



EAST FERRIS

Final Report - Community Profile & Asset Inventory

Prepared For The Municipality of East Ferris

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Final Report - Community Profile & Asset Inventory**

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Introduction

Surrounded by stunning landscapes and housing on the beautiful shores of Trout Lake and Lake Nosbonsing, The Municipality of East Ferris is situated in the District of Nipissing in Northern Ontario. Located 20 kilometers east of the City of North Bay, East Ferris is in close proximity to transportation centres, health care facilities, employment opportunities, educational institutions and other urban amenities. With a growing population of over 4,700 people and a track record of measurable growth over the last five years, East Ferris is well-positioned as year-round recreation destination with an increasing number of home-based businesses and industries, low cost of living, and high-quality way of life. This growth has contributed to the evolution of the municipality from a township with a rural setting to a semi-urban community with the Hamlets of Astorville, Corbeil and Derland as centres.

An Economic Development Funders Forum, combined with the results from the Ontario Investment Readiness Test for Northern Communities, identified the need for more involvement at the municipal level as a means of assisting existing East Ferris businesses and to continue to move the community forward with additional growth and development.

As part of a first-step in developing a comprehensive economic development strategy, The Municipality of East Ferris embarked on the development of an Asset Inventory, Gap Analysis, and Community Profile. The objective of the project was to identify key economic drivers and demographics that are important to residents and investors alike, including geographic location and boundaries, climate, transportation access and hubs, ethno-culture, population and families, labour force and income levels, housing, education, employers, health care services, recreation facilities, utilities and telecommunications, accommodations, landfill, services, business/industry, non-profit organizations, industrial/commercial buildings, key sectors, and other categories as defined in the Investment Readiness Test for Northern Communities. The analysis identified gaps and strengths that can be transformed into opportunities for growth, partnerships and investment resource development for The Municipality of East Ferris. A Community Profile that included consideration of the region was created as a tool to increase awareness about the opportunities and advantages of living and operating a business in the community.

