
Subject: Shape Niagara - Council Strategic Planning

Report to: Regional Council

Report date: Thursday, April 4, 2019

Recommendations

1. That the this report outlining the process for developing the 2019-2022 Council Strategic Plan, and which includes the Shape Niagara environmental scan reports “*What We’ve Heard*” and “*Setting the Stage for Strategy*”, as well as the departmental SWOT Analysis, **BE RECEIVED**.

Key Facts

- Typically, before the start of each new term of Regional Council, staff prepares a background report which sets the stage for Council to create their new term strategic plan. For this term of Council, staff have undertaken community engagement and environmental scan efforts through an initiative entitled Shape Niagara. The information has been summarized within a pair of reports: *Shape Niagara - What We’ve Heard* and *Shape Niagara - Setting the Stage for Strategy*, found in Appendix 1 and 2 respectively.
- During Council Orientation in November of 2018, a Council Information request was put forward to put together a departmental SWOT Analysis, this request has been fulfilled and is contained in Appendix 3.
- A strategic planning workshop will be hosted on May 11, 2019. This workshop will be the opportunity for all Council members to come together to identify their collective priorities, and to set the goals and objectives that will become the 2019-2022 Council Strategic Plan.
- The results of the workshop will be brought back to Council for final approval and following that, senior staff will put together a project-based implementation plan for Council’s consideration, to action the priorities of Council.
- The Shape Niagara reports are available for public viewing and download on the Region’s webpage at www.niagararegion.ca/priorities. This webpage is where the final strategy will also be posted.

Financial Considerations

It is the intent that a project-based implementation plan be developed to action the 2019-2022 Council Strategic Plan, and timing will be aligned to coincide with the 2020 budget planning process. This will allow Council to make timely decisions to align resource requirements to the projects identified to action the strategic plan.

Analysis

A strategic plan is an important document, particularly for municipal government, as it is the basis for aligning the work of the organization with the priorities of Council. The strategic plan guides the corporate workplan which allows the organization to dedicate adequate resources to address Council's priorities, and to be transparent and accountable to the results. It is about solving the right problems, to deliver value to the residents of Niagara.

The Strategic Planning Process

A comprehensive strategic planning process follows a four step cycle:

1. **Environmental Scan** - A typical strategic planning process begins with an environmental scan of internal and external factors, and should include stakeholder consultation. This is followed by a review of an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT Analysis) which provides a clear picture of the current state.
2. **Defining the Strategy** - Following a review of the current state is the opportunity to identify the vision for the future, and define the goals and objectives that will allow the organization to reach that vision.
3. **Implementation Plan** – An implementation plan is developed which will identify the actions required to realize the goals and objectives. The Region has had success in the past with a project based plan that allows the organization to focus on tangible, deliberate outcomes, designed to reach the specific objectives and goals of Council.
4. **Monitor & Measure Success** - The last stage of the strategic planning process is to monitor and evaluate progress towards those goals. The Region enables public transparency in two ways: First, through project progress reporting throughout the term, and second, through the Region's public facing performance measurement dashboard which will be re-aligned to the new Council strategic plan.

1. Environmental Scan – Background Documents

As the end of each term of Council nears, staff typically prepares a background report which serves to inform the new Council on the current state of Niagara, as well as Niagara's position with the provincial, national and global landscape. For the 2019-2022 term of Council, a pair of reports were created to serve this purpose and were branded as Shape Niagara.

The first report provides the results of an extensive community engagement initiative that captures the priorities as identified by the residents, businesses, organizations and local area municipalities of Niagara, “*Shape Niagara – What We’ve Heard*”, and can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

Details around the community engagement initiative, including methodology, and results are captured in full within the *What We’ve Heard* report. The key takeaways from this report is that staff collected qualitative, open ended feedback from which a thematic analysis was conducted to identify common trends that recurred throughout the data. The narrative of these themes, which provides the story and context behind the feedback was also captured. From this analysis, 17 Community Priorities were identified, numbered in rank order with the first priority being identified most frequently.

