

Township of Zorra Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022



On behalf of the Council and staff of the Township of Zorra, we are pleased to present the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. The Plan articulates goals and objectives for the term of Council. It is the main communication tool to inform residents of the direction of the Municipality and how it will be achieved during the 2019-2022 term.

This document represents our compass to the future. It builds on some of the elements residents were looking for when they elected their new Council including openness and transparency. It continues to focus on building a vibrant, safe and healthy community for the next leg of the Municipality's journey.

The Strategic Plan does not capture everything the Municipality does each day for our citizens. Rather it captures the significant measures necessary to move on priority goals. It also takes into account several important stakeholder perspectives and considerations from constituents identified through the 2018 election campaign, our strategic plan community open house and online survey, staff, direction from previous Council, and previous Strategic Plan initiatives that have not been fully completed.

The Strategic Plan will guide the Municipality's budget over the next term of Council. It is through the budget process that Council's Strategic Plan will be implemented with details on actions, timing, required resources and accountability. On an annual basis, Council will report to citizens of Zorra Township on its implementation progress and how the work is impacting our community. In closing, we wish to thank everyone who provided input as we prepared our Strategic Plan. Your voice is valued!



(Left to Right) Steve MacDonald, Ward 3, Paul Mitchell, Ward 4
Marcus Ryan, Mayor, Ron Forbes, Ward 1, Katie Davies, Ward 2

VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Our vision statement reflects the future we want for Zorra, while our mission statement describes what we will do to make this future happen. Our values are the defining, guiding principles of our Municipality. Together, our values, mission and vision are the foundation of Zorra, reminding us of who we are, what we do and the future we want to achieve.



Vision, Mission and Values

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.

Mission

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

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 ideas 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.

Four strategic goals have been identified and developed as a framework to realize Zorra's vision. In achieving these goals, Zorra will be a better place to live and work in.

1

We are a *vibrant* community that values our uniqueness, creativity and takes pride in calling Zorra home.

2

We are a *prosperous* community that provides opportunities to work and shop in our community and to grow in a sustainable manner.

3

We are an *engaged* community that values all members and actively encourages involvement, engagement, openness and transparency.

4

We are an *environmentally conscious* community are good stewards of our natural environment and we protect our environment by valuing our natural assets and using our resources wisely

We are a vibrant community

Strategies

Providing recreational opportunities for everyone

Supporting our community, events and celebrations

Preserving our history and heritage

Growing arts and culture

Developing safe, liveable communities



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.

We are a vibrant community

Establish standards for traffic calming entering villages, flashing speed signs, Community Safety Zones at schools as well as improving pedestrian and cycling safety and access.

Continue school retention strategy by advocating with Oxford County Planning that schools are an integral part of the Planning Process and should be reflected in the County Strategic Plan and Official Plan, and lobbying the Provincial Government that there be greater integration of school locations with Municipalities:

Continue with implementation of Recreation Arts and Culture Master Plan (RACMP).

Accurately measure participation in recreation services increase participation levels by 5% by the end of 2022

Establish a Facility Sharing Agreement with Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) to improve resident access and use of facilities

Carry out a review Fire Level of Service in regard to increased costs and recruitment difficulties caused by Provincial policy changes.

Work with Beachville Museum to get exhibits in local schools to attract and retain our youngest residents.

Prepare a plan for a six-month pilot project to gather data regarding the effectiveness of using a decoy cruiser to reduce traffic speeds on roads in Zorra Township.

Develop strategies to encourage and guide local groups to plan and raise funds for projects that would be of benefit to their community.

Work with schools to increase field trips within the Township: to attract and retain our youngest residents

Maintain compliance with accessibility legislation and the Township's Multi-year Accessibility Plan (2019-2023)

Explore opportunities to increase usage of township owned and/or operated recreational and cultural facilities.

Better Recreation communication with user groups: Zorra Recreation Advisory Committee (ZRAC) have "use specific" (ice, soccer, Embro, service groups, etc.) meetings inviting specific user groups

Review the boundary lines for response areas for the ZF&ES so that wherever possible all properties are serviced by the nearest located fire station within the township.

