



# Where You **BELONG**

2019-2022 CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN



PROGRESSIVE | HEALTHY | STEWARDSHIP | VIBRANT | EXPERIENCE | RESILIENCY

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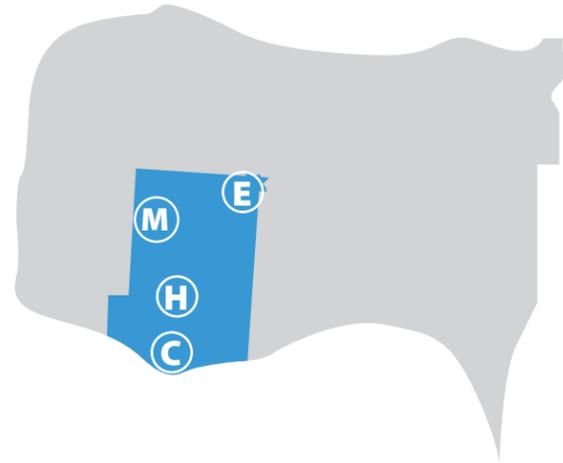


# Community Profile

Centrally located in the heart of Essex County, our community stretches from the “hub” of the county at Essex Centre, through prime agricultural land, all the way to the shores of Lake Erie at Colchester. More than 20,000 people spread over nearly 300 square kilometres call our community home.

We host the most wineries of any community in our region, and our agricultural roots run deep. Not only do we boast an amazing agricultural heritage, we’re also home to some of the oldest European settlements in the country.

We enjoy a quality of life that’s hard to beat. We rank among the safest communities in Canada and we’re home to expansive rural areas and **four unique urban centres**.



# Our Urban Centres



Essex Centre is the largest of the four urban centres. At the geographic centre of Essex County, it offers many shops, services, and community facilities. It is home to the Spitfire Memorial, the Essex 73s, more than a dozen murals painted by local artists, and the annual Essex Fun Fest.

Colchester is a waterfront community on the shores of Lake Erie which is noted for its harbour and beautiful beach. Known as the Walleye Capital of Canada, Colchester is an iconic stop for visitors. It is one of the oldest European settlements in Canada and recently celebrated its 225th anniversary.

Harrow serves the agricultural community and is home to the largest federal agricultural research centre in the country, as well as the Harrow Fair, established in 1854. Harrow offers a number of local shops and services and is a hub for some of the region’s top manufacturers, such as Atlas Tube and Sellick.

McGregor, with its strong roots in agriculture, is notable for its outdoor sports activities at Co-An Park and as the perfect stop for cyclists at the intersection of two local greenways. It is also home to the Essex County Steam and Gas Engine Museum, the largest steam engine museum in Ontario.

# Mayor’s Message

On behalf of Council and the citizens of the Town of Essex, it is my pleasure to present the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. This plan represents a vision for the future, and provides our community with a road map to get there.

It is the product of many hours of hard work and dedication by my fellow Council members and administration. The plan has also incorporated feedback from community members from all four wards, as well as stakeholders throughout our region.

While the Council table is a place for discussion and debate, this plan is an important reminder of the goals on which we have set our sights. It is a document our citizens can use as a guide to where we want to go as an organization, while providing transparency and accountability as we push to meet the strategic goals and actions. I look forward to seeing our vision become a reality.

Larry Snively  
Mayor 



# CAO’s Message

This plan helps define who we are as an organization and provides guidance on where we are going. It was developed following thoughtful consultation with our residents, businesses, stakeholders, Council and Town staff.

The Strategic Plan provides us with a common focus, and outlines priorities and strategies to be achieved over the term of the plan. It establishes a commitment from the organization to our citizens and stakeholders – clarifying priorities and opportunities to best meet the needs of our community. It will help our community move successfully into the future by pursuing key areas and outlining activities for strengthening the municipality. Developing an implementation plan, with flexibility in mind, will allow administration to effectively manage the priority areas of the plan. We will ensure we are on track through regular communications with Council and citizens.

