



Township of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh Corporate Strategic Plan

October 3, 2023

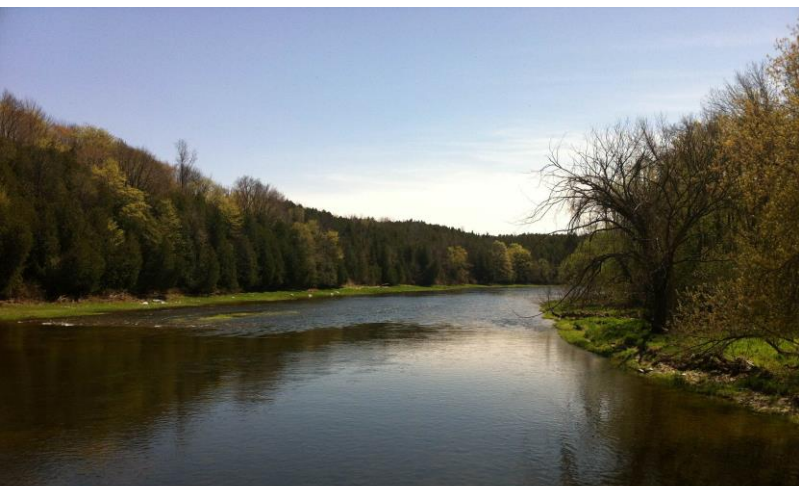




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Message from the Mayor

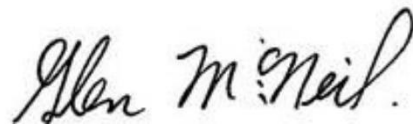


On behalf of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh Township Council, we are pleased to present our five-year Strategic Plan as a road map for our future. This document was made possible through the input of hundreds of people within our community who told us what they love about living here and helped identify areas which need improvement. We would like to commend the involvement of our residents, business leaders and staff who continue to be integral partners with valuable insights in developing our community. As a Council, we are committed to listening, to supporting our community, and to making progressive change for the better of our community.

Council is working towards the vision of being rooted in tradition, while growing in opportunity and being united in community. Council and Staff will work towards this vision by serving today and planning for tomorrow by engaging our community partners with integrity, active engagement, and responsible growth.

We hope you will continue to follow our progress. I encourage you to reach out to our office or through our social media channels to stay involved. We are here to listen, and our conversations are stronger when we know what matters most to the people we serve.

Sincerely,



Glen McNeil

Mayor

1.0 Township of ACW Strategic Framework

Vision

Rooted in tradition, growing in opportunity,
united in community.



2.0 Introduction

2.1 Who We Are

The Township of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh (“the Township”) is a rural municipality located in the northwest corner of the County of Huron, which is known as Ontario’s West Coast, along the shores of Lake Huron. The Township has a vibrant rural community and is one of Ontario’s most agriculturally productive areas. The growth and prosperity of the Township has been supported through agricultural roots which provides the community with a unique blend of strong community connections with economic prospects.

To best serve the community and develop a clear and sustainable path forward, the Township of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh, in consultation with staff and community members, has developed this Strategic Plan for 2023-2028. The new Strategic Plan supports our Vision, Mission and Values and reflects input from a diverse group of internal and external stakeholders. This Strategic Plan represents one of the first measures undertaken by the Township to comprehensively understand its distinct and changing needs while meticulously mapping out the path ahead.

2.2 Strategic Plan Overview

The Corporate Strategic Plan functions as a guiding blueprint for both the community and the Township Corporation. It offers a structured framework that aids us in decision-making, helping us prioritize initiatives and steadily progress towards realizing a long-term vision for the community. Additionally, the Strategic Plan provides the key direction for the Township to ensure that community priorities are well understood and opportunities for the future clearly defined.

Our Strategic Plan unveils an opportunity for the Township to capitalize on its robust agricultural heritage, fostering a backbone for economic development and expansion. As we observe an influx of young families drawn to the harmonious blend of rural tranquility and modern urban amenities, the Township is primed to cultivate a community that is both welcoming and inclusive, deeply rooted in its historical foundations.

