



Subject: Town of Aurora Strategic Plan Update – What We Heard

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Department: Planning and Building Services

Date: October 18, 2016

Recommendation

- 1. That Report No. PBS16-085 be received; and**
- 2. That staff be directed to prepare the draft Strategic Plan update based on the feedback received to date and that the draft Plan form the basis for the remaining planned public consultation activities.**

Executive Summary

- The purpose of the report is to update Council on the status of the Strategic Plan update.
- In September 2015, Council directed staff to initiate an update of the Strategic Plan. As directed by Council, the Strategic Plan update is focused on the update of the Strategic Plan actions and measures.
- In late 2015, the project was temporary delayed due to a reallocation of staff resources. In the spring of 2016, the project was re-initiated and staff completed consultation with Council, senior staff and initiated key stakeholders consultation.
- The consultation was focused on several open-ended questions aimed at identifying significant issues and challenges facing the Town over the next 5-10 years and specific actions to address the issues and challenges.
- Staff are recommending that an updated Strategic Plan be drafted on the basis of the feedback received to date. The draft Plan will form the basis for additional public consultation in late 2016.

Background

First Strategic Plan Approved in 1994

In 1992, the Town of Aurora established a Strategic Plan Steering Committee with the responsibility of developing the Town's first Strategic Plan. The purpose of the Plan was to "guide Aurora's overall growth and direction". The Plan was approved by By-law 3526-94 and adopted by Council in February 1994. Council also approved a process to update the Strategic Plan in 1998, 2006 and 2011.

On March 29, 2011, Council approved a work plan for the update of the Town's Strategic Plan and directed staff to prepare and issue a request for proposal for professional consulting related to the update of the Plan. Subsequently, a Strategic Plan Steering Committee comprised of members of Council and staff was established to guide the development of the Plan. The Plan was developed using a sustainability framework and functions as both the Town's Strategic Plan and Sustainability Plan. The Plan was approved by Council on June 26, 2012.

In addition to the Town's Strategic Plan, Council has also approved a number of Action Plans and Master Plans that also provide strategic direction. Examples include the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Corporate Environmental Action Plan, the Town Official Plan and the Aurora Promenade Study. Moreover, Council, through the annual budget, provide direction on specific operating and capital expenditures. In support of Council's strategic direction, staff have also developed departmental plans and individual performance plans.

In September 2015, Council directed staff to initiate an update of the Strategic Plan. As directed by Council, the Strategic Plan update is focused on the update of the Strategic Plan actions and measures. This process utilizes the current Strategic Plan Vision, Principles, Goals and Objectives as the basis for consultation activities. This approach was envisioned as part of the 2011 Strategic Plan process to allow for a consistent long term vision for the community. In late 2015, the project was temporary delayed due to a reallocation of staff resources. In the spring of 2016, the project was re-initiated and staff completed consultation with senior staff and initiated key stakeholders consultation. The following stakeholders have been engaged to date:

- Mayor Dawe and Members of Council
- Senior staff
- Sport Aurora

- Aurora Seniors Association
- Aurora Chamber of Commerce
- Aurora Public Library
- Aurora Cultural Centre

Analysis

The consultation was focused on several open-ended questions aimed at identifying significant issues and challenges facing the Town over the next 5-10 years and specific actions to address the issues and challenges. The following summarizes the feedback received to date:

Summary of Highlighted Challenges/Issues facing the Town over the next 5-10 years

Service Accountability

- Municipal Services must represent good value for investment. Balancing tax pressures with key initiatives is essential.
- Appropriately defining, re-defining and meeting community expectations over a 10 year period. Municipal structures/organizations in the 21st century need to be nimble in order to respond to rapid change.

Growth and Development

- Transition towards a mature community. The Town is approaching buildout and needs to transition towards an organization that can best support a mature community. The Town also needs to prepare for added pressure towards infill development and the related community impact.
- The Town is growing and the demographics of the Town are changing with more diversity. The Town has an active role in:
 - controlling the pace of growth to ensure that services are available when growth occurs;
 - bring people from different backgrounds, socio-economic status and physical location together;

- maintaining the “spirit” and “uniqueness” of Aurora as a community; and,
 - leading the integration of services to meet the needs of a more diverse resident base.
- Traffic congestion is growing both inside and outside Aurora. Growth in neighboring municipalities to the north will impact traffic in Aurora. There is a need for better:
 - east-west connections;
 - commuter transportation; and,
 - transit infrastructure.
- Increased foreign real estate investment has the potential to create an increase in vacant landlords with a variety of associated challenges.