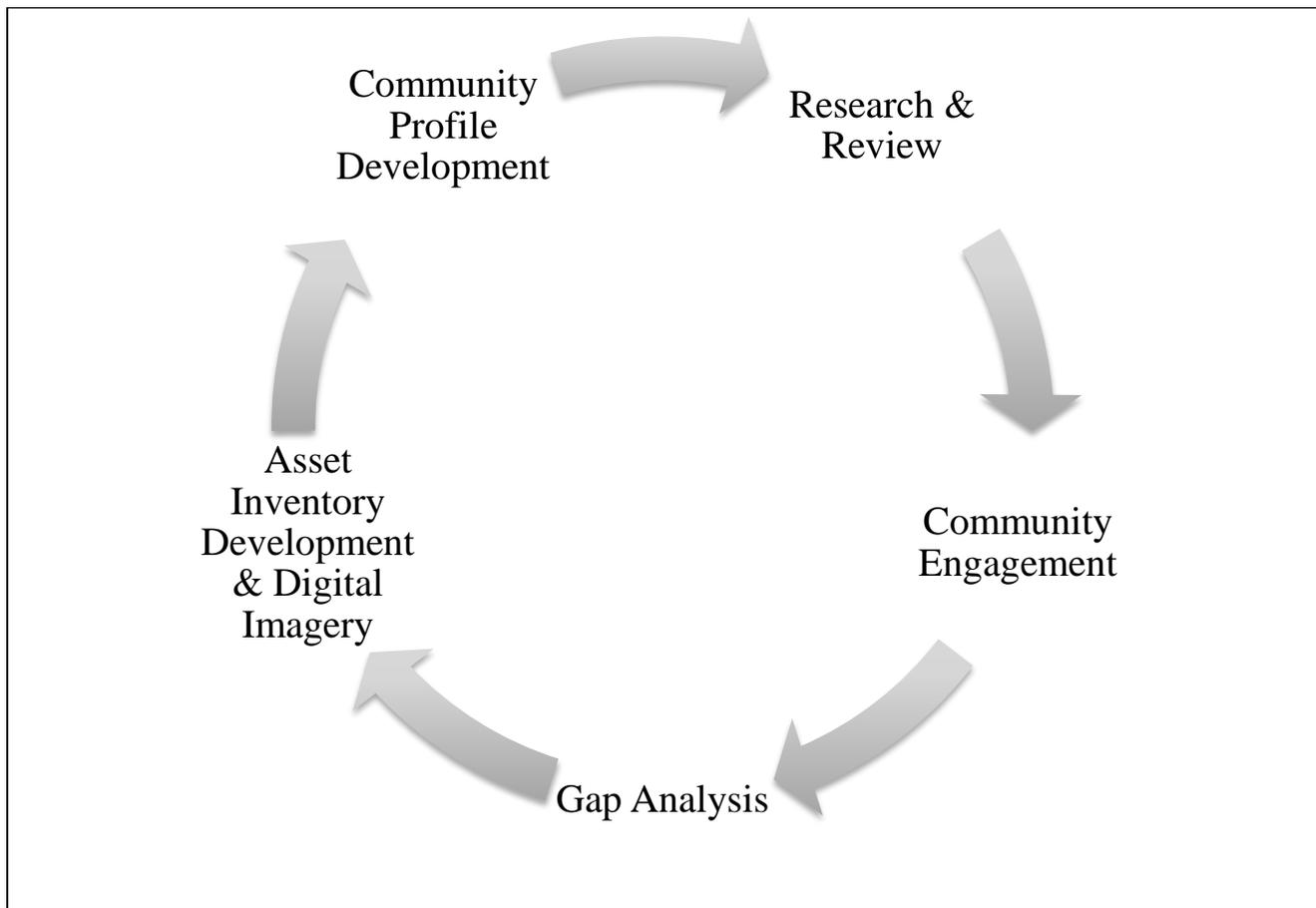
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Process & Deliverables

Research was conducted to identify the needs, gaps, and assets in East Ferris. This research included reviewing existing reports, online research from Statistics Canada, public consultations, interviews with local businesses, and comparisons with other similar-sized communities.

The secondary research involved retrieving data for the Community Profile and Asset Inventory to highlight key information such as population, municipal tax rates, services, geography, natural amenities and other attributes about East Ferris.



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Comparative Communities

A comparison of statistical data between East Ferris and three similar-sized communities was conducted. The comparison highlighted that East Ferris has surpassed other communities in population growth from 2006 to 2011. This is an indicator that the opportunity exists for East Ferris to develop strategies to support residential growth and planning, while creating a business-friendly community. An interesting variance to note is that North Bay experienced a negative population shift while East Ferris experienced a positive population shift. This suggests that residents may be relocating out of North Bay but remaining in close proximity. Based on East Ferris' steady growth it is evident that the community has a strong appeal to new residents.

The following provides background information about each of the three compared communities.

Thornbury, Ontario

Located on Highway #26 on the southern shores of Georgian Bay, the Village of Thornbury is less than 22 kilometres away from the town of Collingwood. As part of the Blue Mountains area, Thornbury residents (population 2,253) take advantage of the amenities offered in the larger Collingwood area (population 19,241) and enjoy many seasonal activities such as fishing, boating, golfing, hiking, skiing, and snowshoeing. Rock climbing areas and beaches are also popular places to visit, and the Bruce Trail passes through sections of the town. Thornbury has a downtown business area that supports free parking and offers a variety of shops, restaurants, accommodations, and other retail and professional services. It is also home to the L.E. Shore Memorial Library.

