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**City of Stratford Strategic Priorities
Final Report**

January 2014

atfocus

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INTRODUCTION

Project Objectives

The Corporation of the City of Stratford's Request for Proposal articulated the need for the City to establish Priorities for the next three to five years in order to prioritize spending. In addition, during our project kick-off meeting, it was identified that the City required more focused Priorities than in the current Strategic Plan, as previous attempts to prioritize capital projects had not been fully successful.

Many organizations who have been successful at setting Strategic Priorities have come to understand that the overriding lesson learned is that the lack of a guiding strategic and business direction and relevant performance measures have left organizations deficient in accomplishing their longer-term goals and/or demonstrating success against their plans. Strategic and business direction that is steeped only in high level concepts without the ability to drive these concepts down to tactical Priority Projects will produce Plans that are shelved by staff and not used as a guide post. Although the Vision, Mission and overall Strategic Direction maybe higher level, these have to be driven down to actual projects which must be aligned with available resources (budget and staff).

Establishing Priorities is especially pertinent as, in the municipal environment, it is easy for projects (e.g. storm water management) to be re-prioritized due to a multitude of factors (referred to as "triggers") such as funding opportunities and weather events.

As in Stratford, the most critical issue for local government across Canada is the definite need to manage the City's debt. However, this is complicated by the City's need to fund important capital projects while ensuring that it does not have to borrow funds every time they are needed, resulting in increased City debt. There is a need to establish a process and method of evaluating the priority of currently unfunded projects so as to fund the most important projects with available funding, or additional funding, if it were to become available.

As a municipality, the City of Stratford has a variety of parties who are affected by which issues become prioritized and the funding implications that the Strategic Priorities will have. Therefore, it is important for the City to engage all parties who may be impacted including Staff, Stakeholders, Council and members of the public. Previous open houses held by the City have had very small attendance, indicating a clear need to find ways to engage with the public that will encourage greater participation. AtFocus was engaged by The Corporation of the City of Stratford to create a strategic priority framework. Our work resulted in the following:

- A Strategic Priority Framework which includes:
 - A new Vision and Mission
 - An overall Strategic Goal
 - 3 Priority Pillars
 - Strategic Priority Projects for the next 5 years
 - A foundational component required to achieve the framework
- A Funding Logic Flow which assists in determining available funding sources
- A Decision Making Tool which assists in future prioritization
- A method of measuring public opinion for future priorities

Project Methodology

Our approach was to be inclusive and offer the opportunity to engage various parties to develop an understanding of issues that could become potential priorities for the City of Stratford over the next five years. We utilized several different tools to extend our reach and invited participation from all sources. To develop an understanding of the issues facing the City and potential priorities, AtFocus completed the following activities:

- A review of relevant documents provided by the City such as budget documents, priority lists, previous Council direction documents
- A staff, stakeholder, Council and public web survey
- 8 Departmental focus groups with City Staff, interviews with selected individuals
- 2 full day and 1 half day workshops with CLT
- 2 Council sessions

Our methodology included a 7 step approach.

- **Step 1 – Project Start Up:** The objectives of the project start up meeting were to define project success, clarify roles and responsibility, discuss risks, sensitivities and possible challenges as well as to confirm the outcomes and deliverables expected from the project
- **Step 2 – Build Knowledge Base:** During this Step, we reviewed documents that were relevant to the development of Priorities for the City of Stratford. These included surrounding area and Stakeholder Strategic Plans, City of Stratford budget/financial documents, corporate organizational, demographic and population information
- **Step 3 – Engage:** The purpose of this Step was to engage Staff, Council, CLT, the CAO and Stakeholders. Our efforts included three unique web surveys that were deployed to Staff, Stakeholders and Council, eight Departmental focus groups, a Council focus group, individual interviews with the CAO and Mayor and a full day workshop with CLT
- **Step 4 & 5 – Develop Draft Priorities:** Using the information gathered in Step 3 and working with CLT, we drafted a Strategic Priority Framework which included a draft Mission and Strategic Priority Pillars for the next 5 years. This was presented to Council who's input was received and incorporated. We then met with CLT a second time to develop potential Strategic Priority Projects for each of the Pillars. We then met with Council to present the entire Framework and solicited input and required changes. The Framework and Priority Projects were then finalized. The output from this step formed the basis for the public web survey
- **Step 6 – Develop Process to Measure Public Opinion:** We developed and deployed a public web survey to solicit initial reaction to the Strategic Priority Pillar. We also requested input on suggested methods of measuring their opinion (e.g. communicating/soliciting additional input in the future). Once the survey was completed, we developed a process to measure public opinion in the future
- **Step 7 – Finalize Report:** Based on the activities undertaken in Steps 1 – 6, this final report was developed.