Excellence and Innovation

- The Town has a role in driving innovation in the community. The Strategic Plan should have a stronger link to excellence and good governance.

Environmental Protection

- There is an ongoing need to focus on environmental protection and building a culture of environmentalism in Aurora. Planning for climate change and the related impacts on municipal services is essential.

Summary of Highlighted Actions Council to address Issues/Challenges by Theme Area

Service Accountability

- Continue to implement and promote engagement tools such as the citizen budget to engage residents on the annual budget process.
- Work community partners to develop a Plan to review and realign service levels to reflect current and future demographic trends.
- Develop a strategy to expand e-services where possible.

- Continue to pursue inter-municipal partnerships/initiatives to drive efficiency and potential cost savings.
- Continue to work towards multi-year budgeting and performance-based budgeting to drive efficiencies.

Growth and Development

- Update and implement a plan to promote downtown revitalization.
- Update the Town's Official Plan to consider the potential impact of infill growth as the Town transitions to a mature municipality.
- Complete a study to examine traffic issues at the Yonge-Wellington intersection.
- Continue to advocate for the improvement of key Regional infrastructure such as necessary road widenings.
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- Continue to advocate for the construction of a new highway interchange at St. Johns Sideroad and highway 404.
- Consider transportation capacity when determining the location of new municipal services/amenities.
- Consider removing parking and/or reducing lanes to promote downtown revitalization.
- Create and enforce a property standards program to ensure that properties are maintained to a Town standard.
- Develop a coordinated approach to Town planning that manages growth, plans for the necessary infrastructure and aligns fiscal accountability.
- Develop policies to ensure that growth is phased and coordinated with existing and planned infrastructure.

Excellence and Innovation

- Develop and implement a customer engagement plan.
- Work with community partners to pursue the establishment of business incubators as a driver of economic activity.
- Identify and engage in the promotion of “premium” events in Aurora to help advance the Aurora brand.
- Work with community partners to deliver a series of community building events that celebrate diversity and multiculturalism.

Environmental Protection

- Continue to invest in green initiatives and infrastructure to promote environmentalism locally.
- Develop policies to ensure the protection of the Town’s urban tree canopy.
- Examine opportunities to implement a bottle ban at town owned facilities in Aurora.
- Develop a climate change adaptation plan for the Town of Aurora.

The comments received to date generally align with the themes and structure of the Strategic Plan. As a result, staff are recommending that the preliminary 2016 Strategic Plan be drafted on the basis of the feedback received to date to support future public consultation activities planned for late 2016. It may also be appropriate for Council to establish a Strategic Plan Steering Committee at this time to lead to review of the preliminary draft Plan prior to proceeding with public consultation. Staff will continue to engage key stakeholders, the public and the Town Advisory Committees as previously directed to inform the further refinement of the Strategic Plan.

Advisory Committee Review

None. It is anticipated that Town advisory committees will be engaged in late 2016

Financial Implications

As directed by Council, the proposed workplan can be undertaken within existing budgets.

Communications Considerations

The update of the Strategic Plan will include two public consultation sessions in the coming months that will be promoted through local media, online through the Town's website and through social media.

Link to Strategic Plan

This report was prepared in support of the Strategic Plan and directly relates to the principle of the Town's Commitment to the strategic Plan as a long-term planning document.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council may choose to not authorize the update of the Town of Aurora Strategic Plan.

Conclusions

In September 2015, Council directed staff to initiate an update of the Strategic Plan. As directed by Council, the Strategic Plan update is focused on the update of the Strategic Plan actions and measures. The consultation was focused on several open-ended questions aimed at identifying significant issues and challenges facing the Town over the next 5-10 years and specific actions to address the issues and challenges. Staff are recommending that an updated Strategic Plan be drafted on the basis of the feedback received to date. The draft Strategic Plan will form the basis for additional public consultation in late 2016.

Attachments

None

Previous Reports

Report number CAO15-005 dated March 24, 2015; and
Report number CAO15-011 dated September 8, 2015.

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team Meeting review on October 3, 2016.

Departmental Approval

Approved for Agenda

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