



MUNICIPALITY OF TWEED

ASSESSMENT, ENGAGEMENT, & RECOMMENDATIONS

BACKGROUND & SCOPE

The 13 Ways Team was contracted by the Municipality of Tweed, Ontario to complete the following three primary deliverables:

1. **Engagement:** Meeting with members of the community and the greater region, stakeholder and citizen groups, and businesses through interviews, focus groups, ad-hoc opportunities, and public meetings to gather opinions and information.
2. **Assessment:** Identify the community's current state of assets, challenges, and opportunities, as well as its offerings and positioning for growth opportunities in the future.
3. **Make Recommendations:** Provide to Council, administration, and the community at large advice on next steps to take to generate community and economic growth opportunities that capitalize on the community's unique opportunities.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY & METHODOLOGY

The team (Doug and Heather) attended the community from October 2nd to October 5th, 2022. In that time, the team completed 12 in person interviews, held a town hall presentation with questions and feedback for approximately 50 residents, and completed an unguided tour of the community and hamlets. Following that tour the team conducted online/zoom and telephone interviews with numerous individual residents, a focus group meeting with residents, and another focus group specifically with residents of hamlets.

The team met with business owners, retirees, young leaders, elected leaders, volunteers, and concerned citizens. Everyone who wished to participate was encouraged to submit concerns, ideas, and opinions to the 13 Ways Team, or to request an interview if they so preferred. Collectively they received written submissions from residents with issues and ideas, and did another dozen personal interviews gleaning further ideas and identifying more issues.

There was a remarkable amount of agreement on the opportunities and challenges the community and the region is facing. That is not typically the case with most communities, which means the most challenging job most communities face is building a common vision and priority actions. Doug and Heather's opinion is that a concise strategy document is an important next step so the public can become excited about what needs to be done, why it needs to be done, and when they can expect it to be done.

**Resident Submissions are Appendix A.*

ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The region and its communities have remarkable amenities that have it punching above its weight class in many respects: medical services, extensive recreation services conveniently offered in a common area on the east side of the river, and passionate volunteer organizations that contribute greatly to the communities and citizens quality of life gives you a wonderful head start on many other regions. Adding to that the quality of the education system and the ability to accommodate growth there, and in your water and wastewater systems prepares you well for growth opportunities.

Citizens seemed to be genuinely concerned about each other. Of course, that happens in other communities, but in your case, there is an actual appreciation for groups and activities that others participate in. For instance, those involved in hockey were quick to not only point out the value of theatre to the community and its future, they openly advocated for support for those arts. Likewise, those involved in arts and theatre productions not only explained the benefit of hockey to the community but advocated for its role in building the community for the future. While mutual support between such groups is common, such passionate advocacy is rare. This says a lot, and bodes well, for the communities you wish to build.

As much as we heard complaints and concerns about the downtown core of Tweed, there is a lot to work with, and the hydro lines are not such a critical issue. There are many initiatives that can help improve and cover the hydro lines from eyesight. As well, there are so many great buildings with so much character that only small investments are really needed to make large improvements in the façades of buildings and the look of mainstreets and the downtown core. Some buildings have already made some significant advances that have helped set a style and tone, and with a reinvigorated façade grant, we believe change on mainstreet could happen quickly.

Considering downtown as more than Highway 37, but also should extend to at least Colburne and Metcalf streets from River Street to Bridge Street, there is potential to create new, invigorate existing, and reinvigorate dropped events that would bring people from a 150 km radius to spend a day, or a weekend to experience the event, as well as the waterways, nature, and the communities. There is potential to incorporate live theatre and music venues that would immediately change the look and feel of the heart and soul of the community, which would draw investors to explore the opportunities for more live music, brew pubs and wine bars, quality restaurants, and boutique hotels.

Your location is actually perfect to attract those people who want to get away from the noise and the congestion to some place that is just off the beaten trail, offering a more relaxed pace that gives them a chance to savor nature, culture, time, their families, and their own souls. You will attract artists in residence, and creative minds, and work-from anywhere folks who want to be in a real community that they feel home in. That is what you have to offer, that is what you can leverage for growth, that is what so many people are looking for these days.

