

# ST. MARYS STRATEGIC PLAN REVISION & UPDATE

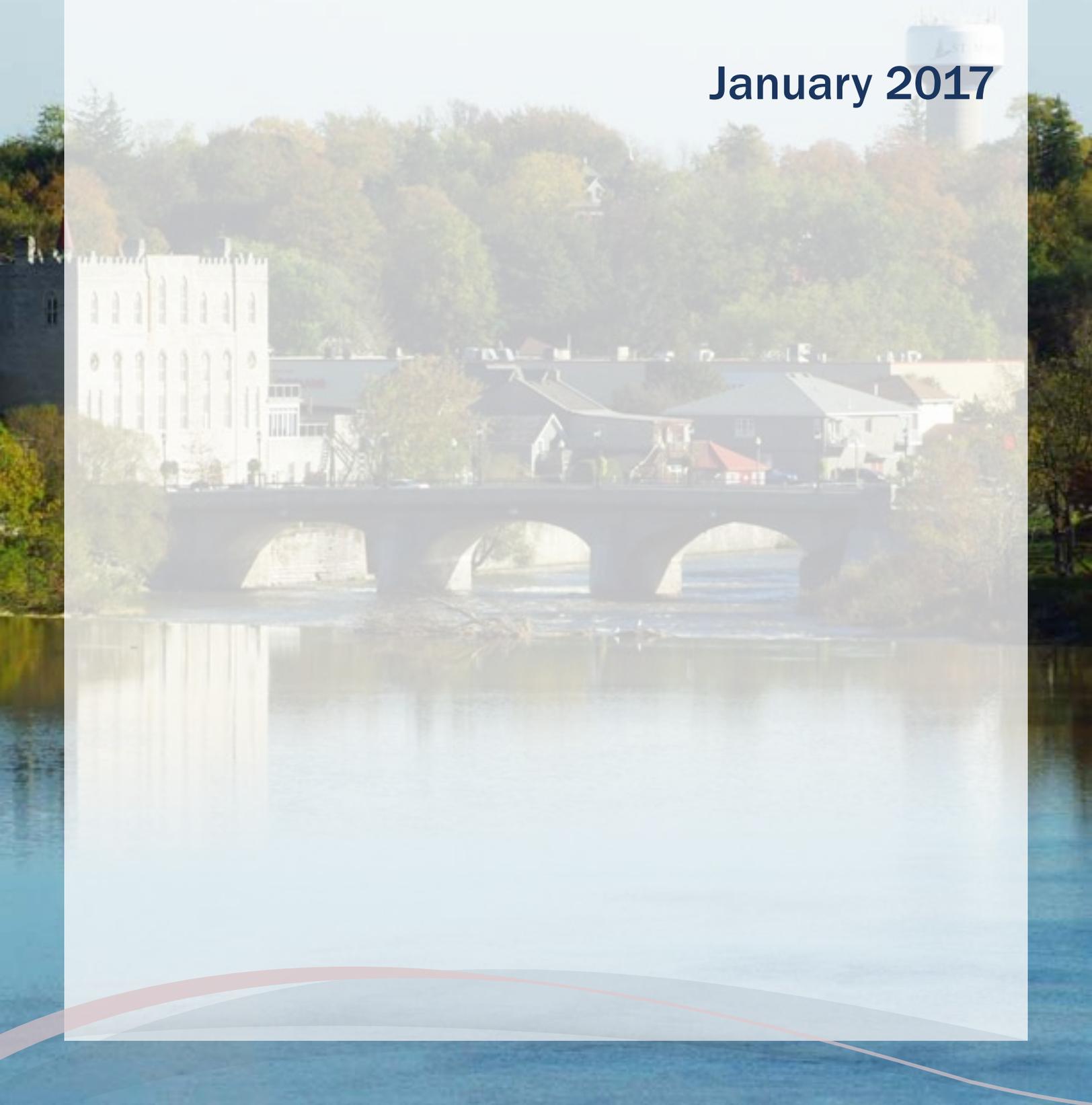
January 2017





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# BACKGROUND

## Current Strategic Plan

In 2010, St. Marys retained the services of Millier Dickinson Blais Inc. for the purposes of preparing a five-year community-based strategic plan. Although the plan was adopted, implementation was compromised by a variety of internal and external factors, not least of which being a changeover in Council and staff turnover, in addition to a shifting provincial landscape. The change in priorities as a result of exigencies required an adjustment to the direction the Town was choosing to take to meet new public needs and expectations. Moreover, regrettable changes in the industrial sector has prompted reconsideration and readjustment of some of the priorities as a result of this.

As the 2010 plan indicated, the fastest growing segment of the population by demographic has been the 45 - 64 age group, and that remains the case, with all the benefits and challenges this presents. In addition, local retail has seen a decline, partly due to the broader adoption of online shopping; St. Marys is seen increasingly as a retirement destination; there is a lack of

attainable housing for youth and workers; and the legacy effects of recreational services, occasionally in a state of duplication or over-servicing.

The initial plan was more focused on cultural heritage preservation, with an emphasis on economic development. And although these remain as priorities for the Town, there is a recognition for a renewed emphasis on establishing a cultural experience as an essential economic driver. This will be complementary to other key drivers in the revised plan, including an industrial strategy and fostering entrepreneurship.

Historically, the Town has shown a certain degree of resilience, and weathered the 2008 downturn fairly well given its strong industrial base and its status as an autonomous, single tier municipality. The Town of St. Marys has shown a willingness and resolve to move itself forward and seize new opportunities for the improvement and enhancement of its financial and quality of life position.

## Revision Activities

In 2015/2016, the Town of St. Marys retained the services of Irwin & Associates (now Compass Point Consulting) for the purposes of revising and updating the strategic plan.

We were tasked with facilitating a process with municipal Council covering the following:

- Reassess the strategic themes and priorities identified in 2010
- Identify any new strategic priorities that may exist
- Identify a goal, or goals, to be achieved by the strategic priorities
- Identify actions that should be taken in the short, medium and long terms to implement the strategy

The expectations emerging out of this exercise included the following:

- A document that is actionable, with a clearer sense of planning in terms of a time horizon that could be used to drive staff activities
- A document that is measurable, with a means to measure progress on each key priority
- A document that strives to seek collaboration and avoid competing priorities through alignment of strategic priorities with common tactics
- A document that will promote discipline in adhering to the revised priorities

Because this is an action-focused plan, the reader will find it to be concise and without much of the boiler plate material that is contained within the documentation of a “traditional” strategic plan. The rationale for this approach is that this plan is to be actionable, using the 2010 plan as the foundation. Upon review, much of the environmental scan and priorities identified in the 2010 plan are still current in 2015/2016. Throughout today’s planning process, it was decided that the 2010 plan should be used as a basis for the 2015/2016 strategic planning project given the large investment of dollars

and time to produce that 2010 report, because a comprehensive public engagement process was undertaken as a part of that effort to generate the Town’s list of priorities, and because much of the information included in that report (priorities and public comments) were still current in 2015/2016 St. Marys.

