

STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG



Report to:	Mayor and Council Members	Priority:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low
Submitted by:	Kara Euale, Communications Manager, Office of the CAO	Meeting Type:	Open Session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed Session <input type="checkbox"/>
Meeting Date:	November 6, 2023		
Report No.:	Office of the CAO-033-23		
Submit comments to Council			

Subject/Title: Community Engagement Report – Council Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027 and Beyond.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receive this report for information purposes; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to use community feedback received on the draft strategic plan to help inform the 2024 Operational Plan; and

FURTHER THAT Council adopt the Town of Cobourg Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027 and Beyond.

1. STRATEGIC PLAN

This report will inform the Strategic Plan for 2023-2027.

2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Following the endorsement of Council at the Monday, October 16, Committee of the Whole meeting, the Communications Department initiated a Community Engagement program seeking community feedback on the draft Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027 and Beyond. The Communications Department employed the following tactics to connect with members of the community and seek their feedback:

- Public Notice issued Tuesday, October 17, 2023

- Social Media campaign – Facebook, X and Instagram
- Radio Campaign – Daily Radio ads on Classic Rock, 107.9 from October 18 until October 27
- Hello Cobourg! – Town of Cobourg eNewsletter
- In-person engagement opportunities:

Town of Cobourg staff hosted the following pop-up engagement opportunities to speak with residents about the draft strategic plan:

- Friday, October 20: Victoria Hall, 55 King Street West from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
- Monday, October 23: Victoria Hall, 55 King Street West from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- Tuesday, October 24: Cobourg Community Centre, 750 D’Arcy Street from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, October 25: Cobourg Public Library, 200 Ontario St. from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- Thursday, October 26 – Cobourg Public Library, 200 Ontario St. from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to summarize the findings from the community engagement initiatives. Appendix A includes a detailed Community Engagement Report developed by the Town of Cobourg Communications Department.

Please note, the Community Engagement Survey regarding the draft strategic plan included three opportunities for written responses from residents. All written responses have been included in Appendix A. Any comments that contain profane, aggressive, hateful, defamatory, insulting, rude, abusive, or violent language or content, were excluded from public viewing.

4. ORIGIN AND LEGISLATION

The Town of Cobourg’s Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027 and Beyond will guide the Town’s corporate priorities and decision-making processes. The primary purpose of the Strategic Plan is to communicate the community priorities and to focus the Corporation of the Town of Cobourg’s resources along with those of the Municipal Council.

5. BACKGROUND

Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027

The Town of Cobourg had been following the blueprint set out in their Strategic Plan 2019-2022. It was time to develop a new Strategic Plan that would clearly articulate a vision for the municipality and define the priorities of Council for the remainder of the current term of Council, as well as setting longer term goals.

Through an RFP process, the Town selected Capital Park Consulting Inc. to assist in the development of the new plan by providing the following services:

- Carrying out an examination of matters relating to the future success of the Town.
- Reviewing the input received from residents and other stakeholders through the Engage Cobourg platform and other sources.
- Reviewing additional background materials.
- Researching Strategic Plan precedents.
- Conducting a SWOT analysis to identify the Town's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- Coordinating and facilitating a consultation process to obtain input from Council and municipal staff.
- Preparing a draft plan based on information gathered from the consultations for Council to review and approve.
- Presenting the draft Strategic Plan to Council and senior staff.
- Amending the Strategic Plan as required and issuance of the final version.

The desired outcomes of the project were to:

- Provide a clear vision for the organization, its mission, core values and guiding principles that will inform strategic initiatives and actions.
- Develop a concise, virtually appealing strategic planning document that articulates the Town's strategic directives.
- Establish specific objectives which are realistic and achievable.

Vision, Mission and Values Statements

During the Council Strategic planning sessions, Council and senior Staff also reviewed the Town of Cobourg Mission and Vision statements. Participants reviewed best practices for Vision, Mission and Value Statements, examined examples of strong statements and evaluated the current statements in Cobourg's most recent strategic plan to see how the wording aligned with the new aspirations communicated by Council.

Through the Community Engagement program, staff sought feedback from residents on the draft Strategic Plan Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027 and Beyond including the newly developed mission and vision statements.

6. ANALYSIS

Appendix A includes a full overview of community feedback received regarding the draft strategic plan.

Strategic Priorities

The survey outlined the three strategic priorities set out in the draft strategic plan. Respondents were asked to rank the priorities and their corresponding actions in order of importance. Of the 64 residents who participated in the survey, Thriving Community was ranked as number one, closely seconded by Sustainability and Service Excellence was ranked third.

Strategic Actions

Each strategic priority has three to four strategic actions listed within. The strategic actions were outlined in the survey for residents to review. Respondents were asked to rank the strategic actions in order of importance.

