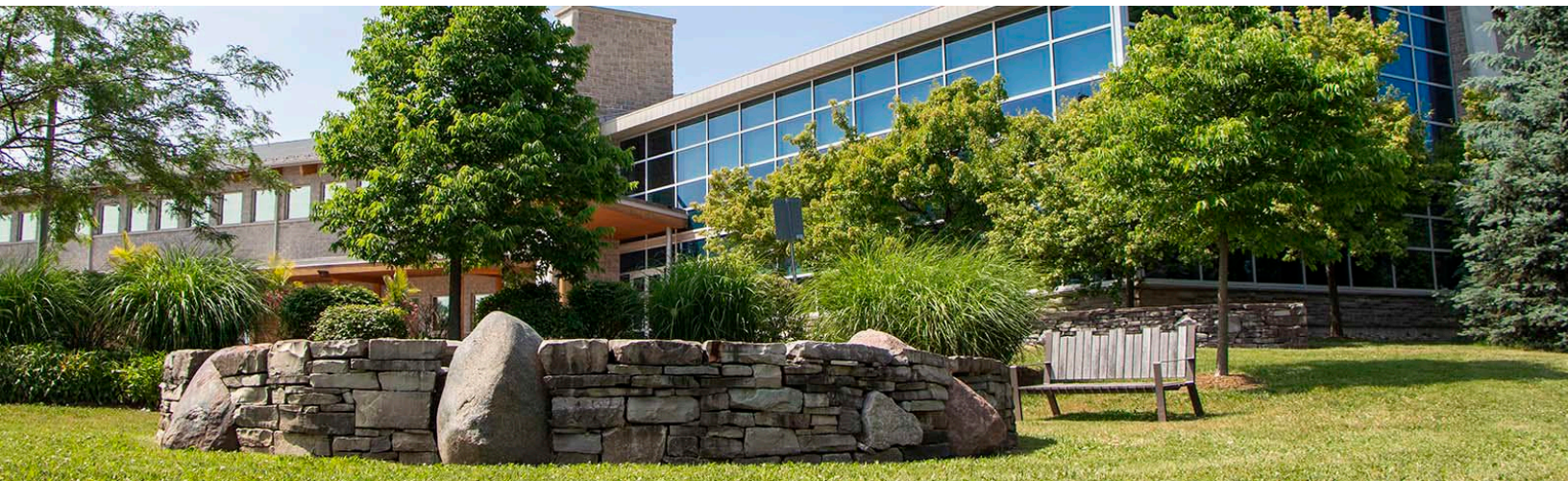


**Northumberland County  
2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan**

# **Engagement Summary Report**



Prepared by LURA Consulting

July 2023

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# Executive Summary

To inform the development of the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, from April through June 2023, Northumberland County embarked on a collaborative process to establish a shared vision for the future Northumberland that Council, staff, and community members seek to cultivate together, and to identify core priorities and related actions for the next four years that will set the path to achieving the vision.

Through this process, **over 910 people were directly engaged, and a conservative estimate of 50,000 people were reached** through marketing and communications efforts.

## Section 1: Introduction

### Process Overview

From April through June 2023, Northumberland County embarked on a collaborative strategic planning process to establish a shared vision for the future Northumberland that Council, staff, and community members seek to cultivate together, and to identify core priorities and related actions for the next four years that will set us on the path to achieving this vision.

The 2023-2027 Strategic Plan will be a guiding framework as the County navigates a period of significant transformational change. This includes changes related to growth and development, economic renewal as we emerge from COVID-19, climate change, community health and well-being, and changing government services and accountabilities. This plan will create a common understanding of the work our organization 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, County Council, and staff.

### Previous Strategic Plan

The 2019-2023 Northumberland County Strategic Plan had four strategic priorities, which were "Economic Prosperity and Innovation," "Sustainable Growth," "Thriving and Inclusive Communities," and "Leadership in Change." Under each priority were specific actions. The plan aimed to create a vibrant, sustainable, and prosperous community for all residents of Northumberland.

Since the last strategic plan was created, some disruptive changes have occurred, and some broader initiatives have taken place in Northumberland County. These initiatives are expected to have a significant impact on the community and create transformational change.

### Initial Direction

Council, senior leadership, and the staff working group who led this process discussed initial priorities for incorporation into this 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, including:

- **Municipal Leadership and Service Excellence:** Strong municipal processes, and collaboration with lower-tier municipalities for efficient governance/service delivery.
- **Thriving and Resilient Communities:** Systems and services that foster a vibrant, inclusive, safe, healthy, and secure place for people of all ages, stages, backgrounds, and cultures to live, work and play.
- **Innovation, Talent, and Economic Opportunity:** Creating the conditions for a strong, diverse, and resilient economy that enhances quality of life for residents.

- **Sustainable Growth and Environmental Stewardship:** Where the benefits of urban development are balanced with the capacity to appropriately service this growth, and the need to preserve environmental assets for future generations to enjoy.

