

Forging the Future:

“Working together toward a dynamic future”



Marathon
Community Development Strategy

2006 - 2010

Prepared by:

Marathon Community Development Commission
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marathon is currently faced with a number of economic and social challenges. These challenges include people retention, jobs losses, and industry downsizing – to name but a few. These impacts all have contingent effects on our local community economy and quality of life. These impacts, while progressive, are reversible with a strategic and committed plan of action.

Strategic planning is a cornerstone concept to enhance our ability to manage positive and progressive change, improve our quality of life, and ensure our community remains healthy and viable into the future. Balanced strategic planning will ensure we have:

- ✓ Sufficient populations to sustain local economies;
- ✓ Reliable access to health-care services;
- ✓ Quality education close to home;
- ✓ Adequate and well-maintained infrastructure that supports economic prosperity, public safety, and a high quality of life;
- ✓ Diversified economies that provide a range of employment opportunities including well-paying, highly-skilled jobs;
- ✓ Clean and healthy natural environments that support public health and safety, economic activity, and a high quality of life;
- ✓ Active community participation and necessary leadership to build on community strengths.

Marathon is currently faced with a number of economic and social challenges. These challenges include people retention, jobs losses, and industry downsizing – to name but a few. These impacts all have contingent effects on our local community economy and quality of life. These impacts, while progressive, are reversible with a strategic and committed plan of action.

The Marathon Community Development Commission (CDC) has embarked on a process to develop an updated Community Development Strategy for Marathon. The last community Strategic Plan was completed in 1996 by the then CDC. This strategy has one keystone purpose in mind – enhance the economy and improve the quality of life for the residents and stakeholders in Marathon.

This strategy is a compilation of input collected from local stakeholders throughout the entire planning process. A number of information-gathering initiatives were undertaken to gain stakeholder input into economic, community, and social initiatives that should be pursued to enhance the economy, improve the quality of life, and maintain the current population.

Vision

"Marathon...Built on Paper, Laced with Gold...is a positive and progressive model community. Our strength comes from nurturing individual involvement and

fostering open successful partnerships that promote effective communication and trust. We are a preferred location. Our community offers a superior quality of life that provides a high standard of accessible medical, educational, and leisure services, and a strong, growing, competitive and diverse economic base."

Goals

- 1. Sustainable municipal fiscal capacity and infrastructure.**
- 2. Strong economy.**
- 3. Healthy social climate.**
- 4. Clean and healthy environment.**

This strategy, in the context of community development, can be considered ambitious. A number of challenging action items are identified and will require a tremendous amount of work, human resources, partnerships, and investment to reach fruition. But these types of action are exactly the solutions that are required to ensure our community remains healthy and prosperous into the future.

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1. PROJECT CONTEXT

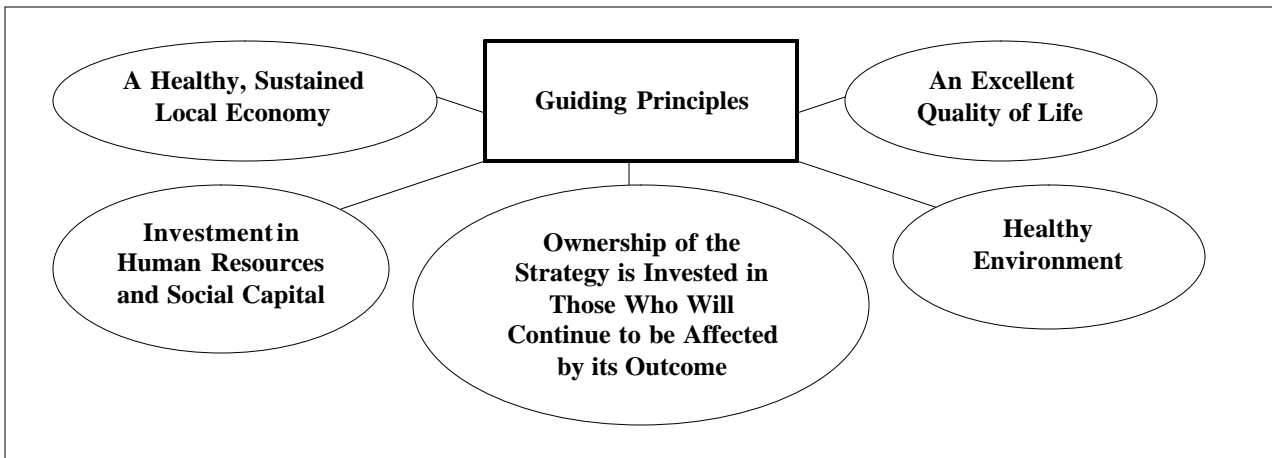
Marathon Town Council, Administration, and the Community Development Commission (CDC) has realized the valued need to have a Community Development Strategy in place to ensure the community’s economic and social sustainability, and maintain the community’s excellent quality of life. This Community Development Strategy serves as a ‘blueprint’ of action items which will lead to community development and spur future economic and social growth over the next five years.

