

Summer Village of White Sands

2026 Strategic Plan

Mission Statement

The Summer Village of White Sands is committed to fostering a friendly, safe, and inclusive lakeside community that balances recreation with environmental stewardship. We provide responsible, cost-effective services while preserving our rural charm, protecting Buffalo Lake, and creating opportunities for families, seniors, and visitors to connect, belong, and build lasting memories.

Vision Statement

White Sands is a vibrant lakeside village known for its strong sense of community, beautiful natural surroundings, and thoughtful, balanced growth. We envision a future with enhanced recreational amenities, sustainable shoreline and lake health, improved water access and infrastructure, and a welcoming village centre — all while protecting the character, affordability, and small-community spirit that make White Sands unique along the south shore of Buffalo Lake.

The Background

The 2026 Strategic Planning Session provided an opportunity for the Summer Village of White Sands Council and Administration to look beyond the current year's operational needs and budget cycle and set priorities for future years. The underlying strategic purpose was to collaborate on a vision that sets organizational goals that can be realistically accomplished. Respecting both the short term and long-term ideas and to work towards deliverable action plans.

The Plan

The Summer Village of White Sands 2026 Strategic Plan is a living document that should be reviewed and updated regularly. As priorities evolve and progress is made, the Plan must be re-evaluated to reflect new opportunities, emerging challenges, and changing community needs. New initiatives and action items will be added as required to ensure alignment with long-term goals.

Part 1 of the Plan establishes the future vision and strategic direction for the Village. It identifies our core goals, builds on our strengths, outlines areas for improvement, and defines key priorities for future focus. It also sets out the future vision by time horizon — describing what the community aims to achieve in 5, 10, and 30 years.

Part 2 of the Plan is the action development phase. Through a collaborative roundtable process, Council and staff presented ideas and proposals for consideration. These included operational improvements and broader strategic advocacy initiatives.

All ideas were collected, discussed, and prioritized through a voting process to establish clear action priorities. Participants contributed ideas and engaged in constructive discussion, including advocating for and building support around their proposals. The outcome reflects the priorities identified collectively through this collaborative process.

Together, Part 1 defines the vision and direction, and Part 2 identifies the prioritized actions to move the Summer Village of White Sands toward that future.

PART 1

Future Visions and Goals for the Summer Village of White Sands:

- **Preserve Small-Village Character**
Protect the rural charm, inclusive culture, and strong community spirit that define White Sands.
- **Balance Recreation with Environmental Stewardship**
Enhance recreational amenities while protecting the lake, shoreline, trees, and green spaces to ensure long-term ecological health and sustainability.
- **Strengthen Community Connection**
Foster a welcoming environment where families, seniors, and visitors gather, build relationships, and create lifelong memories through vibrant social and recreational opportunities.
- **Ensure Financial Sustainability**
Deliver essential services—roads, parks, waste, and infrastructure—in an efficient, cost-effective manner while preserving and growing property values.
- **Protect and Advocate for Lake Health**
Champion for lake stabilization, healthy shorelines, and responsible water use to safeguard Buffalo Lake for future generations.
- **Support Thoughtful, Measured Growth**
Encourage development that aligns with the village’s character—avoiding over-commercialization while enhancing livability and recreational access.
- **Remain a Destination for Living and Leisure**
Sustain White Sands as a safe, beautiful, and desirable place to live, vacation, and spend weekends.

Communication – Building on our Strengths:

- **Promote Community Events & Activities**
Actively communicate and highlight planned and informal events to strengthen participation and community connection.
- **Communicate to Our Core Community Groups**
Ensure consistent outreach to families, seniors, and seasonal residents through clear, accessible communication channels.
- **Showcase the Beach and Lake Experience**
Regularly share updates on lake conditions, beach improvements, and recreational opportunities to reinforce pride and engagement.
- **Improve Transparency on Services**
Clearly communicate how core services—roads, snow removal, mowing, waste management—are delivered and maintained.