Report Overview

This report presents our deliverables including the recommended Strategic Priority Framework including Priority Projects for the next 5 years, the Funding Logic Flow and Decision Making Tool. A summary of Web survey results can be found in **Appendix A**.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY FRAMEWORK

The purpose of the Strategic Priority Framework (SPF) is to:

- Establish a planning framework for the City, Boards and Agencies
- Guide priority setting for next five years to achieve the Vision and Mission
- Align Staff in their efforts to achieve the overall Goal of Building Prosperity: Economic Development

The SPF includes:

- The Vision: To be the best City to live, work and play
- The Mission: Strengthening our community, attracting people and investment
- The Overall Goal: Building prosperity; Economic Development. Promoting retention, growth and diversification while enabling investment in our City
- Three Priority Pillars:

Long Term Financial Planning

- Incorporating and balancing debt management, capital investment, asset management and sustainable funding for current infrastructure

Affordable Living

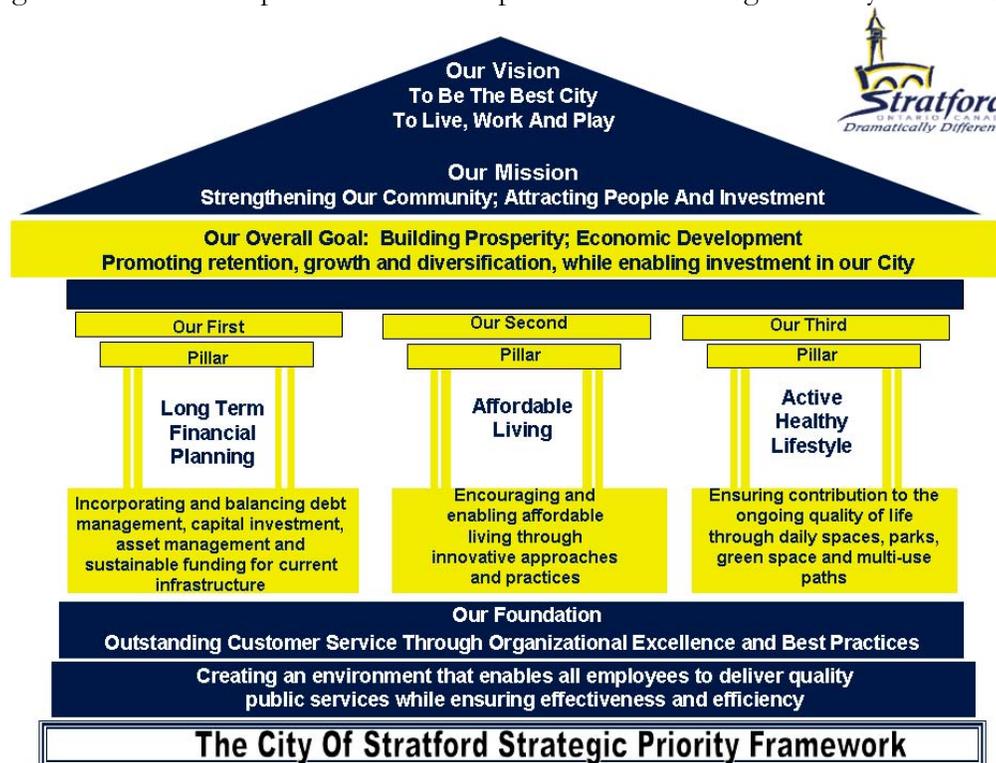
- Encouraging and enabling affordable living through innovative approaches and practices

Active Healthy Lifestyle

- Ensuring contribution to the ongoing quality of life through daily spaces, parks, green space and multi-use paths

- The Foundation: Outstanding customer service through organizational excellence and best practices. Creating an environment that enables all employees to deliver quality public services while ensuring effectiveness and efficiency

The diagram that follows represents a visual depiction of the Strategic Priority Framework.



