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DEPARTMENT: Planning
DATE: December 21, 2009
PREPARED BY: Jeff Watson, Policy Planner
REPORT NUMBER: PLN2009-26
SUBJECT: Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) Part 3 – Goals and Possible Actions

PURPOSE

To present Part 3 of the Sustainability Action Plan - Future Policies and Actions Discussion Paper and a sustainability plan amendment to the Official Plan.

BACKGROUND

Part 1 of this Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) outlined the rationale for the adoption of sustainability principles in day to day decision-making and in long term municipal planning. It summarized the efforts of other municipalities to adopt such plans.

Part 2 set out the opinions of municipal staff of the Town of Essex toward sustainability and identified the initiatives already taken by the different departments in achieving sustainability goals and objectives.

In this part, Part 3, sustainability goals, objectives and actions are set out in order to begin the process of integrating sustainability principles into our day to day activities and long term decision-making. A balanced sustainable community will proactively address the challenges our society faces, reduce its dependency on finite and non-renewable resources, maintain a strong sense of community and pave the way for a healthy and productive future for the generations of citizens to come.

A vision statement and six overall sustainability goals are set out and possible actions to help achieve these goals are listed for further discussion. It also identifies the need to review internal municipal activities and strategic planning and to determine specific directions and actions we should take to achieve our commitment to a sustainable future.

COMMENTS

As stated in Part 3, the incorporation of sustainability principles into day to day decision-making and long term planning is a complex task that will occur over time. Given issues surrounding, climate change, peak oil, dwindling resources, asset management and budgetary constraints, there will be

increasing pressure on municipalities from higher levels of government, and, eventually local citizenry, to become a “sustainable” community. The transition to a sustainable community will not be quick or easy, but, it will be beneficial to the long term health of the community and to future generations who also want the opportunities for productive and healthy lives.

It is recommended that Part 3 be received and the following additional steps be taken:

1. That an amendment to the Town of Essex Official Plan, incorporating a sustainable community vision statement and goals into the OP, be adopted in principle and circulated for public notice and comment;
2. That the draft sustainability action policies set out in Part 3 be circulated for internal review and comment.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

No financial impact as this is a discussion paper for future policy direction.

RECOMMENDATION(S)/CONCLUSION(S)

1. That Part 3, the Sustainability Action Plan Future Policies and Actions Discussion Paper, a discussion paper proposing sustainability goals, objectives and actions related to the day to day municipal operations and long term planning for the Town of Essex, be received and circulated for internal review and comment.
2. That the proposed amendment to the Town of Essex Official Plan, incorporating sustainability principles into the OP, as set out in Appendix “A” to this report, be received and circulated for public review and comment.

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APPENDIX "A"

Proposed Sustainability Policy Statement for the Town of Essex Official Plan

The Town of Essex Official Plan is hereby amended by adding the following subsection as subsection 2.3 and the existing subsection 2.3, Time Period of the Plan, is hereby renumbered 2.4:

"2.3 A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

The Town of Essex is committed to the incorporation of sustainability principles in its operations and activities.

Vision Statement

The Town of Essex is a community which provides for the long term social, environmental, economic and cultural needs of its residents, while respecting the natural environment, our natural resources and the natural processes that sustain us.

Our Goals

1. We will respect and enhance our community values, the health of our residents and the natural environment;
2. We will strive to meet the basic needs of our residents in a healthy and safe environment, with adequate food, affordable housing, opportunities for employment and access to education, balanced transportation and recreation;
3. We will maintain an environmentally sustainable community, minimize our contribution to waste and natural degradation and use our land, resources and energy most efficiently;
4. We will show civic leadership through green, eco-friendly practices, the management of our resources and procurement strategies;
5. We will support the principles of smart growth when considering major transportation and land use submissions;
6. We will foster public awareness of the need to adopt sustainable core values and principles.

In order to achieve this vision and to satisfy these goals, the Town will adopt a Sustainability Action Plan, as a working document, to set objectives and determine actions that are intended to make sustainability thinking an integral part of all municipal activities. Throughout this Official Plan are more specific guidelines and objectives devoted to the achievement of a sustainable community.

The Town will show to the community by example, through the application of these Official Plan guidelines and objectives, through its day to day operations and in its long term strategic planning, the merits of adopting sustainability principles. Over time, by way of such actions and through public outreach and education, it is expected that our citizens will incorporate sustainability thinking into their lives and activities for the benefit of the entire community and the generations who follow us.”