

Blyth Tourism Facilitation

Final Summary

Prepared by Overlap Associates

February 2nd, 2018



Introduction

Exciting things are happening in Blyth. Recent investment, a rich history and a group of dedicated stakeholders are coming together to create great potential for the community. There's an opportunity to leverage this momentum and work together to make Blyth an even more desirable village aligned with our aspirations.

RTO4 convened stakeholders in three facilitated sessions to mobilize the community of Blyth around this opportunity. The goal of these sessions was to build consensus on Blyth's DNA (i.e. the unique appeal of Blyth as a tourism destination) and generate ideas for projects to enhance that appeal.

This report provides a full summary of the activities and outputs from the three sessions. It outlines Blyth's DNA, a 5-10-year vision for Blyth, and ideas for potential projects. In the appendix, it also includes a full list of possible project ideas for Blyth and a list of the town's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

Table of Contents

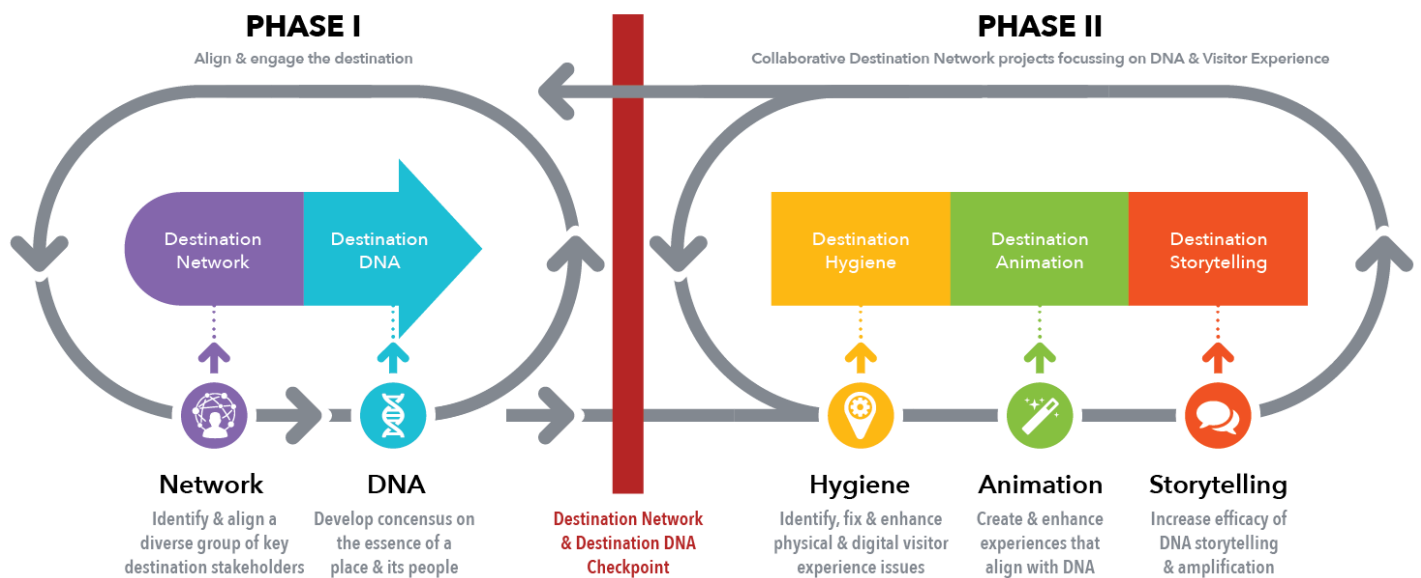
Introduction	2
The Process	3
Blyth's DNA	5
A 5-10 Year Vision for Blyth	6
Project Ideas.....	10
Next Steps	23
Appendix A: Full List of Project Ideas	24
Appendix B: Strengths	31
Appendix C: Weaknesses	33
Appendix D: Opportunities	35

The Process

RTO4 uses a five-step destination development process. First, a network of stakeholders is established (and new stakeholders are always welcome and encouraged to join the process). Stakeholders work together to establish the unique DNA of the destination and set a vision for the destination's development. With the DNA in mind, stakeholders generate collaborative projects that align with Blyth's DNA.

Destination Development Process

The goal of the RTO4 Destination Development process is to create vibrant destinations by emphasizing capacity building, a culture of innovation, and the transfer of key skills to Destination Network partners, as well as unlocking co-investment from traditional and non-traditional stakeholders; in essence, a virtuous loop of continuous destination improvement.



For Blyth, the destination development process occurred across three facilitated meetings, on Oct. 12th, Nov. 2nd and Nov 30th.

During the first meeting, participants grounded themselves in the visitor experience by doing a gallery walk of photos from Blyth and developing visitor personas. They identified strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for the village, and began to imagine what Blyth might be like in the future. This began an ongoing conversation about Blyth's DNA.

In the second meeting, participants reviewed and gave feedback on potential DNA statements. Together, they built a 5-10 year vision for Blyth by answering the question: "What do we want to achieve for Blyth as a destination over the next 5-10 years?"

In the third and final meeting, participants aligned around a final version of the DNA statement. Working in small groups, they generated ideas for projects that would contribute to achieving their 5-10 year vision and fit within the DNA. From these ideas, they prioritized an idea that they were passionate about, and that was feasible enough that they could envision how they might implement the idea. Using a series of question prompts, participants then created a more detailed description of the prioritized ideas.

Blyth's DNA

In small groups, participants at the third facilitated session generated DNA statements from a list of themes surfaced during previous discussion. Participants voted on their favourite expression of the DNA, which led to the statement “welcoming people to participate in the theatre of rural life”. The runner-up statements are included here as well, as they also highlight important elements of Blyth’s character.

The Final DNA Statement

Welcoming people to participate in the theatre of rural life

Runners-Up

- Heritage (Village of Blyth & The fusion of agriculture, arts, and innovation)
- Cultivating creativity
- Pioneers of rural Canadian creative sensations
- The essence of rural storytelling
- Original, innovative, authentic, frontier, Blyth
- Harvesting culture from agriculture

A 5-10 Year Vision for Blyth

A vision helps us visualize future success and understand what we are working toward. It answers the question: “What do we want to achieve for Blyth as a destination over the next 5-10 years?” This vision incorporates the input from over 30 key stakeholders, including business owners, residents, artists, farmers and government representatives.

