



Three-Year Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026





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Acknowledgements

The strategic planning process was guided by Karen Jones Consulting Inc. and received engagement and support from Laurentian Ski Hill Board of Directors, staff and community stakeholders. The strategic framework reflects the thoughtful input and insightful recommendations of those who dedicated their time and effort to this initiative.



The Laurentian Skill Hill Strategic Plan initiative was made possible by the funding received from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.





Board of Directors 2023

Brad Gavan - President

Kristin Franks – Vice-President

Peter Rooney - Treasurer

Stephanie Silverthorne – Secretary

Andre Purcell - Director

Gord Prisco - Director

Doug Linklater - Director

Michael Miscio - Director

Stacie Fiddler - Director

John Strang - Past President

Background

Laurentian Ski Hill and Snowboarding Club Inc. is a fun-packed recreational destination located in North Bay, Ontario, where skiing and snowboarding enthusiasts gather to enjoy the slopes, a vertical drop, a terrain park and licensed café. Rentals, group and private lessons, programs and camps for kids, and school programs are also available. Additionally, Laurentian Ski Hill plays host to a range of events and activities for club members, community members, and visitors to enjoy throughout the year. The community-centric, non-profit organization is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. It was originally formed in 1925 as The Laurentian Ski Club and operates on land owned by the North Bay Mattawa Conservation Authority.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide an exciting, inclusive, safe and enjoyable experience for our guests and community through exceptional customer service, innovative and diverse programming and events while working collaboratively with our partners to continue to positively impact our region.

Vision Statement

Our vision is to be a premier 4-season recreation destination in Northern Ontario by fostering sustainable growth, collaborative partnerships and an inclusive environment that welcomes a solid customer base, strong community engagement and attracts visitors to our region.

Core Values

Sustainability: Achieving financial stability and growth while limiting impacts to the natural environment.

Excellence: Creating memorable experiences through innovative programs and exceptional customer service.

Wellness: Ensuring the well-being and safety of our guests, community and staff.

Respect: Promoting a diverse and inclusive culture while ensuring an accessible and welcoming environment for all to enjoy.

Community: Fostering engagement, communication and collaboration within our region.



Strategic Planning Process

The Laurentian Skill Hill Strategic Plan 2022 provides a roadmap to help guide the organization in achieving sustainable growth over the next three years. The strategic planning process allowed the organization to reflect on successes and challenges while engaging with key stakeholders. The plan identifies priorities in areas of focus that align with the organization's vision, mission and core values.

The Board of Directors, NBMCA, staff and community stakeholders provided valuable input that assisted with identifying organizational strengths, opportunities, challenges and key priorities. The research and feedback received during the engagement sessions was summarized and used to develop the priorities and actions outlined in this plan.

Engagement Summary

The Strategic Plan was developed through a grassroots approach that included engagement with key stakeholders. The engagement process included:

- Community focus groups
- Staff focus group session
- Online survey
- One-on-one interviews

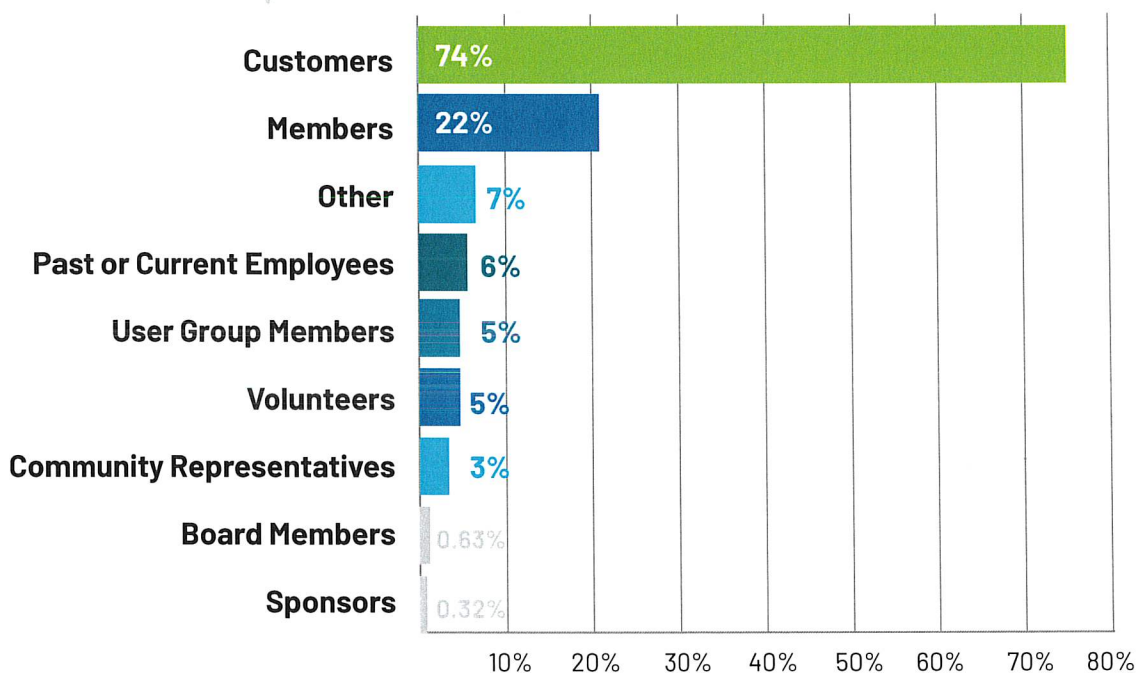
A collaborative approach was instrumental in creating a plan that reflects the strengths, challenges and opportunities as they relate to the organization. Feedback gathered through the engagement process has been summarized and included within the Internal & External Analysis and was instrumental in identifying priorities and actions that support organizational growth.

