APRIL 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Toronto Destination Master Plan



Image courtesy of Norm Li

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF TORONTO TOURISM

The Toronto Destination Master Plan is a comprehensive, decade-long strategic roadmap to strengthen Toronto's position as one of the world's premier urban destinations.

Built through broad consultation with the tourism and hospitality sectors, City of Toronto departments, provincial and federal agencies and ministries, cultural institutions, and private-sector partners, the plan provides a shared framework for action.

Toronto is Canada's largest and most-visited city: a dynamic hub of culture, innovation, and global connectivity. Over the past years, tourism has proven to be a resilient export sector with significant economic impact. 2025 was a record-breaking year for visitation to the city, bringing 28.2 million visitors who generated $9.1 billion in spending. International arrivals grew 8% year-over-year, and major business events produced $982 million in economic impact alone.

This success and growth trajectory can't be taken for granted. The visitor economy thrives when there is strong diversification of markets (domestic, U.S. and international) and traveller types (leisure, business and meeting attendees) throughout the year. Peer cities around the world are investing decisively in the infrastructure, public spaces, and signature attractions needed to capture more of the global tourism market, and Toronto must respond.

The plan is built on competitive benchmarking against 14 North American peer cities, rigorous analysis of visitor trends, and alignment with broader city-building priorities including transit expansion, public realm enhancement,and economic growth and inclusion. The result is a living roadmap of 29 strategies and related actions organized across five interconnected tracks, a blueprint to realize Toronto's full potential as a global destination and one that benefits both visitors and locals alike.

Destination Toronto served as the lead partner and project coordinator for the plan, with co-funding from the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario). The plan emerged from extensive consultation with more than 400 partner organizations and community stakeholders throughout 2025 and early 2026. These diverse perspectives were vital in creating a roadmap that is as resilient as it is inclusive.

Resonance Consultancy supported these consultations and undertook extensive research. A steering committee of city-builders and leaders from diverse sectors provided strategic guidance and insights throughout the development process.

Destination Master Plan Steering Committee

Sara Anghel, President & CEO,
Greater Toronto Hotel Association

Cameron Bailey, Chief Executive Officer,
Toronto International Film Festival

Kendra Bator, General Manager, Mirvish Productions

Dolf DeJong, Chief Executive Officer, Toronto Zoo

Kathy Haley, President & CEO,
Metro Toronto Convention Centre

Pauline Larsen, Executive Director & CEO,
Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area

Stephen Lund, President & CEO, Toronto Global

Roselle Martino, Executive Vice President,
Policy, Advocacy, and Stakeholder Relations,
Toronto Region Board of Trade

Karen Mazurkewich, Vice President,
Stakeholder Relations and Communications,
Greater Toronto Airport Authority

Kojo Modeste, Executive Director, Pride Toronto

Andrew O'Neil, Vice President of Development,
Oxford Properties Group

Jennifer Sullivan, Vice President, Operations and
General Manager, Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment

Patrick Tobin, General Manager,
Economic Development & Culture, City of Toronto

Andrew Weir, President & CEO, Destination Toronto

George Zegarac, President & CEO, Waterfront Toronto



Distinctive Strengths and Critical Gaps

Throughout the development of the Destination Master Plan, key insights about Toronto's distinctive strengths and critical gaps pointed the way toward transformative action. These insights are outlined in the State of the Destination Executive Summary and include:

- Tourism is **a significant export sector** and the city's **geographic location, population size and current market diversificatio**n position it well to further grow international visitation.
- Benchmarking against North American peers confirms Toronto's position as a **top-tier destination for arts and culture, culinary experiences, retail, and attractions.** Visitor behaviour data reinforces these findings, with dining, arts, culture, and shopping among the most frequently cited motivations for visitation.
- Toronto is **one of the world's most diverse and inclusive cities**; this is one of its key strengths. The city has an opportunity to further differentiate itself as a destination where every visitor feels welcomed.
- Toronto's **global connectivity** is another defining strength. The city performs above average for air access, with US and international visitors accounting for 37% of total visitor spending and generating the highest per-trip expenditures.
- While connectivity to the city is strong, **visitors often face challenges navigating Toronto**, especially when exploring beyond the downtown core. Transportation congestion further limits efficient movement between districts and attractions. **Wayfinding, accessibility, and regional transit integration** all need improvement.
- The current **street-level experience** requires attention. To compete with top global urban destinations, Toronto needs **more vibrant, pedestrian-friendly public spaces and strategies to ensure safety, cleanliness, and state of good repair**, particularly in the downtown core.
- Toronto is well-positioned to attract more major events and conventions **but is constrained by limited venue capacity and lack of convention centre-adjacent lodging.** The city is experiencing increasing competition from U.S. cities that have expanded convention infrastructure and incentives.
- **Seasonality remains a challenge** with leisure visitation concentrated in the summer and spending peaking between May and September. Investment in winter events, indoor attractions, and outdoor recreation could improve the 40 per cent drop currently seen in visitor numbers between January and March.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Toronto Destination Master Plan represents a comprehensive vision for strengthening Canada's largest city as a world-class urban destination.