The issues identified are:

- **Childcare:** A shortage of childcare is a critical issue every community is facing, but those first to address it will prosper.
- **Housing:** All over North America, housing is in short supply. However, the issue is not with affordable housing as much as it is with housing diversity and affordability. Many can't afford to live in traditional subdivisions, and even more don't want that type of housing anyway. All age groups and demographics are looking for condominiums and apartments they can buy or rent because they want to spend more time connecting with nature, connecting with others on mainstreet, or spending money on travel and quality of life. Traditional housing is not a solution to modern issues. Creating diversity of housing creates affordability, and adding in childcare options makes your community a persuasive option for those looking for authentic communities in which to live.
- **Attitudes and Communication:** Your community has a very significant issue that is preventing you from meeting your challenges head on or taking advantage of your opportunities aggressively. In interviews there was a tendency for people to say they want change, we discover they want change as long as nothing changes. They want mainstreet to be better, but don't want to commit tax dollars, cause businesses that are already barely hanging on any stress, or cause anyone else any grief. Yet, if something is going to be done, if anything is going to be done, someone isn't going to be happy. We recognize that is a problem with previous councils: people want council to do something, but when they propose a solution people oppose it because it will impact someone negatively, so council doesn't follow through, and then people complain council isn't doing anything. It left many previous councils paralyzed and many citizens and business owners frustrated. The success of this new council depends on communicating well, engaging citizens, listening to criticism, and then moving forward.

Below are recommendations we are making based on our interviews, focus groups, written submissions, research, in-person community assessment, and online data scans:

RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

1. **Asset Management Plan:** Municipal Corporations were required to adapt Asset Depreciation into their accounting processes many years ago. Provinces across Canada are moving to require municipal corporations to move to Tangible Capital Asset Accounting and mandating municipalities develop Asset Management Plans to encourage better long-term planning. Your community has created such a plan, and we encourage you to revisit it regularly and leverage it to ensure appropriate accountability and consistency, measurement and reporting of full costs, effective use of assets, and long-term planning for replacements of existing assets and new builds.

Note – Debt is debt. Most people think of debt as a financial loan, however, maintenance and replacement costs deferred is a debt that is still accrued, but not in the financial records. Asset Management Plans give a municipality and the public full awareness of the current situation and the ability to plan longer term.

2. **Integrated Community Facility:** This will ensure as recreational infrastructure comes of age, each is not solely replaced as a one off, but part of an integrated plan that brings services together which can save on capital and operating costs while also improving service delivery over the long-term. For instance, as the arena ages out (which is coming soon) consideration should be given to a more diverse facility that could accommodate an arena as well as other services, such as a theatre, daycare, indoor walking track and fitness centre, sports courts for basketball, tennis, pickleball, or squash, indoor swimming pool, and Municipality of Tweed offices, as well as other considerations, just to name a few. We are not suggesting all of these elements and services are needed. We simply want to indicate the potential and value of developing an integrated community facility over time.
3. **Strategic Investments:** The region needs to decide its priorities. A municipality cannot be all things, do all things, or pay for all things, all the time in all areas. Spreading human, financial, and time resources equally across too many areas leaves too little resources in any single area to be effective. If the goal is to invest municipal resources to attract people and businesses, so the tax base grows so more investments in capital and services can be made that improve the quality of life for the entire region, which in turn will attract more people and businesses, than some key strategic investments need to be made in some core areas. In short, precedence must be given to strategic investments that grow the tax base and improve the quality of life for all communities in the region over the long-term. If this is not done, short term focus on equal spending of tax resources will mean the services and amenities provided to communities in the region is likely to deteriorate at worst and remain stagnant at best. This is not to say all resources need to be spent in one location or on one project, but the focus must be on strategic long-term growth, and not strictly on equality.
4. **A Strategic Plan:** A focused, action oriented strategic plan with the following structure should be created to ensure everyone in the region understands what is going to be done, why it is going to be done, what the communities and the region are going to become. We recommend the following concise structure:

Our Story – This is a half-page, three paragraph, story explaining who you were, who you are, and who you are becoming as a region. This is core to ‘why’ every action is done, and forms the basis of your marketing campaign to potential businesses and residents.

