



REPORT

Council

Meeting Date: April 26, 2021

FROM: Economic Development and Corporate Strategy Department

DATE: April 20, 2021

SUBJECT: Council Strategic Plan Refresh, April 26, 2021

LOCATION: Town Hall

WARD: Town-wide

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RECOMMENDATION:

That the report, Council Strategic Plan Refresh, April 26, 2021, from the Economic Development and Corporate Strategy Department, be received.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- This report presents Council with a refresh (Refresh) to Council's 2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan). There will be a two-week review period until May 7, 2021, for Members of Council to provide comments and additional input on the Refresh. Based on any feedback from Council and additional staff input, the final Refresh will be tabled for Council's consideration at the Council meeting on May 25, 2021.
- The Strategic Plan remains broadly valid in its five areas of focus and key objectives. However, the Refresh to the Strategic Plan and the list of major initiatives planned for this term of Council is necessary, in recognition of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other external factors.
- From March to April 2021, Members of Council and staff provided input into major initiatives planned for this term of Council. These major initiatives are outlined in *Appendix A - Draft Progress Report - 2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan Refresh* (Progress Report).
- Council and staff identify five priority areas for the Refresh to address in this term of Council: a Pandemic Recovery Plan; addressing traffic, speeding and safety; reducing timeframes for applications, permits and licenses; enhancing communications; and implementing capital projects.

- The Pandemic Recovery Plan would address at least the following elements, to be prioritized based on a risk assessment: financial sustainability; business supports; program and service delivery adaptation; enforcement; and workforce planning.
- Members of Council and staff also provided input and identified other trends, challenges and opportunities (External Factors), that could impact the Refresh and strategic planning, including: climate change, financial uncertainty, shifting demographics, technological disruption, new service models and housing affordability.

BACKGROUND:

Context

The Strategic Plan establishes the framework for both Council decision-making and day-to-day employee choices and ensures that resources are allocated to support the strategies and initiatives that help the Town achieve its vision, mission and values.

Council adopted the following vision, mission and values in 2007, which drive Council's priority setting.

- **Vision:**
 - To be the most livable town in Canada.
- **Mission:**
 - We create and preserve Canada's most livable community that enhances the natural, cultural, social and economic environments. We achieve this by continuously improving programs and services that are both accessible and environmentally and fiscally sustainable.
 - We are highly valued and widely celebrated due to the innovative and outstanding way we satisfy the needs of our residents, businesses and employees. As a result, the process is as fulfilling as the outcome.
 - We ensure our staff receives the same level of respect, commitment and care that they are expected to deliver to the community.
- **Values:**
 - **Accountability:** We deliver what we promised. We are accountable for our own actions and results. We are accountable for the efficient and effective use of public funds.

- Dedication: We willingly take on responsibility. We are committed to serving our community. We take initiative and we take on our share of the work.
- Honesty: Each of us demonstrates personal integrity, truthfulness and honesty in how we do our job. We inspire public confidence and trust in our government.
- Innovation: We pursue innovation by being creative, showing initiative and taking risks. We encourage employees to exercise judgment in meeting customer needs.
- Respect: We value an open, respectful and inclusive workplace. We value the cultural and social diversity of our community. We make it possible for every resident to participate in our community, and in our government.
- Teamwork: We act as a team. We demonstrate high levels of trust and cooperation. We collaborate across departments to achieve our goals. We work in partnership with our community.

Since 2007, Council has met annually to review and measure progress being made to achieve these key strategic priorities. They also drive the Town's annual business planning and budgeting process, which ensures departmental initiatives are aligned with Council's strategic priorities.

On April 29, 2019, Council approved its 2019 – 2022 Council Strategic Plan (hereinafter the 'Strategic Plan') and five strategic areas of focus to guide decision-making for this term of Council:

1. **Livability:** To be the most livable town in Canada
2. **Engaged Community:** Foster a community environment that engages residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds
3. **Accountable Government:** Inspire public confidence through open, accountable and efficient delivery of government services
4. **Mobility:** Improve town's multi-modal transportation network to support effective movement of people and goods
5. **Environment:** Protect greenspace and promote environmentally sustainable practices

Process for the Refresh

In the Livable Oakville Progress Report during the Special Council Meeting on October 20, 2020, the Mayor noted the need for a refresh of the Strategic Plan (hereinafter the 'Refresh'). The impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and other considerations, detailed below, also highlight the need for the Refresh that is the subject of this report.