- **Strengthen Responsiveness Through Clear Communication**
Continue being responsive to property owner concerns by acknowledging issues promptly and providing timely updates on actions taken.
- **Demonstrate Financial Stewardship**
Communicate budget priorities and financial decisions in simple, understandable terms to build trust and confidence in responsible management.

Areas for Improvement and Future Focus:

- **Enhance Lake Access & Infrastructure**
Improve key amenities such as a functional boat launch, shoreline access, dock and lift storage, beach sand maintenance, and overall lake usability.
- **Better Balance Seasonal and Permanent Resident Needs**
Develop clearer priorities that thoughtfully address both year-round and seasonal perspectives while maintaining fairness and balance.
- **Improve Communication & Visibility of Actions**
Strengthen outward communication so residents understand what Council and administration are working on, what decisions are being made, and why.
- **Increase Engagement with Younger Generations**
Expand recreational opportunities and programming to make the community feel active and appealing to families and younger residents.
- **Shift from Reactive to Strategic Decision-Making**
Anchor Council discussions and decisions more consistently to the long-term vision instead of responding only to immediate issues.
- **Align Budget Decisions with People-Centered Priorities**
Ensure financial decisions prioritize community impact, long-term sustainability, and quality of life over short-term cost considerations alone.
- **Integrate Recreation and Environmental Planning**
Make deliberate decisions that balance improved lake access and amenities with shoreline protection and environmental stewardship.

Future Vision by Time Horizon

In 5 Years

- Permanent boat launch solution in place
- Village centre strengthened (potential hall expansion / central gathering space)
- Full community internet access
- Lake stabilization project completed; shoreline lease renewed
- More vibrant community with increased activities and engagement
- More permanent and seasonal residents with thoughtfully developed lots
- Preserved natural spaces, trees, and green areas
- Strong rural charm and neighborly feel maintained

In 10 Years

- Last large land parcel (35+ acres) developed with integrated green space and pond
- Better road access and additional feeder roads (some paved improvements)
- Rapid response fire unit with trained volunteers
- Recreation coordinator supporting programming and events
- Expanded water access and community-use spaces (playgrounds, trails, disc golf, etc.)
- Continued growth while protecting lake health and community character

In 30 Years

- Strong, established sense of community
- Improved infrastructure — potential water & sewer services
- Breakwater with improved dock and boat launch infrastructure
- Limited, thoughtful commercial development (e.g., convenience/snack services)
- Balance through planning the tension between growth and protecting lake health
- Maintains its distinct identity as a small lakeside village — preserve its unique rural lakeside character while adapting to responsible growth pressure.

PART 2

Strategic Planning Items Ranking

	Item	Council Vote	Staff Vote	TOTAL
1	Establish Parks & Recreation Committee	18	13	31
2	Village Centre	15	16	31
3	Development Opportunities	7	8	15
4	Shoreline Management	8	4	12
5	Government Advocacy	5	6	11
6	Safety	4	4	8
7	Community Signage		8	8
8	Stormwater Management Plan		4	4
9	Municipal Storage Compound	2	2	4
10	Community Investment by Donation		1	1
11	South Shore Community Committee			
12	Permanent Committees (Public at Large)			

Strategic Action Planning

#1 -Establish Parks & Recreation Committee

Establishing a dedicated Recreation Committee to guide, prioritize, and implement community-driven recreational improvements. This committee would provide structure, coordination, and long-term focus to enhance amenities while preserving the village's natural character. Initial ideas focus on activating underutilized spaces, improving lake and land-based recreation, strengthening community connection, and creating seasonal programming. Proposed priorities include:

- developing community gardens and orchards (including mapping and celebrating existing natural orchards through a festival),
- enhancing beach access with targeted improvements such as play structures and designated swimming areas,
- adding recreational features like disc golf or a par 3 concept,
- expanding nature trails and trail connections,
- improving spaces such as Jack's Pond,
- implementing clear places and spaces wayfinding signage, and
- establishing seasonal events such as a winter festival or berry festival.

