



TOWNSHIP OF SOUTHWOLD

Report to Council

DATE: November 25th, 2019

PREPARED BY: Lisa Higgs, CAO/Clerk

REPORT NO.: CAO 2019-137

SUBJECT MATTER: Annual Strategic Plan Update to the End of 2019

Recommendation:

That Council receive this report as information.

Purpose:

The Township Strategic Plan was adopted in May of 2018 and requires an annual review to determine if the plan is being implemented. This report serves as the update of the plan's aims for the year ending 2019.

Background:

On February 27th, 2018 Council held a special public meeting to obtain input from the citizens and staff of The Township of Southwold for the purpose of developing a Strategic Plan. The input gained from this meeting was used to develop a four year Strategic Plan for the Township of Southwold. Many ideas received at the public meeting held in February 2018 were already being implemented by council and staff and therefore may not appear explicitly in the action plan contained in the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan was adopted by Council in May of 2018 and annual updates are a requirement of the plan. The below discussion outlines the aims of the plan and the progress made to the end of 2019 on each item.

Comment:

1. Growth	
<i>Strategic Goal:</i> <i>To promote residential, agricultural, commercial, and industrial development by ensuring policies and services are in place to support growth in The Township of Southwold.</i>	
<i>Strategies:</i> 1.1 Encourage and invest in sewer services and waste water treatment facilities in the growth communities.	2019 UPDATES

Action Plan:

A. Complete municipal servicing studies, environmental assessments, and development or connection charges studies in anticipation of growth on an ongoing basis.

The Township is completing a Class C EA for Shedden and Fingal. The next PIC scheduled for December 5th 2019. Following this PIC, the EA should be close to being finalized. The Township also made significant progress on its DC study, Water-Wastewater Rate Study and OP review in late 2019.

B. Ensure the appropriate development policies are in place and review and update the Township Official Plan every five years to ensure that the Township retains an adequate supply of vacant lands for growth.

The Township made significant progress on its OP review in 2019. Growth projections have been approved and draft policies have been reviewed. A public meeting for settlement area boundaries is proposed for January 2020. Updated OP adoption is targeted for 2020.

C. Prioritize the provision of sewer and waste water servicing in the Township budget process.

The Township completed significant sanitary sewer works in Talbotville in the 2019 construction season, which will be completed at year end.

D. Establish connection policies and connection charges in the growth areas to appropriately finance waste water treatment and collection systems via a user pay mechanism and federal and provincial government grants.

Following significant public consultation, a Talbotville Wastewater Connection By-Law was adopted on August 12th, 2019.

E. Plan wastewater treatment facilities for diverse uses including residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, and institutional uses.

The Talbotville WWTP MBR system is compatible with all uses.

1.2 Support & prioritize access to high speed internet for all (agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, etc.) Township properties.

2019 UPDATES

<i>Action Plan:</i>	
A. Support independent needs studies on telecommunications systems in the Township and promote surveys to ascertain data.	Staff recommends that the EDC tackle this project in 2020.
B. Form partnerships with agencies, corporations, municipal neighbours, SWIFT, residents, local businesses, and telecommunications companies to find solutions, including alternative options for service.	The Township continues to participate in SWIFT through Elgin County. The Township Mayor, as Deputy Warden participates in SWIFT meetings.
C. Investigate options for servicing growth communities and consider municipal investment or debenture options for residents to expedite installation of high speed internet.	No work was completed in 2019 on this initiative.
D. Support efforts by agricultural and rural property owners to facilitate “last kilometer” high speed infrastructure.	No work was completed in 2019 on this initiative
1.3 Encourage & Support Residential Development.	2019 UPDATES
<i>Action Plan:</i>	
A. Support developers and builders by reducing unnecessary administrative processes and providing clear, responsive, and efficient service.	The Township’s CBO has been working to streamline permit issuance and assist development. Median permit processing times are as follows: - Residential (decks, additions, pools, renovations) = 3 days - SFDs = 3 days - Agricultural = 3-4 days - Commercial = 9 days
B. Provide opportunities for residential development for diverse populations including young families and seniors.	Talbotville and Ferndale are seeing significant subdivision development.

