



Strategic Plan

2019-2022



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Overview

Council and senior staff for the Township of Essa held a strategic planning session together, in public, on April 2nd, 2019. The aim of the day was to think about the future and where we are going, as a community and as a municipal organization.

Everyone was able to participate in an open and relaxed forum. A situation analysis was carried out with the results summarized below (the order does not reflect any priority whatsoever).

Strengths - What do we Value Most about Essa; and

What are the Positive Conditions and Initiatives that have been Created in Essa?

1. Taxes

- Safe community with low taxes ... low taxes mentioned often (6 times)
- Good value for taxes

2. Parks (6 clear responses that parks/green spaces valued)

- Gets families out at no cost
- Trail improvements welcome
- Nottawasaga River can be focus since unique and beautiful
- Green spaces, parks, trails, gardens.... All add to the municipality, people enjoy/they bring pride
- Splash pads well used and enjoyed
- Dog parks well used and enjoyed

3. Roads (4)

- Good roads, road safety and improvements are important

4. Service

- Burn permits are popular (2)
- Level of service considered good (2), staff friendly and helpful

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- Council values staff
 - Public happy with medical clinic
 - Public transportation helping with isolation
 - Events i.e. Essalicious/Farmer's Market growing in popularity
 - Increases in number of businesses is valued (2)

5. Community Feel

- Small town feel, know your neighbours highly valued
- Small community feel and quality of life are very important

6. Attitude (3)

- We value working together/cooperation

Weakness - What can we be Doing Better – within our Control?

1. Investing in Capital

- Should invest more and more consistently; adhere to a standard
- Prepare realistic long range plans
- Measure results and report on metrics
- Ensure financial sustainability

2. Service

- Rely on technology more
- Reduce duplication in planning
- Look for efficiencies within
- Look for partnership opportunities with neighbours
- Increase recreation programs
- Streamline processes

3. Communication

- Spread news about events, work on communications

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- Improve on broadband/internet
 - Develop a community brand
 - Improve on media releases/increase ads/spread the word
 - Ensure that website and Council pages are easily accessible and informative
 - Develop a different newsletter
- 4. Take responsibility for County Roads to ensure safety and consistency**
- Request more control over County Roads and impose local improvements to these roads to reduce complaints from the public, ie install pedestrian crossings in Thornton along County Roads
- 5. Parks**
- Plant more trees
- 6. Staffing**
- Listen to the ideas of staff
 - Undertake a pay review/comparison
 - Recognize staff contributions, achievements and milestones
 - Celebrate holidays/social events
 - Provide training including on opportunities and cross-training
 - Ask staff to suggest redundancy

Opportunities - Trends may be beyond our Control?

1. River and trail opportunities

- Nottawasaga River
- Rail trail leading to Collingwood, County assessing
- Public seeking green space and developed public spaces, with good facilities/amenities

2. Transit

- Regional bussystem

3. Funding

- Other levels of government looking for savings
- Need to find efficiencies
- Change to development charges (community benefits)
- Need to develop Asset Management Plans, Climate Action Plans, Community Safety Plans, Sourcewater Protection Plans
- We work well with neighbours but what about other levels of government

4. Second Suites

- Required to provide for apartments/second suites

Threats - Trends beyond our Control?

1. Costly housing/ daily affordability
2. Senior housing and affordability
3. Aging population and health care
4. Ontario government regionalization
5. Loss of autonomy
6. Climate change- dramatic weather events
7. Reduction in base funding
8. Funding services shrinking
9. River erosion
10. NVCA out of planning – keep in watershed
11. Cost of services to residents

Strategic Plan Process

The municipality deals with a number of issues ranging from operational concerns to high level concerns such as the regional government review and the County of Simcoe's municipal comprehensive review. The Township has identified which areas are of greatest interest to it, to ensure future success.

Council for the Township of Essa has agreed, at its October 16th Council meeting, that the following 5 major issues are most important to influence the changes desired of Council.

1. Roads and Transportation
2. Recreation and Green Development
3. Customer Service
4. Governance
5. Finances and Funding

Vision, Mission and Goals

A Strategic Plan contains the following elements: a vision, mission and goals. The Township's mission will be achieved through its goals and each goal is associated with actions to achieve desired outcomes (listed in no particular order).

Vision	Mission	Goals
Essa: Where town and country meet	Essa Township will be a place where town and country meet in a safe and healthy environment to serve you with a responsible plan going forward.	The goals are the results that are desired to be achieved over the next 3 years (to 2022 and the next term of Council).

