



OAKVILLE

REPORT

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE: DECEMBER 13, 2011

FROM: Environmental Policy Department

DATE: November 24, 2011

SUBJECT: 2011 Environmental Strategic Plan (ESP) Update

LOCATION: Town wide

WARD: Town wide

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RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the 2011 Environmental Strategic Plan (ESP) Update report from the Environmental Policy department, dated November 24, 2011, be received;
2. That the draft updated Environmental Strategic Plan (ESP) shown in Appendix A of the report dated November 24, 2011 from Environmental Policy department, be endorsed;
3. That the Vision, Guiding Principles and Goals serve as the Environmental Strategic Plan policy statement for the town with the recommended action plans defining the implementation process; and
4. That the 2011 Environmental Strategic Plan recommended actions be considered in the development of annual departmental work plans and budgets.

KEY FACTS:

- This staff report deals with a comprehensive update to the Environmental Strategic Plan (ESP) as one of the town's master plans and policies that fall underneath these guiding principles. The ESP falls under the key strategic direction of 'Preserve It' within Vision 2057.
- The town's initial ESP was approved in 2005 and this is the first scheduled five year update of the plan.
- The 2011 ESP is based on a structure similar to the 2005 plan and incorporates inputs from a comprehensive master plan review, community and staff consultation and review by stakeholder agencies.

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- The 2011 ESP is intended to be a “living document”. This will allow staff to update the plan to reflect new information and remain current prior to the next planned comprehensive update in 2016.
- The 2011 ESP includes actions from the draft Community Energy Plan (Appendix D of the ESP) and the Climate Change Adaptation Plan (Appendix E of the ESP). The expected completion date of these plans is 2012 and final actions will be incorporated into the ESP at that time.
- In 2012, the town will begin development of the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) and Corporate Sustainability Plan. Staff will report to Council in early 2012 on a comprehensive public engagement strategy for the development of the ICSP.

BACKGROUND:

The first Environmental Strategic Plan (ESP) was developed through a multi-year process involving extensive consultation and community involvement. Consultation with the community included establishing a community task force, numerous open houses, workshops and surveys. In addition, meetings with town staff and the development of an internal Environmental Management Team provided input from the corporation. In December 2005, Council approved the ESP and established that the Vision, Guiding Principles and Goals would serve as the Environmental Strategic Plan policy statement for the town with the recommended action plans defining the implementation process. The following year, the Environmental Strategic Plan Advisory Committee was created to advise Town Council and staff on matters relating to Oakville's ESP and to help promote the plan within the community.

Successes

The action-based format of the ESP provided a clear guide for accomplishing specific tasks and helped to spur the development of the Towards Zero Waste strategy, fleet greening, sustainable purchasing policies, green building standards for the town, a Community Energy Plan, the Oakville Wildlife Strategy, tree protection by-law, urban forest management plan, pesticide reduction, stormwater management program, active transportation plan, and the State of the Environment reporting program among many other environmental improvements.

The process for monitoring annual progress of the plan was also successful. Since its inception in 2005, almost 100% of the actions from the ESP have been implemented or initiated as reported most recently to Council in the June 10, 2011 Community Services Committee (CSC) report .

The ESP was also instrumental in providing a platform to develop a comprehensive environmental outreach and education program which has helped residents and

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businesses become more engaged in environmental stewardship and conservation. This work has also led to enhanced opportunities for internal partnerships between town departments and also between the town and community.

Challenges

The availability of funding, staff time and lag time with technology are challenges common to municipalities that were also faced in implementing the ESP. There were also issues when trying to implement actions that were outside of the town's jurisdiction or required enabling legislation from either the province or federal government. For example, the Ontario Building Code limits the town's ability to impose stricter green building requirements for private development.

As a static document, there was no mechanism to update targets, reflect new information or revised actions from other master plan updates, or to include changes resulting from legislation. This resulted in some information and actions becoming outdated before the scheduled update of the plan in 2011.

Finally, monitoring and measuring outcomes of actions in an efficient but effective manner is an ongoing challenge for the town and other municipalities. The State of the Environment Reporting, annual ESP implementation reports and the move to Program Based Performance Based (PB2) budgeting have helped considerably, however, the need to better connect monitoring and measuring with program impacts remains.

The 2011 ESP update builds on the successes and works to address the challenges.

In 2012, the town will begin development of the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) and Corporate Sustainability Plan. Staff will report to Council in early 2012 on a comprehensive public engagement strategy for the development of the ICSP.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

Based on the high success rate and extensive community consultation that went into the 2005 ESP, the basic framework for the ESP was retained. While the basic framework remains similar, a number of revisions were made to all the components to ensure it was consistent with the town's other guiding documents and reflected a current understanding of where the town needs to be directing its efforts on the environment. Stantec, a consulting firm with experience in the development of municipal strategic plans, was selected to assist the town with the update. A copy of the draft 2011 ESP update is provided in Appendix A of this report.

