




Strategic Planning for Municipalities


10 Questions that Councillors Might Ask
About Strategic Planning

UNSM

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*“If you don’t know where
you are going, you’ll
end up someplace
else.” (Yogi Berra)*





Ten Questions

1. Why should a municipality develop a strategic plan?
2. What is the real value of a strategic plan to a municipal council?
3. What is the Council's role in relation to strategic planning?
4. How does strategic planning "fit" with other types of planning?
5. What is a good process for developing a strategic plan?



Ten Questions

6. What does a good strategic plan look like?
7. How does a strategic plan get “traction” within the organization of the municipality?
8. How is progress in relation to the strategic plan measured and monitored?
9. What does progress reporting to Council look like?
10. How does Council report on the municipality’s progress to its citizens and other stakeholders?



Key Definitions

- **Integrated community sustainability plan** - mandatory under Municipal Funding Agreement; identification of 20-30 year Vision and infrastructure requirements for sustainable future focused on 1) natural environment, 2) social elements, 3) local and regional economy and 4) culture and heritage
- **Regional/municipal plan** - 25-year plan that guides land-use policy development by municipalities; can be comprehensive or single issue; optional



Key Definitions

- **“Strategic”** - highly important or essential to an intended objective (versus business as usual)
- **Strategic plan** - 3 to 5 year plan that identifies the critical priorities and outcomes to be achieved by the municipality over that time
- **Annual business plan** - 12-month plan for the organization; includes a budget component; sometimes also referred to as a corporate plan
- **Outcome** - what success looks like; end result vs. activity
- **Strategy** - how you get to where you want to go



1. Why have a strategic plan?

- Big rocks vs. gravel and sand
- Municipal councils elected for four-year terms - 1460 days
- What do you, collectively, hope to accomplish as a council in that time?
- What do you want your legacy to be?
- Strategic plan - medium term plan for progress towards a longer-term vision
- Direction-setting; priorities/choices



“Developing and overseeing implementation of our strategic plan is the most important thing a municipal council accomplishes over its three year term.” (Ian Duncan, Mayor, Hinton Town Council)



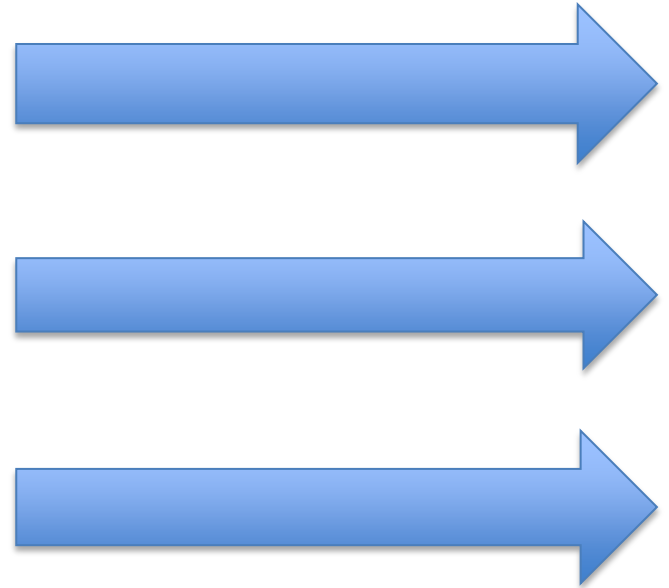
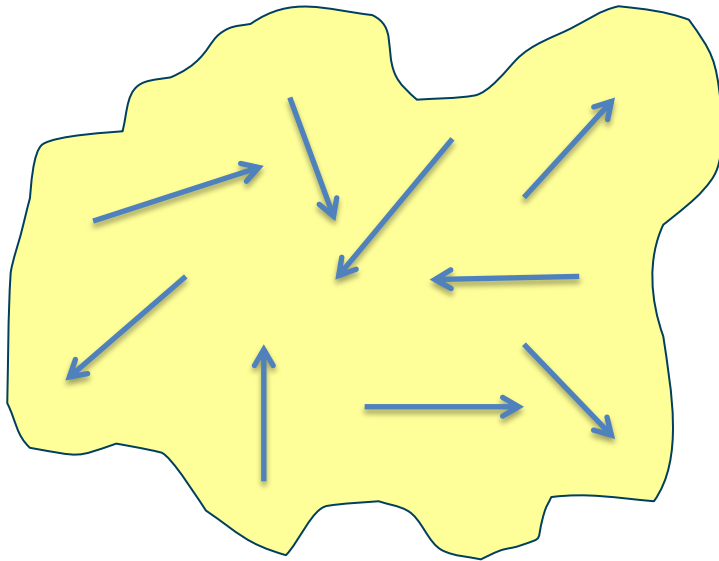



2. What is the real value of a strategic plan?

- Focus
- Alignment with longer term plans
- Council and Administration on the same page
- Direction for departmental plans/budgets
- Key component of accountability relationship between CAO and Council




