



Township of Zorra Strategic Plan 2015 - 2018

Message from Mayor Lupton and Council

On behalf of the Council and staff of the Township of Zorra it is with great pleasure that I share with you our Draft 2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan. The Draft Strategic Plan has been developed as a result of feedback received from staff and Council. The Plan encompasses a vision for the Municipality and guides our direction for the next several years through numerous initiatives

As you explore the Plan, you will note the focus on sustainability. The Township wishes to create a sustainable and healthy community that balances economic growth, fiscal responsibility and environmental awareness. Initiatives throughout the Plan focus on cultivating partnerships, engaging the community, excelling in service delivery and incorporating green principles in decision-making, Engagement of our young people and our seniors needs to be a priority as well as ensuring we have services and venues to retain both segments of our population.

The 2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan is a framework for our Township but it's the community and its people that make Zorra a great place to live! I would like to thank Council, staff and all of those in the community who provided valuable input and support to the process.

I look forward to working with Council, staff, community members and stakeholders to see our vision for Zorra come to fruition over the next several years.

Margaret Lupton
Mayor, Zorra Township

1. Introduction

Strategic planning is one of the most important tools that a municipality can use to bring together the public, municipal Staff and members of Council in the development of a common vision, direction and goals for a community. It can also function as an accounting mechanism, allowing management and the public to evaluate progress and ensure that the municipality is moving in the right direction.

Rather than simply reacting to change, municipalities can examine issues and concerns with the goal to create a community that is sustainable, providing opportunities for business and economic growth, and a healthy lifestyle, while at the same time protecting its social and cultural connections.

While community sustainability doesn't necessarily imply growth or expansion, it does imply change. The decisions made, or not made will shape how a community develops and prospers. A Strategic Plan therefore, builds an overall vision for a community and guides municipal decision-making that will move the community towards its desired

state. The plan also assists with prioritizing the management and use of the local assets as well as human, financial, physical and environmental resources.

1.1 Objective of the Plan

The main objective of this Plan is very straight forward – continue building off of the enviable quality of life experienced in the Township of Zorra, to create a more cohesive, diverse and connected community. A community where its residents not only enjoy interacting with each other through their natural, built and historical surroundings, but also are able to enjoy the benefits of focused and centralized community amenities and services as well as a flourishing local economy that supports the needs of the local residents.

Success for the Township of Zorra, will come through embracing the enviable quality of life enjoyed by the residents. Clearly, our community members relish the special quality of life offered by this rural community. Additionally, the location of the Township allows for a mix of urban and rural characteristics, easy access to major centres, services and amenities but, most of all, quick and easy access to the surrounding natural environment.

1.2 Strategic Planning Process

Zorra Township Council and Staff were asked to prepare a list of ideas, goals, objectives, projects, buildings, etc. they would like to see accomplished over the term of this Council. The ideas and thoughts were wide-ranging and provided valuable input on the collective vision from Council and Staff on the future of the Township. Members of the public were also asked for input on what they would like to see accomplished over the term of Council.

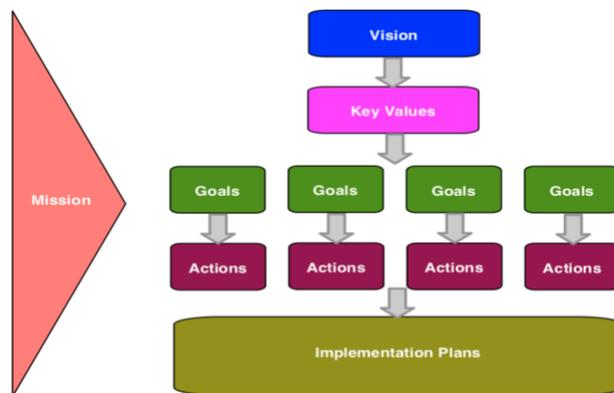
In review of the goals and objectives, it became clear the Township Council is focused on long-term strategic planning. The discussion and debate that has taken place mimics a typical strategic planning process without the formality of substantive public input. Also lacking is defining of a mission statement, vision and key principles. At this point, Council has decided it is the appropriate time for Council to enshrine a mission statement, vision and key principles and then refine specific goals to set the direction of the Township in its day to day operations which will then be supported by specific strategic objectives. In order to do so, there will need to be public input on the work that has been carried out to date and to assist Council in defining a mission statement, vision and key principles.