<p>C. Encourage an appropriate mix of residential development including single family dwellings, multi-residential dwellings, and affordable housing.</p> <p>D. Support the development of a retirement community or condominium complex for seniors.</p>	<p>The Township’s Official Plan requires an appropriate mix of housing. 75% of plans of subdivision submitted to Council for approval in 2018 included a mix of SFD and multi-residential housing.</p> <p>The Township has received and responded to many inquiries related to a vacant property which may be used for senior’s housing.</p>
<p>1.4 Utilize the Economic Development Committee to prepare recommendations to attract key businesses to the municipality and develop strategies to retain and expand existing critical businesses.</p>	<p>2019 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <p>A. Provide the EDC the authority to make inquiries, meet with businesses and contacts to promote The Township of Southwold.</p> <p>B. Utilize the Economic Development Committee to help identify development opportunities in the Township and address strategies for supporting small businesses and reducing red tape.</p> <p>C. Utilize the Economic Development Committee to develop a strategy to attract, retain, and expand critical sectors and key businesses such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Gas Station b. Coffee Shop c. Financial Institution/Bank/Credit Union d. Pharmacy e. Family Restaurant f. Grocery Store g. Rural Tourism & Agri-Business h. Alternative Accommodation 	<p>This authority was granted previously and is ongoing.</p> <p>The EDC has requested that checklists be developed for potential business sites. This will need to be revisited in 2019.</p> <p>This project will be flagged to the EDC in 2019. In 2018, with Elgin County’s assistance, a business needs study was completed and is being investigated by the EDC. The EDC is undertaking its own strategic plan to determine how to tackle these recommendations. An alternative accommodation study is slated to come before Council in January 2020.</p>
<p>1.5 Attract new industrial development and encourage expansion and improvements on existing industrial</p>	<p>2019 UPDATES</p>

businesses with input from Council and Council members of the EDC.	
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Action Plan:

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| <p>A. Provide enticements for land owners of vacant industrial land to market their properties to industrial developers.</p> | <p>The Township made efforts in 2019 to converse with different industrial land owners in response to requests for property forwarded through Elgin County.</p> |
| <p>B. Investigate servicing options for lands earmarked for industrial development in the Township Official Plan and reserve funds to service the lands.</p> | <p>The Township completed significant research on servicing of industrial lands and participated in discussions on natural gas servicing, waste water treatment, and water distribution to industrial lands.</p> |
| <p>C. Partner with Elgin County, the Provincial Government, and Federal Government and other agencies to attract industrial development through a marketing plan of key sites.</p> | <p>The Township worked closely with Elgin County, MP Vechhio, and MPP Yurek in 2019 to help market industrial lands.</p> |
| <p>D. Support the creation of incentives that attract new industries and support incentives for existing industrial property owners to improve and expand their businesses.</p> | <p>In 2019, the Township updated its Community Improvement Program (Elgincentives) to include new incentives for industrial lands.</p> |
| <p>E. Provide excellent administrative services to assist businesses in navigating through various planning processes (plan of subdivision, re-zoning, consent, site plan approval, etc).</p> | <p>Township staff work hard to assist new business owners in planning ventures.</p> |

2. Culture, Recreation, Environment, & Community Beautification

Strategic Goal:

Promote a healthy, naturally beautiful, and community oriented municipality by encouraging and supporting involvement of volunteer organizations wishing to provide cultural and recreational activities in the Township of Southwold.

Strategies:

2.1 Complete capital recreation projects and proceed with the revitalization of Township parks.

2019 UPDATES

Action Plan:

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| <p>A. Continue working with current multi-purpose committee to set long term priorities for the parks and establish multi-year parks capital project plan.</p> | <p>The Township Parks Committee informs that municipal capital budget program. In 2019, the Township Treasurer met with the Parks committee twice in the fall for capital budget feedback and to help establish a longer range budget forecast.</p> |
| <p>B. Improve the communication of Township park projects through improved web and social media posts and celebratory grand openings of new capital park investments. Consider an advertising & marketing plan to increase awareness and use of facilities.</p> | <p>In 2019, new marketing materials were created to advertise the Keystone Complex. Updates were made to the Township website for each of the different parks to provide consistent information to residents and include more photos of facilities.</p> |
| <p>C. Continue to improve efforts to engage community members and enhance representation from all areas of the Township.</p> | <p>More work to be done on a broader community outreach program for 2020.</p> |