A Framework For Action





“This unity of vision brings unity of purpose to all of the City’s activities, and sets measurable objectives to ensure that we deliver.” (Stephen Mandel, Mayor, City of Edmonton)





“*The Strategic Plan provides Council and Staff with a common focus, priorities, outcomes and strategies to be pursued over the term of the plan.*” (Al Kenning, City Manager, City of Nanaimo)





3. What is Council's role in strategic planning?

- Approve the process including the “touch points” with Council during the process
- Participate in the early stages - environmental scanning and identification of strategic themes/outcomes
- Review and assess the reasonableness of the proposed strategic plan
- Approve the strategic plan
- Monitor and report on the municipality's progress



3. What is Council's role in strategic planning?

- Senior Administration's role is to:
 - Develop a suggested process
 - Design and lead all aspects of the strategic planning process
 - Lead/conduct all research and analysis required
 - Prepare the draft strategic plan
 - Present and explain the draft plan



3. What is Council's role in strategic planning?

- Senior Administration's role is to:
 - Implement the strategic plan
 - Design and implement a progress tracking and reporting system to Council



4. How does strategic planning “fit” with other types of planning?

- Bridges the gap between really long-term plans and annual plans/budgets
- In sync with term of Council’s mandate
- Focused on the work of the entire organization, not just land-use/infrastructure issues



4. How does strategic planning “fit” with other types of planning?

- Where are investments of time, energy and \$ required to advance the municipality towards its longer-term vision?
- Considers multiple dimensions of the organization's priorities - e.g. programs, services, reputation, organizational excellence, infrastructure, HR, governance, etc.



5. What is a good process for strategic planning?

- a) Initial research to set a solid foundation for planning
- Global trends
 - Local/regional trends
 - Municipal government trends in Canada
 - Your municipality-specific trends
 - Trends include demographic, economic, environmental, social, technological, etc.



5. What is a good process for strategic planning?

- b) Sharing of research via “primer” or discussion paper
- c) Identification of consultation questions
- d) Consultation sessions with key constituencies - e.g. Council, Administration, staff, agencies, citizens, etc.
- e) Analysis of feedback and development of a draft strategic plan



5. What is a good process for strategic planning?

- f) Allow Council to “chew on” the draft strategic plan
- g) Consider the merits of another round of broad consultation on the draft plan
- h) Revise and finalize the draft plan based on input from Council and others
- i) Strategic plan is then presented to Council for approval
- j) Clear identification of process for progress monitoring and reporting



Public Consultation Process

Broad Participatory Approaches

- Public information meetings
- Open houses
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Workbooks
- Communication tools such as newsletters, website, public displays and other communication initiatives

Smaller Informal Initiatives

- One-on-one meetings
- Local community meetings
- Fairs/events
- Meetings with various community groups - allows targeted engagement of those who might not otherwise participate



6. What does a good strategic plan look like?

- Brief and easy to read
- Mission and values
- Vision - what the municipality aspires to be like in 10 years or longer
- Planning context - a summary of the key trends and their implications



6. What does a good strategic plan look like?

- Identified priority areas/strategic themes (aka “big rocks”) for the next 3 years (max of 3-5 themes)
- Clear outcomes - we will know we have been successful if X, Y or Z
 - Realistic given resource constraints
- Specific discussion of progress monitoring and reporting process



6. What does a good strategic plan look like?

- Does NOT include:
 - Details regarding HOW the outcomes will be achieved - these fall to management implementation plans



7. How does a strategic plan get “traction”?

- CAO is responsible for implementation
 1. Clear and broad communication of the strategic plan across the organization - variety of channels - e.g. Town Halls, staff meetings, electronic means, etc.
 2. Development of measurable targets and key performance indicators



7. How does a strategic plan get “traction”?

3. Development of annual business plans that support the strategic plan (“12-month chunks)
4. Development of departmental/unit annual plans
5. Development of individual performance goals/objectives



8. How is progress measured and monitored?

- In a variety of ways:
 - Qualitative
 - Individual performance reviews
 - Departmental/unit staff meetings/reports
 - Senior management team meetings/reports
 - Quarterly updates on progress from CAO to Council



8. How is progress measured and monitored?

- In a variety of ways:
 - Quantitative
 - Key performance indicators re progress towards target
 - Financial performance in relation to approved budget - with variance analysis
- Important to focus on progress towards outcomes vs. busyness of activity levels



9. What does progress reporting look like?

- It typically includes:
 - Quarterly updates from CAO on progress towards annual business plan outcomes
 - Quarterly updates on key performance indicators and financial performance
 - Annual critical evaluation of progress in relation to strategic plan outcomes by CAO (as a foundation for mid-course adjustments and the development of next year's annual business plan)



9. What does progress reporting look like?

- Important to focus on progress towards outcomes vs. busyness of activity levels



10. How does Council report on progress to its stakeholders?

- Typically through annual reports
 - Formats vary
- Content should be balanced - accomplishments and challenges
- Identify any mid-course adjustments to the strategic plan and why



Q&A

- Questions?