The traditional process has been altered in that Council and Staff have already defined goals and objectives and now working backwards to preparing a Strategic Plan. The list of ideas, goals, objectives, projects, buildings, etc. that Council and staff prepared are a list of directions and actions in the context of a strategic plan. The list was separated

into general themes and then tested against other municipal strategic plans to arrive at four goals that seem appropriate for Zorra Township. These will be discussed later in this document.

2. Corporate Vision, Mission and Key Values

The Strategic Plan will be developed by components, or in layers. The Plan sets a Vision for the community and will outline a Mission and Key Values as well as established Goals, Directions and Actions to achieve that Vision. The following is an overview of how the Plan will work. Each component will be explained in greater detail in the Plan.



2.1 Vision Statement

A vision reflects the aspirations of an organization or community providing a panoramic view of ‘where we are going’. It points an organization in a particular direction and charts a strategic path for everyone to follow. It describes what the Township is striving to become.

Our Vision

“A vibrant, prosperous, engaged and environmentally conscious community that evokes pride in residents for its accomplishments and continuing resilience as it forges the future”

2.2 Mission Statement

While a Vision paints a picture of a final destination, the destination pre-supposes a starting point. It begins with a clearly crafted Mission articulating the ways by which the

Vision is achieved – “who we are”, “what we do”, “who we serve” and “where are we now”. It is a stepping off point for the long term vision – where we want to go.

Our Mission

“The Zorra team of elected officials, staff and volunteers works together responsibly and transparently to realize and sustain the community’s vision.”

2.3 Key Values

The mandate of local government is to provide services to its community according to the unique wishes, needs and values of that community. Zorra Township is no different. As a result, any planning for the future of our community has to be grounded in its shared values. Values reflect the shared beliefs of a community. They tell us what is important to a community, and how we should go about achieving our goals.

Our Values

Trust - The trust between community members is what makes Zorra an inclusive community. Community trust is built through sensible planning, reliable services and public engagement.

Respect – The residents of Zorra come from diverse backgrounds. It is through respect for the varied backgrounds and experiences that common ground can be achieved.

Innovation – Zorra must be a community which embraces change. It must remain open to all ideals to become a flexible, progressive municipality which can successfully anticipate and adapt to changing environments.

Accountability - Council and Staff must be accountable to Zorra residents and be responsible for actions and inactions.

Teamwork – We will work cooperatively at all levels of the organization and community to accomplish the Township’s objectives and to provide our residents with quality service.

Transparency – We will conduct all affairs for the Township openly and with complete transparency, except where prohibited by law.

3. Our Goals...

The list of ideas, goals, objectives, projects, buildings, etc. that Council and staff prepared are a list of directions and actions in the context of a strategic plan. The list was separated into general themes and then tested against other municipal strategic

plans to arrive at four goals that seem appropriate for Zorra Township. The four goals have been put forward that Zorra hopes to achieve to make our community a better place to live and work are:

- We are a **vibrant** community that values our uniqueness, creativity and takes pride in calling Zorra home.
- We are **prosperous** community that provides opportunities to work and shop in our community and to grow in a sustainable manner.
- We are an **engaged** community that values all members and actively encourages involvement, engagement, openness and transparency.
- We are an **environmentally conscious** community that are good stewards of our natural environment and we protect our environment by valuing our natural assets and using our resources wisely.

3.1 We are a **vibrant** community

The specific actions that have been identified to ensure that Zorra becomes a more vibrant community are as follows:

- By providing recreational opportunities for everyone
- Supporting our community, events and celebrations
- Preservation of our history and heritage and growing the arts
- Developing safe, livable communities

Present State of Where We Are Now

We are proud of our vibrant communities and rich history. The Township has provided a progressive cultural landscape that offers residents of Zorra the opportunity to celebrate our cultural identity. We express our unique history and culture through annual festivals and events, the performing and visual arts, community centres, places of worship, as well as our built heritage. Zorra has an emerging and active artisan community with many artisans working in their homes.

Our community supports a diversity of lifestyles and is welcoming and close-knit. Our community offers a variety of lifestyles that ensure anyone can call Zorra home. From the rural and small-town village lifestyle we are also proud to be part of the broader Township of Zorra.