Through the implementation of this Community Development Strategy, with the ultimate goal of achieving the stated vision kept at the fore, the following priorities will guide the process:

- Contribute to the creation of a community which reflects the hopes and aspirations of Marathon residents;
- Assist Marathon in planning and managing economic and social development for the community through various initiatives and projects;
- Empower organizations, institutions and individuals within the community to become involved in joint ventures, partnerships and other cooperative efforts to improve the community economically, socially and environmentally for future generations.
- Assist Marathon in prioritizing its present and future programs and services, recognizing that the resources available may be limited; and
- Assist and contribute to a continuing efficient, responsive and accountable municipal government.

Furthermore, the strategy which has been developed and is presented in this document has been based on the guiding principles identified in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 – Guiding Principles for Marathon’s Community Development Strategy



PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

The purpose of this Community Development Strategy and the planning and development process associated with it, is to formulate a document which will be the 'plan of attack' to guide the Town and its strategic partners in its community development pursuits. This type of strategic planning will lead to economic and social growth, increased community wealth, and the creation of new employment opportunities. A number of positive benefits will be accrued from strategic planning efforts. These benefits will include:

- Managed, targeted development;
- Improved coordination of municipal service delivery;
- Enhanced profile and image of Marathon as a dynamic and vital community located in Northwestern Ontario;
- Investment in human and social capital and effective knowledge transfer;
- Increased effectiveness and efficiency of Community Development initiatives and activities.

Purpose Statement

To promote and enhance the strong resource-based community – Marathon – with a prosperous economy, rich cultural and natural heritage, and a capacity and leadership to enhance and sustain a high quality of life.

Town Council has stated very clearly that development is a priority for the municipality. Community Development is essential for the community to maintain its excellent quality of life, and to diversify and strengthen its economy. The Community Development Commission, through the facilitation of Municipal Administration, will develop a realistic strategy for the betterment of the community and its residents. This community involvement approach to developing this strategy will be a key element in successfully implementing the end product.

The Community Development Commission is an advisory committee to Council responsible for the development and promotion of community and economic development. As the lead committee of community and economic development, the CDC shall make Marathon a more attractive place to live and do business by:

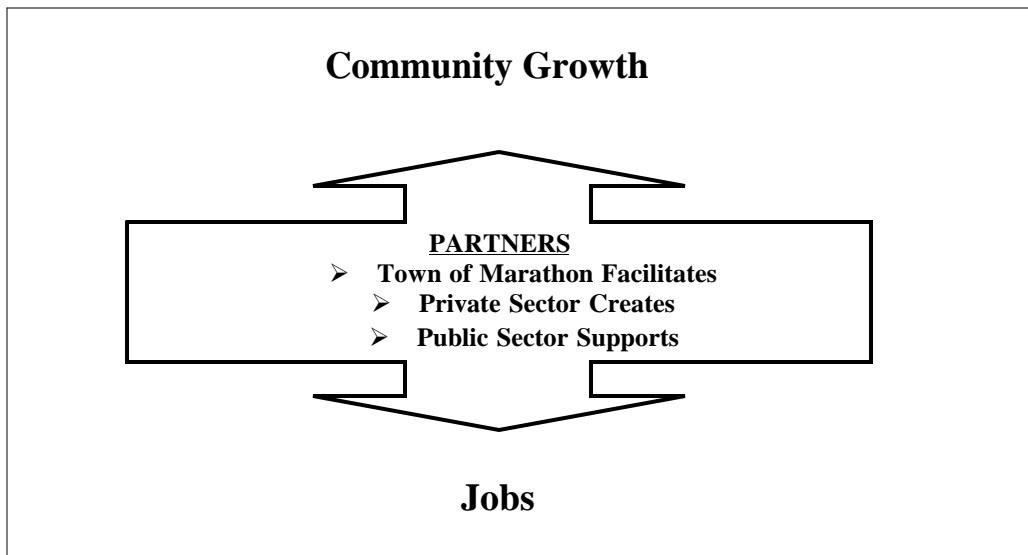
- i) fostering unification and trust amongst all members of the community;
- ii) leading positive, progressive change;
- iii) identifying and pursuing opportunities to enhance and improve the community's economic base and quality of life in a consultative and dynamic fashion.

