Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc

Service Delivery Review | Final Recommendations Report

January 13, 2025
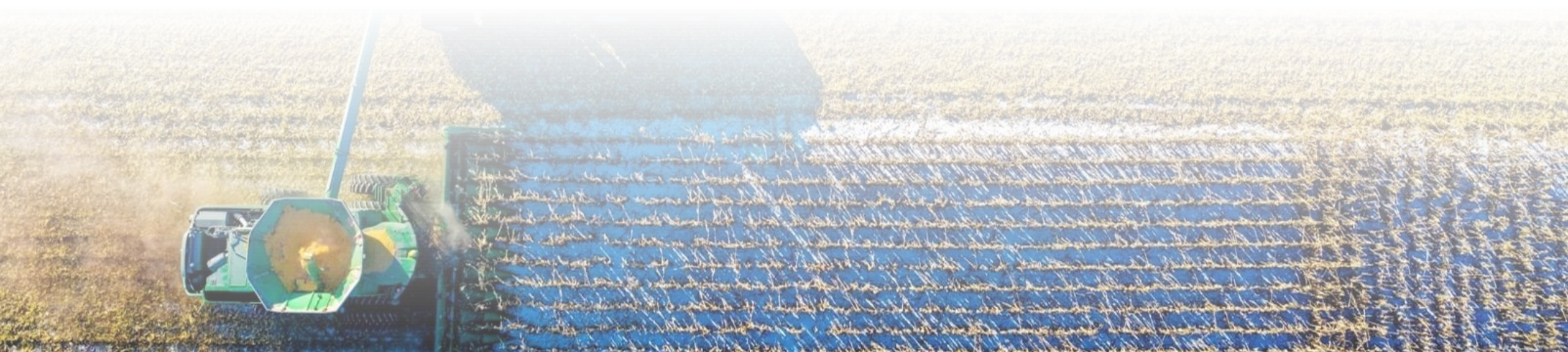
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Executive Summary

Strathroy-Caradoc is at a critical point in its evolution, where strengthened strategic management will significantly shape its future trajectory

Based on this SDR, key areas requiring immediate action include revitalizing corporate culture post-leadership changes, strengthening capabilities for future-ready leadership, prioritizing critical infrastructure and core services, and enhancing customer service and community engagement.

1. **Corporate Culture |** Following significant turnover among Council and the Senior Leadership Team (including the CAO and director-level positions) Strathroy-Caradoc is grappling with corporate culture challenges that have led to a strained workforce, operational backlogs, and diminished staff morale. An outdated municipal structure, compounded by the blurring of lines between governance and administration, adds to these pressures. Addressing these issues requires a strategic approach that includes defining clear roles, empowering staff, fostering collaboration, and respecting the distinct roles of officials and the workforce, to effectively manage and mitigate these complexities.

2. **Enhancing Capabilities for Future-Ready Leadership |** As Strathroy-Caradoc's population has grown, its municipal staffing levels have not kept pace in critical service areas, leading to a lean organizational structure that overburdens staff, jeopardizes resident satisfaction, and threatens the loss of institutional knowledge with the departure of key personnel. Leadership, predominantly occupied with operational tasks, fails to deliver needed strategic direction. To mitigate these issues, Strathroy-Caradoc must enhance staffing in essential areas and offer leadership training to realign the focus towards strategic management.

3. **Focus on Critical Infrastructure and Core Services |** Like many Ontario municipalities, Strathroy-Caradoc faces the ongoing challenge of aging infrastructure. The Municipality must prioritize core services to prepare for future demands, while also carefully managing investments in discretionary services to maintain the capacity for essential infrastructure upgrades. To sustainably address these challenges, strategic investments are required to modernize infrastructure and integrate new technologies. Moreover, it is vital that the Municipality's asset management planning is comprehensive and aligns with broader corporate strategies, such as strategic plans and budgets. This alignment is crucial for effectively prioritizing resources to deliver against legislated and strategic requirements.

4. **Customer Service and Community Engagement |** Strathroy-Caradoc's customer service has traditionally been reactive, resulting in delayed responses and reduced resident satisfaction. The gap between service delivery and community expectations underscores the need for an integrated engagement strategy to foster better dialogue and consistent interactions, aimed at rebuilding trust and meeting resident needs. To effectively address these issues, the Municipality should train their staff, and develop a comprehensive engagement framework that emphasizes transparency, responsiveness, and adaptability. This framework should define service standards, enhance communication channels, ensure regular community feedback, and utilize advanced digital tools.

*For Strathroy-Caradoc adopting a comprehensive strategy for organizational development is essential to **rebuild trust in its corporate culture, enhance staffing strategies, and strengthen Council-staff relationships**. These efforts will help **resolve current issues and lay the groundwork for a resilient, progressive future**.*
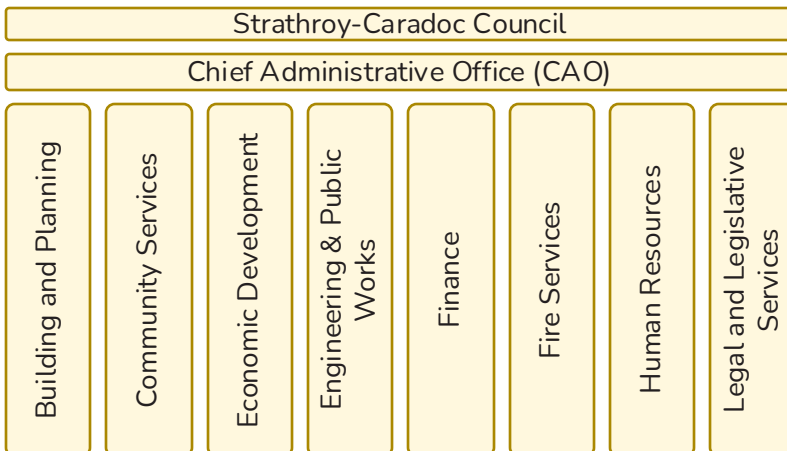
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The Municipality's rapid growth is putting its traditional administrative structure in focus…
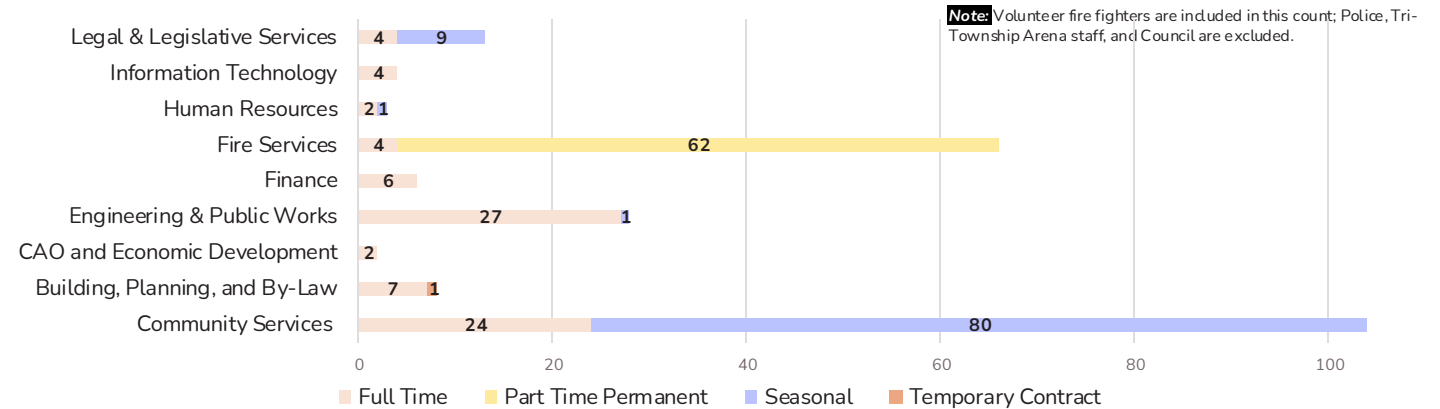
Strathroy-Caradoc at a Glance

- From 2016 to 2021, Strathroy-Caradoc has seen a 14.41% increase in population and a 7% rise in private dwellings. These trends are expected to persist, with a 63.78% increase in residents, 83.87% increase in the number of households, and a 56.25% increase in jobs by 2046.[1]

- Strathroy-Caradoc currently employs **234 staff** including: **80 full time** staff; **62 volunteer fire fighters** (part-time permanent); **91 seasonal** staff; and **1** temporary contract staff.

This count excludes the Police Services and Tri-Township Arena staff.

Staff Complement by Department

Note: Volunteer fire fighters are included in this count; Police, Tri-Township Arena staff, and Council are excluded.

Legend: Full Time, Part Time Permanent, Seasonal, Temporary Contract

Strathroy-Caradoc Organizational Structure

Strathroy-Caradoc Council
Chief Administrative Office (CAO)

Departments:
- Building and Planning
- Community Services
- Economic Development
- Engineering & Public Works
- Finance
- Fire Services
- Human Resources
- Legal and Legislative Services

Governance and Administration

- The Municipality's operations are currently structured into eight operating departments headed by Directors who report directly to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) who in turn reports to Council.

- In addition to the eight operating departments and Police Services, Economic Development has a direct reporting relationship to the CAO.

- The Municipal Act, 2001, clearly outlines the governance responsibilities of Council and the operational duties of the municipal administration. The point of overlap involves the Council deciding on services to be provided by the Municipality, with the staff then executing those decisions.

- Typically, Council directly oversees only one position, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), who is responsible for conveying Council's decisions to the staff for action.

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…as it is under pressure to adapt and scale to meet the pressures of growth

Presented below is summary of key observations gathered during our analysis in Phases 2 and 3. This includes insights from the SWOT analysis, a review of relevant data and documents, and discussions with key stakeholders of the Municipality.

Evolving Resident Expectations and Growth Management | The Municipality faces increasing expectations from new residents and diverse communities, necessitating adaptable service delivery. Managing growth effectively requires balancing the needs of both long-time and new residents. A focus on inclusive and responsive planning and service modernization (including digital service delivery) will help the Municipality address these shifting dynamics.

Infrastructure and Resource Allocation Challenges | Strathroy-Caradoc's aging infrastructure calls for a more strategic, risk-based approach to resource allocation. The Municipality will need to prioritize funding for essential infrastructure maintenance and upgrades to meet resident expectations and support sustainable growth. Focusing on critical infrastructure and key services will be essential to meet community needs and ensure long-term sustainability.

Internal and External Communication Challenges | Strathroy-Caradoc faces challenges in both internal and external communications, including fragmented messaging and inconsistent community engagement. Internally, unclear communication contributes to misaligned goals and expectations, while externally, residents often feel underinformed and disconnected. Closing these gaps is essential to unify the organization's vision, enhance transparency, and build public trust.

Technology and Project Management Gaps | The Municipality's outdated technology and inconsistent project management practices limit efficiency and modernization. Insufficient training on digital tools and a lack of standardized project management have resulted in fragmented processes and missed opportunities for improvement. Investing in modern infrastructure and standardized project management practices could streamline operations and improve service quality

Experienced and Committed Workforce Seeking Strategic Direction | Strathroy-Caradoc is supported by a longstanding, knowledgeable staff deeply committed to the Municipality's success, many of whom have dedicated their entire careers to its operations. This experienced team has been instrumental in sustaining services, often overcoming resource limitations through their dedication and expertise. Looking ahead, staff are eager for clear direction and a more focused approach to help guide the Municipality's future and maximize their impact.

Culture of Mistrust Impacting Efficiency and Collaboration | Strathroy-Caradoc faces a cultural challenge due to a disconnect between Council and leadership, as well as between leadership and staff. These gaps in alignment have fostered a culture of mistrust, which hinders open communication and collaboration. Furthermore, this mistrust impacts the efficient and effective use of resources, limiting the Municipality's ability to operate cohesively and achieve its full potential.

Staff Morale and Succession Planning Needs | High turnover, leadership changes, and a lack of succession planning have affected staff morale and increased operational risks. Without clear knowledge transfer and formal succession processes, critical information is concentrated among a few individuals, creating potential vulnerabilities. Developing a strategic approach to workforce planning and morale-boosting initiatives would mitigate these risks.

A review of the Municipality's current state identified 20 enterprise-wide and 15 department specific opportunities to address growth pressures

SLT & Council Interviews	Community & Staff Surveys
Strathroy-Caradoc Data and Documents	Service Profile Information

Operating Environment

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT)

Service Delivery Improvement Opportunities
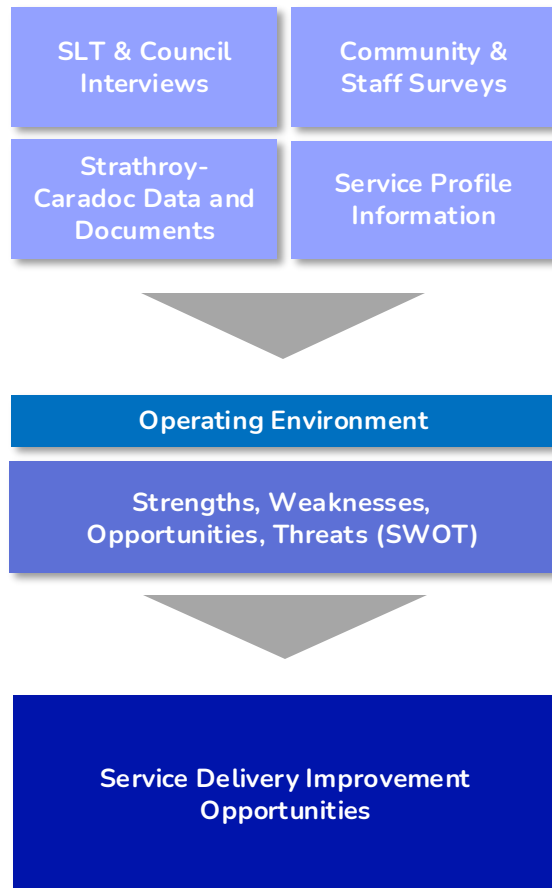
Phase 2 of the project focused on developing a comprehensive understanding of the Municipality's current state in terms of its governance, administrative structure, and service delivery scope and scale.

Key takeaways from the current state assessment were as follows:

- **Strathroy-Caradoc could benefit from a strengthened relationship between staff, council, and the community – firmly underpinned by trust.** To realize shared goals, there must be full support for strategic alignment and enhanced two-way communications across all levels of the organization.

- **To meet resident expectations, there is a need to explore ways to enhance and improve customer service across all levels of the organization, ensuring a consistent approach that aligns realistic service delivery with resident expectations.** Strathroy-Caradoc could benefit from a standardized approach to customer service, centered around the shared objective of improving services for residents.

- **Strathroy-Caradoc's team is dedicated, and its structure relatively lean in some service areas.** To sustain staff engagement and address ongoing service demands, it may be beneficial to enhance technological resources and HR support. Opportunities for improvement include succession planning, targeted training, and a review of the organizational and functional structures of the Municipality.

A list of potential service delivery improvement opportunities was identified based on the current state report:

- 20 Enterprise-wide opportunities for improvement; and,

- 15 Department-specific opportunities for improvement.

Initial Improvement Opportunities presented in the Current State Report have been reconfigured and additional information is included in Appendix 2.

These and other findings from the current state assessment have informed the development of targeted initiatives, tailored to address the unique challenges and opportunities for Strathroy-Caradoc.

These enterprise and departmental opportunities were further refined into priority initiatives to improve the Municipality's operating model

StrategyCorp used a **Municipal Target Operating Model** to assess the Municipality's current state, and develop the priority initiatives that frame recommendations:

1. Supporting Governance & Culture

Review and evaluate opportunities to enhance governance and organizational culture, fostering strategic decision-making and building a culture of trust within the Municipality.

2. Risk Mitigation

Review and explore the cost-benefit associated with risk mitigation tactics that protect and prepare Strathroy-Caradoc.

3. Strategic Capacity and Resourcing

Review Strathroy-Caradoc's organizational design and department/role alignment to ensure support for optimal service levels and delivery.

4. Digital Modernization

Develop an enterprise-wide vision for technology enablement that will support a municipality that is modern, adaptable, and efficient over the long-term.

5. Customer Service Enhancements

Explore opportunities and review and evaluate existing capacity to provide enhanced customer service across the municipality to ensure resident needs are met.

6. Preparing for Growth

Review and evaluate opportunities to undertake strategic reviews and opportunities to strengthen Strathroy-Caradoc's services for future population growth and demand for municipal services.

Evaluation Tool

A Target Operating Model is a blueprint that aligns an organization's operating capacities and strategic objectives.

All initiatives were also assessed on their alignment with Strathroy-Caradoc's Strategic Vision:

"Strathroy-Caradoc envisions a dynamic community where residents thrive in a sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous environment. We aspire to be a model of effective governance and community engagement, setting the standard for excellence in our programs and services."

The priority initiatives are designed to help the Municipality build a strong foundation for scalable growth…

The following section presents an overview of the initiatives designed to enhance the organizational infrastructure of Strathroy-Caradoc. Rather than solely focusing on cut-cutting, these initiatives aim to prepare the Municipality for scalable growth by strengthening both its physical assets and the capabilities of its people and processes.

	Initiative	Timing	Potential Productivity Gains "Light Green"	Potential Direct Savings "Dark Green"	Potential Increased Revenue	Supports Risk Mitigation
1.0	**Supporting Culture and Governance**					
1.1	Enhance Governance through Strategic Communication and Decision-Making Frameworks.	Near Term	✔	-	-	-
1.2	Streamline Council Decision Processes through Optimized Meeting Procedures and Agenda Management.	Near Term	✔	-	-	-
1.3	Develop a Focused Strategy for Organizational Culture Enhancement and Internal Communications.	Near Term	✔	-	-	-
1.4	Implement Departmental Business Planning to Guide Strategic Action Plans	Near Term	✔	-	-	-
1.5	Enhance Policy and Procedure Compliance	Near Term	✔	-	-	-
2.0	**Risk Mitigation**					
2.1	Strengthen Long-Term Core Asset Management and Investment	Medium Term	-	-	-	✔
2.2	Develop a Comprehensive Business Continuity Plan for the Corporation	Medium Term	✔	-	-	✔

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* Near Term: (0-12 months) ● Medium Term: (1-2 years) ● Long Term: (2+ years)
** Annual potential benefit is a combination of potential cost savings and potential increased revenue

…by enhancing decision-making frameworks, expanding core capabilities, and improving service delivery…

	INITIATIVE	Timing	Potential Productivity Gains "Light Green"	Potential Direct Savings "Dark Green"	Potential Increased Revenue	Supports Risk Mitigation
2.0	**Risk Mitigation**					
2.3	Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to Enhance Consistency and Efficiency	Near Term	✓	-	-	✓
2.4	Conduct a Comprehensive By-Law Review to Ensure Relevance and Effectiveness	Medium Term	✓	-	-	✓
3.0	**Strategic Capacity and Resourcing**					
3.1	Develop a Strategic Capacity and Resourcing Plan ("People Plan")	Medium Term	✓	-	-	✓
3.2	Establish an Integrated Communications and Customer Service Team	Near Term	✓	-	-	✓
3.3	Leverage County Services to Enhance Municipal Support and Efficiency	Near Term	✓	✓	-	✓
4.0	**Digital Modernization**					
4.1	Develop a Digital Services and IT Strategic Plan	Near Term	✓	-	-	✓

* Near Term: (0-12 months) ● Medium Term: (1-2 years) ● Long Term: (2+ years)
** Annual potential benefit is a combination of potential cost savings and potential increased revenue

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…that will position Strathroy-Caradoc to increase revenues, deliver direct savings, mitigate key risks, and achieve productivity gains

INITIATIVE	Timing	Potential Productivity Gains "Light Green"	Potential Direct Savings "Dark Green"	Potential Increased Revenue	Supports Risk Mitigation
5.0 Customer Service Enhancements					
5.1 Develop a Strathroy-Caradoc Community Engagement Strategy	Near Term	✔	-	-	✔
5.2 Implement a CRM System to Enhance Resident Engagement and Service Efficiency	Medium Term	✔	-	-	✔
5.3 Develop a Customer Service Policy and Training	Near Term	✔	-	-	✔
6.0 Preparing for Growth					
6.1 Conduct a Review of the Development Approvals Process to Improve Efficiency and Customer Experience	Near Term	✔	-	-	✔
6.2 Develop a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Strathroy-Caradoc	Near Term	✔	-	✔	-
6.3 Plan for Developing a Composite Model Day Shift Fire Service	Medium Term	-	-	-	✔
6.4 Expand By-Law Enforcement Services to Other Municipalities to Support Revenue Generation	Medium Term	-	-	✔	-

* Near Term: (0-12 months) ● Medium Term: (1-2 years) ● Long Term: (2+ years)
** Annual potential benefit is a combination of potential cost savings and potential increased revenue

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Section 1 |
Overview of
Priority Initiatives

The first priority initiative is focused on strengthening governance structures…

Further details on the sub-initiatives including full Initiative Profiles and key implementation actions can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

1.0	Governance and Culture		
	Sub-Initiative	**Description**	**Benefits**
1.1	**Enhance Governance through Strategic Communication and Decision-Making Frameworks.**	Strengthen governance frameworks and communication pathways by enhancing Council's understanding of municipal operations through strategic briefings and integrating clear communication protocols between Council, the CAO, and municipal staff.	✓ Facilitates more informed and transparent decision-making ✓ Fosters enhanced communication, trust, and collaboration between Council, the CAO, and municipal staff. ✓ Increases governance effectiveness by aligning municipal actions and policies with strategic objectives.
1.2	**Streamline Council Decision Processes through Optimized Meeting Procedures and Agenda Management.**	Implement procedural changes, including adopting a consent agenda, to streamline Council meetings to expedite routine decision-making, allowing more time for strategic deliberations on complex matters.	✓ Reduces time spent on non-critical discussions during formal meetings, allowing more focus on strategic issues. ✓ Enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of meetings. ✓ Encourages focused and impactful council discussions, prioritizing key municipal challenges and opportunities.
1.3	**Develop a Focused Strategy for Organizational Culture Enhancement and Internal Communications.**	Develop a targeted strategy to foster a positive organizational culture and improve internal communications, creating a unified work environment that aligns with municipal values and strategic goals.	✓ Promotes a unified organizational culture that aligns with municipal values and strategic goals. ✓ Boosts employee morale and job satisfaction by ensuring a supportive and engaging work environment. ✓ Increases staff retention and attracts talent by highlighting the municipality as a great place to work.

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…and fostering an organizational culture that promotes strategic decision-making and trust within the Municipality

Further details on the sub-initiatives including full Initiative Profiles and key implementation actions can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

1.0	Governance and Culture		
	Sub-Initiative	**Description**	**Benefits**
1.4	**Implement Departmental Business Planning to Guide Strategic Action Plans**	Introduce structured annual business planning within each municipal department to focus operations on alignment with the Municipality's overarching strategic goals, legislated mandates, and fiscal parameters.	✓ Improves departmental focus and efficiency by clearly defining objectives and expected outcomes. ✓ Enhances accountability and performance monitoring across municipal operations. ✓ Manages stakeholder expectations effectively by setting clear, achievable goals. ✓ Increases transparency in departmental operations, helping to align staff and leadership efforts towards common municipal objectives.
1.5	**Enhance Policy and Procedure Compliance**	Ensure policies and procedures remain relevant and effective through regularly scheduled reviews and updates.	✓ Keeps municipal operations aligned with best practices and legal standards. ✓ Enhances adaptability to changes in the legal and operational environment.

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The second priority initiative involves implementing cost-effective risk management strategies…

Further details on the sub-initiatives including full Initiative Profiles and key implementation actions can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

2.0	Risk Mitigation		
	Sub-Initiative	**Description**	**Benefits**
2.1	**Strengthen Long-Term Core Asset Management and Investment**	Focus on planning, investing, and maintaining core infrastructure to enhance service reliability, and avoid costs related to deferred maintenance and pre-mature asset obsolescence.	✓ Ensures critical infrastructure assets are robust and capable of meeting future demands. ✓ Supports long-term sustainability and resilience of municipal infrastructure by focusing resources on essential services.
2.2	**Develop a Comprehensive Business Continuity Plan for the Corporation**	Establish a comprehensive business continuity plan for all essential services to ensure critical municipal functions can continue during and after a disaster or disruption, minimizing downtime and service interruptions.	✓ Ensures municipal services remain operational during adverse conditions. ✓ Reduces recovery time and costs associated with disruptions.
2.3	**Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to Enhance Consistency and Efficiency**	Document SOPs for core services to mitigate the impacts of staff turnover to quality and consistent service delivery.	✓ Enhances operational efficiency and consistency across departments. ✓ Reduces errors and improves compliance with regulatory standards.
2.4	**Conduct a Comprehensive By-Law Review to Ensure Relevance and Effectiveness**	Develop and implement a rolling annual approach to evaluating and updating existing by-laws to ensure the efficiency of municipal operations.	✓ By-laws remain aligned with legal requirements and community expectations, improving enforceability and compliance.