Developed through extensive research, stakeholder engagement, and community consultation, this framework addresses the opportunities and challenges facing Toronto's visitor economy over the next decade.

To realize this vision, five interconnected tracks were identified to form a comprehensive framework for action. These priorities balance competitive positioning with authentic cultural expression, visitor experience excellence, and sustainable city-building that benefits both residents and visitors alike.

These five tracks are underpinned by a total of 29 strategies. Each strategy outlines specific approaches and considerations designed to transform the plan's vision into tangible outcomes.

The complete list of strategies and actions are detailed in the full version of the Destination Master Plan.



DESTINATION MASTER PLAN

2026–2036

The Destination Master Plan is a bold, collaborative roadmap for growing Toronto's visitor economy over the next decade.

TRACK	STRATEGY
1. ENSURE THE CITY IS WELCOMING, SAFE, AND INSPIRING	1.1 Ensure Toronto's Destination Districts are visitor ready 1.2 Improve safety and quality of key public spaces 1.3 Create a consistent sense of arrival and welcome 1.4 Enhance street-level vibrancy and pedestrian-friendly spaces 1.5 Strengthen Toronto's waterfront 1.6 Advance Indigenous placekeeping and partnership 1.7 Solidify Toronto's inclusivity and accessibility
2. SEAMLESSLY CONNECT PEOPLE TO AND WITHIN TORONTO AND THE BROADER REGION	2.1 Develop and implement congestion relief strategies 2.2 Make use of water transportation options 2.3 Strengthen inbound aviation capacity 2.4 Foster micromobility innovation 2.5 Support transit expansion 2.6 Strengthen regional connectivity
3. INCREASE TORONTO'S COMPETITIVENESS FOR MAJOR EVENTS	3.1 Support the vision for a next-generation convention centre 3.2 Enhance Exhibition Place and Ontario Place as a major events campus 3.3 Elevate Toronto's existing events 3.4 Evolve annual events to ones of global significance 3.5 Establish a pathway for event attraction 3.6 Expand Toronto's capacity for major events
4. DEVELOP NEW ATTRACTORS AND DEMAND DRIVERS	4.1 Help more neighbourhoods become destinations 4.2 Develop new landmark attractions and experiences 4.3 Leverage developments to integrate tourism 4.4 Stimulate new accommodation supply
5. UNITE PARTNERS AND RESOURCES TO ADVANCE DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP	5.1 Activate a shared implementation plan 5.2 Embrace the visitor perspective in planning and development 5.3 Reduce bureaucratic hurdles for tourism businesses and investors 5.4 Advance environmental sustainability 5.5 Attract and retain a skilled, diverse workforce 5.6 Generate local prosperity and belonging through tourism

STRATEGIC TRACKS

TRACK 1

ENSURE THE CITY IS WELCOMING, SAFE, AND INSPIRING

Toronto's most visited districts shape visitor perceptions and drive significant economic activity, yet inconsistent activation, governance, and public realm quality limit their ability to deliver world-class experiences. This track takes a holistic approach to the street-level visitor experience, from the moment someone arrives at an airport or train station to how they feel exploring a neighbourhood after dark in the middle of winter.

The work involves: identifying designated Destination Districts where coordinated investment and programming are concentrated for greatest impact in key tourism areas; improving safety and cleanliness; and, creating a more coherent arrival experience across airports, hotels, and major venues. There is significant opportunity to animate Toronto's streets more boldly through pedestrianization, public art, and a robust winter activation strategy, and by supporting a vibrant, 24-hour city and night economy. Strengthening the waterfront as a cohesive four-season destination and seizing the opportunity to connect the major transformations underway at Ontario Place, Exhibition Place, the Central Waterfront, and the Port Lands is a key priority. The importance of advancing Indigenous placekeeping, and reinforcing Toronto's reputation for inclusivity and accessibility are highlighted within this track's strategies.

TRACK 2

SEAMLESSLY CONNECT PEOPLE TO AND WITHIN TORONTO AND THE BROADER REGION

Getting to and around Toronto remains one of the most frequently cited barriers to a great visitor experience. Congestion is persistent, transit can feel fragmented and hard to navigate, and last-mile connections between major hubs and key attractions are often missing. This track addresses mobility at every scale.