We have a variety of clubs and organizations in both our urban and rural settlement areas that provide our residents with numerous social and recreational opportunities. We participate in our community. A dedicated pool of volunteers ensure that our service clubs are strong, annual fairs and festivals are well attended, and faith-based and other

community groups are active. Being actively engaged in our community has helped develop a strong sense of community while providing connection and cohesion across all of our communities.

Our Township Council and staff are known in the community and always accessible and involved in numerous community events. The Township is proud of being a transparent municipality that has built a welcoming relationship with fellow community members.

3.2 We are a *prosperous* community

The specific actions that have been identified to ensure that Zorra becomes a more prosperous community are as follows:

- By retaining and expanding our existing businesses
- By strengthening our agricultural and agri-business sector
- Investing in our infrastructure
- Improving municipal efficiency
- Encourage entrepreneurship among residents of all ages

Present State of Where We Are Now

We live in a community where our economy has remained strong. The main economic sectors that have contributed to our strong economy are agriculture, agri-business, aggregates, and commercial/retail. Many of our local businesses are small and medium sized family businesses that are rooted in the history of our community.

Agriculture – both large and small farms – is the strongest economic sector in Zorra and the surrounding area and continues to grow and flourish. A significant portion of our land base has historically been used for agricultural activities and we recognize that this sector is a major contributor to our economic base. Agriculture also plays an important role in our culture. The aggregate sector also has a substantial economic impact through primary processing and secondary consumption in cement making and lime production. Zorra is traditionally among the top ten aggregate producing municipalities in Ontario and is home to over 40 gravel pits and lime stone quarries.

On-farm diversification and home based business start ups are becoming a valuable asset to our economy. As well, proximity to the 401 corridor and to two large auto assembly plants in Oxford County mean that Zorra is well situated to take advantage of its strategic location in Ontario's heartland.

3.3 We are an *engaged* community

The specific actions that have been identified to ensure that Zorra becomes a more engaged community are as follows:

- By being open and transparent
- By being inclusive and accessible
- By strengthening our customer service and being an employer of choice

Present State of Where We Are Now

Through community consultation and outreach Zorra Council and staff actively try to encourage citizens to become more engaged in their communities and empowered to effectively communicate their concerns to the government and other citizens, resulting in more timely citizen involvement in the decision making activities of local government.

Zorra is well served by a rural broadband network and our population is becoming “connected” in many ways outside of traditional mediums. We have recently started interacting through social media and see this as an emerging trend that we need to learn from, continuously improve, and adapt to new technologies as they materialize.

Zorra, like many small rural municipalities, needs to do a better job at engaging our seniors and youth as well as persons with disabilities and visible minorities.

3.4 We are an *environmentally conscious* community

The specific actions that have been identified to ensure that Zorra becomes a more environmentally conscious community are as follows:

- By protecting our natural assets
- By using our resources wisely
- By doing a better job to monitor and manage our aggregate resources

Present State of Where We Are Now

Our natural landscape is one of our greatest and most valuable assets. Zorra and our surrounding area includes many natural features that make us unique, such as significant woodlands, groundwater recharge areas, wildlife and fish habitat, and watercourses. The Township and the County of Oxford have been progressive in preserving and protecting our natural assets and resources. The combined efforts of the Township, County, Provincial and Federal Ministries, and countless other organizations have helped to ensure environmental integrity is maintained in our community, both on public and private land. A number of very successful programs have helped our community participate in protecting our natural resources. A Tree Conservation By-laws is in place to prohibit and regulate destruction of trees and woodlots on private property, drinking water monitoring and protection efforts are ongoing, waste reduction and management programs are available.

We are facing challenges on how to continue managing and protecting our farmland in light of Zorra's aggregate rich geology. Provincial policy places high regard in protecting aggregate resources and Zorra is left to balance this along side of protecting our natural environment.

4. Implementing our Plan

4.1 Implementation Plan

Implementation of Plan will be ongoing. A detailed Implementation Plan outlining the Actions that support each Goal and Direction will be included as a separate component to this Plan. It will include a lead for each action, identification of potential partners, measures of success, and implementation. Each year the Implementation Plan will be updated to reflect progress on implementation and align with work planned for the next year.

4.2 Annual Review and Work Planning

Each year Township staff will review the Implementation Plan and report on how the Plan is moving forward. The Actions identified in the Implementation Plan will be incorporated into the annual work plans developed by the Department Heads in collaboration with the Administrator and presented to Council for their consideration.

