



TOWNSHIP OF SOUTHWOLD

Report to Council

MEETING DATE: March 14, 2022

PREPARED BY: Lisa Higgs, CAO/Clerk

REPORT NO: CAO 2022-15

SUBJECT MATTER: 2021 Strategic Plan Annual Update

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives 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 2021.

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 2021 on each item.

Comments/Analysis:

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.	2021 UPDATES

<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Complete municipal servicing studies, environmental assessments, and development or connection charges studies in anticipation of growth on an ongoing basis. 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. C. Prioritize the provision of sewer and waste water servicing in the Township budget process. 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. E. Plan wastewater treatment facilities for diverse uses including residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, and institutional uses. 	<p>The Class C EA for Shedden and Fingal wrapped up in 2021. Council hosted a special development meeting and direction was provided to proceed with a WWTP in Shedden and Fingal. Engineering for a conveyance system and WWTP are proceeding.</p> <p>The new Township Official Plan was approved by Council on November 15, 2021 and has been adopted by Elgin County Council.</p> <p>The wastewater rate study helps to inform rates and connection charges for revenue purposes. A detailed capital sewer budget is prepared by OCWA and presented annually.</p> <p>In 2021, the Wastewater Connection By-Law in Talbotville was amended to include fees for commercial connection, multi-residential connection, apartments, etc.</p> <p>The Talbotville WWTP MBR system is compatible with all uses. The preferred plant option for Shedden and Fingal as approved in 2021 is also an MBR unit.</p>

<p>1.2 Support & prioritize access to high speed internet for all (agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, etc.) Township properties.</p>	<p>2021 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Support independent needs studies on telecommunications systems in the Township and promote surveys to ascertain data. B. Form partnerships with agencies, corporations, municipal neighbours, SWIFT, residents, local businesses, and telecommunications companies to find solutions, including alternative options for service. C. Investigate options for servicing growth communities and consider municipal investment or debenture options for residents to expedite installation of high speed internet. D. Support efforts by agricultural and rural property owners to facilitate “last kilometer” high speed infrastructure. 	
<p>1.3 Encourage & Support Residential Development.</p>	<p>2021 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Support developers and builders by reducing unnecessary administrative processes and providing clear, responsive, and efficient service. 	

Township staff completed discussions with alternative service providers of internet in 2021 and are pursuing alternatives to Fibre in the ground (i.e. satellite, communications towers, etc).

The Township continues to participate in SWIFT through Elgin County. SWIFT announced new infrastructure being installed in the northwest part of the County in 2021.

No work was completed in 2021 on this initiative.

No work was completed in 2021 on this initiative

In 2021 the Township successfully hired a new Deputy CBO to provide enhanced service to residential contractors.

<p>B. Provide opportunities for residential development for diverse populations including young families and seniors.</p> <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>Talbotville saw significant subdivision development in 2021 especially in The Ridge Phase 2, The Enclave, and Talbotville Meadows.</p> <p>The Township approved a Site Plan and Condo Plan in 2021 for the multi-residential block in the Ridge Phase 3.</p> <p>The Township attended the grand opening of the Royal Oaks Senior Living in 2021, located within the Township.</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>2021 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 	

This authority was granted previously and is ongoing.

The EDC has requested that checklists be developed for potential business sites. This will need to be revisited in 2022.

This project is ongoing. Alternative Accommodations have been discussed for inclusion in the Township Official Plan and a request for inclusion of policies in the County OP has been forwarded in 2021.