To help make the new strategic plan a concise action plan, as a part of the revision process, a session was facilitated where Council reviewed the priorities from the 2010 plan and identified those strategies and tactics that had been addressed and:

- Needed no further action
- Were in progress and not required to be addressed in the plan
- Had not yet been initiated and (i) were no longer a priority OR (ii) were required to be addressed in the new action plan

As part of this facilitated process, Council also identified which new priorities existed today and needed to be addressed.

Throughout this process Council was asked to define St. Marys by those “things” that are to be considered “givens” in the Town that will always form a part of the undertone or community culture of how the Town approaches its actions and decisions (typically documented as the “strengths” in a SWOT analysis). Although not an exhaustive list, these “givens” include (but are not limited to): the Town’s heritage and history; its natural beauty (including the unique architecture and stonework and its natural amenities); the overriding sense of community among its citizens; and the Town’s small town charm and character. These “givens” are not overtly expressed in the action plan because they are taken as automatic considerations in every action prescribed by the plan.

### *Ongoing Challenges*

The Town, however, also has some challenges to confront. There is the recognition of a “missing generation” between the very young and seniors. Analysis of different scenarios indicate that, should the Town make no effort to encourage more settlement by a more diverse demographic population, this may result in the Town becoming a de facto retirement community, which then comes with other associated challenges such as increased costs for necessary services in the context of a shrinking tax base and declining revenue picture. According to the Ontario Ministry of Finance, at present, a major driver for population growth is among new immigrants. Also, it should be noted that the Town’s current growth rate is at least three percentage points behind the provincial average.

Complicating this picture further, there is an acute labour shortage in the surrounding county. One of the identified barriers to allowing those in this income bracket to settle in St. Marys is the lack of housing that is affordable. It is our contention that diversifying housing stock to permit more housing that is affordable and rental options will not only make St. Marys more attractive to lower income workers, but also might attract younger people who are not in the financial or lifestyle position to be homeowners. Our recommendation of diversifying housing options to attract youth should be seen as part of a youth strategy. We feel that attracting youth (ages 18 - 29) will provide net benefit to the Town, especially as it is the demographic most likely to take on risk to develop new start-up business initiatives, and organically growing the cultural identity of St. Marys. Ultimately, attracting youth and workers to work in St. Marys necessitates their ability to live, work and play in the area.

We are also mindful of a need to ensure that downtown development can come under a single, overarching, progressive vision so that the downtown may flourish.

### *Resource Realities*

With respect to the Town’s budgetary position, in our consultation with Council and staff, we have been able to identify areas for cost containment and best practices going forward. For example, the sale of vacant Town-owned properties would provide a one-time revenue boost, but also decrease annual liabilities. A comprehensive recreational services review may also result in cost savings, as the current capacity of recreational services provided may be tailored to the population more closely, if not also entertaining alternative models for service delivery (such as user-pay, rental fees, etc.). Moreover, a more structured and detailed granting policy can build in conditions for application, such as the applicant demonstrating that all reasonable efforts have been made to secure funding from other sources prior to application to the Town. That being said, the Town is in a position to decide whether its approach will be bold, or remain with the status quo. In this way, the Town has the options and capabilities to take on any initiatives permitted, but does not have the resources to do everything. It is essential that strategic choices be made.

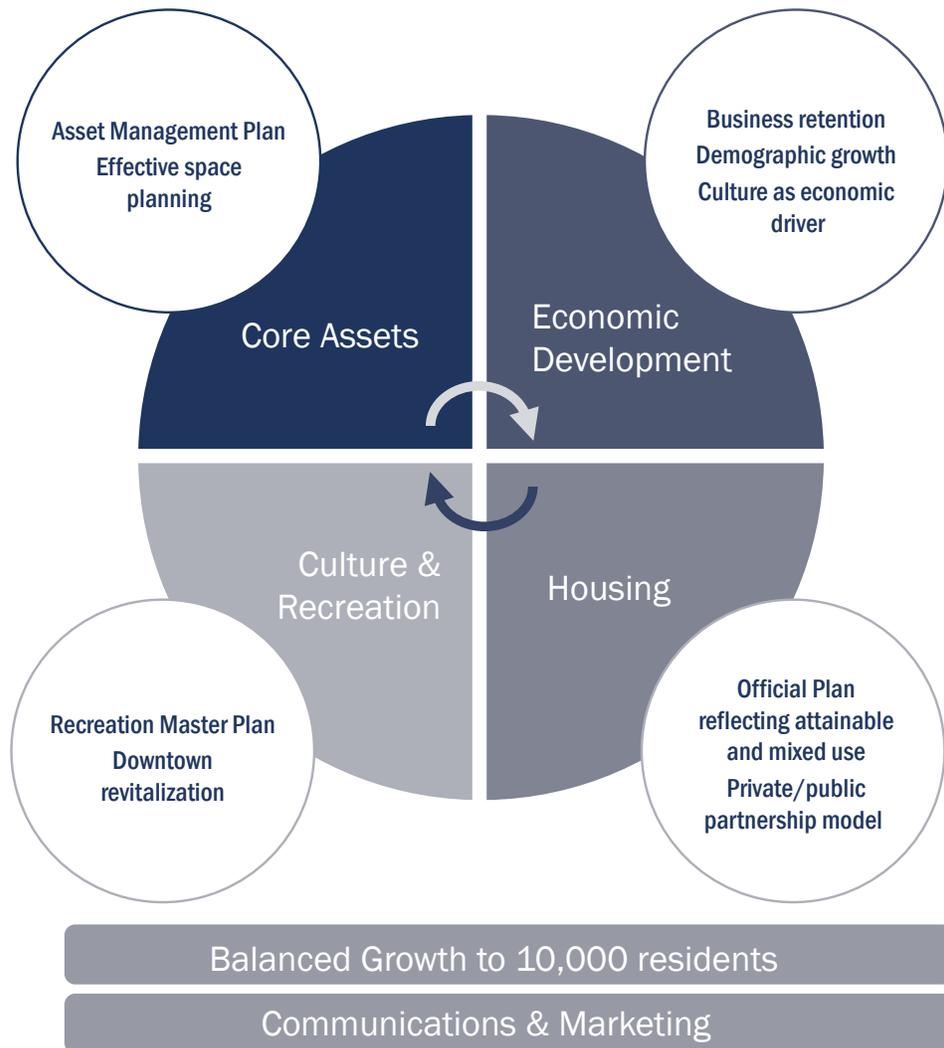
## Overview

We have prepared a series of strategic pillars with associated tactics, with these pillars identified as key priorities in our consultations with Council and Senior Management.