## Consultation Purpose and Objectives

Stakeholder and community engagement in planning and decision-making plays a pivotal role in improving the County's understanding of prevalent concerns, expectations, and priorities, and ensures that a wide range of perspectives inform decision-making. Recognizing the significance of this, the County was committed to promoting and fostering meaningful engagement among both staff and the community throughout the development of the new Strategic Plan. The County aims to effectively address community needs and expectations, thus establishing trust and confidence in local government.

**The Goal:** Raise awareness and generate broad participation in a collaborative process to establish a shared vision for the future of Northumberland and actions to achieve in pursuit of this vision.

To achieve this goal, the County outlined specific objectives:

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

## Section 2: How We Engaged

### Engagement Audiences

Engagement activities for this consultation process sought to secure participation from a broad range of community members to ensure that the development of the strategic plan reflected the diverse range of perspectives and aligned with community needs and expectations. An overview of audiences engaged is outlined below.

Audience	Participant Groups
Community members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General public, including seniors, youth and families</li> </ul>
Alderville First Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alderville First Nation Chief and Consultation Coordinator</li> </ul>
Community Development Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manufacturing: Northumberland Manufacturers Association</li> <li>• Agriculture: Northumberland Federation of Agriculture</li> <li>• Tourism: Regional Tourism Organization 8</li> <li>• Business: Trent Hills Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Newcomer Canadians: client of the New Canadian Centre</li> <li>• Housing development: Stalwood Homes</li> <li>• Workforce development: Watton Employment Services</li> <li>• Social services: Transition House Shelter</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faith community: Trinity – St. Andrew's United Church, Brighton</li> <li>• Training &amp; Education: Community Training &amp; Development Centre</li> <li>• Non-Profit: Northumberland United Way</li> </ul>
<b>County Council and Staff</b>	County Council, Senior Leadership, and staff from all County departments including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Works</li> <li>• Social Services</li> <li>• Corporate Services</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Information Technology</li> <li>• Economic Development and Planning</li> <li>• Paramedics Operations</li> <li>• Golder Plough Lodge</li> <li>• Finance</li> <li>• Legal Services</li> </ul>

### Engagement Activities

Through this process, over 910 people were directly engaged, and a conservative estimate of 50,000 people were reached through marketing and communications efforts. An overview of engagement activities and participation is outlined below.

<b>Engagement Activities</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Participation</b>
County Council and County senior leadership team interviews and planning session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• March 13 to April 3, 2023</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18 participants</li> </ul>
County staff working group Meetings	Three Virtual Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 2, 2023</li> <li>• May 30, 2023</li> <li>• June 22, 2023</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 staff</li> </ul>
Staff working group-led internal discussions	May 8 to May 26, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 87 staff</li> </ul>
Community Questionnaire	May 8 to June 5, 2023 – online, along with hard copies available at 17 locations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northumberland County Headquarters, Cobourg</li> <li>• Provincial Offences office, Cobourg</li> <li>• Victoria Hall, Cobourg</li> <li>• Cobourg Public Library</li> <li>• Bewdley Library</li> <li>• Gore's Landing Library</li> <li>• Hamilton Township Office</li> <li>• Brighton Public Library</li> <li>• Campbellford Library</li> <li>• Warkworth Library</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 165 online participants</li> <li>• 105 hardcopy participants</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hastings Library</li> <li>• Trent Hills Municipal Office, Campbellford</li> <li>• Alnwick/Halldimand Township municipal office, Grafton</li> <li>• Grafton Public Library</li> <li>• Cramahe Township Municipal Office</li> <li>• Port Hope Public Library</li> <li>• Port Hope Town Hall</li> </ul>	
Join In Northumberland Ideas Boards	May 8 to June 5, 2023 - online – Join In Northumberland project page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 participants</li> </ul>
Community Conversation Pop-ups	7 In-Person Events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 20, 2023 – Cobourg Farmers' Market, Port Hope Farmers' Market</li> <li>• May 26, 2023 – Brighton Public Library</li> <li>• May 27, 2023 – Cobourg Early ON, Roseneath Public Library, Bewdley Public Library and Community Centre</li> <li>• May 28, 2023 – Warkworth Lilac Festival (Millenium Trail)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 500 participants</li> </ul>
Community Development Roundtable	In-Person - 600 William Street Board Room, May 30, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 participants</li> </ul>
Youth Roundtable	Virtual, May 31, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 participants</li> </ul>

## Marketing and Communication Activities

The County used a variety of methods to notify staff and the community about the consultation process to generate awareness and promote engagement. A summary of the marketing and communication tactics used is provided below.