Negotiate with neighbouring municipalities so that wherever possible all properties within Zorra, and the neighbouring municipalities are serviced by the nearest located fire station.

Strategies

Retain and expand our existing businesses

Strengthen our agricultural and agri-business sectors

Invest in our infrastructure

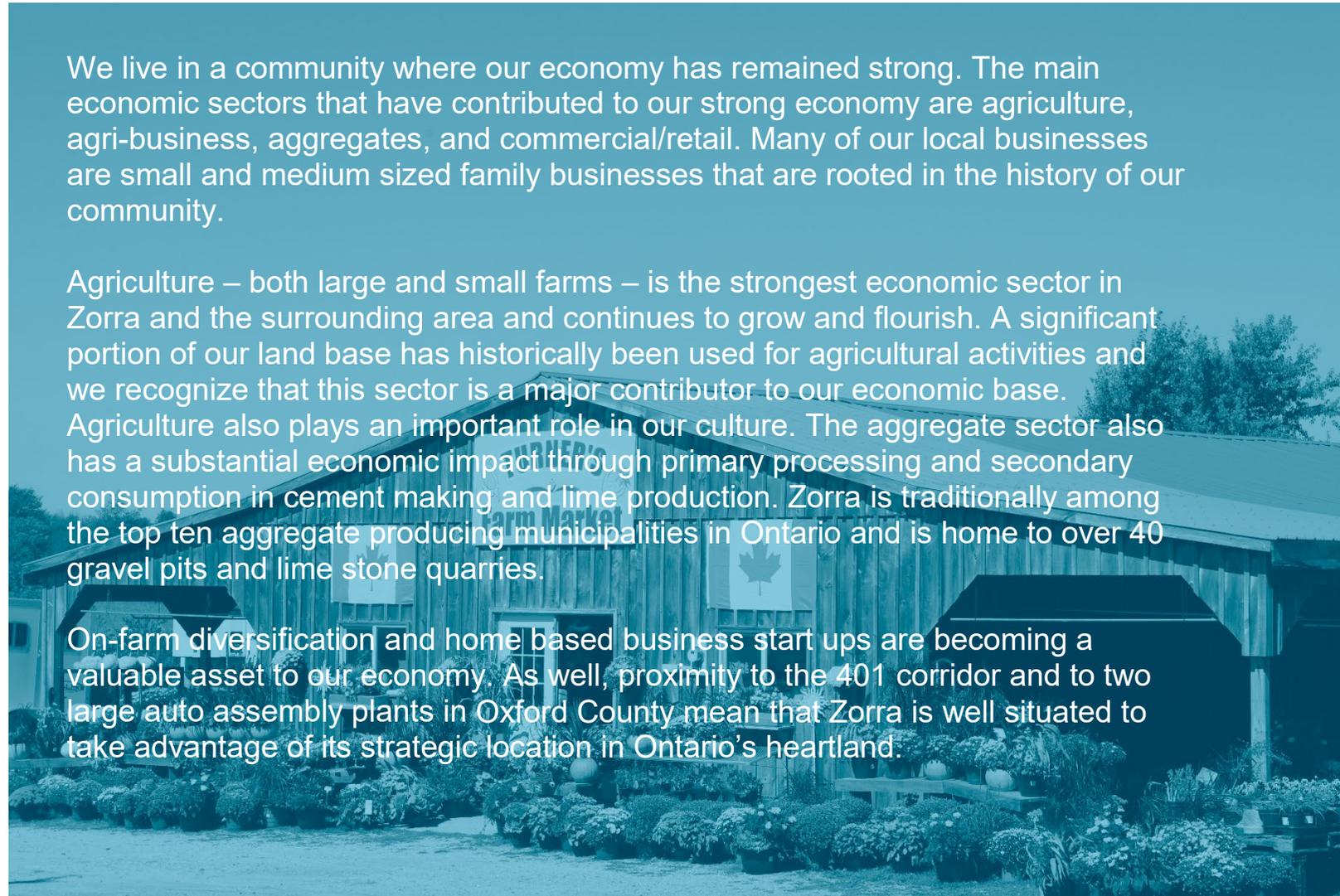
Improve municipal efficiency

Encourage entrepreneurship among residents of all ages

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.