Priority Projects

The following 8 Priorities have been set for the next 5 years (2014-2018), as recommended by CLT and agreed to by Council:

- *Priority 1:* Complete all Priority Projects in 2014 budget
- *Priority 2:* Complete the following critical staff projects in 2014/15
 - Asset Management Plan (2014)
 - Engineering Storm Project Review (2014)
 - IT Strategic Plan (2014)
 - Staff Training Plan (2014)
 - Succession Planning (2015)
- *Priority 3:* Do not acquire new debt that impacts tax base, no additional Priority Projects will be completed other than the *Priority Projects by Year* listed below
- *Priority 4:* Maintain current debt repayment and allow natural debt reduction. Do not accelerate debt repayment over next 5 years
- *Priority 5:* Subject to the results of the Engineering Storm Project Review:
 - Incorporate storm sewer improvements into the annual engineering capital allotment
 - Do not undertake new multi-million storm improvements for next 5 years
- *Priority 6:* Implement components of the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan through the engineering capital allotment. Do not complete full implementation over next five years unless additional capacity becomes available
- *Priority 7:* Do not undertake the Market Square project, unless additional funding becomes available. Consider this project as the top priority on the list of projects to be considered if additional capacity becomes available
- *Priority 8:* Spend the available annual debt capacity (approximately \$200,000 each year, resulting from natural debt reduction) on the recommended Priority Projects as listed in the table that follows:

| 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete Council Chambers (requires allocation of additional \$100,000 to current funding envelope) ▪ Complete the Kiwanis Community Centre HVAC (requires allocation of additional \$100,000 to current funding envelope) ▪ Begin Affordable Housing Formal Strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete an Affordable Housing Formal Strategy (estimated cost \$50,000) ▪ Increase Social Housing Capital by \$50,000 ▪ Increase Building Reserves by \$50,000 ▪ Allocate \$50,000 to IT Infrastructure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Purchase Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (requires allocation of additional \$100,000 to current funding envelope) ▪ Increase Social Housing Capital by \$50,000 ▪ Increase Building Reserves by \$50,000 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase Social Housing Capital by \$50,000 ▪ Increase Building Reserves by \$100,000 ▪ Allocate \$50,000 to IT Infrastructure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase Social Housing Capital by \$50,000 ▪ Increase Building Reserves by \$100,000 ▪ Allocate \$50,000 to IT Infrastructure |

The above Priority Projects were developed based on critical needs facing the City and the availability of an estimated \$200,000 each year resulting from natural debt reduction. If additional financial capacity becomes available in any year, the following Priority Projects should be considered:

- Completion of Market Square *
- Completion of remainder IT Infrastructure requirements
- Additional allocation to the Social Housing Capital
- Installation of an insulated arena floor
- Implementation of the Area Transportation Plan
- New Sidewalks with a view to enhancing accessibility
- Development and implementation of City branding
- Completion of the steps leading to City Hall
- Investigation, with a view of providing joint dispatching services
- Offering bus service on Sunday
- Implementing the remainder of the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan

* Priority Projects are not in order of priority with the exception of the Completion of Market Square. This should be considered first if additional capacity becomes available.

Public Input

The public survey indicated that there is significant support for the Strategic Priority Framework. More specifically:

- 79% of respondents have medium-high support for the Vision, with the majority having high support
- 86% of respondents have medium-high support for the Mission, with the majority having high support
- 78% of respondents have medium- high support for the Goal, with a split between medium and high support
- 87% of respondents have medium-high support for the Long Term Financial Planning Pillar, with the majority having high support
- 88% of respondents have medium-high support for the Affordable Living Pillar, with the majority having high support
- 91% of respondents have medium-high support for the Active Healthy Lifestyle Pillar, with the majority having high support
- 84% of respondents have medium-high support for the foundation, with the majority having high support

Two primary themes emerged from the comments provided by respondents. These are:

- Ensuring that the Strategic Priority Framework becomes a reality and is achieved
 - This will require measurement and public reporting on progress including how the Vision and Mission will be measured (e.g. how will “best” be measured?)
- Using more specific language. Respondents reacted to the lack of individuality represented by the Vision and Mission. Suggesting that all Cities across Canada could establish similar Visions/Missions
 - More specificity should be provided through more detailed communications as the Strategic Priority Framework is implemented and achieved. Communicating Priority Projects will establish more focus and provide more detail