Strategic Actions to Support the Goals

Goal 1: Good and Safe Roads and Transportation

Desired Outcomes:

- Public transportation helping with affordability and social issues (ie isolation)
- Good roads, road safety and improvements - desired to have roads which are safe for motorists and pedestrians/improved infrastructure
- An improved transportation network with linkages
- Support for active transportation to provide for choice in mode of transportation
- To improve on the transportation system including coordination with County roads

Strategic Actions

Action	Target Due Date	Comments
Create a focus group to collect local ideas and comments - Traffic Advisory Comm (TAC)	Completed in 2020	Include citizens from across the municipality; TAC created and meets regularly
Traffic calming measures	2020 budget \$12,500 2021 budget \$110,000	
Road improvements, including crosswalks	2020 budget \$200,000 2021 budget \$200,000	Centre St and Angus Crosswalks; Thornton pedestrian crossing installation \$165,307
Implement an active transportation strategy and plan	Review of standards and practices underway in 2021	Roads review in 2021 \$80,000; County Transportation Master Plan underway; Infrastructure Master Plan underway in 2021

Strategic Actions to Support the Goals

Goal 2: Varied Recreation and Green Development

Desired Outcomes:

- To improve on the Township's parks and recreation service providing more programs or programs which are popular
- To develop green public spaces and preservation of green space/features with amenities to promote enjoyment of public spaces and the natural environment
- Trail improvements/increased trails and related opportunities to promote natural recreational opportunities in Essa

Strategic Actions

Action	Target Due Date	Comments
Draft a master plan	2021 – 2022	Working on an inventory of assets plus needs (2 separate initiatives)
Develop a sense of pride	Each year	Employee engagement citizen involvement
Ensure programs are popular and in demand/modify to suit demographics	Each year	Programmer encouraged to do this
Create partnerships with community organizations	On-going relations	Lions, Legion, Private recreation providers, etc; on-going outreach
Increase attendance at community events	Each year	Tree lighting ceremonies, farmers markets, Edible Essa, etc; on hold with COVID
Plant more trees	Each year	Working with South Simcoe Streams and NVCA/HCC
Make trail improvements	Each year	Wayfinding signage to be proposed 2021-2022 as a part of a grant application
Make park improvements	Each year	Refer to budget 2021; basketball, LED lights, play equipment, etc.

Strategic Actions to Support the Goals

Goal 3: Customer Service Excellence

Desired Outcomes:

- To enhance our customer service so that residents feel well-informed
- To ensure that we are known to be friendly and helpful
- Easy to access information
- More/better use of technology
- Improved communications with easy to read newsletters and publications

Strategic Actions

Action	Target Due Date	Comments
Better communication/use of social media	Each year	Facebook, Twitter accounts; regular posts
Easy to read newsletter	2020	Newsletter updated with current content; posted on website
Easy to read budget updates	2020	Insertion of pie chart and other graphics into updates
Better use of software to enable efficiencies	2021	IT Strategic Plan to contain recommendations
Identify resources for dedicated communications	2021	Dedicated staff member for communicating
Create opportunities for increased citizen involvement	Each year	Zoom meetings allow meetings to be more accessible

Strategic Actions to Support the Goals

Goal 4: Good Governance

Desired Outcomes:

- To find efficiencies in service delivery to ensure optimal effectiveness
- To streamline processes
- To eliminate duplication
- To ensure that the municipality is responsible and accountable to its taxpayers
- Partnerships to cost-share in service delivery

Strategic Actions

Action	Target Due Date	Comments
Undertake an efficiency audit	2022	
Promote cross-training	Started	On-going given constant staff turnover
Promote partnerships	2020	On-going meeting with south Simcoe partners
In-house efficiencies/suggestions encouraged	Each year	Staff encouraged to make suggestions, some suggestions received
Means to ensure effective deployment of staff	Completed	Requests of Council funneled through the CAO/Department Head; Council policy in effect

Strategic Actions to Support the Goals

Goal 5: Responsible Finances and Funding

Desired Outcomes:

- Maintain low taxes but continue to support asset management and long range planning
- Seek out grant opportunities that open the door to the municipality
- Responsible spending without waste
- An asset management plan that is supported and a long range capital plan to provide for certainty

Strategic Actions

Action	Target Due Date	Comments
Dedicate funding to replacement of assets	Began in 2019 2020 budget \$343,000 2021 budget \$343,000	
Long range capital plan	Began and restarted in 2020	Infrastructure Master Plan underway: water and wastewater plan adopted December 2020
Maintain low taxes but ensuring good value	Each year	Essa's operating expenses at \$18,605,762; Total levy required is \$8,097,650
Establish standards	2020	Council decision to put 3% to asset management funding each year

Priority Strategic Actions

All activities listed above are important and should begin right away if not already started. Each Manager should review all items with their staff and report to the CAO on implementation. Some actions are straight-forward and on-going and others require development. Some may involve further Council discussion.

Implementation and Monitoring

The Strategic Plan will be implemented by staff under the direction of the CAO, and monitored by Council. On an annual basis, Council will review the progress on the strategic actions through a report prepared by the CAO. Performance measures should be quantifiable, measurable and focused specifically on the strategic actions. The report may also identify new issues and challenges that may require new or updated strategic actions.