Survey Result Highlights

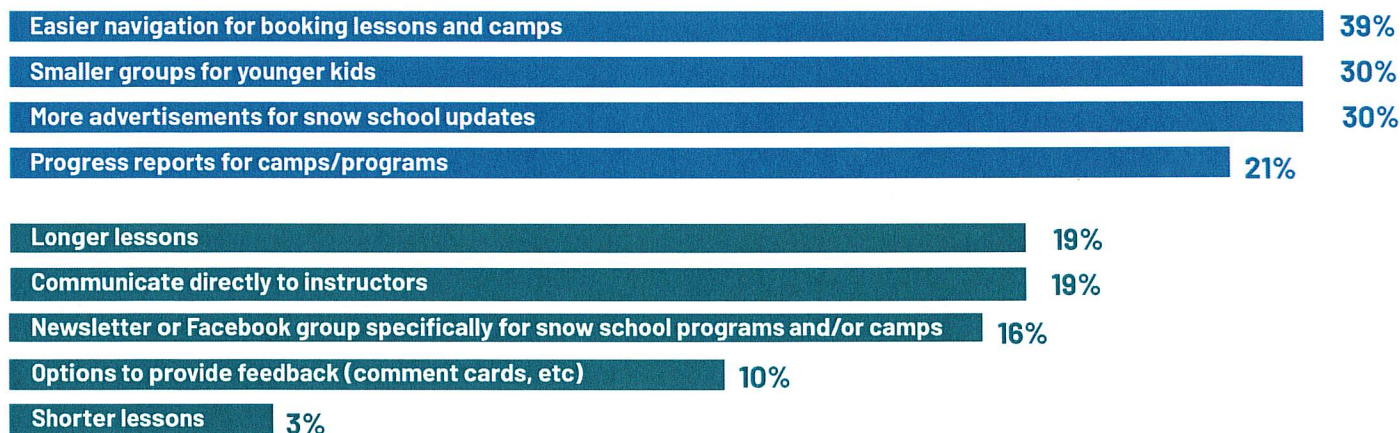
An online survey was developed and distributed using Survey Monkey to gain a thorough understanding of current opportunities, challenges and perceptions of the organization as observed by various stakeholders. The survey was distributed to constituents through the organization's databases and shared through social media channels.

A total of 317 respondents completed survey. The information below presents some of the key findings gathered throughout the survey process.