Stirling-Rawdon, Ontario

Located 25 kilometres from the City of Belleville (population 49,454), the township of Stirling-Rawdon boasts a population of 4,978 residents and takes pride as an environmentally friendly and "attractive community for families, youth, seniors, and those of all ages who love a rural lifestyle with convenient local amenities an easy access to larger urban centres." Stirling-Rawdon has its own central business district, a thriving Festival Theatre, a state-of-the art library, a variety of recreational facilities, and a hockey arena.

Perth South, Ontario

Agriculture represents one of the most significant and economic community assets of Perth South. A mix of rural agricultural and residential hamlets, the township of Perth South boasts a population of 3,993 residents and is a short 11.5 km drive to Stratford, home of the famous Stratford Festival Theatre. Arts and culture, sports and recreation events, golfing shipping, restaurants, farmers' markets, motorcycle tours and festivals are just some of the things to see and do in the area.

Each community identified has similar amenities as East Ferris such as recreational and outdoor activities, arenas, libraries, and access to larger urban centres. The one difference between East Ferris and the communities reviewed is the central core or community centre. As part of the long-term visioning process, The Municipality of East Ferris may wish to look at options and possibilities to establish a centralized area(s).

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The following table identifies Statistics Canada data comparing East Ferris with the Ontario communities of Thornbury, Stirling-Rawdon, and Perth South.

	Thornbury, ON	Stirling-Rawdon, ON	Perth South, ON	East Ferris, ON
Population in 2011	2,253	4,978	3,993	4,766
Population in 2006	2,217	4,906	4,132	4,228
2006 to 2011 population change (%)	1.6	1.5	-3.4	6.7
Total private dwellings	1,409	1,998	1,456	2,081
Private dwellings occupied by usual residents	1,015	1,898	1,393	1,802
Population density per square kilometre	537.4	17.6	10.2	29.1
Land area (square km)	4.19	282.31	393.03	155.03

The following table identifies Statistics Canada data that compares North Bay with the three neighbouring urban centres.

	Collingwood, ON	Belleville, ON	Stratford, ON	North Bay, ON
Population in 2011	19,241	49,454	30,886	53,651
Population in 2006	17,290	48,821	30,516	53,966
2006 to 2011 population change (%)	11.3	1.3	1.2	-0.6
Total private dwellings	10,695	22,153	13,892	24,748
Private dwellings occupied by usual residents	8,339	21,065	13,330	23,257
Population density per square kilometre	575.1	200.0	1,146.0	168.2
Land area (square km)	33.46	247.21	26.95	319.05

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Community Engagement

Community input and engagement provided an important contribution to the Asset Inventory, Community Profile and the Gap Analysis process.

Community Consultations

In addition to the statistical research collected, information and feedback was received from community members and businesses in East Ferris. Two community consultations were held on January 14th and 21st, 2013. The following list outlines outcomes of the discussions:

Workforce Development Challenges	<p>The following challenges were identified as it relates to Workforce Development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of transportation for younger staff to get to work• Ratio with journeymen & apprentice• Difficulty to find Architect Technologists• Programs at post secondary level do not match available jobs in market• Skill development doesn't occur early enough at school• Lack of trained trades people to support sectors
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Business Development Challenges	<p>The following challenges were identified as it relates to Business Development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to industrial land• Difficulty with funding support to complete applications• Lack of Internet and cellular access• Lack of "shared" office space to host clients/staff• Limited awareness about businesses, products and services offered in region• Lack of encouragement for small business support on website• Health and Safety Act concerns with business expansion• Lack of property inventory database• Lack of awareness about available funding and programs• Difficulty to get people out to provide information• Lack of formalized strategy to develop partnerships with operators and businesses when other events are going on in the region to encourage spin off (Bonfield, North Bay, etc.)• Concerns with succession planning• Lack of regional business draw, infrastructure, tourism, food and beverage services• More residents needed to support growth and keep businesses open• Business often stay under radar due to perception of red tape/regulations• Lack of transportation services
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Opportunities for Growth

The following challenges were identified as it relates to Opportunity for Growth.

