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Purpose of a Municipal Strategic Plan

Strategic planning is established as a best practice for all organizations, including municipalities. Strategic planning is a process, which ultimately sets a course for the municipality's future.

Strategic planning is not a single task or event; it is a continual process of:

- determining the vision for the municipality;
- identifying actions to get there;
- creating an action plan;
- evaluating success;
- and then making new goals and plans.

Municipalities are expected to formally revisit their strategic plans at least annually, ahead of the budgeting process.

An effective municipal strategic plan impacts day to day decision making by council and administration and fits within the existing business planning framework, which includes:

- business plans
- budgets
- staff performance management (where do staff see their work in the strategic plan) and
- all land use plans.

Contents of a Municipal Strategic Plan

Generally, municipal strategic plans will contain:

- Vision, mission, values: what is the overall vision for the municipality
- Environmental scan: to identify the environment that the municipality is working in
- Identify goals: what does the municipality want to achieve
- Action plan: how to achieve the goals
- Evaluation plan: how the municipality will know they were successful

Municipal Strategic Planning Process Diagram



Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision – what the municipality wants to be in the future

Vision: Stellarton is a thriving community that is safe, healthy, inclusive and engaged with a robust economy that appeals to businesses, citizens and visitors alike.

Mission – why the municipality exists, its reason for being

Mission: Working together to address Stellarton’s needs, build a vibrant community and create an environment that encourages growth.

Values – what the municipality believes in

Values: Key values for the Town of Stellarton include:

- accessibility for citizens and businesses to the quality services that the Town provides; and
- openness and transparency, in conducting the business of the municipality.

Environmental Scan – SWOT Analysis

The purpose of the environmental scan is to gather information about the environment that the municipality operates in (external) and to identify the municipality’s own current state (internal). The information gathered at this stage of the process helps to inform goal setting and development of action plans.

There are various tools that a municipality can use to conduct an environmental scan, including a SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats).

SWOT, KEY FACTORS:

Positive FACTORS	
Strengths (+)	Opportunities (+)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Quality of life (high level of recreation offerings, trails, accessible shopping) *Business park and industrial park have land available for development *Downtown business district is relatively strong *Strong municipal staff (strong management, dedicated employees, volunteer fire department) *Efficient and effective delivery of municipal services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Opportunities for development of business park and industrial park *Increase participation in existing recreational programs *Expand on walkability of Stellarton that exists now *Asset management (plan and be proactive) *Improve communications between Council and staff, revisit communications policy *Communicate with citizens more and in different ways (get the word out)

Negative FACTORS	
Weaknesses (-)	Threats (-)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Lack of job opportunities for citizens *No public transportation in the region *Relatively low incomes in the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Population decline due to out migration, threat for this to continue * Continued loss of youth *Dependence on one employer (Sobeys)

SWOT, OTHER FACTORS:

Positive FACTORS	
Strengths (+)	Opportunities (+)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Quality of municipal infrastructure -Commercial tax base -Inter-municipal agreement -Small council works together well -Federal representation in majority party -NSCC -Railroad is still accessible -Museum of Industry -Salmon River -Wellness Centre, sports stadium -Entrepreneurial mind set of the community -FCIs – only one red indicator -Good split between residential/commercial assessment -Trails -New website -Façade improvements happening downtown -Neighborhood pride -Sidewalk access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Opportunities to improve tourism -Development of the mine -Opportunities to expand commercial tax base -Improve look of downtown

Negative FACTORS	
Weaknesses (-)	Threats (-)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Perceived lack of appreciation of municipal staff on part of the public -Political disagreements within government -Expenditure pressures -No dedicated IT staff -Small HR staff -Caught up in day to day -Bureaucracy of reclaiming land -Stagnant tax base -Relatively low income levels in the region -High unemployment rate in region -Parking -Foord street – congested -Limited municipal budget -Subsidence- dealing with areas where coal mining has taken place -Older housing stock downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Aging population -Resistance to change -Source drinking water is a river

Strategic Goals and Action Plans

Goals should:

- Support the municipality's mission
- Exploit opportunities and strengths, neutralize threats and weaknesses
- Be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timely

Council has established three strategic goals for the Town of Stellarton:

1. Support development of the industrial park and the business park.
2. Decrease barriers for citizens to be active in Stellarton.
3. Increase openness and transparency with respect to municipal business.

Goal 1: Support development of the industrial park and the business park.

*WHY is this a strategic goal? What identified issue(s) will the goal address? What are the specific objectives associated with this goal? Is the goal **relevant** and if so, to which stakeholders? How does it support the municipality's mission? How does the goal link back to SWOT analysis (build on strengths, neutralize weakness)?*

Development of the business park and the industrial park would:

- Create job opportunities for people in the region, which would help to stem outmigration
- Generate tax revenue for the Town

These outcomes are directly related to the mission for Stellarton, which is to build a vibrant community and create an environment that encourages growth.

WHAT: specific actions that will be taken to meet goal?

