

REPORT

Council

Meeting Date: April 25, 2022

FROM: Strategy, Policy and Communications Department

DATE: April 19, 2022

SUBJECT: Climate Action: Progress and Directions Report

LOCATION: Town-wide

WARD: Town-wide

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RECOMMENDATION:

That the report entitled “Climate Action: Progress and Directions Report” dated April 19, 2022 be received.

KEY FACTS:

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

- On June 24, 2019, Oakville Town Council unanimously declared a Climate Emergency.
- Significant changes due to the pandemic and rapid shifts in understanding around local and global climate risks and opportunities created a need to reflect and reassess the town’s climate efforts to ensure ongoing accountability and continuous improvement.
- The Climate Action: Progress and Directions Report (included in Appendix A) provides a high level overview of the Town’s climate efforts to date, an assessment of the current state and next steps needed to move the corporation and the community forward in meeting the challenges and opportunities presented by the ongoing climate crisis.
- The Town continues to demonstrate leadership across the spectrum of climate action, however, gaps were noted under the focus area of Foundational Support which covers elements that support the strategy and delivery of climate programming such as governance, data management and training.
- Three priority projects are recommended to fill the observed gaps and provide a well rounded foundation for the town’s ongoing climate work. Operational tools embeds climate considerations at the department level;

climate disclosure assessment and reporting supports accountability; and the Climate Action Strategy provides an opportunity to engage the community and pull the pieces together to help clarify and coordinate efforts being made around the four climate focus areas.

BACKGROUND:

On June 24, 2019, Oakville Town Council unanimously declared a [Climate Emergency](#), recognizing the need to address the significant risks and opportunities facing our community resulting from a changing climate. Staff have reported annually on the progress that has been achieved on Council's resolution and a brief summary of progress to date in 2021 is provided as part of this report.

While the town continues to move forward on addressing the emergency, there have been significant changes brought about by the pandemic and rapid shifts in understanding around local and global climate risks and opportunities. Financially, there have been greater strains placed on local governments due to COVID, but also more opportunities for climate funding and partnerships. Locally, we are seeing the impacts to our community first hand from events such as the flooding that occurred around Lake Ontario in 2017 and 2019. Federal and provincial priorities are also increasing regulatory and financial requirements around climate action such as carbon pricing and Net Zero targets around energy, while internationally there is a growing call for rapid action through organizations such as the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)](#). With these being just some of the changes seen, staff determined a need to reflect and reassess the town's climate efforts to ensure ongoing accountability and continuous improvement.

Throughout 2021, staff undertook a review and analysis of the Town's climate action activities across the corporation. This work is presented in the Climate Action: Progress and Directions Report included in Appendix A and provides a high level overview of the Town's climate efforts to date and next steps needed to move the corporation and the community forward in meeting the challenges and opportunities presented by the ongoing climate crisis.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

Since being one of the first municipalities to have an [Environmental Strategic Plan](#) in 2005, the Town has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to leadership on sustainability and climate change. To help organize the breadth of work accomplished and ongoing, activities related to climate action were grouped under four areas of focus. These four focus areas were then used as a basis for conducting a qualitative assessment to review the town's existing climate programming against best management practices, municipal benchmarking, the regulatory landscape, as well as the stage of implementation.

Areas of Focus: Assessing Progress

Highlights of the analysis of the town's climate programs and 2021 progress is summarized as follows:

1) Mitigation: Actions that help reduce or reduce the effects of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) which are the leading man-made cause of climate change.

Analysis Highlights: Established strategies in place and clear targets through the Conservation and Demand Management Plan (2020) and the Community Energy Strategy (2020). Implementation has been progressing over a number of years with targets for energy and GHG reductions either meeting or exceeding targets. Progressive projects moving forward around District Energy, Residential Energy Retrofit support, and Net Zero pathway recommendations for corporate facilities.	Progressing well
2021 Accomplishments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed new strategic plans to address both energy and GHG reductions through the Renewable Energy Strategy and the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Roadmap and Action Plan • GHG reduction of 29.3% for facilities over 2014 baseline • Energy use reduction of 24.7% for facilities over 2014 baseline • Completed study for District Energy • Received funding from FCM to initiate Retrofit project with Oakville Energy Corporation 	

2) Adaptation: Actions that help us adjust to the impacts and reduce our risk due to the effects of climate change already underway, such as flooding and more extreme weather.