…to safeguard Strathroy-Caradoc's fiscal and brand position and enhance its resilience

Further details on the sub-initiatives including full Initiative Profiles and key implementation actions can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

2.0	Risk Mitigation		
	Sub-Initiative	**Description**	**Benefits**
2.5	**Create Project Manager Position for Major Capital Projects**	Enhance the municipal team's ability to handle complex, risk-laden projects effectively by adding a dedicated Project Manager to oversee projects that involve significant changes or upgrades to municipal infrastructure and services.	✓ Improved oversight and successful delivery of major municipal projects, especially those critical for risk mitigation and infrastructure resilience. ✓ Enhanced ability to predict and manage risks associated with large-scale projects, reducing potential overruns and ensuring projects align with municipal goals. ✓ Strengthened capacity of municipal staff to focus on their core responsibilities while the Project Manager handles complex project coordination and risk management.

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Initiative three optimizes organizational design and staffing to meet desired service levels and enhance efficiency

Further details on the sub-initiatives including full Initiative Profiles and key implementation actions can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

3.0	Strategic Capacity and Resourcing		
	Sub-Initiative	**Description**	**Benefits**
3.1	**Develop a Strategic Capacity and Resourcing Plan ("People Plan")**	Create a comprehensive plan to assess and address the human resource needs of the Municipality over the longer-term, focusing on aligning human capital with strategic objectives.	✓ Ensures the Municipality has the right talent to meet its strategic goals. ✓ Improves employee retention and prepares for future leadership transitions.
3.2	**Establish an Integrated Communications and Customer Service Team**	Form an integrated team to manage and synchronize communications and customer service efforts across the Municipality.	✓ Provides a cohesive approach to managing public relations and customer interactions. ✓ Enhances responsiveness and consistency in public communications.
3.3	**Leverage County Services to Enhance Municipal Support and Efficiency**	Use shared services and resources available through the County of Middlesex to strengthen municipal capabilities and reduce costs.	✓ Lowers operational costs through economies of scale. ✓ Enhances service delivery through collaborative approaches. ✓ Can lead to cost savings and improved service quality in specialized areas.

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Initiative four targets a modern, adaptable, more accessible and efficient Municipality

Further details on the sub-initiatives including full Initiative Profiles and key implementation actions can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

4.0	Digital Modernization		
	Sub-Initiative	**Description**	**Benefits**
4.1	**Develop a Digital Services and IT Strategic Plan**	Review of current technology systems and digital processes to identify areas for improvement and modernization. Plan for the scalability of digital solutions to accommodate future growth and the potential integration of emerging technologies. Use these inputs to develop a Digital Services and IT Strategic Plan that outlines the direction and implementation strategies for IT over the next few years, aligning with the Municipality's overall objectives.	✓ Identifies critical areas needing investment or upgrade, ensuring technology alignment with service needs. ✓ Enhances the municipality's ability to serve the public effectively and efficiently. ✓ Provides a clear framework for IT investments and initiatives, ensuring they support broader organizational goals. ✓ Facilitates better budgeting, planning, and implementation of technology solutions.

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Initiative 5 involves enhancing service delivery systems and expanding engagement to better meet resident expectations

Further details on the sub-initiatives including full Initiative Profiles and key implementation actions can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

5.0	Customer Service Enhancements		
	Sub-Initiative	**Description**	**Benefits**
5.1	**Develop a Strathroy-Caradoc Community Engagement Strategy**	Create a comprehensive strategy to foster active participation and dialogue between the municipality and its residents, ensuring transparency and enhancing trust.	✓ Strengthens community relations and trust through regular, structured engagement. ✓ Provides council and municipal staff with direct insights into community needs and priorities.
5.2	**Implement a CRM System to Enhance Resident Engagement and Service Efficiency**	Deploy a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to centralize resident interactions and streamline service delivery, enhancing responsiveness and tracking engagement metrics.	✓ Improves service delivery efficiency by providing a unified view of resident interactions and service requests. ✓ Enhances data-driven decision-making and personalization of services based on resident history and preferences.
5.3	**Develop a Customer Service Policy and Training**	Develop and implement a comprehensive Customer Service Policy to establish consistent standards and expectations for all municipal staff in their interactions with the public. Provide customer service policy training to all municipal staff to establish a consistent standard of high-quality public interactions.	✓ Ensures that all residents experience the same high level of service. ✓ Helps ensure professional and satisfactory service.

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The final priority initiative prepares the Municipality to scale to meet increased service demands driven by population growth

Further details on the sub-initiatives including full Initiative Profiles and key implementation actions can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.
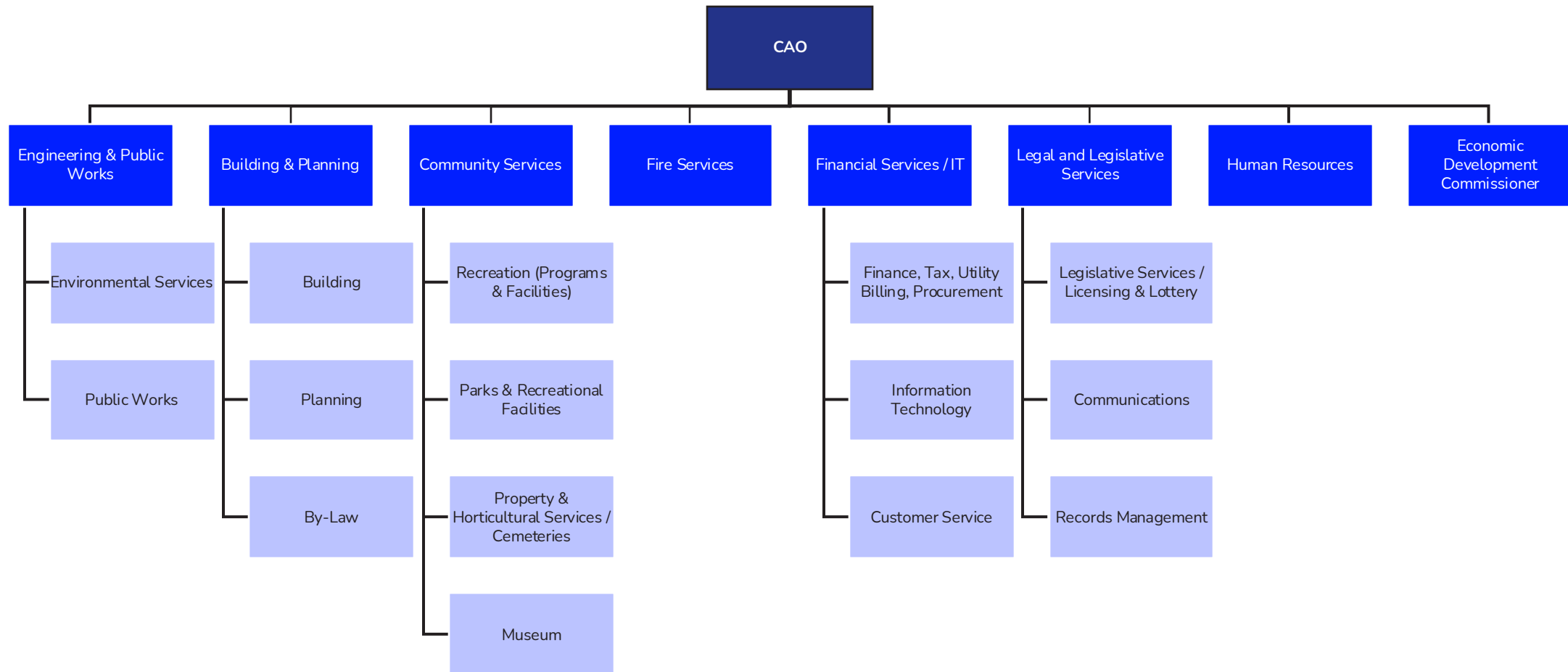
6.0	Preparing for Strategic Growth and Development		
	Sub-Initiative	**Description**	**Benefits**
6.1	**Conduct a Review of the Development Approvals Process to Improve Efficiency and Customer Experience**	Streamline the development approvals process to reduce wait times and improve the experience for developers and residents.	✓ Enhances the efficiency of development approvals, promoting local growth. ✓ Improves customer satisfaction and attracts more developers to the area.
6.2	**Develop a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Strathroy-Caradoc**	Develop a detailed strategy that supports sustainable economic growth, leveraging local assets and market opportunities.	✓ Positions Strathroy-Caradoc as a competitive location for business and investment. ✓ Drives economic prosperity and increases job opportunities for residents.
6.3	**Plan for Developing a Composite Model Day Shift Fire Service**	Evaluate and plan for the transition to a composite model fire service that utilizes both full-time and volunteer firefighters to provide efficient day shift coverage.	✓ Provides enhanced fire protection services during peak hours without the full cost of a full-time service. ✓ Increases responsiveness and reduces risks to community safety.
6.4	**Expand By-Law Enforcement Services to Other Municipalities to Support Revenue Generation**	Pilot expanding existing team and extend by-law enforcement services to neighboring municipalities under service agreements that generate additional revenue.	✓ Creates new revenue streams for the municipality. ✓ Enhances the capacity and professionalism of by-law enforcement services.

Section 2 | Organizational Design Changes

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Strathroy-Caradoc's organizational structure was compared against similar-sized municipalities…

The following functional organizational chart provides an overview of Strathroy-Caradoc's organization based on specific functions. It shows the current structure for reporting and accountability.

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                              CAO

Engineering   Building &   Community   Fire        Financial     Legal and      Human        Economic
& Public      Planning     Services    Services    Services /IT   Legislative    Resources    Development
Works                                                             Services                    Commissioner

Environmental  Building     Recreation              Finance, Tax,  Legislative
Services                    (Programs               Utility       Services /
                            & Facilities)           Billing,      Licensing &
                                                    Procurement   Lottery

Public Works   Planning     Parks &                 Information    Communications
                            Recreational            Technology
                            Facilities

               By-Law       Property &              Customer       Records
                            Horticultural           Service        Management
                            Services /
                            Cemeteries

                            Museum
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…and revealed that while the Municipality's current structure is generally in line, a few tweaks are necessary

However, the engagement process and analysis identified several areas where strategic adjustments could optimize the groupings of functions.
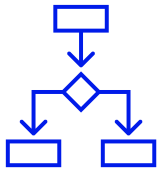
Needs and Recommendations

- The analysis identified a need to **refine the span of control for the CAO** and **balance portfolios** to **ensure functional alignment** among services. For example, integrating communications with customer service and aligning planning with infrastructure can drive efficiencies and improve service.

- At this stage, **major changes to the overall staff complement are not recommended** until other immediate priorities are addressed.

- There is an **immediate need for three additional staff**, including a customer service representative, a communications coordinator, and a project manager for Engineering/Public Works.
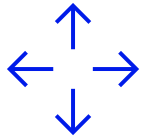
Structural Changes: Proposed Interim State Design

- The proposed adjustments **reduce the span of control for the CAO**, which will enable more focused oversight and capacity for strategic leadership.

- The next section outlines the current functional design and introduces an interim state design. The interim state design focuses on **creating a leaner management structure that supports faster decision-making** and **enhances the municipality's adaptability** to changing demands. The design **supports a culture of collaboration and accountability**, particularly in areas critical to municipal operations including engineering, public works, and customer service / communications.

- **The proposed organizational structure addresses immediate needs and establishes a strong foundation for future growth**

Note: Throughout the Service Delivery Review, nearly every service area indicated a strong need for additional staff. It is recommended that Strathroy-Caradoc hold off on expanding the team further until it has established a strong culture and soft infrastructure to support future growth.

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The review and proposed adjustments to the Municipality's organization were guided by nine design principles

The design principles emphasize clarity, adaptability, flexibility, and engagement, guiding the report and design recommendations to pragmatically address Strathroy-Caradoc immediate and long-term challenges.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Agility and Flexibility
Creating an adaptable and future-ready state.

Customer-Centric Service
Embed a customer-first approach in all Strathroy-Caradoc services to enhance user satisfaction and engagement.

Collaborative Integration
Enhancing collaboration across departments departments.

Proactive Service Delivery
Anticipating and addressing service needs.

Continuous Improvement and Innovation
Encourage a culture of continuous improvement and creativity within Strathroy-Caradoc to enhance service delivery.

Strategic Resourcing
Constructing a team that embodies a balance of skills and experience levels.

Knowledge Continuity
Ensuring valuable knowledge is retained and accessible.

Cultivating a Positive Culture
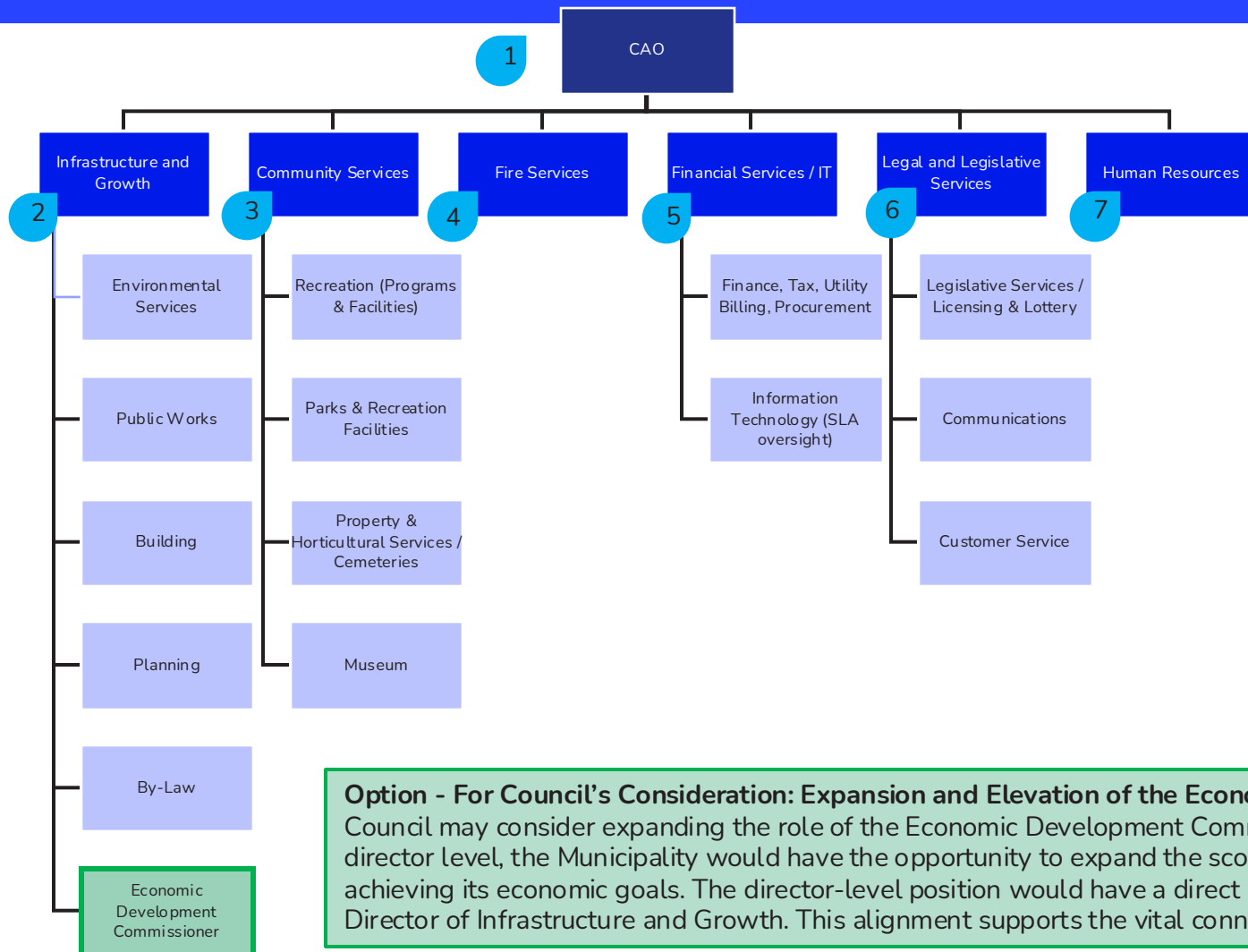*Promote a workplace culture within Strathroy-Caradoc that values collaboration, respect, and well-being, contributing to a motivated workforce and a healthy organizational climate.*

Digital Transformation and Automation
Drive digital transformation initiatives that streamline processes through automation improving productivity and enhancing service delivery.

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The proposed organizational design streamlines senior administration and establishes an integrated division focused on growth

1 — CAO

2 — Infrastructure and Growth
- Environmental Services
- Public Works
- Building
- Planning
- By-Law
- Economic Development Commissioner

3 — Community Services
- Recreation (Programs & Facilities)
- Parks & Recreation Facilities
- Property & Horticultural Services / Cemeteries
- Museum

4 — Fire Services

5 — Financial Services / IT
- Finance, Tax, Utility Billing, Procurement
- Information Technology (SLA oversight)

6 — Legal and Legislative Services
- Legislative Services / Licensing & Lottery
- Communications
- Customer Service

7 — Human Resources

Notes

1	Reduces the number of direct reports to the CAO from eight to six.
2	Establishes a new Infrastructure and Growth division, which includes redefining the role of the Director of Engineering and Public Works. The division, under this model, encompasses Economic Development (previously under the CAO) and Building, Planning, and By-Law (previously under the Director of Building and Planning)
3	There are no functional changes to Community Services.
4	There are no functional changes to Fire Services.
5	Under this model oversight of Customer Service will transition to Legal and Legislative Services.
6	Legal and Legislative Services will now oversee Customer Service to enhance alignment with Communications.
7	There are no functional changes to Human Resources.

Option - For Council's Consideration: Expansion and Elevation of the Economic Development Commissioner Role
Council may consider expanding the role of the Economic Development Commissioner to further drive economic development. By elevating this position to director level, the Municipality would have the opportunity to expand the scope and strategic capacity of this role, supporting significant advancement in achieving its economic goals. The director-level position would have a direct reporting line to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and a dotted line to the Director of Infrastructure and Growth. This alignment supports the vital connection between economic development, infrastructure, and planning.

Section 3 | Next Steps

Advancing Strategic Priorities Excellence

STRATHROY-CARADOC STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2029	
VISION	MISSION
Strathroy-Caradoc envisions a dynamic community where residents thrive in a sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous environment. We aspire to be a model of effective governance and community engagement, setting the standard for excellence in our programs and services.	Our mission is to provide innovative and up-to-date services, engage in proactive planning for the future, facilitate partnerships, and advance community goals to create a vibrant and sustainable future for all in Strathroy-Caradoc.
VALUES	
Service Teamwork Respect Integrity Progress Compassion	
GOALS	

- Local Infrastructure and Capital Investment
- Economic Development, Industry, and Jobs
- Community Well-being and Quality of Life
- Community Safety
- Municipal Customer Service
- Managing the Challenges of Growth for the Municipal Organization

- **Council's participation** in the pursuit of service excellence is critical. Council and Administration must operate "Team Strathroy-Caradoc". They must work hand-in-hand to make strategic decisions that ensure service levels across the Municipality's service areas are aligned with the Municipality's goals.

- **Council must recognize the impact of decisions and directives on service levels,** resourcing, and organizational structure will influence the Municipality's trajectory. As well, Council's commitment to fostering streamlined and efficient communication with Administration is vital in fostering service excellence

- This **Service Delivery Review is about more than just day-to-day management**, it represents a strategic step towards **forward-looking planning**. It combines long-term vision with innovative approaches to support the continuous improvement and growth of the Municipality.

- To maximize the potential opportunities available to the Municipality through this Review, **strategic decisions must be made with a mutual understanding** of the distinct yet complementary roles, challenges, and viewpoints of both Council and Administration and with a holistic view of the Municipality's needs and operational realities.

Appendices

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Appendix 1 |
Initiative Profiles

The following section outlines the proposed initiatives and their various sub-initiatives for the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc.

Overview | Initiative #1 **Supporting Governance and Culture**

Description

This initiative is centered on strengthening governance frameworks and communication strategies in Strathroy-Caradoc to strengthen operational transparency and efficiency. It targets refining decision-making processes, enhancing internal communications, and ensuring departmental actions are in harmony with municipal objectives.

By streamlining Council meetings, optimizing business planning, and implementing performance metrics, this initiative cultivates a governance structure that is proactive, responsive, and adaptable. Moreover, it promotes leadership development to effectively address and navigate future challenges.

Recommended Sub-Initiatives

1.1	Enhance Governance through Strategic Communication and Decision-Making Frameworks.
1.2	Streamline Council Decision Processes through Optimized Meeting Procedures and Agenda Management.
1.3	Develop a Focused Strategy for Organizational Culture Enhancement and Internal Communications.
1.4	Implement Departmental Business Planning to Guide Strategic Action Plans
1.5	Enhance Policy and Procedure Compliance

Cost-Benefits Overview	Direct Costs	Direct Savings
Enhanced Decision-Making: Adoption of strategic communication and decision-making frameworks reduces redundancies and accelerates response times, leading to cost savings from improved efficiency.	n/a	Savings from reduced delays and redundant processes
Operational Efficiencies: Streamlined council decision processes and optimized meeting procedures prevent delays, cutting down on unnecessary expenditures linked to prolonged decision-making.	n/a	Savings on administrative time and resources
Resource Allocation: Departmental business planning aligned with municipal strategies ensures that investments are directed towards critical needs, enhancing the impact of spending.	Investment in planning tools and systems	Long-Term savings from optimized resource use
Performance Tracking: Implementation of performance measurement frameworks allows for real-time monitoring of governance effectiveness, ensuring resources are used where they are most impactful.	Costs for performance management software, reporting tools, and training	Potential savings from improved resource allocation
Compliance and Standards: Regular reviews and updates of policies ensure compliance with legal and regulatory standards, mitigating risks associated with non-compliance.	n/a	Savings from reduced legal risk exposure
Leadership Development: Investing in leadership training builds a resilient management team capable of leading the municipality through future growth and challenges, potentially reducing turnover and associated training costs.	Training program costs (fees, consultants, etc.)	Potential Savings from reduced turnover and improved team effectiveness.

Sub-Initiative #1.1 | Enhance Governance through Strategic Communication and Decision-Making Frameworks

Overview

To address the lack of coordination and established protocol, implement a streamlined communication protocol to establish the CAO as the primary conduit for Council directives to municipal staff.

By preventing potential confusion from direct instructions between Council and staff, this approach will enhance accountability, promote consistency in communication, and support the efficient execution of Council's decisions.

Additionally, it is recommended that actions be taken to strengthen governance frameworks and communication pathways by fostering Council's understanding of municipal operations. This includes regular strategic briefings and clear communication protocols between Council, the CAO, and staff. This initiative will enable informed decision-making, consistent interactions, and enhanced operational transparency, ultimately improving governance efficacy.

Rationale

+ **Prevents Confusion and Miscommunication:** Centralizing communication through the CAO ensures that staff receive clear, consistent instructions aligned with Council's intent, reducing conflicting messages and misunderstandings.

+ **Empowers Effective Leadership by the CAO:** With the CAO as the primary conduit for Council's directives, Council's vision is effectively translated into actionable steps for staff, ensuring efficient management, delegation, and progress monitoring.

+ **Enhances Accountability and Transparency:** The CAO is accountable to Council for municipal performance, while staff are accountable to the CAO. This structured communication pathway reinforces accountability, prevents confusion, and facilitates timely execution of Council decisions.

Implementation Actions

Strengthen Council Governance and Operational Insight:

- **Regular Strategic Briefings:** Schedule regular briefings where the CAO presents updates on key operational and strategic matters to Council, providing insights into the progress of municipal projects and alignment with strategic goals.

- **Data-Driven Dashboards:** Implement data dashboards for Council members, curated by the CAO, showing timely information on municipal performance, resource allocation, and operational efficiencies.

- **Workshops for Council Members:** Conduct workshops to educate Council members on municipal processes and operational realities, enhancing their strategic understanding and decision-making capacity.

Enhance Communication Between Council, the CAO, and Municipal Staff:

- **Clear Communication Protocols:** Establish a structured protocol outlining the chain of communication from Council to staff through the CAO, ensuring directives are efficiently translated into actionable steps.

- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement a feedback system where staff can report back to the CAO on the progress of Council directives, allowing for adjustments as needed.

- **Training on Protocol Compliance:** Provide training for all municipal staff and Council members on adhering to the new communication protocol, ensuring clarity and accountability.

Risk Impact	**Low** for day-to-day operational disruption: The protocol primarily affects communication flow rather than core operational functions, so minimal disruption is expected.
Financial Impact	**Medium** for financial impact: Initial investments in training and possibly software tools (for dashboards or feedback mechanisms) might be required, though they are generally moderate in cost.

