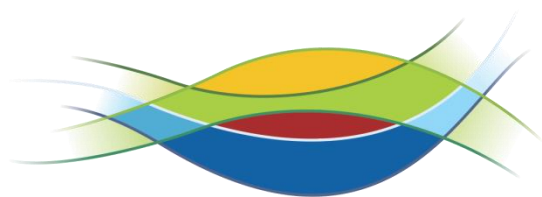


2016-2018

Tourism Strategy

Stop – Stay – Shop – Play



LAKE COUNTRY

Life. The Okanagan Way.

District of Lake Country

February, 2016

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Acknowledgments

The creation of this Tourism Strategy would not have been possible without the talent, hard work, and dedication of a number of contributors, including:

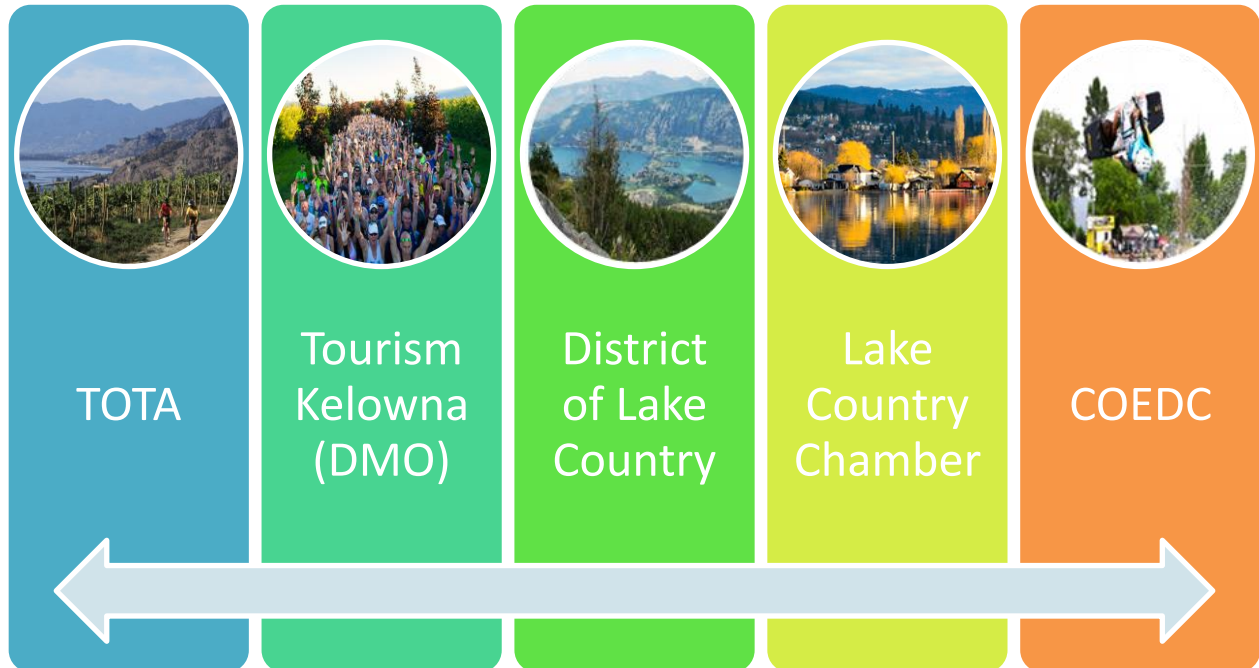
- Council
- The Lake Country Economic Development and Tourism Committee
- Tourism Kelowna
- Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission
- Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
- Lake Country Chamber of Commerce
- Lake Country Visitor Information Centre



1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The District of Lake Country (DLC) partners with a number of community organizations and regional partners in striving for success in the tourism sector. Below is a figure that identifies key regional collaborators in the tourism sector.



The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) is a connection point between the District of Lake Country and Destination BC, which itself is a link to Destination Canada.

At the Central Okanagan level, Lake Country partners with two key regional organizations: Tourism Kelowna and the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission. With Tourism Kelowna, the District leverages its strengths as a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) on a broad scale. The partnership with the COEDC ensures that the District leverages its strengths in regional economic development, which includes programming to facilitate the retention, growth, expansion and attraction of businesses and assets to the Central Okanagan.

Locally, the District works closely with the Lake Country Chamber of Commerce in ensuring a positive business climate is in place, and that tourism opportunities are not only highlighted, but enhanced.

