

## CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN SURVEY RESULTS

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### BACKGROUND

The Township launched a survey to garner feedback about perceived opportunities and threats, along with priorities, services and programs the public would like included in the review of West Lincoln's 2019-2029 Corporate Strategic Plan.

The survey was available in an online format as well as a paper format available for pickup at Township Administration, the West Lincoln Community Centre, and all three branches of the West Lincoln Public Library.

The survey was open from 9 a.m. on Friday, February 17, until 4:30 p.m. on Monday, March 20.

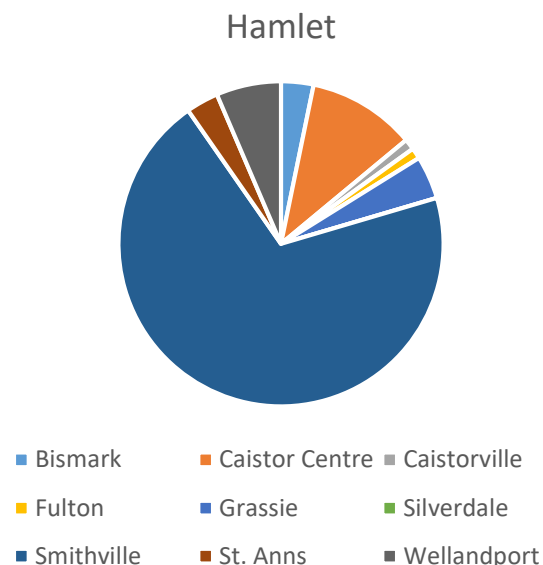
In total, we received **93** completed surveys: 90 online + 3 on paper.

### PARTICIPANTS

Of the 93 people who completed the survey, it is important to note that the vast majority were from Smithville.

**69.89%**

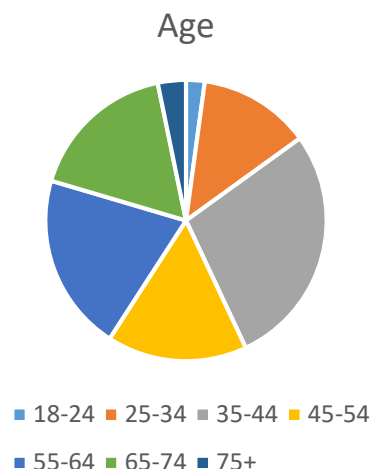
	<b>Smithville</b>
10.75%	Caistor Centre
6.45%	Wellandport
4.30%	Grassie
3.23%	St. Anns
3.23%	Bismark
1.08%	Caistorville
1.08%	Fulton
0.00%	Silverdale



There was a good balance in age groups represented by participants, with most aging from 35 to 44 but those aged 55-64, 65-74, and 45-54 not far behind.

**27.96%**

	<b>35-44</b>
20.43%	55-64
17.20%	65-74
16.13%	45-54
12.90%	25-34
3.23%	75+
2.15%	18-24



## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

### 1. What do you identify as opportunities for the Township?

**Strategic Growth:** The most common responses touched upon “careful”, “controlled”, “moderate” residential and commercial growth, including the appropriate supporting infrastructure and urban planning - not only in Smithville, but also in rural hamlets. A majority consensus appeared in the results, indicating that strategic growth, including the expansion of urban and hamlet boundaries, and sustainable development is seen as an opportunity for the Township, in order to attract more businesses and services, expand and enhance industries, and create more employment opportunities. Supporting current small businesses with grant opportunities was also noted, as was a desire for downtown revitalization/beautification, more small stores and the maintenance of a small town feel amid growth. Responses also included removing red tape and easing restrictions for building permit applications and allowing severance and rezoning so existing residents and landowners can develop their lands.

**Road & Traffic Improvements:** Diverting trucks from downtown to calm traffic, creating a walking friendly area downtown and in Wellandport, efficient parking, eliminating bottle necked roads, repairing roads, applying pressure to the Region to repair Regional roads, upgrading and improving existing and new transport corridors and a traffic light at Hwy 20 and Dennis St. were identified as opportunities.

**Program & Facility Enhancements:** Increasing programming and events for all age groups at the Community Centre was noted as an opportunity. As was a recreation centre that includes a pool and gym, a seasonal outdoor pool, an outdoor basketball court in Alma Acres, and an outdoor ice rink.

**Environmental Protection:** Balancing growth by ensuring to protect the environment appeared in several responses. Creating policies around carbon footprint (i.e., an idling bylaw), increasing the volume of renewable energy concepts to lower the cost to the Township, solar power

generation to municipal buildings, protecting wetlands and natural areas, preserving wildlife, and greening the Township with tree plantings, parks and trails, and Indigenous gardens were identified.

**Other:** Other comments included rural broadband, farming incentives, promoting increased diversity through education and activities, greater collaboration, removing the Leisureplex fence, increasing Bylaw enforcement, demolishing the Feed Mill on Canborough, a community calendar, and a plan for seniors and disabled residents so they can remain in the community.