Our Strategic Plan defines a thoughtful path, committing us to the improvement and maintenance of critical infrastructure and services, such as waste management, vital in attracting and retaining young families. It echoes a resounding commitment to environmental conservation, demonstrating our dedication to sustainable practices and reverence for the natural abundance that envelops us.

As we embark on this new journey, we envision a community that seamlessly blends the serenity of rural life with urban anticipations, fostering a locale where economic progression harmoniously coexists with our dedication to preserving the environment and sustaining our agricultural legacy. This commitment extends beyond the present, representing a promise to nurture a future characterized by prosperity, responsibility, and inclusivity.

By adopting a strategic plan, we are directing our community towards a future that respects our history while skillfully adjusting to changing trends. This detailed strategy helps us to prioritize and manage opportunities that align with our vision, building a prosperous, inclusive, and environmentally conscious community for both today and future generations.

The following key themes were gathered from community feedback and influenced the development of the strategic plan:



3.0 Township of Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan of the Township lays a foundation rooted in our past, while crafting a roadmap for a prosperous future, where both existing and incoming residents can flourish in the Township. This blueprint is shaped actively by the recurring themes and insightful input gathered from residents during our strategic planning endeavors.

3.1 Vision

A vision should articulate what the Township would like to achieve or would like to be recognized for in the future. It guides the development of policies aligned with these aspirations. Moreover, a vision statement clearly communicates these long-term objectives, uniting strategies and actions with the community's core values, and fostering a cohesive and prosperous trajectory. The following is the vision statement that has been informed by the strategic planning process:

Rooted in tradition, growing in opportunity, united in community.

We are invested in our commitment to nurturing a community that is not only vibrant and active but also deeply rooted in its rich agricultural heritage, a sentiment strongly echoed in recent surveys and town hall discussions. While we hold our history in high regard, we are equally enthusiastic about merging our time-honored agricultural traditions with new economic opportunities.

Our endeavor is to cultivate a deep sense of belonging among our residents, assuring a safe and secure environment for all, while fostering a spirit of unity and collaboration across the Township. This reflects the community's aspirations for economic development and the expansion of opportunities, fostering local business growth and innovation, thereby underlining the Township's forward-looking approach to growth and prosperity.

We are devoted to providing every resident, whether they've been here for generations or are newcomers, with ample opportunities to thrive. These opportunities extend beyond just employment success and business growth linked to our agricultural background but also innovative education and skill development programs that meet residents' needs. We aspire to enrich the lives of our residents through diverse recreational, leisure, and cultural activities, thereby enhancing the overall quality of life for Township. This commitment emphasizes the vital role of community engagement, collaboration, and the fostering of shared values.

3.2 Mission

A mission statement should clearly communicate the purpose of the Township or why the Corporation of the Township exists. The following is the mission that has been informed by the strategic planning process:

Progressively serving today and planning for tomorrow by connecting our community partners with integrity, active engagement, and responsible growth.

Our mission reflects the daily dedication of the Township's Council and Administration to advance our community towards our envisioned future, fostering an environment where both residents and businesses can prosper. This entails nurturing community connections that promote unity and collaboration among residents, staff, and council. We prioritize building trust through transparent communication and ethical conduct, alongside a commitment to clear, accountable governance that facilitates informed decision-making. Central to our mission is the pursuit of shared prosperity, focusing on collaborative economic growth and the well-being of all community members through support for local businesses and job creation.

What this means for the Township's Administration and Staff

For the Township's administrative leadership, the emphasis lies on fostering transparent governance and encouraging active participation from the residents. This entails:

- Collaborating actively with community partners to foster a shared sense of responsibility and mutual respect.
- Upholding unwavering integrity at the core of their mission, constantly reassessing supporting systems and structures with a balanced and comprehensive approach.
- Aiming to personify the operations of the Township, ensuring that the community perceives not just an administrative entity, but a collaborative partner.
- Continue to encourage staff to adopt a proactive mindset, identify opportunities, and address concerns that align with the commitment to active engagement and responsible growth.
- Building operations upon a foundation of integrity that brings a human touch to daily activities, empowering staff to communicate, collaborate, and seek assistance as necessary, with the ultimate goal of serving the community's best interests.