Participants in the session started by each generating a list of what they want to see achieved in Blyth over the next 5-10 years. Using a consensus building method that ensured each unique idea was included, the group shared ideas and found connections between the ideas. The result of this exercise was six high-level themes that provide a direction for the development of Blyth over the next 5 years.

While not every idea may be realized in the way it was articulated, the individual ideas can be used to inspire future targets or projects. Most importantly, the themes that emerged when ideas were combined create a vision for what Blyth might look like in the future and provide a focus for our collective efforts.

Over the next 5-10 years, we hope to achieve:

- A Future-Ready Blyth
- A Welcoming Visitor Experience
- A Unique and Well-Known Brand
- A Reputation for Friendly Folks
- Clear and Easily Available Information
- A New, Inclusive Rural Conversation

What follows is a summary of each theme, and the individual ideas that contributed to the creation of that theme.

A Future-Ready Blyth

Rather than reacting to whatever the future brings, we want to play an active role in shaping that future. This means investing now in activities that will help Blyth thrive in the future, such as encouraging entrepreneurship and supporting youth to live and work in Blyth. At its most ambitious, this goal is about Blyth pioneering a new and more diverse economic model for rural villages and towns, ensuring a country lifestyle remains desirable for future generations.

- Creative entrepreneur incubator
- Relevant to lifestyle 2020
- Artist in Residency program—high calibre
- Youth retention
- Improved digital engagement
- Encourage businesses and volunteers (“rub their backs”)
- Resident capacity (more residents)
- Educational Opportunities

A Welcoming Visitor Experience

We want to ensure that visitors always feel welcome by making Blyth and its surroundings open, safe and accessible. This starts before arrival, when booking transportation and accommodation, and extends to everything from sidewalks to business hours. We want visitors to feel that every aspect of their experience has been considered, and consistently communicate: “We’re glad you’re here.”

- Safe and well-maintained village/infrastructure
- Accessible
- Short and long-term accommodation
- Linking and amplifying town and country tourism opportunities
- Business Mondays
- Fix 4 and 25!
- Transportation options
- Mix of historic and new architecture (appealing)

A Unique and Well-Known Brand

We will craft an argument for “Why Blyth?” that distinguishes the village from similar creative or agricultural communities. With a clearly established differentiator, we can build out the Blyth brand and apply it across the village’s story, appearance, and activities. From this foundation, we can increase name recognition and strengthen tourism, making Blyth a distinct and memorable destination.

- Reconnect with agriculture
- Build on authentic, original, Canadian brand
- New entrance facades
- Year round
- Identify a differentiator
- Blyth festival core economic industry
- Name recognition—through being a getaway town
- Strong relationships between operators and guests
- Explosion of art
- Link Cowbell – Village – G2G – Lake

A Reputation for Friendly Folks

Already, Blyth is known as an incredibly friendly place to visit. Over the next 5-10 years, we want to build on that reputation and expand that feeling around the clock. One of the best ways to remember a place is through its people. Our vision for Blyth is a place where the connections you make with residents, artists and visitors are an integral part of any visit.

- “Meet the Folks”—encourage visitors to meet residents
- After 5 economy—vibrant and welcoming
- Diverse but cohesive business vision
- A place to relax
- Fostering hospitality culture
- Overnight destination through activities
- Walkable weekends
- Connect with descendants of Blyth residents

Clear and Easily Available Information

We need to let people know about Blyth, online and in the village. This means improving marketing and removing any challenges to wayfinding or retrieving information. By engaging local artisans in this effort, we can find creative ways to share info, while simultaneously showcasing Blyth's artistic brand.

- Seamless online experience
- Engage and showcase artisans
- Improved town wayfinding—"direct traffic"
- Invest in printed products
- 3 dimensional signage
- Traffic and pedestrian flow and safety
- Advertise in house—work together
- Funky vibe not manufactured

A New, Inclusive Rural Conversation

We want to invite everyone to be part of developing Blyth and shaping its story. This story should celebrate traditional rural perspectives, and at the same time invite in newcomers and make room for diverse voices. Allowing many people to have their voices heard and participate in shaping the community will increase the resiliency of the village and contribute to a future-ready Blyth.

- Broad engagement
- Resilience
- History management team
- Diverse voices
- Retain rural character
- Pass on heritage skills
- Leverage government support

Project Ideas

Participants filled out Idea Briefs for their most promising project ideas. These captured a description of the idea, and some key aspects of each idea such as stakeholders, required resources, and next steps. What follows are the complete Idea Briefs for each of the six ideas.

There are three key levers for increasing tourism in a destination:



Animation: Creating and enhancing experiences that align with the DNA



Hygiene: Identifying, fixing and enhancing physical and digital visitor experience issues



