



Staff Report CAO2023-006

Title of Report: CAO2023-006- Future Focused Roadmap - Strategic Planning
Department: Administration
Council Date: April 20, 2023

Recommendation:

Be it resolved that Council receive Staff Report CAO2023-006 for information; and

That Council direct the CAO to issue a Request for Proposals to create a 2023 – 2027 Corporate and Community Strategic Plan to capture the needs of the municipality’s rapidly growing community and aligned actions to support future-focused strategies for prosperity and sustainability.

Background:

The 2019-2023 Community Action Plan was created to provide strategic direction through action items aligned to established goals. On December 21, 2022, Council received the 2019-2023 Community Action Plan 2022 Annual Report and 2023 recommended actions.

On May, 24 2022, Council adopted a new Official Plan (OP), later approved by Grey County on October 27, 2022. The vision statement reads: “To be a vibrant progressive community that is a desirable place to live, work and invest.” To support this vision, the Township committed to a mission to support a mix of residential development to enhance existing quality of life and rural charm and to strive for diversity within multiple sectors to enhance growth opportunities. This statement is accompanied by several established Core Values, including:

- a home for the next generation;
- our agricultural community;
- our natural environment such as our rivers, woodlands and wetlands;
- our cultural history;
- our neighbours - working in partnership with them to strengthen our community;
- a balance between quality of life and future development that promotes sustainable economic growth while protecting our natural environment;
- our rural character;
- our sense of community;
- community safety and good will;
- our strategic location; and,
- our responsive local decision making

The following growth projections are included in the 2022 OP:

"1) The population of the Township has increased by more than 1,000 permanent residents between 2016 and 2020, and the forecast is for a continuation of this unprecedented growth over the next several years. The County of Grey Growth Management Strategy (2021) estimates that over 4,000 new permanent residents will be added to the population base by the year 2046.

2) This projected increase in population will result in approximately 2,040 new households during that same time period, which would give Southgate Township the second highest percentage share of new housing starts within Grey County, behind The Town of the Blue Mountains.

3) The Growth Management Strategy also predicts that 1,000 new jobs will be established in Southgate between 2021 and 2046."

Staff Comments:

The 2018-2023 Community Action Plan was developed through a third-party consultant and has proved to be a valuable document determining objectives through community consultation and tracking actions over several years. Much has been accomplished through the actions completed through the CAP to date, as previously reported. Nevertheless, the township has experienced unprecedented and rapid growth in the past four years, which is projected to continue for several years, as detailed in the newly adopted OP. As a result, further engagement through multiple lenses and a new future focused roadmap that takes this significant community growth into account is needed. The Community Action plan was developed at a time where such rapid progression was not necessarily anticipated. In addition, social pressures have changed the way we do business and prioritize our personal lives as the pandemic has added another layer of social change that was also not able to be considered during the formulation of the previous and current CAP, which expires this year.

It is the writer's opinion that a full review of strategic priorities and actions to be undertaken be completed this year. A new strategic plan may require an entirely new outlook, or additional pillars that incorporate the community that Southgate is growing into, and the acknowledgement and celebration of innovative, diverse, and inclusive strategies for a changing community, to foster a prosperous and sustainable future. It should also include a review of modernization efforts and scaling resources to meet the future needs of the vibrant community and vision that council has prioritized through its community planning to date.

The Official Plan is a roadmap to responsible and sustainable growth in the township. Building upon this comprehensive planning, a new Corporate Strategic Plan would be developed through comprehensive consultation process with Council, staff, businesses, residents, and community partners. Additionally, the development and refreshing of corporate vision, mission, and values statements may better reflect our current culture and create a more inspiring tone. It is recommended that a third-party consultant be enlisted to perform this detailed work for several reasons.

A professional consultant is most often enlisted by municipalities to work with all stakeholders in the development of Strategic Plans, including Official Plans, Community Plans, and Corporate Strategic Plans, as Southgate has done in the past. Often, as is the case in Southgate, municipalities are challenged with limited

resources to complete such comprehensive review and data analysis. Pressures compound when substantial growth and changes have occurred in the community and are anticipated to continue. The importance of future planning requires focussed attention on the exercise, aside from daily operations of the municipality, which is extremely challenging for staff that are already at maximum workload capacity. Additionally, staff conducting these reviews may not draw the widespread responses that a third party would from all key stakeholders. When determining actions to shape a community's future, it is crucial to success that an objective and detailed review is conducted by experienced individuals.

Consultants are experienced specialists in these areas and provide a valuable perspective to the process of future focused community planning. The process begins by gathering feedback from all key stakeholders, including council, staff, residents, and community partners. Completing this engagement thoroughly and independently allows for a more fulsome discovery of the needs and interests of the community. Gaps in services can then be identified and brought forward to be addressed in the plan. Ultimately, the Strategic Plan becomes a living document that sets a path forward based on current and future needs, with priorities and objectives that are achievable and measurable and affect the community in a meaningful way.

Financial Implications:

The Strategic Plan Reserve has a balance of \$42,993.83. It is recommended that these funds be used to create the new 2023-2027 strategic plan. Staff will bring back an RFP award recommendation at a later date.

Communications & Community Action Plan Impact:

The 6 major goals of the 2019-2023 CAP are:

1. Attracting New and Supporting Existing Businesses and Farms
2. Revitalizing Downtown Dundalk
3. Promoting Health Services and Housing Choices
4. Adequate and Efficient Public Facilities
5. Upgrading our "Hard services"
6. Citizen Engagement

A review of the needs of the growing community may see these priorities change.

Conclusion:

It is recommended that Council direct the CAO to issue a Request for Proposals to create a 2023 – 2027 Corporate and Community Strategic Plan to capture the needs of the municipality's rapidly growing community and aligned actions to support future-focussed strategies for prosperity and sustainability.

Respectfully Submitted,

CAO Approval: Original Signed By
Dina Lundy, CAO