- Leveraging partnerships to underscore the significance of mutual respect, understanding, and equity, guaranteeing that all voices within the community are valued and acknowledged.

What this means for the Township's Council

For our Council, embodying the mission is a pivotal task. Responsibilities include:

- Promoting healthy living within the community.
- Championing responsible and sustainable business growth within the Township.
- Incorporating community perspectives through public meeting discussions and resident feedback into policy-making and initiatives. Regularly communicating priorities to the Township's administration to ensure alignment with community aspirations and needs.

What this means for the Township's Residents

For our residents and broader community, this signifies a call to actively engage and influence the Township's trajectory. In shaping our Strategic Plan, we've been deeply informed by your voices and centered our strategies around your needs and aspirations. This encompasses:

- Actively collaborating with local government and other community partners to foster a sense of shared responsibility and mutual respect.
- Ensuring resident voices and ideas are woven into the fabric of the Township's development.
- Upholding a continuous commitment to voicing their concerns and aspirations, assisting in the constant improvement and adaptation of community systems and structures.

3.3 Values

Values refer to the core beliefs and principles that guide the attitudes, behaviors, and decision-making processes within the Township.

The values we have established act as a foundational pillar in nurturing a culture of inclusiveness among our residents and staff. Our leadership remains committed to recognizing and strengthening these values, promoting their continual embodiment within our teams. We stand committed to embodying these values, ensuring adherence through regular and tangible assessments. The following are the values that has been informed by the strategic planning process:



Fiscal Responsibility – Our Township is committed to prudent financial practices, harmonizing infrastructure development and community projects with available resources and making decisions that consider both short-term and long-term financial impacts.



Professionalism – Our Township maintains the highest standards of conduct valuing our community's rich history while embracing innovation solutions. We strengthen excellent communication and community development and steering the community through challenges and opportunities.



Inclusivity and Equality – Our Township is committed to building a unified community that values each member, irrespective of background or identity, promising equal access to services and fostering active participation in the community's evolving identity and goals.



Service Excellence – Our Township is devoted to providing exceptional civic services, exceeding residents' expectations through proactive community engagement, innovative service delivery, and upholding core values to enhance the well-being and satisfaction of our residents.



Transparency – Our Township is prioritizing clear and open communication, ensuring that decision-making processes and organizational strategies are accessible and understandable, fostering trust and facilitating active community engagement and prompt resolution of concerns.

3.4 Success Factors

To achieve our goals and turn our vision into reality, it is vital to focus on a few critical areas that have the greatest potential for a substantial positive effect. Over the next five years, we will concentrate on five key factors that will strengthen our organization and establish our Township as an ideal place for residents to live.

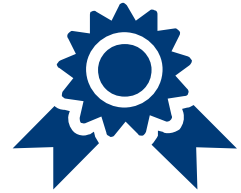
Success Factors



In the subsequent sections, you will find comprehensive information on each of these success factors, including our expected outcomes and the strategies we will employ to gauge our progress and success.

3.4.1 Success Factor 1: Advancing Service Excellence

Advancing Service Excellence refers to our focus on consistently delivering reliable and effective civic services, while actively seeking feedback from residents to make incremental improvements.



For the Township, this means we will:

- Ensure our customer service representatives are well-versed in Township services and procedures, enabling them to accurately diagnose issues and effectively guide residents through questions.
- Update our customer service methods with a focused effort on enhancing and streamlining our complaint resolution processes, enabling us to adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities.
- Establish and articulate definitive public expectations regarding response times, creating a framework that allows for the transparent tracking of our performance metrics, facilitating a smoother and more predictable engagement process for all parties involved.
- Consistently invest in staff training to ensure that our team can address inquiries in an informed, empathetic, and effective manner.