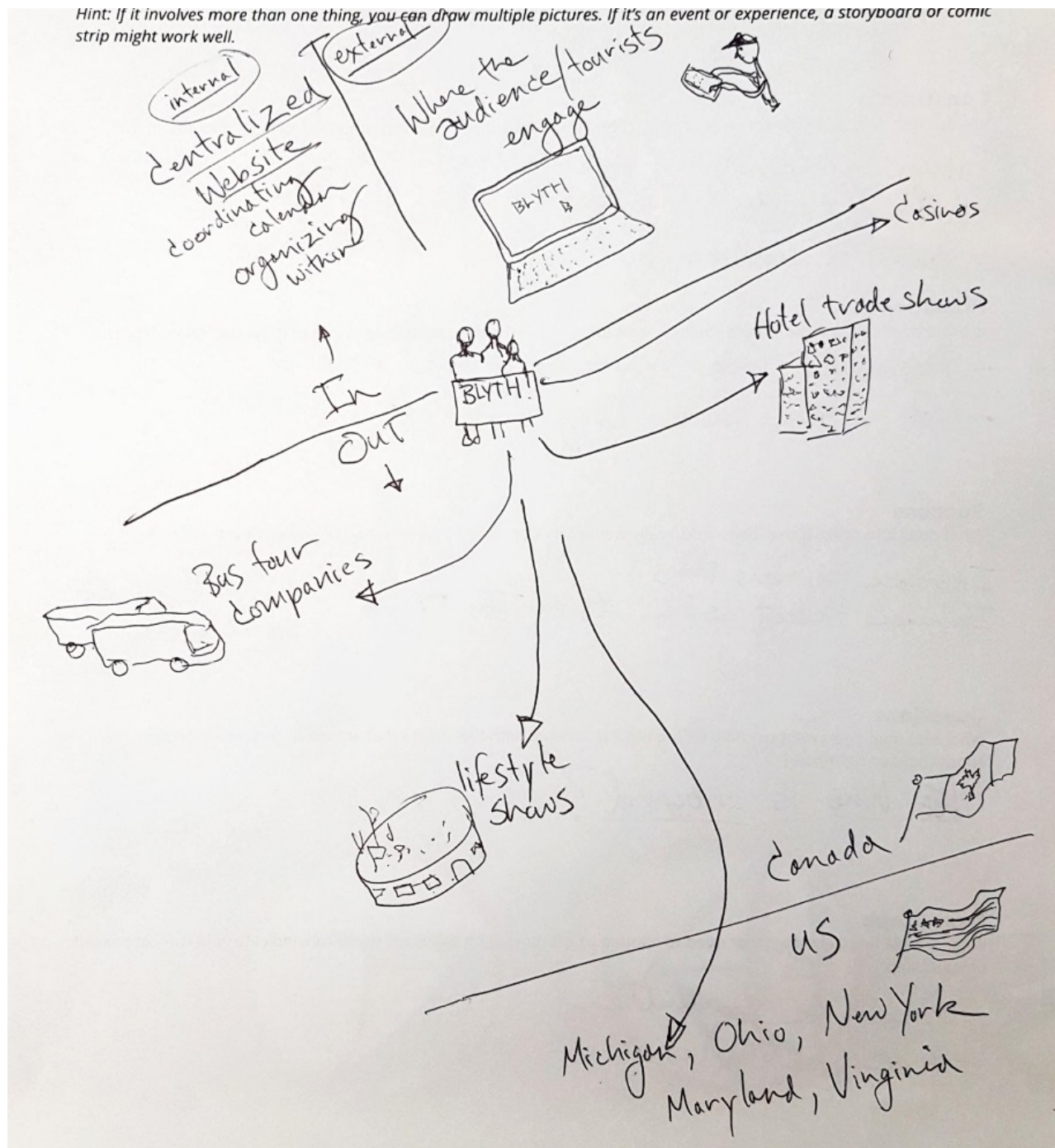
Storytelling: Increasing efficacy of DNA storytelling and amplification

Generally, successful tourism projects will focus on contributing to either animation, hygiene or storytelling for a destination. For each of the projects outlined below, the description of each idea also identifies whether that project most addresses hygiene, animation, or storytelling.



Joint Ambassador Team

The creation, coordination, and deployment of a joint ambassador team. A group that goes out to trade shows, travel agencies, bus tours, and attempt to attract people back here. A team that is on the road, constantly promoting the stuff that is happening here in town.



People

Core Team

- The Blyth Festival
- Cowbell RTO4
- Restaurateurs (reps)
- Farm (reps)

Connections

- Regional, provincial, national tourism operators
- Travel agents

Resources

- Money
- Travel stays
- Membership
- Tradeshow booths and fees
- Website developers
- Print materials

Constraints

- Hinges on the creation of packages/partnerships
- Lack of coordinated winter activities of scale
- Partisan sentiments

Precedence

- Successful trade show folks of all stripes
- Not a new idea. Only new here.

Success

- Increase in bus tours
- Increase ticket sales at the theatre
-> Metrics include postal codes

Questions

- Who is onboard?

Next Steps

- Call a committee
- Designate a leader



Gateway to Blyth

The creation of a gateway, or it could be a roundabout at 4 and 25, to provide a welcoming and clean sense of arrival for motorists arriving in Blyth via all four entry points. We envision a one year timeframe, to be done quickly. Visible from North, South, East, West. The first concern should be safety—making sure no one gets hurt at this dangerous intersection.



People

- North Huron
- Central Huron
- Huron County
- Blyth
- RTO4
- Rick Elliott
- Lisa Thomson

Resources

- Political will
- Money – \$100,000 (Street lights, studies, and signage)

Constraints

- Lack of sense of urgency
- Multiple jurisdiction
- Clean branding for the village
- Should not create ongoing expenses (semi-permanent structures)

Precedence

- Iconic entry point movements (e.g. big moose)
- Draw on RTO4 expertise

Success

- Visual reference point for Blyth is established
- Attract several people
- Blyth impossible to miss from highway (or Cowbell)
- Aesthetically pleasing and unique

Questions

- Who pays?
- What is our village brand/colours/etc?
- Whose jurisdiction? Who makes the final call?
- Where are the signs best situated along the highway?
- What needs to be considered? (e.g. trucks)