<p>1.5 Attract new industrial development and encourage expansion and improvements on existing industrial businesses with input from Council and Council members of the EDC.</p>	<p>2021 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Provide enticements for land owners of vacant industrial land to market their properties to industrial developers. B. Investigate servicing options for lands earmarked for industrial development in the Township Official Plan and reserve funds to service the lands. 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>The Township approved the Site Plan and redevelopment of the former Ford Property in 2021. The redevelopment is the result of countless hours of administrative and building department support.</p> <p>To support the re-development of the Ford Property, servicing upgrades were supported to water infrastructure on Sunset Road in 2021. A Secondary Plan is included in the 2022 budget to inform long-term servicing.</p> <p>The Township continues to work closely with Elgin County, the MP and the MPP to help market industrial lands. In 2021, the Township submitted another application to the Job Site Challenge for industrial lands. Staff have fielded numerous inquiries from potential purchasers in 2021.</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>The Township updated its Community Improvement Program (Elgincentives) to include new incentives for industrial lands. While Elgincentives funding from Elgin County winded down in 2021, the TEIG program continues for industrial sites.</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. In 2021, the Township hired a Director of Development and Infrastructure with engineering skills to improve administrative support to developers and application turn-around time.</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.

2021 UPDATES

Action Plan:
 A. Continue working with current multi-purpose committee to set long term priorities for the parks and establish multi-year parks capital project plan.

The multi-purpose parks committee met multiple times in 2021 virtually; most notably their input was received for the new playground in Talbotville.

<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 & marking plan to increase awareness and use of facilities.</p> <p>C. Continue to improve efforts to engage community members and enhance representation from all areas of the Township.</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>The COVID-19 pandemic meant that many parks projects were delayed and "grand openings" were not held. A grand opening or celebratory social media post will be scheduled in 2022 for the various parks projects completed in 2021 including the Fingal Heritage Park, Shedden Trail, and new Talbotville Park.</p> <p>More work to be done on a broader community outreach program for 2022.</p> <p>The Talbotville Park was substantially completed in 2021 and will be opened in spring of 2022. The Fingal Heritage Park completed many elements in 2021 and a new trail was built in 2021 at the Shedden Open Space park.</p> <p>COVID-19 restriction meant that facilities and parks were largely unrented and unused in 2021.</p>
<p>2.2 Promote community volunteerism and support community driven events.</p>	<p>2021 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p>	
<p>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.</p>	<p>The Township was able to host a smaller Volunteer appreciation night in 2021,</p>

<p>B. Encourage collaboration between community groups by establishing a secure, privacy compliant, central volunteer database and volunteer mentoring program that supports cross-organization sharing.</p> <p>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> <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>To be worked on in 2022.</p> <p>To be completed in 2022.</p> <p>All events, fairs and festivals in 2021 were cancelled because of COVID-19. Staff are hoping that in 2022 these events can return.</p> <p>COVID-19 cancelled all community events, schools were closed intermittently, and Elgin Manor was unopen to the public.</p>
<p>2.3 Prioritize Township-wide beautification projects that enhance our natural resources and promote the rural character of the municipality.</p>	<p>2021 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 addressed in 2022, especially with the hiring of a new full time parks and facilities operator.</p>

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| <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. Despite COVID-19, Communities in Bloom continued to maintain flower boxes and hosted a no-contact plant sale to support the beautification of the Township.</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 Zero Waste Committee worked in 2021 to facilitate the sale of subsidized composters to residents. There have been many developments in 2021 about the transition to producer-responsibility recycling and staff have brought reports to Council to speak to this change.</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 2021 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>The 2021 budget included a continuation of the phragmites management program.</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 2021, the Township supported the continued rejuvenation of the Fingal Heritage Park. The Township’s War Memorial Committee presented a modified Remembrance Day event with the hosting of a virtual event.</p>
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<p>2.4 Place special focus on cultural and recreation activities aimed at serving seniors in our community.</p>	<p>2021 UPDATES</p>
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<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p>	
<p>A. In partnership with Elgin County, develop and implement a plan for our aging population.</p>	
<p>B. Combat social isolation felt by many seniors by supporting services that help provide care to seniors including volunteer organizations.</p>	<p>In 2021, the Southwold Young at Heart committee provided programming and drive-through/drop-off materials and lunches.</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 met virtually throughout 2021 and hosted COVID safe events/materials.</p>
<p>D. Provide recreation opportunities for seniors and invest in activities to create a central hub for seniors.</p>	<p>COVID-19 meant congregate recreation for seniors was prohibited; programming is hoping to return in 2021.</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</p>	<p>All parks projects continue to be constructed in compliance with the AODA.</p>