The Vision Statement – This is a statement of what the communities/region are going to become, and can, and should, be shared with all other organizations in the region so they are working on and building in the same direction. If everyone is working on a different vision, the region will fail.

The Mission Statement – This concisely lays out the municipality’s role in making the vision come true. The municipal corporation is not exclusively responsible for building the communities. Others will have their own mission and roles that lay out what they will do to contribute to realizing the shared vision, as well.

What We Value (Most) – This connects directly to recommendation 3, above. Choosing three to five priority areas to focus investments of time, human, and financial resources that are intended to grow the communities and the region will ensure the ‘tyranny of the urgent’ does not distract from the long-term plan and work that needs to be done to become successful. Without these priority areas identified and committed to, constant arising issues will mean a lack of focus and a lack of results.

5. **Mainstreet Rehabilitation:** A long-term plan that focuses on facilitating and creating vibrancy in the core in the years to come is essential. Components we recommend include:
 - a. **Visualizations:** Create a vision/visualization of what mainstreet in Tweed will look like in the future so people see what it can become and how it will change. Visuals bring ideas to life, increase the likelihood of buy-in and support and increase excitement as people can literally see what the potential and the future that is to come.

Note - When we refer to mainstreet, we are not meaning only the main thoroughfare (Highway 37), but Colborne and Metcalf streets and those that connect them, as well.
 - b. **Building Code Guidelines:** Clearly articulated building code guidelines, especially for mainstreet and the downtown core is critical, not to ensure complete unison and homogeneity, but to ensure quality and beauty within diversity. The storefront program could, and probably should, be revamped to support the new visualizations, and concentrate effort block by block.
 - c. **Tax Incentives and Bylaws:** The municipality must seriously consider the opportunity to implement a Vacancy Tax, intended to incentivize occupancy, and/or a Blight Tax, intended to encourage the care of property. The names or titles associated with tax are not nearly as important as the objectives – incentivize beautification and cleanups, new investments in frontage, accessibility, and functionality, and to encourage new business openings.

Note – Broken window theory research demonstrates dirty windows in a vacant property show a lack of care. That leads to someone throwing a rock through the window. When the window isn’t fixed because it is vacant and unmaintained, it leads to more broken windows in the building. That leads to an unkempt look on the block, which in turn leads to broken windows in neighbouring buildings whether or not they are

vacant. Vacant and unkempt properties cost neighbours, the municipality, residents, other business, and the entire community with rising costs, lower property values, and deterred investment. Leveraging tax incentives is not only the right of municipalities, but a responsibility, as they help their citizens and businesses enjoy the best success and prosperity.

- d. **Events, plus Hours of Operations:** These two go hand in hand. When no one is downtown there is no reason for businesses to stay open. When no businesses are open, there is no reason for anyone to go downtown. Events are the best way to get people downtown, and then businesses need to cooperate by being open. A robust Chamber of Commerce or Downtown Business Association will be an important partner in helping to coordinate events, and hours of operation to reintroduce some heart and soul to the core of the community. There are, or were, many events the community puts on which could be leveraged into larger events, marketed more broadly to attract more outsiders, and used to sell business opportunities in the downtown core. During events, we recommend identifying, reaching out, and inviting all food truck operators within 200 kilometres to attend, give them space, and make it successful for them, because successful events always have a diversity of food and drink available. This will fill the gap until more restaurants begin to locate in the core.
- i. Winter Carnival – winter events are desired as people need to get out of the house during winter months.
 - ii. Tweed and Company Theatre – absolutely the top asset you have to leverage in your events calendar and your marketing strategy.
 - iii. TransCanada Trail – a beautiful asset that brings people through town or can be sold as a starting point for hikes and walks in either direction.
 - iv. Harvest Fest – shoulder season event that attracts people to come for the colours.
 - v. Fair and Farmer’s Market – traditional day trip summer event that captures the nostalgic days of community get-togethers.
 - vi. Elvis Festival – a unique event that draws in a particular crowd and can be grown into an event for weekend trippers.
 - vii. Front Porch Ruckus – music event that connects to theatre and drama, which means it is an important event that helps build the brand and story of the community.

