



2019-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN REPORT

TOWN OF WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

JULY 2019



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
1. Methodology	4
1.1 Developing the Plan.....	4
1.2 Refining the Plan	5
1.3 Finalizing the Plan.....	6
2. Updated Vision and Mission.....	7
2.1 Vision.....	7
2.2 Mission	7
3. Guiding Principles	8
4. Strategic Plan Components	10
4.1 Strategic Pillars	10
4.2 Strategic Priorities	10

Appendix

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Executive Summary

An effective Strategic Plan provides the long-range guidance that enables an organization to advance priorities, strengthen operations, identify objectives and allocate the resources required to pursue strategy implementation.

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's Strategic Plan for 2019-2022 reflects Council's vision for an ambitious, yet realistic approach to establishing a foundation for future progress and sustainable growth. The Plan clearly identifies strategic priorities and supports management and staff in the development of departmental business plans that will guide operations and service delivery. The development and refinement of this plan has considered both resident values and priorities as well as best practices in municipal good governance.

From the outset, the planning process has recognized the importance of context. Whitchurch-Stouffville has recently emerged from a period of instability that had a detrimental effect on planning, service delivery and the overall organizational health of the Corporation. This new plan reflects a renewed commitment to the provision of exceptional service and to sustainable, future-focused planning. It recognizes the importance of building the capacity of staff to be responsive and proactive in serving the needs of residents, business, and other stakeholders. It further seeks to provide a sustainable foundation through prudent fiscal management and a commitment to best practices in good governance. Building on this solid foundation, the strategic plan that has emerged will leverage the Town's strengths and support the ability of the Town to grow in a way that respects the important quality of life attributes that make Whitchurch-Stouffville unique.

Significant effort was undertaken by the Town to ensure the broadest possible engagement of residents and other stakeholders in the planning process. A strong effort to engage the public through social media, online surveys and public meetings, engagement by the public in the strategic planning process resulted in limited participation. This level of response is not uncommon in the municipal strategic planning process and is likely indicative of a gap in understanding of the role that a strategic plan plays in guiding the direction of planning, programs, service delivery and resource allocation. It is anticipated that as Council and Staff move forward with implementation of the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, that the public will become increasingly engaged as a result of regular reporting on plan progress.

Four key strategic pillars have been identified through this planning process:

- a) Fiscal sustainability;
- b) Expanding the tax base through a growing, diversified economy;
- c) Service excellence; and
- d) Asset planning, maintenance and development.



It is recognized that a strategic plan is not a comprehensive description of all the activities that the Town will undertake. It is a tool that serves to focus effort and resource allocation where it can have the most significant impact on advancing objectives that are most critical to efficient, effective, and sustainable municipal operations.

The Strategic Pillars and Priorities are supported by five Guiding Principles. These Guiding Principles encompass values of the Town and the corporation and will serve to inform the decision-making process beyond the life of this strategy.

Environment

Our actions and decisions are evaluated through an environmental lens; ensuring that we are able to meet present needs without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations.

Engagement

We support the engagement of residents and stakeholders through an ongoing commitment to dialogue, transparency and collaboration. Effective engagement ensures members of the community have a voice and an opportunity to contribute their diverse strengths to building a strong and sustainable future.

Partnerships

Wherever possible, we will forge and nurture strategic partnerships that increase effectiveness, efficiency and mutual benefit.

Respect

We are committed to fostering a corporate culture that enhances individual creativity and teamwork, while supporting mutual trust and respect among employees, elected officials and members of the public.

Quality of Life

We are committed to be a caring community that upholds the values of inclusion, safety, and wellness that exemplify the Town's exceptional quality of life.

The 2019-2022 Strategic Plan will now inform the Implementation Phase through the development and execution of Departmental Business Plans. Departmental Business Plans detail the specific actions that staff will undertake in support of achieving the objectives of the Strategic Pillars and Priorities. The Business Plan creates a direct connection between high level strategic priorities and the daily activities of staff; ensuring that all staff have a clear understanding of how their role and their efforts align with the overall strategic objectives.





1. Methodology

The development of this strategic plan was supported by the establishment of a Project Steering Committee comprised of the Mayor, representatives of Council, senior staff and the consultants. From the outset, the project was designed as a collaborative effort that would provide ongoing opportunities for input and validation by staff, stakeholders and members of the public. The methodology employed to build the plan is described below.

1.1 Developing the Plan

Literature Review

To ensure that the project was able to move forward with a foundational understanding of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's current state, a comprehensive review of select literature and studies was undertaken. This review provided important context in understanding current and emerging trends that influence the direction and goals of the municipality. A review of relevant documents provided by Town Staff was augmented by an analysis of key regional, provincial, national and global trends in preparation for an initial workshop with Council and senior staff.

Community Profile

A community profile detailing significant demographic trends was prepared as background for the initial workshop with Council and senior staff. Using gathered literature and information provided by the Town in conjunction with data obtained from the Statistics Canada and Canadian business counts data etc., a snapshot of the socio-economic profile of the Town was created that provided insight into key patterns of change and trends.

Initial Consultation – Interviews with Council and Senior Staff

Building on the literature and data review, a series of in-person and phone interviews were conducted that focused on current trends, opportunities, challenges, and priorities for growth. Common themes emerging from these discussions were captured as part of a presentation to Council and Senior Staff. The presentation was used to lay the foundation and establish a common understanding for the first Council and senior Staff workshop held in March 2019.