The second report, “*Shape Niagara – Setting the Stage for Strategy*”, provides Council with current state information collected through an environmental scan, and can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

The focus of this report is to provide data and information to Council to support informed decision making during this critical strategic planning process. Data and information from a global, federal, and provincial lens were captured; as well as an overview of the current state of Niagara as both a place to live, and as an organization. This Niagara-specific snapshot captures a range of information including demographic, social, and economic data. The report also includes a view of the alignment of priorities across Niagara’s local area municipal strategic plans (at the time of writing the report). A full matrix which outlines the alignment of strategic themes can be found in Appendix 4 of this report. The last section of the *Setting the Stage for Strategy* report provides a review of departmental initiatives and opportunities which have been linked to the 17 Community Priorities from the *What We’ve Heard* report. Drawing these linkages will give Council a line of sight into how the community priorities align with the services provided at the Regional level of government.

To complete the environmental scan, a SWOT Analysis was conducted at the organizational and departmental levels, and can be found in Appendix 3 of this report.

2. Defining the Strategy – Council Workshop

Following the presentation of the environmental scan documents, members of Regional Council have been invited to attend a strategic planning workshop. This workshop is set up as a full day facilitated working session where Regional Council will work through the development of their strategic vision, goals and objectives for the 2019-2022 term of Council. Senior staff will be present to lend support, provide context, and participate as required in aligning the goals and objectives to Regional services.

Following this workshop, staff will consolidate the information collected from Council and format it to create the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan for Council's final approval. It is anticipated that the final strategy will be brought back to Council as quickly as possible following the workshop, and the aim is for the June 20, 2019 Council meeting.

3. Implementation Plan – Project Based

A strategic plan has no true value without an action plan to implement the goals and objectives that it identifies. A project-based plan allows Council to realize tangible successes, assign the correct resources required, and demonstrate measureable results and value for the residents of Niagara. The results of the 2015-2018 Council Strategic Plan are an example of how successful a project-based plan can be. The *2015-2018 Council Strategy: Term in Review* report can be found on the Regional website at www.niagararegion.ca/priorities.

Once the Strategic Plan is finalized, staff will use Council's input to identify potential projects and develop an implementation plan for Council's consideration. It is the intent that the timing of developing an implementation plan will align with the 2020 budget planning process. Aligning to the Region's established budget planning process will ensure the appropriate dollars and resources are identified up front to set the implementation plan up for success.

4. Monitor & Measure Success – Driving Accountability & Transparency

A public-facing webpage and dashboard are online tools that the Niagara Region uses to share with residents or other interested parties, the performance of the Region's strategy using well-organized, relevant data. Residents may not be familiar with the high level language that a strategic plan typically contains, but may resonate with the tangible, measureable outcomes of these plans.

In order to foster the trust of residents, the Region must provide transparent information around its performance. Having progress reports and performance measures available for public viewing holds the organization accountable. The current webpage dedicated to reporting on Council's strategy, www.niagararegion.ca/priorities, and public facing dashboard, www.niagararegion.ca/priorities/dashboard, will be re-aligned with Council's new strategic goals to provide progress updates, and performance measures that will hold the organization accountable and show progress on the commitments made.

Once Council's strategic planning process is complete, staff will commit to bringing regular progress reports back to Council on the implementation of the goals and objectives, all of which will be made available publicly on the dedicated webpage.

Alternatives Reviewed

The feedback received from the previous Council on the background document that was provided to them in 2015, was that the information did not include the voice of the community. Shape Niagara has addressed that gap by conducting a full community engagement initiative, capturing the voice of Niagara's residents, businesses, organizations and local area municipalities for this Council's consideration in the development of their 2019-2022 Council Strategic Plan.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This report will provide Council with background information and community input that can be considered in the development of the Region's next 2019-2022 Council Strategic Plan.

Other Pertinent Reports

- CAO 19-2018 Shape Niagara – What We Heard
- CAO 17-2018 Council Strategic Priorities 2015-2018 Term in Review
- CWCD 128-2018 Shape Niagara Public Open Houses
- CAO 06-2018 Shape Niagara

Prepared by:

Kristen Delong
Manager, Internal Control &
Organizational Performance
Enterprise Resource Management
Services

Recommended by:

Todd Harrison
Commissioner, ERMS
Enterprise Resource Management
Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Sandy Dupuis, Corporate Performance Specialist, with graphical support from Kelsea Cotnam, Graphic Designer. Reviewed by Maciej Jurczyk, Director of Internal Control & Organization Performance, and members of the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).

Appendices

Appendix 1	Shape Niagara – What We’ve Heard
Appendix 2	Shape Niagara – Setting the Stage for Strategy
Appendix 3	SWOT Analysis
Appendix 4	Local Area Municipal Strategy Theme Matrix