LEGEND
Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost
Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
Medium – High: Significant impact; substantial disruption, high financial cost
High: Severe impact; critical disruption, very high financial cost

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Sub-Initiative #1.2 |Streamline Council Decision Processes through Optimized Meeting Procedures

Overview

To address the high frequency and lengthy nature of Council meetings, implement procedural changes aimed at streamlining meeting operations. This includes adopting a consent agenda, which consolidates routine, non-controversial items—such as approval of minutes, standard financial reports, and information-only memos—for collective approval without discussion. This method enables Council to swiftly address routine matters, freeing up valuable meeting time for in-depth discussions on complex, strategic issues.

There is also a need to ensure that Council reports are structured to meet Council's needs for data-driven and historically contextual information, enabling informed decision-making.

Both Council and staff have expressed interest in process enhancements to improve meeting efficiency and identify opportunities to reduce the overall number of Council meetings.

Rationale

+ **Focus Meeting Time on Strategic Priorities:** By minimizing time spent on routine matters, Council can dedicate more time to substantive issues, improving the quality of decision-making and discussions.

+ **Enhance Meeting Productivity:** A consent agenda promotes a more streamlined, focused meeting structure, reducing the overall length of meetings and improving efficiency by enabling Council to address routine matters in a single, efficient motion.

Implementation Actions

1. **Training for Council and Staff**: Ensure Council members and staff are trained on effectively using a consent agenda and understand its purpose to maximize efficiency.

2. **Report Standardization**: Develop a standardized format for Council reports that aligns with the municipality's strategic plan. Reports should include:
   - Data-driven analysis and historical context to support informed decision-making.
   - Summary of Options Considered in arriving at a recommendation, with each option including an analysis of associated benefits and risks.
   - A section that links decisions to strategic plan objectives, helping Council understand how proposed actions support long-term municipal goals.

3. **Technology Integration**: Implement digital tools to streamline and automate the consent agenda process, allowing easy access to supporting documents for routine items and ensuring efficient management of Council materials.

4. **Monitoring and Adjustment**: Establish a process for monitoring the effectiveness of these procedural changes. Schedule regular feedback sessions with Council members and staff to make necessary adjustments based on real-world outcomes.

Risk Impact	**Low** – Minimal impact; introducing a consent agenda is a standard practice in many municipalities and has low associated risks.
Financial Impact	**Low** – Minor impact; any costs involved would likely be limited to initial training and potential minor adjustments to digital tools, which are low in financial outlay.

LEGEND
Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost
Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
Medium – High: Significant impact; substantial disruption, high financial cost
High: Severe impact; critical disruption, very high financial cost

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Sub-Initiative #1.3 | Develop a Focused Strategy for Culture Enhancement and Internal Communications

Overview

The Municipality currently faces challenges in internal culture and communication, impacting staff morale, cohesion, and alignment with strategic goals. Employees have expressed a need for a more supportive and unified work environment, where values are clearly communicated, and their roles are seen as integral to broader municipal objectives. Internal communication gaps have left many staff feeling disconnected and unaware of how their work contributes to the Municipality's mission, affecting job satisfaction and overall engagement.

To address these issues, a targeted strategy will focus on strengthening organizational culture and improving internal communications. Key initiatives include enhancing communication channels to keep staff informed and engaged, fostering a supportive culture through increased Council and staff attendance at municipal events, and establishing an Organizational Culture Development Program.

This program will prioritize team-building, professional growth, and values alignment, creating a cohesive work environment that supports retention and attracts new talent.

Rationale

+ **Promotes a Unified Organizational Culture:** Aligns municipal operations with shared values and strategic objectives, helping to create a cohesive organizational identity.

+ **Boosts Employee Morale and Job Satisfaction:** Establishes a supportive, engaging work environment that values employee contributions and well-being, leading to higher morale.

+ **Increases Staff Retention and Talent Attraction:** By fostering a positive work environment, the Municipality can retain skilled staff and attract new talent, positioning itself as an employer of choice.

Implementation Actions

1. **Strengthen Internal Communications Activities**: Establish structured communication channels and protocols that ensure staff receive timely and relevant information on municipal priorities, policies, and Council decisions from senior leadership.

2. **Organize Team-Building and Engagement Events**: Host regular municipal events and team-building activities to foster interaction between Council members, leadership, and staff. These events will help build relationships, improve morale, and create a cohesive organizational culture.

3. **Implement an Organizational Culture Development Program**: Develop a comprehensive program focusing on core values, skill development, and career growth. This program could include mentorship opportunities, recognition programs, and clear pathways for career progression to support staff morale and retention.

4. **Establish Feedback Mechanisms**: Create tools and surveys to regularly gather staff feedback on communication, workplace culture, and job satisfaction. Use this feedback to adapt strategies and proactively address any emerging issues within the organization.

5. **Leadership Training and Development**: Provide training programs for leaders and managers, focusing on building a positive work culture, effective team management, and open communication. This will strengthen leadership skills and support a constructive work environment.

6. **Promote Council and Staff Attendance at Municipal Events**: Encourage participation in community and municipal events to strengthen Council and staff connections with the community and reinforce a shared sense of purpose aligned with municipal goals.

Risk Impact	**Low - Medium**: The initiative poses a low risk, as it primarily focuses on internal improvements and staff engagement. The impact on service disruption is minimal.
Financial Impact	**Medium**: Implementation costs may include expenses for events, training, and program development. These costs are manageable and provide long-term value through increased employee retention and productivity.

LEGEND
Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost
Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
Medium – High: Significant impact; substantial disruption, high financial cost
High: Severe impact; critical disruption, very high financial cost

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Sub-Initiative #1.4 |Implement Departmental Business Planning to Guide Strategic Action Plans

Overview

Introduce structured business planning within each municipal department to streamline their activities in alignment with the municipality's overarching strategic goals. While departmental business planning is currently undertaken to some extent to support the budget process and departmental activities, there is an opportunity to enhance this process by developing Council-approved action plans. This structured business planning tool will ensure each department's objectives are not only aligned with operational needs but also with the Council's Strategic Plan, creating a clear link between departmental activities and the municipality's long-term vision.

This initiative formalizes the planning process, providing departments with a roadmap that aligns their actions with municipal objectives. By establishing clear, measurable goals and a consistent planning structure, the municipality can optimize resource allocation, increase accountability, and set clear performance expectations for each department. This alignment will improve overall efficiency and foster a cohesive approach to achieving the municipality's priorities.

Rationale

+ **Improves Departmental Focus, Efficiency, and Transparency**: Departments can focus their efforts on Council approved priority activities, enhancing productivity.

+ **Enhances Accountability and Monitoring**: Business plans create a structured way to monitor performance across departments, ensuring alignment with the Municipality's strategic goals.

+ **Improves Stakeholder Engagement**: Clearly defined goals help manage expectations with stakeholders, allowing departments to communicate progress and challenges effectively.

Implementation Actions

1. **Develop Department-Specific Business Plans**: Create clear, action-oriented business plans for each department that outline measurable objectives, KPIs, and timelines. These plans should align with the Municipality's strategic goals and legislated requirements to provide Council with a transparent view of each department's focus. Priority should be given to business planning and analysis that ensures staffing levels align with operational demand.

2. **Train Department Heads in Business Planning and KPI Measurement**: Conduct training for department heads on business planning, performance measurement, and reporting. Provide training for departmental staff on data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Ensuring staff are skilled in these areas will improve the accuracy and reliability of performance data and empower them to identify and address issues proactively.

3. **Establish Council Review and Approval Process**: Integrate departmental business planning as part of the Municipality's annual budgeting process. This approach allows Council to assess departmental priorities, ensure alignment with strategic goals, and understand fiscal impacts, supporting informed decision-making.

4. **Implement Annual Review Process with Reporting to Council**: Set up an annual review to evaluate each department's progress against its business plan. Summarize and present findings to Council, highlighting achievements, challenges, and recommended adjustments.

5. **Equip Departments with Performance Tracking Tools**: Provide departments with essential tools and resources, like data analytics and project management software, to facilitate ongoing tracking and reporting. Regular check-ins will keep projects on track, support adaptation, and enhance data-driven decision-making.

Risk Impact	**Low - Medium**: Minor to moderate disruption may occur as departments adjust to new planning and reporting requirements. However, this risk is mitigated by proper training and support for department heads.
Financial Impact	**Low**: The financial cost is minimal, mainly associated with initial training and resources required to support departments in developing and reviewing their business plans.

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Sub-Initiative #1.5 | Enhance Policy and Procedure Compliance

Overview

As legislative and regulatory requirements continue to rise, dedicating time and resources to policy and procedure compliance is essential for Strathroy-Caradoc to maintain alignment with evolving standards. In sectors such as planning, environmental regulation, and human resources, shifts in legislation are increasingly frequent, impacting how municipal operations must be conducted. Without a structured approach to policy management, municipalities risk falling out of compliance, which can lead to legal issues, financial penalties, and reputational harm.

By making policy review and compliance a priority, Strathroy-Caradoc can proactively adapt to new legislative demands. This approach ensures that staff are equipped to handle updated regulations, whether related to zoning laws, safety standards, or HR policies. Allocating specific time for these reviews reinforces a culture of compliance, positioning the municipality to operate efficiently and responsibly in the face of changing legal and regulatory landscapes.

Rationale

+ **Enables Consistency with Legal Standards**: Keeps municipal operations aligned with best practices and up-to-date legal standards, reducing the risk of non-compliance and liability.

+ **Promotes Adaptability to Changing Requirements**: Ensures policies and procedures reflect changes in the legal and operational environment, enabling the municipality to adapt smoothly to new regulations or standards.

+ **Supports Staff Efficiency and Compliance**: Streamlined, updated policies can improve efficiency, making it easier for staff to stay compliant and focus on their core responsibilities.

Implementation Actions

1. **Schedule Regular Policy Reviews**: Establish an annual rolling schedule to review and update municipal policies and procedures. A rolling schedule will ensure that a manageable number of policies and procedures on an annual basis.

2. **Involve Key Stakeholders**: Engage relevant stakeholders, including department heads and legal advisors, in the policy review process to ensure policies meet current needs and regulatory requirements, reflecting on-the-ground challenges and compliance needs.

3. **Conduct Training for Staff**: Implement training sessions to familiarize staff with new or revised policies. Training will ensure that staff are fully aware of their roles in maintaining compliance and can consistently apply updated policies in their work.

4. **Monitor Compliance and Conduct Audits**: Set up a system to monitor compliance and conduct periodic audits. Regular audits will help identify areas of non-compliance, allowing the municipality to address any issues proactively and reinforce adherence to updated procedures.

Risk Impact	**Medium**: If compliance efforts are neglected, there's a moderate risk of operational inefficiencies, legal challenges, and reputational harm, especially as legal and regulatory standards evolve.
Financial Impact	**Low – Medium**: Minimal to moderate financial cost associated with scheduling reviews, providing resources, and conducting training.

LEGEND
Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost
Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
Medium – High: Significant impact; substantial disruption, high financial cost
High: Severe impact; critical disruption, very high financial cost

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Overview | Initiative #2 **Risk Mitigation**

Description

This initiative aims to strengthen Strathroy-Caradoc's resilience against risks to its long-term sustainability and its ability to protect public services from key vulnerabilities.

Recommended Sub-Initiatives

2.1 Strengthen Long-Term Core Asset Management and Investment

2.2 Develop a Comprehensive Business Continuity Plan for the Corporation

2.3 Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to Enhance Consistency and Efficiency

2.4 Conduct a Comprehensive By-Law Review to Ensure Relevance and Effectiveness

2.5 Create Project Manager Position for Major Capital Projects

2.6 Enhance Technology / Cyber Security Risk Capabilities

Cost-Benefits Overview	Direct Costs	Direct Savings
Strengthen Core Asset Management: Ensures essential services are robust, reducing long-term costs by proactively addressing infrastructure needs.	Investment in core infrastructure upgrades	Long-term savings from reduced repair and replacement costs
Develop a Comprehensive Business Continuity Plan: Minimizes operational disruptions, ensuring services continue during adverse events, thereby saving costs and reducing recovery times.	Planning and implementation costs	Savings from minimized service disruptions and faster recovery times.
Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): Increases operational efficiency and consistency, which streamlines municipal operations and reduces costs.	Costs for SOP development and training	Potential savings from more efficient operations and reduced redundancy
Comprehensive By-Law Review: Maintains compliance with legal and legislative standards, minimizing legal risks and enhancing governance effectiveness.	Costs for legal review and updates	Savings from reduced legal risk exposure and improved compliance.
Add Strategic Capacity and Hire a Project Manager: Improves the success and efficiency of large-scale projects, which can lead to cost savings from better risk management and project outcomes.	Salary for Project Manager	Savings from improved project efficiency and risk management, reducing overruns

Sub-Initiative #2.1 |Strengthen Long-Term Core Asset Management and Investment

Overview

Planning, investing, and maintaining core infrastructure may not always capture public attention, yet it is essential for the Municipality's sustainable growth and resilience. This initiative focuses on reallocating resources to ensure the maintenance and upgrading of foundational infrastructure crucial to the daily functioning of the community.

By prioritizing essential services, Strathroy-Caradoc can proactively address future demand pressures, enhance service reliability, and avoid costly reactive measures in the years to come. Remaining committed to these less-visible investments is key to building a resilient municipality that is prepared to meet the evolving needs of its residents.

Rationale

+ **Ensures Resilience of Critical Services:** Focused investment in essential infrastructure ensures that core services remain robust, reliable, and capable of meeting future demands.

+ **Supports Long-Term Sustainability:** Strategic infrastructure planning and maintenance contribute to the municipality's resilience, enabling it to serve the community effectively even as conditions change.

+ **Mitigates Reactive Costs:** Proactive infrastructure management helps avoid the higher costs associated with emergency repairs, ensuring that funds are used efficiently over time.

Implementation Actions

1. **Ensure Alignment with Asset Management Plan**: Integrate the Municipality's Asset Management Plan into both annual and long-term budget planning processes, ensuring it is properly resourced and followed. This alignment will prioritize the sustainability and resilience of essential services and guide funding decisions based on the most pressing infrastructure needs.

2. **Prioritize Funding for Essential Infrastructure**: Allocate funding strategically, focusing on the repair, maintenance, and enhancement of critical infrastructure that supports core services, such as roads, water treatment facilities, and emergency response systems. This prioritization will ensure essential services remain operational and resilient.

3. **Adopt a Long-Term Investment Strategy**: Develop a multi-year investment plan that balances immediate needs with long-term infrastructure goals. This plan will facilitate efficient allocation of resources over time, ensuring that critical infrastructure remains functional and sustainable as the municipality grows.

4. **Engage Stakeholders in Decision-Making**: Involve Council members, senior staff, and relevant departments in discussions about investment priorities. This collaboration will help align infrastructure investments with strategic goals and build consensus on critical areas needing support.

5. **Monitor and Adjust Investment Priorities Annually**: Establish an annual review process to monitor infrastructure conditions and adjust investment priorities as needed. This flexibility will allow Strathroy-Caradoc to respond effectively to new developments, evolving needs, and emerging challenges.

Risk Impact	**Low to Medium:** Prioritizing core services may lead to minor disruptions during upgrades and maintenance but ensures that essential services are strengthened for the future.
Financial Impact	**Medium to High:** Investment in critical infrastructure may require significant upfront costs; however, the long-term benefits of sustainable infrastructure and reduced reactive spending justify this financial commitment.

LEGEND

Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost
Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
Medium – High: Significant impact; substantial disruption, high financial cost
High: Severe impact; critical disruption, very high financial cost

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Sub-Initiative #2.2 | Develop a Comprehensive Business Continuity Plan for the Corporation

Overview

Developing a comprehensive business continuity plan is essential to ensure that all critical municipal functions can continue during and after a disaster or disruption, minimizing downtime and service interruptions. While some departments may have their own operational continuity plans, there is currently a lack of coordinated planning across the Municipality.

This initiative aims to centralize and standardize continuity efforts, providing a cohesive strategy that integrates departmental plans, prioritizes essential services, and prepares the Municipality to respond effectively to various risks.

Rationale

+ **Builds Operational Resilience**: Ensures that municipal services remain operational and accessible during adverse conditions, protecting public safety and municipal reputation.

+ **Reduces Recovery Time and Cost**: Minimizes downtime and associated costs by preparing proactive continuity strategies, allowing for quicker recovery and less resource expenditure in emergencies.

Risk Impact	**Medium**: While a coordinated continuity plan significantly mitigates risk, its implementation requires buy-in from all departments, along with adequate resourcing to ensure effectiveness.
Financial Impact	**Medium**: Initial investments in risk assessments, training, and infrastructure for continuity may incur moderate financial costs, but these costs are offset by the reduced financial impact of unplanned service disruptions.

Implementation Actions

1. **Conduct Comprehensive Risk Assessments**: Identify and evaluate potential vulnerabilities across all municipal departments to prioritize continuity planning for high-risk areas. This includes assessing the likelihood of various disruptions and the impact they could have on municipal operations.

2. **Develop and Implement Continuity Strategies for Critical Services**: Create specific continuity strategies for essential services, detailing recovery time objectives, backup procedures, and resource requirements. Ensure that these strategies address both short-term disruptions and longer-term impacts.

3. **Integrate Departmental Continuity Plans**: Coordinate existing departmental continuity plans into a unified framework, ensuring alignment in priorities, resources, and recovery objectives.

4. **Establish Communication Protocols**: Designate clear communication channels and protocols for use during disruptions, enabling quick and coordinated responses across departments. This includes notifying Council, staff, and the public as needed, and ensuring that key stakeholders are informed at every stage of the response.

5. **Conduct Regular Testing and Training**: Implement a schedule for regular testing of the business continuity plan through simulations and tabletop exercises, involving all relevant departments. Provide training for staff to ensure familiarity with continuity procedures, enhancing readiness and responsiveness during real events.

6. **Create a Review and Update Schedule**: Establish a review cycle for the business continuity plan, incorporating feedback from tests and actual events to continually improve and adapt to changing circumstances and emerging risks.

LEGEND
Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost
Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
Medium – High: Significant impact; substantial disruption, high financial cost
High: Severe impact; critical disruption, very high financial cost

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Sub-Initiative #2.3 | Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to Enhance Consistency and Efficiency

Overview

High turnover in recent years has highlighted the need for standardized operating procedures across departments to maintain consistency and quality in service delivery. This initiative aims to build on the continuity plan by implementing clear, documented SOPs that streamline operations and foster uniform practices. With standardized procedures, departments can mitigate the impacts of turnover, providing new staff with clear guidelines to support efficient onboarding and uninterrupted service levels. SOPs also reinforce accountability, ensuring a high-quality experience for residents regardless of staffing changes.

Clear procedures for critical tasks help maintain regulatory compliance and reduce error risks, essential as regulatory requirements evolve. SOPs empower departments to deliver reliable customer service across routine and emergency scenarios, building community trust.

Rationale

+ **Enhances Operational Efficiency**: Standardizing procedures reduces variability, allowing departments to perform tasks more consistently and with fewer resources.

+ **Reduces Errors and Compliance Issues**: Well-documented SOPs lower the risk of mistakes and ensure that departments operate in compliance with legal and regulatory standards, protecting the municipality from potential liabilities.

+ **Mitigates Impact of High Turnover**: SOPs provide new or temporary staff with clear, accessible guidelines to perform their roles effectively, reducing the disruption caused by staff changes. This consistency in operations helps maintain service levels and institutional knowledge despite turnover.

Implementation Actions

1. **Document and Streamline Critical Workflows**: Identify and document essential workflows across departments, focusing on standardizing processes that are commonly used or that impact multiple areas. Streamlining these workflows can reduce redundancy and ensure uniformity in service delivery.

2. **Regularly Review and Update SOPs**: Establish a periodic review cycle for SOPs to ensure that they remain relevant and aligned with current practices, municipal goals, and regulatory standards. Regular updates will help SOPs adapt to evolving municipal needs and legal requirements.

3. **Provide Training for Staff**: Implement training programs for all relevant personnel to ensure they understand and can consistently apply the standardized procedures. This will support compliance, reduce errors, and increase staff accountability.

4. **Establish Cross-Departmental SOP Committees**: Form a team responsible for overseeing SOP development and updates, incorporating insights from multiple departments. This collaborative approach will ensure that SOPs are comprehensive, reflect diverse perspectives, and meet cross-functional needs.

5. **Integrate SOPs into Performance Metrics**: Link adherence to SOPs with departmental performance metrics to encourage accountability and track the impact of standardized processes on operational efficiency. This integration will also facilitate data-driven adjustments to SOPs over time.

Risk Impact	**Low**: The implementation of SOPs is expected to have minimal disruption but provides significant benefits in standardizing procedures and reducing errors.
Financial Impact	**Low to Medium**: Initial investments may be required for documentation and training, but standardized procedures will lead to cost savings through improved efficiency and reduced compliance issues.

LEGEND

Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost

Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
Medium – High: Significant impact; substantial disruption, high financial cost
High: Severe impact; critical disruption, very high financial cost

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Sub-Initiative #2.4 | Conduct a Comprehensive By-Law Review to Ensure Relevance and Effectiveness

Overview

A comprehensive by-law review ensures that the municipality's legislative framework remains relevant, enforceable, and aligned with current legal standards and community expectations. Over time, by-laws can become outdated or ineffective, creating compliance challenges and potentially diminishing public trust.

This initiative focuses on systematically evaluating existing by-laws to identify areas requiring updates or revisions, which is critical for governance and operational resilience.

In addition to compliance, an up-to-date by-law framework supports the municipality's strategic objectives and enhances the efficiency of municipal operations.

Engaging legal and community stakeholders in the review process will ensure that by-laws reflect current priorities, address community needs, and remain adaptable to future changes.

Implementation Actions

1. **Establish a Regular Review Cycle**: Implement a structured rolling review cycle (e.g., every 3–5 years) to ensure that by-laws remain current and relevant.
2. **Provide Training for Staff**: After updating or introducing new by-laws, provide training for relevant municipal staff on enforcement and compliance requirements to ensure consistent application and improve enforcement effectiveness.
3. **Develop a Communications Plan for the Public**: Create a communications strategy to inform the public about significant by-law changes to foster transparency, improve public understanding, and enhance compliance.
4. **Implement a Monitoring Mechanism**: Set up mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of revised by-laws over time. This could include tracking compliance rates, collecting feedback from enforcement teams, and conducting periodic assessments to evaluate if the updated by-laws are meeting their objectives.

Rationale

+ **Builds Compliance and Relevance:** Keeps by-laws aligned with legal requirements and community expectations, enhancing enforceability.

+ **Supports Governance:** Ensures a legislative framework that strengthens municipal governance and operational resilience.

Risk Impact	**Low**: Minimal disruption expected; the review will primarily involve administrative updates and stakeholder engagement with no anticipated critical operational risks.
Financial Impact	**Low - Medium**: Minor to moderate costs for stakeholder consultations, legal review, and document updates.

LEGEND

Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost

Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
Medium – High: Significant impact; substantial disruption, high financial cost
High: Severe impact; critical disruption, very high financial cost

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Sub-Initiative #2.5 | Create Project Manager Position for Major Capital Projects

Overview

To enhance the municipality's capacity to manage complex, risk-intensive projects, this initiative proposes the addition of a dedicated Project Manager. This role will focus on large-scale projects involving critical infrastructure or substantial upgrades, where precise planning, risk management, and timeline control are essential. High-risk projects, such as those related to infrastructure resilience and public safety, require specialized oversight to ensure timely completion within budget constraints and compliance with municipal standards. By establishing a dedicated Project Manager role, the Municipality can achieve better oversight, effective risk mitigation, and improved project outcomes, supporting long-term community needs and operational resilience.

Rationale

+ **Improves Oversight and Project Success:** A dedicated Project Manager ensures that high-priority, complex projects receive the focused attention necessary to meet timelines, budget goals, and quality standards, minimizing potential delays or cost overruns.

+ **Mitigates Risks in Large-Scale Projects:** The Project Manager can proactively identify and address risks, reducing the likelihood of costly or disruptive issues. This approach enhances project resilience and aligns outcomes with municipal goals.

+ **Enhances Staff Efficiency and Focus:** By delegating project management tasks to a specialist, other municipal staff can focus on their primary responsibilities, improving overall team productivity and resource allocation.

+ **Supports Strategic Growth:** Effective project management contributes to well-coordinated, sustainable infrastructure development.

Implementation Actions

1. **Hire a Qualified Project Manager:** Recruit an experienced Project Manager to work within the Engineering and Public Works Department with expertise in municipal projects, infrastructure development, and risk management, especially for high-stakes initiatives involving public infrastructure upgrades and safety considerations.

2. **Integrate into Project Planning and Execution:** Embed the Project Manager in both the planning and execution stages of all major projects to ensure consistent and cohesive project delivery, aligned with municipal goals and risk management protocols.

