

**MAYOR
MATTHEW
SHOEMAKER**



MID TERM REPORT

RELEASED: FALL 2024



MID TERM REPORT



A better future for Sault Ste. Marie will not come about by wishing it to be, or by virtue of good luck. The City needs to take deliberate action to make it happen. It starts with leadership that plans to get things done and then acts on those plans, addressing key challenges like housing, economic growth and public safety.

Sault Ste. Marie's history is ripe with examples of missed opportunities. From the prime property of the old hospital being left to deteriorate for a decade, to the unrealized potential of the Gateway Site, to the decades of talk (but lack of action) about the Port of Algoma development, the list of missed opportunities is understandably frustrating. However, we are finally moving beyond just talking about these opportunities and this mid-term report will delve into each of these projects in a bit more detail.

When it comes to the old hospital property, I am committed to taking action to ensure these facilities are demolished and redeveloped. The site plays a key role in unlocking a prime waterfront asset for future development, and the decision to buy these properties was necessary to ensure their demolition, and pave the way for redevelopment.

For years, the City took every legal measure possible to enforce by-laws against the old hospital owners. Nearly \$100,000, in addition to 400+ staff hours, has been spent fighting them in court and trying to enforce municipal property standards by-laws.

The Building Division estimates that another \$30,000 has been spent on contractor invoices to make repairs the former owner did not make. Continuing down this same path would only incur further costs without any progress. The reality is clear: the buildings need to be demolished and the former owner was not going to make that happen.

I wasn't letting the status quo remain while the buildings continued to deteriorate. The cost to purchase these properties wasn't ideal, but was necessary. There was no perfect option, but we chose the path that offered a clear plan with the shortest possible timeline for a return-on-investment. City Council's unanimous support for the plan positions us to transform this site from a costly eyesore into a source of revenue and activity. One way we did so was by giving prospective purchasers with plans to demolish the buildings extra points in the sale process we are now undertaking. After demolition, we are seeking proposals to develop the site with new residential or commercial units, with permits submitted within a maximum of five years. Proposals that include earlier development will also receive additional scoring.

With a sale price estimated to be approximately \$2 million, the City could see its investment recovered within a decade if a high-density building were put up. Over 20 years, that initial investment could generate between \$5 million and \$15.3 million. This return on investment is worth pursuing, especially as we resolve a long-standing problem in the process. Importantly, the City's 2023 budget surplus of \$6 million made funds available for the purchase, so there will be no tax increase for residents.

In the following sections, you'll find updates on key initiatives and projects that demonstrate the City's commitment to action. From ongoing economic development to housing and public safety improvements, these updates show the real progress we're making toward building a stronger, more vibrant future for Sault Ste. Marie.



Mayor Matthew Shoemaker

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A PLAN FOR PROGRESS - IN MOTION

My 2022 Platform: **A Plan for Progress** offers a plan for Sault Ste. Marie rooted in community input, and throughout my mayoralty, I will provide updates.



○ PLATFORM COMMITMENT

Supporting Downtown Revitalization

✓ ACTION

The Gateway Site has been at the heart of urban renewal and economic development discussions in Sault Ste. Marie since 1986, yet no project has come to fruition. The sustained interest highlights its potential, but one crucial element has been missing – a developer with both the vision and resources to bring it to life. We now have that in place with Tony Porco and the SIS Group. City Council approved selling the parcel of land surrounding the building that housed the former Mill Market to the SIS Group, which plans to convert it into a two-storey building that will be home to a automotive museum butterfly emporium, deli/restaurant and event space.

○ PLATFORM COMMITMENT

More Meetings and Collaboration with Peer Governments

✓ ACTION

Garden River First Nation and the City celebrated the successful conclusion of a Cultural Competency project with a Wampum Belt Ceremony on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The Wampum Belt represents the shared commitment to a stronger future between GRFN and the City. It serves as a reminder of the commitments we've made and the responsibilities we have to one another and to the land. Additionally, for the first time since 2017, the City hosted a joint meeting with Sault Michigan's City Council, where they discussed key economic development projects, including the Soo Locks and the Port of Algoma.



A PLAN FOR PROGRESS - IN MOTION



○ PLATFORM COMMITMENT

Enhancing our Quality of Life

✓ ACTION

This summer saw the opening of Sault Ste. Marie's second municipal splash pad at Manzo Park in the west end. Recreational facilities like splash pads are vital for fostering a vibrant, healthy community by offering fun, free activities for local residents. Having been

involved in the development of the first splash pad in 2019, I remain committed to championing these kinds of projects that enhance our quality of life.

○ PLATFORM COMMITMENT

Taking Action against Negligent Landlords

✓ ACTION

A Vacant Homes Tax was approved by City Council to help address the issue of unoccupied and neglected properties. These vacant homes not only fall into disrepair but also reduce the availability of housing. I'm committed to pursuing all possible measures to prevent landlords from leaving properties idle and unproductive.

○ PLATFORM COMMITMENT

Conduct Due Diligence on a Potential Downtown Police Station

✓ ACTION

A location has been chosen for a Downtown Police Station and it will open soon. It is aimed at addressing both the existing crime and the broader perception of insecurity in the downtown area. The opening of this station marks an important step towards creating a safer, more welcoming downtown, encouraging more people to enjoy the area's attractions and support local businesses.