Marathon's economic and employment base has been and still is supported strongly by the natural resource-based industries of forestry (pulp mill) and mining (gold). While the hope is that these industries maintain and even gain momentum, new community

investment and development must be recruited and undertaken to ensure the community's economic viability.

For community development success to be achieved and have positive and measurable effects for the community, a community partnership approach, as can be seen in Figure 1.2, will be pivotal.

Figure 1.2 – Community Partnership Approach to Development



ADDRESSING KEY ISSUES

A number of key issues are currently present that need to be addressed in this strategy to ensure that strategy implementation is successful. Some of these key issues are external factors that are very difficult to control, while some of the key issues are internal which can be controlled with proper planning and action items. Nonetheless, this strategy must attempt to address both external as well as internal key issues to create an environment for successful strategy implementation.

Key issues which need to be addressed include:

- People and youth-out migration;
- Reduction and downsizing of primary sector jobs;
- Downloading of increased responsibilities and costs to the municipality;
- Continued investment in community/economic development and human resources;
- Diversification and broadening of the community's economic base;
- Ongoing support for existing local businesses and companies;
- Reducing and/or eliminating barriers to economic growth and investment;
- Maximization and development of strategic community partnerships.

METHODOLOGY

The local strategic planning process began in early 2004 and has culminated into this final report.

A defined strategic planning process was not utilized and administered to develop this strategy. Rather, to ensure a holistic and comprehensive approach, a number of research and planning initiatives were undertaken and documented, which formed the framework for this strategy. These initiatives are documented in this report's appendix.

There is no one process than can be considered “the best” approach to develop a strategy. Rather, you must apply a process that works for your situation-type and that will provide you with the end result you require. In our case, a number of items were utilized and transposed to develop a ‘best fit’ plan for Marathon. It made logistical and efficient sense to make best use of the hours and pages of documented research and work already previously completed as well as introduce some fresh information gathering initiatives. These initiatives included:

- Community Development Commission Asset-Mapping Exercise - April 2005
- Community Development Commission TV – October/November 2004
- Town Hall Business Meetings – May/October 2004
- Business Retention and Expansion Survey Visitations – May/June 2005
- Community Development Commission Strategic Plan - 1996

All of these elements in synergy formed the content for the development of this “living” strategy.

2. STRATEGY VISION AND GOALS

STRATEGY VISION

A community vision is a description of the ideal state of being which community members believe is the desirable future for their community.

A vision statement clarifies common values and broad goals and involves the passions, desires and hopes of individuals. The vision statement becomes the touchstone for longer-term planning. It inspires the community to take forward-thinking steps, and provides reference points for determining the direction in which those steps should be taken.

Marathon's community vision statement recognizes the need for long-term stability and enhancing our quality of life. The Town of Marathon should manage community development and improve the quality of life for residents in a consultative, dynamic and proactive manner, while retaining and reinforcing the community values which make Marathon a desirable community to live and work.

The Town of Marathon's community vision is:

"Marathon...Built on Paper, Laced with Gold...is a positive and progressive model community. Our strength comes from nurturing individual involvement and fostering open successful partnerships that promote effective communication and trust. We are a preferred location. Our community offers a superior quality of life that provides a high standard of accessible medical, educational, and leisure services, and a strong, growing, competitive and diverse economic base."

STRATEGY GOALS

Marathon's Vision gives rise to specific Community Development long-term goals. These goals are statements of the community's pursuit of specific, strategic directions. They are comprehensive, addressing all aspects of Community Development. Achieving Marathon's Vision for its future depends on balancing its goals and its efforts to achieve them in a collective manner. The following goals have been developed in order to achieve the Community Vision set for Marathon:

1. **Sustainable municipal fiscal capacity and infrastructure.**
2. **Strong economy.**
3. **Healthy social climate.**
4. **Clean and healthy environment.**

The Community Vision cannot be achieved by pursuing one goal to the detriment of others. All goals must be pursued in parallel.

3. ACTION THEMES

Action Themes have been chosen as the mechanisms to support the vision identified in this strategy, and achieve the defined goals and objectives. Four relevant themes have been selected for this strategy; each inter-related, and in synergy, will contribute to the development of a strong community.