3. **Equip with Tools and Authority:** Provide the Project Manager with the necessary tools (e.g., project management software, risk assessment frameworks) and the authority to make decisions that support effective risk mitigation, stakeholder coordination, and timely project delivery.

Risk Impact	**Medium:** The initiative will have a noticeable impact on operational processes due to the focus on complex projects; however, effective risk management and the structured oversight provided by the Project Manager should mitigate any major risks associated with project execution.
Financial Impact	**Medium – High:** The cost of hiring a dedicated Project Manager and supporting resources may be significant initially but is justified by the potential savings in project efficiency, cost avoidance, and quality improvements in project outcomes over time.

LEGEND

Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost
Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
Medium – High: Significant impact; substantial disruption, high financial cost
High: Severe impact; critical disruption, very high financial cost

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In-Depth Analysis |Sub-Initiative #2.5: Create Project Manager Position for Major Capital Projects

Change | Add Strategic Capacity and Hire a Project Manager

Description

To strengthen Strathroy-Caradoc's ability to manage complex, high-risk municipal infrastructure projects, the proposal is to establish a dedicated Project Manager position within the Municipality. This role will enhance oversight, streamline execution, and improve risk management for major projects involving critical infrastructure.

Rationale

Currently, without a dedicated Project Manager, high-value and complex municipal projects are being overseen by staff members as an additional responsibility, often without specialized project management expertise or the necessary dedicated focus. This approach presents significant risk to project outcomes, as it stretches resources thin and lacks the structured oversight that complex projects require. Adding a Project Manager will allow Strathroy-Caradoc to enhance oversight, mitigate risks, and streamline execution for critical infrastructure and large-scale improvements. With this role in place, the municipality can ensure that projects are completed on time, within budget, and in alignment with community goals, all while improving operational efficiency and supporting long-term growth.

- **Improves Oversight and Project Success**: A Project Manager will provide focused attention to high-priority projects, ensuring better adherence to budgets, timelines, and municipal goals, while minimizing potential delays or cost overruns.

- **Mitigates Risks in Large-Scale Projects**: This role allows for proactive risk identification and management, reducing the likelihood of costly or disruptive issues, aligning project outcomes with municipal goals.

- **Enhances Staff Efficiency and Focus**: By delegating project management tasks to a project manager, other staff can focus on their primary responsibilities, improving productivity and resource allocation.

- **Supports Strategic Growth**: Effective project management aligns with the municipality's strategic growth plans, ensuring sustainable development that meets long-term goals.

Estimated Financial Impact	**Project Manager**	**Assumptions:** The financial analysis assumes the role will be full-time with costs covering salary, benefits, and required project management tools.
	* Estimated costs based on comparator analysis is $100,000 + benefits (estimated to be 25%)	
	(As a new role, this position will require evaluation through the Municipality's job evaluation tool and may be subject to adjustments)	Impact on operational efficiency and project quality is expected to offset initial costs over time due to reduced project delays, improved risk management, and resource optimization.
	Note: An innovative approach that some municipalities are considering is funding this position from the Capital Budget, rather than operating. Development Charges (DC) can fund staff positions if they are part of a growth-related project that directly supports new development – however, ongoing staffing costs are not eligible for DC funding. Alternatively, Strathroy-Caradoc can allocate other revenue sources—such as property taxes or user fees—to cover the cost of this position.	

Overview | Initiative #3 **Strategic Capacity and Resourcing**

Description

Strathroy-Caradoc's initiative on Strategic Capacity and Resourcing focuses on aligning organizational structure and resource management to meet current and future service demands efficiently. This initiative covers enhancing staffing strategies, optimizing operational efficiencies, and upgrading technological capabilities to support municipal operations and community service delivery.

Recommended Sub-Initiatives

3.1   Develop a Strategic Capacity and Resourcing Plan ("People Plan")

3.2   Establish an Integrated Communications and Customer Service Team

3.3   Leverage County Services to Enhance Municipal Support and Efficiency

Cost-Benefits Overview	Direct Costs	Direct Savings
Strategic Capacity and Resourcing Plan: Aligns talent with strategic goals, reducing recruitment costs and enhancing productivity.	Investment in workforce analysis and planning tools	Reduced recruitment and turnover expenses
Communications and Customer Service Team: Unifies public relations efforts, boosting efficiency and reducing external PR needs.	Salary for additional customer service personnel	Reduced costs related to complaint handling and increased community satisfaction
	Investment in team structuring and communication tools	Savings from increased efficiency in communication and reduced need for external PR services
Leverage County Services: Reduces costs and improves quality through shared services and economies of scale.	Contribution to shared service agreements	Cost savings from shared resources and operational efficiencies

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Sub-Initiative #3.1 | Develop a Strategic Capacity and Resourcing Plan ("People Plan")

Overview

Strathroy-Caradoc faces an evolving landscape of service demands, population growth, and demographic shifts, all of which necessitate a robust and future-focused approach to human resource management. High turnover, the need for specialized skill sets, and anticipated retirements among senior staff underscore the importance of developing a Strategic Capacity and Resourcing Plan, or "People Plan." This initiative aims to assess and align the Municipality's human capital with its strategic goals, ensuring that the organization is equipped with the talent and resources required to meet both current and future challenges.

The People Plan will proactively identify workforce gaps, inform succession planning, and enable Strathroy-Caradoc to recruit and retain skilled personnel who align with the Municipality's mission and values.

Rationale

+ **Builds Organizational Capacity:** Ensures the Municipality has the skilled personnel required to achieve strategic objectives and deliver high-quality services.

+ **Supports Continuity and Growth:** Enhances employee retention, reduces turnover costs, and prepares the municipality for leadership transitions, strengthening operational resilience.

+ **Enables Data-Driven Decision-Making:** Provides a structured framework for analyzing staffing needs, skill gaps, and future workforce demands, supporting informed, proactive decisions that align human resources with strategic priorities.

Implementation Actions

1. **Conduct a Workforce Analysis:** Perform a comprehensive analysis of current staffing, skill gaps, and future needs. This analysis will guide resource allocation and ensure departments have the personnel needed to fulfill their mandates effectively.

2. **Develop Recruitment Strategies:** Create targeted recruitment strategies to attract high-caliber talent, particularly in critical areas where specialized skills are essential to meeting service demands and advancing strategic priorities.

3. **Establish Retention and Development Programs:** Implement retention programs focused on employee engagement, career development, and recognition to enhance job satisfaction and reduce turnover. This includes establishing staff training and development programs to address existing skill gaps and support staff's professional growth.

4. **Implement Succession Planning:** Design and roll out a succession planning framework that prepares emerging leaders for future leadership roles, ensuring continuity in service delivery and institutional knowledge retention.

5. **Align Talent Management with Strategic Goals:** Regularly review and adjust human resource strategies to ensure alignment with evolving municipal goals, allowing the municipality to respond effectively to changing community needs.

Risk Impact	**Medium – High:** A comprehensive People Plan mitigates risks associated with staffing shortages, high turnover, and potential service disruptions due to lack of skilled personnel.
Financial Impact	**Medium – High:** While investment in recruitment, retention, and succession planning may have upfront costs, these measures ultimately reduce expenses associated with turnover and improve service efficiency.

LEGEND
Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost
Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
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High: Severe impact; critical disruption, very high financial cost

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Sub-Initiative #3.2 |Establish an Integrated Communications and Customer Service Team

Overview

To enhance service delivery and ensure consistent, high-quality support in customer service and communications, the Municipality should establish a dedicated Communications and Customer Service Team within the Legal and Legislative Services Department. This shift moves the customer service function from the Finance Department to Legal and Legislative Services.

Consolidating and enhancing customer service and communication resources is essential for providing consistent, high-quality service across Strathroy-Caradoc's municipal operations. With an increasing demand for timely responses and transparent communication from the public, creating one division for communications and customer service and dedicating additional resources to these areas will improve the Municipality's responsiveness and community engagement.

Rationale

+ **Builds Cohesion in Public Relations:** Provides a coordinated approach to managing public relations and resident interactions, reducing inconsistencies and ensuring a unified municipal voice.

+ **Enhances Responsiveness and Consistency:** Improves responsiveness to resident inquiries and ensures consistent messaging across all communications, fostering trust and engagement within the community.

Implementation Actions

1. **Structure the Team for Integration:** Establish the team with close integration into all municipal departments, ensuring that customer service and communication efforts support and align with each department's objectives and responsibilities.

2. **Develop a Unified Communication Strategy:** Create a cohesive communication strategy that aligns with municipal objectives and establishes standardized messaging across all public-facing channels. This strategy should include guidelines for consistent branding, response protocols, and proactive community outreach.

3. **Hire Additional Staff for Customer Service and Communications:** Recruit qualified personnel to expand the customer service and communications teams to handle an increased volume of inquiries, manage social media channels effectively, and provide timely responses to resident concerns. (Customer service standards for these functions are to be addressed as part of Sub-Initiative 1.4.)

4. **Leverage Technology to Streamline Processes:** Invest in customer relationship management (CRM) systems, digital communication tools, and social media management software to enhance the efficiency of customer service and communication activities. These tools will facilitate more effective tracking and reporting of resident interactions.

5. **Establish Clear Guidelines for External Communications:** Develop standardized guidelines for external communications to ensure that messaging is consistent, accurate, and aligned with the municipality's values. These guidelines should cover all forms of communication, including social media, public notices, and press releases.

Risk Impact	**Low** – Minimal impact as this initiative primarily strengthens existing operations without causing major disruptions.	*Financial Impact*	**Medium** – Moderate investment required for hiring additional staff, technology enhancements, and ongoing training.

LEGEND
Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
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In-Depth Analysis | Sub-Initiative #3.2 | Add Customer Service & Communication Resources **– Financial Implications and Benefits**

Change | Add Customer Service and Communication Resources

Description
This initiative proposes adding an additional Customer Service Representative and creating a new Communications Coordinator role within Strathroy-Caradoc's team. The aim is to enhance the municipality's capacity to respond to resident inquiries, manage communications, and deliver high-quality customer service. The Communications Coordinator's role is subject to the Municipality's job evaluation process, which may affect the final grading and salary. Both roles are full-time positions, aligning with the municipality's strategic goals for public engagement and transparent communication.

Rationale
Enhancing Customer Service and Communication Resources aligns with Strathroy-Caradoc's objectives to ensure consistent, high-quality service delivery and address the increasing demands for timely response and transparent communication. Adding these two roles will enable the municipality to handle a greater volume of inquiries effectively, establish a proactive approach to resident communication, and foster public trust. By empowering the municipality to streamline interactions and provide structured communications, this initiative sets a foundation for a responsive and service-oriented municipal model.

Estimated Financial Impact	**Additional Customer Service Representative Salary:** Estimated at $56,979 + benefits annually. **Communications Coordinator Salary (post-evaluation):** Estimated at $77,512 + benefits annually.	*Assumptions:* • Assumes a 35-hour work week • Customer Service Representative (assumes Band 2, Step 3), excludes benefits • Communications Coordinator (assumes Band 5, Step 3), excludes benefits • The Communications Coordinator's final salary will be determined based on the Municipality's job evaluation tool and may vary based on the evaluation outcome. • Estimated salaries for positions do not include standard benefits which are estimated to be 25% on top of the base salary. • This budget does not account for potential adjustments to salaries over time, such as cost-of-living increases.

Sub-Initiative #3.3 |Leverage County Services to Enhance Municipal Support and Efficiency

Overview

Leveraging shared services and resources available through the County of Middlesex offers an efficient approach for Strathroy-Caradoc to strengthen municipal capabilities while managing costs. By collaborating with the County on specific services, the municipality can reduce redundancies, gain access to specialized expertise, and achieve economies of scale.

In the past, there was some hesitancy to leverage County-delivered services due to concerns about autonomy, oversight, and alignment with municipal priorities. However, recent feedback and operational assessments suggest that strategic partnerships could alleviate pressures on municipal departments that are experiencing increasing demands. For example, the Service Delivery Review highlighted that enhanced IT support could address growing technological and cyber security needs in areas like Police Services. Additionally, the review identified opportunities to consolidate procurement functions, reducing workload on the finance team while enhancing efficiency.

This initiative identifies areas where using the County's shared services has the greatest potential to enhance service quality, reduce administrative burdens, and lower costs. Strategic partnerships with the County can streamline service delivery, allowing the municipality to allocate more resources to priority areas without compromising quality.

Rationale

+ **Lowers Operational Costs:** Achieves cost savings through economies of scale by sharing resources and reducing duplicate efforts.

+ **Enhances Service Delivery:** Improves service quality through collaborative approaches that leverage County expertise.

+ **Enables Cost Savings and Improved Service Quality:** Consolidating specialized services leads to higher service standards and allows for reinvestment in critical municipal functions.

Implementation Actions

1. **Identify Services for Shared or Consolidated Delivery**: Conduct a thorough review of municipal services to determine those that could be effectively shared or consolidated with the County. Focus on areas where the County already has established resources, expertise, or infrastructure that can efficiently support municipal operations.

2. **Maintain Open Communication with the County**: With procurement services evolving as a levied service, stay updated on its development. This service, once fully operational, could help relieve pressure on the finance team by providing additional support in procurement processes.

3. **Negotiate Service Level Agreements (SLAs)**: Develop clear agreements with the County to outline service expectations, financial terms, and performance metrics. SLAs will be instrumental in ensuring accountability, service consistency, and measurable outcomes, ultimately providing both financial and operational efficiencies.

4. **Clarify Performance Metrics and Reporting Requirements**: Defining performance metrics and reporting obligations within SLAs will help address concerns about oversight and service management, ensuring that shared services meet the municipality's standards for quality and accountability.

Risk Impact	**Low – Medium:** Minor impact with some disruption; consolidated services may require adjustments but ultimately provide greater efficiency.
Financial Impact	**Low – Medium:** Some initial investment may be needed to establish service agreements, but long-term savings are expected through shared efficiencies.

LEGEND

Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
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In-Depth Analysis |Sub-Initiative #3.3: Overview County's IT Services

Overview of the County's IT Services for Strathroy-Caradoc | The County of Middlesex offers a comprehensive suite of Information Technology (IT) services to local municipalities through a service agreement model. This agreement includes an annual base cost, along with the possibility of an "Actual Costs Adjustment" to tailor costs to the specific needs and resource usage of each municipality.

Key Components of the IT Service Agreement:

- **Five-Year Renewable Agreement:** This service agreement is currently in place for six local municipalities, with a five-year renewal term. The most recent renewal was in early 2024.

- **Direct Billing Model:** Each participating municipality receives direct billing based on the actual IT services utilized, allowing for tailored budgeting and cost management aligned with each municipality's service demands.

- **Service Scope:** The County's IT department offers a full range of services, including security, design, helpdesk support, system architecture, and capital procurement. This robust service scope covers foundational IT needs, ensuring participating municipalities benefit from a modernized and secure IT infrastructure.

- **Performance and Service Level Agreements (SLAs):** The agreement incorporates SLAs that define service quality, response times, and accountability, ensuring consistent and reliable support across municipalities. This framework supports municipalities in maintaining high standards of IT service delivery while managing costs effectively.

Considerations for Strathroy-Caradoc:

- **Past Hesitancy and Opportunity for Cost-Efficiency:** Historically, Strathroy-Caradoc was hesitant to leverage County IT services. However, partnering with the County now presents an opportunity to address evolving IT needs more cost-effectively, while accessing specialized expertise without the overhead costs of building internal IT capacity.

- **Specialized Service Needs:** Specific municipal departments such as police and fire may have unique IT requirements, which the County is capable of accommodating under this agreement. The County's experience in delivering IT services for emergency and regulated services like EMS provides Strathroy-Caradoc with a reliable support system for its own specialized departments.

- **Potential for Capital Savings:** Feedback from municipalities already using the County's IT services indicates that immediate savings can be realized in capital investments. Capital costs associated with IT infrastructure can be significantly reduced over time by leveraging the County's existing resources and expertise. This arrangement could provide Strathroy-Caradoc with access to essential IT infrastructure without the full burden of upfront capital costs.

- **Design of the County's IT System:** While Strathroy-Caradoc expressed concerns regarding the lack of "onsite" IT support, the County's IT service model is structured around a team of specialized experts who deliver support remotely and efficiently. This modernized system minimizes the need for constant onsite personnel, utilizing centralized expertise for cost-effective and responsive service.

- **Future of Cost Structure:** Currently, IT services are not levied, as participation is limited to the six municipalities in the agreement. However, if Strathroy-Caradoc joins, this could potentially evolve into a levied service, altering the cost structure and potentially providing greater economies of scale for all participating municipalities

Collaboration with the County's IT services offers Strathroy-Caradoc a scalable and specialized IT support framework. This partnership approach would allow Strathroy-Caradoc to focus on core municipal services, benefit from the County's well-established IT infrastructure, and achieve cost savings in both operational and capital expenses.

In-Depth Analysis | Sub-Initiative #3.3b: Optimize Planning Services Through County Collaboration

Change | Optimize Planning Services Through County Collaboration		
Rationale		**Potential FTE Impact**
Given the evolving needs and recent staffing changes in Strathroy-Caradoc's planning department, including the vacancy in the Director of Planning role, a hybrid model is proposed to optimize planning services effectively. This model is designed to reduce redundancy, enhance service delivery, and leverage County resources while maintaining essential local oversight. By strategically reorganizing roles, Strathroy-Caradoc can ensure the effective management of planning services while aligning with budgetary and operational priorities.		
Hybrid Model Structure: **Vacant Director-Level Position:** • **Role Assessment**: With the Director of Planning position currently vacant, Strathroy-Caradoc has the opportunity to reassess the need for this role. Instead of directly replacing the Director, the department could redistribute high-level responsibilities across a new Manager of Planning and the County's planning support, achieving a more streamlined structure. • **Strategic Oversight Through County Collaboration**: The absence of a Director may be offset by a formalized agreement with the County to provide support for strategic, long-term, and specialized projects. This setup leverages regional resources without duplicating senior leadership functions, effectively bridging the gap left by the vacant Director role. **Manager of Planning (Strathroy-Caradoc FTE):** • **Role Focus**: Reprofiling the Director position to a Manager-level role can centralize day-to-day planning operations, including processing development applications, managing subdivision and severance files, and providing support to the Committee of Adjustment as Secretary-Treasurer. • **Customer Service and Application Processing**: The Manager would be equipped to handle front-line service for developers, residents, and stakeholders, ensuring timely and accessible customer support without relying on a Director-level role. • **Operational Efficiency**: By focusing the Manager role on immediate operational needs, Strathroy-Caradoc can achieve cost savings and reduce administrative duplication, while retaining local control over essential planning functions.	**Enhanced Role of County Planning Services:** • **Specialized and Overflow Support**: The County would assume a more significant role in handling strategic planning initiatives, policy studies, and other specialized projects beyond regular development application processing. This structure offers Strathroy-Caradoc access to high-level expertise on an as-needed basis, minimizing the need for permanent, high-cost senior roles. • **Avoidance of Service Duplication**: Defining clear service boundaries between the Manager and the County helps to prevent overlap, ensuring that specialized or complex tasks are efficiently managed by the County, while routine operations remain under local control. **Potential Customer Service Enhancement Role:** • **Monitoring Period**: Following the reorganization, Strathroy-Caradoc would assess demand for customer service support by tracking application volume and client inquiries. If data supports it, a customer service role could be added to assist with initial interactions, helping customers navigate the planning process more effectively. • **Role Scope**: This role would provide on-the-ground support for permit applications, zoning inquiries, and other customer-facing needs, reducing the workload on the Manager and County planners, and enhancing the public's experience.	1. Director of Building and Planning (vacant) 2. Development Services Coordinator 3. Senior Development Coordinator

In-Depth Analysis | Sub-Initiative #3.3b: Optimize Planning Services Through Enhanced County Collaboration

Change | Optimize Planning Services Through Enhanced County Collaboration

Rationale	Implications for Long-Term Planning in Strathroy-Caradoc
Rationale and Benefits: • **Reduced Redundancy and Cost Savings**: The hybrid model replaces the vacant Director role with a more cost-effective Manager position and leverages County resources for high-level planning, resulting in significant potential cost savings. • **Improved Service Delivery**: By establishing a clear division of responsibilities, Strathroy-Caradoc can improve local service delivery, ensuring a dedicated point of contact for routine planning matters while accessing County expertise for complex cases. • **Scalable Resource Allocation**: Through collaboration with the County, Strathroy-Caradoc can adjust its planning resources based on demand, accessing additional support for peak periods or large projects without a permanent increase in staffing. **Implementation Considerations:** • **Service Agreement Update**: The shared service agreement with the County should be updated to reflect the expanded role of the County in providing strategic and overflow support for Strathroy-Caradoc's planning functions. • **Transition Planning and Onboarding**: An implementation plan should be established to guide the transition, including recruiting the new Manager, defining customer service protocols, and establishing workflows with the County to ensure continuity. • **Evaluation and Adjustment**: Regular evaluations, particularly within the first year, will help Strathroy-Caradoc assess the model's effectiveness, measuring factors like processing times, customer satisfaction, and cost savings. This feedback will inform adjustments to the structure or support roles as needed.	1. **Access to Expertise |** The County provides specialized planning expertise for complex projects, helping Strathroy-Caradoc navigate regional regulations and emerging issues without needing in-house resources. 2. **Focus on Local Priorities |** With a Manager of Planning handling day-to-day tasks, Strathroy-Caradoc can address community needs while the County focuses on strategic, long-term projects. 3. **Scalable Support for Growth |** The model allows flexible support from the County as the municipality grows, scaling services as needed without overextending local resources. 4. **Proactive Planning |** The hybrid approach enables local resources to focus on proactive, community-driven goals, while the County manages regulatory and technical aspects. 5. **Budget Stability |** Relying on the County provides predictable costs for long-term planning, enabling better budget management for strategic initiatives. 6. **Reduced Leadership Gaps |** The County's support reduces the impact of local staffing changes, ensuring continuity in planning efforts and mitigating risks of project delays. 7. **Future Flexibility |** Strathroy-Caradoc can adapt the model over time, increasing or decreasing reliance on the County as planning needs evolve.

By strengthening its hybrid approach, Strathroy-Caradoc can balance local control with regional expertise, addressing immediate planning needs while positioning the department for future growth and efficiency. This model leverages vacant positions as opportunities to restructure and strengthen planning services, meeting both current operational requirements and long-term strategic goals

Implementation Timeline	**Horizon:** 3-months	Leverage the existing vacancies within the department.
Estimated Financial Impact and Savings Potential	*Cost Savings: By not filling the vacant positions and adopting a hybrid approach with a Manager and the current Senior Development Coordinator positions, Strathroy-Caradoc avoids the higher expense associated with a full-time director, generating potential **savings of approximately $50,000 - $65,000 (minimum)** when balancing the new costs with the director-level vacancy savings. (note: these are high-level estimates provided for illustrative purposes only). The potential savings offsets costs of hiring additional customer service supports, as required.*

Overview | Initiative #4 **Digital Modernization**

Description

The Digital Modernization initiative aims to establish a forward-looking technology infrastructure for Strathroy-Caradoc, enhancing service delivery, operational efficiency, and adaptability. Through a comprehensive review, IT strategic planning, and leveraging advanced technology, this initiative seeks to align digital systems with the municipality's goals, positioning it to effectively serve residents and operate seamlessly in an evolving digital landscape.

Note: There is potential alignment between Strathroy-Caradoc's needs and the County's available IT resources, as it is likely that the County already provides similar services as part of its offerings. Engaging with the County's IT services could enable Strathroy-Caradoc to leverage established infrastructure, benefit from shared resources, and reduce costs through economies of scale.

Cost-Benefits Overview	Direct Costs	Direct Savings
Develop a Digital Services and IT Strategic Plan: Provides a roadmap for future IT investments, optimizing spending over the long term.	Cost of Review and analysis of existing digital systems. Investment in strategic planning and consulting services	Savings from improved budgeting, decision-making, and technology alignment with long-term goals

Recommended Sub-Initiatives

4.1   Develop a Digital Services and IT Strategic Plan

Sub-Initiative #4.1 | Develop a Digital Services and IT Strategic Plan

Overview

Conduct a thorough review of the municipality's current technology systems and digital processes to identify opportunities for modernization, efficiency, and enhanced service delivery. This review will encompass an evaluation of existing digital tools, platforms, and infrastructure to uncover gaps and inefficiencies that may hinder service delivery. Using the inputs from the review, develop a Digital Services and IT Strategic Plan that outlines the direction and implementation strategies for technology investments over the next few years, ensuring alignment with the Municipality's overall goals. This plan will serve as a roadmap for adopting and integrating technology across departments, enhancing operational efficiency and supporting service delivery improvements. By establishing a clear IT strategy, the municipality can make informed decisions on future technology initiatives, optimize resource allocation, and proactively address potential digital transformation challenges.

