> <li>• 84.8% own a home</li> <li>• 36.9% university degree or higher</li> </ul> |

[15] [https://www.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/2013-01-01/Tools\\_ExplorerQuotient\\_Profiles\\_2015\\_EN.pdf](https://www.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/archive/2013-01-01/Tools_ExplorerQuotient_Profiles_2015_EN.pdf)

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 48.8% have a University degree or higher</li> <li>• 44% belong to a visible minority</li> <li>• Avg. Household income \$119, 717</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45% belong to a visible minority group</li> <li>• Avg Household income \$147,961</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low diversity index</li> <li>• Avg. Household income \$181,992</li> </ul> |
| <b>TRAVEL MOTIVATORS</b>   |  |  |
| Love for constant travel and continuous opportunities to embrace, discover, and immerse themselves in the culture, people, and settings of the places they visit.                    | Combination between the other two segments but more importantly to travel together as a family and create memories as a family.      | Looking for authentic, tangible engagement with a particular interest in history, culture, health, and lifestyle.  |
| <b>KEY WORDS</b>   |  |  |
| Original/unique, immerse, embrace local culture, connect, dare, off the beaten path  | Together, discover, learn, family, memories, all ages, exclusive, fun  | Living culture, accomplish, legacy, you choose, be surprised   |





# Appendix B:

## Comparative Analysis

| PLACE  | STRENGTHS   | WEAKNESSES/CONCERNS  |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Elora and Fergus<sup>16</sup><br/>(Grand River)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Elora Gorge Conservation Area<sup>17</sup>:</b> Offers a range of outdoor activities like tubing, kayaking, and hiking, attracting adventurers.</li> <li>• <b>Riverfest Elora:</b> An annual music and arts festival that draws thousands of visitors.</li> <li>• <b>Restoration Projects:</b> Active efforts to maintain and enhance the river’s ecological health.</li> <li>• <b>Public Access Points:</b> Well-maintained trails and parks along the riverbank.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Commercialization of the Gorge:</b> Increased commercial activities and tourism development around the gorge can lead to environmental degradation, loss of natural beauty, and potential overuse of natural resources.</li> <li>• <b>Overcrowding:</b> Popularity can lead to overcrowding, particularly during peak seasons, which can strain local infrastructure and reduce the quality of the visitor experience.</li> <li>• <b>Environmental Impact:</b> High visitor numbers can lead to litter, erosion, and pollution if not managed properly.</li> </ul> |
| <p>Paris (Grand River)</p>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Grand Experiences Outdoor Adventure Company<sup>18</sup>:</b> Offers guided canoe and kayak trips, bicycle rentals, and other outdoor activities centred around the river.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Limited Accommodation Options:</b> The town does not currently have enough accommodation options to meet the demand during peak tourist seasons.</li> <li>• <b>Flooding Risks:</b> As with many riverfront communities, Paris faces the risk of flooding, which can damage infrastructure and deter tourism.</li> </ul>  |

[16] <https://elorafergus.ca/>

[17] <https://www.grandriver.ca/en/outdoor-recreation/Elora-Gorge.aspx#gsc.tab=0>

[18] <https://grand-experiences.com/>

|                         |   |   |
|-------------------------|---|---|
|                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Riverfront Dining</b><sup>19</sup> : Establishments like the Arlington Hotel and Stillwaters Plate and Pour provide dining experiences with views of the Grand River.</li> <li>• <b>Grand River Rafting Company</b><sup>20</sup> : Provides rafting, canoeing, and fishing tours, promoting active engagement with the river.</li> <li>• <b>Historical Walks and Tours:</b> Leveraging the town’s historic charm with guided tours that include the river’s role in the town’s development.</li> <li>• <b>Riverside Parks:</b> Enhancing public parks along the river with amenities for picnics, walking, and fishing, promoting daily use by both locals and visitors.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Conservation Challenges:</b> Balancing tourism growth with the need to protect and conserve the natural environment can be challenging.</li> </ul>  |
| Brantford (Grand River) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Brant’s Crossing Riverfront Park:</b> Features trails, picnic areas, and scenic overlooks, encouraging recreational use of the riverfront.</li> <li>• <b>Events:</b> Festivals, utilize the riverfront as a picturesque backdrop, increasing visitor engagement.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Urbanization:</b> As Brantford continues to grow, urban development near the river can threaten natural habitats and the scenic quality of the riverfront.</li> <li>• <b>Pollution:</b> Industrial and urban runoff can negatively impact water quality, deterring recreational activities and harming wildlife.</li> </ul> |

