MUNICIPALITY OF HIGHLANDS EAST

Corporate Strategic Plan

2024 – 2028 and Beyond

MUNICIPALITY OF HIGHLANDS EAST

Yours to Explore.

highlandseast.ca

Message from the Mayor and Council

As Mayor and Council, we are proud to present to you the Corporate Strategic Plan for the Municipality of Highlands East. This plan is the result of extensive collaboration, thoughtful consideration, and a deep commitment to the well-being and prosperity of our community.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all residents who completed the online survey, participated in focus groups, and attended public meetings. Your input and feedback have been invaluable in shaping this plan and ensuring that it reflects the aspirations and priorities of our community.

You might wonder, how does a corporate strategic plan differ from a community strategic plan? Simply put, the corporate strategic plan focuses on the internal workings, aligning our operational strategies with the broader goals and aspirations of our residents. Our new plan will be the blueprint guiding our actions, investments, and initiatives to fulfill the shared vision we have crafted together.

Our strategic plan outlines our vision for the future of Highlands East, focusing on key priorities that will guide our decisions and actions over the coming years. It reflects our dedication to enhancing the quality of life for all residents, fostering economic growth and sustainability, and preserving our unique natural environment.

As we embark on this journey together, we are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. We are confident that by working together, we can achieve our goals and build a brighter future for Highlands East.

Sincerely,

Mayor Dave Burton
Deputy Mayor Cecil Ryall
Councillor Angela Lewis
Councillor Cam McKenzie
Councillor Ruth Strong

Highlands East Council: Cecil Ryall, Ruth Strong, Dave Burton, Angela Lewis, Cam McKenzie

Message from the CAO and Staff

As the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and staff of the Municipality of Highlands East, we are pleased to join Mayor and Council in presenting the Corporate Strategic Plan for our community. This plan represents our shared commitment to building a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive municipality that meets the needs of current and future generations.

The strategic priorities outlined in this plan – Thriving Community, Service and Operational Excellence, and Environmental Stewardship – serve as our guiding principles. They emphasize our commitment to fostering a community that is not only prosperous and resilient but also deeply connected and environmentally conscious.

As stewards of this plan, it is our responsibility as staff to diligently execute the directions set by Council. We are committed to ensuring that these directives are implemented effectively and efficiently, and we will work tirelessly to realize the goals outlined in the plan.

As we implement this plan, we are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. We are confident that by working collaboratively with residents, businesses, and community organizations, we can achieve our shared goals and build a better future for Highlands East.

Sincerely,
Highlands East CAO and Staff

Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that the community of the Municipality of Highlands East is located on the Treaty 20 Michi Saagiig territory and in the traditional territory of the Michi Saagiig and Chippewa Nations, collectively known as the Williams Treaties First Nations, which include: Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Alderville, Scugog Island, Rama, Beausoleil, and Georgina Island First Nations.

The community of the Municipality of Highlands East respectfully acknowledges that the Williams Treaties First Nations are the stewards and caretakers of these lands and waters in perpetuity, and that they continue to maintain this responsibility to ensure their health and integrity for generations to come."

Overview of Highlands East

The Municipality of Highlands East is located in central Ontario, Canada, and was established on January 1, 2001, through the amalgamation of the former townships of Bicroft, Cardiff, Glamorgan and Monmouth. However, the history of the area dates back much further, with Indigenous peoples inhabiting the region for thousands of years before European settlement.

The land that would become Highlands East was originally inhabited by the Michi Saagiig and Chippewa Nations. European settlement began in the early 19th century, with the arrival of fur traders, followed by settlers drawn to the area's rich natural resources, including timber, minerals, and fertile land.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the logging industry played a significant role in the development of the region, with many sawmills and logging camps operating in the area. The arrival of the railway in the late 1800s further facilitated the extraction of timber and the transportation of goods to market.

The early settlers of Highlands East faced many challenges, including harsh winters, isolation, and limited access to services. However, the community was resilient, and over time, it grew and prospered. Agriculture also played a significant role in the local economy, with many settlers establishing farms and homesteads.

The 20th century brought significant changes to Highlands East, with the decline of the logging industry and the shift towards a more diversified economy. Today, Highlands East is a vibrant community with a diverse economy that includes tourism, agriculture, and small businesses.

The Municipality of Highlands East is known for its stunning natural beauty, including pristine lakes, dense forests, and rolling hills. It is a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts, offering a wide range of recreational activities such as hiking, fishing, boating, snowmobiling, geocaching and mineral collecting.