Improved development plan to reduce pressure on current property taxpayers and increase affordable housing.

Assess opportunities for possible densification of villages.

Conduct a Municipal Road Inventory Condition Assessment and Capital Improvement Plan.

Explore the potential of adding Inclusionary Zoning provisions into a Zoning By-law update.

Encourage better interdepartmental communication and collaboration to more effectively and efficiently achieve Strategic Goals

Lobby and develop relationships with the appropriate level of government and private businesses to provide improved access to natural gas

Adopt a Strategic Asset Management Plan address the core infrastructure assets (roads, bridges and culverts, stormwater).

Track and record current levels of service data using qualitative and technical metrics in O Reg 588/17 for two years on core infrastructure assets

Explore a restructured budget plan that starts with the previous Operational Budget plus Consumer Price Index (CPI) or Cost of Living.

Advertise Zorra to attract and retain residents.

Help Zorra businesses grow - work with the Rural Oxford Economic Development Corporation to offer more workshops to businesses to facilitate their growth

Assess Zorra and Oxford by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture “Checklist to Support Agricultural Growth in Your Municipality” to look for opportunities to better support the agricultural sector.

Affirm by Motion that Zorra supports Ontario’s *Farming and Food Production Protection Act* protecting farmers from complaints regarding Normal Farm Practices

Request a report from County Planning Staff regarding greater flexibility in permitting severances of surplus farm dwellings.

Explore opportunities for improved High-Speed Internet with Oxford County SWIFT (South West Integrated Fibre Technology)

We are a *prosperous* community

Prepare a staff report regarding the cost of building and operating a centralized Zorra Township municipal building that will meet the needs of Council, Administrative Staff and Public Works Department

Review of Senior Management Team Succession Plan to annually review the Organizational Chart and when there is a staff change

Develop Performance Review policy and a staff development and training plan that directly supports the succession plan

Determine the potential sale value of under-utilized Township properties including the current Township Municipal Office and Embro Public Works Yard.

Review rental rates and program fees for all recreational facilities and programs to maximize cost recovery while remaining competitive with neighbouring communities and accessible to Zorra residents.

Review policies regarding the scheduled replacement of all Township owned vehicles and equipment and explore the feasibility of cooperative purchasing with other municipalities

Review the annual contribution of tax dollars to the various reserve funds and determine if the amount of the contributions needs to be adjusted and for Staff to develop a reserve policy

Review the availability and range of housing stock within the Township and develop policies to encourage construction of suitable housing for markets under served.

Establish a reserve for industrial land purchase.

Establish an enhanced reserve for parkland purchases to better serve residents and to create trail links in urban areas.

Install “Things to do” boards at EV charging stations in Embro and Thamesford.