The six key pillars include infrastructure, communication and marketing, culture and recreation, economic development, growth, and housing. Some of the tactics have been forged in collaboration with key stakeholders with a view to changes in the Town since the adoption of the 2010 Strategic Plan, while others reiterate or build upon the identified goals in that document.

In order to operationalize this plan we recommend that Council adopt these pillars accordingly. Committing to these pillars requires this discipline; for example, the granting policy needs to be revised to reflect the priorities since no community can be all things to all people, and there may also be strategic reallocation of funds should the Town decide to lessen its liabilities in Town-owned vacant lands and/or the sale or rental of some properties.

A broad overview of the strategic pillars can be seen here. The tactics associated with each appear in the charts following.



# Infrastructure

Municipal infrastructure needs in St. Marys will require a focus on sustainability and growth, while balancing these activities against anticipated changes in provincial legislation (for example, the carbon neutral push for buildings in the new climate change plan). As no single plan can afford to achieve all its infrastructure goals, we have identified with the aid of staff the top priorities for this planning cycle. The five critical infrastructure needs identified would be the following: Water reservoir storage, Wellington Street Bridge, landfill expansion and digital fibre ducts.

Strategic Priorities	Outcome Statements	Initiatives (Short-term)	Initiatives (Mid-term)	Initiatives (Long-term)
<p><b>Developing a comprehensive and progressive infrastructure plan</b></p>	<p>St. Marys is committed to developing a progressive and sustainable infrastructure plan that meets the infrastructure needs of today and tomorrow. This will require a balance between building and regular maintenance.</p>	<p>Identify immediate needs in the community.</p> <p>When developing the annual capital plan, have regard for the infrastructure needs identified in the asset management plan before considering new builds or renovations that represent significant service level improvements.</p> <p>To support the asset management plan, complete a financial analysis of the Town's ability to pay to establish a minimum capital budget threshold to be budgeted for each year (either in actual spending, or put into reserve).</p>	<p>Prepare an itinerary of planned projects that can be made shovel-ready in response to funding changes at the senior levels of government.</p> <p>Develop a public engagement program to better inform residents of the Town's asset management strategies.</p> <p>Develop an Inclusion Policy/standard partnered with guidelines or standard operating procedures that outline how the Town will adopt inclusion and to what extent inclusion will be considered for Town infrastructure, programs, events, etc.</p>	<p>Ongoing infrastructure assessment and evaluation that is sensitive to growth trends</p> <p>When reviewing priorities of needs for maintenance investments in "discretionary" Town assets, the following Town icons will be considered of most importance: historic Town Hall, historic water tower; Mill Race Dam and Spillway; Carnegie Library, museum, Water Street bridge, Church Street Bridge, Grand Trunk Trail and Sarnia Bridge, and Junction Station.</p>
<p><b>Meeting and exceeding current and anticipated provincial environmental standards</b></p>	<p>St. Marys will approach infrastructure needs. (e.g. future landfill needs) with a proactive plan and a view to environment. An anticipatory approach to addressing infrastructure needs will become the norm.</p>	<p>Develop a proactive action plan to prioritize immediate and midterm infrastructure needs, including: realistic timelines, funding consequences, operational implications, and delivery options.</p> <p>Develop a transition plan to make all municipal infrastructure compliant with external legislation (i.e. AODA, sustainability goals, etc) including requirements and costing.</p>	<p>Commence needed infrastructure improvements, based on the developed plan. This would require establishing measureable goals on a cost/year development strategy.</p>	<p>Continue the improvements. Begin developing a long term planning approach to infrastructure.</p> <p>Initialize new fiscal policies and disciplines focused on building strategic fund balances to meet needs in future.</p>

Strategic Priorities	Outcome Statements	Initiatives (Short-term)	Initiatives (Mid-term)	Initiatives (Long-term)
<b>Water reservoir storage</b>	If the goal is to achieve a population target of 8,000 residents by 2026/2027, (annual growth rate of 1.5%, doubling current rate), both access to potable water and fire protection needs would best be served by addressing this issue.	Plan for an updated reservoir. Include its development in the community's capital and financial plan. As an interim measure, promote effective water conservation.	Commence work on an updated water reservoir to meet provincial standards.	
<b>Wellington Street Bridge</b>	North-south access is currently limited, and so it is recommended that a modern bridge able to withstand a much higher load restriction be considered.	Commence work on an updated bridge, which will allow for a more timely development of the northern part of the community.		
<b>Waste Management Plan</b>	With anticipated proactive measures for growth (residential, commercial, and industrial), there will need for active consideration of optimizing landfill services, but with a view to controlled costs and forward-thinking environmental initiatives.	Plan for a new long-term review of waste management, taking account of new and more prescriptive provincial standards. Explore alternatives to status quo waste management with a view to reduction and recycling initiatives for all residential, commercial, and industrial properties.	Decide on what approaches best meet long-term community ability to meet provincial standards. Build a program and identify a budget to accommodate.	Implement renewed waste management approach on a phased-in basis.
<b>Digital fibre ducts</b>	Part of future growth will require addressing digital needs for residents and emergent businesses.	Research options for best providers.	Incorporate communication duct-work in all future capital works projects (pilot phase).	Incorporate communication duct-work in all future planned subdivisions as part of development.
<b>Granting readiness</b>	With a change in the federal government, which has signaled a desire to fund infrastructure projects, it will be vital that the Town be in a state of readiness to compete for much-needed infrastructure funding.	Establish a nimble foresight approach to capital initiatives that creates a project inventory and plans to meet new grant opportunities. Assign a lead staff person for this task.	Keep abreast of developing and evolving opportunities. Actively seek opportunities that align with municipal capacity and vision.	Review infrastructure plans on an on-going basis, seeking grant alignment.
<b>Maintenance prioritization</b>	Given the large number of Town-owned heritage assets, a maintenance schedule ought to be agreed to by Council in prioritizing which of these assets will be the recipient of discretionary funding.	Prioritize heritage assets, in terms of importance and develop maintenance schedule and budget accordingly. Assess if any assets can be better utilized by others.  Implement a seasonal inspection schedule.	Rethink use of assets to maximize their utility to the community. Develop a municipal policy outlining how decisions will be made in future in the acquisition of addition heritage sites.	On a go forward basis, maintenance, acquisition and devolution of heritage assets will align with the municipality's long-term strategic position.

# Communication & Marketing

As civic engagement improves, growing expectations of accountable and transparent local government requires proactive communication approaches. Included in proactive communication would be innovative means of establishing a more outbound place-setting narrative for the purposes of tourism and growth. Develop a comprehensive and fully integrated communications plan, including a marketing plan, tourism plan and economic development implementation plan. These do not necessarily have to be new documents, as they can draw upon existing shelf studies that the Town has.