Analysis Highlights: Strategies underway to address adaptation include Asset Management integration of climate risks and natural assets, Rainwater Management Strategy and Climate Risk assessments and action plans. Established work includes the Stormwater Masterplan (2019) and OakvilleReady partnership hubs. Generally progressing well but not as established as mitigation efforts. Clear targets and metrics still needed.	In progress
2021 Accomplishments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiated Rainwater Management Strategy • OakvilleReady partnership agreement, funding formalized and continued implementation 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of climate risk into Asset Management Plan • Risk and Vulnerability Assessments, department climate plans and climate lens work underway, including establishing a Facilities Climate Team, developing a departmental Climate Resiliency Implementation Plan and integration of a climate lens into all Standard Operating Procedures 	
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3) Natural Environment: Actions that support our natural environment which helps with both mitigation and adaption and addresses things such as air and water quality, forestry and biodiversity

<p>Analysis Highlights: Established strategies, targets and implementation in place for Forestry and Biodiversity (Urban Forest Strategic Management Plan update in 2022, Oakville Strategy for Biodiversity (2019)). Key partnerships in place with community and leadership on advocacy to support greenspace acquisition.</p>	In progress
<p>2021 Accomplishments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Town's woodland regeneration program planting efforts which saw 23,634 native trees and 4,382 native shrubs planted by end of 2021 • Stewardship projects in collaboration with community partners including planting of a new meadow at Kingsford Gardens Park to create pollinator and bird habitat. 	

4) Foundational Supports: Actions that support climate action strategy and programs such as data and metrics, governance, strategy, training and resourcing.

<p>Analysis Highlights: The town's strategy for overseeing climate and environment require significant updates to address areas such as metrics, governance, training and education gaps, coordinated reporting, prioritization and resourcing. While there are gaps, staff have already initiated work to address some of them. For example, work is well underway on the development of climate lenses and risk integration.</p>	Needs work
<p>2021 Accomplishments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Action: Progress and Directions Report • Climate workshop for senior management • Completion of localized climate data and projections report 	

Generally, the town is either progressing well or is currently undertaking actions to support a robust response to the climate emergency. To facilitate the continuation of this work, gaps in the Foundational Supports should be addressed.

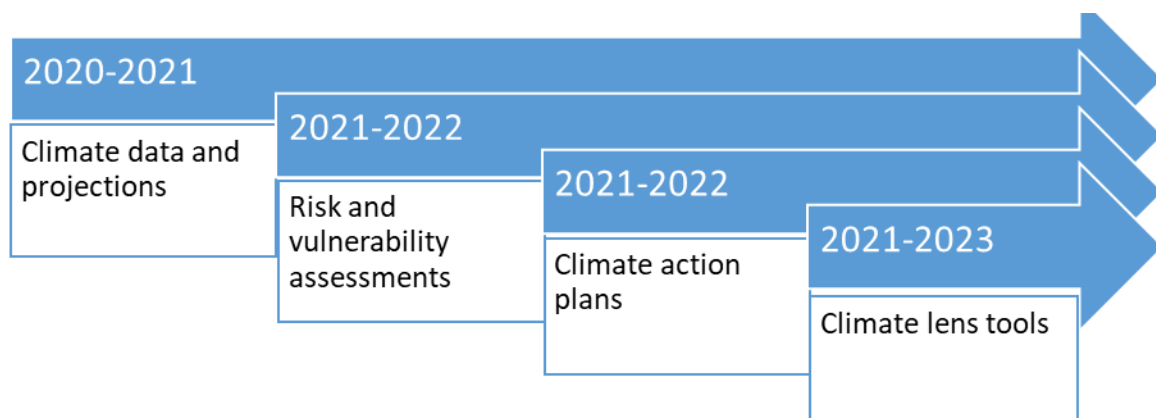
Next Steps

Strong action needs to be supported by a strong foundation to be effective and efficient. To ramp up the town's capacity to continue growing its climate action efforts and help close the identified gaps, an important area of focus over the next two years will be to strengthen the Foundational Supports area through three major projects that will:

- utilize a data based approach to build greater capacity within departments;
- future proof the organization to better manage risks and opportunities, and;
- strengthen the strategic approach to incorporate greater accountability and connectivity.