Council and Senior Staff Workshop

The initial workshop provided an opportunity to focus on defining the future of the Town and achieving consensus on key strategic priorities for the current of Council. As part of this initial workshop, Council and Senior Staff also undertook a review of the existing Vision and Mission statements in an effort to ensure that they accurately reflected the goals and aspirations of Whitchurch-Stouffville now and into the future. Efforts to identify strategic priorities were supported by technology provided by the Queen's Executive Decision Centre that allowed for ideas to be organized by theme and ranked by participants in real time. Four Strategic Pillars were identified as a result of this initial workshop as well as a number of strategic priorities under each of the pillars.



1.2 Refining the Plan

Staff Consultation – Town Hall Meetings

Internal Staff Town Hall meetings provided the first opportunity to share the outcomes of the Council and Senior Staff workshop. Some initial feedback was gathered as part of these Town Hall meetings. The primary focus, however, was awareness-building and engagement of staff to participate in more extensive ½-day workshops.

Public Consultation – Online Survey

As part of its efforts to validate the proposed Strategic Pillars and Priorities, the Town undertook a public online survey that was promoted using various social media channels. The survey was conducted using Survey Monkey. Survey questions were developed in collaboration with the consultant and designed to support the public's engagement with the strategic planning process and elicit feedback on the pillars and priorities as proposed. It was further designed as an opportunity to identify any gaps, and to suggest additional priorities that respondents felt should have been included.

Public Consultation – Facebook Live

As part of the strategic planning process Mayor Iain Lovatt hosted a Facebook Live engagement to discuss the strategic planning process and the emerging priorities. While response to the Facebook Live forum was overwhelmingly positive, resident input was not focused on the strategic planning process and unfortunately provided little feedback on the Strategic Pillars and Priorities as presented. The Facebook Live forum did, however, generate significant positive engagement and should continue to be considered as a municipal engagement tool.

Public Consultation – Public Meetings

Two public sessions were held to share findings to date, highlight emerging themes, identify strategic priorities, and seek community input. It was intended that this input would both provide additional direction to Council and support staff in their efforts to identify specific actions and tactics in support of the Plan.

Advisory Committees to Council Surveys

The Town conducted a secondary survey online using Survey Monkey that was targeted specifically to members of Advisory Committees of Council.

Respondents were asked to validate the proposed strategic pillars and to suggest potential additional areas of focus not addressed by the proposed pillars.



Staff Workshops

Staff across the corporation were invited to participate in half-day workshops designed to assess the proposed priorities in more detail and to identify the actions and tactics that would best support those priorities. Once identified, the proposed actions would then be used to inform the departmental business planning process.

Four workshops were facilitated by the consultant over a 2-day period with more than 50 staff participating. As part of the workshop, attendees were asked to identify any additional priorities that they felt should be brought forward for Council's consideration.

Input Summary Report

Input gathered through the various consultations processes was summarized and provided to Council for their consideration as they worked to refine the plan. A copy of the Input Summary report is included as Appendix A to this report.

1.3 Finalizing the Plan

Council Workshop

The strategic planning process culminated with a second Council workshop. During this workshop Council had an opportunity to consider the feedback of staff and stakeholders in finalizing the Strategic Pillars and Priorities.





2. Updated Vision and Mission

2.1 Vision



To be an inclusive, caring community with a unique rural-urban identity that provides an exceptional quality of life.

2.2 Mission



To enhance our community by delivering service excellence that is friendly, efficient and financially responsible.





3. Guiding Principles

The principles provide a broad philosophy that encompasses values of the Town and the corporation. These principles were adopted in order to be able to provide a lens through which to evaluate all decisions. Guiding Principles differ from strategic pillars or priorities in that they extend beyond the life of the strategic plan.



Environment

Our actions and decisions are evaluated through an environmental lens; ensuring that we are able to meet present needs without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations.

Engagement

We support the engagement of residents and stakeholders through an ongoing commitment to dialogue, transparency and collaboration. Effective engagement ensures members of the community have a voice and an opportunity to contribute their diverse strengths to building a strong and sustainable future.



Partnerships

Wherever possible, we will forge and nurture strategic partnerships that increase effectiveness, efficiency and mutual benefit.

Respect

We are committed to fostering a corporate culture that enhances individual creativity and teamwork, while supporting mutual trust and respect among employees, elected officials and members of the public.

Quality of Life

We are committed to be a caring community that upholds the values of inclusion, safety, and wellness that exemplify the Town's exceptional quality of life.





4. Strategic Plan Components

4.1 Strategic Pillars

The following strategic pillars and priorities were identified by Council with input from Senior Staff and form the backbone of the Strategic Plan. The proposed pillars form the foundation for achievement of the vision for the Town.