Overall, the history of the Municipality of Highlands East is one of resilience, adaptation, and community spirit. From its early days as a wilderness inhabited by Indigenous peoples to its present-day status as a thriving municipality, Highlands East has remained a place of natural beauty and community pride.

OUR VISION

Engaged and connected.
Moving forward together.

OUR MISSION

Enriching lives. Strengthening community.
Building our future.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Thriving Community

Service & Operational Excellence

Environmental Stewardship

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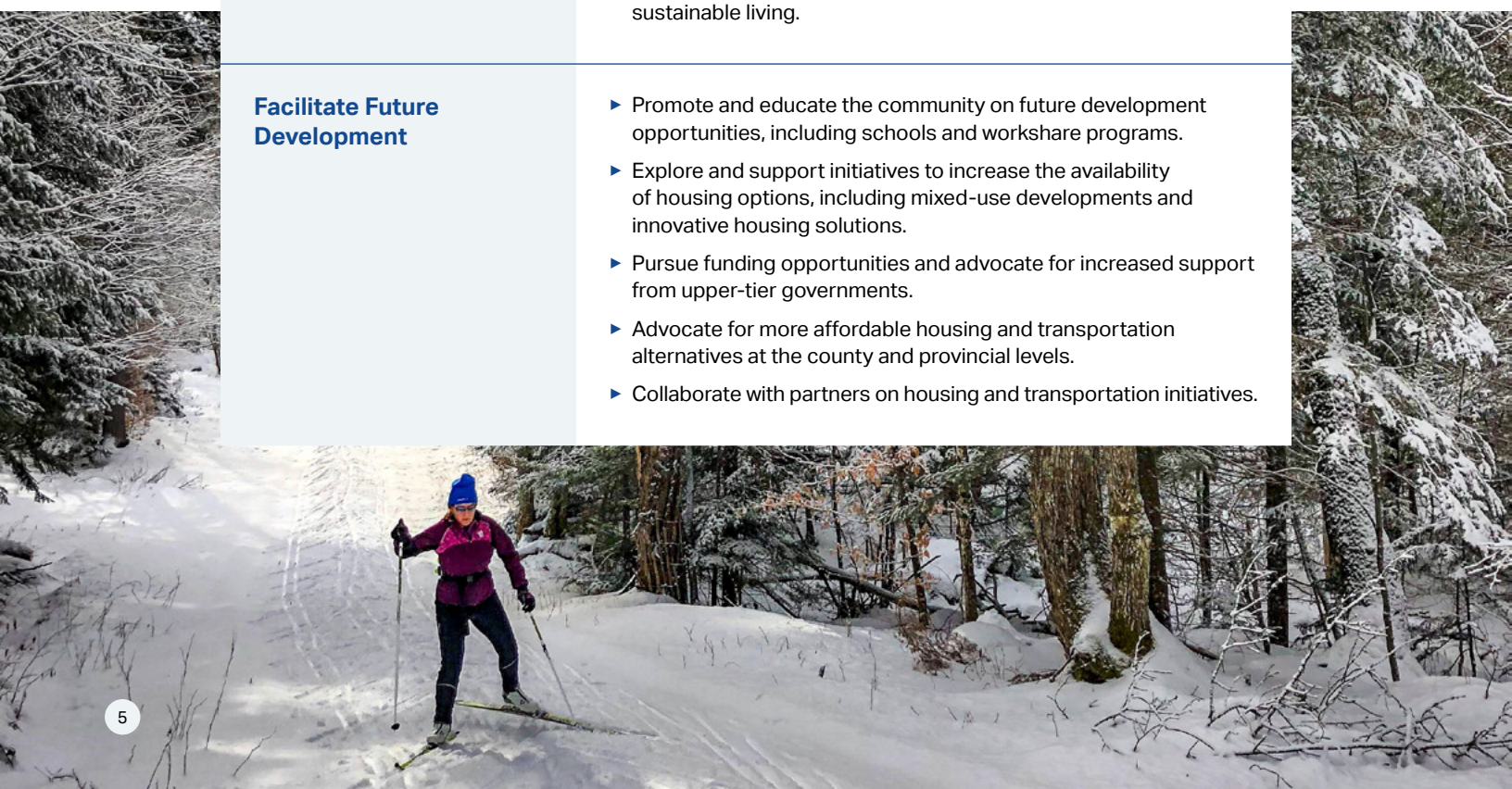
STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Thriving Community