In consultation with Mayor, staff developed the following process for refreshing Council's Strategic Plan:

- Staff developed a draft progress report outlining major initiatives that were completed in 2019 and 2020, as well as major initiatives that are planned to be completed in 2021 and 2022.
- Staff also developed the broad elements of a potential pandemic recovery plan and identified external factors for Council to consider as part of the Refresh.
- In April 2021, staff shared the draft progress report, the draft pandemic recovery plan and the draft external factors (hereinafter 'the Draft Refresh Materials') with Members of Council.
- In April 2021, staff held meetings with Members of Council to provide them with the opportunity to provide additional input and feedback on the Draft Refresh Materials.
- Based on input from Members of Council, this report, Council Strategic Plan Refresh, April 26, 2021, presents Council with the draft Refresh.
- Following the Council meeting on April 26, 2021, there will be a two-week review period, until May 7, 2021, for Members of Council to provide comments and additional input on the Refresh. Based on feedback from Members of Council and additional staff input, the final Refresh will be tabled for Council's consideration at the Council meeting on May 25, 2021.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

Input from Councillors

Feedback from Members of Council obtained through meetings held in April 2021 confirmed that the Strategic Plan remains broadly valid in its five areas of focus and key objectives. However, Members of Council also confirmed that it is necessary to refresh the Strategic Plan to incorporate factors that were not contemplated during the original Strategic Plan process such as pandemic response and recovery, as well as address key priorities during the remaining term of Council.

The draft Refresh reflects the input from Councillors regarding the priorities that they have identified through interaction with their constituents including improved communication; reduced processing times for development applications and permits; events and programming that reflects the diversity in Oakville; more options for outdoor space and recreation; and measures to address traffic safety.

The draft Refresh also builds in a plan for COVID-19 recovery; and recognizes the influence of the following external factors:

- **Climate change:** mitigating and adapting to climate change remains a critical priority for Council, including embedding a climate lens at the corporate level into departments and processes; participating in the implementation of the Community Energy Strategy; and other areas.
- **Financial uncertainty:** Members of Council reiterated a desire to keep taxes at or below the rate of inflation, notwithstanding the costs imposed by COVID-19. There is also a need to demonstrate value and leverage efficiencies from the delivery of digital services.
- **Shifting demographics:** the demographics of the community continue to change, highlighting the need for the Town to continue in its diversity and inclusion efforts, including understanding and responding to changing community needs related to Town services, communications, events and other areas. Demographic shifts may also have workforce implications related to aging populations.
- **Technological disruption:** remote work, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impact of technologies, such as autonomous equipment, will continue to have workforce impacts. Members of Council recognized that while many Town staff were quickly able to shift to remote work at the start of the pandemic, longer term, more comprehensive plans will need to be prepared.
- **New service models:** partly as a learning from the COVID-19 pandemic, master plans and service models will need to respond to and reflect changing community needs. Members of Council noted the increased demand for outdoor recreation and parks during the pandemic and the likelihood such demand will continue in the future. New service models will explore the delivery of services and programs related to parks (year-round amenities, climate change adaptation); recreation (shifts in demand and the form of what is offered, as well as private sector impacts); transit (fleet utilization); and maintenance (workforce impacts related to technological transformation).
- **Housing affordability:** the rising cost of housing, particularly evident during the pandemic, presents broader community challenges with respect to housing affordability.

The above-noted factors are important considerations for the Town to be aware of, especially for strategic planning and the development of master plans. It is recognized that initiatives stemming from these factors may have both short-term (within the current term of Council) and long-term measures.

DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN REFRESH

Progress Report and Major Initiatives for 2021 and 2022

One of the major outputs of the Refresh process is *Appendix A - Draft Progress Report - 2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan Refresh* (Progress Report). The Progress Report outlines the major initiatives that were completed in 2019 and 2020, as well as major initiatives that are to be completed in 2021 and 2022.