Expected Outcomes:

We will know that we are being successful in this area if we can demonstrate:

- Enhanced resident satisfaction with customer service.
- Improved effectiveness in addressing resident queries and issues.
- More timely and effective resolution of complaints.
- Greater public awareness and understanding of expected response times.
- Continue to cultivate a more skilled and empathetic customer service team.

3.4.2 Success Factor 2: Cultivating Community Trust

Cultivating Community Trust refers to our commitment to building and maintaining a strong, transparent relationship with residents, characterized by open communication, accountability, and actions that consistently reflect the community's needs and values.



For the Township, this means we will:

- Communicate openly with residents using our staff's expertise to provide accurate and timely information.
- Enhance civic engagement by actively involving and consulting with residents for key community projects.
- Uphold our policies on inclusivity and respect, promptly addressing any actions that do not meet these standards.
- Encourage both the Township and community members to communicate openly with each other, offering tools and help for Council members to assist residents.

Expected Outcomes:

We will know that we are being successful in this area if we can demonstrate:

- Increased levels of trust and satisfaction among residents.
- Improved resident satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of information provided by the Township.
- Increased public awareness of the roles and responsibilities within the Township.
- A community environment that residents perceive as inclusive and respectful.

3.4.3 Success Factor 3: Championing Environmental Practices

Championing Environmental Practices refers to our dedicated efforts to prioritize and implement sustainable and eco-friendly initiatives, both in Township operations and community life, to protect and preserve the natural environment for current and future generations of ACW.



For the Township, this means we will:

- Actively engage with key partners to discuss sustainable solutions, advocating for renewable energy sources and promoting energy-efficient alternatives.
- Enhance community communication and update residents about ongoing and upcoming sustainability projects.
- Increase community awareness about sustainability through organized events and partnerships that educate residents on various topics such as renewable energy, connectivity, and waste management.
- Integrate environmental considerations into community and development decisions, including infrastructure planning and procurement processes.
- Engage with provincial and federal partners to advocate for and secure resources that support our sustainability goals.

Expected Outcomes:

We will know that we are being successful in this area if we can demonstrate:

- Greater resident engagement and increased awareness of the Township's sustainability efforts.
- Increased community engagement and participation in sustainability-focused events and positive resident feedback on their value.
- A clear emphasis on sustainable practices in new developments and procurement activities.
- Strong partnerships with provincial and federal partners, resulting in enhanced support for the Township's sustainable projects.

3.4.4 Success Factor 4: Supporting Economic Growth

Supporting Economic Growth refers to our focus on nurturing a resilient local economy through community engagement, small business support, and initiatives that create opportunities for sustainable growth within the Township.



For the Township, this means we will:

- Engage in a comprehensive study to understand the current economic landscape of the Township, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- Consult with the Township's local businesses, residents, and community organizations to gather insights into their needs and expectations for economic growth.
- Conduct a review of existing regulatory processes to identify ways to make it easier for the Township's businesses to operate.
- Collaborate with neighbouring municipalities and the County to identify and pursue opportunities for shared economic growth and resource optimization.
- Initiate discussions with local educational institutions to explore potential collaborations that could benefit the Township's future workforce.

Expected Outcomes:

We will know that we are being successful in this area if we can demonstrate:

- Informed economic development strategies that reflect the needs and expectations of the community.
- A more business-friendly environment that encourages local enterprise.
- Strengthened community trust through clear communication of the direct benefits of economic development support.

3.4.5 Success Factor 5: Promoting Safety and Well-Being

Promoting Safety and Well-Being refers to our desire to have a Township that is secured and that facilitates a holistic vision of well-being for the Township to be a desired place to live for residents.



For the Township, this means we will:

- Adopt a holistic approach to well-being, to address vital community needs such as safety and inclusivity.
- Uphold principles of respect and anti-discrimination by creating an environment free from harassment and discrimination.
- Collaborate proactively with community groups and strengthen partnerships to enhance safety and well-being initiatives.
- Strengthen partnership ties with health partners to orchestrate services and programs that amplify the community's safety and well-being.