<p>D. Investigate the feasibility and confer with the multi-purpose committee to establish an action plan on proceeding with the following Township Parks Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Bandshell/Outdoor Stage at the Keystone Complex b. Talbotville New Park Project c. Splash Pad d. New Shedden Open Space Park (Soccer Fields, Lawn Bowling, Football, etc.) <p>E. Maximize the use of community spaces and support community programs that incentivize the use of facilities. Consider partnerships that ensure municipal facilities can be rented for summer camps, day programs, and programs that encourage full rental of parks and municipal buildings.</p>	<p>Investigating the feasibility of each of the following will be delegated to the Parks Committee in 2019. The Talbotville Park is earmarked as the next major project for 2020. The Shedden Open Space park Phase 1 & 2 elements are nearing completion (targeted for early 2020)</p> <p>To be addressed in 2020.</p>
<p>2.2 Promote community volunteerism and support community driven events.</p>	<p>2019 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Promote volunteering opportunities for Township Committees and local organizations and service clubs through the use of Township staff, website, social media, and communications products. B. Encourage collaboration between community groups by establishing a secure, privacy compliant, central volunteer database and volunteer mentoring program that supports cross-organization sharing. C. Sponsor efforts, including the creation of a central listing of assets and organization skillsets, to maximize the use of existing assets and sharing of existing resources between organizations. 	<p>The Township promotes volunteering opportunity on our social media. The Township also recognized volunteers at a well-attended banquet in 2019.</p> <p>Database to be initiated in 2020. An initial contact listing was consolidated and compiled as part of volunteer appreciation 2018.</p> <p>To be completed in 2020.</p>

<p>D. Ensure that fair and festival organizers receive support from the Township to aid in their promotion and that resources are committed from the municipality that prioritize the continuation of municipal traditions (i.e. Rosy Rhubarb, Shedden Fair, Optimist Club Parade, Southwold by Tractor, etc).</p> <p>E. Partner with Schools, Elgin Manor, Community Groups to support community events.</p>	<p>The Township Facebook Page in 2019 has assisted in the promotion of Rosy Rhubarb, the Fair, Tractor Pull, Southwold by Tractor, Optimist Club Parade, Winterfest, Shedden Soccer, Minor Sports, etc. Municipal staff provide resources as requested to various committees to help ensure their events are successful.</p> <p>The Township of Southwold hosted the TVDSB annual soccer tournament at the Keystone Complex in 2019.</p>
<p>2.3 Prioritize Township-wide beautification projects that enhance our natural resources and promote the rural character of the municipality.</p>	<p>2019 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p>	
<p>A. Emphasize year-round, four season, park and municipal property maintenance. Ensure that parks can be accessed in spring, summer, fall, and winter and encourage activities in all seasons.</p>	<p>To be completed in 2019.</p>
<p>B. Work closely with the Township Communities in Bloom Committee to support the beautification of the municipality.</p>	<p>The Township continues to support the Communities in Bloom through the Public Works Department and by supporting financial requests to the Green Lane Trust. Administrative support was also increased in 2019.</p>
<p>C. Investigate progressive waste management solutions and evaluate the costs and benefits of different waste management collection service types (i.e. single stream vs. two-stream recycling, compost/organic collection, etc.) and service levels (weekly, bi-weekly, additional seasonal collections, etc). Council selection of the optimal service based on this evaluation.</p>	<p>The Township will be initiating a service review of waste management services in 2019. The creation of the Zero Waste Committee will help provide direction to staff and council on preferred waste management options.</p>

<p>D. Provide options to residents for special waste management such as large article collection, household hazardous waste, community swap days, or a community dumpster option.</p>	<p>In 2019 the Township continued to participate in the St.Thomas Community Recycling Centre. Information to residents regarding waste collection has been frequently posted on the Township Facebook page.</p>
<p>E. Encourage wildlife preservation and environmental protection through the use of the protection and promotion of Fingal Wildlife Sanctuary, the consideration of greener services and alternative energy, and the control of invasive species.</p>	<p>To be completed in 2020. Township staff have worked preliminarily with the Optimist Club to host the Rhubarb Run in 2020 which will showcase & help promote the Wildlife Sanctuary.</p>
<p>F. Celebrate our local history and work to preserve heritage features of our community through the support of History Committee initiatives.</p>	<p>The Township continues to support the history committee. In 2019, the Township supported the rejuvenation of the Fingal Heritage Park and a Victorian-style Gazebo is under construction. The Township's War Memorial Committee put on an excellent Remembrance Day event in November 2019. The History Committee was awarded a special award at the volunteer appreciation banquet.</p>
<p>2.4 Place special focus on cultural and recreation activities aimed at serving seniors in our community.</p>	<p>2019 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p>	
<p>A. In partnership with Elgin County, develop and implement a plan for our aging population.</p>	<p>To be initiated in 2020.</p>