<p>committed to the goal of accessible and inclusive spaces.</p>	
<p>3. Municipal Infrastructure, Improved Transportation, and Public Safety</p> <p><i>Strategic Goal:</i> 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.</p>	
<p><i>Strategies:</i> 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.</p>	<p>2021 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Commitment from Council and staff to follow recommendations arising from the asset management plan. B. Provide rapid response to repairing Township roads, assets, fleet, and facilities to prevent further damage to municipal properties. C. Ensure that new subdivision development and impacts of growth are well planned and managed for the future impact on municipal assets. 	<p>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.</p> <p>This is an ongoing Township responsibility.</p> <p>The Township requires that all new subdivisions submit CAD files and plans to be included into the Township’s Asset Register. Municipal budgeting aligns with Asset Management planning, where possible including the retention of sufficient reserve funds.</p>

<p>3.2 Emphasize public safety on municipal roadways and provide safe active transportation options.</p>	<p>2021 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. B. Partner with the OPP to ensure that municipal speed limits are enforced and encourage targeted enforcement via focused patrols. C. Confirm that new subdivisions in growth communities include sidewalks and active transportation networks to encourage safety. Ensure all new parks are fenced. D. Ensure that new subdivisions are designed with traffic control measures that reduce impacts on public safety resulting from growth. 	<p>This is an ongoing Township responsibility. Stop signs were installed on Talbotville Gore Road in 2021.</p> <p>The Township continues to lobby the OPP to improve enforcement. Southwold community policing continued to meet in 2021 and advocate to OPP for improved speed management.</p> <p>All plans of subdivision submitted and under construction in 2021 were required to provide sidewalks and trail systems to new parks.</p> <p>Talbotville plans of subdivision included community input related to traffic control. Concrete barriers were deployed in 2021 to appropriately direct construction traffic.</p>
<p>3.3 Investigate transportation options for seniors and isolated populations in rural communities.</p>	<p>2021 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Support and help facilitate shared senior transportation opportunities. B. Explore alternative public transportation models used in other jurisdictions and investigate the feasibility of these systems in Southwold. 	<p>COVID-19 prohibited the Township from proceeding with this initiative.</p>

<p>C. Work with community volunteer organizations and municipal partners to help promote transportation options for seniors and isolated populations.</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>2021 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>The doctor’s office in Shedden remains occupied. While Dr. Robinson retired in 2021, her daughter is taking over the practice.</p> <p>2021 was again defined by the COVID-19 Emergency and the Declaration of a State of Emergency. The Township’s website and Facebook page have been dominated by COVID-19 messaging. Social media campaigns have also focused on emergency preparedness.</p> <p>The Township supports EMS services through Elgin County and through tiered medical response.</p>
<p>4. Municipal Financial Stewardship</p> <p><i>Strategic Goal:</i> To exercise good financial stewardship in the management of Township expenditures and revenues.</p>	
<p><i>Strategies:</i></p> <p>4.1 To continue researching and applying for applicable Federal and Provincial funding.</p>	<p>2021 UPDATES</p>