In an era where digital expectations are rapidly advancing, this initiative is essential to position the municipality as forward-thinking, responsive, and accessible.

Rationale

+ **Identifies Inefficiencies and Gaps**: Reviewing current tools and platforms will reveal weaknesses in the existing system, enabling targeted improvements and eliminating redundancies.

+ **Supports Service Delivery Improvement**: Adopting modern digital solutions enhances responsiveness and enables a more seamless experience for residents, improving satisfaction and engagement.

+ **Promotes Scalability and Future-Readiness**: Implementing scalable digital systems prepares the municipality to adapt to future demands and emerging technologies.

Implementation Actions

1. **Audit Current Technology Systems and Tools**: Conduct a thorough audit of all existing digital tools, platforms, and IT infrastructure to identify inefficiencies, redundancies, and upgrade needs. Include systems for customer service, internal communications, records management, and operational workflows.

2. **Evaluate Emerging Technologies**: Research technologies that could enhance service delivery, such as AI for customer service automation, mobile apps for resident engagement, and data analytics tools for data-driven decision-making.

3. **Define IT Strategic Goals**: Identify and set clear short-term and long-term IT goals that align with municipal objectives. Each technology initiative should support operational needs and community service improvement.

4. **Develop a Technology Adoption Roadmap**: Create a phased roadmap for adopting and integrating technology across departments. This roadmap should include specific timelines and milestones to guide implementation and assess progress.

5. **Allocate Resources and Budget for IT Projects**: Ensure that the IT strategic plan is supported by adequate resources and budget allocations. This will enable the successful execution and sustainability of new technology initiatives.

6. **Establish Performance Metrics**: Define key performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of IT initiatives, such as cost savings, efficiency improvements, and user satisfaction. Regularly monitor these metrics to evaluate the impact of the IT strategy.

Risk Impact	**Medium**: Transitioning to new digital systems may temporarily disrupt services and require an adjustment period, but this risk is manageable with careful planning.
Financial Impact	**Medium – High**: While initial costs may be substantial, investing in scalable, efficient technologies will yield long-term savings through enhanced efficiency and improved service quality.

LEGEND
Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost
Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
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Overview | Initiative #5 **Customer Service Enhancements**

Description
This initiative aims to enhance customer service across Strathroy-Caradoc by creating a stronger connection between the municipality and its residents.
By implementing a robust engagement strategy, improving public relations, and using technology to streamline service, the municipality can better meet resident needs, foster trust, and ensure high-quality service delivery.

Cost-Benefits Overview	Direct Costs	Direct Savings
Develop a Strathroy-Caradoc Community Engagement Strategy: Builds trust and strengthens community relations.	Cost of engagement tools, surveys, and forums	Savings from reduced complaint handling and increased resident satisfaction
Implement a CRM System to Enhance Resident Engagement and Service Efficiency: Improves response times and personalization.	Investment in CRM software and staff training	Operational savings from reduced manual processes and enhanced service efficiency
Enhance Customer Service and Community Interaction: Elevates service standards, strengthening the municipality's reputation.	Training and resource costs for customer service enhancement	Savings from reduced inconsistencies in service delivery, leading to improved resident satisfaction and trust

Recommended Sub-Initiatives

5.1   Develop a Strathroy-Caradoc Community Engagement Strategy

5.2   Implement a CRM System to Enhance Resident Engagement and Service Efficiency

5.3   Develop a Customer Service Policy and Training

Sub-Initiative #5.1 | Develop a Strathroy-Caradoc Community Engagement Strategy

Overview

This initiative seeks to develop a comprehensive community engagement strategy for Strathroy-Caradoc that actively fosters participation and dialogue between the Municipality and its residents.

The SDR Community Survey findings indicate that most respondents view the Municipality's engagement as "Average" (38.3%) or "Good" (33.5%), with adequate to good opportunities for resident input. However, 16.4% rated engagement as "Poor," and 2.6% as "Very Poor," suggesting some residents feel engagement opportunities are limited. Only 5.4% rated it "Excellent".

Through structured, proactive engagement efforts, the municipality can build transparency, enhance trust, and ensure residents feel heard and valued. The engagement strategy will include multiple channels of communication to reach diverse groups within the community, leveraging digital platforms, town hall meetings, surveys, and other interactive tools to encourage broad participation.

This strategy intersects with the need for customer relationship management (CRM) technology to streamline interactions and provide municipal staff and Council with insights into resident feedback.

Rationale

+ **Increases Community Trust:** Strengthens community relations and trust through regular, structured engagement, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual respect.

+ **Enhances Decision-Making:** Provides Council and municipal staff with direct insights into community needs and priorities, supporting informed and community-focused decision-making.

Implementation Actions

1. **Define Multi-Channel Engagement Methods**: Create a comprehensive plan that incorporates digital platforms (social media, email newsletters), in-person events (town halls, community forums), and interactive tools (online surveys, feedback forms) to reach a broad spectrum of community members, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility.

2. **Tailor Engagement to Demographic Needs**: Utilize digital channels like social media and mobile-friendly surveys for younger, tech-savvy residents, and provide in-person engagement options, such as community workshops, for older residents or those less comfortable with digital platforms.

3. **Ensure Feasibility and Resource Allocation**: Assess available resources, including staff, technology, and budget, to ensure the strategy is realistic and sustainable. Provide necessary training to staff to effectively manage both digital and in-person engagement.

4. **Set Clear Goals and Metrics for Success**: Establish measurable objectives such as participation rates, satisfaction levels, and feedback responsiveness. Regularly evaluate and adjust the engagement strategy based on these metrics.

5. **Regularly Communicate Engagement Outcomes**: Keep the community informed by sharing the results of engagement efforts and illustrating how resident feedback has influenced municipal actions.

Risk Impact	**Low - Medium:** Implementing a CRM and new engagement channels require appropriate training and clear communication with staff.
Financial Impact	**Medium:** Initial investments in CRM technology, staff training, and engagement tools may incur moderate costs, but these are justified by the long-term benefits of stronger community relations, improved customer service, and more data-driven decision-making. In-house, this would require dedicated staff time to develop the strategy (average of 7 hours per week for 5 months). Opportunity to engage an external consultant external consultant (~$30,000).

LEGEND
Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost
Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
Medium – High: Significant impact; substantial disruption, high financial cost
High: Severe impact; critical disruption, very high financial cost

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Sub-Initiative #5.2 | Implement a CRM System to Enhance Resident Engagement and Service Efficiency

Overview

Deploy a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to centralize and streamline resident interactions, improving efficiency, accountability, and service quality. Currently, resident requests come through various channels—online, phone, in-person, and self-service—which often results in duplicate efforts and inconsistent follow-up. A CRM system will provide a single-entry point for service requests across all platforms, allowing staff to track, organize, and respond to inquiries effectively. The CRM will integrate seamlessly with existing municipal software, including Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and work order management, to provide comprehensive data and insights on resident needs and service performance.

This system will also enhance transparency, enabling residents to see the status of their requests and receive timely responses.

Rationale

+ **Reduces Duplication and Improves Efficiency**: Provides a centralized platform to track inquiries and responses, reducing duplicate work and enabling faster, more coordinated responses.

+ **Enhances Consistency in Resident Interactions**: Stores resident history and context for each inquiry, allowing for personalized, informed responses and minimizing the need for residents to repeat information.

+ **Enables Data-Driven Decisions**: Aggregates data on resident inquiries, enabling the municipality to analyze trends and allocate resources based on real patterns and needs.

+ **Strengthens Accountability and Transparency**: Tracks the status and resolution of each request, promoting accountability and providing residents with visibility into the municipality's responsiveness.

Implementation Actions

1. **Select and Customize a CRM Solution**: Choose a CRM platform that aligns with municipal needs and integrates with existing software systems for GIS, work order management, and online service portals.

2. **Train Staff and Build Departmental Champions**: Implement comprehensive training for staff to ensure effective use of the CRM. Designate "CRM champions" in each department to provide ongoing support and foster a culture of adoption.

3. **Establish Metrics for Engagement and Responsiveness**: Define metrics such as response times, resolution rates, and resident satisfaction scores to evaluate CRM effectiveness. Regularly review these metrics to identify areas for improvement.

4. **Collaborate with Middlesex County**: Explore shared procurement opportunities with Middlesex County to reduce costs and leverage additional resources, support, and best practices for CRM adoption.

5. **Enable Continuous Improvement**: Regularly update the CRM system with feedback from users and residents to refine features and processes. Monitor system usage and make adjustments to improve service quality and operational efficiency.

Risk Impact	**High**: Transitioning to a CRM system may disrupt traditional processes and require significant training for staff. This risk can be mitigated by providing comprehensive support during the implementation phase and ongoing training.
Financial Impact	**High**: The initial costs for CRM software licenses, staff training, and system customization will be substantial. However, the investment is expected to yield long-term savings through operational efficiencies and improved service delivery quality.

LEGEND
Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost
Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
Medium – High: Significant impact; substantial disruption, high financial cost
High: Severe impact; critical disruption, very high financial cost

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Sub-Initiative #5.3 | Develop a Customer Service Policy and Training

Overview

Develop and implement a comprehensive Customer Service Policy to establish consistent standards and expectations for all municipal staff in their interactions with the public. This policy will include guidelines on response times, communication standards, and issue resolution protocols, ensuring that every resident receives a professional, timely, and effective response.

Provide customer service policy training to all municipal staff to establish a consistent standard of high-quality public interactions. This initiative aims to equip staff with essential skills for effective communication, responsiveness, and problem-solving to enhance the overall service experience for residents.

Rationale

+ **Consistency in Service Delivery**: Standardizing expectations for customer interactions ensures that all residents experience the same high level of service, reducing variability and fostering trust in municipal operations.

+ **Promotes Accountability**: By monitoring compliance with the policy, the Municipality can encourage staff to uphold service standards, thereby improving responsiveness and transparency.

+ **Increases Resident Satisfaction**: Providing clear guidelines for staff interactions with residents helps ensure professional and satisfactory service, positively impacting the community's perception of municipal services.

Implementation Actions

1. **Draft a Comprehensive Customer Service Policy**: Establish clear guidelines addressing expected response times, communication etiquette, issue escalation processes, and follow-up protocols to provide residents with a consistent experience across departments.

2. **Conduct Mandatory Training on Policy Standards**: Ensure all staff understand and adhere to the policy through required training sessions focused on effective communication, problem-solving, and handling difficult interactions in alignment with municipal standards.

3. **Monitor Compliance and Gather Feedback**: Implement a mechanism to track adherence to the policy, gather resident feedback on service interactions, and regularly review the policy for improvements. Adjust guidelines as needed to address evolving resident expectations.

Risk Impact	**Low**: Minimal risk in developing and implementing a standardized policy, as it aligns with organizational goals and service expectations.
Financial Impact	**Low**: Costs associated with policy development and initial staff training, but these are one-time expenses with long-term benefits in service consistency and quality.

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Overview | Initiative #6 **Preparing for Growth**

Description

Undertake strategic initiatives to align municipal planning frameworks, streamline development approval processes, and foster economic development to support Strathroy-Caradoc's growth and ensure municipal services meet future demands.

This initiative focuses on strengthening the municipality's ability to support population growth and stimulate local economic opportunities while enhancing essential services, such as fire protection and by-law enforcement, to meet increased demands.

Recommended Sub-Initiatives

6.1	Conduct a Review of the Development Approvals Process to Improve Efficiency and Customer Experience
6.2	Develop a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Strathroy-Caradoc
6.3	Plan for Developing a Composite Model Day Shift Fire Service
6.4	Expand By-Law Enforcement Services to Other Municipalities to Support Revenue Generation

Cost-Benefits Overview	Direct Costs	Direct Savings
Establish a Corporate Planning Framework to Align All Municipal Plans: Promotes resource efficiency and alignment across departments.	Investment in planning framework development	Savings from reduced redundancy and improved long-term planning capabilities
Conduct a Review of the Development Approvals Process: Enhances processing efficiency, attracting development opportunities.	Cost of process review and digital solution implementation	Increased potential tax revenue from more development projects and reduced approval delays
Develop a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy: Drives economic growth by supporting local businesses.	Costs for strategic development and stakeholder engagement	Increased job opportunities and tax revenue from new businesses and investment attraction
Plan for Developing a Composite Model Day Shift Fire Service: Increases fire efficiency with optimized coverage.	Feasibility study and phased implementation costs	Cost savings from enhanced fire coverage without full-time costs
Expand By-Law Enforcement Services to Other Municipalities to Support Revenue Generation: Generates additional revenue streams.	Costs for team expansion and equipment for by-law services	Revenue from partner municipalities and cost-sharing benefits

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Sub-Initiative #6.1 | Conduct a Review of the Development Approvals Process to Improve Efficiency & Customer Experience

Overview

Undertake a comprehensive review of the development approvals review process, with the goal of streamlining operations and establishing internal systems that focus on continuous improvements. This includes implementing benchmarking of processing times and creating a more customer-focused approach to service delivery.

As it prepares for growth, the Municipality is at an ideal point to examine its internal processes, procedures, and resource allocations, allowing it to enhance customer service, improve communications protocols, build stronger relationships with stakeholders, and focus on process improvement. By optimizing the development approvals process, Strathroy-Caradoc can better meet the needs of residents, developers, and businesses, while supporting community growth and economic development.

Rationale

+ **Increases Efficiency**: Streamlining the approvals process reduces redundancies and shortens processing times, allowing for quicker project completions and enhancing staff productivity.

+ **Enhances Customer Experience**: By improving transparency and accessibility, the Municipality can foster trust and improve satisfaction among applicants and community members.

+ **Supports Economic Development**: A faster, more efficient process encourages investment and development, attracting new businesses and residents to the area.

+ **Optimizes Resource Allocation**: A refined approvals workflow allows staff to focus on high-priority tasks, making better use of municipal resources and reducing administrative strain.

Implementation Actions

1. **Process Optimization**: Actively involve staff, residents, developers, and businesses in the process review to gather diverse perspectives and ensure the proposed changes meet the needs of all stakeholders.

2. **Change Management and Training**: Equip municipal staff with necessary training to adapt to the streamlined process. Provide clear guidelines to ensure they can efficiently handle inquiries and communicate updates to applicants effectively.

3. **Technology Integration and Digital Tools**: Explore the use of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems or other digital platforms to enhance tracking, communication, and transparency. Ensure that any technology solutions selected are user-friendly and integrated with existing municipal software.

4. **Clear Communication Protocols**: Establish a standardized communication process for updates, inquiries, and requests. This will help manage applicant expectations and reduce confusion or misunderstandings about the status of their applications.

5. **Performance Metrics and Continuous Improvement**: Develop key performance indicators (KPIs) such as processing time targets and customer satisfaction levels. Regularly assess these metrics to identify areas for improvement and sustain high service standards.

Risk Impact	**Medium–High**: Streamlining the approvals process may initially disrupt existing workflows and lead to delays as staff and stakeholders adapt to new procedures. Effective change management practices, including staff training and clear communication, are essential to mitigate these risks.
Financial Impact	**Medium**: The costs associated with training, technology integration, and resource allocation may be significant. However, these are offset by the potential long-term savings from increased efficiency and reduced processing times, supporting economic growth and improved service delivery quality.

Sub-Initiative #6.2 | Develop a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Strathroy-Caradoc

Overview

With the recent hiring of an Economic Development Officer, Strathroy-Caradoc is poised to take a proactive approach to economic growth and community prosperity. Developing a comprehensive economic development strategy will provide a clear direction and structured framework to guide the Economic Development Officer's work and ensure alignment with the municipality's broader strategic objectives.

This strategy will support Strathroy-Caradoc's goals by defining priorities for attracting new businesses, fostering local entrepreneurship, and retaining existing businesses. It will include targeted initiatives to leverage the municipality's assets—such as its skilled workforce, favorable location, and community appeal—to attract both investment and talent. Key areas of focus will include diversifying the local economy, promoting sustainable growth, enhancing infrastructure to support businesses, and building partnerships with regional stakeholders. This roadmap will empower the Economic Development Officer to work effectively toward measurable outcomes and to respond adaptively to emerging opportunities and challenges.

Rationale

+ **Promotes Economic Growth and Job Creation**: A clear economic development strategy attracts investment, supports job creation, and strengthens the local economy, establishing Strathroy-Caradoc as an attractive destination for businesses.

+ **Enhances Quality of Life**: By diversifying job opportunities and fostering a vibrant economy, the strategy contributes to a higher quality of life for residents, making the community more appealing for current and future residents.

+ **Supports Business Retention and Innovation**: A targeted approach aids in retaining and expanding existing businesses, while encouraging innovation and resilience, positioning the municipality to adapt to changing economic conditions and sustain long-term growth.

Implementation Actions

1. **Stakeholder Engagement**: Involve local businesses, community groups, residents, and regional partners in the strategy development process to ensure that the plan reflects community needs and aspirations.

2. **Data-Driven Analysis**: Conduct thorough market research and analysis to identify industry trends, economic gaps, and growth opportunities. Use data to inform targeted initiatives and measure success.

3. **Develop Strategy:** Develop a Strategic Plan: Outline specific goals, key performance indicators, and priority sectors for economic growth, ensuring alignment with Strathroy-Caradoc's broader strategic objectives.

4. **Regional Partnerships**: Establish collaborations with regional economic development organizations, neighboring municipalities, and industry groups to amplify economic growth efforts and attract investment.

5. **Regular Review and Adjustment**: Implement mechanisms to regularly review and update the strategy to respond to changing economic conditions and community needs.

Risk Impact	**Medium**: Implementing a new economic development strategy may require adjustments in municipal priorities and allocation of resources. Economic shifts and unforeseen challenges may impact planned initiatives, making adaptability crucial.
Financial Impact	**Medium–High**: While the initial costs of research, stakeholder engagement, and implementation may be substantial, these investments are expected to yield long-term financial benefits through increased business investment, job creation, and expanded tax revenue.

LEGEND

Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost
Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
Medium – High: Significant impact; substantial disruption, high financial cost
High: Severe impact; critical disruption, very high financial cost

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Sub-Initiative #6.3 | Plan for Developing a Composite Model Day Shift Fire Service

Overview

As Strathroy-Caradoc anticipates significant population growth and development, the demand for Fire and emergency services will increase. The current volunteer-based model, while effective for past needs, may face challenges in meeting the service expectations and safety requirements associated with a larger, more urban population. A new Fire Hall is already under construction, and a shift to a composite model that includes the addition of full-time fire-fighters on a day-shift (or to cover peak times) is anticipated to enhance response times, coverage, and overall community safety.

Rationale

+ **Meeting Increased Demand:** With growth, Strathroy-Caradoc will experience higher call volumes, and potentially more complex emergency situations. A composite model ensures consistent coverage, especially during peak hours, addressing increased demand.

+ **Alignment with Other Growing Municipalities:** Several Ontario municipalities experiencing similar growth have transitioned to a composite fire service model. This approach balances cost-effectiveness with enhanced service quality. By starting with a day-shift full-time roles, the Municipality can take a phased approach to meet evolving needs, based on best practices observed in municipalities like Centre Wellington, Innisfil, and others.

+ **Proactive Community Safety Strategy:** The introduction of a composite model aligns with Strathroy-Caradoc's strategic goals to provide high-quality, proactive services. It ensures the Municipality is prepared for future growth and evolving risks, which strengthen community trust and safety.

Implementation Considerations

1. **Develop a Business Case:** The Fire Chief has been collecting data and research regarding a composite force. It is recommended that this be presented as a business case considering a composite fire service model for Council's consideration. The business case should outline a phased staffing approach, detailing the anticipated number of full-time firefighters required to support projected growth. This should include a forecasting analysis based on current and projected call volumes to ensure staffing levels align with community needs over time.

2. **Operational Planning and Training:** Integrating a full-time team within a historically volunteer-based model will require that clear operational plans be developed. Protocols for role responsibilities, scheduling, and teamwork will be required to ensure a cohesive, responsive fire service.

3. **Financial Planning and Budgeting:** Identify the long-term financial impact of the composite model, including costs for phased staffing and training. Explore funding sources or budget adjustments to manage these costs incrementally, aligning financial commitments with the Municipality's growth, if possible.

4. **Ongoing Monitoring and Adjustment:** Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the impact of the composite model on response times and service quality. Regularly review and adjust staffing levels, training, and operations based on performance data and further growth projections.

Risk Impact	**Medium** – Enhanced safety but requires effective integration of volunteer and full-time teams.
Financial Impact	**Medium** – Initial investment required for staffing, training, and operational adjustments.

LEGEND

Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost
Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
Medium – High: Significant impact; substantial disruption, high financial cost
High: Severe impact; critical disruption, very high financial cost

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Sub-Initiative #6.4 | Expand By-Law Enforcement Services to Other Municipalities to Support Revenue Generation

Overview

Expand by-law enforcement services to nearby municipalities, offering support on a fee-for-service basis. This approach leverages the Municipality's existing by-law enforcement resources, generating additional revenue to offset operational costs while strengthening regional partnerships.

Currently, Strathroy-Caradoc's By-Law Enforcement Officers successfully deliver services to Southwest Middlesex through an established service agreement. In 2023, by-law enforcement officers handled 610 occurrences within Strathroy-Caradoc and 111 occurrences for Southwest Middlesex.

Between January 1 and October 22, 2024, occurrences rose to 687 in Strathroy-Caradoc and 157 in Southwest Middlesex, highlighting growing demand for enforcement services. This successful partnership demonstrates the potential for expanding services to other nearby municipalities, creating a reliable revenue stream and maximizing the Municipality's enforcement expertise.

Rationale

+ **Revenue Generation:** Expanding by-law enforcement services to neighboring municipalities provides Strathroy-Caradoc with a new revenue stream, helping offset operational costs and reduce dependency on local tax revenue.

+ **Existing Capabilities:** Strathroy-Caradoc already has the infrastructure, staff, and expertise in place to deliver effective by-law enforcement.

+ **Proven Success:** The current partnership with Southwest Middlesex has shown that Strathroy-Caradoc's by-law enforcement team can successfully meet the needs of other municipalities.

+ **Regional Collaboration and Support:** Expanding by-law services helps support neighboring municipalities, especially those with limited resources for enforcement. This strengthens regional relationships, fosters intermunicipal collaboration, and enhances community safety across the area.

Implementation Actions

1. **Assess and Plan Staffing Needs:** Review the workload of the current full-time and temporary by-law enforcement officers to determine immediate staffing needs. If expansion to additional municipalities is pursued, identify the number of additional officers required and budget for new hires to support the increased workload.

2. **Establish Service-Level Agreements and Prepare Resources:** Define expectations, response times, performance standards, and specific by-laws for each partner municipality. Set a fee structure that covers all operational costs, including staffing, training, and equipment, to ensure financial sustainability for Strathroy-Caradoc. Assess and acquire any additional vehicles or equipment needed for expanded coverage. Implement a training program to familiarize by-law officers with each municipality's regulations, ensuring consistency and quality across service areas.

3. **Launch and Monitor Service Expansion:** Begin with one or two new municipalities to test processes, refine workflows, and assess resource adequacy. Monitor key metrics such as response times, number of occurrences, and feedback from partner municipalities to ensure service standards are met.

4. **Evaluate and Scale:** Regularly solicit input from partner municipalities and staff to identify areas for improvement. Evaluate whether the expanded services meet cost-recovery goals and support sustainable revenue generation.

Risk Impact	**Medium**: Expansion may temporarily strain existing resources, potentially impacting service quality within Strathroy-Caradoc. Additionally, adapting to varying by-law requirements and performance standards for each partner municipality could lead to inconsistencies. Careful planning, clear agreements, and the establishment of standardized procedures needed to manage risk.
Financial Impact	**Medium-High**: Additional staffing, equipment, and training may be necessary to meet the increased service demand. Revenue needs to be set to recover costs and achieve target margin.

LEGEND
Low: Minimal impact; little to no disruption, minimal financial cost
Low – Medium: Minor impact; some disruption, low financial cost
Medium: Moderate impact; noticeable disruption, moderate financial cost
Medium – High: Significant impact; substantial disruption, high financial cost
High: Severe impact; critical disruption, very high financial cost

Appendix 2 | Reconfigured Improvement Opportunities

Reconfiguration of Initial <u>Enterprise-Wide</u> Improvement Opportunities for Final Report (1/3)

The 20 enterprise-wide opportunities initially identified in the Current State Report were further refined through discussions with leaders and staff focus groups at Strathroy-Caradoc. The table below details the opportunities that were either a) merged with other initiatives, or b) deemed to be of low value or unfeasible based on conversations with Senior Leadership or through staff focus groups.