There are a number of other local organizations and service groups that contribute to the success of tourism in Lake Country. It is not without the contributions of these groups, and the community itself, that the District has laid the foundations for a positive future for tourism in Lake Country.

1.2 Context: The District of Lake Country

The District of Lake Country incorporated as a municipality in 1995, and recently celebrated its twentieth anniversary. The community has grown, and with this growth it has witnessed many changes.

Between 2006 and 2011, the District grew from 9,606 residents to 11,708, representing 21.9% growth. Growth levelled slightly in the years immediately following the 2011 Census, but accelerated again by 2014. That year, the District was named BC’s “fastest growing municipality” by BC Statistics, with an estimated growth rate of 5.7%. Again, the District topped growth rates across BC, this time with 7.6% growth. At the same time the District has maintained its agricultural and rural nature, and views it as a driver for growth and diversified local services. In 2015, the District’s building permit statistics also reached record numbers, along with near record levels of business licenses.

The community is known for its wealth of natural, breathtaking vistas; its orchards, farms, and vineyards; its unique and thriving arts, culture, and heritage community; and of course, its lakes. More recently, it is becoming known as an economic development and business leader, which is due in part to its strong partnerships and recent growth.

1.3 Council Policy and Planning Framework

Council has established a number of high-level policies regarding tourism, as summarized in the following table.

Document/Plan	Policy Statement and/or Synopsis of Relevant Framework
Regional Growth Strategy (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Regional District of Central Okanagan’s (RDCO) Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) Section 3.2.2 “Our Economy” provides general policy statements pertaining to the diversification of the local economy, the provision of greater job opportunities, and increasing the quality of life for residents. • Section 3.2.5 “Our Food” speaks to the need to expand local food markets and agri-tourism in the region. • Section 3.2.10 “Our Governance” states that the RDCO will support the assessment of the social and economic benefits of arts, culture, tourism, and recreation amenities in decision on land use. • The RGS informs local plans, which, by law, must reflect the RGS, but delve deeper into local specifics.
Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ICSP speaks to supporting and highlighting the role of agriculture in the tourism sector, including multi-cultural farm-to-table initiatives, harvest events, and winery/vineyard programming. Section 3.3.2 of the ICSP highlights outdoor recreation and agri-tourism opportunities as important to the resilience and diversity of the local economy. Through facilitating growth in the tourism sector, the District aims to increase exposure of the community and its local businesses. • Strategy 4 of the ICSP speaks to the need to build a cohesive

	<p>identity for Lake Country. Tourism, and tourism stakeholders, will play a role in building this cohesive identity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy 8 of the ICSP identifies parks, trails, and the natural environment as cornerstones of the local tourism sector. • Strategy 10 reinforces earlier statements regarding the role of local food production and agriculture in tourism. • Strategy 12 speaks to the diversification and strengthening of the local economy, of which sustainable tourism will be a component.
Official Community Plan (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 4.12 “Regional Context Statement” reflects the vision and principles of the RGS. • Section 6 “Economic Development” speaks to the diversification of the local economy and facilitating tourism expansion. • Section 14.6 “Agri-Tourism” speaks to the role and importance of valuing agriculture in the local economy and tourism sector. • Section 15.4 “Boating and Marine Amenities” speaks to providing water access for tourism. • Section 19 “Commercial” & Section 19.5 “Tourist Commercial Designation” speak to future land uses that accommodate tourism. • Section 22.14 “Agri-Tourism Accommodation DP Area Guidelines” speaks to the provision of accommodation within agri-tourism designated properties.
Economic Development Report & Work Plan (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This document identifies the Tourism Strategy as a key objective for the District, including the need to address an update of the 2009 Tourism Strategy produced by TOTA. • Other key components of this report include discussions on the planning and development of Pelmewash Parkway, marketing and promotions of the community’s tourism assets, and the development of tourism “products” in Lake Country.
TOTA Tourism Planning Workshop Report (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This report outlines a number of goals for the District, including increased partnerships, leveraging funding, re-branding, marketing, signage, and integrating tourism policies into planning documents such as the 2010 OCP.
TOTA Tourism Strategy Workshop & Unique Features Inventory (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This workshop provided an opportunity for stakeholders to share their input on a number of community tourism objectives, with a key objective being to begin an inventory of “market ready product” for tourism.

1.4 Purpose of Strategy

The purpose of this Tourism Strategy is to confirm a vision, set goals, and outline tactics for tourism in Lake Country over the next 3 years.