Near-term measures like designated motor coach staging zones and better coordination of road closures around major events can reduce friction quickly.

Over the longer term, increasing aviation capacity at Toronto Pearson International Airport and Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport, building out micromobility infrastructure, and advancing construction of critical transit investments including the Waterfront East LRT will reshape how visitors travel to, and through the city. Stronger regional rail links to destinations like Niagara, Muskoka, and Ottawa present a real opportunity to extend visitor stays and deepen the economic benefit of tourism well beyond the city.

TRACK 3

INCREASE TORONTO'S COMPETITIVENESS FOR MAJOR EVENTS

Toronto has proven it can host world-class events, but its ability to compete for the largest gatherings is constrained by real infrastructure gaps. Many global conventions have outgrown Toronto's meeting facilities and several North American cities have invested in expanded convention centres. Convention-adjacent hotel rooms are in short supply, and large-scale sporting and entertainment venues are limited. These gaps directly determine which events Toronto can pursue and host.

This track makes the case for transformational investment in a next-generation convention centre and surrounding district, and realizing the full potential of Ontario Place and Exhibition Place as a year-round major events and entertainment campus.

Beyond bricks and mortar, it calls for elevating Toronto's existing events and festivals by improving coordination amongst organizers, venues and funders, and by expanding year-round programming, while strengthening Toronto's event and music ecosystem and night economy. Establishing both a dedicated Major Events Fund and coordinated bid strategy to attract signature events on a consistent basis are key to helping Toronto's event ecosystem become an even bigger demand driver.

TRACK 4

DEVELOP NEW ATTRACTORS AND DEMAND DRIVERS

Toronto's tourism economy is heavily concentrated in the downtown core, leaving much of the city's cultural richness invisible to most visitors. Neighbourhoods across Scarborough, North York, and Etobicoke offer compelling food, culture, and community experiences that genuinely reflect the city's identity, yet they remain largely off tourists' maps. This track is about changing that by co-developing Neighbourhood Destination Plans with local BIAs, community organizations, and residents, and investing in the infrastructure and storytelling that help these areas welcome visitors with confidence.

Toronto also needs more globally distinctive landmark attractions that inspire international travel in their own right. Toronto's ongoing development presents opportunities to embed tourism, visitor experiences, and cultural programming into major projects. Waterfront precincts, heritage properties, public buildings, and mixed-use districts can evolve into attractors and cultural anchors that boost neighbourhood vitality. Embedding a tourism lens into major development decisions and encouraging investment in hotel supply through targeted planning tools would further strengthen the city's long-term appeal.

TRACK 5

UNITE PARTNERS AND RESOURCES TO ADVANCE DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP

A plan of this scope only delivers results if the right people are aligned around it and accountable for moving it forward. This track is the connective tissue that holds everything else together.

A multi-year Implementation Plan with clear accountabilities, timelines, and performance metrics, supported by an Implementation Steering Group to monitor progress, and coordinate decision-making will be critical. Recommendations include: embedding visitor experience considerations more intentionally in design and planning; reducing bureaucratic friction through streamlined permitting; and, creating a Tourism Investment Concierge service to make Toronto more competitive for private investment.

The final set of strategies focus on workforce development, environmental sustainability, and a Social and Economic Impact Framework to measure how tourism contributes to community prosperity.



Image Credit: Joshua Halling

PUTTING THE PLAN INTO ACTION

The opportunity to grow Toronto's visitor economy is significant and the Toronto Destination Master Plan provides a clear path forward. As a 10-year roadmap reflecting a shared vision, it will need sustained partnership among hospitality and tourism businesses, government, private sector investors, and community organizations to succeed.

The recommended strategies and actions represent the Toronto tourism community's response to what must be achieved over the coming 10 years, and will remain flexible to updates as Toronto evolves and grows. The stakeholder community has rallied around this plan, raising their hands to lead or support the implementation of these actions. Some of these actions are already underway; others will require time for the relevant organizations to work them into their business planning, or for the right partnerships to form.

An Implementation Steering Group will track and coordinate activity in a multi-year Implementation Plan.

This coordinated approach will ensure that we:

- Strengthen Toronto's best assets while building a pipeline of new demand drivers
- Remove pain points for visitors and improve their experience
- Move quickly to make improvements while planning for more ambitious projects and investments
- Advance existing plans and strategies

Destination Toronto will act as the steward and lead coordinator for the plan's implementation.



This project is jointly funded by Destination Toronto and the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario). Destination Toronto is serving as the lead partner and project coordinator.

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