These ideas provide a foundation for discussion, feasibility review, budgeting, and phased implementation aligned with community capacity and long-term vision.

#2 -Village Centre

The Village Centre represents a key opportunity to create a central gathering hub that strengthens community connection and supports modest, thoughtful activation of existing assets. Action planning should focus on enhancing the space as a welcoming destination for residents and visitors while maintaining alignment with the village's rural character.

Initial ideas include

- improving outdoor gathering areas through features such as a covered deck and expanded seating,
- exploring the conversion of underutilized spaces like the hall garage into functional recreational space,
- improving shop yard storage with better organization and visual aesthetics, and
- identifying potential commercial lease opportunities for small-scale services such as an ice cream stand or community concession.

These concepts require feasibility assessment, cost analysis, and phased implementation to ensure improvements are practical, financially sustainable, and supportive of long-term community goals.

#3 – Development Opportunities

Planning around development opportunities focuses on guiding thoughtful growth while protecting community character and environmental values. Priority should be placed on:

- strategically attracting a developer for the remaining 35+/- acres of developable land in alignment with the village's long-term vision, statutory plans, and green space preservation goals.
- identifying and formally designating key community spaces and common areas to ensure they are protected and enhanced as growth occurs.
- additional considerations include reviewing and clarifying short-term rental (Airbnb) regulations to balance property rights with neighborhood impacts, and
- exploring carefully scaled small-business or small-scale commercial opportunities that complement the village.

These initiatives require clear policy direction, land-use planning, and phased implementation to ensure development supports sustainable growth and community benefit.

#4 – Shoreline Management

Shoreline management is a priority area centered on protecting lake health while improving access, functionality, and long-term infrastructure planning. Action planning should focus on:

- developing clear policies for dock and lift storage to ensure consistency,
- establishing consistent shoreline maintenance standards for White Sands operations staff, and
- development standards for owners to help preserve environmental quality and maintain the aesthetic character of the community.
- securing a long-term lake lease to provide stability and certainty for future planning and shoreline investments.
- identifying and implementing a sustainable boat launch solution supported by consultant analysis and options for Council consideration remains a key infrastructure objective.

Together, these initiatives create a structured approach to managing shoreline use while balancing recreation, stewardship, and regulatory compliance.

#5 - Government Advocacy

Government advocacy focuses on strengthening relationships with provincial and regional partners to advance infrastructure, funding, and regulatory priorities that support long-term community sustainability. Key advocacy efforts include

- pursuing provincial road rights-of-way and access points from Highway 56, Highway 601, and Highway 835 to the Summer Village of White Sands.
- actively seek grant opportunities to support future water infrastructure and related capital projects.
- actively seek grant opportunities to support boat launch reconstruction and related shoreline capital projects.
- advocacy to streamline approvals and secure timely regulatory support for sustainable boat launch solutions.
- engagement with provincial authorities on effective stormwater management standards and guidance to help protect lake health, including possible grant opportunities to develop a community wide plan.

Coordinated advocacy strategies will position the Village to leverage external partnerships and funding to achieve strategic priorities.

#6 – Safety

Safety planning focuses on proactive risk management, emergency preparedness, and community resilience. Action planning should:

- strengthen formal risk management processes to identify and mitigate potential hazards across village operations, infrastructure, and shoreline areas.
- expand FireSmart initiatives on both private and public lands will reduce wildfire risk and improve overall community safety.
- explore a village-owned or south shore co-owned fire response unit, supported by trained local volunteers would enhance emergency response capacity and local readiness.
- evaluate the implementation of emergency alert systems—such as sirens or notification systems to improve communication during critical situations and ensure timely warnings for residents and visitors.

These initiatives collectively build a safer, more prepared community for the long term.

Approved by Council on March 16, 2026 with motion #26:03:10