Tactic	Reach
Internal staff brochure and CAO memo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributed via email, employee intranet, and in hard copy to all staff locations.</li> </ul>
Project Webpage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 783 unique project webpage visits.</li> </ul>
Postcard Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Questionnaire Postcards mailed out to approximately 9,600 randomly selected households across each of the seven municipalities of Northumberland.</li> <li>• Postcards also made available at 17 locations across Northumberland, including municipal town halls and libraries, County facilities, licensed childcare centres,</li> </ul>



	EarlyON Centres, NCHC community housing, Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre, and the Golden Plough Lodge.
Printed promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posters at locations where postcards were available.</li> </ul>
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organic and paid posts on Facebook: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 110,033 people reached via paid ads</li> <li>○ 3,066 people reached via organic posts</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Organic posts on Twitter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 1,397 impressions achieved</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
News Release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
E-newsletters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notices via County e-newsletters including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Join In Northumberland subscribers</li> <li>○ Business &amp; Entrepreneurship Centre Northumberland</li> <li>○ Tourism businesses</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Bi-weekly updates to County Council for sharing at lower-tier committee and council meetings.</li> </ul>
Digital promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homepage banner at Northumberland.ca.</li> <li>• Digital Placement Ads: 167,800 impressions</li> </ul>
Community Radio Ads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northumberland 89.7</li> </ul>
Newspaper Ads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One half-page advertisement in Northumberland News, Brighton Independent, and Community Press.</li> </ul>

### Section 3: What We Heard

The following sections summarize “what we heard” from the various engagement activities, organized by the topics and questions participants were asked to respond to.

#### What is valued

*Thinking about your role at Northumberland County and the value that County staff deliver to our community – What do you? Who do you do it for? Why do you do it?*

**When asked to comment on the value that County staff deliver to the community and the motivations of staff, participants in the staff working group meetings and the working-group led staff discussions reported the following:**

- Participants noted that County staff deliver value to the community by:
  - Developing policies, enforcing by-laws, and supporting lower-tier municipalities in planning and administration.
  - Providing direction and supportive services to County divisions.
  - Overseeing County operations to ensure safety, reliability, and user satisfaction.
  - Managing County facilities, including social housing.
  - Creating a safe work environment and providing training that supports local workforce development.
  - Supporting, building relationships, and collaborating with community members including local businesses.
  - Preparing for and responding to emergencies.
- Participants indicated that they do their job for the County, residents, community stakeholders and partners, visitors, the environment, and family.
- Participants indicated that they do their job to:
  - Make a positive impact for all
  - Achieve personal fulfilment from doing meaningful and challenging work.
  - Provide safe and well-maintained facilities and reliable services.
  - Improve the community’s quality of life and strengthen its infrastructure to make it an attractive place to live, work, and visit.
  - Ensure enjoyment and sustainability for current and future generations.
  - Make connections and build trust with the community.
  - Support personal goals such as financial stability, proximity to family, and enjoyment of the work environment.

*What do you love about the community of Northumberland? What do you value most about your local community within the County?*

**When asked to comment on what they value most about the community of Northumberland, participants that shared feedback through the Community Questionnaire, the Online ‘Ideas Boards’, and by phone, reported the following:**

- Participants expressed that they value the County’s sense of community.
  - It was noted that people in the County are friendly, kind, and supportive towards one another, contributing to a strong sense of connection and togetherness between residents.
  - It was noted that the County is welcoming and inclusive of diversity, resulting in a place that enables opportunities for long-time residents and newcomers.
- Participants expressed that they value the County’s natural heritage and natural beauty.



- It was noted the County provides a diverse range of outdoor attractions, including local beaches, trails, forests, and wildlife sanctuaries.
- It was noted that the County's countryside and waterfront settings offer beautiful vistas that are enjoyable to live, work, and play in.
- Participants expressed that they value the County's small town feel that supports a more relaxed pace of life, while enabling proximity to urban areas and amenities.
  - It was noted that the County's communities are less costly and less congested than those in larger cities and tend to be cleaner and safer.
  - It was noted that the County provides access to all the amenities and services that residents need, including hospitals, libraries, childcare, shops, grocery stores, well maintained roads and trails, restaurants, entertainment, and recreation.
- Participants expressed that they value the County's agriculture, small-business, and tourism focused economy.
  - It was noted that the County's farmland enables access to local food producers.
  - It was noted that the County's natural heritage and proximity to Highway 401 draws tourism.
  - It was noted that the County and broader community supports its small businesses and entrepreneurs, including through initiatives such as the Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre (OAFVC).
- Participants expressed that they value the County's commitment to protecting its history, and arts and culture community.
  - It was noted that the County has a rich built heritage, including many historical buildings and sites.
  - It was noted that the County has a diverse arts scene, that includes many museums, galleries, and local artists from a broad range of disciplines.

***Thinking of the County as a local government delivering programs and services – what is working well?***

**When asked to describe what is working well in the delivery of municipal programs and services, participants in the staff working group meetings and the working-group led staff discussions reported the following:**

- Participants expressed that they value the County's organizational culture and support systems, as well as the talent and dedication of its staff.
  - Participants expressed appreciation for the County being a positive, transparent and inclusive workplace that offers extensive training and Human Resources support.
  - Participants expressed appreciation for the staff's commitment to providing reliable and high-quality services, and for the staff's diverse subject matter expertise.
- Participants expressed that they value the County's emphasis on continuous improvement and strong customer service, which results in positive user experiences from customers/residents.
  - Participants expressed appreciation for the County's utilization of technology that enables improved services and cybersecurity.
- Participants expressed that they value the County's focus on accountability, financial management, and being guided by long-term plans.

