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Report 2023-096

Report Title: 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan – Proposed Pillars, Goals and Actions

Committee Name: Economic Development, Tourism and Planning

Committee Meeting Date: August 2, 2023

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Approved by: Jennifer Moore, CAO

Council Meeting Date: August 16, 2023

Strategic Plan Priorities: ☒ Economic Prosperity and Innovation
☒ Sustainable Growth
☒ Thriving and Inclusive Communities
☒ Leadership in Change

Recommendation

“**That** the Economic Development, Tourism and Land Use Planning Committee, having considered Report 2023-096 ‘2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan – Proposed Pillars, Goals and Actions’, recommend that County Council adopt the identified pillars, goals and actions as final for the 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan.”

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an overview of proposed pillars, goals, and actions for the 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan. The report also includes an overview of the communications and community engagement activities undertaken to raise awareness of the strategic planning process and encourage participation in a collaborative

process to establish a shared vision for the future of the community, and actions to achieve in pursuit of this vision.

Background

Every four years, Northumberland County undertakes a strategic planning process to identify priorities for the new term of County Council and beyond, that will then inform decision-making reflected in its annual budget and long-term financial plans.

The resulting strategic plan creates a common understanding of the work Northumberland County will focus on to:

- Achieve a high quality of life for residents;
- Encourage a thriving economy for local businesses;
- Develop memorable experiences for visitors; and
- Earn the trust and confidence of community members.

The 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan will be a guiding framework as Northumberland County navigates a period of significant transformational change. This includes changes related to growth and development, economic renewal, climate change, community health and well-being, and evolving government services and accountabilities.

At the April 3, 2023, Special Meeting of County Council, Council directed staff to explore initial key areas of focus for this plan, including:

- Shared services/resources with member municipalities
- Affordable/workforce housing; and
- Economic development opportunities.

Council further directed staff to engage in consultation with staff, community members, partners and stakeholders to identify any additional areas of focus.

Consultations

Community engagement in planning and decision-making improves the County's understanding of prevailing concerns, expectations, and priorities, and ensures that diverse perspectives inform decision-making.

The County was committed to promoting meaningful staff and community engagement through intentional methods for the development of the new Strategic Plan. In so doing, the County would be positioned to best meet community needs and expectations, building trust and confidence in municipal government.

Goal

The goal for community engagement was to raise awareness and generate broad participation by staff, community partners, and members of the public in a collaborative process to establish a shared vision for the future of Northumberland and actions to achieve in pursuit of this vision.

Objectives

- Align Council and Senior Leadership around the strategic plan development process.

- Raise awareness and understanding among staff, partners, stakeholders, and community members about this process and the issues being addressed.
- Build trust, transparency, and partnerships by encouraging meaningful engagement in development of the strategic plan.
- Gather actionable insights to shape and strengthen the strategic plan.
- Demonstrate that the final strategic plan reflects the input gathered during the development process.

Communications and Engagement

Over a four-month period, from April through July 2023, Northumberland County engaged in a collaborative strategic planning process to establish a shared vision for the future Northumberland that Council, staff, and the community seek to cultivate, together. Through this process, core priorities and related actions were also identified for the next four years and beyond that will set us on the path to achieving this vision.

The following is an overview of audiences engaged.

Table 1: Audiences Engaged

Audience	Participant Groups
Community members	General public, including seniors, youth, and families
Alderville First Nation	Alderville First Nation Chief and Consultation Coordinator
Community development stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing: Northumberland Manufacturers Association • Agriculture: Northumberland Federation of Agriculture • Tourism: Regional Tourism Organization 8 • Business: Trent Hills Chamber of Commerce • Newcomer Canadians: client of the New Canadian Centre • Housing development: Stalwood Homes • Workforce development: Watton Employment Services • Social services: Transition House Shelter • Faith community: Trinity – St. Andrew’s United Church, Brighton • Training & Education: Community Training & Development Centre • Non-Profit: Northumberland United Way
County Council and staff	County Council, Senior Leadership, and staff from all County departments including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Works • Community and Social Services • Corporate Services • Communications • Information Technology • Economic Development, Planning & Strategic Initiatives • Northumberland Paramedics • Golden Plough Lodge • Finance • Legal Services

Throughout this process, over 915 people were directly engaged, and a conservative estimate of 50,000 people were reached through marketing and communications efforts.