Strategic Priorities	Outcome Statements	Initiatives (Short-term)	Initiatives (Mid-term)	Initiatives (Long-term)
<p><b>Marketing &amp; Promotion Plan</b></p>	<p>Establish St. Marys as an ideal setting for new businesses and tourism. Emphasize its quality of life as a means of encouraging residential growth.</p>	<p>Identify, as part of a marketing plan, the key messages St. Marys wants to share with the outside world, recognizing that it cannot be all things to all people. This needs to align with the economic development plan.</p> <p>Launch a pilot program as the new marketing plan rolls out.</p>	<p>Develop and launch a new communications approach based on the revised strategic priorities. Engage partners based on their ability to better deliver and align with components of the approach (i.e. County, neighbouring municipalities, community groups).</p>	<p>Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this approach and adjust accordingly.</p> <p>Seek on-going partnerships to extend range and efficacy.</p>
<p><b>Engagement</b></p>	<p>St. Marys is committed to engaging and informing residents as stakeholders in key decisions.</p> <p>Communicating relevant municipal information, as well as soliciting input from residents, builds a solid foundation of trust.</p>	<p>Develop an engagement policy for staff that will meet the expectations of the community; conduct internal and external surveys as necessary.</p>	<p>Build an interactive web presence, that is accessible and navigable; a site on which residents can interact with the municipality on multiple levels.</p> <p>Explore other mediums that the municipality may be able to invest in to help fill the information gap.</p>	<p>Measure community engagement, continue to seek new communication mediums, keep policies updated meeting new channels of communication.</p>
<p><b>Positioning</b></p>	<p>Work to have a more prominent regional presence and improve the perception and reputation of St. Marys outside of its borders. Develop a sense of “who we are” as a means of sharing the narrative both internally and externally.</p>	<p>Conduct internal and external surveys to gather baseline data about perceptions of the Town, its current approach to communications, transparency, etc.</p> <p>Develop measurement tools to assess effectiveness of communications; review regularly with a view to reputation management.</p> <p>Develop guidelines for community engagement/ public participation to be used by staff across the corporation.</p>	<p>Develop measurement tools to assess effectiveness of public communications; review.</p> <p>Build “positioning” into the role description of senior management.</p>	<p>Develop budget to ensure on-going positioning presence. Seek new public and private partnerships to advance this agenda.</p> <p>Be an active partner in the region to advance the municipality’s strategic priorities.</p>

Strategic Priorities	Outcome Statements	Initiatives (Short-term)	Initiatives (Mid-term)	Initiatives (Long-term)
<b>Wayfinding &amp; identity</b>	A comprehensive approach to identity promotion - including wayfinding - will help St. Marys in terms of both promoting itself as a destination to the outside world (tourism and attracting new residents), and supporting a sense of common community with current residents.	Tourism effectiveness relies on establishing and promoting a unique and compelling identity that can be communicated beyond the municipal boundary.	Develop a signage program at key sites along the highways advertising Town amenities and further establish/reinforce brand with in-Town signage and wayfinding.	Keep wayfinding approaches current with new opportunities, legislative requirements, and technologies.
<b>Social media</b>	The use of social media may be instrumental to an overall communications plan, which can improve public engagement in bilateral communication between the Town and residents, and broaden the reach of the Town in terms of what it can offer, while celebrating its unique heritage.	Develop a comprehensive social media strategy with a view to centralized function ("same-page messaging").  Frequent updating and the use of social media engagement policy. Decide on the social media venues that are most appropriate, with a view to providing rich media content.	As part of reputation management, assess feedback in terms of scope, reach and sentiment. Adjust policy as required so that it continues to achieve the outcomes of the strategy.	Reassess the social media venues in terms of being able to reach the target audience; evaluate any new social media outlets that may be reasonably added if required.
<b>Media relations</b>	Maintaining and cultivating effective relations with local media is key to preventing misinformation about Town objectives.	Develop a comprehensive media relations policy for best channeling information directly to media sources about Town initiatives and other essential information.  Create a spokesperson contact and ensure centralized communication relations with local media.	Create a communications training package for staff and Council for internal distribution.	Review the media relations policy and communications training package to assess if any changes may be needed.
<b>Community events promotion</b>	Actively promoting existing cultural/community events while seeking to establish new or re-branded signature events (such as festivals) may result in broader audiences and increase the appeal of the Town.  Develop a new event, or re-brand and re-envision an existing event, to be the "signature" St. Marys event.	Establish core event planning through a collaboration between the economic development and communications managers.  Create an event, or re-brand and re-envision an existing event that celebrates the Town's key amenities and ties in with the reactivation of the downtown/waterfront.	Leverage new and existing events so that they incorporate existing amenities and provide a continuum between the downtown and the riverfront.  Ensure events retain/promote the Town's unique offerings so that they appeal to residents and visitors.  Develop an inclusion policy and guidelines that outline how the Town will adopt inclusion and to what extent inclusion will be considered for Town infrastructure, programs, events, etc.	Monitor and assess ongoing event success. Be prepared to add/delete given feedback.  Create a municipal policy to support third-party partnership, delivery and introduction of new events.

# Balanced Growth

Given demographic and economic realities facing municipalities situated outside of the GTA, it is necessary to develop a growth plan to ensure new revenue sources can meet the increasing costs of existing service demands to satisfy population growth and economic development plans. The two identified demographic groups that will further the vibrancy and culture of the Town include youth and newcomers. Growth must be balanced both geographically and economically in such a way that it is sustainable.