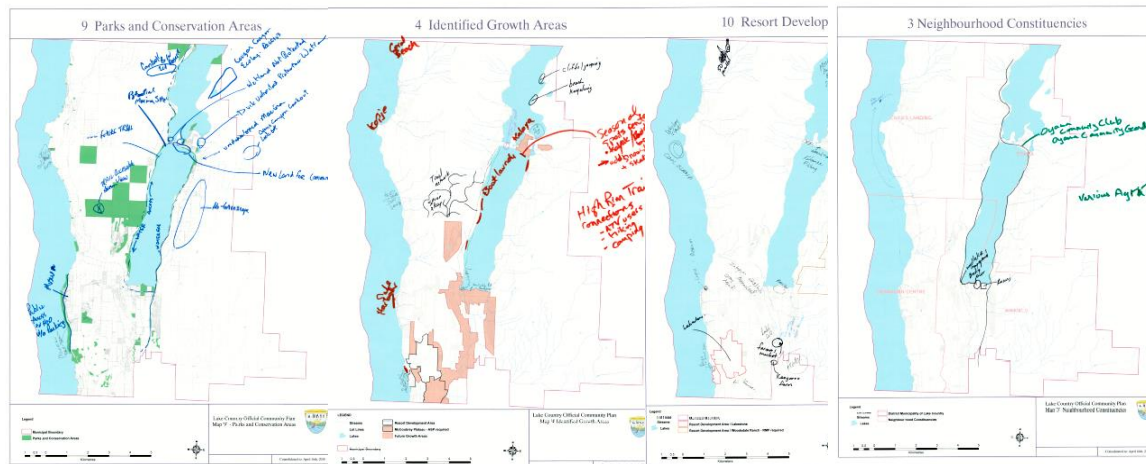
1.5 Methodology & Process

Survey and Community Partner Workshop

A community survey was distributed to 1,500 residents in 2015 (40% response rate) and dealt with a number of community issues, including tourism, a destination event, and community spaces, for example. The survey results inform this Strategy. Further, on October 26, 2015, representatives from the tourism industry participated in an afternoon planning session that forms the backbone of this Strategy. The session dealt specifically with the Vision, Guiding Principles, Inventory/SOAR Analysis, and Goals sections, and offered participants an opportunity to share their experiences in Lake Country tourism. Building on this engagement, the community was also asked about its priorities over the District's social media channels.

SOAR Analysis and Community Mapping Exercise

In order to begin the strategic planning process, participants in an October 26th tourism strategy review session were asked to inventory Lake Country's tourism assets and opportunities on maps from the Official Community Plan. Below are excerpts from the mapping exercise, which are summarized in the following section. This method was used as an "icebreaker" to prepare for the following SOAR Analysis.



Economic Development and Tourism Committee

The Economic Development and Tourism Committee (EDTC) was created from the membership of the former Tourism Development Commission and former Economic Development and Planning Committee in late 2015. The inaugural meeting of the EDTC was held on November 25, 2015. The majority of the meeting was held to discuss the results of the Community Partner Workshop. The EDTC met again on January 6, 2016, and formally endorsed the Tourism Strategy.

Council Discussions

Council has been involved from the outset of the planning process, with invitations and involvement during the October, 2015 session, up to and including the EDTC discussions and a Council Strategy Session on February 16, 2016.

2.0 Vision & Guiding Principles

2.1 Vision Statement

Lake Country will become a first-class hub for tourism activity within the Central Okanagan. Tourism will increase quality of life for residents, provide unique experiences for visitors, and position the community as a memorable place to stop, stay, shop, and play.



2.2 Guiding Principles

- Tourism is an aspect of, and driver for, economic development.
- The tourism sector must improve the quality of life and the enjoyment of spaces/places for residents.
- Tourism will create memorable and distinct experiences for both visitors and residents.
- Tourism amenities and businesses will align with the values of the community and with the pillars of the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan: Economic, Cultural, Social, and Environmental.
- The natural environment and landscape will be highlighted through tourism, and give Lake Country a strategic advantage in attracting visitors.
- Creativity and innovation in tourism business will provide unique, distinct, and enjoyable experiences for residents and visitors alike.
- Efforts in tourism will facilitate a business climate that enables existing and prospective businesses to survive, thrive, and grow.
- Lake Country will work positively in collaboration with neighbouring communities as well as local and regional partners. It is only through strategic collaboration that tourism in Lake Country will reach its full potential.