- Participants expressed being proud of the County's successful implementation of waste diversion programs and infrastructure refurbishment.
- Participants expressed that they value the County's collaboration with lower-tier municipalities and its communication with communities.

**When asked to describe what is working well in the delivery of municipal programs and services, participants in the Community Development Roundtable reported the following:**

- Participants commended the County for being open to partnerships and demonstrating strong collaboration with community partners to meet the needs of the community.
  - It was noted that the County strives to understand the unique needs of each group and helps community development organizations thrive, ultimately improving the quality of life in Northumberland.
- Participants recognized Business and Entrepreneurship Centre Northumberland (BECN) services as valuable assets to the community, generating impactful outcomes.
- Participants recognized the Agriculture Advisory Committee for its valuable advice to the community, specifically supporting farmers and agricultural businesses in Northumberland.
- Participants recognized the Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre (OAFVC) in Northumberland as an asset to the community.
  - It was noted that while OAFVC would benefit from a rebranding, it serves as a valuable resource for the agricultural community, providing opportunities for skill development and mentorship.
- Participants emphasized the importance of supporting and promoting the vibrant agricultural sector in Northumberland.
  - It was noted that agriculture is a complex chain, and the County should make efforts to recruit more individuals into the field to ensure its continued success as a critical aspect of Northumberland's economy.

***What municipal programs and services do you use as part of your every day?***

**When asked to describe the municipal programs and services that are familiar with using, participants in the Youth Roundtable reported the following:**

- Youth participants expressed limited awareness of the services delivered by the municipal government and its various levels.
- Youth participants acknowledged that they were aware of services such as roads, paramedics, and waste management being provided by the county due to their status as students in the area.
- Youth participants struggled to name any specific services provided by the county that they accessed on a regular basis or that impacted their day-to-day lives.
  - Some youth participants mentioned occasional use of public libraries, park spaces, and waterfront spaces, but did not know what entity is responsible for offering these services.
  - It was suggested that the County could collaborate with teachers in developing course material that educates students about the functions and services provided by the local levels of government.

### ***What made the County attractive to you when you applied to work as a student?***

**When asked to describe what makes the County attractive as an employer, participants in the Youth Roundtable reported the following:**

- Youth participants perceived municipal work as offering a good work and life balance, with better hours compared to other employment options.
  - It was noted that the County creates a comfortable and supportive workplace environment.
- Youth participants highlighted a feeling of safety and a consistent standard of treatment in working for municipalities, which they found attractive compared to the private sector.
- Youth participants associated municipal work with opportunities for personal growth, learning, and acquiring transferable skills through summer jobs in professional roles.
- Youth participants valued the growth opportunities available in municipal work and expressed some concerns about career progression in smaller communities.
- Youth participants were drawn to municipal work due to the potential connections they could make, which could benefit their future careers in terms of job prospects, references, and mentoring.
  - It was noted that the County provides students an opportunity to learn from individuals in a leadership or management position.

### **Vision and Priorities**

#### ***Thinking of the County as a local government delivering programs and services – what could be improved?***

**When asked to describe what could be improved in the delivery of municipal programs and services, participants in the staff working group meetings and the working-group led staff discussions reported the following:**

- Participants indicated that there is a need to expand its operations to enable greater community access to programs and services.
  - It was noted that Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives should be prioritized.
  - It was noted that there should be greater community access to collaboration tools and County data.
  - It was noted there should be an expansion of community outreach services, particularly targeting youth and schools to support career development.
- Participants indicated that the environmental sustainability and climate adaptation efforts should be strengthened across programs and services.
  - It was noted that improving waste diversion should continue to be prioritized and that an increased focus on reducing the County's greenhouse gas emissions is needed going forward.
- Participants indicated that the County's would need to service the demand of a growing population through improved resource allocation, while ensuring sustainable funding for maintenance services.
- Participants indicated that a greater focus on supporting economic development and tourism is needed, including attracting businesses to the County.
- Participants indicated that the County should improve staff retention.
- Participants indicated that the County should increase the transparency of Council meetings and County planning processes.