PRIORITY SETTING TOOLS

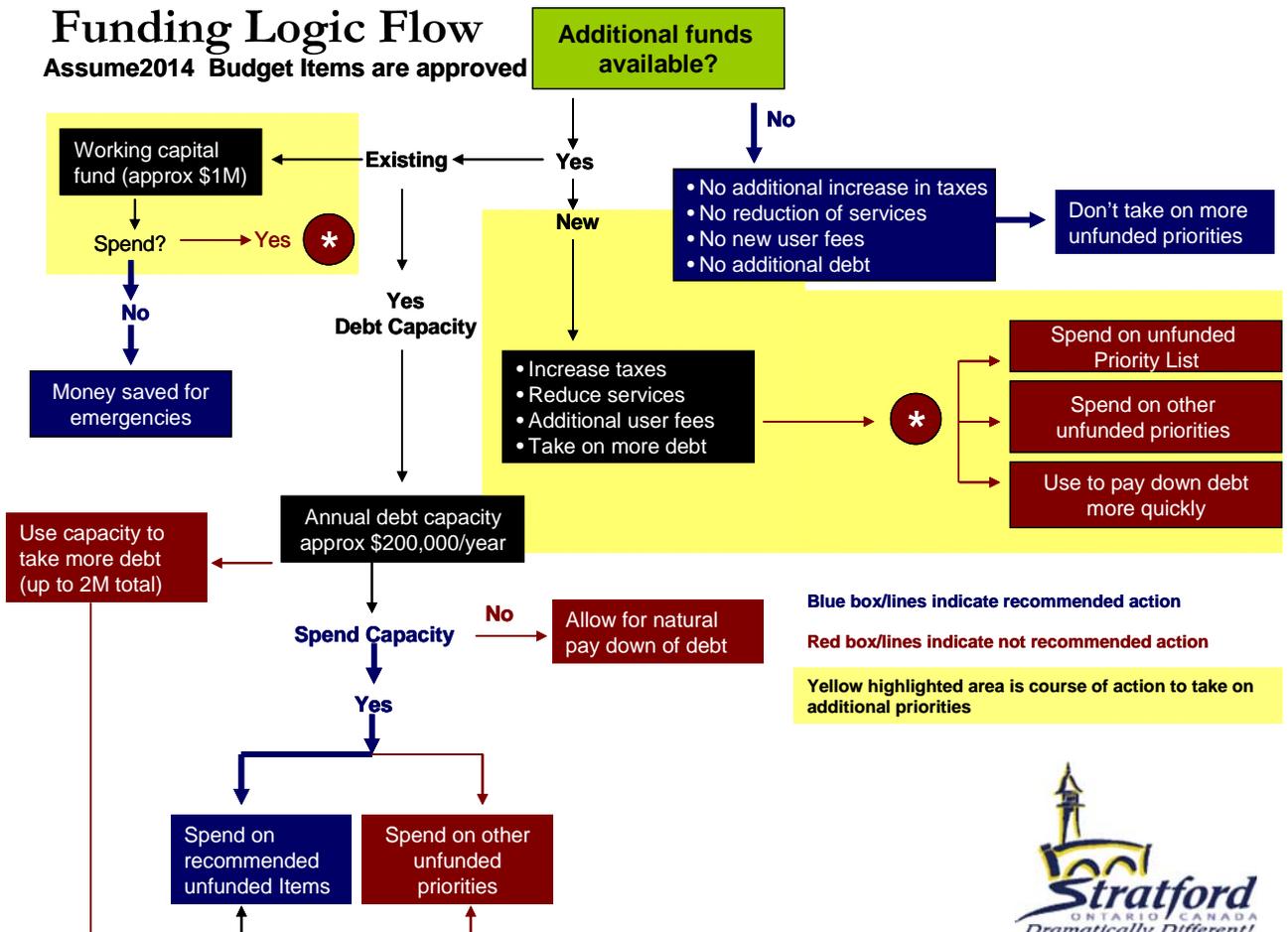
To assist with determining priorities, 2 separate tools were developed.