Strategic Priorities	Outcome Statements	Initiatives (Short-term)	Initiatives (Mid-term)	Initiatives (Long-term)
<p><b>Scale-based demographic growth &amp; targeted immigration</b></p>	<p>One of the only remaining means of growing the population is by attracting newcomers to St. Marys. St. Marys will identify the key demographics they wish to attract and match these against existing amenities that would best serve those demographics.</p>	<p>Review the current approach to development, recognizing that a “one size fits all” plan will not best meet the needs of the Town.</p> <p>Identify what infrastructure needs should be in place to attract/retain this demographic (e.g. housing that’s affordable, public services, etc.)</p>	<p>Need to integrate with a comprehensive marketing plan, economic development approach, and identity approach (selling a lifestyle).</p>	<p>Tie the approach into the marketing and promotion plan to align with the economic development and tourism initiatives.</p> <p>Seek partnerships and additional financial support (government and others) to continue this approach.</p>
<p><b>Youth recruitment &amp; retention strategy</b></p>	<p>It is important to not only attract youth to the Town, but also to retain existing youth by ensuring there are adequate opportunities. Tactics will focus on youth of all ages and abilities.</p>	<p>Review and identify what infrastructure needs should be in place to attract/retain this demographic (e.g. housing that’s affordable, public services, etc.).</p> <p>Establish a youth advisory council to ensure issues important to young people of various ages and abilities are on the municipal agenda.</p>	<p>Focus on the need to integrate with a comprehensive marketing plan (target marketing to specific media), economic development approach, and identity approach (selling a lifestyle).</p>	<p>Build the success of this strategy and early outcomes in the marketing and promotion plan. Align this strategy with the economic development plan.</p>
<p><b>Industrial strategy</b></p>	<p>Industry has played - and continues to play - a key role in the life of the Town in providing employment and economic stability. Seeking new opportunities to attract small, medium and large industry is in the Town’s best interests as part of its growth strategy.</p> <p>Increased focused on industry retention as part of the overall strategy.</p>	<p>Actively seek out new industrial partners.</p> <p>Assess available industrial land with a view to zoning and development.</p> <p>Build a retention plan, identify elements needed to ensure businesses stay and grow in the community.</p>	<p>Align attraction, housing and other policies to support industrial strategy (a “no silos” approach).</p>	<p>Align industrial strategy with both positioning strategy and marketing/promotions plan.</p> <p>Ensure strategy is up-to-date with changing and new trends.</p>

**Strategic  
Priorities**

**Business attraction,  
retention & expansion  
program**

**Outcome  
Statements**

A key to growth is to ensure a vibrant and sustainable commercial sector. Economic development needs to rest on three pillars, beyond the traditional business attraction. It should also focus attention and resources to ensure both business retention and expansion.

**Initiatives  
(Short-term)**

- Create a welcome wagon program for new businesses.
- Host business-to-business networking events.
- Connect with local businesses through a Business Visitation Program (confidential meetings with businesses to discuss successes, challenges, issues, questions).
- Celebrate local business.
- Participate in partnership projects regarding youth retention (i.e. OMAFRA project).
- Website development
- Identify vacant spaces to host entrepreneurs and create an inventory.
- Begin the process of downtown revitalization.

**Initiatives  
(Mid-term)**

- Launch pad/entrepreneur and small business support program.
- Host an annual event to celebrate and thank local businesses for being in St. Marys; incorporate a keynote speaker, mini trade-show, refreshments, networking.
- Youth and entrepreneur program
- Use vacant space in the downtown for entrepreneurs.
- Explore turnkey operations and serviced commercial/ industrial lands.
- Encourage existing businesses to optimize on their existing buildings/ spaces.

**Initiatives  
(Long-term)**

- Identify local business development mentors.
- Create a shared service centre for new business and to support retention activities.
- Integrate new businesses in long term development plan.



# Culture & Recreation

Readjusting existing recreational services to a more scale-appropriate level will result in some measure of cost-savings for the Town by enabling it to reallocate funding to other priorities. In some cases, volunteers and the private sector can take on leadership or partnership roles for the delivery of some recreational services that are underutilized. Moreover, as culture is being positioned as a vital economic driver, some of these tactics are complementary with both the re-profiling of the Town and economic development.

Strategic Priorities	Outcome Statements	Initiatives (Short-term)	Initiatives (Mid-term)	Initiatives (Long-term)
<p><b>Recreation services master plan</b></p>	<p>Assessing the real needs of residents in terms of providing the right fit for recreational services provided by the Town will require contracting out for a consultant who specializes in this area given the exhaustive analysis to be performed in providing key recommendations.</p>	<p>Create and list an RFP for a recreation services master plan.</p>	<p>Implement the key recommendations as required and ensure that they align with concurrent policies and plans.</p> <p>Develop an inclusion policy and guidelines that outline how the Town will adopt inclusion and to what extent inclusion will be considered for Town infrastructure, programs, events, etc.</p>	<p>Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the recreation services master plan in a few years' time to ensure it remains the right fit with Town priorities (no more than three to five years after implementation).</p>
<p><b>Repurposing the Pyramid Recreation Centre (PRC)</b></p>	<p>As the PRC is adequate to a population of 30,000, it far exceeds the needs of the current population and thus results in additional costs to the Town. A more integrated approach may be preferable.</p>	<p>Align future use of PRC with the findings of the recreation services master plan.</p>	<p>If space remains, investigate the options of hosting additional library programming in the PRC through an integrated planning program strategy.</p> <p>Determine the full cost of relocating some of the Town's community services, including retrofit, to the PRC.</p> <p>Investigate the ability to attract the YMCA or any other organization to locate in the PRC.</p>	<p>Continue the improvements. Begin developing a long-term planning approach to infrastructure. Initialize new fiscal policies and disciplines focused on building strategic fund balances to meet needs in future.</p>

Strategic Priorities	Outcome Statements	Initiatives (Short-term)	Initiatives (Mid-term)	Initiatives (Long-term)
<p><b>Downtown revitalization plan</b></p>	<p>Protecting St. Marys' unique heritage assets while planning for growth in key sectors will require an integrated and balanced approach. The downtown should be perceived as a safe, central and culturally vibrant gathering area. Ultimately, the transition will be to transform St. Marys from a heritage to a cultural experience. In order to achieve this, evaluate the Heritage Conservation District Plan (HCDP).</p>	<p>Make the downtown pedestrian-friendly through streetscape design.</p> <p>Offer incentives to new businesses to occupy vacant storefronts.</p> <p>Create the winning conditions to attract cultural/commercial enterprises into the core.</p> <p>Seasonally, rent storefront space in the core for tourism and economic development staff. There is demonstrated success in this approach.</p> <p>Promote local theatre and arts in the core by making an investment in space and programming.</p> <p>Investigate options for incentivizing or enforcing standards for heritage properties after the review of the HCDP.</p> <p>Investigate the idea of providing allowances for accessibility changes to buildings under the Community Improvement Program (CIP).</p>	<p>New development should conform to the existing heritage aesthetic as per either the HCDP or the new cultural initiatives approach.</p> <p>Transform alleyways into art/craft vendor areas.</p> <p>Investigate prospect of turning second storey downtown space into rentals or studios (see Housing pillar).</p> <p>Elevate heritage plaque program.</p> <p>Create a permanent tourism hub/office in a central location.</p> <p>Investigate opportunities to invest in space in the core to further promote and expand local arts, culture, and theatre.</p> <p>Investigate the opportunity for new or improved access to public washrooms in the core.</p>	<p>Complete final phase of integration of waterfront with downtown core as per waterfront integration plan.</p>
<p><b>A focused parks strategy</b></p>	<p>St. Marys' parks are not only a prized asset, they are also a natural gathering place that can be optimized and incorporated into enhancing the cultural profile of St. Marys.</p>	<p>Perform an initial assessment of necessary improvements (beautification, accessibility, etc.).</p> <p>Preserve Cadzow Park as a quiet, residential, family-oriented park.</p> <p>Investigate Milt Dunnell Park in terms of capacity to host cultural events, such as festivals, "gathering on the green", art exhibits, performances, etc.</p> <p>Re-profile Milt Dunnell Park as "the Central Park of St. Marys."</p>	<p>Actively include parks in marketing and promotion.</p> <p>Tie the Grand Trunk Trail to Milt Dunnell Park.</p> <p>Investigate implementing a forestry and tree management policy for the Town.</p>	<p>Ensure Milt Dunnell Park remains the central focus for community events.</p> <p>Continue to seek opportunities to add to its profile.</p> <p>Continue investments in Cadzow Park as a family-oriented public space.</p>