Strategic Pillars
Fiscal Sustainability Working toward a sustainable budget that ensures the protection and maintenance of core services now and into the future.
Expanding the tax base through a growing, diversified economy Building and maintaining a tax base that supports the highest quality program and service delivery.
Service Excellence Supporting a collaborative, timely, customer-focused approach to operations that enhances efficiency, effectiveness, and customer satisfaction.
Asset planning, maintenance and development Successful stewardship of the infrastructure and facilities required to support a growing community and vibrant economy

4.2 Strategic Priorities

Fiscal Sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Capital financing and debt strategy▪ New revenue sources: grant funding, community contributions toward major capital expenditures, sponsorships of programs▪ Invest in budget systems (process enhancement)



Expanding the tax base through a growing, diversified economy

- Focus on servicing and development of Provincially Significant Employment Zones
- Update the Economic Development strategy and continue to attract businesses to locate in WS
- Identify expansion areas for Industrial / Commercial growth

Service Excellence

- Creating a positive culture, with sense of accountability and empowerment
- Create an employee attraction strategy to get the best available people
- Complete staff and customer surveys
- Create service-driven policies and procedures / streamline processes
- Create and implement employee development plans

Asset planning, maintenance and development

- Address / plan for maintenance of existing assets & infrastructure Create new infrastructure
- Focus on continuous improvement of the asset register for asset management planning

Appendix

Town of Whitchurch- Stouffville Input Summary



**Summary of Input to the Strategic Planning
Process to Date**

June 5, 2019

APPENDIX - Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	14
2.	Proposed Strategic Pillars and Priorities 2019-2022	15
3.	Staff Town Hall Input	16
3.1	Methodology	16
3.2	Feedback Summary	16
4.	Public Input	17
4.1	Online Survey	17
4.1.1	Methodology	17
4.1.2	Respondent Profile	17
4.1.3	Feedback on the Proposed Strategic Pillars	17
4.1.4	Additional Input.....	19
4.2	Public Meetings	25
4.2.1	Approach	25
4.2.2	Feedback Summary	25
4.3	Online Engagement – Facebook Live.....	25
4.3.1	Approach	25
4.3.2	Feedback Summary	26
5.	Staff Workshop Input.....	26
5.1.1	Methodology	26
5.1.2	Feedback Summary	26
5.1.3	What else?	27
6.	Advisory Committee Input	28
6.1.1	Methodology	28
6.1.2	Feedback on the Proposed Strategic Pillars	28



1. Introduction

The intent of this report is to support Council in further refining the strategic pillars and priorities that will comprise the final 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. This report summarizes the external and internal input received through a variety of staff and public consultations. Using a combination of Town and consultant-led initiatives described in detail below, input was gathered from a broad range of community stakeholders as well as management and staff. The findings of this input summary will also support management and staff in the development of departmental business plans by highlighting the key resources and competencies that will be required to achieve the strategic objectives.

The objectives in seeking input during this phase of the strategic planning process were as follows:

1. Review and validation of the proposed strategic pillars and priorities;
2. Broad staff and stakeholder engagement in the strategic planning process to enhance communication, awareness and engagement; and
3. Enhanced understanding of the specific competencies and organizational supports that will be required to execute the actions and tactics of the plan.

As Council moves forward with refining the strategic themes and priorities, it will be important to consider how these themes reflect and support resident values and priorities. Equally important is the ability to focus staff efforts and resource allocation so that all staff are able to understand exactly how their efforts are contributing to the overall strategic goals.

Specific inputs are described in detail below, but it is interesting to note some general themes that emerged through the public and staff consultation process. Residents are clearly focused on infrastructure-related issues that have a direct impact on their daily lives such as road maintenance, for example. It was challenging to engage the public on broader strategic themes. This highlights an opportunity to focus on continued education and awareness-building to more effectively engage residents in a more holistic approach to community-building. Residents indicated a clear preference for both digital communication and public meetings. Both, however, yielded low response rates in this instance so it will be important to continue to work to identify those factors which will positively impact engagement with the strategic planning process in the future.

In an attempt to increase public engagement, the project team re-launched the online survey; specifically targeting members of Advisory Committees to Council. Despite this additional effort, response rates remain too low to be considered statistically valid. That said, they offer useful feedback and serve to assist in the process of validating the proposed strategic pillars and priorities.

Overall staff feedback highlighted the importance of investing in the capacity of Town employees to deliver the desired levels of customer service excellence through training and enhanced tools. Environmental sustainability was also identified as a key consideration for staff. It was suggested that this and other high-level, over-arching themes might be effectively addressed as guiding principles for Town operations. These findings are explored in greater detail in the sections that follow.



2. Proposed Strategic Pillars and Priorities 2019-2022

The following strategic pillars and priorities were identified by Council with input from Senior Staff. The proposed pillars and priorities have been validated by staff and have been shared with the public via online platforms and public meetings. While there is broad consensus in support of the intent behind the identified pillars, there has been an identified need to clarify the language to ensure that it is well understood by staff and residents alike. The process of refining the language is still underway. Suggested revisions appear below.

Strategic Pillar	Strategic Priorities
<p>Fiscal Sustainability</p> <p>Suggested Language:</p> <p>Fiscal Sustainability – working toward a balanced budget that ensures the protection and maintenance of core services now and into the future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital financing and debt strategy • New revenue sources: grant funding, community contributions toward major capital expenditures, sponsorships of programs • Invest in budget systems (<i>process enhancement</i>)
<p>Create a more balanced community by increasing the commercial /industrial tax base</p> <p>Suggested Language:</p> <p>Growing the tax base through a diversified economy – ensuring a more equitable distribution of tax base contributions among residents, business, and corporate citizens to support the highest quality program and service delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on servicing and development of Provincially Significant Employment Zones • Continue to attract businesses to locate in WS • Identify expansion areas for Industrial / Commercial growth • <i>Update the Economic Development strategy</i>
<p>Customer Experience</p> <p>Suggested Language:</p> <p>Service Excellence – supporting a collaborative, customer-centric approach to operations that enhances efficiency, effectiveness and resident satisfaction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a positive culture, with sense of accountability and empowerment • Create an employee attraction strategy to get the best available people • Complete staff and customer surveys • Create service-driven policies and procedures / streamline processes • Create and implement employee development plans