The following is an overview of engagement activities and participation.

Table 2: Engagement Activities and Participation

Engagement Activities	Date	Participation
County Council and County Senior Leadership Team	March 13 to April 3, 2023	18 participants

interviews and planning session		
County staff working group meetings	Three meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2, 2023 • May 30, 2023 • June 22, 2023 	15 County staff
Working group-led staff discussions	May 8 to May 26, 2023	87 County staff
Community questionnaire	May 8 to June 5, 2023 – online, with hard copies available at 17 locations across Northumberland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 165 online participants • 105 hardcopy participants
Join In Northumberland Ideas Boards	May 8 to June 5, 2023 – online	11 participants
Community Conversation Pop-ups	7 in-person events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 20, 2023 – Cobourg Farmers' Market; Port Hope Farmers' Market • May 26, 2023 – Brighton Public Library • May 27, 2023 – Cobourg Early ON; Roseneath Public Library; Bewdley Public Library and Community Centre • May 28, 2023 – Warkworth Lilac Festival (Millenium Trail) 	500 participants
Community Development Roundtable	May 30, 2023	11 participants
Youth Roundtable	May 31, 2023	5 participants

The County used a variety of methods to notify staff and the community about the consultation process, to generate awareness and promote engagement.

The following is an overview of marketing and communications tactics and reach.

Table 3: Marketing and Communications Tactics and Reach

Tactic	Reach
Internal staff brochure and CAO memo	Distributed via email, employee intranet, and in hard copy to all staff locations.
Join In Northumberland project webpage	783 unique project page visits.
Postcard delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Questionnaire Postcards mailed out to approximately 9,600 randomly selected households across each of the seven municipalities of Northumberland. Postcards also made available at 17 locations across Northumberland, including municipal town halls and libraries, County facilities, licensed childcare centres, EarlyON Centres, NCHC community housing, Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre, and the Golden Plough Lodge.
Printed promotion	Posters at locations where postcards were available.
Social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organic and paid posts on Facebook: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 110,033 people reached via paid ads 3,066 people reached via organic posts Organic posts on Twitter: 1,397 impressions achieved
News releases	Two media releases promoting community consultation opportunities, with pick-up from outlets including Northumberland News/Brighton Independent, Cobourg News Blog, News Now Network, Today's Northumberland, Northumberland 89.7 radio, MyFM 93.3 radio, Classic Rock 107.9 radio.
E-newsletters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notices via County e-newsletters including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join In Northumberland subscribers Business & Entrepreneurship Centre Northumberland Tourism businesses Bi-weekly updates newsletter to County Council for sharing at lower-tier committee and council meetings.
Digital promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homepage banner at Northumberland.ca. Digital Placement Ads: 167,800 impressions
Community radio ads	Northumberland 89.7
Newspaper ads	One half-page advertisement in Northumberland News, Brighton Independent, and Community Press.

Other sources of insight

In addition to feedback gathered through this consultation process, a unique input was feedback gathered through community consultation done in collaboration with the Ontario Health Team of Northumberland (OHT-N) – of which Northumberland County is a founding member – during the county-wide process to establish its strategic plan in 2022.

This cross-county consultation was organized to identify local health and well-being priorities, as experienced by area residents and service providers. This included 500 touch points with patients, caregivers, community members, health care and community service providers through survey submissions, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews. Furthermore, strategy sessions with over 170 participants, explored challenges and opportunities around themes such as inclusion, systemic inequality, and social determinants of health, aging well at home, supporting mental health and addictions care, and more.

Feedback collected previously through the County's annual budget process, Official Plan update, emergency shelter system review, Transportation Master Plan, and other key projects also informed development of the 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan.