Strategic Priorities	Outcome Statements	Initiatives (Short-term)	Initiatives (Mid-term)	Initiatives (Long-term)
<b>Waterways integration</b>	Part of a recreation services master plan will involve and integrate the natural asset of the waterfront.	Ensure the RFP includes a request to provide a design for the waterfront, incorporating trails and signage so that it becomes a more celebratory public space.	Create seamless linkages between the downtown and waterfront.	Incorporate the waterfront in the cultural life of the Town, including the prospect of tying it with recurring signature festivals.
<b>Year-round Farmers' &amp; Artisans' Market</b>	In smaller communities, a Farmers' Market plays a strong role in terms of identity, as well as promoting tourism to sample local fare and crafts.	<p>Assess the infrastructure needs of creating a year-round, covered Farmers' Market facility.</p> <p>Strike a sub-committee of Council and experts to appoint members of a Farmers' Market Board.</p>	<p>When venue selected, cost out all facility needs (electricity, maintenance, etc.).</p> <p>Establish a reasonable vendor fee.</p> <p>Actively market and promote in tourism literature.</p>	Actively grow the market, design it for local residents (retention) and as an attraction (tourism).
<b>Develop a comprehensive granting policy</b>	Given limited financial resources, a granting policy will ensure that those seeking Town funds will be subject to a process that will assist Council in making key decisions on selecting granting priorities.	<p>Investigate best practices in grant policy standards, such as partnering with the Stratford Perth Community Foundation.</p> <p>Develop and formalize the new granting process for readiness in the next budget cycle.</p> <p>Make a decision regarding the Town's future investment in the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame.</p>	Ensure compliance with the granting policy on an ongoing basis.	Review the granting policy at least three to five years after implementation.





# Economic Development

Economic development is one of the essential keystones to growth and sustainability. A targeted approach in this area will ensure a beneficial mix that is realistically tailored to the strengths and needs of St. Marys, with a view that culture is an economic driver. With the use of cultural mapping, this will facilitate outlining the process to implement municipal cultural planning including public art to economic development, from rejuvenating the downtown to offering practical ideas to save heritage properties, from integrating creative municipal concepts into the Official Plan (derived from the principles of the CRINK Economy - Creative, Innovative, Knowledge-Based).

**Strategic Priorities**

**Downtown revitalization plan**

**Outcome Statements**

Protecting St. Marys' unique heritage assets while planning for growth in key sectors will require an integrated and balanced approach. The downtown should be perceived as safe, central, and culturally vibrant gathering area. Ultimately, the transition will be to transform St. Marys from a heritage to a cultural experience.

**Initiatives (Short-term)**

Make the downtown pedestrian-friendly through streetscape design. Offer incentives to new businesses to occupy vacant storefronts.

Create the winning conditions to attract cultural/commercial enterprises into the core.

Seasonally, rent storefront space in the core for tourism and economic development staff. There is demonstrated success in this approach.

Promote local theatre and arts in the core by making an investment in space and programming.

Investigate options for incentivizing or enforcing standards for heritage properties after the review of the Heritage Conservation District Plan (HCDP).

Investigate the idea of providing allowances for accessibility changes to buildings under the Community Improvement Program (CIP).

**Initiatives (Mid-term)**

New development should conform to the existing heritage aesthetic as per either the HCDP or the new cultural initiatives approach.

Transform alleyways into art/craft vendor areas.

Investigate prospect of turning second storey downtown space into rentals or studios (see Housing pillar).

Elevate heritage plaque program.

Create a permanent tourism hub/office in central location.

Investigate opportunities to invest in space in the core to further promote and expand local arts, culture and theatre.

Investigate the opportunity for new or improved access to public washrooms in the core.

**Initiatives (Long-term)**

Complete final phase of integration of waterfront with downtown core as per waterfront integration plan.

Strategic Priorities	Outcome Statements	Initiatives (Short-term)	Initiatives (Mid-term)	Initiatives (Long-term)
<p><b>Business attraction, retention &amp; expansion program</b></p>	<p>A key to growth is to ensure a vibrant and sustainable commercial sector. Economic development needs to rest on three pillars, beyond the traditional business attraction. It should also focus attention and resources to ensure both business retention and expansion.</p>	<p>Create a welcome wagon program for new businesses.</p> <p>Host business-to-business networking events.</p> <p>Connect with local businesses through a Business Visitation Program (confidential meetings with businesses to discuss successes, challenges, issues, questions).</p> <p>Celebrate local business.</p> <p>Participate in partnership projects regarding youth retention (i.e. OMAFRA Project).</p> <p>Website development</p> <p>Identify vacant spaces to host entrepreneurs and create an inventory.</p> <p>Begin the process of downtown revitalization.</p>	<p>Launch pad/entrepreneur and small business support program.</p> <p>Host an annual event to celebrate and thank local businesses for being in St. Marys; incorporate a keynote speaker, mini trade-show, refreshments, networking.</p> <p>Youth &amp; entrepreneur program</p> <p>Use vacant space in the downtown for entrepreneurs.</p> <p>Explore turnkey operations and serviced commercial/ industrial lands.</p> <p>Encourage existing businesses to optimize on their existing buildings/ spaces.</p>	<p>Identify local business development mentors.</p> <p>Create a shared service centre for new business and to support retention activities.</p> <p>Integrate new businesses in long-term development plan.</p>
<p><b>Industrial strategy</b></p>	<p>Industry has played - and continues to play - a key role in the life of the Town in providing employment and economic stability. Seeking new opportunities to attract small, medium, and large industry is in the Town's best interests as part of its growth strategy.</p> <p>Increased focused on industry retention as part of the overall strategy.</p>	<p>Actively seek out new industrial partners.</p> <p>Assess available industrial land with a view to zoning and development.</p> <p>Build a retention plan, identify elements needed to ensure business stay and grow in the community.</p>	<p>Align attraction, housing and other policies to support industrial strategy (a "no silos" approach).</p>	<p>Align industrial strategy with both positioning strategy and marketing/ promotions plan.</p> <p>Ensure strategy is up-to-date with changing and new trends.</p>
<p><b>Incubators</b></p>	<p>Future industrial success will require the ability to create and grow local businesses as well as attracting new enterprises to the community.</p>	<p>Research the possibility of introducing business incubator(s) as part of the industrial strategy, including potential partners, budget, utilizing existing facilities, governance model, etc.</p>	<p>If feasible, create a policy and budget to launch a municipal incubator. Develop a sectorial focus for its activities.</p>	