Survey Respondents



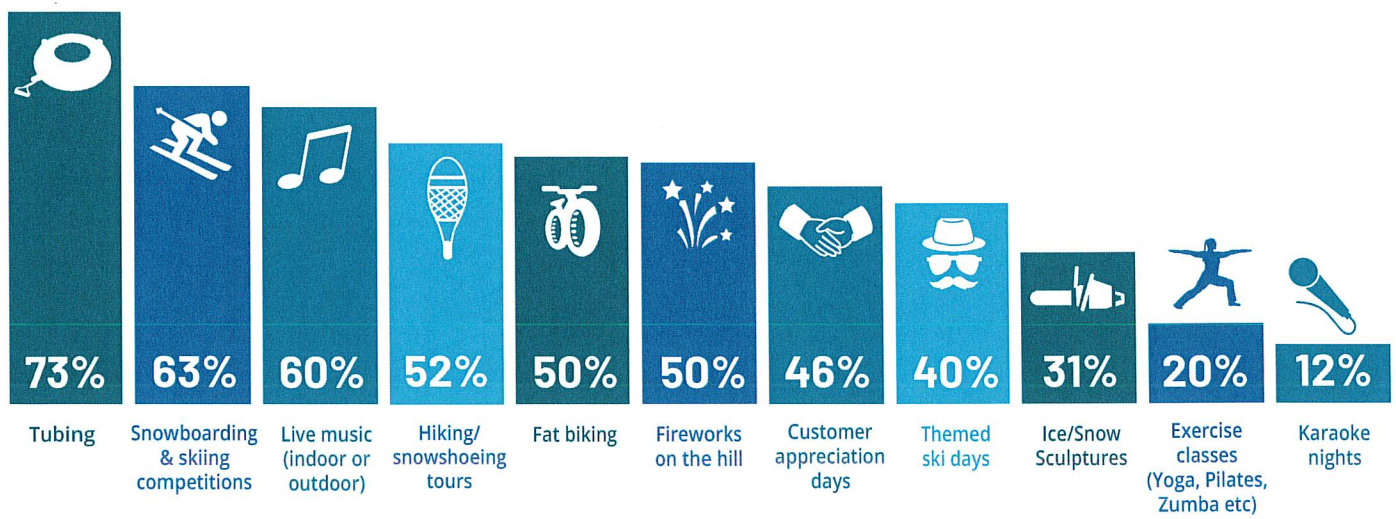
Camps, Lessons and Programs Improvements



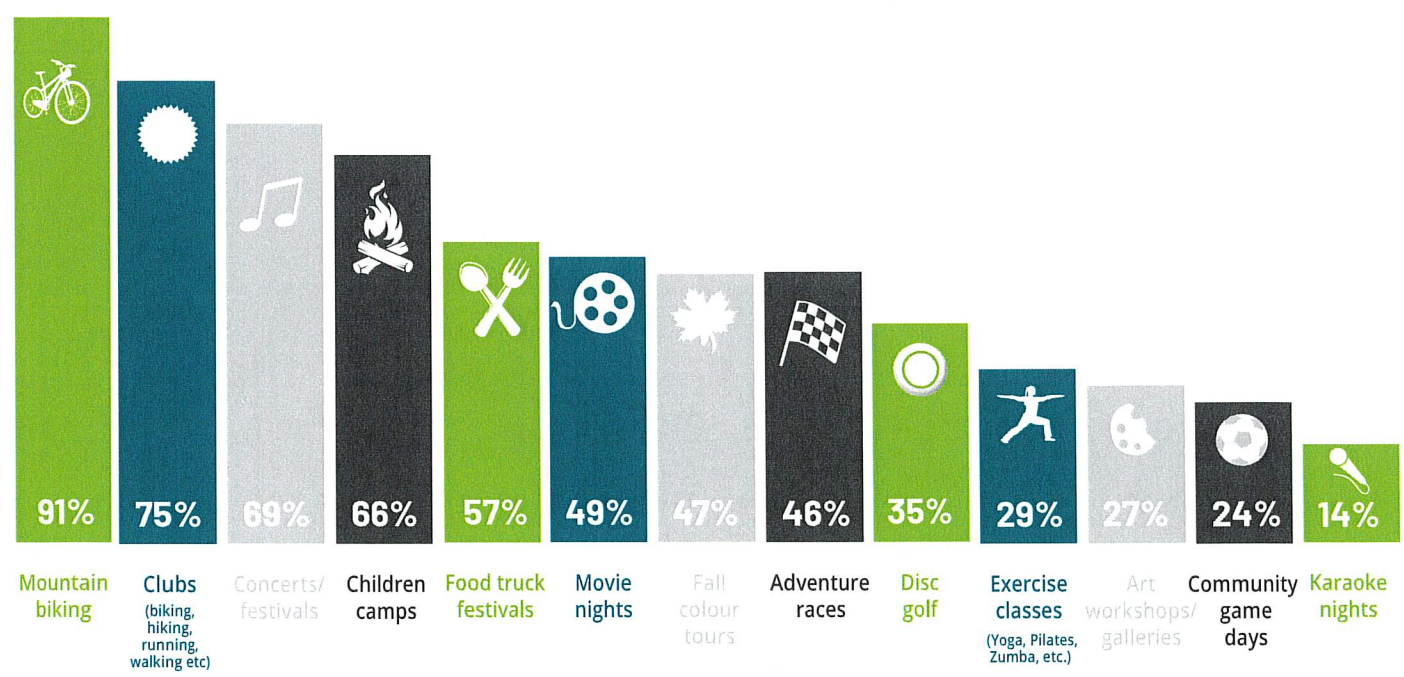
Participated in lessons and/or school camps in the last 5 years.