<p>Maintain and plan for new and existing assets</p> <p>Suggested Language:</p> <p>Infrastructure planning, maintenance and development – caring and planning for the infrastructure and facilities required to support a growing community and vibrant economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address / plan for maintenance of existing assets & infrastructure Create new infrastructure• Focus on continuous improvement of the asset register for asset management planning
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3. Staff Town Hall Input

3.1 Methodology

Led by staff with consultant participation, a series of four Town Hall meetings were held on April 11th and 16th, 2019. Meetings were held at the Town Hall and Operations Centre. Staff were provided with a variety of time and date options in an effort to secure maximal participation. The Town Hall format afforded an opportunity to present an overview of the strategic planning process and the strategic and priorities that had emerged. The Town Hall agenda also consisted of other staff and operational updates followed by an opportunity for staff to ask questions and provide feedback.

A further objective of the Town Hall meetings was to encourage staff to participate in the staff workshops scheduled for May 2nd and 3rd, 2019.

3.2 Feedback Summary

No objections were raised to the proposed Strategic Pillars as presented. Individual attendees did have questions with respect to specific priorities as described below. Attendees were also asked to identify ‘what was missing?’ with respect to additional strategic priorities that Council might wish to consider. Responses highlighted some common themes across all respondent groups:

- Consideration for the environment and environmental stewardship
- Concern that a focus on increasing the commercial /industrial tax base will be challenging and will not ‘solve the whole problem’
- Some concerns were expressed with opening up environmentally sensitive lands to development and the potential impact on water resources
- Staff had questions with respect to plans to leverage the planned development of a Pickering Airport



4. Public Input

4.1 Online Survey

4.1.1 Methodology

The Town conducted a survey online using Survey Monkey. Survey questions were developed in collaboration with the consultant and designed to support the public's engagement with the strategic planning process and elicit feedback that would inform the refinement of the strategic plan.

106 residents participated in the online survey. Data collection occurred between April 15th to 26th, 2019. Residents were asked a series of questions aimed at uncovering their satisfaction with the community and the way that the municipality is managed. They were also asked to validate the proposed strategic pillars.

It should be noted that this was not a scientific survey and therefore results cannot be extrapolated from the sample to reflect the views of the wider population. The online survey approach was used primarily as an engagement tool to ensure that residents were provided an opportunity to inform the development of the strategic plan. It was further intended to provide an opportunity to highlight specific opportunities, challenges or concerns that Council may wish to consider as it further refines the plan.

Response rates to the survey were lower than anticipated and may reflect a general lack of understanding or engagement with the strategic planning process. The strategic planning process is typically more abstract and the immediate relevance to residents may not be as well understood as the implications of specific by-law changes or recent changes to cannabis legislation, for example.

Statistical calculations such as margin of error and confidence intervals do not apply to non-scientific samples such as those obtained through this survey approach.

4.1.2 Respondent Profile

The initial survey questions were used to gather information about the respondents. Of the 106 respondents, the following profile emerged:

- Almost all respondents in the survey live in Whitchurch-Stouffville (98%).
- Most work in Whitchurch-Stouffville (31%) or other area in York Region (30%).
- Nearly 1 in 5 respondents commute to Toronto (18%) for work.
- 13% of respondents are business owners, mostly located in Whitchurch-Stouffville.
- Respondents were well represented by age categories.

4.1.3 Feedback on the Proposed Strategic Pillars

Survey respondents showed strong support for the four strategic pillars as proposed. Of the four



potential strategic pillars presented in the survey, the one with the highest agreement was “Maintain and plan for new and existing assets (e.g. buildings, parks, roads, infrastructure). This would involve the financial and operational planning required for the maintenance of existing assets and the delivery of new ones” with nearly 55% strongly agreeing. This would appear to be the item to receive the most attention as part of the strategic plan.

Figure 1: Feedback on Proposed Strategic Pillars

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Create a more balanced community by enhancing the Commercial /Industrial tax base. This would involve opening up more opportunities for investment and job creation within the Town	43.40% 46	33.02% 35	12.26% 13	6.60% 7	4.72% 5	0.00% 0	106	1.96
Customer Experience and interaction between public and the municipality. This would involve a renewed effort to improve all facets of customer service.	41.51% 44	37.74% 40	16.98% 18	2.83% 3	0.94% 1	0.00% 0	106	1.84
Maintain and plan for new and existing assets (e.g. buildings, parks, roads, infrastructure). This would involve the financial and operational planning required for the maintenance of existing assets and the delivery of new ones.	54.72% 58	35.85% 38	7.55% 8	1.89% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	106	1.57
Fiscal Situation (Sustainability) - this would involve the long-range financial planning required to meet the Town's financial commitments while maintaining financial performance ratios and a reasonable tax rate.	45.28% 48	35.85% 38	16.04% 17	1.89% 2	0.00% 0	0.94% 1	106	1.78

When asked to identify other recommended areas of focus that were not specifically identified in the proposed strategic pillars, (Question: In what other areas should Council focus?), the most frequently mentioned suggestions were as follows:

- Economic Development and Revitalization of the Downtown Core.
- Improvements for Parks and Rec Programs
- Improve Roads and Infrastructure
- Keep taxes low; lower taxes and improve water costs, quality and pressure.
- Protecting the environment and natural green spaces
- Maintain the small community feel and manage growth.