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| <p>B. Combat social isolation felt by many seniors by supporting services that help provide care to seniors including volunteer organizations.</p> | <p>In 2019, the Southwold Young at Heart committee heard presentations from VON. Southwold staff helped promote this information on our social media. Southwold hosts VON weekly events to support fitness and promote community involvement.</p> |
| <p>C. Establish a senior's advisory committee of council to provide input on services for seniors and suggestions for social support.</p> | <p>The Township established the Southwold Young at Heart Committee in late 2018 and adopted Terms of Reference in 2019. The Committee meets regularly.</p> |
| <p>D. Provide recreation opportunities for seniors and invest in activities to create a central hub for seniors.</p> | <p>The Young at Heart Committee hosted biweekly events in 2019 at the Keystone complex for seniors. These events included pickleball, shuffleboard, cards, games, a history tour, refreshments and a Christmas luncheon.</p> |
| <p>E. Make accessible public spaces a priority by designing fully accessible parks and facilities, and conferring with the County Accessibility Coordinator to ensure parks and facilities are fully committed to the goal of accessible and inclusive spaces.</p> | <p>The Township constructed a fully accessible washroom in Shedden in 2019 and upgraded accessible doors at the Keystone in 2019. The Township continues to design accessible public spaces. The Township conferred with the County Accessibility Coordinator frequently in 2019 and used this resource to update policies.</p> |

3. Municipal Infrastructure, Improved Transportation, and Public Safety

Strategic Goal:

Provide improved transportation and a strong commitment to asset management with a goal of maintaining the Township's infrastructure in the promotion of public safety.

Strategies:

3.1 Update and expand on the existing asset management plan including financing, as regulated by the Provincial government, and commit to maintaining the Township's infrastructure and assets to an always improving level.

2019 UPDATES

Action Plan:

A. Commitment from Council and staff to follow recommendations arising from the asset management plan.

In 2019 the Township of Southwold adopted a strategic asset management policy and completed an update to its Roads Needs Study and Asset Management database.

B. Provide rapid response to repairing Township roads, assets, fleet, and facilities to prevent further damage to municipal properties.

This is an ongoing Township responsibility.

C. Ensure that new subdivision development and impacts of growth are well planned and managed for the future impact on municipal assets.

The Township is working on a growth management plan.

3.2 Emphasize public safety on municipal roadways and provide safe active transportation options.

2019 UPDATES

Action Plan:

A. Ensure speed limits in small communities are compatible with the goal of public safety with an emphasis on low speed limits near parks and public facilities where children are travelling.

This is an ongoing Township responsibility. Speeds were reduced on County roads south of Shedden near the new park.

<p>B. Partner with the OPP to ensure that municipal speed limits are enforced and encourage targeted enforcement via focused patrols.</p> <p>C. Confirm that new subdivisions in growth communities include sidewalks and active transportation networks to encourage safety. Ensure all new parks are fenced.</p> <p>D. Ensure that new subdivisions are designed with traffic control measures that reduce impacts on public safety resulting from growth.</p>	<p>The Township continues to lobby the OPP to improve enforcement. In 2019, this enforcement was requested by Township staff related to highway 401 reconstruction. Southwold Community Policing hosted their trivia night in 2019 and provides data to OPP to enhance patrols.</p> <p>All plans of subdivision submitted in 2019 were required to provide sidewalks and trail systems to new parks. A new subdivision was installed on Talbotville Gore Road in 2019.</p> <p>Talbotville plans of subdivision included community input related to traffic control.</p>
<p>3.3 Investigate transportation options for seniors and isolated populations in rural communities.</p>	<p>2019 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <p>A. Support and help facilitate shared senior transportation opportunities.</p> <p>B. Explore alternative public transportation models used in other jurisdictions and investigate the feasibility of these systems in Southwold.</p> <p>C. Work with community volunteer organizations and municipal partners to help promote transportation options for seniors and isolated populations.</p>	<p>To be completed in 2020.</p> <p>To be completed in 2020.</p> <p>To be completed in 2020.</p>
<p>3.4 Ensure that residents have access to health services and are well informed about ways to protect their own personal safety.</p>	<p>2019 UPDATES</p>

<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <p>A. Maintain medical building in Shedden for health service(s) and work to preserve and attract various health providers in the municipality.</p> <p>B. Educate residents about emergency management and emergency preparedness and provide frequent public education on fire prevention.</p> <p>C. Continue to liaise with Elgin County to maintain ambulance services in a timely manner for residents and that growth is accounted for in coordinating service.</p>	<p>In 2019, the Township attracted an additional business in the Medical Building in Shedden. The doctor's office in Shedden remains occupied. Improvements to the medical building in 2019 included new eavestroughs and parking lot repairs.</p> <p>In 2019, the Township Facebook page shared emergency management information and links to Fire Department page updates frequently. The Fire Department hosted a successful Fire Prevention Open House and hired a Fire Prevention Officer in the department.</p> <p>The Township supports EMS services through Elgin County and through tiered medical response.</p>
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4. Municipal Financial Stewardship

Strategic Goal:

To exercise good financial stewardship in the management of Township expenditures and revenues.