Funding Logic Flow

The first tool assists in establishing possible funding sources. This tool illustrates the Funding Logic Flow for providing funds for priorities. Sources for funding have various consequences, be it increasing in the tax base, depletion of Capital Funds, or additional borrowing and increasing debt. There are 6 funding sources which were examined:

- Increase tax base
- Reduce Service (produce savings)
- Introduce additional/new user fees
- Take on more debt
- Use working capital fund
- Use debt capacity (results from repayment schedule on current level of debt)

If there is no desire to increase debt/tax base, deplete the working capital fund, reduce services, or introduce new user fees, then there is only approximately \$200,000 available annually for Priority Projects. The Funding Logic Flow is illustrated below:



Decision Tool

The second tool assists in determining the possible areas of concern associated with proceeding with a project by assessing 16 parameters which are required for long term success. These areas include:

- Council Priority
- Stakeholder Support
- Tools (process and technology)
- Organizational Effectiveness
- Legislation/Regulation
- Innovation
- Savings
- Risk Management
- Corporate Strategic Plan
- Financial Resources
- Organizational Efficiency
- Impact
- Customer Service
- Funding
- Resources (staff and skills)

The following chart provides the questions associated with determining the degree of support/alignment of each parameter.

| City of Stratford Decision Tool | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|-----|--|-----|---|-----|
| Decision Parameters | Proceed | Yes | Proceed With Caution | Yes | Critical Implications | Yes |
| Council Priority | Clearly aligned with existing Council priorities | | Suggests a variation on existing Council priorities | | Not outlined in existing Council priorities | |
| Legislated/Regulated | Complies and/or will meet legislative/regulatory requirements | | Does not fully meet legislative/regulatory requirements | | Will not meet legislative/regulatory requirements | |
| Corporate Strategic Plan | Clearly aligned with existing Strategic Priorities | | Does not impact existing Strategic Priorities | | Does not align with existing Strategic Priorities | |
| Customer Service | Improves or maintains customer service | | Reduces customer service to a portion of customers | | Reduces customer service to the majority of customers | |
| Local/Community Support | Have a high degree of local support | | Selected local support or have not tested local support | | Local opposition | |
| Stakeholder Support | Have a high degree of stakeholder support | | Selected stakeholder support or have not tested stakeholder support | | Stakeholder opposition | |
| Innovation | Is innovative | | Not innovative | | Prohibits innovation in other areas | |
| Financial Resources | Required financial resources are available | | Unclear if required resources are available | | Do not have required financial resources | |
| Funding | Funding clearly supported by Council | | No funding decision made by Council | | Not funded by Council | |
| Resources (staff and skills) | Have the resources (staff and skills) | | Have either staff or skills, but not both and/or easy, but to obtain | | Do not have the resources (staff and skills) | |
| Tools (process and technology) | Have the right tools | | Do not have the right tools, but can make it work easily | | Do not have tools | |
| Savings | Results in savings or in operational budget | | Results in savings but requires significant up front investment | | Does not result in savings or operational cost implications not in budget | |
| Organizational Efficiency | Will improve efficiency | | Improves efficiency but requires significant up front investment | | Adds complexity that requires process re-engineering | |
| Organizational Effectiveness | Will improve effectiveness | | May improve effectiveness but requires significant up front investment | | Adds complexity that requires process re-engineering | |
| Risk Management | Eliminates/reduces risk if completed | | May introduce a level of risk if completed | | High risk if not completed | |
| Impact | Enables other initiatives if completed | | Moves another initiative to lower priority status | | Takes funding from another initiative | |

MEASURING PUBLIC OPINION

Public sector organizations are required to involve their citizens and stakeholders in priority setting exercises and in specific project/initiative and expenditure input. However, over the past several years there has been a decline in the participation levels of traditional citizen/stakeholder input channels e.g. town halls and focus groups across Canada. There still is a bridge, yet to be crossed, by citizens from providing on site, face-to-face input and full social media/online. However, whether face to face or through social media/online to be effective, communication aimed at soliciting input and measuring public opinion must be:

- **Relevant:** The public must have a desire to be involved and participate. The topic/nature of the content must be meaningful and significant for them. As relevance decreases, participation will decrease
- **Compelling:** There must be a real reason to participate. They must feel their input is valuable and will be used
- **Credible:** Messaging and content must strike the balance of coming from a credible source, while allowing for anonymity and “freedom of speech
- **Timely:** Input must be requested within a timeframe that can still make an impact. Asking for input on a final decision, will alienate the public who will believe their time is being wasted

There are 5 primary channels for measuring public opinion and soliciting input. These are presented from most traditional and expensive to emerging and less expensive channels:

- Phone (one-to-one, conference call panels)
- In person (e.g. town halls, interviews, focus groups, exit interviews, representative panels)
- Mail (formal surveys, informal questionnaires, comment cards)
- Paper (comment cards, surveys, informal questionnaires)
- Online (web surveys, emails, webinars) and Social Media (City website, Facebook, chat, Twitter, Blogs, texting, SMS, text messaging surveys)