Strategic Priorities	Outcome Statements	Initiatives (Short-term)	Initiatives (Mid-term)	Initiatives (Long-term)
<p><b>Emphasize culture as a key economic driver for the community</b></p>	<p>Take a lead role in developing a downtown location for a civic square. If possible, locate this near the river to take advantage of this natural amenity.</p>	<p>Establish a partnership with the Stratford Festival and other local theatre entities and take a lead role in developing an increased theatre presence in the downtown core.</p> <p>Update and maintain the Cultural Mapping Plan to identify and assess all key amenities, spaces etc. that are important and significant to the community.</p>	<p>Provide an attractive and well-functioning streetscape in the downtown core.</p> <p>Leverage the downtown architecture, in particular the alleyways, to enhance the cultural experience in the downtown core.</p>	<p>Ensure that marketing and promotion remains a key driver in future economic development strategies.</p> <p>Look for ways to align economic development with other key strategic priorities, adopting a “no silos” approach.</p>
<p><b>Marketing &amp; Promotion Plan</b></p>	<p>Establish St Marys as an ideal setting for new businesses and tourism. Emphasize its quality of life as a means of encouraging residential growth.</p>	<p>Identify, as part of a marketing plan, exactly what are the key messages St Marys wants to share with the outside world, recognizing that it cannot be all things to all people. This needs to align with the economic development plan.</p>	<p>Develop and launch a new communications approach. Engage partners based on their ability to better deliver and align with components of the approach (i.e. county, neighbouring municipalities, community groups).</p>	<p>Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this approach and adjust accordingly.</p> <p>Seek on-going partnerships to extend range and efficacy</p>
<p><b>Leadership &amp; collaboration</b></p>	<p>The Town has an opportunity to take on a leadership role in coordinating economic development activities across several actors whose efforts may be more suitably aligned.</p>	<p>Identify the key players in economic development by sector and host a meeting to determine and align economic development priorities.</p> <p>Investigate the best approach to coordinating economic development amongst the various stakeholders and established groups (e.g., EDAC, Chamber of Commerce, BIAs, etc.).</p> <p>Ensure suitable funds to assist in economic development efforts.</p>	<p>Review and measure economic development initiatives on a midterm basis.</p>	



# Housing

The recent County labour market survey indicates an acute shortage of skilled workers, particularly in the “blue collar” and agricultural sectors. The one barrier to supplying that labour is housing options. There need to be housing options that are affordable, attainable and even include rentals. This solution might also partially encourage youth and cultural practitioners to consider St. Marys as the place to live, work and play.

Strategic Priorities	Outcome Statements	Initiatives (Short-term)	Initiatives (Mid-term)	Initiatives (Long-term)
<p><b>Attainable &amp; mixed-use housing</b></p>	<p>In order to get the “right demographic mix” for St. Marys, it will be essential to ensure housing stock is flexible and attractive for youth, workers, immigrants and persons of all abilities.</p>	<p>Identify in the Official Plan development areas that would be key growth areas among targeted demographics.</p> <p>Encourage businesses to convert second-storey spaces into rentals.</p> <p>Investigate the prospect of medium density housing in the downtown and surrounding areas (infill and new development spaces: “building in and building up”).</p>	<p>Address infrastructure needs to best ensure development capacity.</p> <p>Create direct municipal investments to assure that housing that is affordable is created in the community.</p>	
<p><b>Explore alternative forms of housing</b></p>	<p>To ensure affordability, new forms of housing styles should be investigated; for example amongst millennials, smaller “tiny houses” are becoming a popular alternative.</p>	<p>Review municipal policies to allow for non-traditional and alternative housing models, including accessible homes.</p> <p>Investigate environmentally sustainable housing types as a pilot.</p>	<p>Align land use policy to encourage new housing types and approaches.</p> <p>Create a communication strategy for the community and as attraction, assuring buy-in for this approach.</p>	<p>Assess the success of this initiative.</p> <p>Include this new approach to alternative housing in future marketing and promotion strategies.</p>

Strategic Priorities	Outcome Statements	Initiatives (Short-term)	Initiatives (Mid-term)	Initiatives (Long-term)
<p><b>Seek public-private partnership models</b></p>	<p>New approach to housing may require a different form of initial financial investment to get established.</p>	<p>Investigate and develop a range of possible approaches to launch a renewed housing strategy, designed to meet the current affordability and demographic challenges.</p>	<p>Establish policy and budget parameters to enable new approaches to meeting the housing affordability challenges based on research findings.</p> <p>Seek partnerships from other levels of government to realize this action.</p>	<p>Launch a pilot build. Evaluate its success and plan accordingly for future activities.</p>
<p><b>Prioritize Town-owned property assets</b></p>	<p>Given the large number of Town-owned lands and properties, funding for many of the other initiatives in this revised Strategic Plan may require the sale or lease of these assets.</p>	<p>Develop a short-list of essential versus non-essential Town-owned assets and make key decisions about their future.</p> <p>Explore options for those assets deemed non-essential (sale, lease, partnerships, etc.).</p>		



# IMPLEMENTATION & PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Key to the success of any long-range implementation plan is a need for on-going evaluation. A series of metrics would form an integral part of evaluating the performance of the plan and make adjustments as required. The precise determination of how and what those metrics will measure, particularly program results and outcomes, should be done in advance. Simply put, the plan is the operational blueprint, while evaluation measures how responsive all actors are in following it. Of the numerous benefits of on-going evaluation is keeping the municipality on track in terms of achieving its strategic goals, and in ensuring accountability that these goals remain priorities for the Town.

Managing performance through evaluation involves improving results through evidence-based decision making, continuous organizational learning, and a focus on accountability for performance.

Performance management is integrated into all aspects of an organization's management and policy-making processes, transforming an organization's practices so it is focused on achieving improved results for the public.

On-going evaluation is not an automatic process of simply measuring: it is a tool that requires both engaged leadership and organizational commitment to determine what works and what does not, and from there to adjust the approach to better achieve outcomes for effectiveness (service quality) and efficiency (resources).