- The Clerk will bring a report to Council with respect to:
 - Current situation. This will include details about the role of the real estate agent
 - Jurisdictional scan – what have other municipalities done to encourage development in their industrial and business parks
 - Options for actions the Town can take to further support development of the business park and the industrial park (one option should be status quo);
 - The report should answer if a development plan is required for the parks.
- A complete municipal asset management plan for the Town will be created by 2020.
- The issue of development of the parks and how to encourage it will be brought forward to

<p>the new REN when it is functioning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revisit land use by-laws in two to three years to ensure they are current.
<p>WHEN: will actions be taken (short, medium, long term)? is this goal timely?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -When the Clerk is hired, one of their first tasks will to bring the report to Council. The report should be generated no later than six weeks after the new Clerk is hired. -The asset management plan will be finalized no later than 2020. -Land use by-laws will be reviewed in two to three years.
<p>WHO: will be assigned responsibility to lead actions in relation to this goal? Who else needs to be involved (staff, organizations, stakeholders, etc).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Clerk will be assigned to be the lead the project management and communication to Council with respect to the industrial and business parks. -The Clerk or Town Engineer will be the lead on the asset management project. -Other key individuals include: Council, CAO of the future REN, solicitor, developers, business community, planning and development officer, the real estate agent.
<p>HOW: is this goal achievable, is it in the municipality's scope of influence? What do we need to achieve the goal (resources)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -This goal is within the Town's scope of influence. -Budget may be required. -This will require time on the part of the new Clerk and the Town Engineer.
<p>EVALUATION and reporting: how will progress towards meeting this goal be measured? How will progress be reported?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -This goal will be considered complete when the majority (3/4) of the land in both parks has been sold. -The asset management goal will be complete with the plan is adopted by Council and operationalized. -Timeline to complete this goal is 2020

<p>Goal 2: Decrease barriers for citizens to be active in Stellarton.</p>
<p>WHY is this a strategic goal? What identified issue(s) will the goal address? What are the specific objectives associated with this goal? Is the goal relevant and if so, to which stakeholders? How does it support the municipality's mission? How does the goal link back to SWOT analysis (build on strengths, neutralize weakness)?</p>

A key strength that Stellarton has is the quality of life it offers residents. Capitalizing on this and building on it will help to retain the population base.

An important component of this is the number of recreational offerings in the community. However, accessibility to these programs, places and services can be impaired by barriers such as: low incomes, transportation and knowledge about what is available.

This goal will directly relate to the Town's mission of "building a vibrant community."

WHAT: specific actions that will be taken to meet goal?

- Council will adopt a walkability plan, no later than June, 2018
- Council will conduct an accessibility audit (in relation to physical accessibility) no later than December 2018.
- Council will acknowledge accessibility as a key value in policies, as opportunities arise.
- Council will revisit a staff report, analyzing the costs of making recreation programming in Stellarton at no cost to residents of Stellarton, no later June, 2018.
- A safe bike route will be brought forward for Council's consideration, no later than June 2018.
- An Active Transportation Plan will come to Council for their consideration, no later than June 2018.

WHEN: will actions be taken (short, medium, long term)? is this goal timely?

Refer to dates referenced in the section above.

WHO: will be assigned responsibility to lead actions in relation to this goal? Who else needs to be involved (staff, organizations, stakeholders, etc).

The Recreation Director is responsible for moving the specific actions under this goal forward.

- Council will make decisions and provide direction.
- Other key individuals include: Clerk, Town Engineer

HOW: is this goal achievable, is it in the municipality's scope of influence? What do we need to achieve the goal (resources, budget)?

- Council must refer to the Walkability Audit as a reference document.
- Budget will be required.
- Staff time is required.

EVALUATION and reporting: how will progress towards meeting this goal be measured? How will progress be reported?

- Increasing the walkability of Stellarton, as per a Walkability Audit.
- Increasing participation in recreation programs and attendance at facilities.

Goal 3: Increase openness and transparency with respect to municipal business.

*WHY is this a strategic goal? What identified issue(s) will the goal address? What are the specific objectives associated with this goal? Is the goal **relevant** and if so, to which stakeholders? How does it support the municipality's mission? How does the goal link back to SWOT analysis (build on strengths, neutralize weakness)?*

It is important to the values of Town Council to see continuous improvement with respect to openness and transparency to the public. If citizens feel they are informed with respect to Town business, they will feel more engaged. Engaged citizens directly contribute to fulfilling the vision of a healthy and vibrant community.

*WHAT: **specific actions that will be taken to meet goal?***

- Publish new web site
- Livestream Council meetings
- Engineering documents will be placed on the website
- To improve the flow of communications internally (which will extend to helping external communications) the Recreation Director will review the existing communications policy and bring it to Council for their review
- A policy manual will be developed to put all policies in one place
- Council and staff will continuously look for innovative and effective ways to communicate with the public

*WHEN: **will actions be taken (short, medium, long term)? is this goal timely?***

- Website will be published by February 2018
- Meetings will be livestreamed by March 2018
- Communications Policy will be revisited and come to Council no later than September 2018
- Policy manual will be developed by April 1 2019

*WHO: **will be assigned responsibility to lead actions in relation to this goal? Who else needs to be involved (staff, organizations, stakeholders, etc).***

- The Clerk will be responsible for development of the policy manual
- The Recreation Director is responsible for leading other tasks
- Council will approve policies and set direction

*HOW: **is this goal achievable, is it in the municipality's scope of influence? What do we need to achieve the goal (resources, budget)?***

- Staff and council time will be required.

EVALUATION and reporting: how will progress towards meeting this goal be measured? How will progress be reported?

- Traffic counts on the website will be monitored by the Recreation Director (on a bi-annual basis) and reported to Council, to monitor what level it is being used.
- Policy manual will be updated annually, including the communication policy. Effectiveness of the policies will be discussed at Council and revisions made as required.