



**TOWN of ESPANOLA**  
**STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN**  
**2023-2027**

**PRELIMINARY DRAFT**  
**For Discussion**

**April 2023**

Why is the Town working on a Strategic Action Plan?

It's a new era in Espanola. We have new opportunities, new developments, a growing population, the reconstruction of Highway 6/Centre Street, and the revival of community activities after COVID. We certainly have challenges... the lack of housing options, vacant properties downtown, our always-aging infrastructure, and limited municipal resources, just to name a few. Now is the time for the Town to plan ahead.

So, we're working toward a plan that will take stock of our situation and guide the Town through this term of Council and beyond. We can't do everything, so what will the Town's key priorities be? What initiatives should, and can, the Town take to make progress for the community? Where can we expect support from citizens and partnerships with volunteers, community organizations, and other governments?

This Preliminary Plan is a start. At this point, it's not a commitment from Council; it's not necessarily a full list of good ideas; it's very probably not all affordable or feasible; it's specifically intended to get your feedback. Nor does it touch on everything the Town does; it just focuses on things we want to do more of or do better, on the challenges we want to address and the opportunities we want to seize. The Town provides many basic services and does them well, those will carry on, doing what you expect them to do.

This preliminary document is organized into six broad themes for Espanola:

- A plentiful supply of housing to meet a variety of housing needs
- A prosperous and diversified local economy
- A high quality of life
- A place we are proud of
- Adequate and reliable infrastructure
- Effective and efficient municipal government

Under each of those themes we have put forward preliminary priorities that the Town could focus on for the next decade or so. Do you agree that these are the priorities where the Town (in addition to our ongoing basic services) should focus funding, time, effort, and partnerships? If not, what else?

Under each of those priorities is a preliminary list of possible initiatives that, over the next 3-4 years could get results. As you look at each, consider if that initiative would help Espanola to make progress? Would that progress justify the money and effort that the initiative would likely require? Can you suggest other initiatives that would yield progress in keeping with their cost and effort?

We welcome your feedback, please submit your comments to David King, Strategic Plan Consultant at [dcking.mas@gmail.com](mailto:dcking.mas@gmail.com)

Sincerely,

Mayor Doug Gervais & Council

## **THEME: HOUSING**

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1** (typically applicable for 5-10 years)

### **Increase the supply of housing of all types.**

**POTENTIAL INITIATIVES/IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS** (within term of Council)

1. Develop clear information guidelines on housing-related zoning and regulations.
2. Process whole projects submitted for approval on a One-Stop-Shop basis in the Building Department.
3. Expand water & sewer infrastructure to facilitate new housing developments.
4. Develop a Housing Action Plan, with a clear description of what is to be done and incorporating Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) requirements.
5. Market Espanola to attract more developers - be able to work with small developers with small budgets, as well as larger developers.
6. Pursue relationships with interest groups and private industries that have an interest in sponsoring and/or developing more accommodation.
7. Balance the allocation of services to new development areas with the capacity for more units in existing parts of town.
8. Discuss with Domtar the possibility of making land available outside the urban boundary, and possible partnerships with developers for worker housing.
9. Acquire property for the purpose of housing development or redevelopment.
10. Investigate existing Town-owned property for potential housing development.
11. Pre-plan, pre-zone, pre-subdivide Town-owned property, and sell to developer specifying that the development will be built as planned.
12. Work with community partners to develop additional senior's housing near the hospital.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2** (typically applicable for 5-10 years)

**Increase variety of housing options, including rental and rent-geared to income.**

**POTENTIAL INITIATIVES/IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS** (within term of Council)

1. Encourage accessory apartments in existing dwellings (Wellington County example).
2. Provide an incentive (e.g., a tax deferral from new assessments) for people with large homes to split larger homes into smaller units.
3. Offer and publicize a tax deferral program or tax increment grant program for new or accessory rental units.
4. Encourage accessibility in all new units to appeal to young and old alike.
5. Zone for increased maximum permitted height in urban zones. Keeping in mind fire vehicle capabilities e.g., Ladder truck
6. Create a task force with the Town, MSDSSAB, and other relevant parties to develop a rapid and specific plan for more rent-geared to income housing
7. Explore Housing development partnerships with area First Nations

## **THEME: ECONOMY**

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1** (typically applicable for 5-10 years)