*How does the future community of Northumberland look and feel like? What are the key changes you would like to see?*

**When asked to describe what the future community of Northumberland looks and feels like, participants in the staff working group meetings and the working-group led staff discussions reported the following:**

- Participants expressed a desire for Northumberland to be a more innovative and collaborative community.
  - It was noted that high-speed internet access should be available for all.
  - It was noted that public consultation, inclusivity in decision-making, and representative governance should be prioritized.
- Participants expressed a desire for Northumberland to be a thriving business environment, including supporting its agricultural and agri-tourism sectors.
  - It was noted that businesses and industries should be attracted to operate in the county to create more employment opportunities.
- Participants expressed a desire for Northumberland to be a more welcoming, highly diverse, supportive, connected, and safe community.
  - It was noted that targeted community supports are needed to attract and retain newcomers, young families and seniors to live in the county.
  - It was noted that programs and services should be culturally sensitive, and that additional EDI training for staff is needed.
  - It was noted that efforts are needed to address racism and hate.
- Participants expressed a desire for Northumberland to preserve its small-town feel while accommodating population growth.
  - It was noted that a greater focus on asset management planning is needed to address aging infrastructure.
- Participants expressed a desire for Northumberland to address key challenges experienced by the community.
  - It was noted improved access to public transportation is needed.
  - It was noted that housing should be affordable for all, and improved access to housing supports are needed for those struggling with homelessness are mental health challenges.
- Participants expressed a desire for Northumberland to be an environmentally conscious community, that is a leader in sustainable practices.
  - It was noted that public education on climate change and its local impacts are needed.

**When asked to comment on a vision for Northumberland in 10 years, participants that shared feedback through the Community Questionnaire, Community Conversation Pop-ups, and Online 'Ideas Boards' reported the following:**

- Participants expressed a desire for Northumberland to become more environmentally sustainable through increasing conservation of natural heritage and agriculture lands, while being proactive in leading climate change mitigation and adaptation.
  - It was noted that the County should prioritize the preservation of its natural splendor and delicate ecosystems, including wetlands, forest trails, and farmland, to ensure the well-being of wildlife and future generations.
  - It was noted that a climate lens should be applied throughout all County planning processes, so that they are aligned with responding to the climate emergency.

- It was noted that the County must support farmers, small businesses, and communities in developing resilient methods of operating to withstand the impacts of climate change.
- It was noted that greater focus and investment is needed to ensure that the County's growth is aligned with managing resources efficiently, reducing consumption and waste, and developing a circular economy.
- It was noted that the County could lead replanting initiatives to mitigate the loss of trees that are cut for development.
- Participants expressed a desire for Northumberland to be an affordable place to live, work, and play for all.
  - It was emphasized that the County needs more diverse and affordable housing options, so that all ages and life stages can afford to live in Northumberland.
  - It was emphasized that smaller housing options are needed for seasonal workers.
  - It was noted that residents with fixed incomes are vulnerable to the impacts of rising costs of housing and living, and that measures such as guaranteed annual income and housing geared-to-income should be offered.
  - It was noted that more affordable childcare and recreational programming are needed to enable and attract families to live in Northumberland.
- Participants expressed a desire for Northumberland to be a place that provides accessible and reliable social services that support community safety and well-being.
  - It was noted that there is a desire for increased local access to medical care and healthcare professionals, including family doctors, and nurse practitioners in Northumberland.
  - It was noted that increased services are needed to support people dealing with mental health and addictions issues.
  - It was emphasized that finding solutions for homelessness should be a priority.
- Participants expressed a desire for municipal government in Northumberland to be more efficient and transparent, while providing meaningful opportunities for community engagement.
  - It was noted that there should be greater coordination and communication between municipalities, to streamline activities and avoid duplication.
  - It was emphasized that there should be more opportunities for public input and engagement in municipal decision-making process.
  - It was suggested that the County could collaborate on initiatives with local organizations and resource groups.
  - It was suggested that the County's website could be improved to make accessing information more user friendly.
- Participants expressed a desire for better access to public transportation services and active transportation throughout the County.
  - It was noted that planning should support reducing the number of cars on the road and increasing active travel and the use of public transportation.
  - It was noted that current traffic congestion and road safety can be addressed through developing more designated trails and lanes for walking and cycling.
  - It was noted that there is a need for public transit connections between communities and to the Greater Toronto Area.

- It was noted that the County should help enable innovative transportation solutions to be offered in Northumberland, including electric vehicles and ride-hailing, car-sharing, and bike-sharing applications.
- Participants expressed a desire for Northumberland to continue to foster supportive and kind communities, that are increasingly inclusive, accessible and diverse.
  - It was noted that barriers for marginalized and vulnerable populations to participate in community opportunities and access social supports should be removed.
  - It was noted that there should continue to be a range of family-friendly community events throughout the year, including events celebrating multiculturalism and diversity.
- Participants expressed a desire for Northumberland to balance growth with maintaining natural heritage and limiting urban sprawl.
  - It was emphasized that growth planning should prioritize directing density to existing settlement areas to avoid the loss of natural environments and farmland.
  - It was noted that uncontrolled growth would put a strain on municipal services and infrastructure, and local amenities such as roads and hospitals.
- Participants expressed a desire for Northumberland to be a place that provides greater economic development and employment opportunities.
  - It was emphasized that the County needs to support the creation of more job opportunities and co-op placements in Northumberland to attract youth and qualified individuals to work in Northumberland and reduce labour shortage.
  - It was emphasized that the County should diversify its economy by attracting innovative businesses and supporting local businesses and entrepreneurship.
  - It was emphasized that the County could further stimulate tourism, particularly in its northern townships.
- Participants expressed a desire for Northumberland to continue to be a place that celebrates and supports local arts and culture.
  - It was envisioned that the County could be known for having a vibrant arts and culture community which helps attract tourism.
  - It was noted that the County can support more public art, landscape architecture, and art projects throughout Northumberland.
- Participants expressed a desire for improved municipal infrastructure and amenities throughout the County.
  - It was emphasized that there is a need for improved internet access in rural areas.
  - It was noted that there is a need for more public recreation facilities, including parks, swimming pools, and sport fields that are accessible to all ages.