- Increased employment by encouraging business growth
- Attract industry and jobs through low development costs and tax rates
- Increase awareness about opportunities for business
- Increase awareness of available services and funding support
- Host events
- Increase information and support to hire youth
- Increase awareness about businesses, products and services offered in region
- Long term planning needs
- Green space development
- Development of recreational areas
- Industry attraction and expansion from home based to commercial
- Purchase land for commercial/industrial development as part of long-term vision
- Plan for balanced residential, commercial, industrial growth
- Remove challenges for sub-dividing lots (speed up process, remove barriers)
- Capitalize on amenities for increased population/attraction strategies
- Signage- welcome sign needs improvements, increase signage for area businesses
- Lack of awareness about resources (training programs, expertise at staff level, council, etc.)
- Communication strategy – increase awareness
- Lack of participation at budget meetings
- Increase awareness about Contact North and additional services offered
- Develop feel good stories of positive news and showcase success stories about people who have re-located back to community
- Integrate social media into communication strategy
- Advocate needs to government regarding cell and internet barriers

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Municipality Opportunities

The following challenges were identified as it relates to Municipal Opportunities.

- Municipal partnership opportunities for Internet access
- Encourage people to live and buy locally
- Small business strategy to support home based industry
- Co-operative office space to share resources
- Attraction strategy to find qualified investors to support business development model
- Municipality to communicate priority area as small business
- Send positive message to community about having a home based business
- Identify committee structure within the community – action focused
- Identify tourism opportunities, gaps, etc.
- Develop cycling as a tourism product and package accordingly
- Assess asset management funding
- Increased communication about how to get involved in community- engagement strategy
- Develop succession planning tools for businesses and volunteers
- Develop a communication strategy including email blasts and social media channels
- Networking opportunities for businesses
- Business Mentoring Program
- Out-migration for jobs – youth retention strategy
- Development of central hub/area – “Virtual or Physical Main Street Development”
- Create a business directory and awareness about all business
- Increase opportunity or awareness about co-op/onsite training
- Balance between strong youth and difficult ones – strategies to deal with this
- Increase awareness about services available to help small business and home industry
- Connectivity issues must continue to be communicated with government as technology is block/barrier for growth

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Business Interviews

In addition to the community forums, interviews were conducted with six businesses located in the East Ferris area. The purpose of the interviews was to develop a preliminary understanding about the opportunities and needs as they relate to operating a business in East Ferris. Additional surveys will be developed as part of the Economic Development Strategy process commencing in April 2013. The following provides a summary of responses based on the questions asked during the interview.

1. What do you think the biggest strength is for businesses operating in East Ferris?

- Competitive tax rate
- Good location with proximity to urban and key sectors such as mining
- Ability to live and work from same parcel of land
- Local municipal staff are approachable, easy to work with and supportive
- Quality of Life
- Local business support
- Warm and friendly community
- Proximity to North Bay creates access to urban and rural markets
- Business operating in region demonstrate strong support for community

2. What do you think the biggest challenge is for businesses operating in East Ferris?

- Size of community can be a disadvantage at times
- High expectations because of small community
- Lack of services and reliable technology (utilities, natural gas, internet, cellular service)
- Lack of central core or hub
- Cost of traveling to North Bay often exceeds savings from competitive tax rate
- Landfill hours don't match business needs
- Hydro challenges and capacity load prevents new development
- Growth is prevented due to high costs associated with environmental studies
- Rental costs for meeting space is cost prohibitive for small business
- Lack of awareness about available business services offered through municipal office
- Under-utilized crown land ideal for industrial purposes

3. How can the municipality and regional organizations support your business?

- Advertising/promoting local business opportunities (business-to-business)
- Develop local business directory on website
- Provide **cost-effective** municipal space to host meetings and events with turn-key packages if needed (i.e. catering-food & beverage services, music, etc.)
- Ability to check availability and book municipal space online through booking calendar
- Access to business counselling support services without having to leave community
- Networking events for business (Business After Hours)
- Support and programs for succession planning
- Seminars/resources about building code requirements, builder/contractor expectations
- Awareness and support to complete available funding applications

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- Courses for employees (i.e. defensive driving programs, WHIMIS training, etc.)
- Allocate larger parcels of land for industrial use

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Gap Analysis

The information collected through the consultation process helped to develop the Gap Analysis.