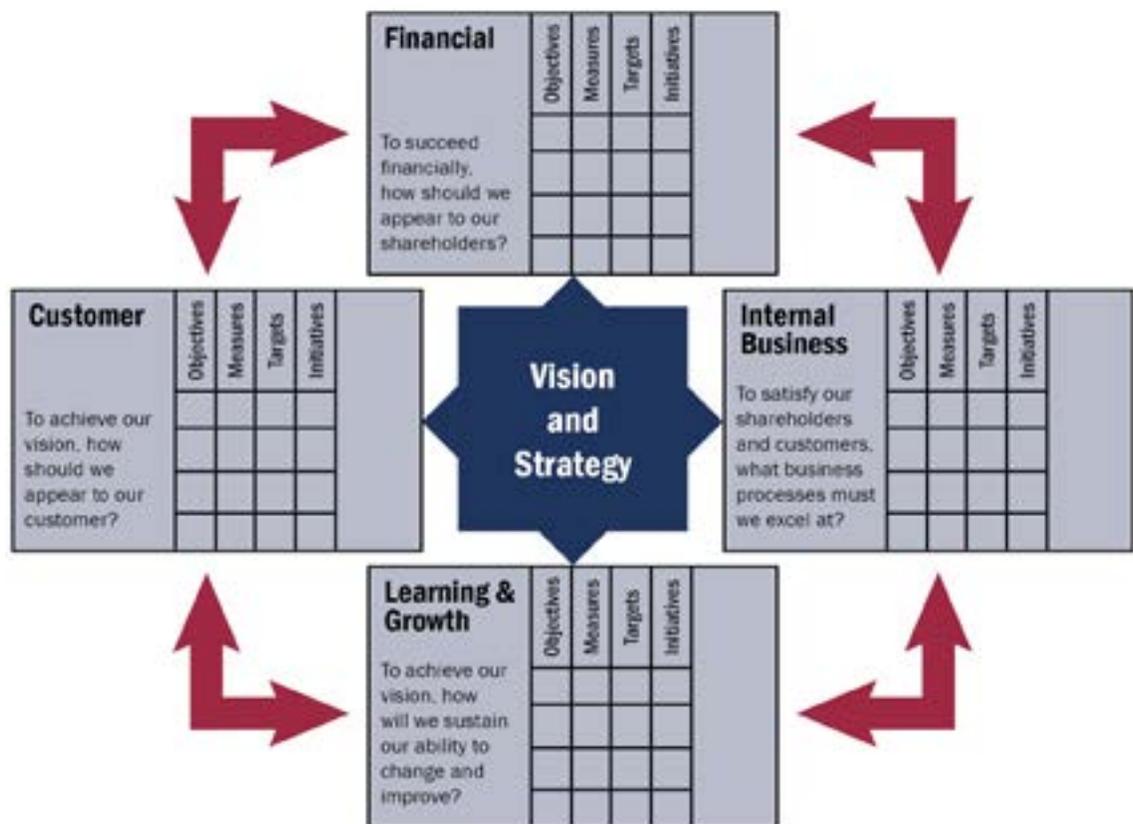


There are a number of performance evaluation methods we could choose, or derive elements that can be tailored to the unique culture of the organization:

1. GARP-PI: One example of performance measurement might be the Quadrant approach whereby the goal is to achieve a balance between performance and the ranked importance of each strategic priority. Goals, activities, resources and programs are aligned with the desired outcomes. The benefit of this approach is that resources can be allocated and adjusted to each strategic priority with a view not to over-focus on those that may be of lesser importance to the community.

2. Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan and Norton): Successfully used in the private sector and modified to fit the needs of the public sector, the balanced scorecard approach measures both lag and lead indicators, with the former representing existing conditions and the latter representing decisions/actions that change organizational behaviour.

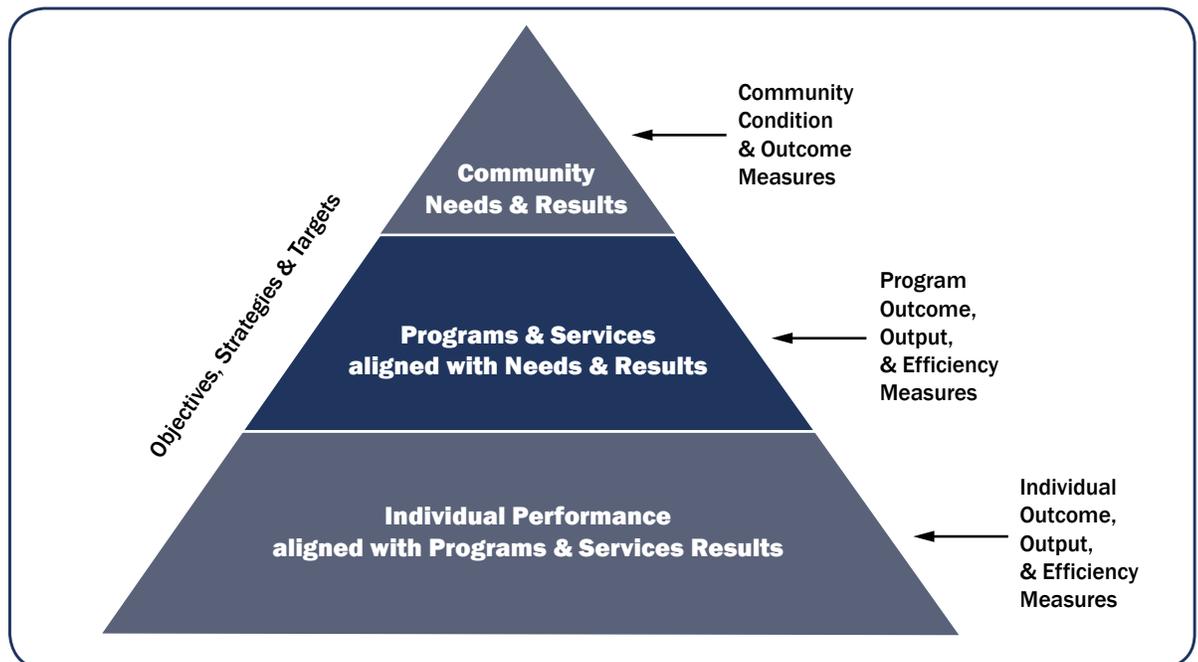
## The Balanced Scorecard Framework



\*Adapted from Kaplan & Norton 1996, The Balanced Scorecard, Harvard Business School Press: 9. Original from HBR Jan/Feb 1996, p. 76.

3. Cascading System: The cascading system is indexed on measuring outcomes on the basis of scale, from the broadest (community) to the employee (individual).

One of the benefits of this system is in aligning all objectives, strategies and targets across the individuals, organization, and the community.



Regardless of which system is employed, the steps should be as follows:

1. Assessment of the organization's capacity for change
2. Assessment of implementation risks (such as progress impediments)
3. Change management as "meta" to ongoing evaluation
4. Focus on frequent, reliable communication and bilateral feedback
5. Coaching and guidance
6. Manage resistance factors
7. Celebrate successes





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