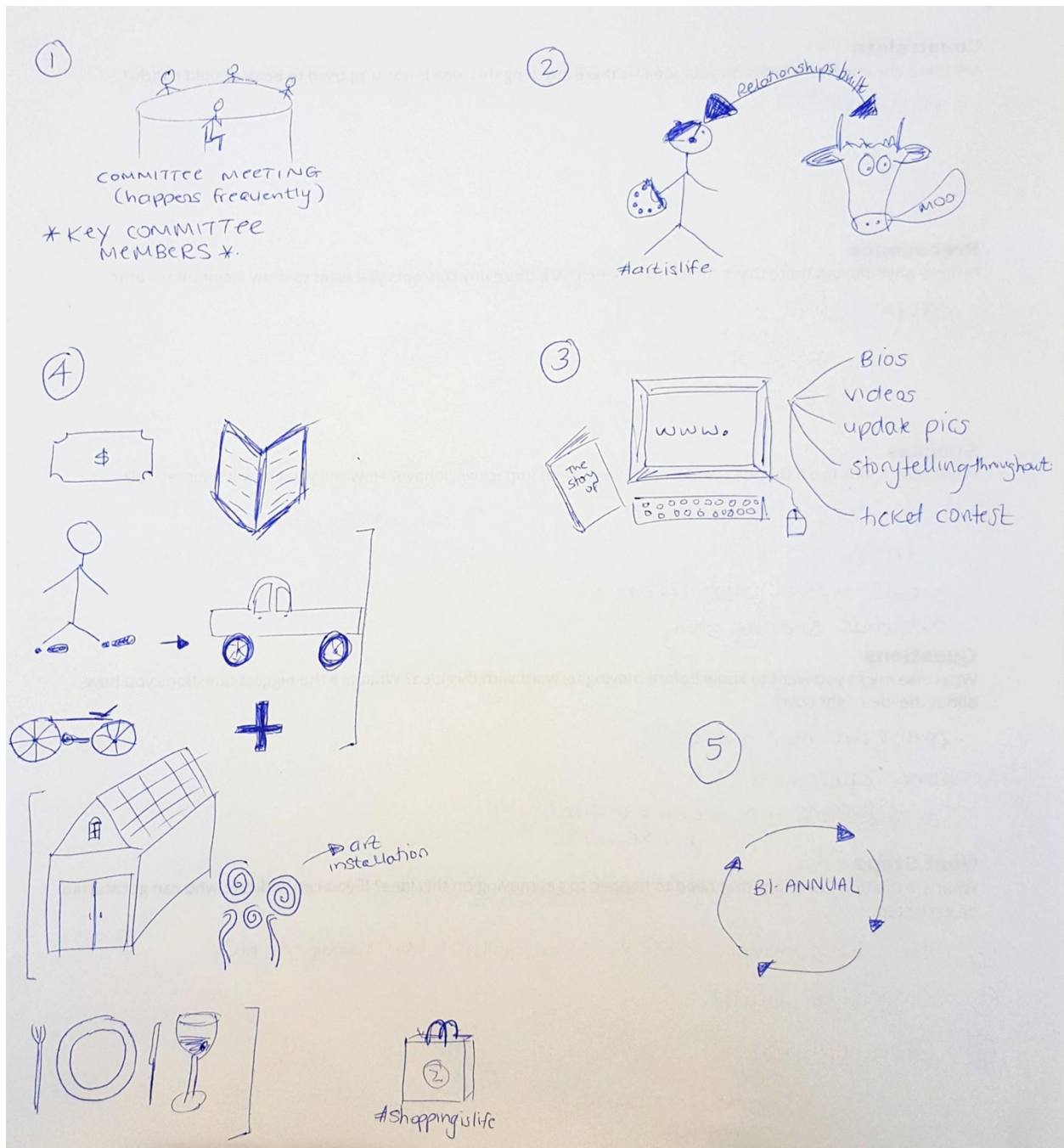
Next Steps

- Branding exercise concluded
- Establish leadership roles
- Seek suggestions, proposals, etc.
- Execute



CSA Program, Arts and Agriculture

Matching high-calibre artists with a community members (farmers, business owners, etc.) involved in agriculture. The artist creates an art installation, inspired by reciprocal relationship with community members, the place, and the business. This is a year-long program, done biannually, so people don't burn out. It could culminate with an event where people view the artwork.



People

Core Team

- CSA committee (volunteers from community)
- Agricultural point
- Bia point
- Marketing personnel
- Artist link

Connections

- Minnesota person (Started CSA)

Resources

- Time
- Money
 - Marketing – Print material
 - Artists?

Constraints

- Participation

Precedence

- CSA programs elsewhere
- Minnesota and beyond

Success

- Business benefit
- Increase traffic to Blyth
- Social media measurables
- Outsiders sharing story
- Increase awareness of Blyth and program

Questions

- Paying artists/farmers
- Time requirement
- Applications (Looking at quality of previous work)

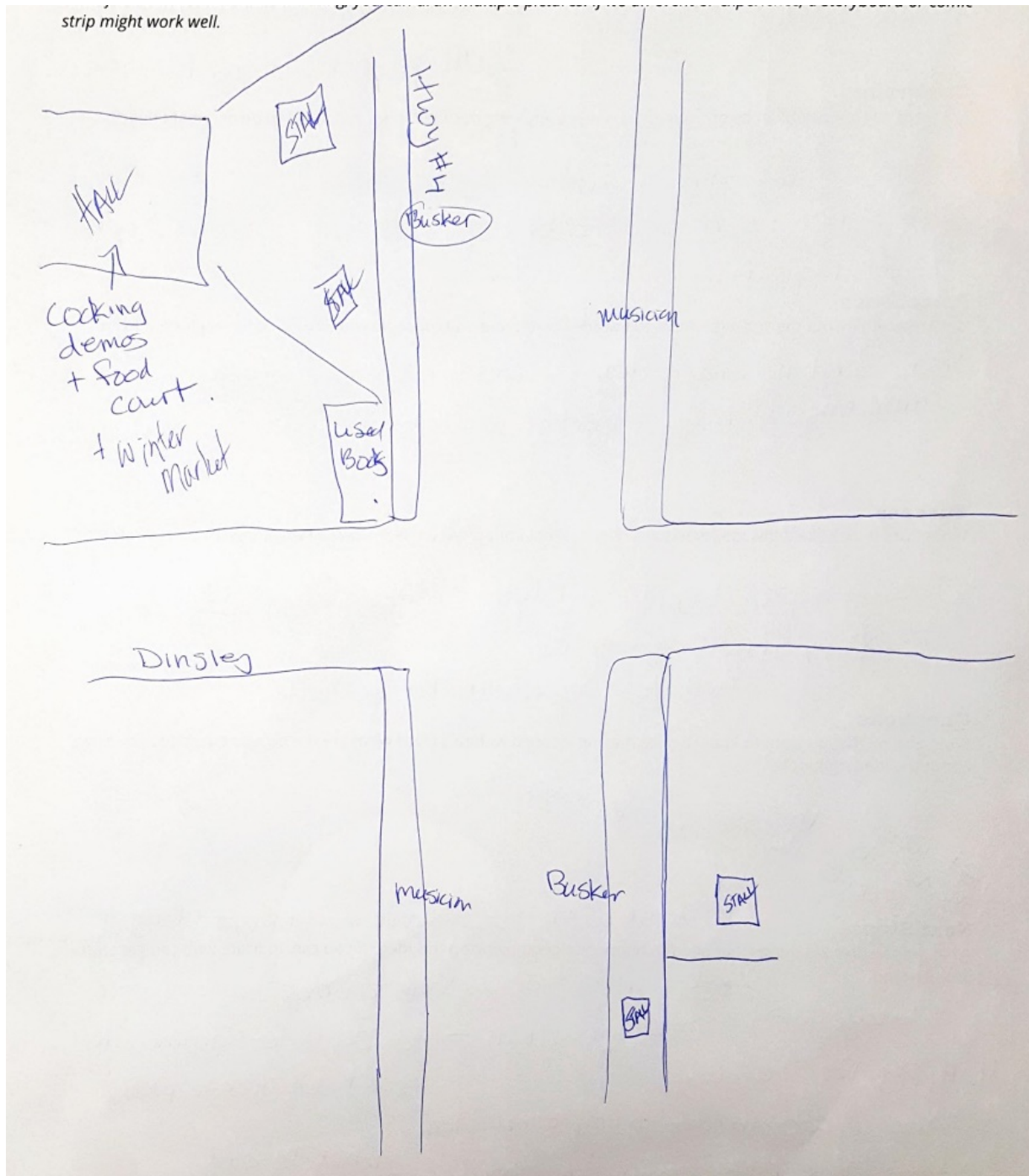
Next Steps

- Peter to communicate with Minnesota, Louisiana, and NC
- Committee builds
- Grant Options
 - OAC
 - Canada Council
 - OMAFRA
 - FCC



Blyth Market Day

A really, really good farmer's market or market day in Blyth that is "street and food theatre". Ideally, weekly on Sundays from 12-4pm—no one else is doing Sunday. The market would partner producers and farmers with local businesses (e.g. Queen's Bakery and someone who grows Aubergine). Stalls would be setup inside or outside of stores. It gets people walking up and down main street.