3.0 SOAR Analysis

3.1 SOAR Analysis

The framework for a SOAR analysis focuses on four pillars: Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results. This tool, different than the more commonly used SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), centres on current strengths, vision, and strategic goals. It also adds a component of results-oriented metrics to the strategic planning process.

SOAR Analysis Framework



Following are the results of the strategic planning process, which used the SOAR method.

Strengths

- Strategic location in the Okanagan Valley
- Proximity to YLW Kelowna International Airport
- Proximity to UBC Okanagan and Okanagan College campuses
- Agricultural, rural, and quiet environment
- Good weather
- Friendly, small town atmosphere
- Family-oriented
- High quality wineries and potential for more along the Scenic Sip

- Engaged community halls and service clubs
- Volunteers
- Active schools
- Sense of community
- Wide array of recreation opportunities in the outdoors for authentic experiences
- Beaches and lakes (proximity and quality)
- Wood Lake kokanee fishery
- Kalamalka Lake reputation
- Okanagan Lake recreation
- Parks and trails
- Cycling routes
- Transit linkages
- Tennis and pickle ball courts
- Clean
- Safe boating and lakes
- Appreciation for the arts and an active arts community
- Museum, Art Gallery, Creekside Theatre, and other cultural amenities
- OK Patio Café and the Lake Country Coffee Shop (and other memorable, unique community gathering places)
- Youth, Family, and Seniors recreational programming
- Lake Country Recreation Centre & Arena
- Proximity to golfing
- Destination products such as the Kangaroo Farm, Oyama Zipline, and Gatzke's Farm Market
- Open Air Performances
- The Lake Country Car Show
- Supply of short-term vacation rentals has potential to provide accommodation to tourists in light of no current waterfront hotel/resort.



Opportunities

- Active transportation, and opportunities to link future corridors
- Accommodation: resorts, camping, short-term rentals, hotels and B&B's
- Okanagan Rail Trail
- Pelmewash Parkway
- Locally-themed adventure race concept
- Facilitate and support marquee events
- Tourism business retention and expansion, along with expanded opportunities for tourism businesses
- Complementary services to existing strengths
- Creation of a tourism asset map
- Capitalizing on the currently strong investment climate
- Unique experiences within the Okanagan Valley
- Stay-cations
- Increase owner-occupancy and/or connect these people to the community when they are in Lake Country



Pelmewash Parkway



Pelmewash Concept Planning Sketch (excerpt)

Aspirations

- Attract international travelers
- Increase promotions and brand recognition beyond Lake Country
 - Know where Lake Country fits within the brand hierarchy and work in partnership with the rest of the Okanagan stakeholders, such as TOTA and Tourism Kelowna
- Position Lake Country as a “cool place” to be
- Become known widely as a place to explore within the Okanagan
- Leverage existing strengths and build upon them
- Create ambassadors out of tourists so that they provide positive word-of-mouth marketing
- Provide adequate parking for tourism businesses and events
- Facilitation the creation of complementary packages between tourism operators
- Attract investment in a destination resort, greater accommodation supply, and more places/businesses to go within the community
- Become a 4-season stop
- Strive to make tourism a benefit for the quality of life of locals, reducing negative impacts through conflicting uses
- Increase the ability of tourists to visit, shop, play, and stay