Note – We do apologize if we missed any significant events. We provide these not as an exhaustive list, but to remind the community and leadership of events that are important and can be connect to grow year round tourism and visitation, improve the quality of life of residents, and support the story and brand of the community as it works to market itself to future residents and businesses.

- e. **Municipal Leadership:** As the municipality considers strategic investments that help attract residents and businesses, and encourage a revitalization of the core of Tweed, they must lead by example. We are not saying the municipality is doing a poor job, but in some cases and some places the investments in beautification and maintenance could be better. Abundant weeds, overgrown shrubs and hedges, unrepaired sidewalks, and external maintenance could be addressed as a priority in the hamlets, and around the village as well. This is not to be critical but motivating the property owners and business owners to raise the bar will require a commitment by the municipality to lead the way by following through on their own improvements
 - Note** - Enforce the bylaws you have. This is important. Once you stop enforcing some you lose the moral authority to enforce others. There must be rules, there must be guidelines, and they must be taken seriously if change is to really happen.

- 6. **Long-Term Development and Housing Plan:** A proper long-term development plan for housing and growth is critical to attracting investment and developers, planning for infrastructure, and targeting your marketing strategy.
 - a. **Development Locations:** It is important to decide where housing will go and what type of housing will go there – mainstreet housing for seniors and/or young professionals, riverfront housing for young families or retirees. We can't answer those questions for you at this point, but you have remarkable opportunities to encourage a portfolio of diversified housing that means the needs of a diversified demographic that will prove to not only be affordable, but encourage new residents that support new businesses, pay taxes, and utilize your growing inventory of build and natural amenities and services.
 - b. **Permitting and Development Processes:** Though the municipality has wisely engaged regional services for development and permitting, the process has a bottleneck somewhere that means a slower process than other jurisdictions utilizing the same services. Whether it is a lack of coherent processes, a lack of motivation, or delays in addressing issues in a timely manner from the Municipality of Tweed is hard to say, but there is an issue. An immediate evaluation needs to be done to identify and address the slow timelines and apparent ad hoc processes that hinder development initiatives and discourage investment before it permanently impacts the brand of the community and makes it impossible to attract new investment.
 - c. **The (Stoco) Lake:** The region has a beautiful lake, though it appears the health concerns created by the algae is an issue that currently hinders leveraging the lake to its full potential. Issues with effluent draining into the lake need to be addressed. We know it may not be the only cause for the quality of the lake, and it is not the sole responsibility of the municipality, but the future of the lake and a

desire for healthy ecosystems and environments means this issue needs to be raised.