Legislative Authority / Risk Considerations

N/A

Discussion / Options

Northumberland County is on the cusp of transformational change. Set to grow to over 122,000 residents by 2051, the intersection of critical requirements related to workforce development, housing, transportation, health, and broadband connectivity reveals a clear overarching mandate for our organization: **to guide this growth with intention.**

In the face of both opportunities and challenges arising from this anticipated growth, the 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan will be the County's principal guidance document. It will inform how we shape our community in alignment with the County's mission, vision and values, Council's direction, and shared community priorities.

In developing the 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan, Northumberland County encouraged broad participation in a collaborative process to establish a shared vision for Northumberland's future, and goals and actions to achieve in pursuit of this vision, to guide intentional growth for our community.

The Community Strategic Plan Principal Direction is a shared vision for the future of Northumberland, based on a consolidation of feedback gathered through this process:

- Northumberland County is recognized as a vibrant and connected twenty-first century community. We embrace innovation, respect our natural environment, and celebrate diversity to shape, together, an inclusive, prosperous, and thriving future for all.

Staff recommend that five strategic pillars underpin the important work required to actively pursue this vision. These pillars reflect the key themes that emerged through the strategic planning process. They provide a framework to direct planning and decision-making over the next four years and beyond to achieve intentional growth for our community.

These pillars, each of which is expressed with a direction – or vision of what the ideal state looks like for our operations – include:

- **Innovate for Service Excellence**

Direction: We embrace a culture of innovation. We pursue partnerships, integrate technology, attract and develop top talent, and use data to inform decision-making, to deliver the impactful services our residents need today, and ensure readiness for those that will be needed tomorrow.

- **Ignite Economic Opportunity**

Direction: We ignite economic innovation, resilience, and prosperity by positioning the infrastructure and services businesses need to thrive.

- **Foster a Thriving Community**

Direction: We foster a liveable, healthy, and inclusive community, where diversity is celebrated and people from all walks of life feel a sense of belonging.

- **Propel Sustainable Growth**

Direction: We balance the benefits of development and intensification with preservation of our rural heritage, and lead in environmental stewardship, building complete communities that create a high quality of life for all residents.

- **Champion a Vibrant Future**

Direction: We proactively build strong relationships with other levels of government, municipal and community partners to address community needs and interests, influence policies, and advance municipal goals.

40 actions tied to these pillars have been defined based on broad input, and careful consideration of what will be required to guide and accommodate this growth for a thriving and prosperous twenty-first century Northumberland.

Measurement

To help achieve the strategic pillars, and monitor and report on progress, Northumberland County will launch a public-facing dashboard tool in early 2024 featuring key performance data. This tool will inform executive and Council decision-making, and ensure transparency and accountability to the public. Staff will report to Council on the development of this tool as work progresses.

Additional measurement activities to track the progress of this plan's implementation will include quarterly reports to Council, along with an Annual Report.

Financial Impact

- Northumberland County retained consultants with facilitation and community engagement expertise to support development of the 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan:
 - Council and Senior Leadership Team one-on-one interviews, trends identification, and facilitated planning session: Current Group - \$25,000
 - Community consultation and engagement: LURA Consulting - \$30,680
- Advertising and promotion
 - Graphic design - \$3,740

- In-home mailer (postcard questionnaire) – \$4,000
- Social media advertising - \$500
- Digital advertising - \$2,000
- Community radio advertising – \$950
- Newspaper advertising- \$1,365
- Total: \$68,235 + HST

Member Municipality Impacts

Northumberland County and member municipalities serve common residents, partners, and stakeholders. Northumberland County will collaborate with member municipalities to fulfill shared strategic priorities in order to best serve the community.

Conclusion / Outcomes

The proposed Northumberland County 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan pillars, goals, and actions have been established based on an assessment of organizational strengths, trends, and emerging opportunities within our operating environment, as well as community needs and priorities, as identified through a review of key data and consultation with Council, staff, community members, partners, and key stakeholders.

It is recommended that the Committee recommend that County Council adopt the identified pillars, goals and actions as final for the 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan. Following Council's approval, a final 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan publication will be produced for the September meeting of County Council.

Attachments

1. 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan – Proposed Pillars, Goals, and Actions
2. 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan – Engagement Summary Report
3. Presentation, 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan – Proposed Pillars