[19] <https://grandiverrafting.ca/>

[20] <https://www.arlingtonhotel.ca/>; <https://stillwatersplateandpour.ca/>

|                             |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
|                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Restoration and Conservation:</b><br/>Initiatives to clean and restore the river and its banks, supporting environmental sustainability and attractiveness.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Limited High-End Tourism Infrastructure:</b> Brantford may lack the range of high-end tourism infrastructure needed to attract a broader demographic of visitors.</li> </ul>   |
| Chatham-Kent (Thames River) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Thames Grove Conservation Area<sup>21</sup> :</b><br/>Offers camping, boating, and fishing, attracting outdoor enthusiasts.</li> <li>• <b>RetroFest<sup>22</sup>:</b> A classic car festival that includes events along the riverfront, enhancing the river's visibility and use.</li> <li>• <b>Riverwalk Trail:</b> A multi-use trail that runs along the river, promoting walking, cycling, and other recreational activities.</li> <li>• <b>Historical Interpretation:</b> Efforts to highlight the river's historical significance through plaques, tours, and museum exhibits.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Environmental Degradation:</b> Pollution and habitat destruction from agricultural runoff and urban development pose significant threats to the Thames River ecosystem.</li> <li>• <b>Underutilized Potential:</b> There is potential for more comprehensive development of tourism attractions and services along the river that has yet to be fully realized.</li> </ul> |
| Guelph (Speed River)        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Riverside Park<sup>23</sup>:</b> A major city park that includes gardens, walking trails, and paddleboat rentals, making the river a focal point for leisure activities.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Urban Pressure:</b> As Guelph grows, urban development pressures can lead to habitat loss and increased pollution in the Speed River.</li> <li>• <b>Maintenance Costs:</b> Maintaining riverfront parks and amenities can be costly, requiring continuous investment and resources.</li> </ul>   |

[21] <https://chathamkenttrails.ca/trails/thames-grove-conservation-area-trail/>

[22] <https://downtownchatham.com/events/retrofest/>

[23] <https://guelph.ca/park/riverside-park/>

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>John Galt Park and Walkway:</b> Features art installations, scenic views, and walking paths along the river, integrating art and nature.</li> <li>• <b>Community Events<sup>24</sup>:</b> Festivals like the Guelph Multicultural Festival take place in river-adjacent areas, enhancing community engagement.</li> <li>• <b>Conservation Efforts:</b> Projects aimed at improving water quality and riverbanks health, ensuring the river remains an attractive and sustainable asset.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Limited Natural Space:</b> Compared to more rural river communities, Guelph has less expansive natural areas along the river, which can limit the range of outdoor activities.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|---|