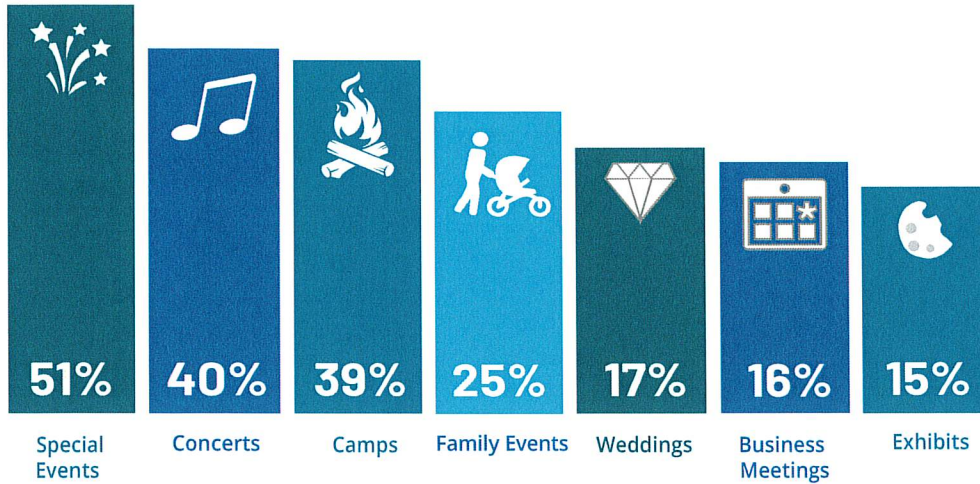
Interest in Winter Activities



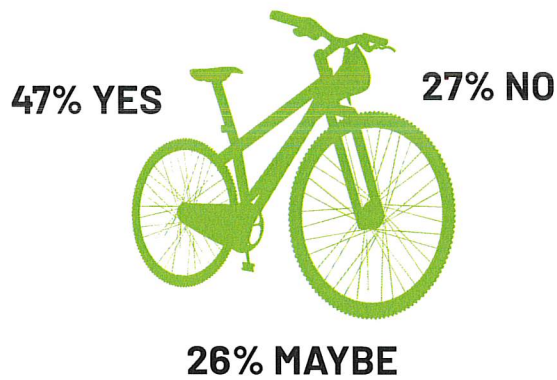
Interest in Summer Activities



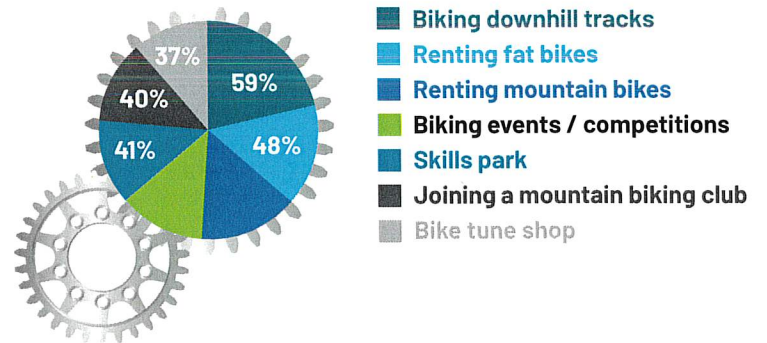
Interest in Community Activities



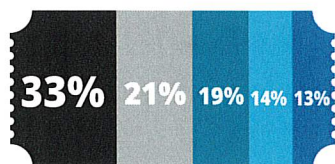
Interest in Mountain Biking



Interest in Specific Mountain Biking Activities

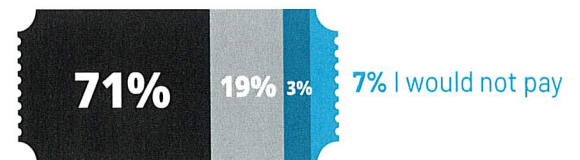


Seasonal Pass (Adult) Pricing for Mountain Biking



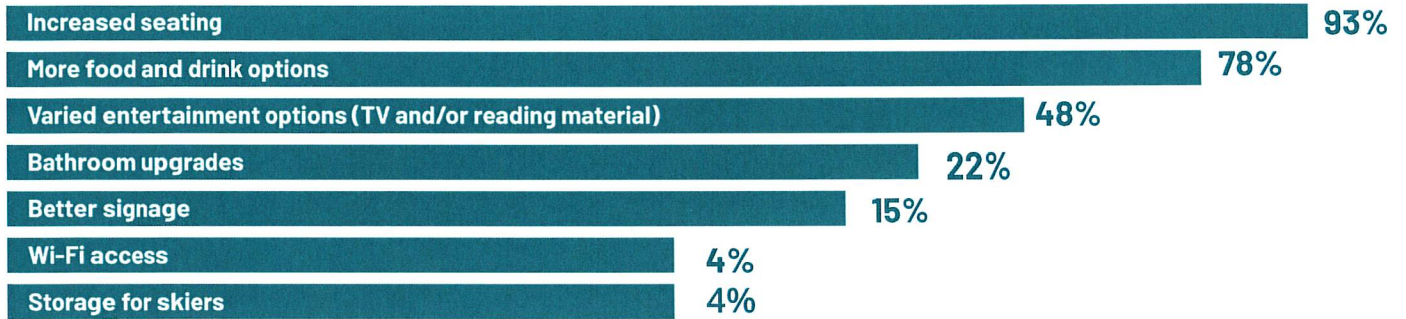
- \$75+
- \$60-\$75
- \$45-\$60
- \$30-\$45
- I would not pay

Day Pass (Adult) Pricing for Mountain Biking

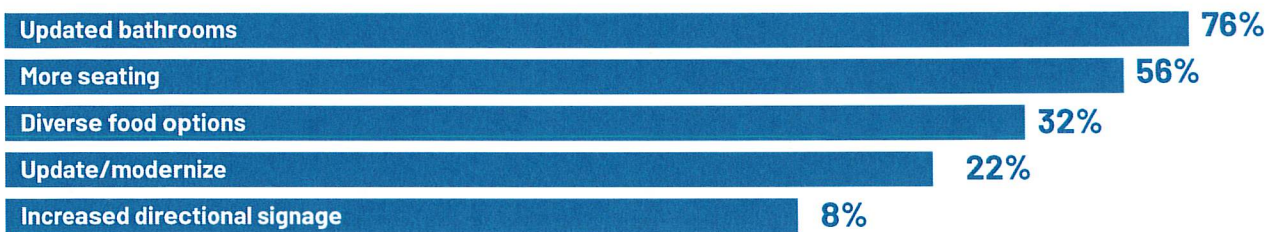


- \$10-\$25
- \$25-\$40
- \$40-\$55
- I would not pay

Upper Lodge Improvements Ranked



Lower Lodge Improvements Ranked



General Layout Improvements Ranked



Staying Connected

1. Website
2. Emails
3. Social Media
4. E-Newsletter
5. Other
6. Printed materials
7. Media advertising



Internal & External Analysis

During the engagement process, information was gathered about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as they relate to Laurentian Ski Hill. The feedback formed the basis for a review on both internal and external factors impacting the organization.



Strengths

- Located in the heart of the city
- Dedicated Board of Directors
- Strong partnership with NBMCA
- Committed staff and volunteers
- Family oriented organization
- Range of activities that appeal to community members
- Excellent programming for adults and children
- Developmental skill building and training programs
- Accessible skiing for persons with disabilities
- Large amount of usable land
- Fun and inclusive events
- Community member support
- Partnership with Laurentian Café
- Laurentian Café liquor license allows for catered events
- Affordable pricing and varied pricing models
- Accessible via public transportation
- Historic destination with deep community roots
- Ongoing certification and industry training