1. SUSTAINABLE MUNICIPAL FISCAL CAPACITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

A strong, healthy community is built on a foundation of adequate and sustainable resources which offers resident a high quality of life. Municipalities with sufficient revenue are able to provide services and make appropriate capital investments to meet the economic, social and environmental needs of the community.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Develop the fiscal, human resource and technical capacity to deliver municipal services and engage in long-term planning.**
- 2. Develop and maintain adequate infrastructure to support economic prosperity, public health and safety, and a high quality of life.**
- 3. Practice fiscal sustainability.**

2. STRONG ECONOMY

Building and sustaining a strong, broad local economy promotes economic prosperity and supports a higher quality of life for residents through a range of quality employment opportunities including well-paying and highly skilled jobs. Sustainable, prosperous economies attract investment and new residents, and create the ability to offer essential community and social services and amenities.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Build and sustain a prosperous economy that is diversified, innovative, and provides well-paying, and high quality jobs.**
- 2. Create a range of employment opportunities that supports a skilled labour force and attracts young people and professionals.**
- 3. Develop strategic sectors that will attract investment and economic opportunity.**

3. HEALTHY SOCIAL CLIMATE

A healthy social climate contributes to the quality of life in a community. A healthy social climate ensures that there is access to quality health-care and educational services. It also means that the community is safe and residents have access to a range of recreational, cultural and heritage facilities, as well as important social services. A healthy social climate creates an environment where residents have a sense of belonging and pride in their community.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Ensure reliable access to quality health-care services.**
- 2. Ensure quality education opportunities are available close to home.**
- 3. Provide access to recreational, cultural and social services.**
- 4. Encourage community leadership and active citizen engagement.**

4. CLEAN AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Protecting the natural environment is important for long-term environmental sustainability, public health and safety, and economic prosperity. Clean water, clean air and alluring landscapes contribute to the quality of life and attractiveness of a community. These rich natural assets also provide jobs for community residents through tourism, recreation, and resource-based industries.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Maintain clean and healthy environments that support public health and safety, economic development, and quality of life.**
- 2. Develop the planning capacity to make decisions that will balance the health of the environment, social well-being of the community, and sustainable economic development.**
- 3. Protect natural features and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources.**

4. ACTION INITIATIVES

Action initiatives are strategic tactics that are designed to focus on the action themes and achieve the goals and objectives of the overall strategy.

1. SUSTAINABLE MUNICIPAL FISCAL CAPACITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Infrastructure and Asset Management

Develop a comprehensive infrastructure and asset management plan. **2006-09**

2. Landfill and Recycling

Develop a long-range plan for solid waste management and waste diversion. **2007-2010**

3. Surplus Property

Strategically dispose of vacant municipal land and property to meet and further economic development goals. **2006-07**

4. Community Development Assistance Fund

Administer the Community Development Assistance Fund to ensure fiscal responsibility and efficiency. **2006-07**

5. Funding

Pursue public and private sector funding to administer community-based projects. **2006 - 2010**

2. STRONG ECONOMY

1. ‘Smart Community’ Development

Implement the Northern Genesis Community Portal. **2006**

Develop an Information Technology and Communications inventory for promotion. **2006**

Identify and capitalize on broadband “Points of Presence”. **2007-09**

Utilize GIS as an economic development tool. **2006-08**

2. Investment Readiness and Attraction Strategy

Develop, in consultation with local stakeholders, a detailed Investment Readiness and Investment Strategy. **2006-07**

3. Natural Resource Sector

- Establish under the Mayor's leadership, with stakeholder participation, a strategy to maximize the spin-off economic benefits of the local natural resource sectors as the primary economic engines, and develop a contingency plan should a sudden unforeseen downturn occur in these sectors. **2006**
- 4. Mining**
Develop infrastructure to support local mineral exploration and prospecting.
Promote Marathon as an attractive 'mineral exploration centre'. **2006-08**
 - 5. Forestry**
Continue to support the efforts to develop a healthy and competitive forest sector in Northwestern Ontario. **2006**
 - 6. Alternative Energy**
Develop the 'Marathon Wind Energy Project'. **2006-2010**

Explore alternative energy solutions. **2006-07**
 - 7. Airport Retention**
Develop a plan to utilize the airport as a focal point for economic development.
2007-08
 - 8. Tourism Development**
Facilitate the development and implementation of a long-range Tourism Development Strategy. **2006-2010**
 - 9. Lakefront Property Development**
Research the feasibility of developing residential lakefront property on the shore of Lake Superior. **2006-08**
 - 10. Business Retention and Expansion**
Implement the action plans from the Marathon Business Retention and Expansion project. **2006-07**
 - 11. Medical Tourism**
Capitalize on the tourism potential of Marathon being a regional "healthcare hub" and working in partnership with the Marathon Family Practice and Northern Ontario Medical School.
2006-08
 - 12. Trails Development**
Develop the Coastal Hiking Trail in partnership with Pic River First Nation.
2006-09