Strategies:

4.1 To continue researching and applying for applicable Federal and Provincial funding.

2019 UPDATES

Action Plan:

- A. Continue memberships in various Municipal Associations and collaboration with municipal partners.
- B. Pre-screen grant information at staff level to determine eligibility and qualifying projects prior to Council recommendation and application.

Township maintains memberships in AMCTO, MFOA, OBOA, DSAO, AMO, ROMA, OGRA, etc. and participates in shared Elgin working groups.

The Township successfully received multiple grants in 2019.

<p>C. Engage, where appropriate, the services of a consultant for completion of grant applications.</p>	<p>Spriet and Associates Engineering were contracted in 2019 to assist with the Rural and Northern Infrastructure grant applications. The Township was successful in attaining this grant.</p>
<p>4.2 Review and protect the assessment base.</p>	<p>2019 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <p>A. Review large changes in assessment as identified by MPAC and monitor and report on changes in assessment practices and legislation.</p> <p>B. Support and consider assessment management efforts beyond Township staff including the use of external consultants, County resources, and municipal organizations.</p>	
<p>4.3 Adopt, review, and frequently update policies that support strong financial stewardship including policies on the following:</p>	<p>2019 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <p>A. Use of Township owned lands (including commercial owned buildings and future development lands) and Township owned properties. To be completed in 2021</p> <p>B. Revenue and Tax Collection To be completed 2020</p> <p>C. Procurement/Purchasing. To be completed by 2021</p> <p>D. Use of and Contributions to Township Reserves. To be completed by 2020</p> <p>E. Financial Reporting. To be completed by 2020</p> <p>F. Investment Policy To be completed by 2020</p>	

5. Public Engagement, Transparent Government, and Informing the Community

Strategic Goal:

To promote public engagement, transparent government, and strong communications with all members of the community across various mediums for the strengthening of civic participation.

Strategies:

5.1 Continue improving information disseminated by the municipality.

2019 UPDATES

Action Plan:

A. Develop improved website content more frequently and re-format so that residents can more easily navigate municipal information.

Township staff have made improvements to parks and facilities pages and committee pages. A new website is proposed for 2020.

B. Maintain a stand-alone bulletin board (whether physical or digital) within communities for local advertising use.

To be completed in 2020.

C. Continue newsletters with water and tax bills.

2019 featured newsletters in the tax bills and Southwold in Motion in the water bills.

D. Create a central information contact list whereby residents can opt into receiving various memos and communications from the municipality.

To be completed in 2020.

E. Aim for improved communication with residents and engagement via sharing through various social media platforms.

In early 2019, the Township created a position for Community Services and Communications. This position has significantly improved Facebook posts.

5.2 Adopt practices that promote transparent government

2019 UPDATES

Action Plan:

A. Adopt and abide by public notice policies.

Ongoing.

<p>B. Consider proactive disclosure practices.</p> <p>C. Make public records easily available online in an accessible format.</p>	<p>To be investigated in 2020. Staff is including a recommendation for a public portal to many of the Township’s public records database (Laserfiche)</p> <p>All documents posted to website in 2019 are in accessible format.</p>
<p>5.3 Celebrate community engagement and create vibrant connections within the community.</p>	<p>2019 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <p>A. Consider strategies to support community neighbourhood engagement.</p> <p>B. Support community outreach efforts and neighbourhood efforts that enhance our subdivisions, making them more than “bedroom communities”.</p> <p>C. Encourage collaboration between community groups of volunteers to move towards common goals.</p>	<p>In 2019, the Township supported the creation of the Talbotville Neighbourhood Committee – a Committee of Council focusing on community engagement. This committee has been active in Talbotville and resulted in improved consultation and the creation of an additional community event.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>In 2019, the Township hosted its third Winterfest; a good example of many community groups working together. The Volunteer appreciation banquet brought many groups together for one celebration.</p>

Approved by: Lisa Higgs, CAO/Clerk