4.1.4 Additional Input

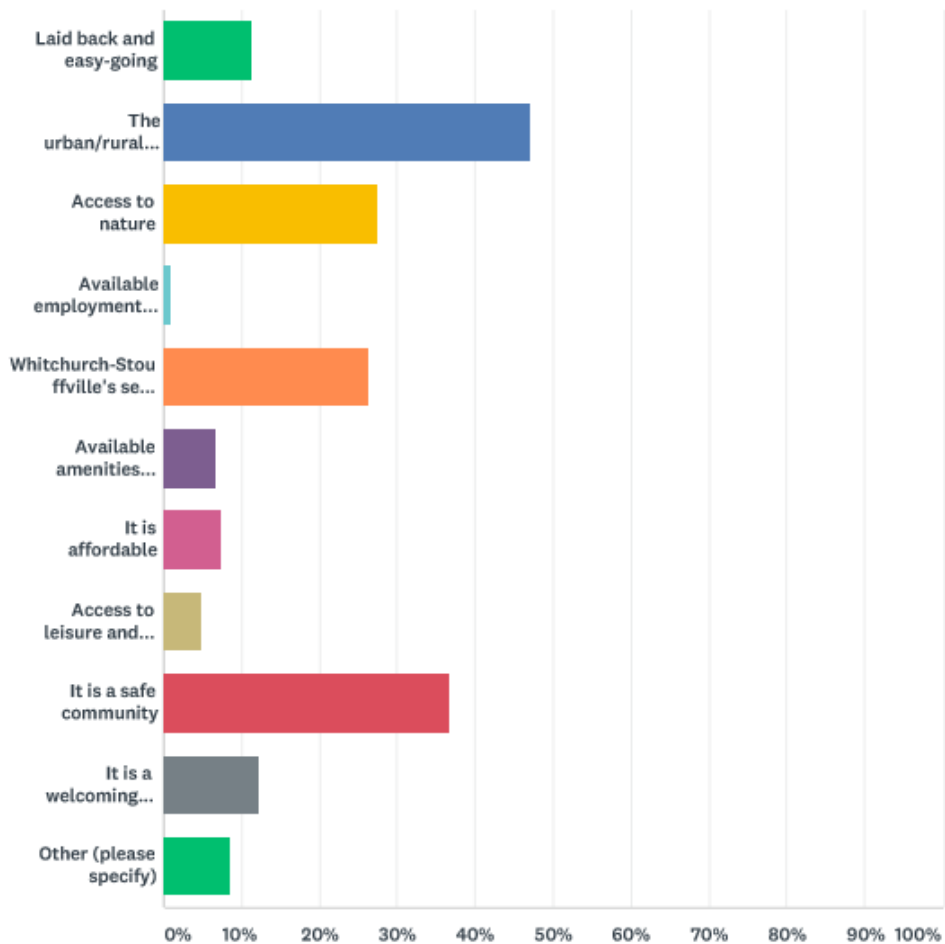
The online survey included more general questions about quality of life and overall satisfaction with municipal services that can be useful in helping Council to evaluate the broad strategic themes that matter most to residents. A summary of responses is included below:

Quality of Place

When asked what makes it a great place to live / work (Q5), the balance between urban and rural and safety emerged as the most common responses.

Q5 What makes Whitchurch-Stouffville a great place to live or work? (Select your two reasons)

Answered: 106 Skipped: 0





Community Strengths

When asked what words best describe the community (Q6), it is clear from the word cloud analysis that Whitchurch-Stouffville would be best described by these three words:

- Friendly
- Safe
- Community

This aligns with the findings of the Council and Senior Staff interviews and discussions. The responses provided are reflected in the word cloud graphic below:



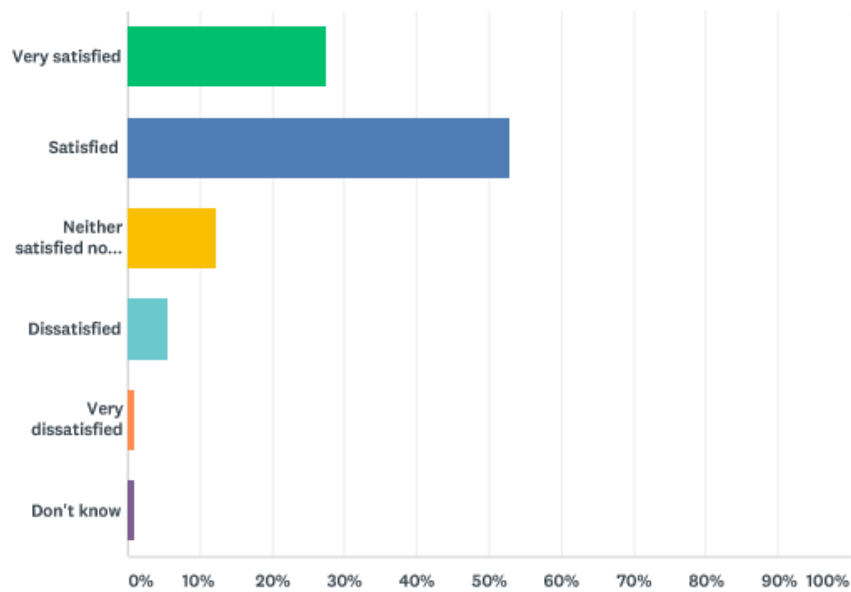


Resident Satisfaction

80% are very/somewhat satisfied with Whitchurch-Stouffville as a place to live. Based on MDB Insight's analysis of this metric in other municipalities, this is considered to be a high score on this metric.