### **Attracting new businesses and modern industries**

**POTENTIAL INITIATIVES/IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS** (within term of Council)

1. Invest in acquiring, servicing, and developing industrial land.
2. Place time-limit conditions for building and occupying industrial park properties.
3. Encourage internet improvements to support home and tech businesses.
4. Promote industrial development on Panache Lake Rd and provide infrastructure.
5. Approach Domtar about their potentially available vacant land.
6. Market Espanola to attract the trades and skilled labourers.
7. Target businesses that provide support and materials to Domtar to consider locating a satellite office in Espanola e.g., CASS Contractors & Equipment)
8. Identify industries that are attracted by the availability of Rail.
9. Investigate how to take advantage of film production activity in Sudbury.
10. Make direct contact with certain franchises to move to premium storefronts, e.g., LCBO and Brewers Retail)
11. Seek out entrepreneurs to establish small businesses with niche offerings (coffee shops, home baking, etc.
12. Market Espanola as a hub for healthcare, commerce, and court services.
13. Capitalize on tourist traffic traveling to and from Manitoulin Island.
14. Investigate the installation of EV Charging Stations in Espanola.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2** (typically applicable for 5-10 years)

**Promoting Tourism**

**POTENTIAL INITIATIVES/IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS** (within term of Council)

1. Expand the Town's Community Improvement Plan (CIP) beautification category for Hwy 6 in 2024, and then move around the municipality in future years.
2. One-stop-shop: CIP application included with permit applications.
3. Make concentrated direct contact with owners of conspicuous vacant properties.
4. Support local signature events – don't need to reinvent; borrow, make it our own.
5. Schedule an entire weekend of events (with Car Show for Spring Festival, Food fest inside on ice surface)
6. Support a signature Spring or Fall Event
7. Support a major Homecoming event.
8. Advertise to attract a chain hotel/motel.
9. Revive snowmobile Radar Runs on Clear Lake

## **THEME: QUALITY of LIFE**

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1** (typically applicable for 5-10 years)

### **Community Events Programming**

**POTENTIAL INITIATIVES/IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS** (within the term of Council)

1. Leverage existing events, working with event organizers. (e.g., The Car Show/The Knights Cruisers, Downtown Markets)
2. Encourage organizers of past events and others with ideas to approach/brainstorm with the Town.
3. Close down Tudhope Street to have a Downtown Market.
4. Increase year-round recreation and community programming as well as use increased use of the Espanola Regional Recreation Complex
5. Support the development and use of local recreation/cultural facilities e.g., Black Creek Trail, the Snowmobile Trail, and Boogie Mountain.
6. Support events with Indigenous themes.



**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2** (typically applicable for 5-10 years)

## **Expanding Recreation Facilities**

**POTENTIAL INITIATIVES/IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS** (within the term of Council)

1. Establish a dog park.
2. Develop a skate park.
3. Establish bike routes.
  - i. Designate a quiet route circling the town, avoiding Centre Street.
  - ii. Convene a volunteer task force to get involvement for bike routes.
  - iii. Refurbish the Rail Trail
  - iv. Marketing focus on biking from Espanola to Little Current
4. Walking Trail(s).
  - i. Support volunteer trail builders (e.g., materials, tools, public information) .

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3** (typically applicable for 5-10 years)

### **Supporting Health and Seniors**

#### **POTENTIAL INITIATIVES/IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS** (within the term of Council)

1. Update the Active Community Charter from 2012.
2. Assist with doctor recruitment.
3. Upgrade the Care Van service.
  - i. Work toward a Care Van that “kneels” to allow those with wheelchairs to board easily.
  - ii. Investigate if and why the Care Van operator doesn’t want to help secure wheelchairs in the van. Liability concern? Insurance concern? Training needed?
4. Better Communicate/Market the Existing Services available.
  - i. Care Van.
  - ii. Seniors Snow Shovelling.
  - iii. From Soup to Tomatoes.
  - iv. Public Works provides sand for the public in the winter months.
5. Partner with the DSSAB to develop programs to assist seniors in winter with putting garbage and recycling to the curb and bringing it back to their door.
6. Transportation.
  - i. Work with all relevant local parties to develop a long-term transportation action plan, to achieve a certain standard of transportation for people who cannot afford a car.
  - ii. Consider expanding the Care Van program to the public or maybe a basic bus service. We’d want something smaller, more affordable, and safer...
  - iii. Advocate for an Ontario Northland bus stop in Espanola.

## **THEME: PRIDE of PLACE**

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1** (typically applicable for 5-10 years)

### **Focusing on the beautification of the community, particularly Centre Street**

**POTENTIAL INITIATIVES/IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS** (within the term of Council)

1. Market and expand the scope of the CIP. (Community Improvement Plan)
2. Contact FEDNOR for support (Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario)
3. Mount an active Property Standard Enforcement program along Centre Street
4. Focus first on vacant lots and making direct contact with absentee landlords.
5. Investigate possibilities to convert former gas station locations into green space.
  - i. Remove the concrete slabs from lot at the corner of James and Centre
  - ii. Identify and publicize who owns what properties.
  - iii. Clarify what options Town must get the properties improved.
  - iv. Look to community groups for ideas and maintenance of the new green space, including the Horticultural Society.
6. Showcase local art outdoors wherever we can. Sculptures, murals etc....