People

Core Team

- Merchants along “main street”
- Vendors/producers/farmers
- Artists/craftsperson

Connections

- Blyth BIA
- Federation of agriculture
- Makers market in Goderich
- Bayfield Farmers market

Resources

- Coordinator - Salary
- Farmers’ market association
- Marketing local makers
- Will get a RED grant

Constraints

- Stores staying open on Sunday? (Mind shift)
- Small and grow or go out big to draw people
- eaHHealth regulations?
- Traffic

Precedence

- Yes, but no one is doing Sunday 12 – 4 and really animating it beyond market vendors

Success

- 1000 people descend on Blyth every Sunday afternoon to stop, and eat
- First year-round market in county

Questions

- Connect weekly market to other events themes. (e.g. Transfigured)

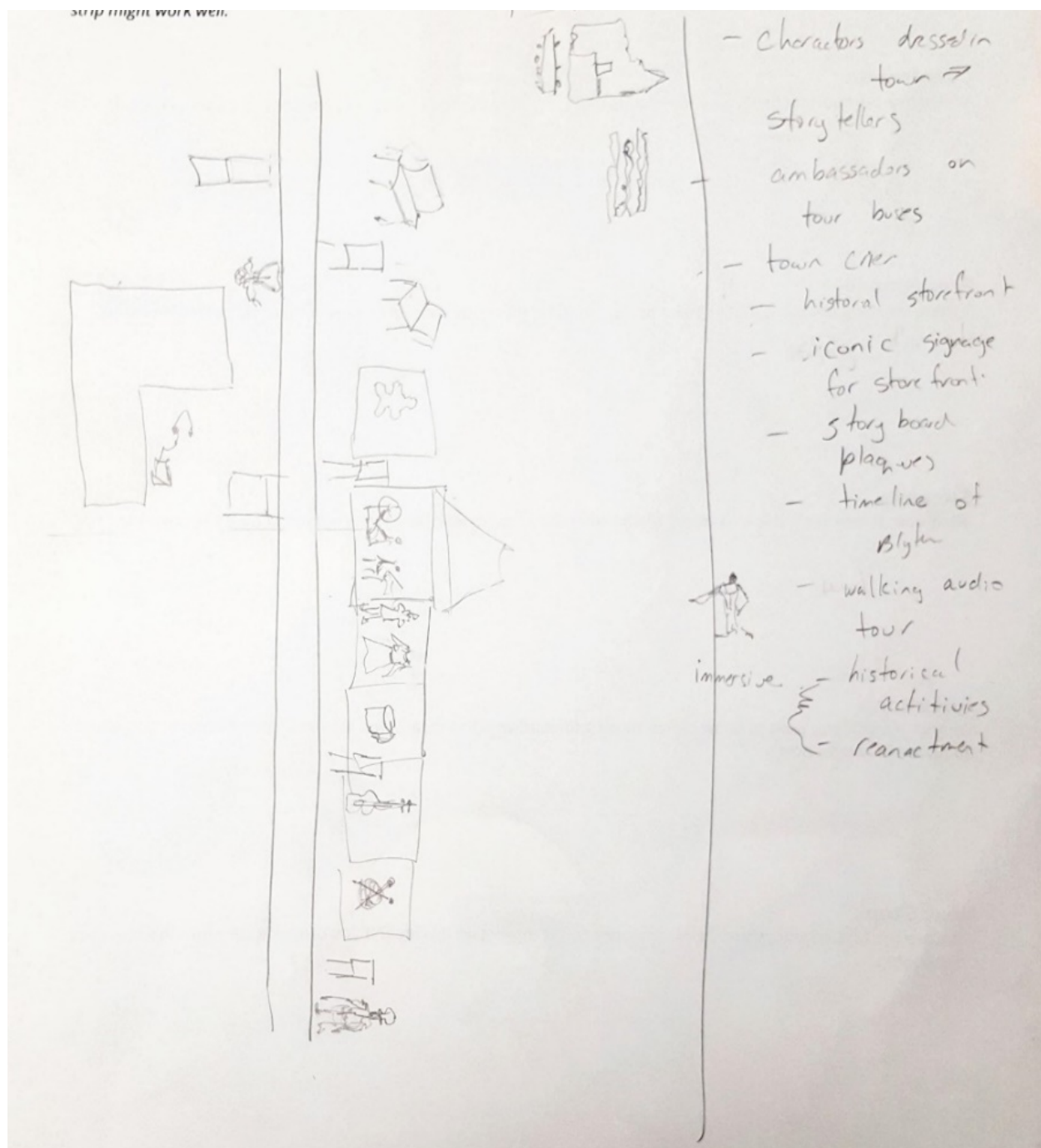
Next Steps

- Start with townhall to get input and buy from community
- Get potential partners together
- Put together business plan with BIA – go back to community to vet business plan
- Apply for funding
- Hire a coordinator to implement plan
- Feedback from community annually – What to add new ideas/artists



Blyth as a Stage

Bringing the history of Blyth to life through experience, audio, and visuals. Have storybook plaques throughout Blyth with links to an audio-visual tour, and timeline of Blyth somewhere (e.g. online, in signage throughout the town). Have a storefront that rotates with different artisans in the area, characters in town as storytellers, or a town crier during big events.