**When asked to help develop a shared vision for the future of Northumberland, participants in the Community Development Roundtable reported the following:**

- Participants suggested the implementation of a buddy system for newcomers, aimed at assisting them in navigating the community, understanding cultural norms, accessing available services, and finding their way around.
- Participants identified transit and transportation systems as an important aspect of development that will improve livability within the community.
- Participants recognized agriculture and tourism as economic drivers.



- It was noted that the expansion of broadband services and high-speed internet is imperative in promoting growth, innovation, and efficiency.
- It was noted that access to natural gas is essential for crop-growing activities and is a more affordable option.
- It was noted that measures to control dust on county roads will support local farmers in their operations.
- It was noted that supporting farmers and migrant workers with housing and services is imperative for the smooth functioning of agricultural operations.
- It was noted that fostering growth of adequate accommodation options for visitors is essential to supporting tourism.
- Participants highlighted the need for affordable, safe, and attainable housing options for all residents, including workforce and market housing, with a focus on purpose-built rental housing and mixed housing neighbourhoods.
  - It was noted that the average income in the community does not align with the housing available. A study conducted by Habitat for Humanity revealed that only 15% of housing in the community is considered affordable or attainable.
  - It was suggested that the County explore accelerating housing types including multi-generational housing and shared living arrangements to address affordability and space utilization.
  - It was suggested that integrated housing, including transitional and supportive housing, can be an alternative to relying on temporary winter warming rooms, which only serve as short-term solutions.
  - It was noted that permit systems could minimize costs associated with zoning and upgrading houses and promote more affordable housing options.
- Participants emphasized the importance of educating the community on promoting resilience, preparedness, and associated risks relating to climate change.
- Participants encouraged collaboration and communication among stakeholders to break down silos and promote a connected and inclusive community.
- Participants emphasized the importance of fostering a sense of connectedness within the community to ensure proper care for seniors and individuals with special needs and to create a livable and inclusive environment.
- Participants emphasized the importance of implementing support services aimed to improve the quality of life for seniors in Northumberland, recognizing that a significant segment of the population is aged 65 and above.
- Participants encouraged government entities to be proactive and supportive of community initiatives, taking calculated risks and leveraging existing successful models.
  - It was noted that the County should establish a community development table to facilitate connections between providers, programs, services, and opportunities for further community development.

**When asked to help develop a shared vision for the future of Northumberland, participants in the Youth Roundtable reported the following:**

- Youth participants highlighted the need to enhance relationships between local employers and trade programs in high schools to create student experiences and build a strong workforce pipeline.
  - It was noted that agriculture, manufacturing, and hospitality are the three top areas of economic development in Northumberland County.

- Youth participants suggested that local businesses connect with students to provide insight into future hiring requirements and in-demand skills.
- Youth participants expressed limited awareness of the County and government's efforts in maintaining greenspaces, parks, flowers, and forests.
  - It was noted that the County should better promote and raise awareness about these initiatives.
- Youth participants emphasized the importance of community events in creating a sense of connection.
- Youth participants suggested aligning housing development and availability with local wages and workforce opportunities to ensure affordability and accessibility for residents.
- Youth participants advocated for limiting urban sprawl and focusing on population density, preserving land, agriculture, and the character of communities while meeting the needs of a growing population.
  - It was noted that the County should develop in already developed areas to meet housing needs while preserving rural spaces.
- Youth participants expressed some concerns about the 'born and raised' culture creating a sense of exclusion or resistance to change as the community grows.
- Youth participants emphasized the need for education on mental health care, development of mental health resources, and early access to support before situations become emergencies, particularly in light of emerging issues in the community.

#### ***What are you looking for in the community where you will live post-graduation?***

**When asked to describe a community where youth would like to live post-graduation, participants in the Youth Roundtable reported the following:**

- Youth participants expressed a desire to live and work in Northumberland County after graduation, seeking a friendly and safe community with job opportunities, affordable housing, connectivity to larger cities, and a strong emphasis on nature and conservation.
- Youth participants emphasized the importance of living where their career opportunities are, with some envisioning starting in a larger city for the early stages of their careers and transitioning to Northumberland County later when starting a family.
- Youth participants expressed a preference for living in a smaller community with access to amenities and greenspace, such as Northumberland County, while also having proximity to larger cities like Toronto.
- Youth participants expressed concerns about the affordability of living in Northumberland County as a graduate.