When assessing potential Actions for any given work plan, there are key questions that should be considered:

- Does it move us towards our Vision?
- Is it consistent with our Mission and Guiding Principles of Sustainability?
- Is it a stepping stone towards future improvements?
- Are the resources available to implement it? What potential partners can assist?
- Are other initiatives already underway that can be tapped into or help support it?

In the annual work programs, individual staff members will be assigned responsibility for overseeing the implementation of specific initiatives.

Schedule A Strategic Plan Actions

We are a <i>vibrant</i> community				
Actions		Action Lead/ Responsibility	Potential Partners	Time Frame
V1	By providing recreational opportunities for everyone			
V1.1	Undertake a Recreation Master Planning process inclusive of completing an assessment of the long-term viability of Thamesford District Recreation Centre and Embro Community Centre			
V1.2	Work with Maple Leaf Foods for land donation along Thames River to create a trail from Middleton Street to Dundas Street			
V1.3	Consider establishment of a Trails Committee and/or work more closely with Oxford Trails Council			
V1.4	Work with UTRCA and Oxford Trails Council to improve public access to Thames River			
V1.5	Explore viability of a splash pad for Embro and Thamesford			
V1.6	Improve marketing and promotion efforts for the Township's recreational facilities and programs to increase participation and revenues			
V1.7	Strategize on ways and means to increase youth and senior participation in recreational activities			

Strategic Plan Actions

Actions		Action Lead/ Responsibility	Potential Partners	Time Frame
V2	Supporting our community, events and celebrations			
V2.1	Develop a school retention plan			
V2.2	Assist with marketing and promotion of major community events such as Calithumpian Weekend, Embro Highland Games, Embro Fair, Weinerfest and to support new community events			
V2.3	Explore options for the Township to assist minor sports organizations in taking a more active role in co-ordination of activities			
V2.4	Investigate how to better support and work with service groups and to encourage service clubs to collaborate with each other			
V2.5	Recognize one volunteer of year and one senior of the year			
V3	Preservation of our history and heritage and growing the arts			
V3.1	Catalogue and display Harvey Waud Collection			
V3.2	Continue signing historical hamlets and use of QR codes to provide historical information. Tourism Oxford may help			
V3.3	Compile a cultural inventory of community assets and implement an interactive map of the Township website			
V3.4	Displaying works of Zorra artisans and craftspeople and promoting the same on Township website			
V3.5	Support Oxford Creative Connections and Halls Creek Festival of Creativity and encourage Zorra artists to become involved			

Strategic Plan Actions

Actions		Action Lead/ Responsibility	Potential Partners	Time Frame
V4	Developing safe communities			
V4.1	Evaluate how to deal with increasing public concerns regarding traffic volume and speed in both rural and urban areas			
V4.2	Continue to work on enhancing public education for smoke alarm awareness and CO ² detector awareness			
V4.3	Consider holding a public education forum on emergency preparedness at each community centre to raise public awareness			
V4.4	Maintain an appropriate standard of winter control that balances risk and financial responsibility while fulfilling statutory requirements			
V4.5	Enhance visibility and awareness of Zorra Policing Committee and encourage greater public involvement			

Strategic Plan Actions

We are a <i>prosperous</i> community				
Actions		Action Lead/ Responsibility	Potential Partners	Time Frame
P1	By retaining and expanding our existing businesses			
P1.1	Supporting Embro and Thamesford Business Associations through membership and financial assistance where applicable			
P1.2	Work with Thamesford Business Association to expand and possibly relocate Thamesford Farmers Market			
P1.3	Work with local businesses and organizations to improve coordination of business development efforts			
P1.4	Consider implementation of a Community Improvement Plan and downtown beautification projects			
P1.5	Promoting a “buy local” campaign and investigate embedding Local Food Act provisions in our operations			
P1.6	Working with, and expanding the role and importance of Rural Oxford Economic Development Corporation			
P2	By strengthening our agricultural and agri-business sector			
P2.1	Explore opportunities to encourage secondary or specialized spin-off industries linked to existing sectors (e.g. food processing to support locally grown food)			
P2.2	Encourage County of Oxford to amend Official Plan policies to allow flexibility for on-farm diversified uses and/or secondary uses			
P2.3	Continue to work with neighbouring municipalities to harmonize policies to encourage and facilitate non-invasive uses into prime agriculture areas			