<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. C. Engage, where appropriate, the services of a consultant for completion of grant applications. 	<p>Township maintains memberships in AMCTO, MFOA, OBOA, DSAO, AMO, ROMA, OGRA, etc. and participates in shared Elgin working groups.</p> <p>The Township successfully received multiple grants in 2021.</p> <p>The Township continues to use consultants where required to apply for and receive grants.</p>
<p>4.2 Review and protect the assessment base.</p>	<p>2021 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Review large changes in assessment as identified by MPAC and monitor and report on changes in assessment practices and legislation. B. Support and consider assessment management efforts beyond Township staff including the use of external consultants, County resources, and municipal organizations. 	<p>The Township has worked with MTAG as well as Elgin County to help review and protect assessment changes. COVID-19 meant that MPAC’s assessment update remains delayed.</p>
<p>4.3 Adopt, review, and frequently update policies that support strong financial stewardship including policies on the following:</p>	<p>2021 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Use of Township owned lands (including commercial owned buildings and future development lands) and Township owned properties. B. Revenue and Tax Collection C. Procurement/Purchasing. D. Use of and Contributions to Township Reserves. E. Financial Reporting. 	<p>In 2021, the Township completed an RFP to sell the Stoss property.</p> <p>To be completed 2022</p> <p>Updated in 2019.</p> <p>To be completed by 2022</p> <p>To be completed by 2022</p>

<p>F. Investment Policy</p>	<p>To be completed by 2022</p>
<p>5. Public Engagement, Transparent Government, and Informing the Community</p> <p><i>Strategic Goal:</i> To promote public engagement, transparent government, and strong communications with all members of the community across various mediums for the strengthening of civic participation.</p>	
<p><i>Strategies:</i> 5.1 Continue improving information disseminated by the municipality.</p>	<p>2021 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Develop improved website content more frequently and re-format so that residents can more easily navigate municipal information. B. Maintain a stand-alone bulletin board (whether physical or digital) within communities for local advertising use. C. Continue newsletters with water and tax bills. D. Create a central information contact list whereby residents can opt into receiving various memos and communications from the municipality. E. Aim for improved communication with residents and engagement via sharing through various social media platforms. 	<p>Township staff launched a new brand and website in 2021, including complete content review and re-design. The feedback from the public has been very positive.</p> <p>To be completed in future.</p> <p>2021 featured newsletters in the tax bills and Southwold in Motion in the water bills.</p> <p>Website update provides the ability to subscribe to get information on various topics and pages. To be further enhanced in 2022.</p> <p>The Community Services and Communications Clerk has significantly improved Facebook posts. The Township in 2021 created and is active on multiple social media accounts (Twitter, Instagram, etc).</p>

<p>5.2 Adopt practices that promote transparent government</p>	<p>2021 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <p>A. Adopt and abide by public notice policies. Ongoing.</p> <p>B. Consider proactive disclosure practices. In 2021, the Township acquired access to Laserfiche Cloud which will allow for a public portal to many of the Township’s public records database to be launched in 2022.</p> <p>C. Make public records easily available online in an accessible format. The new website launched in 2021 includes all documents posted in an accessible format.</p>	
<p>5.3 Celebrate community engagement and create vibrant connections within the community.</p>	<p>2021 UPDATES</p>
<p><i>Action Plan:</i></p> <p>A. Consider strategies to support community neighbourhood engagement. In 2021, COVID-19 and social distancing protocols meant neighbourhood engagement was challenging.</p> <p>B. Support community outreach efforts and neighbourhood efforts that enhance our subdivisions, making them more than “bedroom communities”. Ongoing.</p> <p>C. Encourage collaboration between community groups of volunteers to move towards common goals. Collaborative events (i.e. Winterfest, Volunteer Appreciation) were cancelled because of COVID-19</p>	

Financial Implications:

None.

Strategic Plan Goals:

The above recommendation helps the Township meet the Strategic Plan Goal of:

- Promoting residential, agricultural, commercial, and industrial development by ensuring policies and services are in place to support growth in The Township of Southwold.
- Promoting 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.
- Providing improved transportation and a strong commitment to asset management with a goal of maintaining the Township's infrastructure in the promotion of public safety
- Exercising good financial stewardship in the management of Township expenditures and revenues.
- Promoting public engagement, transparent government, and strong communications with all members of the community across various mediums for the strengthening of civic participation.

Respectfully Submitted by:
Lisa Higgs, CAO/Clerk