

SWOT Analysis – Feb 2019 Strategic Planning

Strengths

- Our people - active engaged citizens many of whom are passionate Strong volunteer spirit
- Exceptional staff
- Location - proximity to Toronto and being on the lake
- Our history - we have an interesting story to tell
- Small community with quality values
- High number and range of offerings given our size
- Natural beauty - we are good stewards of our environment
- Town assets - e.g. Victoria Hall, beach, heritage, historic buildings
- Significant number of activities and events that are well communicated and marketed - e.g. Waterfront Festival, Armistice 18
- Cobourg is a safe community (evidence from Police Services survey)
- Good infrastructure - e.g. roads and sewers
- Town gardens and plantings. We own our own greenhouses; won Communities in Bloom competition
- Strong manufacturing sector

Weaknesses

- Lack of outreach for vulnerable citizens - housing needs, mental health issues, etc.
- Not optimizing engagement of our youth in Town activities
- Not listening well enough and responding to the needs of small businesses - experiencing roadblocks and red tape
- Vacant stores and rundown buildings in the downtown core - not the hub of the community
- Communications with the public is not where it should be - e.g. website not as user friendly as it could be, do not publish meeting minutes, not always sending notices of road closures to affected properties
- Do not have an information technology strategic plan which we identified as a strategic action in the last strategic plan
- Despite what we say, not really a four season destination - winter lull
- Not capitalizing on the potential economic benefits of day trippers and destination visitors
- Beach congestion and lack of parking especially on summer weekends
- Lack of labour generally and appropriate skilled labour in particular
- Lack of affordable housing and housing types (0.4 % vacancy rate)
- Public mistrust of politics and government - people not feeling listened to and that the Town is not inclusive
- Perception that taxes are too high
- Lack of diversity in the Town's makeup - demographics, ethnicity, gender
- Lack of physical connectivity between the beach and the downtown
- Treating issues in silos and not recognizing interdependencies - e.g. labour force and housing

Opportunities

- Increased awareness of the importance of sustainability - economic, environmental, social - e.g. Province now requiring municipalities to adopt climate change plans and canopy plans
- Public transit seen as important for environmental sustainability and to provide alternatives for commuting - e.g. GO, VIA
- Growing awareness and support for the provision of affordable housing
- Food security now a recognized ongoing need in communities
- Growing recognition of the need and responsibility for serving under-represented populations - e.g. mental health, homeless
- Partnerships seen as an increasingly valuable way of doing business
- Residents and businesses increasingly looking at location and transportation when making decisions about where to live and work
- Technology facilitates access to information and improves ability to communicate
- Population and employment growth in the Greater Toronto Area makes neighbouring municipalities attractive
- Communities with strong arts, culture and "creative class" becoming increasingly attractive
- Sports and tourism are strong growth sectors
- Agribusiness is a growing sector of the economy
- Individuals and families increasingly value active healthy lifestyles
- Growth in retiring seniors sector many of whom are interested in staying active and volunteering in their communities

Threats

- Increasing legislation that can be restrictive and expensive to implement
- Municipalities are expected to do more with less - e.g. downloading, cancelling programs and anticipated changes to health, education and energy
- Growing social isolation - e.g. seniors, young mothers, people relying on social media
- Cybersecurity poses a real threat to community safety
- Potential for increasing emergencies - e.g. flooding, terrorism
- Climate change is impacting the environment and services
- Environmental degradation with impacts on water (quantity and quality), natural resources
- Increasing automation is eliminating jobs
- Aging population means fewer people in the workforce and potentially higher demands for social services
- National and international political policies impact the economy e.g. embargo on aluminum
- Increasing public apathy and distrust of politicians - e.g. lower voter turnout
- Rising costs of doing business and living

Strategic Issues

- Availability of affordable housing
- Embracing integrated sustainability practices in our programs and services (e.q. parking, transportation)
- Completing our asset management plan
- Ensuring open, transparent, clear and timely communications (aided by technology)
- Responsibly managing/stewarding our waterfront (including tourism)
- Retaining and attracting qualified staff
- Being more citizen centred
- Finding improving ways to engage our diverse community
- Defining the Town's role in arts and culture in the community
- Improving efficiencies and effectiveness of municipal operations
- Being economically resilient in our changing economy
- Leveraging our assets and economic opportunities