Q7 How do you generally feel about the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville as a place to live?

Answered: 106 Skipped: 0

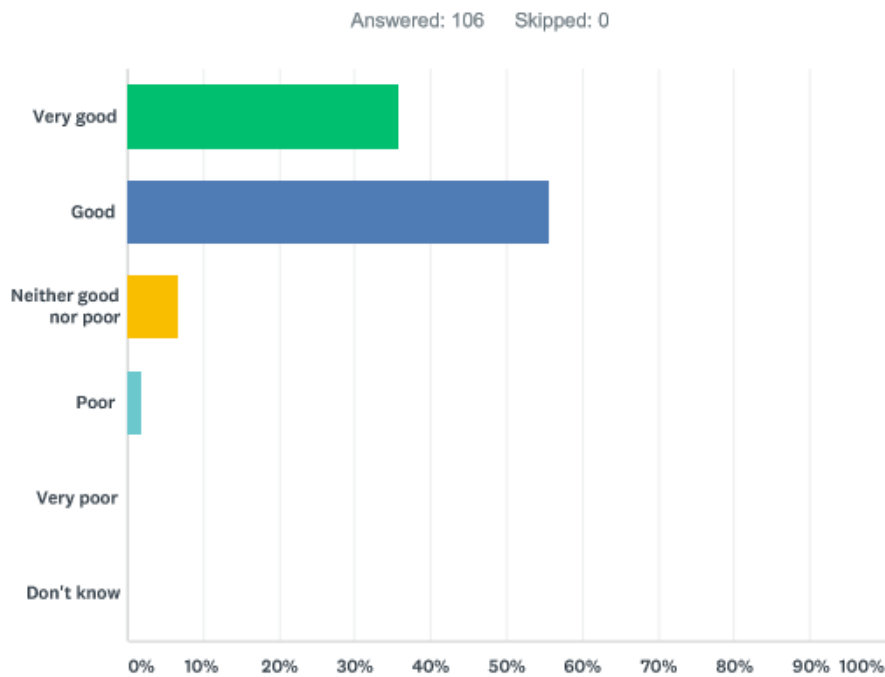




Quality of Life

92% rate the quality of life in Whitchurch-Stouffville as Very Good / Good. This score is also high, but on par with other municipalities in MDB Insight's experience. It is useful to note that there is a gap between the ratings for satisfaction and quality of life. The fact that they are not equally high suggests that something other than quality of life is negatively impacting resident satisfaction.

Q8 How would you rate the quality of life in Whitchurch-Stouffville?

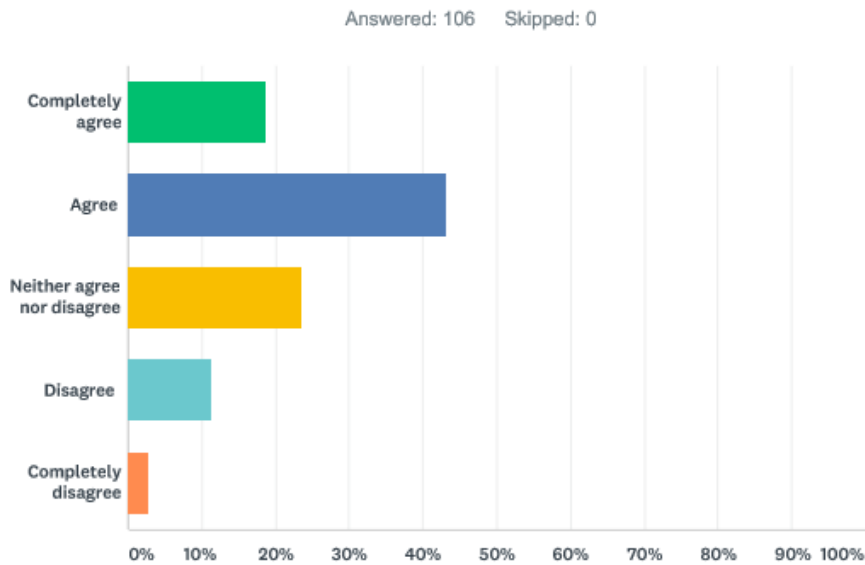




Community Participation and Engagement

Only 62% agree that the municipality provides sufficient opportunities and information to meaningful participate and engage with the town. Given that the Town’s recent efforts to engage the community through this survey process and through public meetings were met with very limited responses and low attendance, this response would seem to be indicative of a disconnect between the Town’s intention and effort to engage the public and perception.

Q11 Do you agree or disagree that the municipality provides sufficient opportunities and information to allow you to meaningfully participate and engage with the Town?