- **Thriving Community:** Of the 64 residents who participated in the survey, the number one ranked strategic action for Thriving Community was the following:
 - Provide the physical infrastructure to support a healthy community that will enable each of us to flourish and reach our full potential. (Rank = 1.89)
- **Service Excellence:** The findings on the strategic actions listed under the service excellence pillar indicate a very close ranking of all four action items. The priority ranked strategic action however was the following:
 - Assess points of contact with customers to identify ways to streamline communications, increase stakeholder engagement, demonstrate user friendliness and provide optimal service. (Rank = 2.28)
- **Sustainability:** The number one ranked strategic action for Sustainability was the following:
 - Protect Cobourg's harbour and waterfront for use and enjoyment by residents, visitors and future generations. (Rank = 1.87)

Past Learning – Forward Looking

Cobourg's strategic plan 2018-2022 had five "pillars" and for each pillar there were five to seven strategic actions. It was agreed that this plan was too ambitious and too operational. It was also noted that Cobourg already has numerous projects underway and studies that recommend more projects but lacks the capacity to do everything that is proposed.

In comparison with the previous strategic plan, survey respondents were asked if they believe the draft Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027 and Beyond provides a clear framework to assist staff achieve Council's vision.

- 64.1% of respondents said they were not sure and needed to wait and see.
- 20.3% of respondents said No.
- 15.6% of respondents said Yes.

The goal of the draft Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027 and Beyond is to develop a plan that was clear, concise and actionable.

In comparison to the previous strategic plan, survey respondents were asked if they believe that the 2023 – 2027 and Beyond plan will allow for more transparent reporting and status updates.

- 46.9% of respondents said that they were unsure and needed to wait and see.
- 31.3% of respondents indicated Yes.
- 21.9% of respondents said No.

The Town of Cobourg draft Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027 and Beyond has three strategic priorities, each with strategic actions followed by a set of strategic questions.

Survey respondents were asked if they believe these strategic questions will be an effective tool in aligning future operational plans and budgets to meet Council's vision as set out in this plan.

- 47.6% of respondents said they were unsure and needed to wait and see.
- 28.6% of respondents said Yes.
- 23.8% of respondents said No.

Appendix A included an overview of community feedback regarding the draft strategic plan.

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Vision Statement

During the strategic planning session, Council discussed what elements make for a good Vision Statement. Following this discussion, Council worked with Senior Staff to redevelop Cobourg's Vision Statement.

Old Vision Statement:

Cobourg...a vibrant inclusive community where everyone has access to meaningful opportunities and experiences.

New Vision Statement:

Welcoming community; thriving town

Survey respondents were asked if they agree with the new Vision Statement for Cobourg?

- 34.4% of respondents said Yes.
- 34.4% of respondents said No.
- 31.3% said Somewhat.

Respondents were asked what words they would you use to describe their vision for Cobourg? Some of the responses included the following. Please note, a full list of responses can be found in Appendix A.

- “A safe place with a clear understanding of what the citizens need and the town is capable of providing.”
- “Sustainable on all levels”
- “Maintain & care for what makes Cobourg special and the town will thrive into the future”
- “A place where young people want to live”
- “Graduated from the past. Focussed on our future”
- “A safe, sustainable, prosperous community that is welcoming and inclusive”
- “An inclusive community that celebrates its past but embraces the future.”

Mission Statement

During the Strategic Planning session, Council discussed what elements make for a good Mission Statement. Following this discussion, Council worked with Senior Staff to redevelop Cobourg’s Mission Statement.

Old Mission Statement:

The Town of Cobourg is committed to open and accountable governance and the provision of quality, accessible programs, and services in a sustainable manner.

New Mission Statement:

Exceeding expectations through quality experiences

Respondents were asked if they agree with the new Mission Statement for Cobourg?

- 36.1% said No.
- 34.4% said Somewhat.
- 29.5% said Yes.

Respondents were asked what words they would use to describe Cobourg’s mission statement? Some of the responses included the following. Please note, a full list of responses can be found in Appendix A.

- “Embracing opportunity, experience and joy for those here and those soon to visit”
- “Exceeding expectations through excellence”
- “Meeting expectations through a quality lifestyle”
- “The Town supports whole community involvement and democratic participation by all citizens.”
- “Transparency, accountability, ease of access”
- “Providing services that enhance the lifestyle and well-being of its multi-generational residents.”
- “Open and Accountable Government that provides sustainable quality programs that are accessible to all.”
- “Dedicated to excellence, committed to you.”

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/BUDGET IMPACTS

The Community Engagement program for the draft strategic plan came at no additional cost. Advertisements and promotional items were already covered under the Town of Cobourg Communications Department operating budget for 2023.

8. CONCLUSION

THAT Council receive this report for information purposes; and

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to use community feedback received on the draft strategic plan to help inform the 2024 Operational Plan; and

FURTHER THAT Council adopt the Town of Cobourg Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027 and Beyond.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Community Engagement Report – Council Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027 and Beyond - Office of the CAO-033-23.docx
Attachments:	- Appendix A - Town of Cobourg Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027 and Beyond - Community Engagement Report.doc - Capital Park Consulting - Final Report - Town of Cobourg Strategic Plan.pdf - Town of Cobourg Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027 and Beyond - DRAFT October 6, 2023.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Oct 30, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer - Oct 30, 2023 - 4:08 PM