#### ***What are you looking for in an employer?***

**When asked to describe an employer they would want to work for, participants in the Youth Roundtable reported the following:**

- Youth participants highlighted the significance of a positive work culture that prioritizes teamwork over competition and fosters a collaborative and supportive environment. Youth participants emphasized the importance of leadership style, mentorship, and ongoing learning and support from their employers.
- Youth participants valued employers who were actively engaged in the community.

- It was noted that a clear mandate of community impact, where employees could see that their work made a difference and contributed to a larger purpose, is important.
- Youth participants highlighted the value of having a work-life balance particularly as individuals navigated different life stages.

## **Focus Areas and Actions**

*What actions can Northumberland County take to make your vision a reality? What actions can staff and community members take?*

**When asked to describe what actions can be taken to make their vision a reality, participants in the staff working group meetings and the working-group led staff discussions reported the following:**

- Participants recommended taking actions that increase the level of transparency and engagement regarding County initiatives and planning processes, both internally and with the larger community.
  - It was noted that more open communication should be promoted within the County to break down silos and increase collaboration.
  - It was suggested that County staff that are involved in initiatives should be spotlighted publicly to help build community trust and familiarity with County staff and emphasize their importance.
  - It was recommended that the County prioritize staff retention initiatives, including employee recognition, so that it continues to be an employer of choice.
- Participants recommended that the County should establish direct relationships with post-secondary education providers to advance youth opportunities within the county.
  - It was noted that the County should take a leadership role in facilitating internships and co-op placements to provide students exposure to employment opportunities in the county.
- Participants recommended that the County should encourage the adoption of integrated approaches for responding to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.
  - It was recommended that the County lead partnerships with healthcare and social support providers to develop a local strategy for integrating mental health and addictions supports with programs addressing homelessness.
  - It was suggested that greater guidance can be provided to enforcement officers.
- Participants recommended that the County develop an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy with defined actions and funding for how the County will address racism, amplify under-represented voices, and build intercultural understanding both within the County and the community.
  - It was noted that the County should support community projects that advance EDI.
- Participants recommended that the County take actions that increase the attractiveness of the county as a place to do business.
  - It was noted that agriculture is the biggest economic driver in the county, and recommended that the strategic plan identify a focus on how the County will help this sector to innovate and grow.
  - It was suggested that communications and resources be developed that support businesses to understand zoning and market gaps in the county.

- Participants recommended that the County foster greater collaboration and knowledge sharing with member municipalities.
- Participants recommended that the County work with partners to increase access to broadband in rural communities and leverage technology to enhance its services.
- Participants recommended that the County take actions to further protect its natural heritage and agricultural lands.
- Participants recommended that the County should continue to aggressively purchase land and engage in construction to expand stock of subsidized rental housing and workforce housing to improve affordability.
- Participants recommended that County's infrastructure planning for future growth should be done proactively and include alignment with the Asset Management Plan.

**When asked to describe what actions need to be taken to make their vision a reality, participants that shared feedback through the Community Questionnaire, Community Conversation Pop-ups, Online 'Ideas Boards', and by phone, reported the following:**

- Participants recommended that the County incentivize and directly invest in the development of affordable housing.
  - It was suggested that amendments be made to the Official Plan to incentivize the development of multi-unit rental buildings and enable municipal land to be developed by non-profit housing providers and developers that are committed to providing deeply affordable housing.
  - It was noted that rental housing for workers, students, and seniors is needed, and that affordable housing can be developed that facilitates these demographics living together.
  - It was suggested that policies such as additional taxes be adopted to discourage speculative housing, vacant homes, and short-term rentals.
- Participants recommended that the County continue to develop and expand services available within the county that enable communities to thrive.
  - It was noted that increasing the availability of childcare is an urgent priority to enable workforce participation, and that the County should explore opening its own childcare centres.
  - It was noted that better access to broadband internet is needed in the county.
  - It was suggested that ride-sharing services be allowed to operate in the county, and public transit be expanded to reduce the need for personal vehicles to access community services/amenities.
  - It was noted that more primary care providers, local clinics, and long-term care homes are needed.
  - It was noted that more supports for individuals/families with low incomes are needed, particularly shelters to address homelessness.
  - It was noted that more targeted services are needed to support individuals dealing with mental health challenges and addictions, while ensuring community safety.
  - It was noted that investment is needed in creating public spaces, local shopping areas, and recreational facilities.
- Participants recommended that the County take action to enhance protection of natural heritage and invest in increased environmental stewardship.