It is through the strength of our people that we can make a difference. I am proud to work here leading a team of dedicated and engaged employees who strive to make Essex the place **where you belong** for generations to come!

Chris Nepszy  
Chief Administrative Officer 



# Overview of Engagement

From March to May of 2019 the Town of Essex conducted consultations to obtain feedback from citizens, stakeholders, Town staff, and members of Council.

Engagement began with brainstorming workshops with managers and Town staff in March of 2019. One month later, citizens and stakeholders weighed in with a Community Survey, which asked them to reflect on what they enjoy most about the Town and what our priorities should be over the next four years.

Nearly 500 citizens and stakeholders provided their feedback, which was then provided to elected leaders for a final strategic planning workshop and brainstorming session.

All of this feedback provided valuable input on establishing the six strategic priorities and associated action items.



## VISION

The Town of Essex will be a prosperous, sustainable, and thriving community for families, business, and development.

## VALUES

- PROGRESSIVE**  
Progressive and Sustainable Infrastructure
- HEALTHY**  
Healthy Community and Quality of Life

## MISSION

The Town of Essex, as a progressive and resilient organization, commits to providing leadership, high quality community programming, sustainable assets, opportunities for growth, and vibrant experiences for citizens, stakeholders, and visitors.

- STEWARDSHIP**  
Financial and Economic Stewardship

- VIBRANT**  
Vibrant Growth and Development

- EXPERIENCE**  
Citizen and Customer Experience

- RESILIENCY**  
Organizational Effectiveness and Resiliency

## We heard you:

Top four priorities identified in the community survey.

1



Growth and development

2



Local economy

3



Balancing urban/rural needs

4



Service delivery

# PROGRESSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Manage, invest, and plan for sustainable municipal infrastructure which meets the current and future needs of the municipality and its citizens.

## Ensure financial stability of current and new infrastructure

- a. Incorporate the Asset Management Plan into budget and forecasting process.
- b. Review reserve financing for annual infrastructure replacement.

## Invest in new infrastructure to meet the needs of all residents

- a. Develop a sustainable priority plan for roads.
- b. Implement a rural drainage and sewage strategy.
- c. Review funding models and long-term planning to meet sustainability objectives for roads, bridges, and other assets.

## Identify and work with stakeholders and partners to meet infrastructure goals

- a. Expand access to broadband internet service.
- b. Improve the road assumption process.
- c. Develop formal partnerships to help achieve infrastructure goals.

## Mitigate the impact of climate change and reduce environmental footprint

- a. Invest in new technology and process improvements for operations and new construction projects.
- b. Identify energy efficiencies in Town facilities.
- c. Continue to invest in flood mitigation and work with partners to reduce the impact of shoreline flooding.
- d. Complete a storm water and sanitary master plan for urban centres.



# HEALTHY COMMUNITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE



Create a safe, friendly, and inclusive community which encourages healthy, active living for people of all ages and abilities.

Provide every resident with access to parks, recreation, and cultural opportunities and improve quality of life through affordable, inclusive, and accessible programming and recreational facilities

- a. Continue to offer a wide range of programming in all four urban centres for all age groups and continue to promote current sport facilities to reach optimal usage and limit downtime.
- b. Explore the potential for Town-facilitated sports leagues.
- c. Maintain High Five accreditation, which sets out principles and goals for youth programming, throughout 2021.

Expand our active transportation network, including multi-use paths and trails

- a. Optimize active infrastructure investment by continuing to work with the County Wide Active Transportation System (CWATS) to connect the entire municipality.
- b. Evaluate active transportation gaps in the urban centres to develop a plan to provide trails to connect neighbourhoods.
- c. Implement the Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan recommendation to hard surface all trails in urban centres.

Conduct a review of recreation facilities

- a. Identify potential for refurbishment of aging facilities.
- b. Develop business plans for capital and operating costs on potential new recreation facilities to show annual impact on Town budgets.
- c. Continue to develop Heritage Park to become a destination within Essex Centre.
- d. Implement the Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan recommendation on sport field shortage in Essex Centre by creating a strategy to develop the Essex Centre Sport fields.
- e. Make sustainable choices to minimize our environmental footprint.



# FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC STEWARDSHIP

Provide fiscal stewardship and value for tax dollars to ensure the long-term financial health of the municipality.

## Maintain financial sustainability and manage the Town's financial reserves

- a. Manage appropriate levels of debt.
- b. Investigate new revenue sources to maintain affordability and competitiveness while attracting investment.
- c. Explore opportunities to diversify the municipality's economy.
- d. Formalize a Reserve Management Plan.

## Invest in sustainable infrastructure and assets

- a. Update the Asset Management Plan at least every five years to maintain relevance and reliability for future financial planning of all Town assets.

## Increase long-term financial planning processes

- a. Expand the current five-year financial plan to ten years for capital and include the plan in the forecast portion of the annual budget.

## Ensure the Town is a destination of choice to newcomers and investors.

- a. Promote the new development charge regime to external investors.
- b. Ensure services are efficient and tax increases are affordable.



# VIBRANT GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT



Manage responsible and viable growth while preserving and enhancing the unique rural and small town character of the community.

## Provide for diverse, development-ready opportunities

- Review affordable housing strategies and strengthen existing policies.
- Develop an industrial and commercial development plan for the Highway 3 Corridor.
- Review policies to create development-ready areas.
- Develop partnerships with utilities to provide serviceable lands.
- Emphasize the agricultural economy.

## Support small businesses, while investing in revitalization and beautification

- Review and build upon the Community Improvement Plans (CIP).
- Develop a small business retention and attraction program.
- Implement aesthetic and streetscaping improvement plans for urban centres.

## Promote the Town as a premier tourism destination

- Develop a comprehensive tourism strategy.
- Develop agri- and eco-tourism offerings.

## Improve connectivity between neighbourhoods

- Continue to work with partners to enhance regional transit.
- Develop and implement a wayfinding signage strategy.
- Review Town-owned properties and develop a surplus property plan.



# CITIZEN AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Improve the experiences of individuals, as both citizens and customers, in their interactions with the Town of Essex.

## Improve the flow of information and delivery of services to citizens and customers

- Improve service delivery with customer service kiosks hosted at Town facilities.
- Review brick and mortar facilities and their capacity to provide high quality customer experience.
- Utilize digital and web-based technology to improve access to information and increase citizen knowledge of Town programs and services.
- Create a single repository for online services (e-Service Hub).
- Implement a Best Practices manual for gathering public feedback.

## Develop a comprehensive customer and citizen service policy

- Incorporate citizen and customer feedback to improve service policies and procedures.
- Review Customer Relationship Management software to provide central way to effectively address issues.

## Mitigate the impact of geographic distance on civic participation

- Develop policy/procedure for hosting public meetings in accessible locations for all citizens.
- Provide a variety of mechanisms for citizens to give feedback on Council agenda items.



# ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND RESILIENCY



Improve the Town's capacity to meet the ongoing and future service needs of its citizens while ensuring the corporation is resilient in the face of unanticipated changes or disruptions.

## Increase organizational capacity by developing staff

- a. Create a formal staffing plan to include succession planning and cross-training.
- b. Implement a Performance Management System which provides concrete goals for staff to develop in their positions.
- c. Review and formalize staff training and education policies.
- d. Maintain annual staff performance evaluations to identify areas of improvement.
- e. Assess the potential for flexible work arrangements to enhance access to services for citizens and improve work conditions for staff.

## Enhance internal and external access to corporate records and documents

- a. Development a Records Management Plan and update policies, procedures, and staffing resources related to corporate record-keeping.
- b. Expand the use of Laserfiche to convert physical records to digital formats.
- c. Implement a corporate paper reduction plan.

## Explore efficiencies in service delivery by working with partners and stakeholders

- a. Initiate a service review with Essex County and neighbouring municipalities.
- b. Explore other opportunities to reduce service duplication and inefficiencies.
- c. Review the current policing strategy.





Council for the Town of Essex

Learn more online at  
[essex.ca/StrategicPlan](https://essex.ca/StrategicPlan)

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