Embedding Climate: Develop Data and Operational Tools (2020-2023)

In 2021, staff completed an Oakville-specific climate data and projections report that detailed information around parameters such as wind, precipitation, temperature, and modeled what can be expected in the future. This work has provided a quantitative basis for completing risk and vulnerability assessments that are currently underway to understand the impacts of the changing climate on the town's assets, services and programs. In concert with the risk and vulnerability assessments, this information is being used to develop department level climate work plans offering operational solutions to address these expected impacts.



A key tool to support embedding of climate into operations throughout the corporation are climate lenses. These can be relatively simple or complex and are generally a series of questions or considerations that can be applied to the Town's operations, projects and budgeting to help departments take a critical look at their potential climate impacts and options to address them. To function effectively, they require having an objective in mind (e.g. reducing carbon footprints, reducing flooding impacts, etc.) and some understanding of what actions could help achieve

the objective (e.g. plant more trees, install more efficient heating, etc.) which is why the development of tools is often best left until other key pieces are in place, as indicated in the flow diagram. Work on the assessments and operational plans will continue throughout 2022 as will the development of climate lenses through to 2023.

Driving Accountability: Undertake a Climate Disclosure Process (2022)

Council's Strategic Plan sets out Accountable Government as a key area of focus and it is recommended that the town adopt an accountability framework based on the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosure (TCFD). The TCFD provides an internationally-recognized path to climate accountability around the four key pillars of governance; strategy; risk management; and metrics and targets.

Staff recommend initiating a TCFD disclosure process in 2022 that would:

- identify gaps in the Town's climate action, specifically, around governance, risk management, strategy, and targets/metrics and support solutions;
- provide a framework for annual climate reporting that would be included with the corporation's financial reporting;
- provide a climate lens for finance;
- align climate reporting with leading domestic and international organizations;
- better position the Town for federal climate funding and anticipated requirements around risk-related disclosure;
- set the stage for developing a carbon budget and carbon accounting for the Town;
- frame the work to be completed for the 2023 Climate Action Strategy.

Strategic Planning: Initiate a Climate Strategy (2023)

The Town's Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ESS) was last updated in 2018 and is approaching its five-year update in 2023. To address the gap of an overarching climate strategy, it is recommended that the ESS transition to a Climate Strategy that would:

- provide a common vision, goals and commitments that would better direct the development of climate-related targets and metrics;
- identify a governance structure to provide accountability and oversight for climate action across the organization;
- set out the mechanisms for how climate action will be prioritized and resourced;
- prioritize and manage climate-related risks;
- engage and build buy-in with the broader community and external stakeholders;
- provide a way to understand and communicate the collective impact of climate-related risks or opportunities from a corporate and community wide perspective; and

- weave together the complexity of this portfolio and focus the Town's and community's actions and partnerships.

These three projects, taken together, will fill the observed gaps and provide a well rounded foundation for the town's ongoing climate work. The operational tools provide a focus on action and support embedding climate considerations at the department level. The climate disclosure assessment and reporting support the strategic management and accountability of the town's efforts and the Climate Action Strategy provides an opportunity to engage the community and pull the pieces together to help clarify and coordinate efforts being made around the four climate focus areas.

The climate crisis offers both risks and opportunities. By taking a proactive approach that emphasizes accountability, the Town can more effectively and efficiently address Council's resolutions for addressing the climate emergency and ensure it has a strong foundation to continue building on its success.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

The Climate Action Directions Report provides transparency and accountability to the public by providing an update on the current status of the town's climate action initiatives and climate emergency progress.

(B) FINANCIAL

The report highlights resourcing considerations that will be addressed as part of future work outlined through the three major projects. These projects will support developing a roadmap for the town to take a proactive approach to future climate project related financing. In particular undertaking the development of a Task Force on Climate-Related Disclosure process will support the application of a climate lens on the town's operations and better align climate risks, opportunities and funding.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

Climate action impacts departments across the corporation and the community. This report outlines work underway and planned to address the embedding of climate considerations.

(D) CORPORATE STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal(s) to:
Environment and Accountable Government;

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION

This report directly supports Climate Action through an assessment of the corporate climate action portfolio, assessment and recommendations for next steps.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Climate Action Directions Report

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