The public web survey asked participants how they would want to be involved in the future. The table that follows provides the question asked and available answer choices.

| In the future, what is the best way to gain your input and involvement? (Please select one answer below.) | |
|---|-------|
| Email | 62.5% |
| Phone | 0.5% |
| Mail | 2.5% |
| City Website | 13.5% |
| Social Media | 11.5% |
| Town Hall | 2.0% |
| Focus Groups | 3.0% |
| Other | 4.5% |

The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that email would be the best way to gain their future input and involvement. The other two most popular choices selected were the City website and social media. Although these results are significant, they maybe skewed towards the Social

Media/E channels as participants already have a predisposition to email/web since the survey was conducted through this type of channel. As such, in order to be inclusive, future public involvement should focus on Social Media/E and also include up to 2 other targeted participation options. The non Social Media/E channels should include questioning how best to solicit participation of these participants. Once it is demonstrated that the majority of the public would prefer the Social Media/E channel, other input channels can be eliminated. It is recommended that the future, public involvement be primarily gained through:

- **Social Media/Online:** Using social media to connect to the public is effective and efficient. It generates real time input and can engage people in dialogue quicker than other forms of customer outreach. This would involve using Twitter, Facebook, Blogs and SMS Text Messaging Surveys. Interacting through social media is becoming easier. One message can now be distributed through various forms of social media at the same time. Social Media is:
 - Easy and inexpensive to launch and administer
 - Interactive and non-threatening
 - Easy to engage in a dialogue and gain context for comments
 - Fast

Using Social Media requires:

- Pages to be regularly monitored and responses provided when required
- Monitoring - Users may post negative experiences/comments, which are viewed by “the world”
- Other forms of input when narrowing the focus of feedback to get specific and comprehensive input is required
- **Panels:** Establishing Panels involves soliciting/selecting targeted groups that can be surveyed on a regular basis. Each Panel would include approximately 15-20 participants who would become a “sounding board”. The panels would be surveyed on an annual basis, and may be invited in for focus groups to discuss various elements of the Strategic Plan and Priority Projects. Survey techniques could be in the form of in-person focus groups, a web survey, web based teleconference which uses voting mechanisms or through a “chat room”. Panels are recommended to engage the public in specific areas of interest. This will expand reach, while soliciting detailed and specific input
- **Exit Interviews:** Conducting short, no more than 5 questions, exit interviews would provide just-in-time responses and gather input from the public as they are leaving a City facility e.g. City Hall, Community Centre. Although this portion of the public may not be as inclined to participate in Social Media/E channels, email addresses should be gathered in order to invite participants to a future web survey and allow Exit Interviews to become obsolete (assuming the public no longer requires this channel to provide input)

APPENDIX A: WEB SURVEY RESULTS

Unique web-based surveys were available to Staff, members of Stakeholder groups, Stratford’s City Council and members of the public. The surveys garnered feedback through the following types of questions:

- Single answer multiple choice questions where the respondent selected a single answer from a list of answers
- Multiple answer multiple choice questions where the respondent selected multiple answers from a list of answers
- Free form text questions where the respondent was free to provide any comments or qualitative information through free form text entry

Staff Web Survey

The survey was designed to examine thoughts on the current Mission, criteria in considering future Priorities, potential changes to the City in the future, top Priorities for the City, wish list items, foreseeable benefits from the priority setting initiative and any additional comments. The Staff web survey was sent to approximately 291 part time and full time City of Stratford Staff members and 90 responses were received, which represents a 31% response rate. The following table provides the overall results as identified by Staff:

| Staff Web Survey Results |
|---|
| <i>Our Mission:</i> Though the majority (73%) of respondents indicated that they believed that the current mission was still relevant, most of Staff also suggested that “worldwide” impact should change as it was too far reaching, too broad or unclear. Other suggestions indicated that the focus of the mission should be on the local community and that the mission needs to be “liveable” for City Staff. |
| <i>Priority Setting Criteria:</i> The top priority setting criteria selected by Staff were “We have the resources (staff and skills),” “We have the required budget” and “It improves customer service.” |
| <i>Important Considerations:</i> Staff suggested that it is important to find ways to engage the community and incorporate their perspectives in the process of the priority setting initiative. In order for the priority setting to be successful, the long term future of the City and the impact on residents and businesses as well as the available resources such as budget and staffing levels must be considered. |
| <i>Stratford in the Future:</i> The majority of Staff indicated that they believed the City would be slightly different within the next three to five years than it is today. Staff pointed to reasons such as population growth, new commercial developments and the economy, with the new University of Waterloo campus and commercial developments being major factors. However, Staff also noted that change takes time, and that a three to five year outlook might be too small a timeframe to observe change as historically, change has occurred slowly. |
| <i>Top Three Priorities:</i> The top three Priorities selected by Staff were economic development, debt reduction and investing more in community social issues. Staff noted that debt reduction is key; to ensure that funds are available for community improvements and that while tourism is an important factor in Stratford’s economy, year-round residents must not be forgotten. |
| <i>Priorities on Our Wishlist:</i> Staff pointed to items such as a new library, a new police facility, a plan to revitalize the Cooper Site, the development of Market Square and a focus on affordable housing both in terms of geared to income and for young families. |