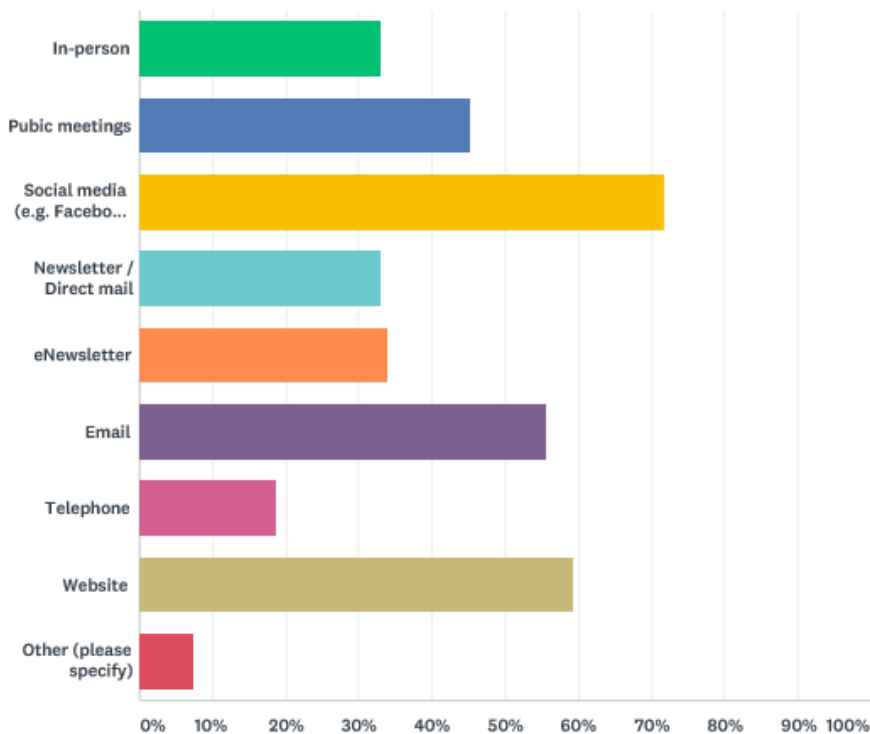
Preferred Communication Channels

Digital channels seem to be most preferred when it comes to communications and engaging with the town with 72% of respondents indicating that social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) is the preferred method of communication, followed by the website (59%) and email (56%). Public meetings, however, is of interest to nearly 45% and remains the most popular traditional channel.

The results indicate that simple communications related to events in the town, possible schedule changes to services such as garbage pick-up, etc., can be addressed via digital channels. It should be noted, however, that nearly half of respondents expressed a desire to attend public meetings to more actively engage with the Town. Complex or highly sensitive issues are likely best served by this method.

Q12 What is your preferred method(s) of communicating and engaging with the Town? Select all that apply.

Answered: 106 Skipped: 0





4.2 Public Meetings

4.2.1 Approach

Public Council meetings were held in the evenings of April 23rd and 24th. These public meetings were planned as an opportunity to validate the proposed strategic pillars and priorities with the public through a presentation and opportunity for dialogue. Despite the efforts of senior staff and Council, public participation was very limited with fewer than ten residents attending each session.

It is interesting to note that the online survey addressed above revealed a strong preference for public meetings and an opportunity to engage with Council directly. It may be worth further investigation to determine if there were specific barriers to attendance such as conflicting events, insufficient awareness of the event, or lack of understanding of the relevance of strategic planning to municipal governance and / or community life.

4.2.2 Feedback Summary

Of the residents who attended, there were no specific objections raised to strategic pillars and priorities that had been identified by Council. Those in attendance expressed appreciation for the opportunity to provide direct input. There were questions of clarity regarding the terminology used. The term ‘high value jobs’ was questioned specifically, for example, as it was not clearly understood that this is an economic term intended to reflect jobs that can sustain a living wage and active participation in the economy (versus a commentary on the inherent social ‘value’ of a specific job or occupation.) This may point to a need for greater clarity in communication and a focus on awareness building with respect to economic growth objectives for the Town.

Despite the low attendance, the open dialogue format proved to be an effective mechanism for enhancing understanding and engagement as evidenced by the response of those in attendance.

While no clear themes emerged from the discussions, one resident spoke specifically to the importance of supporting existing local businesses to survive and thrive. This remains an ongoing focus for the Town, but again highlights the importance of a continued commitment to communicating (and re-communicating) Town priorities, activities, and successes.

4.3 Online Engagement – Facebook Live

4.3.1 Approach

On April 30th, 2019 Mayor Iain Lovatt hosted a Facebook Live engagement to discuss the strategic planning process and the emerging priorities. Nearly 2000 residents engaged with the discussion while it was live, and it has received an additional 900 views in the weeks since it was first posted.



4.3.2 Feedback Summary

While response to the Facebook Live forum was overwhelmingly positive, resident input was not focused on the strategic planning process and provided no real feedback on the Strategic Pillars and Priorities as presented. Again, this may speak to a lack of understanding of the strategic planning process and its relevance to municipal governance. It may highlight an opportunity to better educate residents on how the planning process informs priority-setting and the operations of the Town.

That said, the Facebook Live forum generated significant positive engagement and should continue to be considered as a municipal engagement tool. It may be more useful as a tool for idea generation with a single question as the focus of the discussion such as ‘What programs would you like to see offered at Memorial Park?’ or ‘What types of businesses should the Town be trying to attract?’

5. Staff Workshop Input

5.1.1 Methodology

Staff across the corporation were invited to participate in half-day workshops designed to assess the proposed priorities in more detail and to identify the actions and tactics that would best support those priorities. Once identified, the proposed actions would then be used to inform the departmental business planning process.

Four workshops were facilitated by the consultant over a 2-day period with more than 50 staff participating. As part of the workshop, attendees were asked to identify any additional priorities that they felt should be brought forward for Council’s consideration.

5.1.2 Feedback Summary

Participating staff were in generally support of the proposed strategic pillars and priorities and offered the following insights for consideration:

Fiscal Sustainability

- A broader focus on ‘Sustainability’ would allow for the inclusion of environmental priorities.
- Is there an opportunity to consider Triple Bottom Line reporting which would reflect both social and environmental considerations along with financial?