Expected Outcomes:

We will know that we are being successful in this area if we can demonstrate:

- Community members benefitting from a holistic approach to well-being.
- Improve access to comprehensive well-being services and safety programs through collaborative efforts with partners.
- Enhance communication and cooperation between staff, Council members, and the community, leading to a harmonious and respectful environment.
- Continue to enhance staff morale and engagement by recognizing and celebrating long-term dedication.

4.0 The Strategic Planning Process

We initiated the process of strategic planning to fine-tune our vision for the Township and pinpoint the primary focuses for the forthcoming five years. This crucial process encompassed several significant inputs:

1. Stakeholder Engagement

This engagement encompassed consultations with Township staff and leadership, as well as external stakeholders like residents and community organizations, soliciting their inputs through various avenues including interviews and focus groups. Additionally, we conducted a Town Hall session with staff, residents, and Council members.

2. Planning Workshops

The Leadership Team of the Township and Council met during August 2023 to review input from all sources and stakeholders and develop the vision, mission, values, and success factors of the Strategic Plan.

3. Surveys

The survey was distributed to community members and internal teams via Survey Monkey and paper-based copies. The survey's objective was to identify strengths and challenges within internal operations, and to highlight the present state of the Township as well as the desired future state.

5.0 What We Heard

Through our engagement with residents, businesses, and other stakeholders, we conducted an analysis on the Township's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, which are summarized below. The findings, summarized below, offer a comprehensive overview of the community's perspectives, and will guide our future strategic planning.

5.1 Strengths

What the Township does well today, the qualities that separate it from competitors and the tangible/intangible assets it possesses.

- **Active Community:** The community is highly engaged, providing constructive feedback and showing a willingness to improve the township.
- **Core Infrastructure:** The Township has a foundation of civic services such as waste management and road maintenance.
- **Natural Resources:** The natural beauty of the township offers potential for outdoor recreation, tourism, and a strong agricultural sector.
- **Community Identity:** A strong sense of community identity can foster unity and pride among residents.

5.2 Weaknesses

What the Township struggles with today, where limitations and/or gaps exist and where competitors potentially have an advantage.

- **Service Expectations:** New residents from urban areas have higher expectations for service levels, leading to pressure on existing services.
- **Infrastructure Challenges:** Certain infrastructure demands, such as streetlights and sidewalks, have divided opinions among residents.
- **Regulatory Enforcement:** There is a perceived lack of enforcement of property standards, especially with regards to short-term rentals and property maintenance.
- **Resident Communication:** There may be room to improve communication with residents to manage expectations, promote understanding of council decisions, and address concerns.

5.3 Opportunities

Areas where the Township could expand or pivot to meet emerging opportunities and needs going forward.

- **Infrastructure Improvement:** The influx of residents from urban areas offers an opportunity to improve and diversify civic services.
- **Community Building:** Efforts to redesign urban areas and to set up active community associations for success could strengthen community bonds.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Growing interest in green initiatives and efficient systems offers a chance to position the township as an eco-friendly community.
- **Communication Improvement:** Enhancing communication with residents could help manage service expectations, build trust, and ensure all residents feel heard.

5.4 Threats

Areas where the Township is facing pressure, within the community or through external factors.

- **Fiscal Pressure:** Infrastructure improvements and increased service levels come with significant costs, which could strain local finances.
- **Public Trust:** Unresolved dissatisfaction with council decisions, particularly around the master plan, could undermine trust in local governance.
- **Demographic Shifts:** The growing population and changes in the composition of residents could exacerbate service demands and community divisions. Concurrently, the implications of an aging population are expected to significantly impact the workforce dynamics.
- **Environmental Impact:** Climate change and its consequences, such as more intense weather events, could lead to increased scrutiny and expectations of public services.
- **Volunteer Shortage:** A lack of succession planning for community volunteers could lead to a decline in community maintenance and services.