- It was noted that the County should continue its focus on increasing waste diversion through ongoing public education and improvements to recycling and compost services.
- It was noted that more public green space should be developed, including through 'renaturalization' efforts, and further development of environmentally sensitive areas should be prevented.
- It was suggested that additional by-laws are needed to protect trees.
- It was noted that public education and programming should be developed to support the protection of shorelines and waterways, and their wildlife.
- It was noted that operational changes should be explored to reduce use of salt/brine on roads.
- It was suggested that the County can help facilitate community and roadside/trail clean-ups.
- It was suggested that the County can implement wayfinding signage that provides public education on the value of natural features.
- Participants recommended that plans and policies be developed to ensure that future growth and community design is sustainable and aligned with County priorities.
  - It was emphasized that the County development should build up within existing urban areas, and that building outwards in rural areas should be avoided.
  - It was emphasized that agricultural lands should be protected from development.
  - It was emphasized that the County's architectural heritage should be protected.
  - It was suggested that employment lands should be secured in each community to support development of local jobs.
  - It was suggested that commercial development should be encouraged near population centres to support the creation of complete communities.
  - It was suggested that more multi-use trails, sidewalks, and cycling lanes should be developed to encourage active travel.
- Participants recommended that the County develop a county-wide climate action plan that engages all community members on climate mitigation and adaptation initiatives.
  - It was noted that action is needed to address to local impacts of climate change, including drought, flooding, fires, and extreme temperatures.
  - It was noted that the climate emergency should be a key lens applied to all policy decisions.
  - It was suggested that the County should take a leadership role in raising awareness about climate impacts and encouraging community actions such as installation of solar panels and EV chargers, energy efficiency retrofits, and community gardens and tree planting.
  - It was suggested that the County implement methane capture technology at its waste facilities.
- Participants recommended that the County should expand initiatives and formats for community engagement and input in County decision-making.
  - It was suggested that the County host periodic public forums to gather feedback on improving community vibrancy.
  - It was suggested that more opportunities should be provided for community members to participate on advisory boards/committees and that these opportunities be widely communicated.

- It was suggested that the public should be actively invited to observe Council meetings and share input on decision-making through a variety of formats.
- Participants recommended changes be made to how planning is conducted across the county to decrease redundancies and increase government efficiency.
  - It was suggested that a single, unified planning resource team be created to ensure that planning across the county is conducted through a common vision.
  - It was suggested that a comprehensive infrastructure plan be developed.
  - It was suggested that a County police force could be established.
- Participants recommended that the County continue to promote tourism, economic development, and entrepreneurship in the community.
  - It was emphasized that agriculture is a major economic pillar in the county and that the County should continue to invest in the OAFVC.
  - It was suggested that tourism can be enhanced by promoting county areas outside of Cobourg and Brighton.

**When asked to describe what actions need to be taken to make their vision a reality, participants in the Community Development Roundtable reported the following:**

- Participants emphasized the importance of providing support to local businesses while recognizing their crucial role in maintaining vibrant downtown areas.
- Participants recognized the commitment of construction associations and individual developers to housing, but as housing needs continue to evolve, efforts should be made to alleviate red tape and reduce development timelines.
  - It was noted that alleviating red tape was a priority identified in the last County Strategic Plan.
  - It was noted that building multi-generational housing and smaller units can help to address housing needs effectively.
- Participants suggested localizing development in urban centers to preserve farmland and utilize existing space efficiently.
  - It was noted that the County is expected to be a leader in implementing best planning practices and to work with lower tiers.
- Participants suggested that the County consider cross-municipal transit to support workforce housing initiatives, providing transportation to locations such as Trenton.
- Participants suggested improving communication and promotion of various programs and services available to ensure it reaches community members who need it, including immigrants and vulnerable populations.
- Participants emphasized the need for the integration of social services and healthcare, to address issues relating to substance abuse and homelessness.
- Participants noted that community members, faith organizations and agencies want to help address issues like homelessness but may require support and guidance from the County in providing effective assistance.
- Participants highlighted the challenges immigrants may face in navigating and accessing local public services and starting businesses due to language barriers, unfamiliarity with new service systems, and cultural differences.
  - It was suggested that the County provide support and guidance to help them integrate and succeed.



- Participants suggested addressing the shortage of accommodations aligned with tourism opportunities to encourage visitors to stay and spend their money in the community.
- Participants expressed the need for a recruitment strategy to fill local workforce gaps.
  - It was noted that research is needed to understand where students are seeking employment as they are no longer applying locally.
  - It was noted that the recruitment of doctors and nurse practitioners is crucial to align with population growth and meet the healthcare needs of the community.

### ***What are the barriers to youth working in the County?***

**When asked to describe barriers to working in Northumberland that youth face, participants in the Youth Roundtable reported the following:**

- Youth participants expressed that limited transportation options between rural areas to urban centers can pose a barrier for them in accessing employment opportunities.
- Youth participants highlighted the importance of internet access for remote employment opportunities and continuing education.
- Youth participants emphasized the need for more employer education on hiring individuals with disabilities to expand workforce opportunities and promote inclusivity within the workplace.
  - It was noted that while support for resume building and job interview preparation is available, there are limited resources to assist them in entering the job market.
- Youth participants noted a lack of support for youth who did not complete a high school education and are seeking jobs.