#	Enterprise-Wide Opportunities	Description of Change / Reprofiling
Service Delivery		
1.	Consider establishing clear **service level standards and a Customer Service Policy** across the organization, including key performance indicators, and targets to assess service standards.	Included within Initiative #5 – Customer Service Enhancements.
2.	Explore the benefits of implementing a **Customer Engagement and Communications Strategy** for Strathroy-Caradoc to enhance resident engagement and experiences and better manage their expectations.	Included within Initiative #5 – Customer Service Enhancements.
3.	Evaluate the benefits of investing in a **centralized customer service system** (e.g. a Customer Relationship Management software) to streamline and enhance the delivery of a consistent and seamless customer experience.	Included within Initiative #5 – Customer Service Enhancements. Dependency: Digital Modernization
4.	Identify skills gaps and assess the need for enhanced **employee training and development** to enhance service delivery.	Included within Initiative #3 – Strategic Capacity and Resourcing.
5.	**Evaluate levied County services** to determine if delivering these services in-house creates duplication or if there is an opportunity to leverage County services for efficiencies.	Included within Initiative #3 – Strategic Capacity and Resourcing.
Governance		
6	Explore opportunities to **enhance trust and clearly define the unique roles and responsibilities of Council and Administration** to support a distinction between governance and operational duties.	Included within Initiative #1 – Supporting Governance and Culture
7	Explore opportunities to **strengthen community and staff engagement by improving transparency and creating more avenues for meaningful dialogue and participation**. This includes enhancing communication processes to build trust in government and leadership, both within the community and among municipal staff.	Included within Initiative #5 – Customer Service Enhancements.

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Reconfiguration of Initial <u>Enterprise-Wide</u> Improvement Opportunities for Final Report (2/3)

#	Enterprise-Wide Opportunities	Description of Change / Reprofiling
Governance, Continued		
8	Consider **streamlining governance activities and improving council meeting efficiency.**	Included within Initiative #1 – Supporting Governance & Culture.
9	Assess the need for the development of a **comprehensive corporate planning framework** that unifies and clearly defines the relationship between the Corporate Strategic Plan and other key corporate plans, such as budgets, asset management planning, parks and recreation master plan, Official Plan, etc.	Included within Initiative #6 – Preparing for Growth.
10	Evaluate the need for the development of a comprehensive **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEI-A) Strategy** for the Municipality.	Not an area of focus during Phase 3/4 Consultation.
11	Assess the need for a comprehensive Strathroy-Caradoc **Economic Development Strategy** to guide the Municipality's economic development efforts.	Included within Initiative #6 – Preparing for Growth.
12	Evaluate opportunities to support **enhanced annual operational departmental planning** to support Council's Corporate Strategic Plan and the budget process, ensuring each department is aware of and aligned with Council's direction, outlining goals, key performance indicators, and service standards.	Included within Initiative #1 – Supporting Governance & Culture.
People and Culture		
13	Assess the need for a comprehensive **Human Resources Strategy** to address staffing levels, succession planning, staff retention, performance management, and training.	Included within Initiative #3 – Strategic Capacity and Resourcing.
14	Evaluate **organizational staffing levels to ensure alignment with strategic priorities and departmental needs** and identify opportunities to mitigate risks, particularly in the context of service modernization.	Included within Initiative #3 – Strategic Capacity and Resourcing.
15	Evaluate and optimize Strathroy-Caradoc's **organizational and functional structure** to better align with community needs and anticipated growth.	Included within Initiative #3 – Strategic Capacity and Resourcing.
16	Explore the **development of new and diverse communication channels that enable staff**, particularly managers and front-line employees, **to provide feedback and engage directly with leadership**.	Included within Initiative #1 – Supporting Governance & Culture.

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES

Reconfiguration of Initial <u>Enterprise-Wide</u> Improvement Opportunities for Final Report (3/3)

#	Enterprise-Wide Opportunities	Description of Change / Reprofiling
People and Culture, Continued		
17	Explore the development and implementation of an **organization-wide IT training program** to equip staff with the skills to effectively use the Municipality's available IT tools.	Not an area of focus for Phase 3 /4 engagement, generally considered within Initiative #3 – Strategic Capacity and Resourcing.
Process and Technology		
18	Develop **standard operating procedures (SOPs)** for services that currently lack formalized processes, aiming to increase procedural consistency and transparency.	Included within Initiative #2 – Risk Mitigation.
19	Evaluate the need for an organization-wide **IT Strategic Plan** to guide the modernization of digital tools and the transition from manual to automated processes.	Included within Initiative #4 – Digital Modernization.
20	Consider introducing a structured **project management framework** at the Municipality to ensure effective support and oversight for critical projects.	Opportunity was focused on resourcing and is included within Initiative #2 – Risk Mitigation.

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Reconfiguration of Initial <u>Departmental</u> Improvement Opportunities for Final Report (1/2)

The 15 department-specific improvement opportunities initially identified in the Current State Report were also further and were either a) merged with other initiatives, or b) deemed to be of low value or unfeasible based on conversations with Senior Leadership or through staff focus groups.

#	Departmental Opportunities	Description of Change / Reprofiling
Building and Planning		
21	Examine the potential for **short-term increased planning support** from the County to accommodate planning support needs.	An interim plan for County planning services was established. This opportunity was not explored.
22	Explore opportunities to **enhance the customer experience of business owners, developers, and residents** by considering opportunities for improving communication, clarity of and access to information and consistency throughout the development approval and building inspection process to ensure it is transparent, user-friendly, and responsive to the needs of developers, business owners, and residents.	Included within Initiative #6 – Preparing for Growth.
23	To identify inefficiencies and modernize services within the Municipality, explore facilitating a **review of the current building inspection process and the technology supporting it.**	This opportunity was not prioritized by staff as part of Phase 3 /4 engagements. Broadly considered within Initiative #5 – Digital Modernization.
24	In alignment with the opportunity for Legal and Legislative Services, consider facilitating a **review of the Municipality's by-law pertaining to building and planning and department's capacity to enforce** them.	Included within Initiative #2 – Risk Mitigation.
25	Assess the value of offering **by-law enforcement services to other municipalities**, building on the success with the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex.	Included within Initiative #6 – Preparing for Growth.
Human Resources		
26	Evaluate the need for a comprehensive review of the Municipality's **HR policies to ensure that they are** up-to-date and aligned with the needs of a modern municipality.	Included within Initiative #3 – Strategic Capacity and Resourcing.
27	Implement a **structured training and development program** to address gaps in employee skills and training.	Included within Initiative #3 – Strategic Capacity and Resourcing.
28	Explore **opportunities to strengthen the support provided by the Human Resources** department to Fire Services and Police Services, particularly in the areas of mental health and well-being programs, as well as assistance with navigating insurance and disability claims and labour relations administration.	Included within Initiative #3 – Strategic Capacity and Resourcing.

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Reconfiguration of Initial <u>Departmental</u> Improvement Opportunities for Final Report (2/2)

#	Departmental Opportunities	Description of Change / Reprofiling
Finance & IT		
29	Evaluate the merits of shifting from annual budget approvals to **Council approving multi-year budgets** to align with the Finance Department's existing multi-year budgeting process in an effort to enhance long-term financial planning, providing greater fiscal stability, and allowing for more strategic allocation of resources across multiple years.	Considered within Initiative #6 – Preparing for Growth (integrated planning).
Legal and Legislative Services		
30	Explore identify strategies, mechanisms, and processes to regularly facilitate the **review of By-laws** to ensure their relevance and effectiveness.	Considered within Initiative #2 – Risk Mitigation.
Community Services		
31	Consider review of Strathroy-Caradoc's current **recreation programs to evaluate the cost of delivering each program in relation to program participation and community benefits.** This evaluation would help the Municipality identify underperforming legacy programs and explore opportunities to build capacity for the development and implementation of new programs that better align with current community needs.	Feedback indicates that programs are evaluated. Considered within Initiative #6 – Preparing for Growth (focus on core services and critical infrastructure).
Fire Services		
32	Evaluate the need and timing associated with the implementation of a **composite model day-shift fire service** to enhance coverage and response during peak daytime hours.	Considered within Initiative #6 – Preparing for Growth.
33	Explore opportunities to **expand the public education programs** for fire prevention to help mitigate increase fire and other fire related emergencies.	Not explored as part of Phase 3 / 4, internal business case under development.
34	Review the current **department structure and assess capacity** to ensure alignment with future needs.	Not explored as part of Phase 3 / 4, internal business case under development.
35	Consider the feasibility of **integrating the department's assets into the Municipality's Asset Management Plan**.	Considered within Initiative #6 – Preparing for Growth.

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Appendix 3 | Long-Term Municipal Trends

The following section aims to steer Strathroy-Caradoc towards its desired future by harmonizing its service delivery with prevailing municipal trends. This proactive alignment does more than respond to change – it strategically places Strathroy-Caradoc in a position to prosper amidst it.

Future State | Planning 10 Years Down the Road

As part of shaping the Municipality's future, StrategyCorp analyzed trends that are currently influencing or are anticipated to influence the growth trajectory over the coming decade, considering the implications for the organization's longevity through to 2034. **Analysis of municipal specific trends is pivotal in designing strategies that incorporate foresight and enable engagement with new challenges.**

The following identified future trends, in alignment with staff feedback, have informed the development of the recommendations– advancing innovation, ensuring compliance, and aligning with the evolving needs of the community and workforce. This strategic approach positions Strathroy-Caradoc advantageously for robust growth and resilience.

FUTURE TRENDS

Shifting Demographics	Evolving Customer Expectations	Digital Innovation	Intergovernmental Pressures	Legislative and Regulatory Pressures	Employee Recruitment and Retention
Strathroy-Caradoc is rapidly evolving as the regional population continues to grow. This present both challenges and opportunities for the Municipality as growth will demand more strategic and proactive planning and scalable services for residents in the future.	Municipalities are seeing shifts in resident demands, with growing emphasis on accessible and citizen-centric services. Meeting growing demands for personalized, efficient, and accessible municipal services will be critical in the future.	Digital innovation is crucial in the municipal sector for streamlining processes, improving accessibility, enhancing convenience, and enabling data-driven decision-making.	Ontario municipalities are adapting to new regulations and policies, often facing "mission creep" and resulting tensions from overlapping responsibilities and financial constraints.	Municipalities must adapt to evolving legislation and regulations to maintain effective and responsible community service amid ongoing challenges.	Attracting and retaining top talent is essential for municipalities facing evolving societal and technological changes, as these shifts present both challenges and opportunities to redefine their workplace and become employers of choice.

Trends | Shifting Demographics

Middlesex County and Strathroy-Caradoc is rapidly evolving. Population growth, and subsequent demographic shifts are presenting both challenges and opportunities for the Municipality. Strategic and proactive planning is critical to support its development, address infrastructure demands, and meet the needs of its growing and increasingly diverse community. Inclusive policies and service provisions will be vital for the Municipality's sustainable growth, ensuring that services continue to be of high quality. This calls for strategic investment and utilization of resources to navigate demographic shifts. **The following trends indicate a shift towards a more diverse community composition, necessitating considerations for varied service provisions that cater to all residents**.

- **Immigration:** Within the County of Middlesex an increase in non-permanent residents has been a key driver of population growth and housing needs.

- **Aging Population:** The population base within the Municipality is generally older and aging more rapidly that that of the Province. The 75+ age group is expected to be the fastest-growing segment. Furthermore, there is an increasing net migration of people aged 55+. These trend present unique challenges for the Municipality.

- **Housing Pressure:** Steady immigration and counter urbanization will continue to fuel housing demands in the Municipality. Regional employment opportunities and affordability are drawing people to the Municipality, leading to a growing need for a higher share of medium-density and high-density housing forms.

- **Infrastructure and Service Adaptation:** As the Municipality's population grows, there is an increasing need to scale infrastructure and services to support residential intensification and higher density housing forms, particularly in urban areas.

Implications & Risks

- The Municipality may experience staffing challenges as it works to meet increased service demands from a growing population, highlighting the importance of resource management.

- An increase in housing demand could place additional pressure on planning and development services suggesting the need for potential future planning to enhance capacity.

- The growing aging population may place additional demands underscoring the necessity of effective resource management to uphold service standards.

- The increasingly diverse population may place additional demands on the Municipality as it explores how best to share critical information with new audiences.

Sources:
[1]: Federation of Canadian Municipalities (2023). *Canada's Housing Challenge is also an Infrastructure Challenge*
[2]: Infrastructure Canada (2023). *Canada's population estimates: Record-high population growth in 2022*
[3]: Government of Canada (2023). *Agricultural Stream: Program Requirements*

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Trends | Evolving Customer Expectations

In recent years, there has been a notable shift in resident expectations. Post-pandemic, residents are seeking services that are citizen-centric, accessible, and easy to navigate. They are looking for exceptional customer service and are holding the Municipality accountable for delivering high quality services in an efficient and effective manner. Residents want to see the Municipality utilize its resources thoughtfully to provide high-quality services. This change in expectations will be a driver for the Municipality to adapt and better service customers.

- **Digital Services and Accessibility:** With the increasing use of digital tools in all areas of life, residents expect online service delivery from the municipality. Residents also seek services tailored to their needs and preferences, mirroring the personalized experiences they get from private-sector companies.[1]
- **Cyber Risk and Privacy in Digital Services:** As counties and municipalities digitize more services, managing cyber risks and ensuring privacy become crucial. Residents expect not only expect seamless online services but also assurance that their data is secure, and their privacy is protected.
- **Instant Communication and Transparency:** The rise of social media demands faster communication from local governments. Residents expect timely updates on matters like road closures and emergencies. They also seek clarity and transparency in municipal decisions.[2]
- **Community Engagement:** Counties and municipalities are observing a shift in community engagement trends, with residents showing a preference for virtual interaction over traditional in-person meetings and committee involvement.[3]

Implications & Risks

- As digital services expand, there is a need to provide personnel with training in digital technologies to ensure uptake of digital tools.
- As the Municipality enhances digital service delivery, IT will need to strengthen its cyber security framework and data protection measures. This shift will require cross departmental collaboration.
- Considering current engagement trends, the Municipality may have to consider enhancing digital community engagement and consultation to foster effective public interaction. Adapting to these trends requires investment in time and resources.

Sources:
[1]: Province of Ontario (2023). *Digital Services Standard, 2021*
[2]: Municipal World (2014). *Three Golden Rules of Social Media for Municipalities*
[3]: Open Council (2023). *Municipal Public Engagement in Ontario*.

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Trends | Digital Innovation
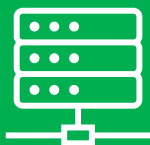
Over the past decade, the Municipality has seen digitization transform its service delivery. As technology rapidly advances, it is vital for the Municipality to keep up with digital innovation. By adopting innovative digital strategies, which many municipalities already benefit from, the Municipality can improve service delivery, engage residents better, and harness the full potential of technological progress.

- **Chief Information Officers:** Ontario municipalities are increasingly hiring Chief Information Officers (CIOs) to lead their digital transformations, enhancing service and efficiency. With the fast-paced IT challenges, the CIO is becoming essential. While cities like Toronto and Ottawa have CIOs, more municipalities, regardless of size, are expected to adopt such roles.
- **Integrated Information Technology/Information Management (IT/IM) Strategy:** Municipalities need a unified IT/IM strategy to align technology and information management with organizational objectives, ensuring cohesive digital and data governance.
- **Enhanced Accessibility:** Some municipalities are moving services online to make them more accessible and efficient for residents. This includes online permit applications, tax payments, and virtual consultation.[1]
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Ontario Municipalities:** AI is being increasingly used in municipalities in areas like traffic management, waste management, and predictive maintenance of infrastructure.[2]

Implications & Risks

- Increased digitization heightens the risk of cyber attacks. A data breach with the Municipality can lead to legal repercussions and loss of public trust. The Municipality will need to collaborate with IT to ensure that appropriate data protection and cybersecurity best practices are in place.
- Additional training may be required to support digital services delivery and handling online queries across the Municipality.
- With increased digitization, there is a need to identify how to best support change management. Digitization required organizational wide training and buy-in to ensure smooth operations and transitions.

Sources:
[1]: Local Authority Services (2023). *Accelerating Digital Services Boon Citizens and Municipalities Alike*
[2]: Global News (2023). *How one Ontario city is blazing the trail for public sector AI use*

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Trends | Intergovernmental Pressures

Municipalities in Ontario are adapting to regulatory changes and policies from higher levels of government, which are impacting local priorities and processes. Often, municipalities face "mission creep," where they engage in policy areas without sufficient financial resources, policy tools, or legislative authority. This has led to pressures and tensions between different levels of government due to overlapping responsibilities, differing priorities, and financial constraints.

- **Legislative and Regulatory Changes:** As laws and regulations evolve at the provincial and federal levels, local governments must adapt. For instance, changes to land-use planning can have significant implications for Strathroy-Caradoc.[1]
- **Social and Health Program Demands:** Increasing needs in social and health services, such as mental health support and housing assistance, place additional financial and operational pressure on municipalities to expand and enhance these essential programs.
- **Funding Constraints:** Many local projects, are reliant on funding from provincial and federal programs. Changes in these programs or a reduction in available funds puts pressure on Strathroy Caradoc to find alternative sources of funding.[2]

Implications & Risks for

- Changes in provincial and federal funding programs may require the Municipality to allocate more resources for securing alternative funding, which could lead to increased workload for staff.
- Legislative and regulatory changes necessitate continuous training and updating of personnel to ensure compliance and effective implementation of new policies.
- Evolving trends in funding constraints, legislative and regulatory changes, and housing and land-use policies in Ontario may require the support of a dedicated Government Relations functions.

Sources:
[1]: Province of Ontario (2022). Proposed updates to the regulation of development for the protection of people and property from natural hazards in Ontario.
[2]: Government of Canada (2021). Canada and FCM invest in asset management in Ontario Communities

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Trends | Legislative and Regulatory Pressures

Municipalities face a dynamic landscape of legislative and regulatory changes. These changes, while designed to enhance governance, safety, and environmental stewardship, can present a myriad of challenges for the Municipality. Such duties require that municipalities constantly evolve and adapt and underline the commitment to serving the community responsibly and effectively.

- **Resource Constraints:** Adapting to new legislation or regulatory changes often requires dedicated resources, expertise, and sometimes infrastructure, which can strain existing resources.[1] Some regulatory changes, especially those related to environmental health, may necessitate upgrades to infrastructure. Careful planning is required to support the financial and logistical challenges of such upgrades.[2]
- **Environmental Regulations:** Stricter environmental standards, like those related to waste management or emissions can pose challenges. For example, changing recycling or waste disposal standards should require consideration.[2]
- **Accessibility Standards:** Meeting AODA requirements for public spaces to be accessible can be challenging when dealing with older infrastructure.[3]
- **Data Protection, Technology and AI Oversight:** As municipalities embrace digital transformation and adopt artificial intelligence, they may encounter more stringent privacy regulations requiring enhanced cyber security and data governance frameworks. The ethical deployment of AI and ensuring accountability in automated services are expected to be areas of increased regulatory attention.

Implications & Risks

- Meeting a heavier regulatory burden requires more staff time and expertise and may require additional resources.
- Aligning with AODA standards, might necessitate a reinvigorated commitment to AODA training and ensuring that teams across the organization are equip with the skills to ensure the Municipality is in compliance.
- The Municipality may require additional staff time and legal support to address new digital privacy and AI regulations, cyber security, and data regulations.

Sources:
[1]: Ontario 360 (2018). The Case for Regulatory Reform in Ontario
[2]: Province of Ontario (2022). Proposed updates to the regulation of development for the protection of people and property from natural hazards in Ontario
[3]: Province of Ontario (2023). Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

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Trends | Employee Recruitment and Retention

As the backbone of operational success, attracting and retaining top talent is more crucial than ever for municipalities, especially in the face of rapidly shifting societal and technological landscapes. As Ontario's demographic landscape changes and the expectations of the modern workforce evolve, municipalities find themselves at a crossroads. While these shifts present challenges, they also offer unprecedented opportunities to redefine workplace paradigms and become employers of choice.

- **Municipal War for Talent:** In an increasingly competitive labour market, municipalities are vying for skilled professionals, not only amongst themselves but also the private sector. Many municipalities are collaborating with local and regional Universities and Colleges to establish internship programs, aiming to tap emerging talent early and fill workforce gaps.
- **Diverse and Inclusive Workplaces:** As Ontario's population becomes a mosaic of various cultures, employees are gravitating towards organizations that embrace diversity. Municipalities that foster an inclusive environment are better positioned to attract a broader spectrum of talent.[1]
- **Work-Life Balance:** The traditional 9-5 work culture is giving way to a more flexible approach, accommodating the needs of modern employees. Some municipalities are pioneering flexible working schedules, remote work options, and even compressed workweeks.[2]
- **Workplace Culture:** Beyond the tangible benefits and remuneration, the intangible aspects of workplace culture play a pivotal role in employee satisfaction. A culture that fosters collaboration, innovation, continuous learning, and mutual respect can be the defining factor that sets one municipality apart from another.[3]

Implications & Risks for LLS

- As the war for talent increases, it will be essential to offer compelling reasons for talent to choose to stay in public service. Developing an internship program through a partnership with Western University and Fanshawe College will help with recruitment.
- By embracing these challenges, municipalities are catering to a wider range of potential employees. There is a risk of talent drain if diversity and inclusion are not prioritized, potentially leading to a less competitive position in attracting skilled workers.
- Failure to adapt to modern work-life balance expectations may result in higher turnover rates and difficulty in attracting and retaining employees.
- Without a strong culture, the Municipality may struggle to maintain employee satisfaction and engagement, which are crucial for long-term organizational success and adaptability.

Sources:
[1]: Municipal World (2019). *Seven municipalities recognized as champions for workplace diversity*
[2]: Thomson Reuters (2022). *Local governments pursue flexible work options to drive retention of high-performing talent*
[3]: Association of Municipalities Ontario (2021). *Municipal Innovation Exchange Toolkit: Modernizing public service through innovation*.

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SPOTLIGHT | Municipal Workforce Development

The following key insights from the AMO Workforce Development Survey [1]shed light on the demographic makeup, motivational factors, diversity, and career entry and retention trends within Ontario's municipal workforce. Understanding these elements is vital for Strathroy-Caradoc as it explores how best to attract and retain talent, ensuring operational stability and succession planning in an increasingly competitive job market.

Age Distribution of the Municipal Workforce | The municipal workforce in Ontario is notably concentrated in the 40-54 age range, with 43% of employees falling into this category. This suggests a well-established group that plays a crucial role in maintaining operational stability and passing institutional knowledge. Additionally, 25% of employees are aged 30-39 years, indicating a significant presence of mid-career professionals who are still in their formative years of service. The substantial proportion of workers aged 55-64 (20%) and aged 64-74 (2%) indicates that there may soon be a wave of retirements, potentially leading to knowledge loss and creating opportunities for succession planning. The relatively small percentage of younger employees aged 25-29 (8%) suggests that attracting and retaining younger talent may be a critical area for future focus to ensure a balanced and sustainable workforce.

Equity Deserving Groups | With 23% of respondents identifying as members of equity-deserving groups, there is a notable level of diversity within the municipal workforce. This highlights the importance of continuing to promote inclusivity and equity in recruitment, retention, and career advancement practices. Understanding and addressing the needs of these groups can enhance workplace culture and improve overall employee satisfaction and engagement.

Motivation to Join the Public Sector | The primary reasons for joining the public sector are pension and benefits (52%), job stability and security (45%), and proximity to the hiring municipality (40%). These factors highlight a strong preference for the stability and long-term benefits of public sector jobs. The lower emphasis on base salary (29%) and making a difference in the community (27%) indicates that financial stability and job security are more significant motivators than intrinsic rewards or community impact. This insight suggests that enhancing the appeal of municipal careers could involve aligning rewards more closely with employees' personal motivations and values.

Entry Pathway & Retention | The data shows that a majority of municipal employees (51%) enter the municipal workforce through entry-level positions, which may reflect a structured career development path within the sector. The high retention rate of 60% among those who entered through co-op programs indicates that such pathways are effective in creating long-term commitment and loyalty. This suggests that investing in internship and co-op programs could be a valuable strategy for building a stable and experienced workforce. Additionally, the success of these programs underscores the importance of providing meaningful work experiences to retain talent in the public sector.

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Appendix 4 | Current State Opportunities and Departmental Profiles

Reminder | Strathroy-Caradoc's Current State

Presented below are the current services provided by the Municipality. This list has been identified by StrategyCorp, in consultation with staff, as the Municipality's services.

Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc							
Building & Planning	**Community Services**	**Economic Development**	**Engineering & Public Works**	**Finance**	**Fire Services**	**Legal & Legislative Services**	**Police Services***

• Planning Operations
• Building Inspections
• Development Services
• By-Law Enforcement
• Property Standards
	• Property Management
	• Aquatics
	• Arena
	• Caradoc Community Centre
	• Community Development
	• Cemetery
	• Downtown Market
	• Recreation
	• Library Operations*
	• Museum Operations
	• Parks Operations
	• Scout Hall
	• Tri-Township Arena *
	• Caradoc Housing Corp.*
		• Economic Development	• GIS
			• Drainage
			• Solid Waste
			• Roads
			• Mount Brydges Sewers
			• Mount Brydges Water System
			• Strathroy Sewers
			• Strathroy Water System
				• Treasury
				• Municipal Debt
				• Finance
				• Accounting
				• Tax Collection
				• Utility Billing
				• Information Technology
				  o Network Administration
				  o IT Support
					• Fire Services	• Council
						• Legal & Legislative Services
						• Communications
						• Lottery Licensing
						• Animal Control
						• Crossing Guards
							• Police Services

Note: *Services marked with an asterisk (*) are not in scope for the service delivery review.*

Reminder | Enterprise-Wide Service Delivery Improvement Opportunities as presented in the Current State Report

20 enterprise-wide opportunities for improved service delivery were identified and included in the Current State Report. Below is an overview of the opportunities:

Service Delivery

1. Consider establishing clear **service level standards and a Customer Service Policy** across the organization, including key performance indicators, and targets to assess service standards.
2. Explore the benefits of implementing a **Customer Engagement and Communications Strategy** for Strathroy-Caradoc to enhance resident engagement and experiences and better manage their expectations.
3. Evaluate the benefits of investing in a **centralized customer service system** (e.g. a Customer Relationship Management software) to streamline and enhance the delivery of a consistent and seamless customer experience.
4. Identify skill gaps and assess the need for enhanced **employee training and development** to enhance service delivery.
5. **Evaluate levied County services** to determine if delivering these services in-house creates duplication or if there is an opportunity to leverage County services for efficiencies.

Governance

6. Explore opportunities to **enhance trust and clearly define the unique roles and responsibilities of Council and Administration** to support a distinction between governance and operational duties.
7. Explore opportunities to **strengthen community and staff engagement by improving transparency and creating more avenues for meaningful dialogue and participation**. This includes enhancing communication processes to build trust in government and leadership, both within the community and among municipal staff.
8. Consider **streamlining governance activities and improving meeting efficiency.**
9. Assess the need for the development of a **comprehensive corporate planning framework** that unifies and clearly defines the relationship between the Corporate Strategic Plan and other key corporate plans, such as budgets, asset management planning, parks and recreation master plan, Official Plan, etc. This framework could also address the need for a performance management system to monitor progress, ensure legislative compliance and maintain alignment with the strategic direction set by Council.
10. Evaluate the need for the development of a comprehensive **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEI-A) Strategy** for internal and external stakeholders.
11. Assess the need for a comprehensive Strathroy-Caradoc **Economic Development Strategy** to guide the Municipality's economic development efforts.
12. Evaluate opportunities to support **enhanced annual operational departmental planning** to support Council's Corporate Strategic Plan and the budget process, ensuring each department is aware of and aligned with Council's direction, outlining goals, key performance indicators, and service standards.

People & Culture

13. Assess the need for a comprehensive **Human Resource Strategy** to address staffing levels, succession planning, staff retention, performance management, and training.
14. Evaluate **organizational staffing levels to ensure alignment with strategic priorities and departmental needs** and identify opportunities to mitigate risks, particularly in the context of service modernization.
15. Evaluate and optimize Strathroy-Caradoc's **organizational and functional structure** to better align with community needs and anticipated growth.
16. Explore the **development of new and diverse communication channels that enable staff**, particularly managers and front-line employees, **to provide feedback and engage directly with leadership**.
17. Explore the development and implementation of an **organization-wide IT training program** to equip staff with the skills to effectively use the Municipality's available IT tools.

Process & Technology

18. Develop **standard operating procedures (SOPs)** for services that currently lack formalized processes, aiming to increase procedural consistency and transparency.
19. Evaluate the need for an organization-wide **IT Strategic Plan** to guide the modernization of digital tools and the transition from manual to automated processes.
20. Consider introducing a structured **project management framework** at the Municipality to ensure effective support and oversight for critical projects.

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Reminder | Departmental Service Delivery Improvement Opportunities as presented in the Current State Report

15 departmental opportunities for improved service delivery were identified and included in the Current State Report. Below is an overview of the opportunities:

Building and Planning

21. Examine the potential for **short-term increased planning support** from the County to accommodate planning support needs.
22. Explore opportunities to **enhance the customer experience of business owners, developers, and residents** by considering opportunities for improving communication, clarity of and access to information and consistency throughout the development approval and building inspection process to ensure it is transparent, user-friendly, and responsive to the needs of developers, business owners, and residents.
23. To identify inefficiencies and modernize services within the Municipality, explore facilitating a **review of the current building inspection process and the technology supporting it.**
24. In alignment with the opportunity for Legal and Legislative Services, considers facilitating a **review of the Municipality's by-law pertaining to building and planning and Department's capacity to enforce** them.
25. Assess the value of offering **by-law enforcement services to other municipalities**, building on the success with the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex.

Human Resources

26. Evaluate the need for a comprehensive review of the Municipality's **HR policies to ensure that they are** up-to-date and aligned with the needs of a modern municipality.
27. Implement a **structured training and development program** to address gaps in employee skills and training.
28. Explore **opportunities to strengthen the support provided by the Human Resources** department to Fire Services and Police Services, particularly in the areas of mental health and well-being programs, as well as assistance with navigating insurance and disability claims and labour relations administration.

Finance (and IT)

29. Evaluate the merits of shifting from annual budget approvals to **Council approving multi-year budgets** to align with the Finance Department's existing multi-year budgeting process in an effort to enhance long-term financial planning, providing greater fiscal stability, and allowing for more strategic allocation of resources across multiple years.

Legal & Legislative Services

30. Explore identify strategies, mechanisms, and processes to regularly facilitate the **review of By-laws** to ensure their relevance and effectiveness.

Community Services

31. Consider review of Strathroy-Caradoc's current **recreation programs to evaluate the cost of delivering each program in relation to program participation and community benefits.** This evaluation would help the Municipality identify underperforming legacy programs and explore opportunities to build capacity for the development and implementation of new programs that better align with current community needs.

Fire Services

32. Evaluate the need and timing associated with the implementation of a **composite model day-shift fire service** to enhance coverage and response during peak daytime hours.
33. Explore opportunities to **expand the public education programs** for fire prevention to help mitigate increase fire and other fire related emergencies.
34. Review the current **department structure and assess capacity** to ensure alignment with future needs.
35. Consider the feasibility of **integrating the department's assets into the Municipality's Asset Management Plan**.

Strathroy-Caradoc by the Numbers

Presented below is a summary of Strathroy-Caradoc's 2024 budget and expense classification.

- The Municipality has a fairly even distribution of legislated and discretionary services. The size of the non-core segment is an indicator of the amount services the Municipality is doing to enhance the community.
- According to Strathroy-Caradoc's 2024 Municipal Budget, Economic Development (47%), Human Resources (28%) and Community Services (19%) had the greatest proportion of discretionary spending.[2]
- There has been an average 14% year over year increase in the budget since 2016 to 2024. This average includes years where the municipal budget substantially increased and years where it remained relatively stable.[1]

Annual Consolidated Budget 2016 – 2024[1]

Tax Rate Trend from 2016 – 2024[1]

Service Area	Total Budget[2]*
Municipal Services	$10,997,588
Community Services	$5,695,846
Engineering & Public Works	$32,478,004
Protective Services	$25,164,339
Planning and Development	$1,949,894
Social Housing	$375,824
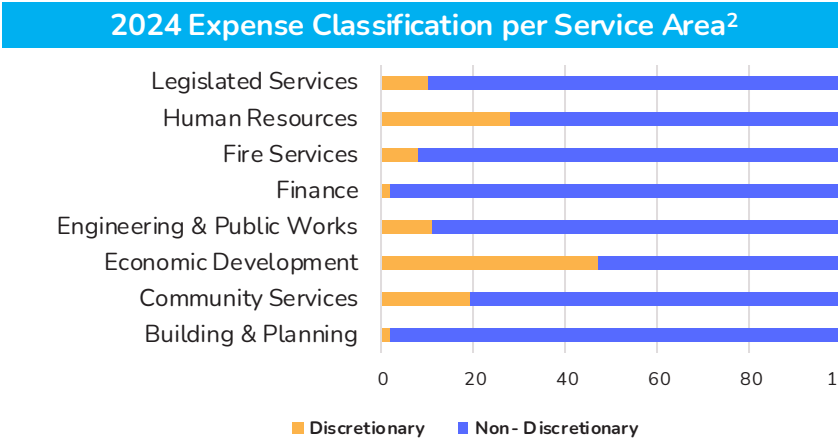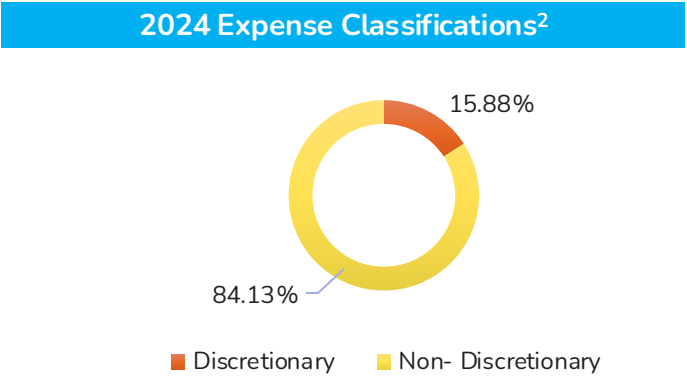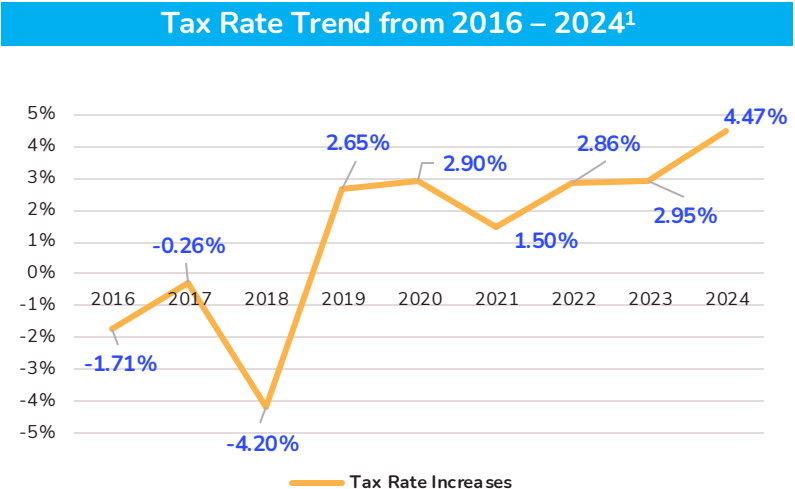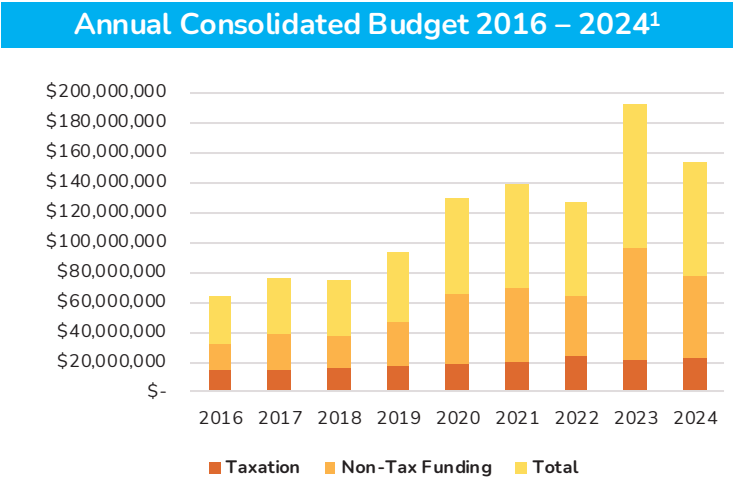
2024 Expense Classifications[2]

2024 Expense Classification per Service Area[2]

__Note:__ Total budget includes operating budget and capital budget

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Evaluating Strathroy-Caradoc's Services | Five Evaluation Categories

Each service is evaluated through the framework below. Outlined below is the ranking definition per each component. A mix of quantitative and qualitive inputs are considered in the service assessments.

Minimal Opportunity for Improvement

High Opportunity for Improvement

Size examines the impact of the service on the Municipality's budget

Small services represent 0 – 2% of the Municipality's budget

Medium services represent 2 – 8% of the Municipality's budget

Large services represent over 8% of the Municipality's budget

Delivery examines the degree to which the service delivery models and supporting infrastructure relies on old or outdated methods

Modern services use leading methods to support delivery

Contemporary services use up-to-date methods to support delivery

Outdated services use old methods to support delivery

Growth examines the year-over-year operating expenses growth of the service

Stable/No growth services have grown 0-3% YoY

Moderate growth services have grown 3-7% YoY

Fast growth services have grown 7%+ YoY

Service examines the degree in which the service is meeting its standards and/or customer expectations

Above standard services exceeds standard and/or customer expectation

At standard services meets standard and/or customer expectation

Below standard services do not meet standard and/or customer expectation

Shared examines the degree to which different departments, municipalities, and/or contractors are involved in service delivery

Focused services are delivered by one municipal department

Mixed services are delivered by multiple municipal departments / partially contracted out

Shared services are delivered entirely by contractors, the County, or one or more neighbouring municipality

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Evaluating Strathroy-Caradoc's Services | Four Classification Categories

Each service area has been classified according to the framework outlined below. The four categories are defined below.

LEGISLATED →

↑ **FLEXIBILITY**

DISCRETIONARY SERVICES

Definition: Services that the Municipality chooses to provide but are not legally mandated and are subject to Council's discretion.

Legislated: No ○

Flexibility: High ◔

Examples:
- Community development programs
- Arts and culture initiatives

D

MANDATORY WITH SOME DISCRETION

Definition: Services that the municipality is legally required to provide, but has some flexibility

Legislated: Yes ●

Flexibility: Yes; Medium – High ◔

Examples:
- Public library services
- Parks and Recreation
- Street lighting

M/D

CORE DISCRETIONARY SERVICES

Definition: Services that are not legally mandated but essential to the community's functionality and well-being. There is no alternative provider, and these services are expected by the community.

Legislated: No ○

Flexibility: Yes; Low – Medium ◑

Examples:
- Community Centres
- Senior Centre

CD

MANDATORY SERVICES

Definition: Services that the Municipality is legally required to provide under provincial or federal legislation.

Legislated: Yes ●

Flexibility: Low ◔

Examples:
- Water and sewage treatment
- Fire services

M

Legislative & Legal Services Profile (1/2)

Service Description

Service Area	Description	Classification
Animal Control	Ensuring public safety and care for animals.	M/D
Council	Manage council meetings, ensuring proper procedures are followed in accordance with relevant legislation (such as the Municipal Act or Procedure By-Law).	M
Crossing Guards	Hire, maintain and supervise crossing guards to provide for the safe movement of students when students are on their way to and from school.	D
Legal Legislative Services	As defined by the Municipal Act and as directed by Council, including the preparation of Council meeting agendas, recording of minutes, and distribution of communications resulting from Council proceedings.	M
Communications	Internal and external communications services to support intra-corporate news and knowledge sharing and to represent the Municipality to external stakeholders.	D
Lottery Licensing	Issue lottery licenses to eligible local charitable or religious organizations.	CD

Staffing Complement

Type of Staff: Non-Unionized

Staff Count

Full Time	4	Seasonal	9
Total	13		

Annual Department Operating Budget
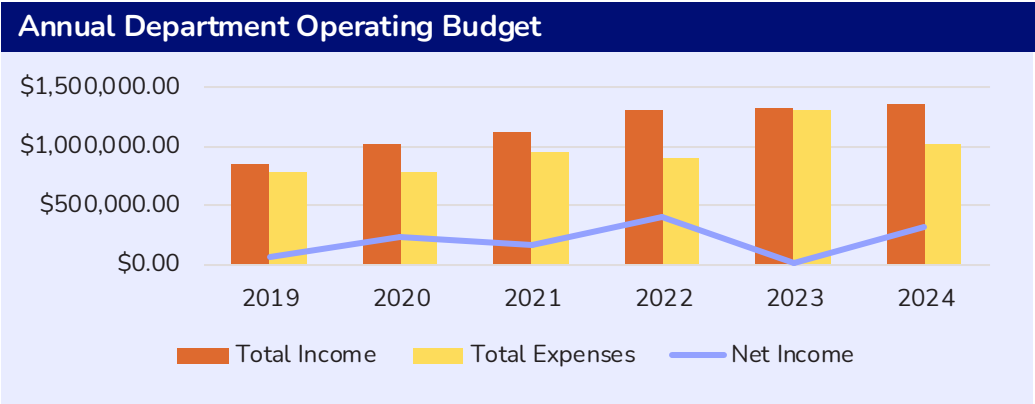
Service Evaluation

Size	Small	This department's services account for roughly of 2.7% of the Municipality's expenditure (administration as a whole).
Delivery	Contemporary	Most services and payments are delivered following standard practice.
Growth	Moderate	This department's operating expenses are growing moderately at 6.5%.
Service	Standard	Most services are delivered at or above legislated standards. There are noted issues with response times due to increase in workload.
Shared	Mixed Services	Primarily delivered by Municipal staff directly with support from Building & Planning for By-Law Enforcement.

Classification Category Legend:
D: Discretionary Services
M/D: Mandatory Discretionary Services
CD: Core Discretionary Services
M: Mandatory Services

= High Priority   = Medium Priority   = Low Priority

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Legislative & Legal Services Profile (2/2)

Observations

- **Team Expertise:** Long-term staff provide valuable expertise and foster strong collaboration, helping the team manage the increasing workload effectively.

- **Increased Meeting Volume:** The number of Council and committee meetings has steadily increased over the years. Between 2020 and 2021, there was a 40.82% rise in the total number of meetings, followed by a 27.54% increase from 2021 to 2022, and a further 22.73% growth from 2022 to 2023. As of August 31, 2024, the total number of meetings stands at 79 compared to 108 in the previous year. Based on historical trends and the introduction of new committees, it is expected that the number of meetings will continue to rise.

- **Efficient Processes:** Despite the growing number of meetings, staff are working diligently to meet prescribed timelines and manage the increased demands.

- **Staffing Needs:** There is a perception among senior staff that the Department requires additional staff to meet the needs of increasing Council and committee meetings. The scheduling and coordination of the increased number of meetings are reported to be time-consuming and placing a strain the Department's resources. There are also concerns that with the growing demands, including frequent evening activities and workshops, are contributing to staff burnout and delays in response times to public inquiries.

- **Cost associated with increased meeting volume:** The increased number of Council and committee meetings has led to higher overtime wages for staff in the Department. Overtime wages have steadily risen from $5,976.56 in 2020 to $16,033.14 in 2023, with the most significant increase occurring between 2021 ($6,747.41) and 2023. This rise is likely due to the increase in the number of staff eligible for overtime, which went from 3 in 2020 and 2021 to 4 in 2022 and 2023. As of 2024, the number of eligible staff has returned to 3 due to the promotion of the Deputy Clerk to Clerk/Director LLS, making them no longer eligible for overtime. OT wages currently stand at $4,811.68 as of August 2024, but are expected to rise, as many staff typically bank overtime until the end of the year, at which point they may choose to have it paid out.

- **Communication with Residents:** Residents have expressed concerns about insufficient communication from the Municipality, indicating a need for enhanced outreach efforts to keep the community better informed.

- **Activity Trends:** Between 2020 to 2023, the Department has seen significant fluctuations in the levels of lottery licenses, parking tickets, taxi licensing, marriage licenses, FOI requests, cemetery services (grave sales/ transfers and interments) and deaths-burial permits issued / registered. Lottery licenses dropped from 64 in 2020 to 12 in 2021, then rebounded to 38 in 2022 and 69 in 2023. Marriage licenses saw a steep decline from 40 in 2020 to just 6 in 2021, followed by a strong recovery to 136 in 2022 and 96 in 2023. Parking tickets dropped dramatically from 180 in 2020 to 27 in 2021, surged to 462 in 2022, and then decreased to 248 in 2023. Taxi licensing remained relatively stable, ranging from 31 to 37 licenses over the years. FOI requests steadily increased from 6 in 2020 to 29 in 2023. Cemetery services for grave sales rose from 43 in 2020 to 62 in 2022, then fell to 36 in 2023, while interments peaked at 96 in 2022 before dropping to 70 in 2023. Burial permits remained consistent, ranging between 129 and 147 throughout the four-year period.

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Community Services (1/2)

Service Description

Service Area	Description	Classification
Property Management	Maintains and operates municipal facilities.	M/D
Aquatics	Managing pools, offering programs, ensuring safety, and coordinating aquatic events.	M/D
Arena	The management, operation, and maintenance of local arenas.	CD
Caradoc Community Centre	Manage the operations, maintenance, event scheduling, and community programming.	CD
Community Development	Delivers programs, services, and partnerships that enhance social, economic, and cultural well-being of residents.	CD
Cemetery	Owns and operates the Strathroy Municipal Cemetery.	M
Downtown Market	Coordinates and manages the Downtown Market.	D

Service Area	Description	Classification
Recreation	Develop and deliver recreational programs.	M/D
Library Operations*	Provides the facility for Strathroy-Caradoc Library.	M/D
Museum Operations	Maintains and operate the Museum.	D
Parks Operations	Maintains and operate parks and sports fields.	MD
Scout Hall	Provides the facility for Scout House.	D
Tri-Township Arena*	A partnership with the Anishinaabeg of the territory of Deshkaan Ziibing, also known as Chippewas of the Thames First Nation.	MD
Caradoc Housing Corp.*	Offers and manages affordable housing options in the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc	M

Note: *Services marked with an asterisk (*) are not in scope for the service delivery review.*

Staffing Complement

Type of Staff: Non-Unionized / Unionized / Contract

Staff Count			
Full Time	24	Seasonal	80
Total	104		

Classification Category Legend:
D: Discretionary Services   **CD**: Core Discretionary Services
**M/D**: Mandatory Discretionary Services   **M**: Mandatory Services

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Community Services (2/2)

Observations

- **Success through Partnerships:** The Department has enhanced service delivery through strong partnerships with minor sports associations, schools, and service clubs, and recent purchases such as outdoor movie screens, event fencing, and beach volleyball facility, etc. have improved community events.
- **Staffing and Scheduling Challenges:** Ongoing reported staffing shortages make it difficult to cover shifts and maintain operations, particularly when staff take sick leave or vacations.
- **Public Service and Response:** Customer inquiries, especially for bookings, have slow response times as many customers prefer direct communication with staff rather than automated systems.
- **Administrative Burdens:** Staff face additional strain from administrative tasks, such as reporting to Council and frequent document updates, which take time away from core responsibilities.
- **Lack of Formal Service Standards:** The Department operates without formal service standards, resulting in inconsistencies, such as mowing fields less frequently than targeted due to resource limitations.
- **Space Limitations for Programming**: Growing community demand for senior services, camp and aquatic programs, as well as indoor programming. Should programming continue to grow, there may be a need for additional resources and spaces.
- **Public Expectations and Maintenance Challenges:** Public consultation helps address community needs, but ongoing requests for amenities and maintenance, such as at Salsbury Park, are challenging to fulfill due to limited staff and resources.
- **Infrastructure and Budget Concerns:** Promised developments, such as park expansions, are delayed by budget constraints and environmental challenges, like drainage and clearing woodlots, to minimize community impact. Additionally, funding for infrastructure projects such as sports fields, is also limited.
- **Technology Integration Challenges:** Efforts to integrate cloud-based technology for operations are hindered by a lack of necessary infrastructure, such as WiFi, and there is some staff resistance to adopting new tools.

Annual Department Operating Budget
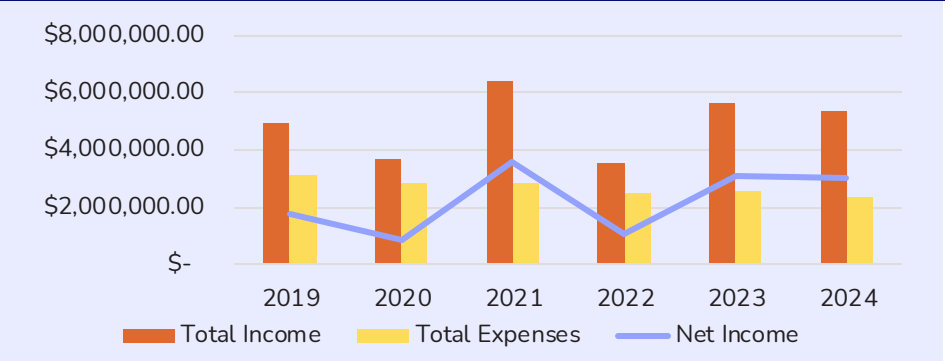
Service Evaluation

Size	Large	This Department's services account for roughly of 9.3% of the Municipality's expenditure.
Delivery	Contemporary	Most services and payments are delivered following standard practice but there are some outdated technology.
Growth	Fast Growth	This Department's operating expenses has grown by 8.6% which is assumed to be correlated to growing services.
Service	Standard	Service at large meet customer expectations at large.
Shared	Mixed	Primarily delivered by Municipal staff directly with some external partnerships (e.g., Tri Township Arena, Dunrite Landscaping, Huron Shores Cleaning Services etc.)