A thriving community is one where residents are actively engaged, supported, and connected, with access to essential services, recreational opportunities, and a sustainable environment. This is important to Highlands East as it fosters a sense of belonging, enhances quality of life, attracts investment, and ensures long-term sustainability and growth.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions
Prioritize Consultation, Communication, and Commitment	▸ Consult regularly with upper-tier governments and lobby on behalf of Highlands East. ▸ Enhance communication tools to improve public engagement with residents. ▸ Strengthen resident engagement by demonstrating commitment to community outreach, collaboration, transparency, and accountability.
Foster Sustainable Living	▸ Improve the quality of life for residents by enhancing programs in recreation and economic development, including the promotion of our trails, geocaching and mineral collection. ▸ Encourage partnerships within the community to support sustainable living.
Facilitate Future Development	▸ Promote and educate the community on future development opportunities, including schools and workshare programs. ▸ Explore and support initiatives to increase the availability of housing options, including mixed-use developments and innovative housing solutions. ▸ Pursue funding opportunities and advocate for increased support from upper-tier governments. ▸ Advocate for more affordable housing and transportation alternatives at the county and provincial levels. ▸ Collaborate with partners on housing and transportation initiatives.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Service & Operational Excellence

Service and operational excellence is about delivering high-quality services efficiently and effectively, meeting the needs of the community while ensuring transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

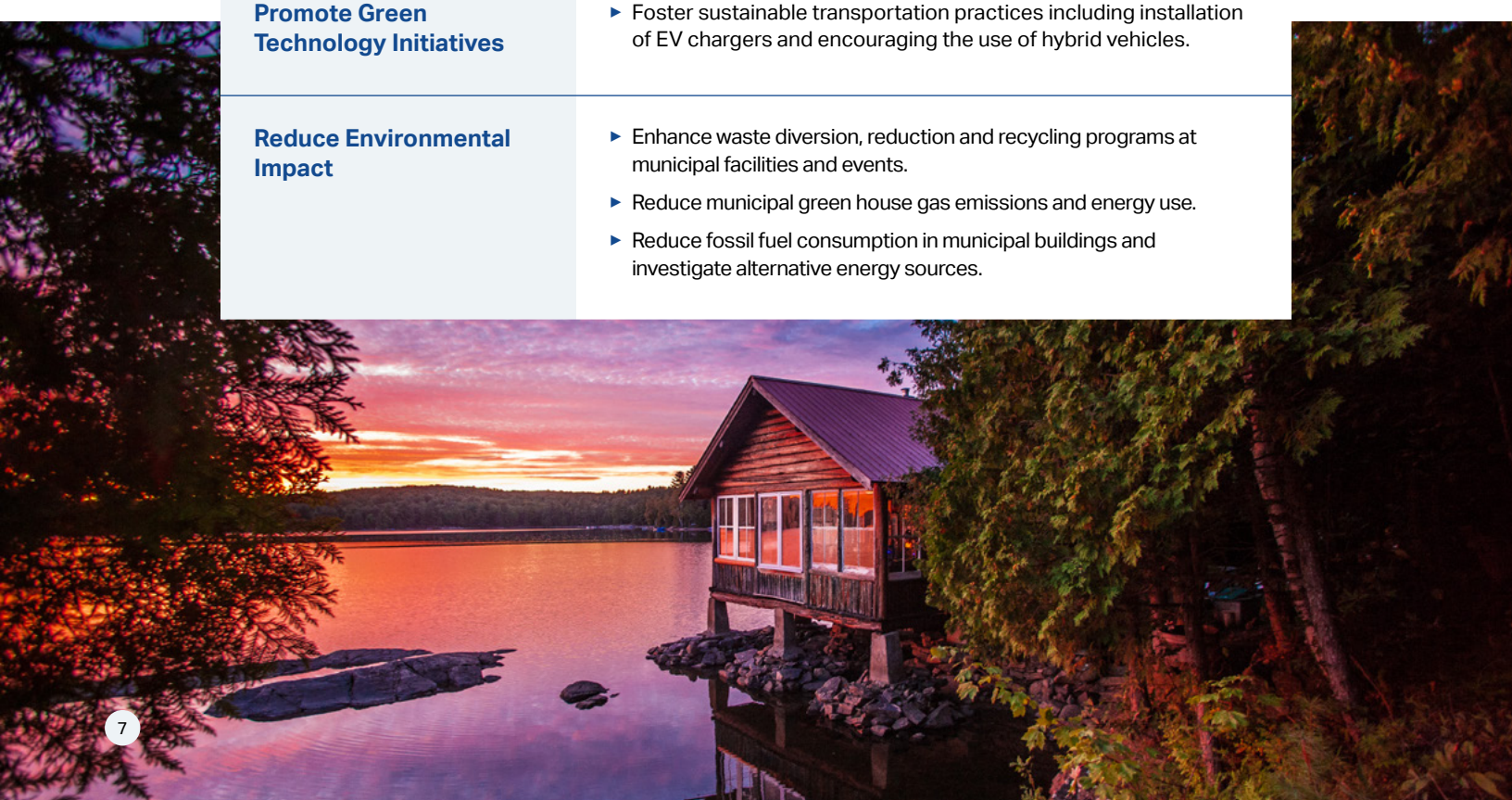
Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions
Optimize Service Delivery	▸ Implement a "one-stop-shopping" approach by consolidating municipal services under one roof. ▸ Embrace technology to provide increased accessibility and efficiency while ensuring that both on-line and in-person options are available for municipal services. ▸ Conduct assessments and reviews to evaluate service delivery and identify areas for improvement. ▸ Promote collaboration and shared services to enhance operational efficiencies.
Become an Employer of Choice	▸ Empower employees to be more proactive, innovative, and collaborative. ▸ Increase cross-departmental collaboration by providing cross-training opportunities that enhance employee skills and adaptability. ▸ Develop and implement succession planning programs. ▸ Strengthen development and training programs to build capacity, preserve institutional knowledge, and facilitate succession planning. ▸ Develop flexible work policies, including alternative work weeks and remote work options, to enhance employee satisfaction and productivity.
Ensure Sustainability of Infrastructure	▸ Prioritize infrastructure projects based on critical needs, aging systems, environmental risks, and community needs. ▸ Determine strategic direction for existing facilities and other infrastructure and address weaknesses in infrastructure through targeted improvement projects.
Maintain Financial Sustainability	▸ Engage with the public to gather feedback and input on financial decisions and budget priorities. ▸ Develop and adhere to a long-term financial plan that aligns with the community's needs and priorities as identified in the Municipal Asset Management Plan.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Environmental Stewardship