Challenges

- Additional instructors required
- High water costs
- Lack of four-season activities
- Lack of all-season dining experience
- No current ownership of trails
- Road crossing to access lower parking lot is dangerous
- Reliance on volunteers
- High staff turnover due to seasonal employment
- Staff & volunteer burnout during season
- Lack of marketing strategy and communication plan
- Reliance on funding
- Risk management and liability
- Lack of ownership of capital assets



Opportunities

- Increase youth programming & advancement opportunities for weekend/after school
- Expand marketing efforts
- Enhance the ski culture with community
- Enhance and expand lower chalet lift line direction
- Establish a separate line for snow school
- Create outdoor seating at lower chalet with heaters
- Improve snow making operations
- More accessible public transit for youth
- Increase volunteer opportunities
- Increase social opportunities for members
- Year-round restaurant and bar
- Develop a marketing communication plan



Threats

- Covid-19 pandemic
- Economic downturn
- Inclement weather
- Insurance and liability cost increases or changes
- Environmental regulations
- Potential decreases in funding support
- Increases in minimum wage
- Workforce challenges



Priority Areas

The following priorities have been identified as key areas of focus for Laurentian Skill Hill and Snowboarding Club. The priority areas are aligned with the organization's vision, mission and core values and will drive goals and actions over the next three years.



Sustainability

Ensure organizational sustainability and growth through increased funding, capacity building and partnership development.



Operations

Continue to manage and operate an efficient, sustainable organization focused on providing safe and enjoyable products, programs and services for community members and visitors.



Infrastructure

Invest in infrastructure upgrades, renovations, new equipment and technology in order to enhance operations and increase safety.



Product Development

Establish a four-season destination through development and diversification of products, experiences and programming that enhance the visitor experience, attract new markets and increase revenue streams.



Marketing & Communications

Increase awareness of the organization and its products, programs, activities and events to increase visitor traffic, attract new visitors and increase sales.

Action Plan

The recommendations identified below connect with each priority area and will support Laurentian Ski Hill with achieving balanced growth.



Sustainability

Ensure organizational sustainability and growth through increased funding, capacity building and partnership development.

Support strong Board governance by developing tools and resources to effectively guide the organization through growth.

1. Develop and adopt organizational mission, vision and values to serve as the framework that guides the direction of the organization.
2. Review and update Board by-laws, policies, terms and procedures to ensure alignment with Corporation Act requirements and organizational needs.
3. Develop a Board recruitment plan and establish an onboarding process inclusive of a Board manual, roles, responsibilities, expectations, and meeting structure to support succession planning.
4. Establish regularly scheduled board sub-committee meetings including finance, governance, product development and fundraising.

Foster strong communication and collaboration with NBMCA.

1. Identify potential areas of collaboration, funding opportunities, resource sharing, etc.
2. Foster strong communication with North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority (NBMCA) staff and Board of Directors to ensure seamless growth and partnership development between organizations.
3. Meet regularly with NBMCA Senior Management to review priorities and identify potential concerns.
4. Develop mentorship/advisory support for LSH Outdoor Operations with NBMCA team members to encourage stable growth for LSH team.

Work with City of North Bay to ensure seamless representation of community asset.

1. Identify ways to create efficiencies with water consumption.
2. Identify opportunities to market public transportation to ski hill with equipment (skis, boards, bikes).
3. Assess bus stop locations and ease of access to lower lodge and upper lodges.
4. Mitigate safety concerns related to cross ski club road from parking lot to access lower lodge.
5. Collaborate on community recreation programs.



Build organizational capacity to effectively deliver products, programs and services.

1. Review organizational structure to identify staffing and volunteer needs in order to implement existing and new services and programs. This includes indoor/outdoor operations, instructors, ski patrol, etc.
2. Develop training plan for professional development needs for key roles and positions.
3. Actively participate in industry-related events and conferences such as the Northern Ontario Tourism Summit, Ontario Snow Resorts Association (OSRA), etc. to continue to identify and implement best practices.
4. Work with partners to leverage funding opportunities to build human resource capacity (internships, wage subsidy programs, sector-based initiatives).
5. Collaborate with post-secondary institutions to explore opportunities for experiential learning, volunteer opportunities and various co-ops for students interested in pursuing a career in the industry.

Continue to implement training, processes and procedures to ensure safety, mitigate risks and ensure compliance.

1. Develop safety training, policies, procedures, equipment safety checklists, etc.
2. Establish a policy for police checks for certain positions working with youth.
3. Develop risk mitigation policy and work with insurance company on strategies to reduce liabilities.
4. Identify strategies to reduce hazards on Ski Club Road which is unsafe when crossing from parking lot.