2011 ESP Highlights

Consistency and integration with other plans: A thorough review and analysis was completed on all the town's master plans and major policy documents. This was used in the ESP update to help build a complementary plan that is supported and strengthened by other plans and policies.

To ensure consistency, integration and provide ease of understanding, this update of the ESP will also include the actions from the Community Energy Plan (see Appendix D of the 2011 ESP Master Plan) and the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (see Appendix E of the 2011 ESP Master Plan). These plans are currently under development, however, drafts are provided as noted in the respective appendices. The preliminary actions supporting the Community Energy Plan and the Climate Change Adaptation Plan have been included in the draft 2011 ESP and are identified with a light bulb and globe icon respectively. Upon completion of these two plans in 2012, any additional actions will be incorporated into the ESP.

A living document: To ensure ongoing integration and consistency as indicated above, the 2011 ESP will be a living document. This will allow staff to amend the plan as needed to reflect current information in the actions and performance measures prior to the scheduled five year update in 2016. These updates will be reported to Council annually as part of the ESP Implementation Reporting.

Defined roles and responsibilities: The actions in the 2011 ESP were developed with a focus on jurisdiction. However, environmental issues usually span geographic and jurisdictional boundaries. For those matters that require other levels of government for implementation, an advocacy and partnership role was defined for the town. Examples include addressing transboundary air pollution through partnerships with other municipalities and advocating to the province for changes to the Ontario Building Code that would support greener development.

Action based: One of the best features of the ESP is that it is based on clearly defined actions which provides a strong foundation for implementation. This format was continued and was further strengthened in the 2011 update. The actions were further selected with an understanding that the future is not likely to be "business as usual" and that we will need to be prepared to address challenges around energy, climate change and a rapidly growing population in North Oakville.

Monitoring and reporting: The annual implementation progress reports to Council and public companion piece entitled "Let's Go Green Together" that formed part of the reporting process of the 2005 ESP will be continued. The State of the Environment Reporting program that was initiated in 2008 will also be continued,

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however, an update to the format and the indicators is planned for 2012 to better reflect the updated ESP. One issue that was brought forward during consultations for the update was the need to better monitor and report on pilot projects. This is highlighted in the report under Action 5.3.3 which states "Incorporate a monitoring and indicator process for all environmental pilot projects". With the town's move to PB2 budgeting, it will become increasingly important to ensure effective monitoring programs are in place. To assist with this, Action 5.3.2 of the 2011 ESP recommends the development of a centralized environmental data and information repository.

Consultation and Inputs

The update relied on a number of inputs from a comprehensive master plan review, community and staff consultation and review by stakeholder agencies to ensure consistency and integration with strategic direction and recommendations. A summary of public comments received is provided in Appendix B.

Master plan synthesis: This process involved assigning the actions from all the town's master plans and key policy documents under one or more of the pillars of sustainability (economy, environment, culture and social), conducting a gap analysis and reviewing the plans for consistency. This major undertaking allowed staff to take advantage of the vast amount of public consultation that went into the development of all these plans and build a foundation for moving forward on all future master plan initiatives, including the ESP and the Oakville Sustainability Plan

Interviews with key Directors and staff: Environmental Policy staff and the consultant met with Directors and key staff in June/July 2011 and a total of ten interviews were held. The purpose of the interviews was to gather information on current and planned departmental activities around the environment and sustainability. Discussions on barriers, attitudes and ideas for innovation were also reviewed.

Community Surveys: In preparation for the ESP update, a Community Attitudes Survey was conducted late in 2009 to gauge community perceptions, attitudes and awareness around the environment. A similar survey was conducted in 2003 as part of the development of the original ESP which allowed the opportunity to compare changes in responses over time. The priorities from 2003 to 2009 remained consistent: development and urban sprawl; traffic congestion and road work and; air quality/pollution. These priority areas form a major component of the actions in the 2011 ESP. The results of the 2009 survey were made public via the town's website.

In addition, since 2001 the town has conducted a general Citizen's Survey. The survey provides quantitative data to assist the town in tracking citizen satisfaction

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with town programs and services and helps to support Council's decision-making by providing broad based public input on resident's expectations. Results from these surveys consistently identify the environment as a top priority for residents.