**Outside scope:** We also received some responses that would be deemed outside of the municipal scope but are worth noting, affordable housing, long-term care homes, increased daycare options, healthcare, restricting cannabis businesses and avoiding 15-minute cities or digital face recognition.

## 2. What do you identify as threats the Township is facing?

**Rapid Growth:** Interestingly, the most common responses about threats the Township is facing were also pertaining to growth. Consistent with the responses about opportunities, respondents specified that intensification without the proper supporting infrastructure and growth that happens quickly without allowing adequate strategic planning is a threat. Many homes but no increase in businesses or services creating a “bedroom community”, losing the small town feel, loss of farmland/expansion into rural areas, and higher population but no increase in programming were also among responses.

**Extremism:** Several respondents noted intolerance, populism, “unsound political rhetoric”, political extremism, “embarrassing culture war politics”, religious bias, lack of equity, diversity and inclusion, “threats to inclusivity by religious groups”, a “heritage” or “past” way of thinking, and resistance or opposition to growth, change or progress as threats to the Township. Conversely, one respondent identified globalism as a threat and another took the opportunity to express anti-pride and anti-trans sentiments.

**Crime:** A low police presence was identified as the perceived reason for unsafe roads, speeding, increased crime, theft, drugs, and people disregarding stop signs, littering in parks and disrespecting rules. Responses also included increased traffic, limited parking, low sightlines through Wellandport, and bored kids getting into mischief as threats.

**Environmental Deterioration:** Consistent with comments about environmental protection being an opportunity, inadequate environmental protection, including lack of greenspace, tree canopy, and biodiversity, and green field development, was identified as a threat.

**Other:** Low tax base, high property taxes, municipal debt, lack of transportation, inadequate garbage service, cannabis, noise violations, asset deterioration, maintenance/upkeep of rural roads and bridges, being overlooked and underfunded by the Region, decreased access to the QEW, not allowing farmers to sever lots, restrictive bylaws and zoning limitations, red tape and

poor communication over developments, amalgamation, and development charges being waived by the Province were also noted as threats. One respondent also noted that the owner of Smith's Cove Apartment should be responsible for repairs.

**Outside scope:** Several respondents noted that affordability factors, including rising housing costs, expensive necessities, and lack of rental options are a threat to the Township. Limited childcare, no old age home, no hospital, few doctors and nurse practitioners were also noted.

### 3. As you consider the municipality's role, what do you think the Township should prioritize and focus on in its upcoming 4-year plan?

**Strategic Growth:** The most common priorities identified were consistent with previous comments about strategic, measured growth, increased infrastructure and systems to support growth, attracting new businesses, industries and services, supporting small businesses, and creating jobs while maintaining a small town feel and protecting farmland. Again, there was mention of including rural hamlets in strategic planning. Simplifying the development permit process to increase development opportunities and therefore increase the tax base was also noted.

**Balancing Increased Services and Asset Improvements with Reasonable Spending:** A significant wish list for increased/modernized services and amenities was identified, including more recreation programming for all ages, a community pool, community events, online services, parkland and green spaces, fleet, fire equipment, snow removal equipment, traffic calming measures, road and bridge improvements, access to QEW. However, it is important to note that respondents would like to see this accomplished with reasonable spending practices that do not significantly increase property taxes.

**Other:** Increasing police presence, improving park accessibility, easing restrictions to allow landowners to develop their lands, rural broadband, supporting agriculture.

**Outside scope:** Affordable housing, controlling inflation, improving waste services, increased childcare options, proper assessment of properties, places for seniors to age in place, more schools, increased health services.

### 4. How can the Township of West Lincoln provide better municipal services and programs to serve you and the broader community better?

**Increase Programming/Events:** The most common opinion was the need for increased programming and events. Respondents spotlighted all age groups – young children, school-aged children, teens, adults, seniors and families – when expressing the desire for more events and programs that support well being. Better communication (advertising/promotion) of events and programming was also noted for improvement, including suggestions for utilizing newspaper advertisements, signs, newsletters and tax bill inserts. Respondents also mentioned extended

business hours at the Community Centre and Libraries, year-round outdoor programs and events, organized sports, and the expansion of programming into communities outside of Smithville. There were also several mentions of a community pool.

**Roads:** Several respondents noted the need to tar and chip gravel roads. The need for a truck bypass around town, faster filling of potholes, and the desire for overnight parking permitted on residential streets were also noted.

**Shared Spaces:** Green spaces like parks and trails were mentioned as a priority, as well as increased security to protect shared spaces and a need to make parks accessible.

**Other:** It is worth noting that several responses said they are happy with services and programs. Other responses mentioned attracting more businesses, increasing public awareness through information sessions, removing red tape, providing digital services, reviewing services to plan for growth, increasing transparency on future developments, and increasing bylaw enforcement.

**Outside scope:** Affordable housing, improved garbage service, increased police presence, better transportation, better childcare options, more health services, and more diversity were noted.