[24] <https://gdmf.ca/>



**Haldimand**  
County

# Public and Private Water Access Points



**Legend**

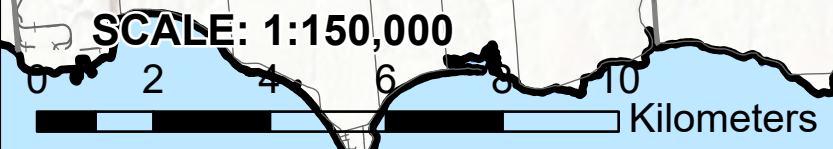
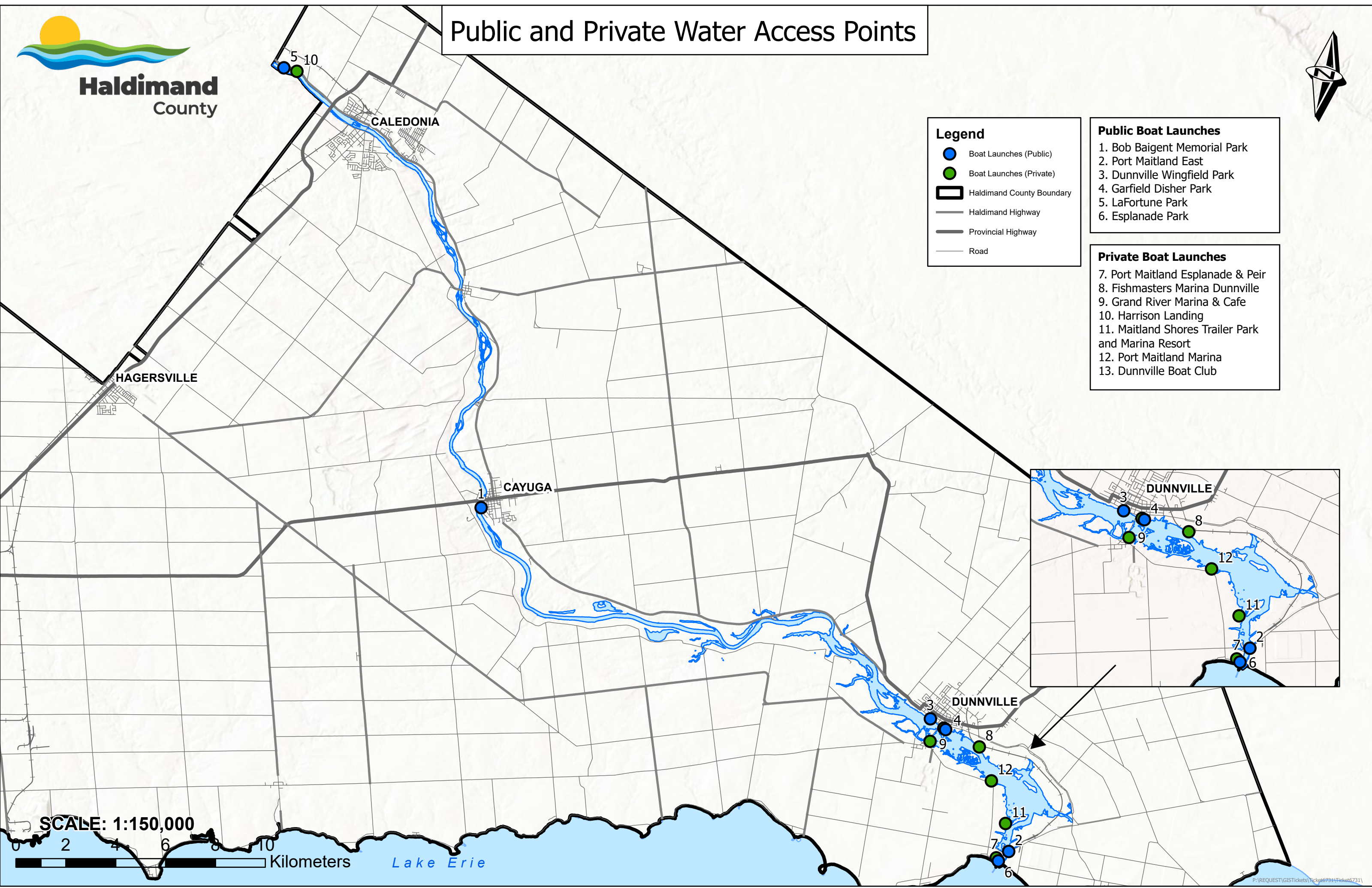
- Boat Launches (Public)
- Boat Launches (Private)
- Haldimand County Boundary
- Haldimand Highway
- Provincial Highway
- Road

**Public Boat Launches**

1. Bob Baigent Memorial Park
2. Port Maitland East
3. Dunnville Wingfield Park
4. Garfield Disher Park
5. LaFortune Park
6. Esplanade Park

**Private Boat Launches**

7. Port Maitland Esplanade & Peir
8. Fishmasters Marina Dunnville
9. Grand River Marina & Cafe
10. Harrison Landing
11. Maitland Shores Trailer Park and Marina Resort
12. Port Maitland Marina
13. Dunnville Boat Club



Lake Erie

## Funder Acknowledgement

The project was funded in part by Ontario's Tourism Development Fund (2023), The views expressed in the publication are the views of the Recipient and do not necessarily reflect those of the province.

Additional financial support was also provided from the Haldimand County Business Development and Advisory Committee, Grand Erie Business Centre and Regional Tourism Organization 1 – Ontario's Southwest.



## Contact Us

Bring your business vision to life in a thriving community that values innovation, sustainability, and authentic experiences. Align your goals with Ready-To-Launch opportunities that create impactful tourism experiences that benefit residents, visitors, and your bottom line.

### **Contact the Economic Development and Tourism Division:**

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