People

- Library
- Brock and Janice
- Jennifer
- Magare
- Citizen
- Theatre
- Blyth Singer
- Local business
- BIA
- Cowbell
- Snack water
- TCC
- Stratford roadtrips
- Mary
- Connie
- 14.19
- Nic
- Jacob

Resources

- Time and Money
- Volunteers
- Research
- Downtown improvement co-ordination
- Costume resource
- Writers
- Actors
- Recording studio
- Printing
- Storefront
- Sculptor/Artisan
- Historical planner
- Props
- Videographer
- Audio tour
- Scavenger

Constraints

- Authentic
- Unique
- Not black creek
- Professional
- Organization
- Seasonality

Precedence

- Picton
- Festival player
- Audio
- Tours
- Bayfield
- Historical characters
- Stratford
- Flutists
- Nature trail

Success

- Activate
- Regular scheduled bus tours
- Shared

Questions

- Organization
- Volunteer capacity
- Funding source
- Complexity

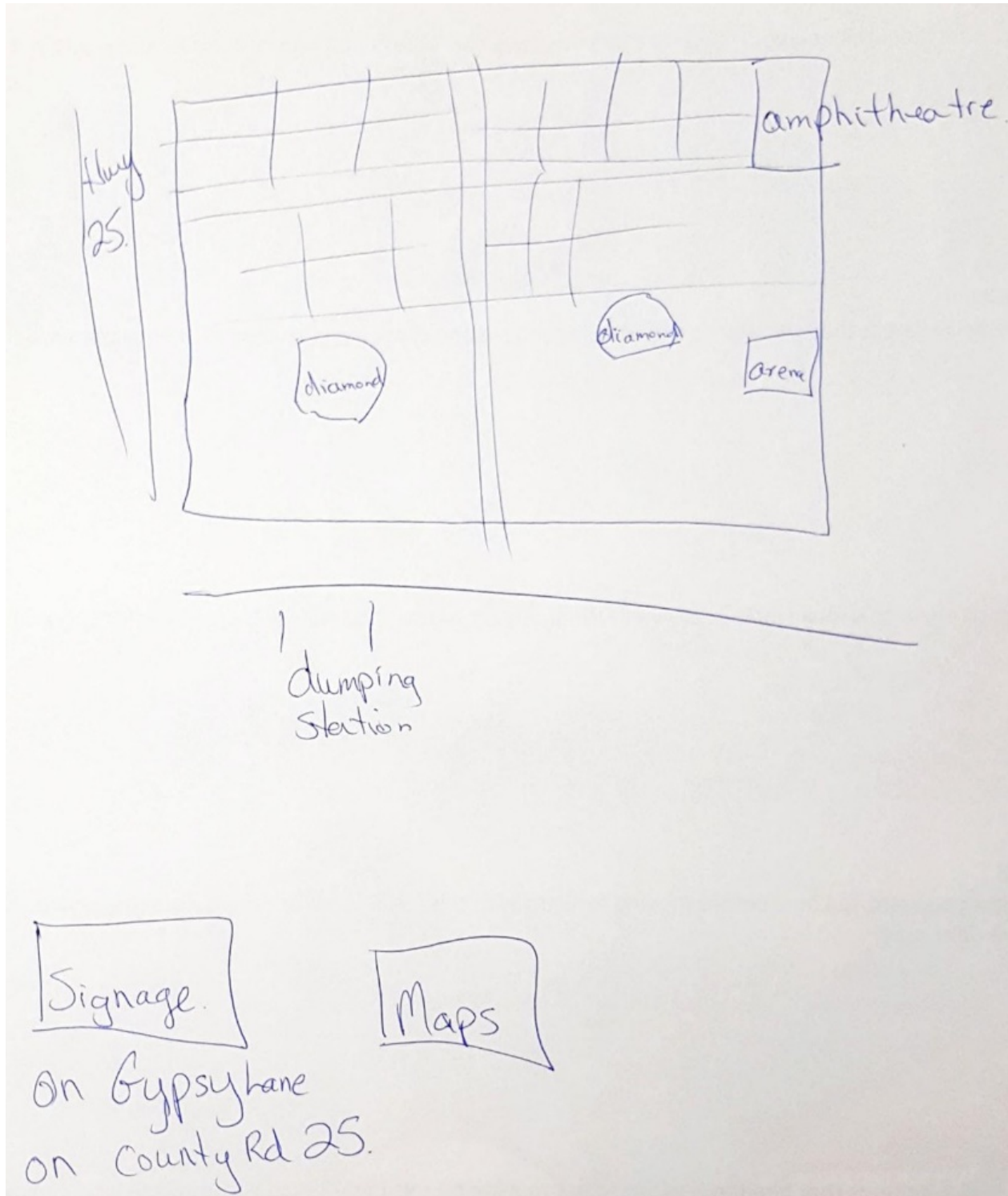
Next Steps

- Committee
- Community of doers
- Prioritized master plan – One project at a time



Campground Modernization

Modernize the Blyth campground by improving signage, promotion and amenities. The campground is currently underutilized. We've seen it bring in 360 people in a day, so imagine if it could be better leveraged.



People

Core Team

- Municipality
- Threshers group

Connections

- Threshers group
- Baseball groups
- Legion
- BIA
- Friends of the village
- CCRC
- Theatre Scout
- Girl Guides

Resources

- Financing
- Grants – Seek out for funding
- Staffing – Volunteer or paid

Constraints

- Municipal rules

Precedence

- Unique as it is located within the village limits

Success

- Occupancy of grounds
- 50% more usage
- More pedestrian traffic downtown as well as use of services and businesses on the grounds

Questions

- Response from municipality
- What effort and funding do they in now

Next Steps

- Talking to municipality
 - Pat Newson
 - Connie Goodall
 - BIA
 - Legion
- Legion

Next Steps

Leveraging the momentum and ideas that were generated in these three meetings, it is now up to stakeholders to move forward with choosing, refining and executing a project (or projects) to develop Blyth as a destination. A suggested first step is a self-organized convening of stakeholders to select one idea as a focus for initial development efforts.

While it's the responsibility of the Blyth community to drive the process, there is financial support available from RTO4 for specific types of projects. More information about these opportunities and about previously funded projects is available at <http://www.animationfund.ca/> and <http://rto4.ca/> or by contacting Andrea Gardi, , Senior Project Manager at RTO4, andrea@rto4.ca, 519-271-7000 ext. 205.

Appendix A: Full List of Project Ideas

When generating ideas for projects that would align with Blyth's DNA and contribute to the 5-10-year vision, participants were instructed to generate as many ideas as possible, and then prioritize the most promising. This is a full list of all the project ideas that were generated during the third facilitated session.