Customer Experience

- Service Excellence was suggested as an alternative title for this pillar.



- Providing enhanced customer service will require supporting front line staff to bridge knowledge gaps that exist with respect to operational functions in order to be able to respond effectively. It may also require changes to the processes for addressing resident inquiries.
- The concept of ‘customer’ needs to be redefined to encompass both staff and community. Within the corporation ‘we are each other’s customer’.
- Enhanced customer service requires as a sense of ownership and accountability.
- Enhanced accountability must be supported by training and capacity-building.
- Leisure, although not explicitly reflected in the proposed priorities, is seen as serving enhanced customer experience through its contribution to quality of life.
- A commitment to ongoing communication must be embedded into this process.

Create a more balanced community by increasing the commercial / industrial tax base

- Additional analysis is required to better understand the types of development best suited to Whitchurch-Stouffville and those most likely to consider locating in the Town
- Continued focus on supporting existing businesses to thrive and expand should not be overlooked

Maintain and plan for new and existing assets

- It will be essential to establish an IT framework to support effective asset management.
- Need to create an implement a comprehensive plan for maintenance.

5.1.3 What else?

Environmental Lens

The lack of explicit focus on the environment was widely identified as a gap by staff participants. The following suggestions emerged from the discussion:

- Include an Environmental Lens as a component of all strategic pillars, Town operations, and budgeting process thereby creating a framework that will inform all other initiatives.
- Lead by example with respect to environmentally sustainable management of Town buildings, parks and other assets.
- Explore best practices to incentivize environmentally sustainable development i.e. such as a fast-track review and approval process.
- The long-term goal should be to enhance the capacity of residents to become stewards.

Quality of Life

It was suggested that Quality of Life may warrant a unique strategic focus that would include safety, leisure opportunities, wellness and engagement. The focus on Quality of Life was seen by some



participants to be *driving* the focus on enhanced Customer Experience.

Guiding Principles

Staff identified that there may be value in updating and expanding the Town's guiding principles to include over-arching themes such as environmental sustainability, fiscal prudence, and respect among others.

Growth and Community Identity

The strategic plan offers an opportunity to provide clarity of vision for the community with respect to growth and long-term sustainability. It was recognized that the Town has changed significantly in size and demographic composition. Designing effective services and programs will require an intentional and focused approach to achieving a well-defined future state. Given the complexity of identifying this desired future state, it may be useful to highlight the definition process itself as a strategic priority. Supporting actions and tactics may include researching best practice approaches and engaging the community to more clearly define 'Whitchurch-Stouffville of 2040' for example. The goal of this strategic priority would be to achieve clear consensus of growth and development objectives in a way that respects both resident values and fiscal realities.

6. Advisory Committee Input

6.1.1 Methodology

The Town conducted a secondary survey online using Survey Monkey that was targeted specifically to members of Advisory Committees of Council.

30 Advisory Committee members participated in the online survey. Respondents were asked to validate the proposed strategic pillars and to suggest potential additional areas of focus not addressed by the proposed pillars.

It should be noted that this was not a scientific survey and therefore results cannot be extrapolated from the sample to reflect the views of the wider population.

Statistical calculations such as margin of error and confidence intervals do not apply to non-scientific samples such as those obtained through this survey approach.

6.1.2 Feedback on the Proposed Strategic Pillars

Survey respondents showed strong support for the four strategic pillars as proposed. Of the four potential strategic pillars presented in the survey, the one with the highest agreement was "Maintain and plan for new and existing assets (e.g. buildings, parks, roads, infrastructure). This would involve the financial and operational planning required for the maintenance of existing assets and the delivery of new ones" with 57% strongly agreeing and 87% agreeing or strongly agreeing overall. .



70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the strategic pillar “Create a more balanced community by increasing the commercial /industrial tax base”. 90% agreed or strongly agreed with “Customer Experience” as a strategic pillar. “Fiscal Sustainability” was endorsed by 80% of respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Maintain and plan for new and existing assets (e.g. buildings, parks, roads, infrastructure). This would involve the financial and operational planning required for the maintenance of existing assets and the delivery of new ones.	56.67% 17	30.00% 9	10.00% 3	3.33% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	30	1.60
Fiscal Situation (Sustainability) - this would involve the long-range financial planning required to meet the Town's financial commitments while maintaining financial performance ratios and a reasonable tax rate.	50.00% 15	30.00% 9	13.33% 4	6.67% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	30	1.77
Customer Experience and interaction between public and the municipality. This would involve a renewed effort to improve all facets of customer service.	40.00% 12	50.00% 15	6.67% 2	3.33% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	30	1.73
Create a more balanced community by enhancing the Commercial /Industrial tax base. This would involve opening up more opportunities for investment and job creation within the Town	26.67% 8	36.67% 11	16.67% 5	10.00% 3	10.00% 3	0.00% 0	30	2.40

When asked to identify other recommended areas of focus that were not specifically identified in the proposed strategic pillars, (Question: In what other areas should Council focus?), the most frequently mentioned suggestions were as follows:

- Maintaining history and heritage of the community
- Focus on downtown revitalization
- Stemming traffic congestion; managing traffic flow
- Maintenance, expansion and integration of trail systems
- Maintenance of green space, parkland, and rural areas
- Expand tourism opportunities including agricultural tourism
- Public transportation and accessibility
- Civic pride & identity