Environmental stewardship is a cornerstone of Highlands East's identity, reflecting our commitment to protecting and enhancing our natural environment. By prioritizing sustainable practices and conservation efforts, we not only preserve our unique ecosystems but also promote community health and resilience.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Actions
Protect Our Natural Resources	▸ Promote education on measures to protect and preserve shorelines, including erosion control, vegetation management, and habitat restoration. ▸ Continue the septic maintenance reinspection program to ensure regular inspection and maintenance of septic systems to prevent environmental contamination. ▸ Develop and implement land use policies that promote sustainable development, protect natural areas, and minimize environmental impact. ▸ Support community partners' programming to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species, including monitoring, control, and public education programs.
Promote Green Technology Initiatives	▸ Foster sustainable transportation practices including installation of EV chargers and encouraging the use of hybrid vehicles.
Reduce Environmental Impact	▸ Enhance waste diversion, reduction and recycling programs at municipal facilities and events. ▸ Reduce municipal green house gas emissions and energy use. ▸ Reduce fossil fuel consumption in municipal buildings and investigate alternative energy sources.



Strategic Questions

As we implement Highlands East's corporate strategic plan, it will be crucial to consider strategic questions when evaluating potential projects. These questions ensure that projects align with our plan's long-term goals, contribute positively to our community's well-being, and are implemented effectively and efficiently. By asking these strategic questions, we can make informed decisions that support our plan's vision and benefit Highlands East now and in the future.

1. Does this project align with our community's long-term goals and strategic priorities?
2. What are the potential benefits and risks of this project for our community?
3. How does this project contribute to the overall well-being and quality of life for residents?
4. Are there alternative approaches or solutions that could achieve similar outcomes more effectively or efficiently?
5. What are the financial implications of this project, and how will it be funded?
6. How will this project impact the environment and sustainability of our community?
7. What level of community engagement and support exists for this project?
8. How does this project fit into our overall budget and resource allocation priorities?
9. How can we collaborate with other levels of government to maximize resources and achieve shared objectives?
10. Are there opportunities to collaborate with community partners or organizations to enhance project outcomes and community impact?
11. What are the potential barriers or challenges to successfully completing this project, and how can they be mitigated?
12. How will the success of this project be measured and evaluated?

How We Will Use This Corporate Strategic Plan

This corporate strategic plan provides a roadmap for elected officials and the senior management team to follow. It is important that council and administration use this plan to guide decision making while considering the annual budget and while determining work plan priorities.

The environment in which the Municipality of Highland East operates is always shifting. As with any plan, we must commit to using, reviewing, and updating our performance measures in order to achieve the success we desire.

To keep our priorities aligned, senior management will ensure council is kept informed through annual progress reports that clearly indicate the work being accomplished and the work in progress. It is an ambitious plan, but one that we are fully committed to achieving.

Municipality of Highlands East

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