Establish standard operating policies and procedures to sustainably guide organizational growth.

1. Review and update policies, create standard operating procedures, clarify internal communication structure, create job descriptions and develop employment handbook to ensure consistent delivery of services and facilitate staff recruitment and onboarding.
2. Develop annual business plan inclusive of departmental goals and KPIs to prioritize actions and establish benchmarks for success and growth. Ensure the Business Plan is aligned with Strategic Plan.

Develop a volunteer strategy to support recruitment, retention and recognition to build and support volunteer base.

1. Create a strategy for recruiting, managing and retaining volunteers. Identify volunteer roles, responsibilities, communication processes and management.
2. Develop volunteer recognition opportunities including website listings, social media, special recognition events, swag items, etc.
3. Conduct a volunteer recruitment drive to build volunteer base and avoid burn-out. Create volunteer package, outline types of opportunities and market through website and social media.



Operations

Continue to manage and operate an efficient, sustainable organization focused on providing safe and enjoyable products, programs and services for community members and visitors.

Develop a strong membership base through active recruitment and engagement initiatives.

1. Conduct a review of membership model and fee structure to ensure alignment with value and costs.
2. Continue to develop, offer and communicate value-added services to members such as multi-year discount, pre-season sales, special events, corporate memberships, partner business discounts.
3. Review and update the member onboarding package to ensure the information is relevant and the process is streamlined when welcoming new members.
4. Host members only events and activities to increase opportunities for socialization and increase perception of membership value.
5. Create a LSH members hub.

Implement new technologies and processes to streamline operations and increase overall sales.

1. Review products, programs and pricing to ensure alignment with competition and industry market standards.
2. Ensure user-friendly online payment systems for ease of payment and access to receipts.
3. Implement self-serve kiosks and online payment options to reduce congestion at ticket lines.
4. Upgrade online POS system.
5. Implement webcam live stream to website to show trail conditions, activities and generate interest.





Enhance and strengthen existing programs and activities to increase attendance and revenues.

1. Create more youth programming and advancement opportunities for weekend and after school.
2. Establish additional group lessons based on experience levels.
3. Build snow school programming through increased number of lessons, camps and programs enhancements.
4. Establish formalized partnerships with elementary, secondary and post-secondary institutions for electives, academic credits/micro-credentials and field trips.
5. Work with NBMCA to maximize use of Tower for ski-hill related events and programs.
6. Increase use and capacity of Terrain Park through development of programming and events.
7. Upgrade rental fleet on a continuous basis, including the implementation of four-season equipment.

Increase revenues through advertisement, sponsorship, and fundraising initiatives.

1. Develop a sponsorship and advertising plan outlining opportunities, costs, benefits, recognition, annual goals and KPIs to measure success and achieve revenue growth. Identify new opportunities for corporate support and methods to attract and retain multi-year sponsorship.
2. Develop an annual fundraising plan outlining activities, initiatives, actions, resources, timelines, recognition, goals and KPIs. Identify new opportunities for fundraising activities and events to support revenue generation and community support.
3. Expand retail operations and increase merchandise sales. Offer seasonal products and limited-edition designs and merchandise. Increase products for sale including supplies and used equipment.
4. Re-visit Laurentian Café operating agreements, requirements and full-service capabilities at both lower and upper lodges.





Infrastructure

Invest in infrastructure upgrades, renovations, new equipment and technology in order to enhance operations and increase safety.

Conduct an infrastructure audit to review current and future equipment and infrastructure needs.

1. Conduct a feasibility study inclusive of an asset inventory that lists equipment, age and condition to identify needs, safety requirements, priorities and accessibility improvements.
2. Facilitate discussion with NBMCA about capital asset upgrades, ownership, asset management plan and access to capital.
3. Develop financial plan to invest in new equipment to support operations, increase efficiency and ensure safety.
4. Create a reserve for future upgrades, equipment and four-season investments.

Develop financial and construction plan for lower lodge enhancements.

1. Formalize partnership with NBMCA to enhance lodge.
2. Work with the NBMCA to create a plan to mitigate associated risks due to condition of lower lodge.
3. Work with contractors to identify expenses and potential funding sources to advance plan.
4. Source funding through identified channels.

Identify four-season initiatives to support transition to four-season destination.