Results

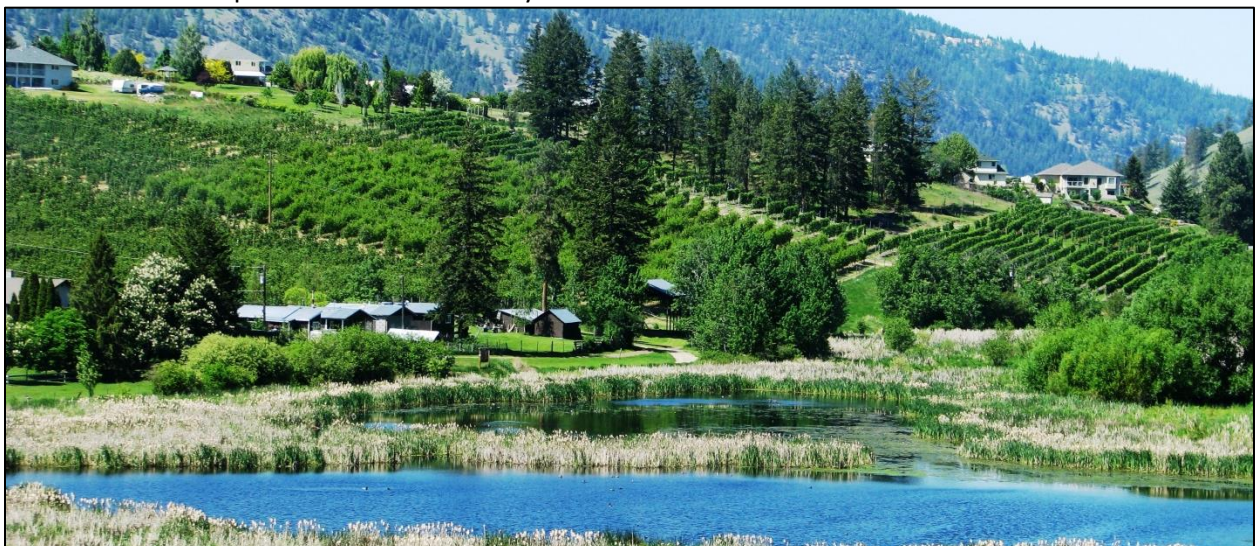
- Reduced ambiguity in brand and community identity
- Completion of a hotel/resort feasibility study
- Attraction of a hotel/resort
- Provide incentives for targeted needs and priorities
- Waterfront access and tourism business opportunities increased
- Okanagan Rail Corridor developing and being used for active transportation and as a tourism anchor
- Pelmewash Parkway developing and being used for active transportation and business opportunities that complement the Rail Corridor
- Increased development of parks and trails as “market-ready assets”
- Create a tourism inventory/asset map and guide
- Increase the number of return visitors
- Residents become tourism ambassadors through becoming more aware of “are you visitor-friendly?” and World Host training
- Continuously striving to be business-friendly
- Break down silos between sectors in tourism
- Marketing is increased, but also targeted and specific to the community’s needs
- Increase the amount of outreach on non-traditional media, while targeting more online presence – social media marketing is increased and targeted
- Diversify the local economy and provide more opportunities for tourists to shop, stay, and play in Lake Country



4.0 Goals

Internal Goals

- The District will strive for continuous improvement of processes that are fair and streamlined with respect to meeting its tourism goals, including the attraction, retention, growth, and expansion of tourism businesses in Lake Country.
- The District will begin the development of Pelmewash Parkway, following successful negotiation of the transfer of ownership from the Province.
- In conjunction with the Interjurisdictional Development Team, the District will partner in the development of the Okanagan Rail Corridor.
- In addition to Pelmewash Parkway and the Okanagan Rail Corridor, Lake Country will continue striving to build upon its asset inventory of parks, trails, and waterfront accesses.
- The District will work with local cultural organizations to continue developing the vibrant arts, culture, and heritage that already exist within the community.
- Unique, diverse, and innovative ideas will be sought, promoted, and valued in the Lake Country tourism. This approach is in line with the “open for business” and “bring your ideas” model of inclusive government.
- In the efforts of hotel and resort attraction, Lake Country will commission a feasibility study to assess community and market readiness for such a development.
- A short-term vacation rental policy will be developed to address this issue within residential areas.
- Increase the amount of tourism accommodation in the community by attracting a hotel and/or resort, with ancillary accommodation from Bed & Breakfast businesses.
- Increase the number of recreational and outdoor accommodation for campers and RV tourists.
- Attract a broad base of retail opportunities for tourists and residents alike.
- Increase tradeshow activity in the retail, homebuilding, and tourism sectors, recognizing that they are interdependent.
- The District will create and maintain a comprehensive inventory of tourism amenities, offerings, and opportunities.
- Add online presence of Lake Country tourism online.



