

Environmental Framework**Report Purpose**

To seek Councils' approval for the Environmental Framework.

Recommendation

THAT the Environmental Framework outcomes and associated objectives for air, water, land, biodiversity, waste, and energy, as set out in pages 26 to 72 of enclosure 2 of the June 29, 2021 Planning and Development Services report, be approved; and

THAT Administration provide an update report, at least on an annual basis, to Priorities Committee or Council on the progress made on the implementation of the Environmental Framework.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals

Goal 4 - Ensure effective stewardship of water, land, air and energy resources

Goal 2 - Manage, invest and plan for sustainable municipal infrastructure

Goal 5 - Foster collaboration through regional, community and governmental partnerships

Report

It has been 10 years since approval of the Environmental Sustainability Framework (2009). Throughout 2020, we have reflected upon, reframed and renewed our environmental priorities. With the foundation of the previous framework and ensuring relevance with current issues and trends, several new priorities have been incorporated into the updated Environmental Framework (2021). Topic areas have been expanded from five to six and include air, water, land, biological diversity, waste, and energy. Each topic area has a clear outcome and specific objectives identified that prioritize healthy ecosystems and set a foundation for healthy citizens. In order to tell our story, the six outcomes and 35 objectives were quantified by documenting:

- **Innovative practices** – processes and programs we have been doing since 2009.
- **Supportive tools** – plans, policies, bylaws and standards that we have put in place since 2009.
- **Strategic initiatives** – new plans, processes, programs, policies, bylaws, or standards that focus on change, spur discussion and garner commitment. They are opportunities that may require an investment of resources.

The Environmental Framework will support a coordinated approach between administrative departments and external stakeholders in Strathcona County by enabling them to work together, leveraging people and financial resources, and responding to community needs.

It became apparent during our research and workshops that we have been actively, but not collectively, working towards some significant environmental improvements for our community. In order to "tell our story" accurately, holistically and robustly, it is important to document and recognize the work to date and realize new initiatives to continue down the path we've set.

Interdepartmental reviews via workshop and referral were completed by over 40 department representatives. Thoughtful feedback was received and a renewed interest and sense of sharing around various topic areas was evident. In order to build on that momentum and assist Planning and Development Services in the implementation of the

framework, an Environmental Framework Integration Team (EFIT) will be created. The team will consist of those department representatives that have already identified strategic initiatives documented within the Framework and those that are actively working within the topic areas.

The purpose of EFIT will be to facilitate implementation of the Framework. A Terms of Reference has been developed that defines roles and responsibilities of the department representatives including:

- ensure up-to-date documentation of programs/plans/policies/strategic initiatives
- ensure coordination of programs/plans/policies/strategic initiatives between departments and external stakeholders
- assist with research and identification of grants and funding opportunities
- support the annual Environmental Framework reporting
- provide strategic initiative recommendations to Executive Team/Council

Members of EFIT may meet at least quarterly to report on existing programs/plans/policies and review new opportunities/strategic initiatives. EFIT will communicate regularly with Senior Leadership Team to ensure effective implementation of the Framework.

In order to provide timely and comprehensive implementation of the Environmental Framework, the following activities will be provided within Planning and Development Services:

- a) Program/plan/policy development and implementation
 - Lead research and development of programs/plans/policies in support of the Environmental Framework
 - Coordinate programs/plans/policies between departments
 - Coordinate programs/plans/policies between external stakeholders
 - Research external and internal opportunities and funding for strategic initiatives
 - Maintain database for grants and funding opportunities
- b) Education and outreach to support the Environmental Framework
 - Recruit and lead Task Forces targeting topic areas and strategic initiatives
 - Create public education materials and deliver information at events
- c) Internal support and collaboration to support the Environmental Framework
 - Lead EFIT
 - Maintain database for programs/plans/policies and strategic initiatives
 - Support and lead annual Environmental Framework reporting
 - Regularly meet with departments not represented on EFIT to document programs/plans/policies and strategic initiatives
 - Regularly meet with external stakeholders to document strategic initiatives and set connections with internal stakeholders

We have renewed focus and subject matter experts within our existing administration. Rather than sustaining the Environmental Framework from the side of our desks, active dedication is required and will be provided by Planning and Development Services. There are clear opportunities for building internal capacity specifically to support department-defined programs/plans/policies and internal collaboration networks.

Council and Committee History

April 20, 2021	Priorities Committee received an update on the draft Environmental Framework
January 26, 2021	Priorities Committee received information on Reducing our Carbon Footprint
June 30, 2009	Council approved the Environmental Sustainability Framework

Other Impacts**Policy:** n/a**Legislative/Legal:** n/a**Interdepartmental:** All**Master Plan/Framework:** Environmental Sustainability Framework**Communication Plan**

A detailed public engagement and communication plan was developed to support this update. Interdepartmental administrative reviews focussed on challenges and opportunities since 2009, which have been captured through a series of workshops with department representatives. Six internal workshops were completed between November 2020 and January 2021. Over 40 department representatives participated. Based on that input, a draft Environmental Framework was developed and submitted to all department representatives on February 2, 2021.

External engagement focussed on workshops with municipal representatives from the Capital Region Municipal Sustainability Group (January 29, 2021), representatives of non-governmental organizations (February 18, 2021), and the Youth Advisory Committee (scheduled for April 12, 2021).

A mixed-topic survey offered through the Strathcona County Online Opinion Panel was completed in October 2020, followed up by a full survey completed in March 2021.

A communications strategy has been developed to support the Environmental Framework: to highlight environmental innovative practices, supportive tools and strategic initiatives; create internal awareness; increase stakeholder awareness of environmental issues and their local impacts; and define how Strathcona County is addressing these issues.

Key messages:

- We are committed to sustaining and protecting healthy ecosystems and healthy citizens
- We use sound, evidence-based decision-making tools to take environmental action
- We can all take action to address local, regional and global environmental issues

Enclosures

- 1 Environmental Framework presentation
- 2 Environmental Framework