

DATE: June 16, 2025

REPORT NO: CAO-02-2025

SUBJECT: **Strategic Plan Review**

CONTACT: Truper McBride, Chief Administrative Officer

OVERVIEW:

- In June 2023, Council adopted a Strategic Plan for the 2022–2026 term to guide both community and organizational development, supported by a list of Strategic Plan Deliverables.
- The Plan is organized under three overarching themes—community building, strategic growth, and agricultural enrichment—alongside one foundational theme focused on organizational capacity.
- This review provides a progress update on implementation efforts, highlights successes, and identifies areas where further work or adjustments are needed to stay aligned with Council's long-term vision.
- With the current Council term ending in 2026 and facing rapidly evolving economic and societal conditions, this review offers an opportunity to realign strategic priorities for greater impact.

RECOMMENDATION:

That, Information Report CAO-02-2025 titled “Strategic Plan Review” dated June 16, 2025 be received.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

Theme #N/A

BACKGROUND:

In June 2023, Council adopted its Strategic Plan (attached as Appendix A) to guide community and organizational development over the course of the 2022 to 2026 term of office. In addition to the Strategic Plan, Council also adopted a list of Strategic Plan Deliverable items (Appendix B). The Strategic Plan represents the long term vision of the municipality and provides strategies to be employed to achieve it.

The Strategic Plan is structured into three overarching themes and one foundational theme.

1. Building a safe, connected, caring and active community
2. Champion Strategic and Responsible Growth
3. Enrich our Strong Agricultural Legacy
4. Foundational: Advance Organizational Capacity and Effectiveness

This report provides Council an overview of the progress against the Strategic Plan Deliverables to date along with noted challenges and opportunities to make advancements towards the Municipality's long range vision.

Effectiveness of Strategic Plans

In general terms, the more focused a strategic plan is the easier it is to take action against it simply as a result of the finite resources of any organization. Strategic plans with three or four clear related, actionable, and measurable objectives have a higher achievement rate than plans that have longer lists of diverse goals.

With the 2022-2026 term of Council coming to an end next year, Council now has an opportunity to review its objectives and make refinements to account of changing economic, environmental, and societal pressures. Since the adoption of the Strategic Plan in 2023, the world has gone through significant rapid change as the international trading system is being restructured with associated tariffs creating further strain on the economy and risks for stagflation. This strategic planning session provides Council an opportunity to adjust priorities to proactively position West Lincoln to meet the future.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Appendix B to this report provides an accounting of all Strategic Plan Deliverables. The narrative below expands upon the status updates provided in the Appendices.

Building a Safe, Connected, Caring, and Active Community

This theme represents the type of community character and culture desired in West Lincoln. The theme focuses on ease of mobility for both people and goods throughout the Township in addition to an expansion of recreational programs and amenities such as parks and trails. It also envisions robust protective services through Fire, EMS/Health Care.

Status of Deliverables:

Action towards this theme is taken across multiple departments with each having a role to play. The organizational review has split Public Works and Recreation into two Departments which has allowed for further leadership capacity to focus on parks and recreation. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is expected to be to Council in late

2025 and will provide information on community programming needs and an accompanying fee structure to allow for more cost recovery on community services. Recruitment is now being completed for a Manager of Community Services which will provide further capacity in the Department to meet Council's goals listed in this section of the Strategic Plan.

Over the next year, Community and Protective Services will be focused on establishing an operating model for the West Lincoln Community Centre, revised fee structure to support expanded programming and cost recovery, along with better support and planning of community events.

Fire Services is well resourced from a capital perspective however continues to be in need of a Fire Prevention Officer and for the Administrative Assistant position to be made full time. Both of these staffing needs are high priority for ensuring community safety in the future.

Two strategic objectives that have not progressed to date include the feasibility study of a community hub in downtown Smithville and establishing an improvement plans for Caistor/Abingdon Community Halls. Administration will review both of these in the Draft 2026 Budget development process. A service delivery review of the community halls is targeted for 2027.

Champion Strategic and Responsible Growth

This theme represents and guides future growth and development within the municipality. This theme directs a collaborative relationship be established with the development industry to support residential and community growth. It speaks to mixed forms of housing that is complimented by commercial and industrial expansion. Finally, the theme considers ways to protect ecological infrastructure through restoration and linkages, and the greening of the downtown core of Smithville.

Status of Deliverables:

Good steady progress is being made on priorities across the theme. A number of objectives have been operationalized, including ongoing developer roundtable meetings, planning for mixed use development, greening of Smithville and complete community planning.

Two objectives that have not advanced are 2.8 'Project that beautify and enhance the character of West Lincoln' and 2.10 'Community Hub Feasibility Study for downtown Smithville'. A Building Façade Grant program is planned for review which will provide action on these initiatives.

Enrich our Strong Agricultural Legacy

This theme emphasizes that agriculture is one of the most important industries and employers in West Lincoln and the Region. West Lincoln is committed to protecting farmers and their land for the long term along with expansion, diversification and intensification of innovative farming opportunities.

More broadly, this theme is encouraging wide scale stakeholder engagement of the agricultural community and its partners and agencies.

Status of Deliverables:

Progress has been made through work on the Official Plan to research best practices in planning used by other rural municipalities and a new shop local campaign has been launched in partnership with the Niagara Region.

Further attention is needed to better engage with the local agricultural community on topics from economic development to help facilitate expanded agri-tourism to support to build the Farmers' Market. Administration is considering a potential roundtable engagement with the agricultural community in the fall of 2025 to begin this discussion.

Foundational: Advance Organizational Capacity and Effectiveness

This theme speaks to ensuring that the municipal corporation has the right amount of resources to deliver the services desired by stakeholders in an efficient, transparent, and effective manner.

Status of Deliverables:

Council has made meaningful progress towards a number of objectives in this fourth strategic theme. Revenue streams are now in the process of being reviewed with a focus on user fees as a means to cost recover services and expand community events and programming. Cemetery grants have been updated, marriage licenses services have been introduced, and a delegation of authority bylaw has been adopted.

Continued effort is needed with respect to policy review and the onboarding of new staff. A digital transformation strategy is being developed in 2025 to establish a roadmap for technology use and as a means to automate service delivery in the future. A full records management overhaul is needed and will become a growing priority to complete in the years ahead.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no financial impacts associated with this report however any changes to the strategic plan may have budget impacts for 2026.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS:

This report was reviewed and circulated to all department heads for input.

CONCLUSION:

This report serves as an overview of Councils current Strategic Plan, as approved in 2023, including the deliverables that have been met and deliverables on the horizon.

SCHEDULE(S)

Schedule A – Strategic Plan

Schedule B – Corporate Workplan by Department 2023-2026

Prepared and Submitted by:

Truper McBride
Chief Administrative Officer