

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Chief Administrative Officer

2021 Future Oxford Staff Update

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Report No. CAO 2021-07, 2021 Future Oxford Staff Update be received for information.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- This report highlights the accomplishments realized through County Council's investment in community sustainability, via implementation of the Future Oxford Community Sustainability Plan.
- Council's investment includes the provision of staff time to resource the 'backbone' function of the Future Oxford Partnership and the various action teams within its network.

Implementation Points

Future Oxford is an on-going process of engaging stakeholders in the community in co-creating a vision of a sustainable future and linking that to realistic planning and collaborative action today.

The Plan is built on past and present strengths through Oxford, and emphasizes long-term thinking, engaging community stakeholders, creating partnerships, and collective impact.

Ongoing Future Oxford activities, including keeping the Plan relevant, monitoring progress, facilitating a network of stakeholders, engaging the public, and celebrating success stories remain critical to success.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts associated with this report.







Communications

Many individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments are actively engaged in advancing the Plan through the Future Oxford network of leadership, pillar, and action-oriented accomplishments.

- The leadership table, called the Future Oxford Partnership meets regularly with two-way communication among themselves and throughout their own respective networks.
- The Environment Network operates with a 'door's always open' approach, inviting interested, passionate individuals to (virtual) networks three or more times per year. This Network acts as an entry point for potential action team members.
- Action Teams meet regularly to share information, identify challenges and opportunities in Oxford, and prioritize where to focus their efforts.

The regular, ongoing collaboratives listed above are enhanced by Future Oxford's digital channels, website, targeted emails, and the occasion advertisement via traditional media outlets.

Strategic Plan (2020-2022)

					
WORKS WELL TOGETHER	WELL CONNECTED	SHAPES THE FUTURE	INFORMS & ENGAGES	PERFORMS & DELIVERS	POSITIVE IMPACT
		3.iii.	4.i.		

DISCUSSION

Background

The Future Oxford Community Sustainability Plan, adopted by County Council in 2015, is a grass roots community-based plan that embodies three pillars of sustainability: Community, Economy, and Environment in an Oxford context. Oxford boasts a leading agriculture, agri-food and manufacturing based economy that is home to Canada's Outdoor Farm Show. Oxford's urban communities are full of life, entertainment, and commerce; its rural areas are strong farming communities rich in natural resources and history. Oxford's individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments are resourceful, innovative, and committed to a quality of life in Oxford second to none.

The Plan was developed from a broad consultation and engagement process led by a Steering Committee comprising of active and informed citizens representing a cross-section of the community from both a geographic perspective as well as with respect to the 'pillars' of sustainability (i.e. community, economy, environment).

The Plan is premised on a vision that encompasses vibrancy, prosperity and responsibility with a simple mission to 'achieve community sustainability throughout Oxford'. The Plan's goals and objectives reflect the community's perspectives regarding accessibility, education, and creativity as well as growing a vibrant economy and creating an Oxford that is a leader in environmental action. While the original Plan is specific, it was the expectation of the original Future Oxford Partnership, that the plan be a 'living document' that is intended to evolve over time through both use in the community and periodic review.

Comments

The County acts as the backbone organization for Future Oxford. Backbone organizations are vital to the sustainability of a collective impact effort. To fulfill the role of 'backbone', County staff facilitate strategic direction, engage the leadership table (the Partnership), engage the action teams and community partners, and enable change to happen.

Staff from the CAOs office and the Strategic Communication and Engagement team have been integral to the accomplishments below, facilitating strategic visioning, providing administrative and communication support, engaging the actions teams and community partners, as well as making strategic connections between initiatives throughout the county that advance the Future Oxford vision.

2021 Accomplishments

With the **Future Oxford Partnership**, effort focused on recruitment.

- Six new members, "Partners", were welcomed to the Partnership in September, infusing a renewed sense of purpose into the mix with existing members.
- Current Partners are Al Lauzon, Bryan Smith, Chris Kennedy, Heather McDowell, Kayla Doan, Monica Clare, Rick Cox, Sam Coghlan, Samantha Haverkamp, Stephen Cornwell, and Whisper Gardiner.
- Many of Oxford's communities are currently represented, as indicated by the map below:



- On behalf of the Partnership, staff facilitated collaborations with:
 - ROEDC's virtual fam tour video series
 - ROEDC's We Grow Together campaign
 - University of Guelph Rural Response to COVID-19 research
 - Maglin Site Furniture and the Upper Thames Region Conservation Authority storm pond rehabilitation partnership
 - Bridges Out of Poverty (workshop attendance for new Partners)
 - Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan review
 - Voices that Count: collaboration with Community Employment Services, the Tillsonburg Multi-Service Centre, and Oxford County Human Services (FOx role as an observer)
 - Association of Municipalities Ontario Municipal Innovation Awards submission
 - Woodstock Chamber of Commerce Awards nomination response
- The Future Oxford Partnership met monthly.

Within the **Community Network**, staff efforts were focused on renewing efforts to end poverty:

- Zero Poverty Oxford (ZPO) took on the new, more inclusive name of Reducing Poverty Together (RPT).
- Prioritization and recruitment was driven by three community workshops with 50 participants representing businesses, not-for-profit organizations, governments, and the community-at-large.
- RPT met monthly.

Within the **Economy Network**, staff efforts were focused on advocating for implementation of the Workforce Readiness Plan, which included:

- Establishing an Employer Advisory Committee (EAC).
- Launch of a youth-focused campaign to retain Oxford youth by showcasing many attractive careers available within our boundaries.
- Launch of the Manufacture My Future – an employer-driven, needs-focused program – providing skills training for current employees and drawing job seekers into the sector by providing free training and knowledge.

Within the **Environment Network**, staff efforts contributed to a variety of successful initiatives, including:

- The Environment Network met three times, hosting county-wide virtual networking events to bring together passionate environmental individuals to identify collaborative opportunities.
- County staff continued to attend South-West Oxford's monthly Environment and Innovation Committee meetings, sharing information and mining for opportunities to collaborate.

Smart Energy Oxford (SEO) remained active, with staff efforts focused on:

- Hosting virtual Speakers Series events in partnership with the Oxford County Libraries, showcasing the state of the hydrogen industry and Woodstock General Hospital's journey to sustainability.
- Preparing a letter to the Office of the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Energy, advocating for virtual net metering.
- SEO met monthly (except for July).

Zero Waste Oxford (ZWO) was as active as always, with staff efforts focused on supporting:

- A full review of the Zero Waste Plan, and drafting an update to ZP Plan.
- Planning for an on-site food scrap program at the Renaissance in Tavistock, utilizing green cone digesters.
- Zero Waste Oxford met monthly.
- Bryan Smith, Chair of ZWO is commended for his leadership and enthusiasm toward achieving zero waste.

Future Oxford and the teams listed above rely heavily on the commitment, passion, and efforts of volunteers to advance the vision and action items contained in the Plan.

Conclusions

The development of a community-driven sustainability plan is supported by all of the strategic directions contained in the County Strategic Plan, and in particular, the County's commitment to thinking ahead and wisely shaping the future by applying social, financial and environmental sustainability lenses to significant decisions. The Future Oxford Plan, together with a community-oriented implementation and reporting strategy, is an effective tool for the County when considering emerging issues and opportunities going forward.

Staff, in unison with the Future Oxford Partnership, are pleased to share with Council the activities and accomplishments of 2021.

SIGNATURES

Report Author:

Original signed by

Dennis Guy
Manager of Strategic Initiatives

Approved for submission:

Original signed by

Michael Duben, B.A., LL.B.
Chief Administrative Officer