Develop adequate tourism infrastructure at Pebble Beach. **2006-07**

- Develop a Trails Plan to link and promote local trails to tourists and residents. **2006-07**
- 13. Penn Lake Revitalization**
Implement the recommendations from the Penn Lake Revitalization Study. **2006-2010**
 - 14. First Impressions Community Exchange**
Implement the recommendations from the Marathon First Impressions Community Exchange project. **2006-08**
 - 15. Development of Local Skills Capacity and Knowledge-base**
Work with local and regional partners to develop tools and implement programs which will invest in skills development, capitalize on talent, develop knowledge, and create entrepreneurial spirit.
- 3. HEALTHY SOCIAL CLIMATE**
- 1. Health Care Professionals Recruitment**
Continue to support partner efforts to recruit Health Professionals to Marathon. **2006-09**
 - 2. Northern Genesis and Tele-health**
Encourage and enhance the tele-health system through the Northern Genesis Portal. **2006-07**
 - 3. Health Sector Impacts**
Recognize the impact of the health sector and its economic impacts. **2006-07**
 - 4. Long-Term Care**
Support the development of local long-term care projects. **2006-2010**
 - 5. Culture**
Support the activities of the Marathon & District Historical Society. **2006-07**
 - 6. People Retention**
Recognize the need to retain the population base as a top priority and develop a strategy that is focused on retaining the people in the community. **2007-08**
 - 7. Signature Event**
Support, enhance and promote the 'signature event' for Marathon. **2006-08**
 - 8. Northern Ontario Medical School**
Maximize the benefits from the Northern Ontario Medical School. **2006-2010**

9. **Physician Retention**
Recognize that physician retention is a top priority and adopt a policy to reflect this. **2006**
10. **Volunteers**
Administer the Community Development Assistance Fund to support local volunteer organizations and activities. **2006**

4. CLEAN AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

1. **Town Beautification**
Continue participation in the Communities in Bloom program. **2006**

Continue to promote community beautification and its impacts locally. **2006**
2. **Green Energy**
Explore local alternative energy solutions. **2006-07**
3. **Landfill Site**
Relocate the current landfill site and continue to promote recycling and waste diversion. **2006-2010**
4. **Ecological Monitoring**
Research the potential benefits of developing a community-based network to undertake local ecological monitoring to detect, describe, and report on local ecosystem changes. **2006-2009**

5. ACCOUNTABILITY/REPORTING/REVIEW

This Community Development Strategy sets out a strategic framework from which to enhance the local economy and quality of life. With that being said, a number of elements must be in place to ensure the strategic advance and success of this plan. The elements that are pivotal to the implementation of this plan include: community champions; entrepreneurs; partnerships; human resources; capital investment, and most importantly, time, perseverance and patience. These elements must work synergistically and intrinsically for the actions set out in this plan to provide real and measurable benefits and the plan's vision and goals be achieved.

While comprehensive, this Strategy must be a flexible tool that can adapt to change given the global environment in which we live, and the ever-changing events, challenges and opportunities we face. To ensure this, accountability and review measures have been built into this strategy. These measures will ensure that this strategy does not remain idle, and that it is a 'living' document which works towards shaping our future in a positive and progressive manner.

Accountability Statement

Every 180 days, beginning from the date of adoption by Council, Council will receive a report from Administration indicating compliance and progress on achieving the goals and objectives set out in this plan.

Accountability/Review Measures

On a yearly basis, each action theme will be charted, and measured in a number of areas to determine its overall effectiveness.

An annual indicators report will be developed to measure progress for each action theme. These indicators will utilize standard methods of measurement such as population growth, income levels, and unemployment and participation rates to chart progress; but also employ non-numeric indicators to look at community issues such as economic wellness, community safety, and environmental health.

These indicator reports will not only measure the progress of this Community Development Strategy, but also serve as an important tool in the implementation of this strategy. The measurement indicators will help celebrate the successes of the community, and help improve on areas of weakness.

REFERENCES

Community Development Commission Terms of Reference

Marathon Business Retention + Expansion Project - 2005

Marathon Strategic Plan – “Superior in the Long Run” - 1996

Penn Lake Revitalization Study - 2005

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