Gaps	The results of the consultations and interview identified the following five priority areas .
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Telecommunications 2. Infrastructure and Services 3. Business Support Services 4. Communication 5. Transportation

SWOT Analysis

The information collected through the consultation process developed the beginnings of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis as they relate to the Municipality of East Ferris. The following provides a preliminary overview which will be used as part of the Economic Development Strategy process.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive residential and business tax rates • Municipal support • Natural vistas and lakes • Success stories • Friendly and supportive community • Proximity to larger urban centres • Growth in residential development • Quality of Life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of regional business draw (destination development) • Under-utilized natural tourism assets • Lack of awareness about businesses in community • Limited signage- increase/update signage • Lack of awareness about resources • Limited communications and awareness about services • Lack of participation at events, Council, budget meetings, etc. • Lack of transportation to North Bay • Municipal website (layout and functionality) • Lack of regional partnerships for economic, business, tourism initiatives • Limited succession planning support • Lack of economic development strategy

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Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green space development • Recreational areas • Industry attraction and expansion from home base to commercial • Increased employment through business growth • Long term planning needs (central hub concept) • Planning for balanced residential, commercial, industrial growth • Capitalize on amenities for increased population/attraction strategies • Integrate social media into communication strategy • Residential development • Purchase land as part of long-term growth • Development of communication strategy with integration of social media and traditional tactics • Improve signage and wayfinding • Development of new economic development strategy and municipal website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses closures • Government processes/barriers for sub-dividing lots, environmental, etc. • Youth-out migration

Deliverables & Tools

To support the economic development process, The Municipality of East Ferris has created a variety of tools as part of the initiative. Subsequent to the research stage, a Community Profile, Asset Inventory/Business Directory, Commercial Land Inventory, and Digital Images were developed. The tools provide relevant information about East Ferris and offer visual representation of a variety of key assets. The following provides an overview of each deliverable.

Community Profile

The Community Profile provides a comprehensive snapshot of The Municipality of East Ferris. As a representation of the warm and welcoming East Ferris community, the document details significant attributes, amenities and other factors that showcase East Ferris as an ideal place to live, work and play. The Community Profile is a multipurpose tool that can be used to promote both residential and commercial growth.

Asset Inventory/Business Directory

The Asset Inventory is a customized, easily updated database of significant assets and statistics that relate to the Municipality of East Ferris. The database provides a comprehensive listing of resources and includes municipal services and information, population demographics, labour demographics, income demographics, cultural demographics, as well as information on health, safety, education and other municipal resources. Statistical data contained in the Asset Inventory was obtained from many

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sources, including Statistics Canada Community Profiles and The Labour Market Group. The completed Asset Inventory assists with identifying gaps and areas of opportunity for the community.

The Business Directory is a database within the Asset Inventory of existing businesses operating in East Ferris. The database will be updated on an ongoing basis. The directory will set the foundation for future communication and networking opportunities to support business development in East Ferris. With the future development of the Municipal website, the business directory data will be used to populate an online tool to promote available businesses and services in the region.

Photography

A digital collection of images represents the winter season in East Ferris. As part of a longer-term initiative, the digital database will expand to include all four seasons. A selection of photographs was used in the creation of the Community Profile. The high-resolution images taken have been provided on DVD's for future use.

Vacant Land Inventory

The vacant land inventory provides a listing of current land available for sale in the East Ferris area. This database will continue to be populated as new listings are available. This document will serve as a resource for the Municipal staff and used for future residential, investment attraction or business expansion opportunities.