We are an *engaged* community

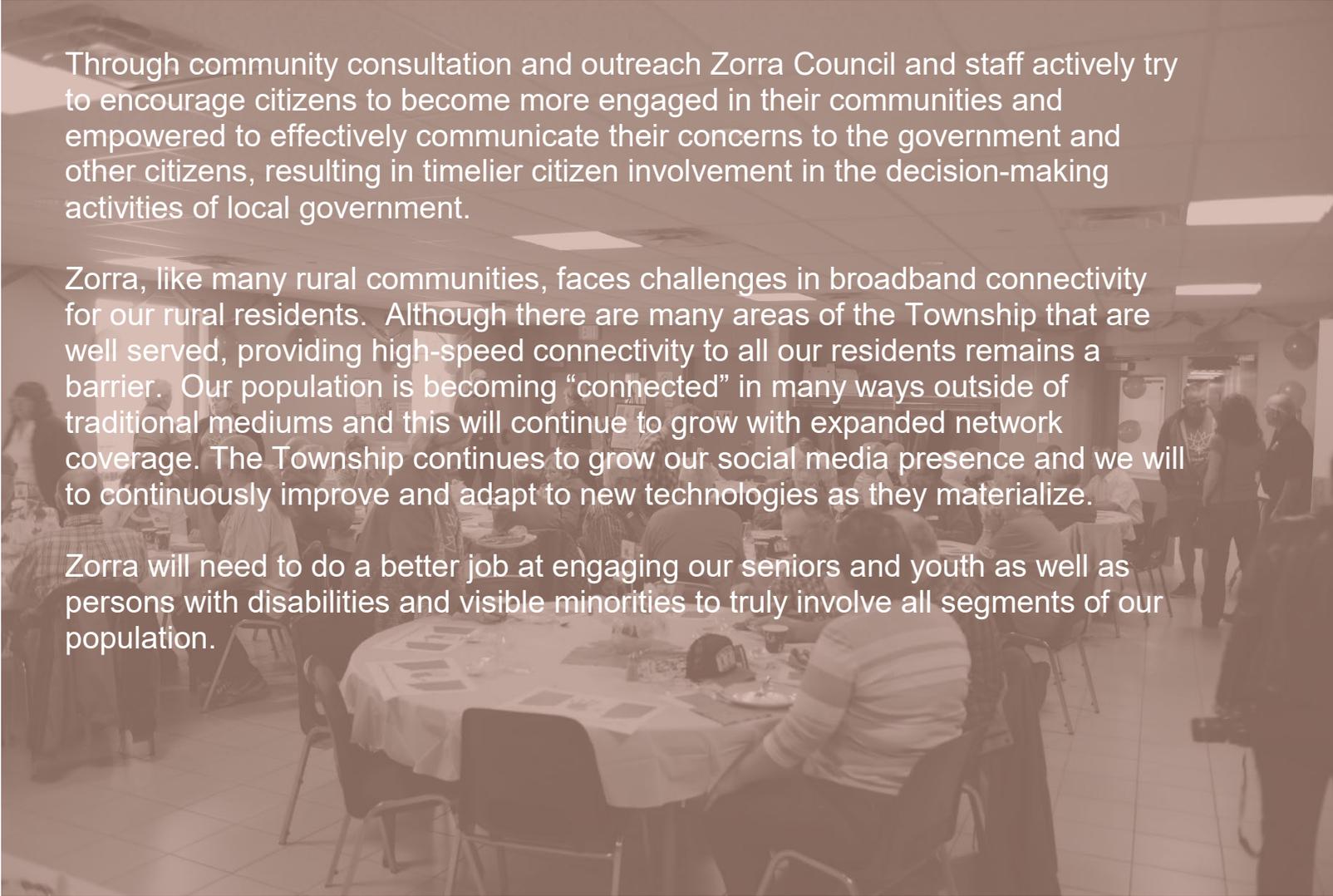
Strategies

Being open and transparent

Being inclusive and accessible

Strengthening our customer service

Being an employer of choice



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 timelier citizen involvement in the decision-making activities of local government.

Zorra, like many rural communities, faces challenges in broadband connectivity for our rural residents. Although there are many areas of the Township that are well served, providing high-speed connectivity to all our residents remains a barrier. Our population is becoming “connected” in many ways outside of traditional mediums and this will continue to grow with expanded network coverage. The Township continues to grow our social media presence and we will to continuously improve and adapt to new technologies as they materialize.

Zorra will need to do a better job at engaging our seniors and youth as well as persons with disabilities and visible minorities to truly involve all segments of our population.