Community Working Group/Environmental Strategic Plan Advisory Committee (ESPAC): In August 2010, staff began working with the Environmental Strategic Plan Advisory Committee (ESPAC) on the update of the ESP. A committee member was nominated to assist in the consultant selection process and three workshops were held with the committee in 2011. In March 2011, Council directed the winding down of many of the advisory committees, including the ESPAC. Staff assembled a working group comprised of the former members of the ESPAC to continue to provide feedback. This group also included additional members of the public that self-identified with an interest in the ESP update. One further meeting was held exclusively with this group in September 2011.

Community Energy Plan (CEP) workshop: A focused community workshop was held during October 2011 to provide feedback on the draft CEP and to offer ideas for collaborative actions that would support community energy reductions. A number of recommendations were made that are included in the draft ESP actions. Invitations were sent to community groups, utility corporations, businesses, residents' groups and the members of the Community Working Group.

Community review roundtable: Community members were invited to a facilitated round table workshop in early November 2011 to review the draft ESP update and provide comments. A summary of comments received is provided in Appendix B.

Review by external agencies: Staff from Halton Region, Conservation Halton, Union Gas and Oakville Hydro was provided with the opportunity to review and comment on the draft ESP update. Agency programs have been reviewed and incorporated in the update.

Implementation

The action based format of the 2005 ESP was continued in the 2011 update as it proved highly successful with almost a 100% implementation rate by the end of 2010. While the focus of the plan is largely driven by actions required by the corporation, many involve the need for partnerships with other levels of government, community groups, businesses, residents and agencies. A "hand shaking" icon identifies those actions that require partnerships.

A new component of the 2011 ESP is the recommendation in Action 6.2.2 to establish a series of **six community based working groups** (one for each goal) to provide expertise and feedback on the implementation of the plan. These groups

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would draw on subject matter experts from the community to assist staff by providing feedback and expertise at annual meetings and on an ad hoc basis as needed. This would provide a consistent way of connecting with the community, engender a sense of ownership of the ESP by the public and provide staff with a better understanding of emerging issues within the community.

The 2011 ESP, as with the 2005 ESP, will be implemented in a fiscally responsible and sustainable manner. Many of the actions are drawn from master plans and ongoing work and are already budgeted for in existing work plans. Many of the new initiatives proposed will require more detailed research to review options prior to implementation. Funding projections for these new initiatives will be brought forward as they are scoped and will be subject to departmental and Council review as part of the work plan and budget review process.

The ESP update is integral to the successful implementation of environmental actions in the corporation and the community. The 2011 ESP will be implemented from 2012 – 2017. Staff will continue to monitor its progress and report to Council annually on its implementation status.

Next Steps

Finalize Draft Environmental Strategic Plan

Staff will finalize the ESP by the end of December 2011 with incorporation of comments from Council and outstanding stakeholder input. The ESP will be a “living document” to allow staff to make interim updates to the plan to reflect changes in policies, procedures and other related master plans. The next formal update of the ESP is scheduled for 2016.

The Community Energy Plan (CEP) will be finalized in 2012 after an update report in fall 2012 is brought forward to Council. Actions from the draft CEP have been included in the ESP and will be updated upon completion of the CEP.

The Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (CCAS) is scheduled for completion in spring 2012. Actions from the preliminary climate change work have been included as part of the ESP and will be further updated upon its completion.

Implement the Environmental Strategic Plan (ESP)

Upon Council’s endorsement, staff will begin implementation of the 2011 ESP. The various initiatives are to be prioritized and scheduled by the designated lead parties over the next five years. Those actions identified as “ongoing” will continue as part of departmental work plans. New actions requiring funding will be brought forward for Council’s review and approval during the annual budget process. Staff will

continue to report annually on the progress made. The first update report to Council is planned for July 2012.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

Public involvement has been a key component in the development and implementation of the ESP. To ensure the updated ESP continues this close connection, a number of consultation opportunities were held throughout 2011. The development of community partnerships and public participation will continue to be a key part of implementation.

(B) FINANCIAL

Funding for actions recommended in the 2011 Environmental Strategic Plan will be addressed in the development of departmental work plans and budgets for Council's review and approval within the budgetary process.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

All town departments will be responsible for implementing actions within the ESP.

(D) CORPORATE AND/OR DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal to:

- enhance our natural environment
- enhance our economic environment
- have environmentally sustainable programs/services
- continuously improve our programs and services
- be the most livable town in Canada

(E) COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

The ESP most directly supports the environmental pillar by setting out an action plan to support and enhance Oakville's environment. Economic, social and cultural benefits will also be realized through the implementation of the actions set out in the ESP.

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APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Draft 2011 Environmental Strategic Plan
Appendix B: Consultation comments

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