Strategic Plan Actions

Actions		Action Lead/ Responsibility	Potential Partners	Time Frame
P3	By investing in our infrastructure			
P3.1	Continue planning for construction of a centralized Public Works Operations Centre			
P3.2	Prepare an implementation framework to install generators at Thamesford District Recreation Centre and Embro Community Centre and installing a smaller generator at the Township Office and repurposing existing generator			
P3.3	Preparation of long-term financial master plan for sustainability of existing road system			
P4	By improving municipal efficiency			
P4.1	Carry out a comprehensive and thorough review of recreation user fees			
P4.2	Implementation of multi-year budgets			
P4.3	Establish a revised budget process and timelines to expedite adoption of annual budget			
P4.4	Preparation of yearly departmental work plans that will align with strategic plan directions and actions			

Strategic Plan Actions

We are an <i>engaged</i> community				
Actions		Action Lead/ Responsibility	Potential Partners	Time Frame
E1	By being open and transparent			
E1.1	Work to improve communications of municipal affairs with the public. Building upon the success of Zorra Now and expanding the reach and scope, depth of articles, featuring local businesses etc.			
E1.2	Develop a Community Engagement Strategy			
E1.3	Develop a Communications Strategy			
E1.4	Undertake an initiative to begin using plain language in all communications			
E1.5	Council Chamber redesign to make it more accessible for residents and to project agendas to allow members of the public to follow meetings			
E1.6	Publish annual reports on closed meeting held during the previous year			
E1.7	Continue to improve Township website by providing online forms, means of instant feedback and use of polls and questionnaires			
E1.8	Continue utilization of social media and capitalize on new and emerging trends of social engagement			

Strategic Plan Actions

	Actions	Action Lead/ Responsibility	Potential Partners	Time Frame
E2	By being inclusive and accessible			
E2.1	Update and continue to improve Zorra's Accessibility Plan to meet or exceed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act regulations			
E2.2	Work with businesses to improve accessibility			
E2.3	Consider municipal policies, services and programs that take into account the impact of an aging population			
E2.4	Consider establishing a Youth Council to receive insight and feedback on ways to engage our youth and to develop future leaders			
E2.5	Develop a new resident information package			
E3	By strengthening our customer service and being an employer of choice			
E3.1	Constantly review operational efficiencies and use of resources			
E3.2	Keep organization focused on providing a high level of customer service			
E3.3	Ensuring staff are cross-trained and ensuring gaps do not occur during absences			
E3.4	Build municipal leadership skill through preparation of a Succession Plan			
E3.5	Commit to staff training, team building and professional development through annual budgets			

Strategic Plan Actions

We are an <i>environmentally conscious</i> community				
Actions		Action Lead/ Responsibility	Potential Partners	Time Frame
EC1	By protecting our natural assets			
EC1.1	Promote and support environmental stewardship efforts			
EC1.2	Together with the County of Oxford enhance awareness and importance of the Woodlands Conservation By-law			
EC1.3	Township to undertake an enhanced road side tree planting program – use of larger caliper trees to ensure survivability			
EC1.4	Work with UTRCA to implement a tree planting program for private landowners			
EC1.5	Continue to work with the County of Oxford to enhance waste management initiatives in the County			
EC2	By using our resources wisely			
EC2.1	Begin assessing carbon footprint in anticipation of implementation of a provincial carbon tax			
EC2.2	Installation of energy management practices in all of our facilities, e.g. low flow toilets, light motion sensors, conversion of lighting to LED fixtures			
EC2.3	Installing more garbage and recycling containers in all of our parks and in Embro and Thamesford			
EC2.4	Investigate installing electric vehicle charging stations at various locations in the Township			

Strategic Plan Actions

Actions		Action Lead/ Responsibility	Potential Partners	Time Frame
EC3	By doing a better job to manage our natural resources			
EC3.1	Carry out a yearly review of MNR Compliance Assessment Reports			
EC3.2	Adopt new policies as a result of the Interim Control By-law			
EC3.3	Township staff to carry out photographic details of gravel pits			
EC3.4	Initiate a program to ensure operators are complying with ARA site plans with respect to berm maintenance			