

Middlesex Centre Strategic Planning Process

Survey and Community Engagement Results

Part 8 of 8

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

This document was prepared by **Erebus Municipal Services Inc.** in support of the Municipality of Middlesex Centre Strategic Planning Process, September 2020.

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MUNICIPALITY OF MIDDLESEX CENTRE

STRATEGIC PLANNING INITIATIVE
LOOKING AHEAD
2020 TO 2025 AND BEYOND

Community and Stakeholder Engagement – Summary of Input

- In-person sessions held August 4,5,11,12, 17,18, September 8
- Several on-line meetings conducted
- In-person sessions were held at the Komoka Wellness Centre, the Ilderton Community Centre, Denfield Ops Centre, Ilderton, Coldstream, Bryanston and Delaware Fire Stations
- Social distancing protocols were observed
- Over 25 stakeholder groups and individuals were consulted
- Sessions were well received and productive
- Consisted of introduction of participants and consultants
- Reviewed what strategic planning is, and what it is not
- Shared the list of opportunities and challenges from initial Council meeting of June 24

MAJOR THEMES

- Rural broadband availability (Need to understand the scale and scope of the recent SWIFT announcement for the County)
- Agricultural traditions and the small town look and feel are major values
- Perception that new development is progressing too much, too fast
- Residents of MXC value the proximity to London, but do not want to be London
- Productive agricultural lands should be preserved
- Affordable / attainable housing is needed
- The stakeholders all have a genuine and passionate appreciation for MXC as a special place
- The COVID-19 crisis has and will result in changes to municipal engagement and business services

Here's What We Heard

LAND USE PLANNING, GROWTH AND SETTLEMENT

- Powerful attachment to the rural/agricultural vernacular and heritage
- Important to preserve and protect productive agricultural land and farming
- The natural setting is an important intangible value
- Equally powerful attachment to MXC “small town” look and feel, particularly Ilderton, Delaware...Komoka Kilworth, not as much
- Restrict development to existing settlement areas, focus where full services are available
- Perception that small town, rural values are being eroded by new residential development
- A sense that development is happening at a rapid, somewhat unchecked pace
- Komoka Kilworth lacks identity as a settlement area – Glendon as an arterial road limits opportunity to create a main street look and feel

LAND USE PLANNING, GROWTH AND SETTLEMENT

- Rural, small town identity is being eroded as the municipality transitions to a commuter-based bedroom community
- Impose a limit on rural severances
- Large format retail is not wanted
- Affordable/attainable housing is a major theme, yet recognition that market forces are a strong influence on land and housing costs
- New development should include a mix of housing types and styles, including rental units
- Proximity to London is both an advantage, and a negative
- Serviced lands for business and employment should be available
- MXC should be assertive in demanding a broader mix of housing types in new development
- Aggregate resources and extractive uses require management and control

COMMUNITY ORIENTED INPUT

- The rural / urban divide requires education and engagement
- A welcome / orientation program for new residents may be of value; promote an understanding of living in an agriculturally-based community
- The rural / urban divide is not a significant issue in Komoka Kilworth
- The clergy community seeks to work with the municipality to establish a food bank and to establish a closer relationship with MXC
- Homelessness and youth problems exist in the community, yet are not always apparent
- Trend in new housing shuts out entry level or rental housing for employees
- Attracting labour for the agricultural sector is a challenge
- Farm consolidation erodes the dimension of the small, family agricultural operation
- Rise in farm assessment and farm tax is a concern

COMMUNITY ORIENTED INPUT

- Facility and playing field rental rates and insurance requirements are an issue
- Certain community groups are struggling to survive, greater support from MXC is needed
- Contributions and the important role of service clubs not fully appreciated or understood
- Service clubs and community organizations seeking greater engagement and communication channels with MXC
- Attracting volunteers can be a challenge for community groups
- School planning and student deployment is seen as deficient; the municipality should take on an assertive advocacy role in school planning
- The amalgamated municipality presents a challenge in terms of community identity
- MXC should consider an economic development planning initiative, to refine the brand, to aim to attract a branded hotel, to build on the agricultural economy
- The COVID crisis has had a somewhat positive impact on local business and retail activity⁸

COMMUNITY ORIENTED INPUT

- The Ilderton Agricultural Society is in a solid financial position, yet there is a concern for the future
- The Ilderton fairgrounds property is underappreciated as community open space
- An economic impact analysis of the fall fair was suggested
- Recognize, celebrate and promote the natural and built heritage assets in the community: parks, trails, conservation areas, historic sites
- The archives group wishes to establish a partnership with the municipality
- There is a communication gap between the medical clinic in Ilderton and the municipality
- The family physicians at the clinic are carrying patient rosters beyond sector standards
- There is no physician recruitment program in place

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

- To resist “service level creep”, effort should be made to manage expectations of new residents
- The development sector is concerned with inconsistent file management, inexperienced staff, staff turnover, time delays, shifting engineering and servicing requirements
- A structured engagement program with the development sector would be helpful
- MXC should consider an organizational review and a service delivery review
- Attention to rural roads is required: widening, paving, brushing
- Yet others advocate not paving rural roads
- Limit new driveway entrances on rural roads
- High water rates are an issue

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

- There are conflicting views on considering a new fire station to service Komoka Kilworth
- Small size of fire stations (other than Coldstream) is a challenge
- Fire rescue service and station deployment suggests a thorough analysis and long-term plan
- An economic development strategy was suggested. Could be aimed at home-based and tech oriented business. Could promote agricultural value-added enterprises. Aim for a diversified assessment base.
- Serviced land for business, commercial and light industrial employment was suggested
- Annexation by London is a concern
- Remain committed to follow the Asset Management Plan
- Fiscal sustainability is a fundamental imperative

MUNICIPAL SERVICES, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

- Educate and inform the community on key financial information
- Important to monitor Development Charge debt and cash flow
- Establish a standard framework for staff training and professional development
- Embrace open, inclusive, transparent governance
- Encourage diversity in staff complement
- Pursue partnerships where appropriate: County, sister municipalities, private sector
- Foster a municipal corporate culture that celebrates innovation, best practices, outstanding staff performance, that recognizes emerging lifestyle trends
- Consider a customer service policy and procedures review
- Continue to evaluate and roll-out on-line processes and business applications
- Apply the climate change and carbon footprint lens across all municipal programming and service delivery

ILDERTON, (AND BEYOND)

- The business case for the new Ilderton ice pad project is not fully understood
- The Ilderton Agricultural Society would benefit from added covered space at the fairground
- The new Tim Horton commercial development is a major departure from the Friedman plan and has added to the fragmentation of Ilderton's retail section
- The Friedman plan is regarded as overly ambitious and impractical
- The municipality should consider its obligation pursuant to the Ilderton Community Improvement Plan to undertake public realm improvements
- New retail / commercial space and uses are needed: grocery store, hardware store
- The vacant "silo lands" property is a major obstacle to advancing the vision and vitality of Ilderton's downtown area
- Neither Ilderton or Komoka Kilworth have the critical mass of businesses to support creation of a Business Improvement Area

DISCUSSION AND NEXT STEPS

Following this Council workshop, our mission is to develop:

- A set of broad goals to guide refinement of our Strategic Plan
- A set of principles that will inform and guide decision making
- A preliminary list of strategic directions
- A preliminary set of strategic initiatives – a draft “to-do list”

This material will be posted and published, and used to guide re-engagement with key stakeholders and the community to share results and encourage feedback

We will then meet again with Council for the third workshop to report on results and refine the strategic themes, directions and specific initiatives