= High Priority = Medium Priority = Low Priority

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Economic Development Profile

Service Description

Service Area	Description	Classification
Economic Development	Maintains economic development and close ties with existing commercial and industrial leaders.	**D**

Staffing Complement

Type of Staff: Non-Unionized

Staff Count	
Full Time	*1*
Total	**1**

Observations

- **Growth Potential:** The Municipality has an opportunity to expand its economic development efforts.
- **Strategy Development:** A clear economic development strategy is lacking, but groundwork is being laid through the Coordinator.
- **BIA and Partnership Improvements:** The relationship between the BIA and the Municipality, as well as partnerships with Chambers, need strengthening to support cohesive economic development efforts.
- **Economic Development Challenges:** Developers note frustration with barriers such as a lack of proactive communication, delays in approvals, and insufficient support in navigating Municipal and County processes (which intersects with Building and Planning).
- **County Relationship:** The County handles investment attraction but shares limited information with Strathroy-Caradoc, contributing to delays in tourism, planning, and development.

Annual Department Operating Budget

Legend: Total Income, Total Expenses, Net Income (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024)

Service Evaluation
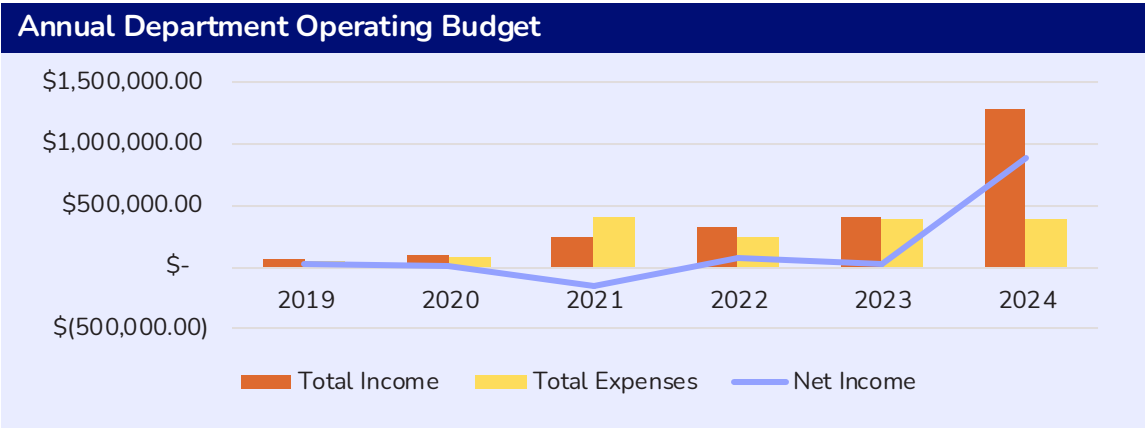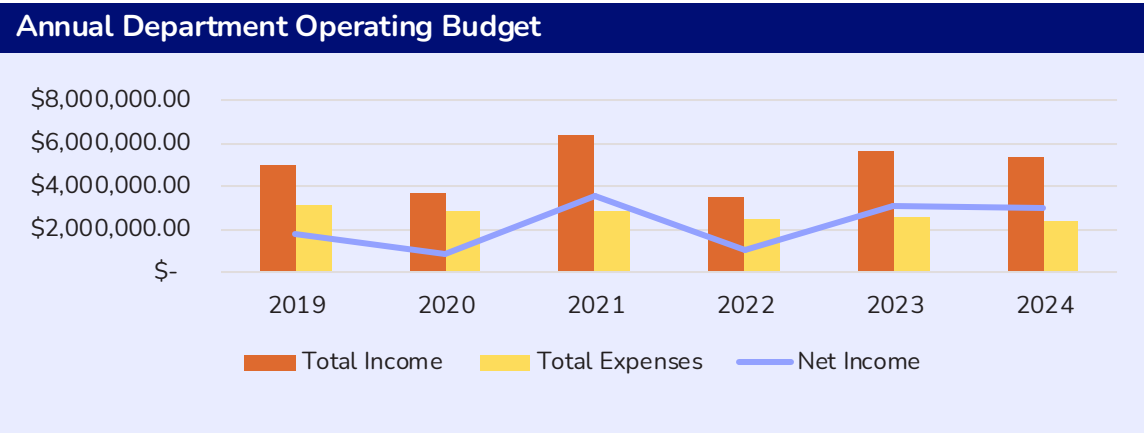
Size	Small	This department's services account for roughly of 1.1% of the Municipality's expenditure.
Delivery	Contemporary	Most services and payments are delivered following standard practice.
Growth	Fast	The Department's operating expenses has grown fast (76.7%), which is assumed to be correlated with the recent focus within this area.
Service	Standard	Most services are delivered at or above legislated standards. This is a relatively new area with a lot of opportunities for growth.
Shared	Focused Service	Primarily delivered by Municipal staff directly.

Classification Category Legend:
D: Discretionary Services
M/D: Mandatory Discretionary Services
CD: Core Discretionary Services
M: Mandatory Services

= High Priority   = Medium Priority   = Low Priority

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Financial Services, Treasurer & Information Technology Profile (1/2)

Service Description

Service Area	Description	Classification
Information Technology	Provides information technology support for municipal and police services, which includes network administration and IT support.	**D**
Treasury	Manages the municipality's financial affairs, including tax collection, accounts payable/receivable, customer service, payroll, and financial reporting. It also ensures accurate records, maintaining accurate financial records, ensuring compliance with provincial regulations, and adhering to stringent investment guidelines.	**M**
Municipal Debt	Manages the Municipality's Debt.	**M**
Finance	Manages the finances and budget of the Municipality.	**M**
Accounting	Manages accounts payable and accounts receivable.	**M**
Tax Collection	Manages tax collection for the Municipality.	**M**
Utility Billing	Manages water and wastewater billing for the Municipality.	**M**

Annual Department Operating Budget

Chart legend: Total Income, Total Expenses, Net Income. Years: 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024. Y-axis: $-, $2,000,000.00, $4,000,000.00, $6,000,000.00, $8,000,000.00

Staffing Complement

Type of Staff: Non-Unionized

Staff Count	
Full Time	*10*
Total	**10**

Classification Category Legend:
D: Discretionary Services   **CD**: Core Discretionary Services
M/D: Mandatory Discretionary Services   **M**: Mandatory Services

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Financial Services, Treasurer & Information Technology Profile (2/2)

Observations

- **IT and Infrastructure Development:** While the Municipality's IT services have grown from a single staff member to a team, there continues to be outdated technology in use at the Municipality. There is a lack of automation in key areas and a perceived resistance to change. For example, Excel is currently used for budgeting and the municipality has yet to adopt Microsoft 365.
- **Financial Management:** Although a multi-year budget was presented to the Council in 2024, its approval of only the annual budget may restrict the administration's ability to plan effectively over the long term.
- **Customer Service Function:** The Municipality's customer service operations, currently managed by the Finance Department, have identified areas for improvement based on resident feedback. Some residents report that their inquiries lack adequate follow-up and that responses sometimes feel incomplete. While the Finance Department is responsible for initial customer contacts, for which customer service is strong, it frequently must direct residents to other departments for specialized assistance. Unfortunately, the absence of clear customer service standards complicates this referral process, leading to potential delays and inconsistencies in response times. This often results in residents being shuffled between departments, some of which may vary in their responsiveness, thereby impacting overall satisfaction with municipal responsiveness and customer service.
- **Customer Service Coordination:** The Municipality lacks a unified approach to customer service, with no coordinated strategy that includes comprehensive training for staff across departments. This has led to uneven service delivery and a failure to consistently meet residents' expectations.
- **Lack of Customer Service Tracking:** The Municipality does not track resident inquiries or the volume of customer service requests, creating a gap in understanding the number and types of inquiries received and their corresponding response times.
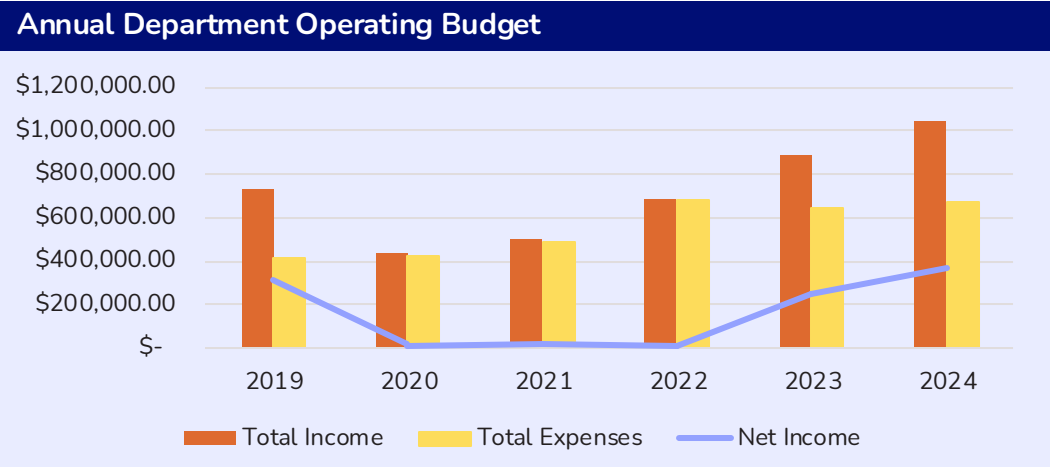
Service Evaluation

Size	Medium	This department's services account for roughly of 6.3% of the Municipality's expenditure (administration as a whole)
Delivery	Contemporary	Most services are delivered in a standard manner.
Growth	Stable	The department's operating expenses have remained stable over the years, with a slight decrease of 4.6%. In 2019, there was a temporary increase in expenses due to reserve transfers, which are recorded as expenses. However, following that year, expenses returned to their stable levels, leading to the overall decline observed.
Service	Standard	Most services are delivered at or above legislated standards. There are noted issues with outdated technology and gaps in skills and ability to do long-term planning.
Shared	Focused Service	Primarily delivered by Municipal staff directly.

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Building & Planning Services Profile (1/2)

Service Description

Service Area	Description	Classification
Planning Operations	Focus on land use, reviewing development applications, guiding community growth, and ensuring compliance with provincial and municipal policies to support residential, commercial, and industrial development.	M
Building Inspections	Ensure construction complies with the Ontario Building Code and local regulations by issuing permits and conducting inspections. They help maintain safety and quality in residential, commercial, and industrial projects.	M
Development Services	Supports residential and commercial growth by guiding developers through site plan approvals and permits.	M
By-Law Enforcement	Handles bylaw enforcement matters related to untidy yards, landlord/tenant issues, and parking enforcement.	M
Property Standards	Ensures buildings and properties meet local safety and maintenance by-laws. They address issues like structural integrity, property upkeep, and cleanliness to maintain community health and safety.	M

Staffing Complement

Type of Staff: Non-Unionized / Contract

Staff Count

Full Time	7	Temp Contract	1
Total	**8**		

Annual Department Operating Budget

Legend: Total Income, Total Expenses, Net Income

Service Evaluation

Size	Small	This department's services account for roughly of 1.8% of the Municipality's expenditure.
Delivery	Contemporary	Most services and payments are delivered in a standard manner.
Growth	Fast	This Department's operating expenses are growing fast at 9.3%.
Service	Below	Most services are delivered at legislated standards. There are noted issues with customer service and response times due to increase in workload.
Shared	Mixed Services	Primarily delivered by Municipal staff directly with shared services agreements with other Municipalities.

Classification Category Legend:
D: Discretionary Services
M/D: Mandatory Discretionary Services
CD: Core Discretionary Services
M: Mandatory Services

= High Priority   = Medium Priority   = Low Priority

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Building & Planning Profile (2/2)

Observations

- **Cohesive and Collaborative Environment:** The three areas within the Department are aware of each other's roles, work seamlessly together, and are helpful and responsive to each other.

- **Effective Shared Services:** The Municipality is currently leveraging the County's resources for support with development approvals. According to the Municipality, this relationship has been very productive and the addition of resources from the County has allowed the Municipality to increase capacity to process applications.

- **Cloud Transition Increased Efficiency:** By transitioning to Cloud technology, it has made their inspections more organized, allowing them to be able to monitor them more effectively and inform the Council and Public more accurately.

- **Navigation Improvement:** The website needs an overhaul to help users navigate the planning process, serving as a one-stop shop for planning matters.

- **Preference for Traditional Practices:** Some long-standing community members and builders prefer maintaining older practices, which occasionally leads to differing views when the Municipality enforces regulations.

- **Housing Development and Planning Challenges:** In the current political climate, there is a strong push for more housing, with some attributing delays to the planning process and others concerned about balancing development with proper oversight.

- **Council's Knowledge Gap in the Planning Process:** A lack of understanding of the planning process and applications has left the council feeling uninvolved and not well-informed, contributing to frustration and differing opinions on their role in decision-making.

- **Perception of Slow Response to Development Needs:** The planning and development processes are perceived as slow and overly complex, with builders and developers expressing frustration over delays and a lack of clear guidance, which could deter investment and growth.

- **Burnout within the Department:** With feelings of increased workload and limited resources, there are concerns team members within the Department are/may be experiencing burnout.

Human Resources Profile

Service Description

Service Area	Description	Classification
Human Resources	Provide the administration with recruiting, hiring, training and onboarding support.	**D**

Staffing Complement

Type of Staff: Non-Unionized / Contract

Staff Count			
Full Time	2	Temp Contract	1
Total	**3**		

Annual Department Operating Budget

Legend: Total Income, Total Expenses, Net Income

Observations

- **HR Department is Sought After and Found Helpful Across the Municipality:** Departments across the Municipality consistency seeks helps from HR regarding all aspects of employee recruitment and retention.
- **HRIS has Enhanced Efficiencies:** Human Resource Information System deployment has been a huge undertaking, and while it is still being implemented, it has already improved efficiency and effectiveness in some areas of their day-to-day operations.
- **Good Process for Recruitment:** Recruitment has been smooth and primarily due to a system which includes rigorous reviews and interview packages.
- **Capacity to Address All Requests:** With increasing needs, the Department does not always have the ability to respond to ad-hoc requests. They want to find a more effective way to balance between their day-to-day work versus ad-hoc requests.
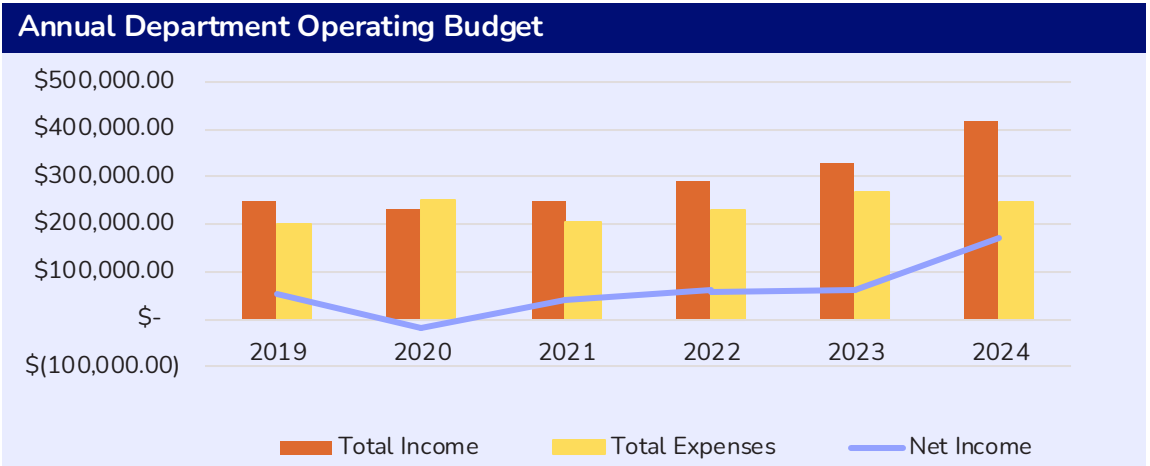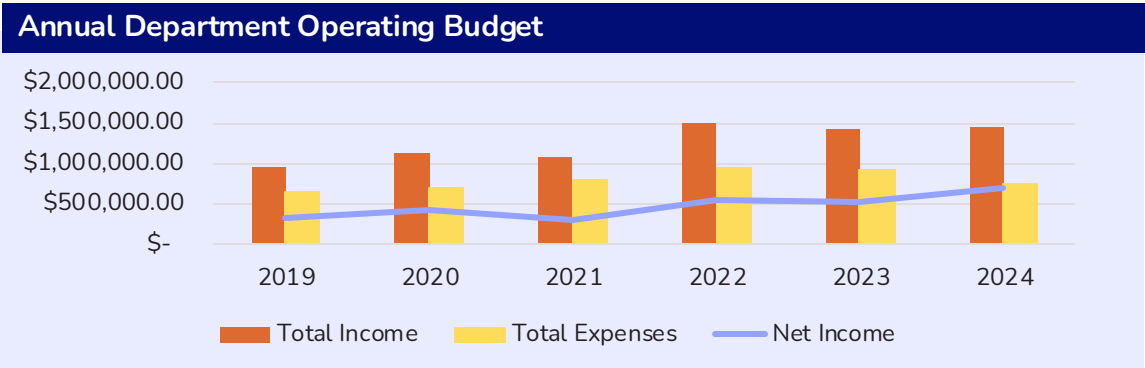
Service Evaluation

Size	Small	This department's services account for roughly of 0.7% of the Municipality's expenditure.
Delivery	Contemporary	Most services are delivered in a standard manner and are catered to internal stakeholders.
Growth	Moderate	This department's operating expenses are growing moderately at 4.7%.
Service	Standard	Most services are delivered internal facing and are meeting expectations.
Shared	Focused Service	Primarily delivered by Municipal staff directly.

Classification Category Legend:
D: Discretionary Services
M/D: Mandatory Discretionary Services
CD: Core Discretionary Services
M: Mandatory Services

= High Priority   = Medium Priority   = Low Priority

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Fire Services Profile

Service Description

Service Area	Description	Classification
Fire Services	Responsible for daily operations of the Fire Services facilities, and programs, administrative matters including directions to staff, regular maintenance of properties, planning issues, budget and capital projects and issues. And project/program implementation.	M

Observations

- **Service Levels and Staffing:** Fire services are meeting high standards in training and service delivery, but the volunteer model in rural areas like Melbourne faces challenges in maintaining staffing levels. A shift toward more full-time staff is anticipated within the next two years.
- **Training and Professionalism:** The department benefits from a strong training program aligned with NFPA standards, resulting in a highly professional and motivated team, with several volunteers transitioning to full-time roles.
- **Tiered Medical Response:** The implementation of tiered medical response, previously limited to one area, has been expanded across the municipality, improving emergency service capabilities and already showing positive results.
- **Technology and Infrastructure Gaps:** The department struggles with outdated technology and limited IT support, though improvements are expected with the new fire station and facility upgrades. There is also a desire to modernize administrative functions.
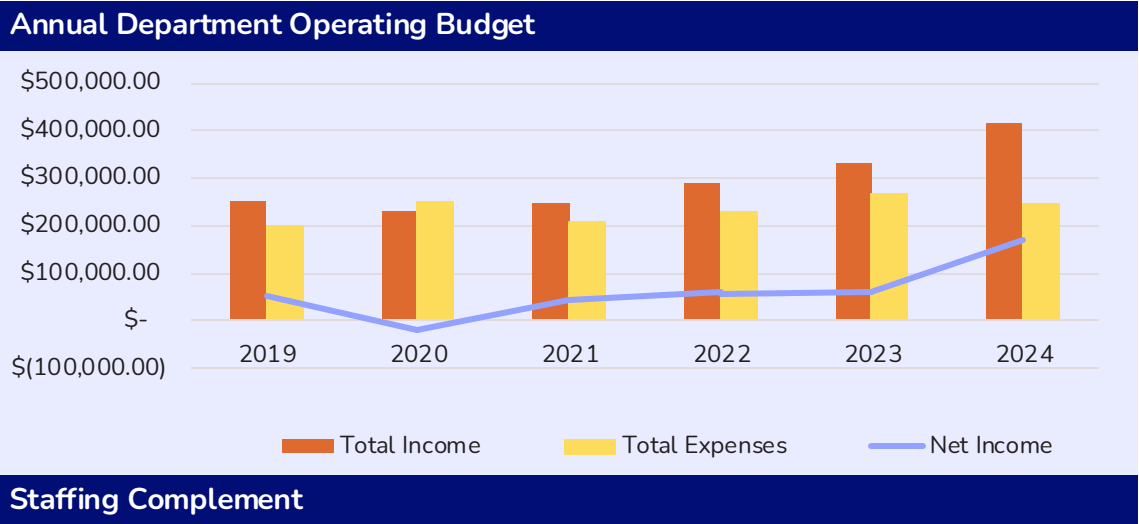
Annual Department Operating Budget

Bar chart showing Total Income, Total Expenses, and Net Income for years 2019–2024. Y-axis ranges from $- to $2,000,000.00.

Staffing Complement

Type of Staff: Non-Unionized / Contract / Volunteer

Staff Count		Volunteer	79
Full Time	4	*Temp Contract*	1
Total	**84**		

Service Evaluation

Size	Small	This department's services account for roughly of 2.0% of the Municipality's expenditure.
Delivery	Contemporary	Most services are delivered following standard practice.
Growth	Moderate	This department's operating expenses are experiencing stable growth at the rate of 3.5%.
Service	Standard	Most services are delivered at or above legislated standards. It has been noted that comparative Municipalities have made changes to the service to meet the needs their size that S-C may explore.
Shared	Focused Service	Primarily delivered by Municipal staff directly.

Classification Category Legend:
D: Discretionary Services
M/D: Mandatory Discretionary Services
CD: Core Discretionary Services
M: Mandatory Services

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Engineering & Public Works Profile (1/2)

Service Description

Service Area	Description	Classification
Geographic Information System (GIS)	Manages GIS data to track and maintain municipal infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, storm sewers, and utilities, supporting efficient planning and asset management.	D
Drainage	Manages drainage within the municipality, which includes overseeing stormwater management systems and ensuring proper maintenance of storm sewers and drainage infrastructure.	M
Solid Waste	Contracts Bluewater Recycling Association for the co-collection of recyclables and garbage.	M
Roads	Oversees the maintenance of 323 km of municipal roads, sidewalks, and storm sewers, including road upkeep, construction, and winter control. It is also responsible for tree maintenance, street lighting, fleet purchasing and maintenance (excluding Police), and operation of the Strathroy-Caradoc Gravel Pit.	M
Mount Brydges Sewer/ Water & Strathroy Sewers/Water Systems	The Water and Wastewater division is in charge of operating the water and wastewater (sanitary sewer) systems in the municipality. The municipality currently provides services for 7,744 water connections and 6,675 wastewater connections.	M

Annual Department Operating Budget

Legend: Total Income, Total Expenses, Net Income

Staffing Complement

Type of Staff: Non-Unionized / Unionized / Contract

Staff Count

Full Time	26	*Temp Contract*	*1*
Total	**27**		

Classification Category Legend:
D: Discretionary Services   **CD**: Core Discretionary Services
M/D: Mandatory Discretionary Services   **M**: Mandatory Services

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Engineering & Public Works Profile (2/2)

Observations

- **Staffing Shortages:** Staffing is a top concern, with key personnel having to manage multiple critical roles, straining overall capacity.
- **Gaps in Capacity and Expertise:** The municipality lacks sufficient staff and expertise to handle critical tasks, such as infrastructure modeling, capacity monitoring, asset management and modeling, future planning and project planning.
- **Asset Management Deficiencies:** The municipality lacks a dedicated team for asset management and does not have a clear understanding of its current infrastructure, making proactive planning difficult.
- **Absence:** Despite numerous capital projects and rehabilitation needs, there is no formal project management system in place.
- **Infrastructure Condition:** The transportation system and water mains are in poor condition due to inadequate proactive management and planning.

- *Note: with a newly appointed Director of Engineering and Public Works, it is anticipated that additional observations and opportunities may arise as part of Phase III.*

Service Evaluation

Size	Large	This department's services account for roughly of 15.8% of the Municipality's expenditure.
Delivery	Contemporary	Most services are delivered following standard practice.
Growth	Moderate	This department's operating expenses are growing at a stable rate of 1.6%
Service	Below Standards	With limited staffing and increase in workload, meeting all requests are becoming more challenging.
Shared	Focused Service	Primarily delivered by Municipal staff directly.

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