- d. **The (Black and Moira) Rivers:** These assets need to be leveraged for recreation, tourism, and housing developments in ways that connect to the brand and the story of your communities. They are incredibly underutilized and under celebrated, but tie into our assessment of the community and a potential marketing strategy that can attract people and businesses to the community for visitations and investments.
 - e. **Water and Wastewater:** Such infrastructure is critical for new developments and existing developments (see Stoco Lake Recommendation). Locating developments in proximity to existing infrastructure reduces upfront costs, and long-term plans to grow services to identified future development locations is imperative.
 - f. **Developer and Investor Open House:** The end of a long-term development plan should culminate with a developer open house. We recommend coordinating it with a huge event that is well marketed to outsiders so the developers see how your own efforts contribute to their marketing your community and impress upon them that their investments will pay off.
7. **The Hamlets:** The hamlets each have something incredibly valuable to the region, even if they are not the commerce or growth core of the region. As the village grows by attracting people, businesses, and investments, there is ample opportunity for that growth to spill over to the hamlets. The creation of a strategic plan, long-term development strategy, and investments in beautification should integrate the hamlets into that plan in some way. It may be better maintenance and upkeep, or marketing, to those looking for a quieter life or one more connected to nature. Regardless, the hamlets need to know where they fit in, and how they add value to the strategy being developed for the region, which means better engagement and more communication is necessary.
- Note –** The Municipality of Tweed is like a patchwork quilt. Each piece has greater value as part of the whole, but the whole is only truly strong when each piece plays its role and is supported in what it needs to fulfill that role. The region is made stronger with the hamlets, and the hamlets don't succeed without being part of a strong successful region.
8. **Broadband:** We heard many stories about broadband, the opportunities and the challenges alike. We are aware there is no easy answer, but we are also aware how critical it is to everything we do in our daily lives. The federal government has declared broadband an essential service and has programs to support it. Those programs are over prescribed, but they continue to replenish the funds. The question is, would you be ready for broadband if money were offered? That is an important question, and the only answer should be 'yes'. The region needs to consider options for a broadband

strategy and be ready for funding, or the funding will always go to those who are ready. Broadband is infrastructure as critical as water and wastewater infrastructure is to your future

9. **Marketing Strategy:** A cohesive marketing strategy that leverages what each community in the region has to offer in a combined package that reaches the people and businesses you are looking for, and who are looking for you, is critical to your future success.
 - a. **Brand Identity:** Your brand identity must reflect your unique assets as a region and a compilation of communities, but it must also reflect your culture and your values. Your recreational assets, your theatre and sports assets, your natural assets, and your location are all important drivers of our identity and your brand. Some slogans that came to mind in our visits include:
 - i. **Highway 7 scenic!** (not our idea, but came out of interviews)
 - ii. **Tweed – a stop better than your destination.**
 - iii. **Reconnect/Recharge Your Soul.**
 - iv. **Tweed – Where Life Slows Down.**
 - b. **Community Growth Profile:** Create a profile of who would be interested in your community, what it has to offer, and what it is becoming. Consider growing day trip and weekend trip tourism from as far away as the two major cities, and then leverage that into the investments in businesses and housing. You need to know who is coming and why before you can successfully attract the first person(s). Once you do, you can find them directly, speak to them directly, and attract them directly.
 - c. **Business Attraction:** So many communities argue they are open for business, but they don't know what kind of businesses they need and want. They simply wait and hope one shows up. Deciding what businesses you want, and how they will be successful with your new events and attractions strategies, allows you to identify what mainstreet will look like, what businesses will be great, and then you can go get them as you bring people and events to the community. We recommend identifying three new businesses that would prosper with the events and changes you are making to the community, leverage agencies and business students to create draft business plans, and then market those opportunities.
 - d. **Internal Communication and Marketing:** It is important to tell the story of who your communities and the region are becoming, not just to those outside the region, but to all the residents and businesses within the region as well. They need to hear it, buy into it, believe it, participate in its creation, and sell it to the world too.

10. Capacity: All of these coming and future initiatives require growth in the capacity of the leadership and administrative teams to ensure they are not only completed, but completed effectively, and without burning out existing staff. There is a tendency to add more workload to teams without removing any existing job requirements, or adding new staff and training. These goals and recommendations will only be completed by ensuring the staffing capacity and capability is reflective of the stated goals of the community.