Staff Web Survey Results

Greatest Benefits of Priority Setting: Respondents noted that establishing Priorities will provide a clear direction for the organization in the future and that Priorities will provide guidance for Council’s decision making. There will also be a sense that Priorities have incorporated perspectives of the public and Staff, resulting in a shared vision.

Stakeholder Web Survey

The survey was designed to examine thoughts on the current Mission, potential changes to the City in the future, top Priorities for the City, the Stakeholder group’s Strategic Priorities and any additional comments. The Stakeholder web survey was sent to 26 Stakeholder groups and 13 different groups responded. The following table represents the Stakeholder groups who were invited to take part in the Stakeholder survey and which groups provided a response.

| Stakeholder Group | Response Received |
|--|-------------------|
| 2017 Sesquicentennial Ad-Hoc Committee | -- |
| Accessibility Advisory Committee | ✓ |
| Appeals Committee for Social Housing Matters | -- |
| Board of Park Management | -- |
| Chamber of Commerce | ✓ |
| City Centre Committee (BIA) | -- |
| Communities in Bloom Committee | -- |
| Doors Open Stratford | ✓ |
| Energy and Environment Committee | ✓ |
| Festival Hydro | -- |
| Festival Hydro Services Inc. | ✓ |
| Gallery Stratford | ✓ |
| Heritage Stratford | -- |
| Perth East | ✓ |
| Perth County | ✓ |
| Perth South | ✓ |
| Perth West | -- |
| Social Planning Council | ✓ |
| Spruce Lodge Non-Profit Housing Corporation | ✓ |
| St Marys | ✓ |
| Stratford Festival President | -- |
| Stratford Perth Museum Association | -- |
| Stratford Public Library Board | -- |
| Transit Steering Committee | -- |
| Upper Thames River Conservation Authority | ✓ |

The following table provides the overall results as identified by representatives of Stakeholder groups:

Stakeholder Web Survey Results

Our Mission: The majority of respondents (78%) indicated that they were aware of the City’s current Mission. In terms of changes, it was suggested that “worldwide impact” is difficult to accomplish or measure and too costly to impact. As well, it was suggested that “community excellence” was unclear and that “community” could be changed to “local.”

Stratford in the Future: The majority of respondents (80%) indicated that they felt that Stratford would be slightly different in the future. Respondents pointed to reasons such as Stratford continuing to be a leader in the “digital world” and that development will lead to business success, jobs and growth. However, respondents also noted that three to five years is too short a time frame for significant change to occur, though reaction to legislative and program changes may force change.

Top Three Priorities: The top Priorities selected by Stakeholder respondents were debt reduction, economic development, building up reserves for future capital expenditures and controlling costs.

Additional Strategic Issues/Areas: Respondents indicated that the priority setting initiative should also focus on tourism as it brings in revenue without significant impact on City services. Respondents also noted that the City should maintain and improve infrastructure and make Stratford a place for everyone by focusing on accessibility and community partnerships.

Council Web Survey

The survey was designed to examine thoughts on the current Mission, criteria in considering future Priorities, potential changes to the City in the future, the greatest upcoming challenges for the City, top Priorities for the City, wish list items and any additional comments. The Council web survey was sent to all members of Stratford’s City Council. We received 8 responses. Councillors were also given the opportunity to participate in a one-on-one interview in lieu of completing a web survey.

Council Web Survey Results

Our Mission: The majority of respondents (67%) felt the mission was still relevant. Comments on the mission focused on changing the mission to reflect local issues and what is being done locally to make Stratford a city of excellence.

