



In 2000, the Township of Assiginack in conjunction with several regional stakeholders participated with the LaCloche Manitoulin Business Assistance Corporation (LAMBAC) in a Strategic Plan called *LaCloche Manitoulin Let's Go...* This study was conducted to identify the top 10 economic development related initiatives for implementation in this region. With over 130 recommendations brought forward, promotion of Manitoulin Island as a "Retirement Destination" was identified near the top of the list.

In 2001, a steering committee was established to develop the strategy with representatives from LAMBAC, the Township of Assiginack, the Township of Central Manitoulin and the Town of Northeastern Manitoulin and the Islands.

In 2002 & 2003, the committee received funding support to conduct surveys that included assessing the strength of the market demand for retirement accommodation on Manitoulin Island, the type of housing people were looking for, the relative demand for rental versus ownership arrangements, the amenities that attract retirees to a community and the most promising markets in Ontario to promote Manitoulin as a retirement destination. One of the most interesting findings from an exit survey was that 78% of people interviewed said that they would like to retire on Manitoulin Island.

In 2004, the committee evolved into the Manitoulin Island Retirement Living Association and began recruiting private sector partners to further develop the association and market Manitoulin to people seeking retirement options. Our first step established a website. In 2005, more funding was provided by FedNor and Service Canada and the organization hired an advertising firm to design a logo and develop a marketing plan. Further research through development of the marketing campaign identified the fact that the Island was not only attractive to retirees but also to younger adults seeking lifestyles complementary to outdoor - active living. A decision was made to broaden our focus and rename the project "Manitoulin Living".

The Manitoulin Living Association has since welcomed the Township of Billings as an additional public partner and has expanded our private partner membership list to over twenty members including real estate firms, property developers, building contractors, local retail businesses, resorts and lodges.

The Manitoulin Living Project is jointly administered by the partnering townships - each taking a turn. The next phase proposes a 2-year marketing plan designed to raise the awareness of the program, inspire additional partners and of course, attract newcomers to Manitoulin. To date, we've observed significant growth in new website visits, information package requests and have had the pleasure of meeting new residents who learned about Manitoulin Island through Manitoulin Living promotions.

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