A PLAN FOR PROGRESS - IN MOTION



○ PLATFORM COMMITMENT

Improving Traffic Flow

✓ ACTION

Following a pilot project, City Council approved the removal of traffic signals at the intersections of Albert Street/Dennis Street and Queen Street/Church Street. Since I was elected, I have successfully lobbied for the removal of eight

unwarranted sets of traffic signals. Signals at Wallace Terrace/Goulais Avenue will be covered to assess their necessity, and at Second Line/Goulais Avenue the acquisition of a building abutting the sidewalk will help residents travelling to the NCC. Reducing unnecessary traffic lights can improve traffic flow, save time, and lower emissions – making driving more efficient and less frustrating for everyone.

○ PLATFORM COMMITMENT

Creating Collaboration to Bring More People Downtown

✓ ACTION

The City has made significant investments in revitalizing the downtown core. With the hope that we'll soon see demolition of the former General Hospital and with the upcoming Gateway Site development, City Council is reviewing how the downtown is programmed/promoted to maximize these growth opportunities. The current model, which has been in place for nearly 50 years, is being reviewed to better suit today's needs with a report outlining recommendations coming to City Council in 2025.

○ PLATFORM COMMITMENT

Lobbying for More Government Support

✓ ACTION

We've secured important support, including federal funding for a Port of Algoma feasibility study (a key step for this project) and provincial approval of the PUC's application to build a transmission line and transformer station, which will support the west end and aid Algoma Steel's transition from coal to electric arc furnaces.



A PLAN FOR PROGRESS - IN MOTION

○ PLATFORM COMMITMENT

Securing Economic Development

✓ ACTION

For over a decade, the former General Hospital site has been a blight on our community, despite numerous efforts to enforce municipal by-laws. City Council has now purchased the buildings and is fast-tracking its demolition, clearing the way for future development and millions in new revenue. This project will transform an eyesore into a hub of economic activity.



○ PLATFORM COMMITMENT

Establishing a Supervised Consumption Site

○ ACTION

The Province's decision to block new supervised consumption sites is disappointing and prevents us from opening a site in Sault Ste. Marie. Despite this setback, I remain committed to securing badly needed support for our community. We've submitted a strong application for a HART Hub, backed by local organizations and advocates. I met with the Minister of Health at the 2024 AMO Conference and told her if this concept is the government's approach to the mental health and addictions crisis, Sault Ste. Marie needs to be at the top of the approval list.

○ PLATFORM COMMITMENT

Lobbying the Provincial and Federal Governments for More Support

✓ ACTION

Sault Ste. Marie is the headquarters of the OLG and all jobs belong here – that's the message I delivered during an OLG board meeting in August. Our skilled workforce, developed over decades, makes operating in SSM more cost-effective than Toronto, while providing greater economic impact.



MEDIA COVERAGE



Shoemaker called the venture an exciting and long-awaited development. “For 40 years, we have worked on unlocking the benefits of the Gateway site - and it has been a clear priority for our city councils past and present.”

SAULT'S CANAL DISTRICT TO EXPAND WITH NEW COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
SooToday, August 26, 2024

“The response to the opening of the NCC arena has been very positive. The NCC has seen many events along with expanded ice time for users within its first year.”



TWIN-PAD ARENA SAVES TAXPAYERS \$438,000
SooToday, August 11, 2024



Mayor Shoemaker and city council should get kudos for their innovative approach to try to improve the constant eyesore of the property that currently exists. Assuming there is interest and development commences, it's another 'to do' box Shoemaker can check off as a promise kept.

CITY'S HOSPITAL PURCHASE BEST OPTION FOR FUTURE REDEVELOPMENT
October 11, 2024

MEDIA COVERAGE



“The urban beach is a concept that I think has a lot of interest, has a lot of support and one that I campaigned on in 2022. I’m eager to see that come to fruition over the course of the coming years.”

EXCITEMENT AS SAULT PLANS MAJOR WATERFRONT MAKEOVER
CTV, June 5, 2024

A community port in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. would create synergies with the new lock under construction on the Michigan side of the border. Both councils heard details about projects designed to lead to economic prosperity on both sides of the St. Mary’s River.



SOO LOCKS, COMMUNITY PORT PROJECTS TO BOOST LOCAL ECONOMIES
Sault Star, June 4, 2024



“We didn’t have much time, and we were forced to work tirelessly to attempt to come up with a solution and then seek the necessary support. I would not say we were positioned to succeed, but the generosity of the community overcame an incredibly challenging situation.”

SAULT YMCA FUTURE SECURED WITH UNANIMOUS COUNCIL SUPPORT
SooToday, July 15, 2024

MEDIA COVERAGE



Shoemaker told Jones that he wants to ensure Sault Ste. Marie is at the top of the list to receive additional funding to help with addictions and mental health problems. “That’s the message I gave her, and I believe it was well received.”

SHOEMAKER MEETS WITH HEALTH MINISTER
Sault Star, August 20, 2024

Mayor Matthew Shoemaker - who earlier this year declared the Sault's 1990 English-only declaration “a mistake” - was celebrated with the community impact award.



FÉLICITATIONS! VOLUNTEERS, MAYOR FETED BY CENTRE FRANCOPHONE
SooToday, September 29, 2024



“There was an invisible line between Garden River and Sault Ste. Marie for so long - hundreds of years - and this day, today, has caused that invisible line to be broken down, and to have a feeling of wellness.”

HISTORIC WAMPUM BELT CEREMONY SIGNIFIES BOND BETWEEN SAULT, GARDEN RIVER
SooToday, September 30, 2024