1. Solidify mountain bike trails development partnership with North Bay Mountain Bike Association (NBMBA) and NBMCA for trail building.
2. Align four-season development with NBMCA priorities and strategies.
3. Develop financial projections for integration of four-season activities including but not limited to mountain bike usage, walking trails, special events and outdoor adventure activities.
4. Work with tourism partners to implement new products in best-bet markets.

Invest in facility and equipment upgrades to enhance customers and visitor experiences.

1. Create comfortable sitting area in the upper lodge with improvements to food & beverage inclusive of licensed area, décor/ambiance and locker rental space.
2. Enhance outdoor space at bottom and top of hill with increased seating, dedicated patio space and location for spectators.
3. Improve signage for runs, lift lines, tickets sales, snow school programming, etc.
4. Engage user groups for hill clean up and enhancements to physical space.



Product Development

Establish a four-season destination through development and diversification of products, experiences and programming that enhance the visitor experience, attract new markets and increase revenue streams.

Explore opportunities to partner with community organizations to develop shoulder season tourism products.

1. Collaborate with NBMBA on development of trails for mountain biking on ski hill property.
2. Work with Tourism North Bay, Northeastern Ontario Tourism, Destination Ontario, Destination Northern Ontario and City of North Bay to develop and market new products related to tourism and community recreation.
3. Develop business model, explore funding opportunities and establish business development supports to help offset costs of developing new tourism products.

Explore opportunities to further develop community activities and events.

1. Identify additional activities to create community engagement including events, adventure-based activities and outdoor recreation.
2. Create new partnerships with non-profit organizations and businesses to host events and become a hub for community initiatives. This may include concerts, family-oriented events, weddings, adult only events, teen nights, jam nights and festivals.
3. Host special interest nights/activities all year round that utilize the space for all ages including but not limited to women, seniors, paint nights/workshops, exercise classes, etc.
4. Establish a pilot “learn to ski” days with instruction and rentals packages for specific demographics including families, low-income youth, newcomers, etc.
5. Work with user groups such as race teams, freestyle and ski cross to attract provincial and national competitions that increase tourism receipts.

Create experiential packages with complementary businesses to increase tourism receipts.

1. Partner with businesses and hotels to develop stay-and-play packages inclusive of dining, entertainment, spa and overnight accommodations at local establishments.
2. Partner with food vendors to enhance culinary experiences for guests.
3. Explore developing products aligned with Destination Northern Ontario priority products and experiences such as culinary, Film & TV, Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+, festivals and events, sports, trails and cycling.



Marketing & Communications

Increase awareness of the organization and its products, programs, activities and events to increase visitor traffic, attract new visitors and increase sales.

Develop a marketing, brand and communication plan to help guide targeted marketing efforts.

1. Develop a marketing plan to guide efforts. Assess branding, identify target audiences, create key messaging, establish best-bet marketing initiatives, develop campaigns and create metrics to measure success.
2. Refresh branding to align with organizational values and resonate with target audiences. Develop a brand guidebook to clarify use and placement of logos, font types and colour schemes for the organization to ensure consistency and promote brand recognition.

Develop and utilize branded materials consistently for all communications to build brand recognition within and outside of the community.

1. Redevelop website and refresh content to streamline communications, showcase products, share information, sell tickets and products and create a user-friendly online experience. Utilize a platform that allows content to be easily managed by staff and allows for e-commerce and online booking functionality.
2. Develop digital and printed marketing and sales materials that can be used to support sponsorship and fundraising development.
3. Continue to use social media consistently for ongoing engagement with members, sponsors, donors, community partners and visitors.

Explore collaborative marketing opportunities and initiatives with partners.

1. Collaborate with community stakeholders such as the City of North Bay, Downtown Improvement Area (DIA), North Bay & District Chamber of Commerce to diversify marketing opportunities and participate in cross-promotion efforts to maximize return on investment.
2. Work with tourism stakeholders such as Northeastern Ontario Tourism, Tourism North Bay, Destination Ontario, Destination Northern Ontario to promote the organization to visitors coming to the region and increase overall market reach.
3. Work with industry partners such as Ontario Ski Resorts Association (OSRA) to stay current about trends, challenges and opportunities within the sector.
4. Develop relationships with the media and identify opportunities to promote the organization. Continue to develop and distribute press releases to showcase programs, events, significant milestones and partnership announcements.



Three-Year Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026

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