Partnership & Relationship Goals

- The District will work in tandem with its regional partners and the community in the planning and development of the Okanagan Rail Corridor.
- To provide longer-term sustainable service delivery, a long-term plan and/or strategy for the Visitor Information Centre will be developed.
- The District will maintain its relationship with Tourism Kelowna as its Destination Marketing Organization to reach broader markets and leverage regional relationships.
- The District will maintain its relationship with the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission in order to partner in its tourism-based business programming.
- In response to the Tourism HR Business Walks conducted in November, 2015 by the COEDC and its regional partners, the District will advocate for positive changes with respect to:
 - tourism business succession planning;
 - tourism business employee attraction and retention programs;
 - increased access to foreign worker recruitment programs;
 - greater professional training options within the region for tourism employees; and
 - building HR skills capacity within tourism entrepreneurs.
- The District will seek opportunities to partner with the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association, Destination BC, and Destination Canada.
- In on-going collaboration, and in the spirit of its Protocol Agreement with the Okanagan Indian Band, the District will continue to work in partnership, where possible, with the Band.
- In partnership with the Province and the Federal government, the District will advocate for increased tourism opportunities and funding within the community.
- In addition to strong partnerships and relationships, the District will work to communicate the progress and results of the Tourism Strategy in an on-going and meaningful way to the public and stakeholders.



5.0 Specific Tactics & Timing

Stop



- 2016
 - Create a tourism product inventory.
 - Meet with the OKIB to discuss areas of mutual tourism-related interest during a Community-to-Community Forum.
- 2017
 - Market the contents of the tourism product inventory to provide more reasons for tourists to stop in Lake Country.
- 2018
 - Revisit the Destination Event concept as considered for 2016.
- On-going
 - Increase tradeshow activity in the retail, homebuilding, and tourism sectors, recognizing that they are interdependent.
 - Add to the online presence of tourism marketing and product inventory through OkanaganWay.ca and social media.
 - Work with local cultural organizations to continue developing the vibrant arts, culture, and heritage that already exists.
 - Maintain and strengthen the focus on Town Centre development and encourage an increase in recreational and tourism focused businesses within the District.

Stay



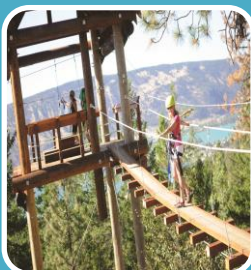
- 2016
 - Develop a specific short-term vacation rental policy.
- 2017
 - Commission a feasibility study to assess community and market readiness for a hotel development.
 - Incorporate research into market readiness for a new community campground and RV services (e.g. grounds, sani-dump, etc.).
- 2018
 - Incorporate the results of the feasibility study into marketing and attraction materials for attracting a hotel to the District.
- On-going
 - Assess policy and practices to ensure that they remain effective for existing accommodations businesses across the spectrum, and position Lake Country for growth in its supply of accommodations for tourists.

Shop



- 2016
 - Re-assess Town Centre incentives to determine if they may be modified to attract businesses that could serve tourists and locals.
 - Connect local event operators with businesses to collaborate and capitalize on local tourism together, particularly those with a destination event component.
- 2017
 - Market the downtown in conjunction with the hotel feasibility study to improve the market for local tourism businesses.
- 2018
 - Incorporate business licensing and private marketing materials into an online repository of curated tourism assets, including a full spectrum of tourism "product" such as: farm-gate operations, B&B's, short-term vacation rentals, motels, hotels, and resorts, retail businesses, and recreational businesses.
- On-going
 - Attract a broad base of retail opportunities for tourists and residents alike.
 - The District will strive for continuous improvement of processes that are fair and streamlined with respect to attracting tourism businesses.

Play



- 2016
 - Begin the community engagement and planning processes for the Okanagan Rail Corridor, working alongside the Interjurisdictional Development Team.
 - Utilize results of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to strengthen connections between parks and trails.
- 2017
 - Begin the development process in addition to detailed planning for the Okanagan Rail Corridor.
 - Create a winery/vineyard marketing action plan.
- 2018
 - Develop Pelmewash Parkway following the Provincial Order in Council transferring ownership to Lake Country.
- On-going
 - Attract/market investment in recreational opportunities, wine and agri-tourism, and ancillary retail businesses.

6.0 Conclusion

This Tourism Strategy acts not only as a high level vision document, but an actionable work plan of strategic objectives and tactics that can have measureable impacts. Some goals and objectives will come with more qualitative measures, while other specific tasks are more easily measured quantitatively.

The intent of this Tourism Strategy is to confirm a tourism vision, set goals, and outline tactics for tourism in Lake Country over the next 3 years.

The newly established tourism vision for the community is that:

“Lake Country will become a first-class hub for tourism activity within the Central Okanagan. Tourism will increase quality of life for residents, provide unique experiences for visitors, and position the community as a memorable place to stop, stay, shop, and play.”

With the alignment of political leadership, administration, the community and its partners, the District will strive for this new vision through approaching its strategic tourism goals.