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2** (typically applicable for 5-10 years)

## **Preserving and publicizing Espanola's History and Heritage**

### **POTENTIAL INITIATIVES/IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS (within term of Council)**

1. Domtar.
  - i. Domtar Tours.
  - ii. The POW map.
  - iii. Would they help sponsor a museum?
  
2. A Museum.
  - i. Using an old caboose car as a museum or a tourist attraction.
  - ii. Possible tourist centre for 2024 – a rail car for that.
  - iii. There is a significant demand for accessible local history but there isn't a main location for all of it.
  
3. Historical Walks
  - i. Community plaques put around the community.
  - ii. Could use and create sponsorships.
  - iii. Could create volunteer engagement (e.g., known local historian).
  - iv. Engage local Indigenous Communities.

## **THEME: INFRASTRUCTURE**

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1** (typically applicable for 5-10 years)

### **Completion of the Hwy 6 Centre Street reconstruction**

**POTENTIAL INITIATIVES/IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS (within term of Council)**

1. Phase 3 of Hwy 6 Reconstruction (McDonalds to Second Avenue) -Part of the proposed 2023 Town Budget.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2** (typically applicable for 5-10 years)

## **Expansion and upgrading of water and sewer servicing**

**POTENTIAL INITIATIVES/IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS** (within term of Council)

1. Mead Boulevard Water Main Replacement- Part of the proposed 2023 Town Budget.
2. Undertake Water & Sewer Capacity Assessment-Part of the proposed 2023 Town Budget.
3. Develop and initiate a program to replace water and sewer pipes in east Espanola.
4. Maintain an accurate sense of water and sewer capacity available for new development.
5. Extend services to additional industrial park lots.
6. Contact owners and develop a plan to extend water pipes on Second street.
7. Extend services past the hospital to accommodate new housing.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3** (typically applicable for 5-10 years)

## **Planning for new facilities**

**POTENTIAL INITIATIVES/IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS** (within term of Council)

1. Upgrade the Public Works Building to meet accessibility standards and develop plans and an implementation program to replace the Public Works Building
2. Investigate options for a new OPP station in the Town.
3. Investigate and report on options to solve the lack of adequate space for the Town administration.
4. Investigate and report on options to solve the lack of adequate Library space.
5. Improve energy use – utilizing solar power, find ways to generate revenue from municipal infrastructure.
6. Add solar panels to the Espanola Regional Recreation complex roof to generate revenue or reduce energy costs.
7. Do something different with the green strip on Queensway Ave.

## **THEME: MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE and OPERATIONS**

### **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1** (typically applicable for 5-10 years)

#### **Maximizing the retention and productivity of staff**

1. Support staff training and staff development activities.
2. Enhance corporate events, including thank-you events in collaboration with volunteer groups and community event organizers.
3. Consider hours of work options
4. Ensure sufficient cross-training so that at least some aspects of each Town position could be performed by one or more other positions.
5. Investigate and report on options to solve the lack of adequate space for the Town administration.
6. Investigate and report on options to solve the lack of adequate Library space.



**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2** (typically applicable for 5-10 years)

## **Maintaining strong relationships and support for the activities of volunteer groups**

**POTENTIAL INITIATIVES/IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS** (within term of Council)

1. Improved Town communications to volunteers.
2. Provide reimbursement for Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) record checks.
3. Establish a policy for reimbursement of fuel costs incurred by volunteers.
4. Organize a forum of working groups with volunteer organizations to share best practices and ideas to promote more volunteerism.
5. Develop an ongoing structure to coordinate publicity about “What’s on in Espanola.”

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3** (typically applicable for 5-10 years)

**Ensuring that our communications, administrative processes, and resources effectively support Town priorities and sustained growth.**

**POTENTIAL INITIATIVES/IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS** (within term of Council)

1. Review our building and planning processes to ensure:
  - a. Applicants only come in once to get everything they need and are made aware of all applicable submission requirements.
  - b. Clear and useful explanatory materials and guidelines are available.
  - c. Regulations applied are, to the extent legally possible, tailored to the complexity of an application.
  - d. Applicants – particularly for new housing, commercial and industrial projects – are guided through the process.
  
2. Review our property standards authority and approach.
  - a. Review the property standards bylaw,
  - b. Develop a program of proactive enforcement in certain areas, and couple enforcement initiatives with Community Improvement incentives.