Project Ideas

Arts

- Heritage connections and storytelling
- Art in public spaces
- Host Alice Munro festival
- Nuit Blanche in the village
- Audio walking tour: Downloadable podcast
- Artist residency program, maybe this is subsidized for recent arts graduates so they don't have to move home

Marketing

- "One Blyth" digital presence
- Reach out to descendants of Blyth families
- Highway 4 as "main street, Huron" working with central and South Huron
- Town marketing plan with branding
- Linking our websites to enhance our digital footprint

Hygiene

- One stop. Reservations: Events, Festivals, Accommodation, dining
- Map (G2G)
- G2G trail: Signage to direct users into town
- Walkability improvements: Lights, crosswalks, traffic calming
- Pedestrian crosswalks downtown

Attractions

- A really good farmers market (street, food, and theatre)
- Greenway trail: Market, building, etc. (Streetscape plan)
- Reunion every 5 years for historic event

- History information centre re: Blyth
- Digitize records: properties, cemeteries, voters' lists
- Historical pictures: houses, shops, landscape

Signage and safety

- Enhance pedestrian safety
- Helpful signage
- North, South, East, and West entrance façade
- Pedestrian traffic controls at 4:25
- Queen Street sidewalk/streetscaping improvements
- Gateway signage (Attractive/welcoming)
- Gateways
- Flashing light on stop signs

Venues and events

- Permanent fence at fairground
- Repeat R2R Conference
- Fare on 4 (or similar)
- Blyth street dinner again!
- Village wide events
- Farmers/makers market
- Winter fest in Blyth

Municipal Hygiene

- Street repair (safe)
- Sidewalk repair (safe)
- Updated main street and side streets that are broken

Branding

- Online calendar of events
- Create concise slogan
- Update branding and digital profile
- Blyth.ca: One website for all
- Being friendly, welcoming
- Living the Blyth – Brand

Leverage G2G

- “Connect” G2G to village
- G2G themed hikes that start in Blyth
- Walking and biking tours in village
- Integrate more community into bonanza weekend
- Handout G2G paper maps at trail entrance

Improve aesthetic of Queen Street

- Queen Street facade improvement
- Restore store fronts
- Queen Street façade “You are welcome”
- Bring back missing stores in the community (Pharmacy)

Modernize Downtown (Make Downtown more Attractive)

- Street/stop light
- Downtown façade strategy
- Art and agriculture walk of fame
- Hotel
- Short-term accommodation development
- Free wifi in downtown Blyth
- High speed internet everywhere
- Join Cowbell by walkway/sidewalk to downtown
- Artist and those in theatre residence

Rural environment immersion

- Farm tours
- Rural cooking expo/festival
- Agricultural conferences
- Development of “Farm Tour” options

Promotion of shows and event

- Blyth markers further out (right now not Monkton)
- Country supper highlighting local fare
- Blyth festival on blue Ontario’s west coast signb
- Winter sporting shows
- Just help promote the shows
- Partner with the paper and increase the distribution of the festival education

Attraction for tourists

- Tourism packages
- Shunpiker Destination
- Door Open: Tunney, Brewery, Elevator, Floormill, Theatre
- Music festival (Lucknow Mitf, Goderich, celtic)

Business

- More relevant retail
- Late – night business incentives (festival hours)

Promote Activities

- Utilize recreational facilities for tournaments (Soccer, hockey)
- Advertise campground
- Youth activities (retention): Paintball, mini-golf, and go-karts
- Promote exercise: G2G, biking, classes

Effective tourist transportation

- Connect with tourism agents
- People movers from intersection to downtown
- An active transportation freeway to Goderich on the G2G (Bridges, Paving)

Overall things to improve

- Fibre Internet (connectivity)
- Better signage and directions
- Joining business (store to store, farm to store, water to Blyth)
- Advertising our neighbours

Weekend Activities

- The bridges of Huron county
- Weekend destination within town and on farm events

Sense of arrival

- Town gateway/sign that people want to take a selfie at.
- The sign should be a stage (theatre) theme where people can interact with the annual/daily feature.
- The feature should be changeable so that the arrival piece is always fresh.
- E.g. feature could be live actors, statues/sculpture, animatronic, dinosaurs, fuzzy mascots, whatever...

A carbon free Blyth. Canada's first carbon free village

Food

- Forging for food in local woodlots
- Crafter's showcase space
- Promote healthy eating (fresh and locally produce and restaurants)

Accommodation

- More housing
- Retirement village for creative, well heeled, and educated

Summer Events

- Peter Kenyan talk next June
- CSA – Community Supported Arts (Project, farm, arts)
- G2G Relay race
- Beer and win marathon

Rural-centred educational program

- Blyth Farm School
- Intrapreneurial fellowship program
- Rural tech hub
- Outdoor school for little people
- Combining Blyth and rural together

Welcome sign

- Welcome point
- Welcome to Blyth unique (ei. Arch)
- Template for town signage

Social Media/Digital

- Agreed upon hashtags #socialmedia
- Link community social media #Blythlove
- An app for Blyth

Storytelling

- Link existing business (longtime) with core

- Day in the life of a local
- Write our story
- Internal newsletters (all stakeholders consistently informed)

Tourism package

- Destination package
- Partnerships and packages (B&B, theatre, restaurant)

Outdoor/water activity

- Shinrin-yoku (bath in trees)
- Flooding G2G (rink)
- Outdoor rink

Investment

- Infrastructure (Social, civic, physical)
- Take risk and opportunities will follow

Getting connected (Glass in the ground)

R2R Conference 2018

Farm Activities

- Farmers market
- Unique farm stays
- Rural retreats
- Field of dreams (High culture events hosted within farm fields)
- Farm tours
- Farm to culture
- Sheering and weaving days
- Community canning days

Historical and cultural activities

- Hamlet in the Hamlet
- Interactive community theatre
- Theatre year round
- Audio walking tour
- More pertinent annual events

- Witches walk
- Augmented reality tour showing what Blyth looked like in the past
- Historical timeline of Blyth
- Historical Blyth character ambassadors (in person and online)

Art Activities

- Artisan symposium
- Fashion arts and creative textiles studio
- Sustainable textiles week
- Acknowledge significant contributions of notable artists, authors, musicians, actors, playwrights, agriculture, and innovation

Improvement in landscaping

- Small park off main street
- Main street building renovations
- Landscaping main street
- Using food plants (veggies) instead of flowers for landscaping
- Community improvement plan
- Sculptural historical signage
- Rotating historical storefront
- Natural dye flower ditches
- Activities: Trails through woods and Maitland River
- Walk/bikeway through town and picnic

More access to shops

- More shops
- Consistent better business hours
- Building business program “Similar to win this space”

Website showing all the things to do and see Blyth

Appendix B: Strengths

Working in small groups, participants in the first facilitated meeting generated a list of Blyth's strengths as a tourist destination and clustered their answers into common themes. The bullet points and quotes supporting a theme are the verbatim responses and comments of participants. These strengths highlight the unique DNA of Blyth, and can also be leveraged in future initiatives to increase Blyth's desirability as a tourism destination.