Members of Council stressed the importance of completing the 2021 and 2022 work outlined in the Progress Report, and in particular, identified the following five priority areas for the Town to address within this term of Council:

Five Priority Areas

- 1. Pandemic Recovery Plan:** as the Town continues to implement its COVID-19 Pandemic Response, there is an imperative to develop a recovery plan to manage the pandemic recovery period. The Pandemic Recovery Plan needs to reflect learnings from the pandemic, best practices from other jurisdictions, and include several strategic components, to be weighted and prioritized based on a risk assessment, including:
 - **Financial sustainability:** demonstrating value; managing ongoing financial sustainability; moving beyond tax deferral options.
 - **Business supports:** processing business applications expeditiously; engaging in advocacy efforts with other levels of government on supports for businesses and taxation issues; partnering with stakeholders; evaluating the role of the Town in supporting small- and medium-sized businesses; continuing with the Digital Main Street program.
 - **Program and service delivery adaptation:** adapting program and service delivery in a cost-effective way to respond to shifting usage/demand patterns and community preferences, including the scale and scheduling of services and offerings related to parks, recreation, libraries, and transit; planning for appropriate special events, with a diversity and inclusion lens, and with an understanding about potential community hesitancy in returning to indoor or large-scale events in the short and medium term.
 - **Enforcement:** managing and resourcing the appropriate enforcement of by-laws and provincial orders throughout the recovery period and beyond (e.g. to address issues related to crowds and parking/congestion).

- **Workforce planning:** planning for workforce-related impacts from a corporate perspective; planning for the impacts from changes in the workforce at the community level.
2. **Traffic, speeding and safety:** the Town must continue to promote safe and efficient travel on town roads through implementation of traffic calming, reduced speed limits, active transportation infrastructure and automated speed enforcement.
 3. **Applications, permits and licenses:** the Town needs to continue to reduce the response time for processing development applications, and permits and improve communications with applicants. This includes advancing the implementation of online applications, permits and licenses for planning, development, building, parking and community-related permits, and implementation of the business stream pilot for non-residential building permits.
 4. **Enhancing communications:** the Town needs to continue to inform the community about the Town's programs, services and decision-making environment. There is opportunity for Members of Council to leverage their communication channels in different ways to inform constituents, including the use of social media and video, the Oakville.ca website, and newsletters. They expressed a desire for consistent messaging across the town that speaks to the Town's process improvements; communication about how the Town makes decisions; as well as how the Town's reviews, studies, and plans fit together.
 5. **Capital projects:** Through the consultation for the Strategic Plan Refresh, Members of Council identified various capital projects that they would like implemented during this term of Council. A number of these projects reflect the increasing use of outdoor parks and recreation facilities evidenced during the pandemic such as pickle ball courts and skating rinks. With the planning process for the 10-year capital budget getting underway, there is an opportunity to include these projects for prioritization in this process. During May 2021, staff will be undertaking consultations in this regard. The 10-year capital plan will then be considered through the 2022 budget process later this year.

Next Steps

Members of Council are invited to provide additional feedback and input on the Refresh over a two-week period, by May 7, 2021. The final version of the Refresh will be tabled for Council's consideration at the Council meeting on May 25, 2021.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

Council's 2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan was approved by Council on April 29, 2019, following broad public input through the 2019 Citizen Survey. Public input through the 2019 Citizen Survey conducted in January and February 2019 and initiatives identified through previous budget processes have helped inform key strategic initiatives and actions.

The Refresh and Progress Report notes that, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 Citizen Survey has been deferred to 2022. The Citizen Survey will feed into ongoing strategic planning processes.

(B) FINANCIAL

The Refresh provides direction to assist in financial decision-making. Long-range financial forecasts, the annual budgeting process, and the 10-year capital budgeting process will be fully aligned with the Refresh and Council's Strategic Plan.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

The Refresh influences every department across the organization. Departmental work plans and budgets will reflect strategic directions established by Council and results will be reported through annual departmental business plans and budgeting process. All reports to Council will align with the Refresh and Council's strategic goals.

(D) CORPORATE STRATEGIC GOALS

The Refresh addresses all of the corporate strategic goals via the key objectives and refreshed list of major initiatives planned for the remainder of 2021 and 2022:

- **Livability:** To be the most livable town in Canada.
- **Engaged Community:** foster a community environment that engages residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.
- **Accountable Government:** Inspire public confidence through open, accountable and efficient delivery of government services.
- **Mobility:** Improve town's multi-modal transportation network to support effective movement of people and goods.
- **Environment:** Protect greenspace and promote environmentally sustainable practices.

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION

The Refresh addresses a number of initiatives that will help the Town and community adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. The Refresh also promotes sustainability through its mission statement that “We create and preserve Canada’s most livable community that enhances the natural, cultural, social and economic environments. We achieve this by continuously improving programs and services that are both environmentally and fiscally sustainable.”

APPENDICES:

Appendix A - Draft Progress Report - 2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan Refresh

Prepared by:

Swaraj Mann, Manager, Corporate Strategy

Recommended and Submitted by:

Dorothy St. George, Director, Economic Development and Corporate Strategy