APPENDIX A - RESIDENT FEEDBACK

General Interview, Focus Group, and Written Submission Comments:

- *Memorial Park – better lighting and more advertisements of (what’s coming) events, Duffers truck with chili and hot chocolate for more winter events – evergreens with lights, music, date nights, food*
- *Better Beach Maintenance*
- *Live music in the evening in businesses, or on the street. Let’s get people into the core. Or just off the core. Adirondack chairs and firepits!*
- *Fix/Use the old Tweedsmuir site!! If it is contaminated it must get remediated. Could we put smaller businesses in there for now that use sea cans?*
- *Solar Lights (with solar lights on top of buildings to keep the lights on and more), or any lights on the hydro lines, which could be used to light up the core and attract people down there with longer story hours, more events, and it would make the place look more welcoming and alive.*
- *Clean windows and updated signs, programs to support new paint and storefronts, as downtown bylaws/requirements that would support a consistent brand and story. Definitely enforce the bylaws that we already have, like zoning for residential and nonresidential, but consider mixed use more, so people can live there, but on the second floor.*
- *Use power poles downtown to showcase the community and its services – food, antiques, art, festivals, florists, etc.*
- *Identify the target market for tourism and visitation growth – nature lovers, recreational ATV folks, millennials or Gen X, semi-retired business owners, condo dwellers?*
- *Tweed is so walkable that it is ridiculous. We could promote ourselves as a walkable community where the only vehicle you need is a bike or an ATV.*
- *We have so many parks and walking trails. It is beautiful. And we have more events than people seem to realize.*
- *Focus on the pedestrian aspect of the community and the downtown with more cleanliness, more walkability in the winter (cleaner sidewalks), more level sidewalks with accessibility, more blade signs, trees, lights, and clean windows. This also means encouraging slowing down as you come into town, which people will do and then appreciate as they come into a beautiful core. They will stop to eat or look around.*
- *We need marketing that lets people in Tweed know what we have and what makes it great so they continue to support, but also appreciate, our community/communities.*
- *If you want businesses to support the community, you should support businesses in the community.*
- *We should have community contribution days where we paint, pick up garbage, pick some project to do all as a community.*
- *We need more seniors appropriate housing, and it could obviously be in the core/downtown, but work on making it a good place to be and something that focuses on accessibility.*

- *We need to ensure that developments can happen in a timely manner. Why are we resisting, or making it difficult? We need these developments and the lack of a clear process and long delays deters investments and developments.*
- *We need to beautify. That will show we are willing to invest in our community. Right now, it looks like we don't care so much and that turns away investment and opportunity. Start by enforcing bylaws! And then create others that encourage use and beautification of buildings and enforce them. It's time to end the blight and the power of absentee landlords.*
- *Cohesive store front palette that gives us a brand and feel. Please!*
- *The internet is a basic service and needs to be improved.*
- *We need better signage (wayfinding signage) so people can find stuff when they come to the community. We have amazing facilities and infrastructure, but we seem determined to keep them a secret.*
- *We have the lake, the river, the dam, the waterfall, major highway, amazing recreation facilities, interested and engaged business leaders, and the best volunteer base and yet we don't leverage them to grow. We need to keep our small town, working person feel, but that doesn't mean we can't be pretty and amazing. We need some beautification to change peoples minds about this community.*
- *We need better daycare, a farmers' market, beautification, high speed internet, and better facilities and support for the elderly.*
- *Downtown is what is holding us back. That is the core of it. The problem at its core is our core. It sends the wrong message, and though it is improving, it can't keep happening so slowly. We need to start there and do it now.*
- *The lake is a big issue because it isn't really fit for swimming most of the time. The issue is that sewage is being dumped into it. We need rules in place to stop that and put people on a water system or at least a proper septic system so it doesn't contaminate the lake. We have a great lake, but we need to take care of it and then it will become a huge asset for us.*
- *Our biggest issue is apathy. People are just complacent, and they sit on their butts and complain but don't, or rather won't, help. We must learn to pivot better. The work has changed. We must invest in what helps us grow in change instead of just complaining about it and find reasons we can't do it.*
- *We ARE right between Toronto and Ottawa. We ARE the middle of everything! How is that not being used as a marketing strategy when we clean up and beautify our downtown. Corporate retreats, need hotels. Weddings need hotels and parks. Day trips need hotels and restaurants. Scenic 7 day-trippers – it's a Capital Idea.*
- *Biggest mistake was losing the golf course.*