Compelling Stories and Talented Storytellers

- The festival story really compelling
- Authentic
- Service and knowledge of each respective business
- Creative residents
- Calibre of artists and art
- History
- Vast amount of historical information about Blyth
- Heritage collection and Vodden's

"It's living history. The way the community engages with its history, it's onstage, not behind glass."

"It's not like anywhere else in Ontario. It's a frontier, for Canadian theatre, for people who've never been outside the city."

Creative, Cultural Experiences

- New draw Cowbell (Cowbell craft beer)
- Quality of coffees / restaurants
- Theatre (Canadian, premier, unique)
- Unique experiences (festival, cowbell)
- Scope of Options
- Locals / artists co-mingling
- Old Mill
- Rural arts centre
- Unique events / businesses

"The calibre of the artists and the facility—it's super theatre. We under-promise and over-deliver."

"I'm seeing a creative, entrepreneurial, artsy theme."

Caring Community and People

- Welcoming
- Wonderful sense of community
- Community pride
- Friendly people
- Engaged residents
- Strong volunteer spirit
- Knowledgeable people
- The people

"The community is up on stage all the time. People should see themselves as part of the attraction."

"People who visit say to us 'we have to go back to Blyth, the people were so nice'."

Rural Community with Natural Surroundings

- Beautiful trails and greenspaces to explore
- Close to lake
- Quiet
- Country living
- Blyth's aesthetic
- G2G Trail
- No traffic
- Campground
- Country fans

"We're not trying to emulate the city. We're different and that's a good thing."

Strong Momentum

- Excitement for the future
- Current momentum
- Local buy-in to development
- Visiting groups
- Captive audiences
- Engaged key stakeholders
- Blyth already has a following
- Buzz about Blyth

"It's a story of resiliency. The community has constantly had to reinvent itself...and it's our local people who have stepped forward and said we need to change."

Existing signage and benefits from location

- Signage, major highway
- Ease of finding

Appendix C: Weaknesses

Working in small groups, participants in the first facilitated meeting generated a list of Blyth's weaknesses as a tourist destination and clustered their answers into common themes. The bullet points supporting a theme are the verbatim responses of participants. Many of these weaknesses have the potential to be addressed in the following facilitated meetings and in subsequent projects.

"Experiential things to do are siloed, but we're not that far away from putting them into a collection called the Blyth Experience."

Lack of Housing and Accommodation

- Accommodation for artists
- Accommodation for visitors
- Limited available housing

Limited Business Hours (evenings, weekends, winter)

- Evening and weekends
- Hours of Operation
- After 5pm (October – May)
- Mondays and Sundays
- Slow winters
- Lack of shoulder season activities

Walkability within town and lack of transit

- Can't walk from Cowbell to Downtown
- Businesses are too spread out
- Major highway traffic
- Geography
- Delineation of downtown
- No bus / transportation

- Safety

Lacking infrastructure, signage and aesthetic appeal

- Sense of arrival
- Signage
- Appealing curbside
- Streetscape
- Parking
- Visibility
- Wayfinding
- Need downtown strip redone to enhance historical building

Not enough collaboration on one experience and one message

- No holistic town feeling/town story
- Linkages between experiences
- Independent
- Organization
- Lack of one stop booking
- Tourists do only one thing (e.g. threshers stay at camping)
- Silos

Not enough to do (or people don't know what exists)

- Not enough going on (Come for theatre, eat, and leave)
- Perception of not much to do
- Lack of information
- Not enough interest in history (which will set Blyth apart)
- Too many static, empty or unopen businesses during peak seasons
- Lack of variety of shopping
- Isolation (service lacking / variety lacking)

Insufficient retention strategy for visiting groups

- Retention of captive audiences
- Conversion of visiting groups

Difficulty adapting to change

- Change susceptible (Carbon free society, travel, economy)

- Rural conservation is bred in the bone!

Poor online presence and media coverage

- Coordination of website for Blyth
- Digital presence
- Social media consistency
- The local news media (except for the Citizen)
- Lack of destination marketing plan

Lack of support available to local business owners

- Lack of resources (business people don't have time "to do it all")
- Business weakness
- Slow service
- Limited development properties

Appendix D: Opportunities

Working in small groups, participants in the first facilitated meeting generated a list of potential opportunities for Blyth as a tourist destination and clustered their answers into common themes. The bullet points supporting a theme are the verbatim responses of participants. Many of these opportunities could serve as launch points for subsequent projects, and the following facilitated meetings will build on and add to this list.

"All of us have different ideas, but similar perspectives on a new and improved Blyth. We have ideas that are not too far-fetched. We can do this."

Increase the Storytelling

- Storytelling
- Opportunity to create a great story to tell visitors
- Tell a destination story
- Highlight stories of locals

Build out Accommodation Options

- Accommodation
- Boutique hotel
- If a family from Detroit is willing to stay in a tent, they would love a cabin with hydro. We have space.
- Blyth campground is huge town asset, how can we utilize it even more?

Spread the Story Digitally

- Digital sophistication
- Better advertising
- Short highly shareable videos
- Cohesive branding of facilities

Collaborate on Blyth Tourism

- Community
- Working together
- Community contribution

Animate the Downtown

- Other stuff to do – Increase the vibrancy quotient
- Night life
- Need more retail
- More small shops or businesses
- Create village wide events
- Gourmet opportunities
- Have tourist attraction (e.g., old rail)
- Green spaces

Increase Investment and Support Entrepreneurship

- Investment
- Commercial kitchen (Culinary training and entrepreneurial business)

Connect to the Downtown, from Across Town

- Something that will draw people from intersection to downtown
- Spread the wow up, down the streets, and around town. Animate and beautify.
- Better sidewalks/traffic flow
- Signage
- Opportunities to bring folks Uptown

Bundle the Tourism Experience

- Providing a sample itinerary of how people could spend a day/weekend here
- Bundle experiences at point of booking
- Create destination packaging
- Packaging similar experience/ assets

Leverage Blyth's Existing Events and Facilities

- Utilize the Blyth theatre year round
- More public art
- Theatre attendance (Room for growth)
- Longer professional theatre season
- Use facilities for conferences
- Regional group tours (Bus)
- Evenings and weekends