Priority Setting Criteria: The top priority setting criteria selected by Councillors were “It aligns with our Strategic Priorities,” “We have the required budget,” “It makes us more efficient” and “We have the resources (staff and skills).”

Stratford in the Future: The majority of respondents (80%) indicated that they believed that Stratford would be slightly different in the future. Respondents pointed to factors such as the impact of the new University campus, historical growth trends as well as different industries, such as tech, becoming part of Stratford’s economy.

Greatest Challenges: The majority of respondents indicated that the City’s greatest challenges over the next six years would be reducing the City’s debt. Other respondents pointed toward investments in new infrastructure and capital projects and the supply of skilled workforce.

Top Three Priorities: The top three Priorities selected by Council were economic development, debt reduction, controlling costs, building up reserves for capital expenditures and tourism. Councillors’ comments focused on job creation and continuing to attract tourism and investment to the City.

Wishlist Priorities: The wishlist items that were identified by Council respondents included Market Square, a new police station, a new library, a new bus terminal and developing the Cooper Site.

Public Web Survey

The survey was designed to gauge public support for the draft Strategic Framework, as well as determining preferred communication methods for gathering future input and participation.

There were 210 responses to the public survey. The following table provides the overall results:

| Public Web Survey Results |
|---|
| <p>Draft Vision: The majority of respondents indicated their level of support was high. A number of respondents wanted greater clarity about what is meant by “best” in the Vision and how this would be measured. Some respondents noted their concerns that the Vision was framed as competing with other cities.</p> |
| <p>Draft Mission Statement: The majority of respondents indicated that their level of support for the draft Mission was high. In the comments, respondents noted that their concern that growth must be sustainable, and that they would not want Stratford to get too big as it might lose its “small town feel.” They also indicated that there should be a focus on existing citizens and retaining them as well as attracting people to Stratford.</p> |
| <p>Draft Overall Goal: Only a slight majority of respondents indicated that their level of support for the draft Overall Goal was high, while an almost equal number of respondents indicated that their level of support was medium. Comments on the Goal echoed many of those that were provided in terms of the Mission, however respondents appreciated that the Goal addressed the issue of retention. There were similar concerns about unrestrained growth. Many comments focused on the idea that while economic development is important, it’s equally important not to forget people who make up the “soul” of the City.</p> |
| <p>Draft First Pillar: The majority of respondents indicated that their level of support for Long Term Financial Planning was high, though there were many comments that reflected a perception that it being the “First” Pillar indicates that it is the most important pillar and that this should not necessarily be the case. Support for this Pillar was reflected in comments that suggested that this is an important priority because it will help manage the City’s debt. There were concerns that the priority focused too much on “current” infrastructure without planning for the City’s future needs.</p> |
| <p>Draft Second Pillar: The majority of respondents indicated that their level of support for Affordable Living was high. Many of the comments indicated an agreement that living in Stratford is expensive and that affects who is able to live in Stratford and what kind of people are attracted to Stratford as a place to live, which are a critical factors in Stratford’s growth. Comments revealed a strong desire to see action stem from this pillar and a plan of how the intent of this pillar would be achieved.</p> |
| <p>Draft Third Pillar: The majority of respondents indicated that their level of support for Active Healthy Lifestyle was high and this strong support was reflected in the comments. Respondents were particularly hopeful that this Pillar would result in an expansion of the bike path system and provide opportunities for many desired improvements in the City. Many respondents suggested that Active Healthy Lifestyle should instead be the “First” Pillar to demonstrate its importance.</p> |
| <p>Draft Foundation: The majority of respondents indicated that their level of support for the draft Foundation was high. Respondents indicated in their comments that the Foundation aligns with their desire to receive improved customer service from the City. As with many other aspects of the draft Strategic Framework, respondents were especially interest in finding out how the Foundation would be achieved. Respondents noted that efficiency and effectiveness are important outcomes and that determining how to measure these would be key to the Foundation’s success.</p> |

Public Web Survey Results

Future Input and Involvement: The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that email would be the best way to gain their future input and involvement. The other two most popular choices selected were the City website and social media.

Other Comments: When asked for any additional comments, respondents echoed many of the comments made earlier in the survey such as maintaining Stratford’s “small town feel” and taking a sustainable approach to growth. Comments reflected a strong desire to see action taken to achieve these priorities as well as a great deal of interest to see the results. Respondents encouraged the City to find ways to engage all segments of Stratford’s population and they noted their appreciation for being consulted about the draft Strategic Framework.