

# First Impressions Community Exchange

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Township of Georgian Bay

Municipality of Dysart et al  
Council Meeting

Monday August 21, 2017



# About the Visiting Team

- 10 participants
  - 3 youths, 3 adults, and 4 seniors
- Different professional backgrounds
- Engaged in diverse roles
  - Student, tourist, prospective business owner, potential resident, and new resident

## Before the Visit

- Participants referred to:
  - Dysart et al's digital profile
  - Tourism websites (Haliburton Highlands)
- Participants expected to see a waterfront tourist community, older homes, heritage buildings, and outdoor recreational activities
- Only 2 participants believed there would be a variety of goods and services

# Entering the Community

- Strengths:
  - Haliburton Village signs are large and welcoming
  - Immediately notice natural environment and vibrant downtown
  - Perceived as “clean”
- Areas for improvement:
  - Unable to find Dysart et al signage
  - Lack of cellular connectivity

## Housing and Residential Areas

- Relative mix of housing to suit a variety of income levels
- Difficult to find rental properties and properties for sale
- Lack of rental properties may deter transient residents (e.g. students, short-term employees)

## Education

- Clustered (elementary and high school)
- Haliburton School of Art & Design - Fleming College
- Residents largely believe you have to leave the area for postsecondary education

## Public Services - Government

- Convenient location (downtown core)
- Residents spoke positively about the level of municipal services
- Some young professionals would like to see more young representation



## Public Services – Health & Social

- Surprising variety of health services
- Easy to locate health / emergency facilities
- Information on service clubs and social support services more difficult to find
  - E.g. low-income support, mental health support and counselling
- Seniors' programs were well-spoken of by residents



## Local Economy - Downtown

- 9/10 participants rated their overall impression of downtown either good or excellent
- Strengths:
  - Recreational green spaces (Head Lake Park)
  - Free Wi-Fi
  - Access to water / docks
  - Landscaping and floral baskets

# Local Economy - Downtown

- Areas for improvement:
  - Public washrooms
  - Safety (street crossings and speed of traffic)
  - Signage and single-sided banners



## Retail & Commercial Services

- Clustered variety of retail and commercial services
- Appeared that several places were understaffed
  - Customer service inattentive and curt
  - Business owners commented that many workers expect to be laid-off after high season
- Lack of nightlife entertainment

## Major Industries

- Industrial Park well-segregated from green spaces
- Noticeable dependence on seasonal industries:
  - Tourism
  - Retail
  - Construction
  - Landscaping and maintenance
  - Automotive

# Tourism

- Unclear community slogan / brand
- Tourism Information Centre not accessible
- Increase directional signage to tourist attractions
- Opportunity to expand tourism businesses (e.g. walking tours, kayak and small boat rentals)

## Recreation

- Participants highlighted Sculpture Forest, Head Lake Park, and Lookout Point as top recreational activities
- Activities outside of Haliburton Village went overlooked
- Promoted as a cycling destination, but unable to find cyclist paths / lanes
- Lack of indoor entertainment

## Restaurants & Accommodations

- No restaurant overtly advertised local food options
- Farmer's Market and "Biggest Picnic Ever" were well-advertised
- Modest accommodations, with the exception of Pinestone Resort

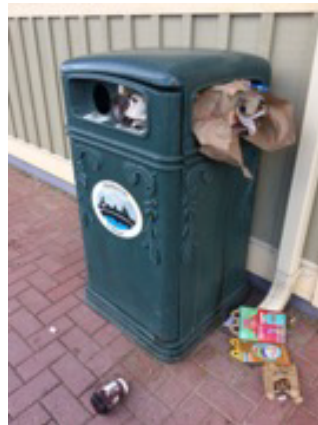
## Culture and Heritage

- Observed art & culture as a common theme throughout the community
  - Sculpture Forest
  - Heritage buildings
  - Summer classes at Haliburton School of Art & Design
  - “DysART” 150 Trail
- Community pride is evident
  - Dysart 150: The Movie
  - Haliburton: A History in Pictures



# Environmental Sustainability

- Several green spaces preserve the natural environment and wildlife
- Locals unaware of sustainability organizations and initiatives in the area
- Presence of overflowing waste bins



# Using Our Senses

**Taste**



Baked & Battered

**Sound**



Truck traffic

**Smell**



Fresh air

**Sight**



Green spaces & flowers

## Five positive things about Dysart et al

1. Well-designed public green spaces
2. Integration and preservation of arts and culture
3. Compatible land uses
4. Proximity to medical and professional services
5. Community pride

## Five biggest challenges facing Dysart et al

1. Reliance on seasonal workforce and related employment challenges
2. Weak telecommunication infrastructure outside of Haliburton Village
3. Uninviting online presence and lack of brand identity
4. Youth retention and attraction
5. Lack of off-season entertainment

## Five potential opportunities available to Dysart et al

1. Expansion of the experience economy to attract tourists
2. Promotion of a workforce that can work remotely
3. Development of a consistent community brand
4. Better support of active transportation
5. Promotion of Dysart et al as a cultural hub

## Quick wins for Dysart et al

1. Increase signage to attractions and key municipal services
2. Increase maintenance of public waste bins and washrooms
3. Implement cyclist lanes
4. Increase number of crosswalks
5. Foster a stronger online presence

## Recommendations for Dysart et al

1. Promote wealth of cultural assets, green spaces, and public recreation
2. Strengthen youth engagement and retention
3. Improve hard infrastructure and signage
4. Strengthen online presence and overall brand
5. Increase Internet and cellular connectivity

**Questions or comments?**