We are an *engaged* community

Install new signage at municipal facilities to enhance visual identity
Install directional signs on main streets for easier navigation to Township facilities.
Create standard sign guidelines to Township's communication policy to extend the strength of our new brand.
Annually produce a simplified one-page summary Financial Statement including previous five year's history for residents
Promote alternatives to the existing High-Speed Rail proposal and support Oxford County in exploring an improved rail network for southwestern Ontario.
Engage more effectively with community/service groups to improve their engagement and look for opportunities for synergies with the Township to improve community development.
Encourage resident participation in government through development in a series of short videos educating residents about the Township, services provided and how to successfully engage with the Township.
Develop a policy for regular communication to the public of the status of ongoing capital projects with respect to timing and budget.
Work to get community/service groups in schools in supporting the new Zorra Brand to attract and retain our youngest residents and to involve them in our community, and grow our next generation of volunteers
Provide Council with the draft minutes or summaries of Township committee meetings within one month of the meeting taking place.
Negotiate with Multi-Sport Canada to sign a contract that compensates the taxpayers of Zorra for the use of Township roads during the Lakeside Triathlon while recognizing the benefits to Lakeside businesses.
Have a feature article on a Zorra resident, group, business, etc. in each edition of the Zorra Now and on the Township website.
Lobby and develop relationships with the appropriate government to provide local input into the operation of the Southwestern Landfill (if approved).

Strategies

Protecting our natural assets

Using our resources wisely

Doing a better job to monitor and manage our aggregate resources

Informing residents how we can reduce our impact on the natural environment

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-law 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.



We are an *environmentally conscious* community

Lobby Province for increased aggregate royalties to compensate Zorra for damage to roads.
Implement an enhanced Roadside Tree Planting Program
Work with the OFA and the OMAFRA to policies in place to preserve and protect prime agricultural land on behalf of all Ontarians through farmbelt legislation.
Enforce paved entrance lanes in all new pits and quarries to reduce dust causing reduced visibility and safety issues.
Encourage increased rehabilitation of pits and quarries to returns sites to a productive state.
Find a financially and environmentally responsible way to preserve the Harrington pond.
Commit to 100% use of Renewable Energy by 2040 and get a report from Staff on the total cost for the Township of Zorra
Staff to prepare a report from on how to minimize roadside tree removal and trimming while maintaining the Minimum Safety Standards of the roads.
Work with UTRCA, Oxford County, and others to increase number of trees and forest cover in Zorra.
Implement low impact development (LID) practices for new developments.
Develop vehicle replacement strategy for ALL vehicles that addresses pollution and carbon footprint
Assess environmental funding opportunities from governments and agencies for potential application in Zorra and be “shovel” or grant ready.
Collect and analyse data, develop and propose alternative policies or changes to the Aggregate Resources Act (ARA) via delegations and the Top Aggregate Producing Municipalities of Ontario.

Making It Happen: Implementation Plan

The Township of Zorra is proud of our new strategic plan and committed to making it happen. This plan is not intended to ‘sit on a shelf’ but to move us to action as we build the future we want for Zorra. Our planning process generated interest and momentum among community members who shared their time, talents and insights not only in this current Strategic Plan but also in the 2015 – 2018 Plan. Moving forward, we will harness this positive energy and use this plan as a tangible tool guiding our efforts. To support our success, the Township of Zorra will:

- ★ Proudly communicate our new strategic plan
- ★ Integrate our Municipality’s vision, priorities and goals into day-to-day operations, including existing organizational structures, work plans and policy frameworks
- ★ Update our action plan to ensure we continue to move from strategy to action
- ★ Make decisions that align with our strategic directions, demonstrating how our decisions and actions lead us to achieve the targets we have set
- ★ Collaborate with allies and partners to ensure initiatives are well resourced and appropriately implemented
- ★ Implement our action plan (described below)
- ★ Regularly communicate with community members, staff and other stakeholders so all are informed of our progress, including what is working well, what is challenging and what we are doing to keep us on target.
- ★ Develop a monitoring framework with progress indicators to ensure we are on target
- ★ Engage citizens — residents, businesses, community associations — to play an active role in realizing our community’s vision
- ★ Regularly review the strategic plan and monitor progress

We will move forward together, and are confident that disciplined implementation of this strategic plan will help us be a community grounded in agriculture and growing in innovation.