



STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 - 2028

Adopted by Town of Aberdeen March 19, 2024

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introduction

The Strategic Plan identifies key strategic priorities for the Town of Aberdeen. The implementation of these priorities is supported by Council and, consequently, by its management team.

The priorities of the Strategic Plan were developed through a process of Council and management input, along with a survey of community residents/high school students. In addition, a community Think Tank session and a Strategic Planning session were held. The Strategic Plan balances priorities against opportunities and challenges, while supporting the principles of community sustainability.

The goal of the Strategic Plan is to guide the responsible use of resources, effectiveness and efficiency in municipal service delivery and ultimately, accountability to citizens, council and stakeholders.

background

The Strategic Plan was developed to assist the Town of Aberdeen prioritize, plan and implement future actions.

By setting direction, desired outcomes and a monitoring process the Strategic Plan focuses the efforts of the Municipality on continually improving the quality of life of citizens now and in the future.

The Strategic Plan priorities will be revisited on a semi- annual basis to ensure responsiveness to new opportunities and challenges, and as a guide for future municipal plans and initiatives.

term and scope of the strategic plan

The Strategic Plan is intended to guide and inform the actions of the municipality, with goals that reflect the priorities of council, citizens and stakeholders within the specified 5 year period of time. The Plan will be adjusted as new issues, challenges and opportunities emerge over the planning horizon of the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan will be used in the following ways:

Align all Municipal planning decisions

All municipal actions will be guided by the priorities identified in the Strategic Plan. Council's evolving priorities and regular input by the members of the community will provide the impetus to make appropriate revisions to the priorities and actions of the Strategic Plan.

Provide direction for municipal plans and budgets

The Strategic Plan will guide all municipal planning and budgeting efforts. The strategies, actions and initiatives of each department along with their respective budgets will be aligned to achieve the current priorities of the Strategic Plan.

Continually monitor progress towards desired outcomes

The priorities of the Strategic Plan and departmental strategies, actions and initiatives in support of the Strategic Plan, will be monitored to gauge our success. This will be achieved through the establishment of performance indicators and targets that best represent the key issues being addressed. Performance results will serve to evaluate our progress and the next cycles of decision making.

Why a Strategic Plan?

The successful management of our municipality requires the coordination of a series of activities and decisions supported by knowledgeable staff advising Council on how to best direct resources in order to achieve compliance with legislated standards and meet the needs of our residents. Further, a successful community also requires input from those people that call Aberdeen home. We are committed to the success of our community. The development of a Strategic Plan is an important component of ensuring that success and requires constant input while building on past work.

In April 2014, with the assistance of Crosby Hanna & Associates, the Town of Aberdeen prepared an Official Community Plan. The Plan was prepared in accordance with Sections 29 and 32 of *The Planning and Development Act*, 2007 and outlined the goals, objectives and policies relating to approximately 20 years of future growth and development.

The planning goals established in the Official Community Plan include:

- I. To direct development and growth of Aberdeen towards a diversification of land use activity in a manner that will maintain a positive relationship with environmental values, resource capabilities, community strengths and the broader region.
- II. To protect the “small town” atmosphere of Aberdeen, while allowing land owners to develop suitable portions of their land, in an orderly, cost-efficient and appropriate way, consistent with the purpose of this plan and within the financial capability of the community.
- III. To promote and encourage innovative and sustainable development within the community, enhancing residents’ quality of life while conserving natural and financial resources.
- IV. To encourage commercial and industrial business development that is compatible with the Town of Aberdeen’s character and environmental values, providing new employment opportunities and contributing to tax revenues.
- V. To promote the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial and industrial structures.

- VI. To encourage a diversity of housing including seniors and rental housing.
- VII. To provide for an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demands for residential, commercial and industrial uses.
- VIII. To pursue partnerships and opportunities on economic development and other areas such as infrastructure and service delivery.
- IX. To market and promote the Town of Aberdeen.
- X. To obtain the support and assistance of senior governments in the realization of the goals and objectives of this plan where such realization is consistent with the protection and maintenance of federal and provincial interest.
- XI. To support and complement the Statements of Provincial Interest Regulations in the realization of the goals and objectives of this plan.

The development of the Official Community Plan was the foundation for the 2018 – 2023 Strategic Plan. The 2023 – 2028 Strategic Plan outlines what is important in the near term (5 years) and where we need to focus our energies. This Plan helps us to define those directions and provides a measurable “check and balance” during the decision-making process. It ensures the allocation of financial resources as well as staff time, equipment and other cost generating items are not expended in areas that have not been identified as Strategic Priorities for our municipality.

Many things have changed in the town over the last few years (COVID, new residents) so there is a need to update the plan and consider ways to re-engage with the community and understand the communities needs. This plan will ensure Council, the municipal staff and our residents have a solid overview of our collective Strategic Priorities and the expected outcomes.

Our Commitment

Smart Growth. Smart Growth is an approach to development that encourages a mix of building types and uses, diverse housing options, development within a defined area and community engagement.

Communities can shape our lives. They are where we start and end each day, where our children learn and grow and where we spend time with our family and friends. Where we live can influence our health, our economic potential and our collective future.

The foundation of a smart growth approach to development includes mixed land uses; taking advantage of compact design, when appropriate; creating a range of housing opportunities and choices; creating walkable, liveable spaces; fostering a strong sense of place; preservation of open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas; directing development within a defined area; making development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective; and encouraging community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

Our community deserves investment, stewardship, and a supportive and thriving environment. Growth is smart when it gives us a better community, with more choices and personal freedom, good return on public investment, greater opportunity across the community, a thriving natural environment, and a legacy we can be proud to leave our children and grandchildren. A smart growth approach to development is about creating the opportunity to make this possible.

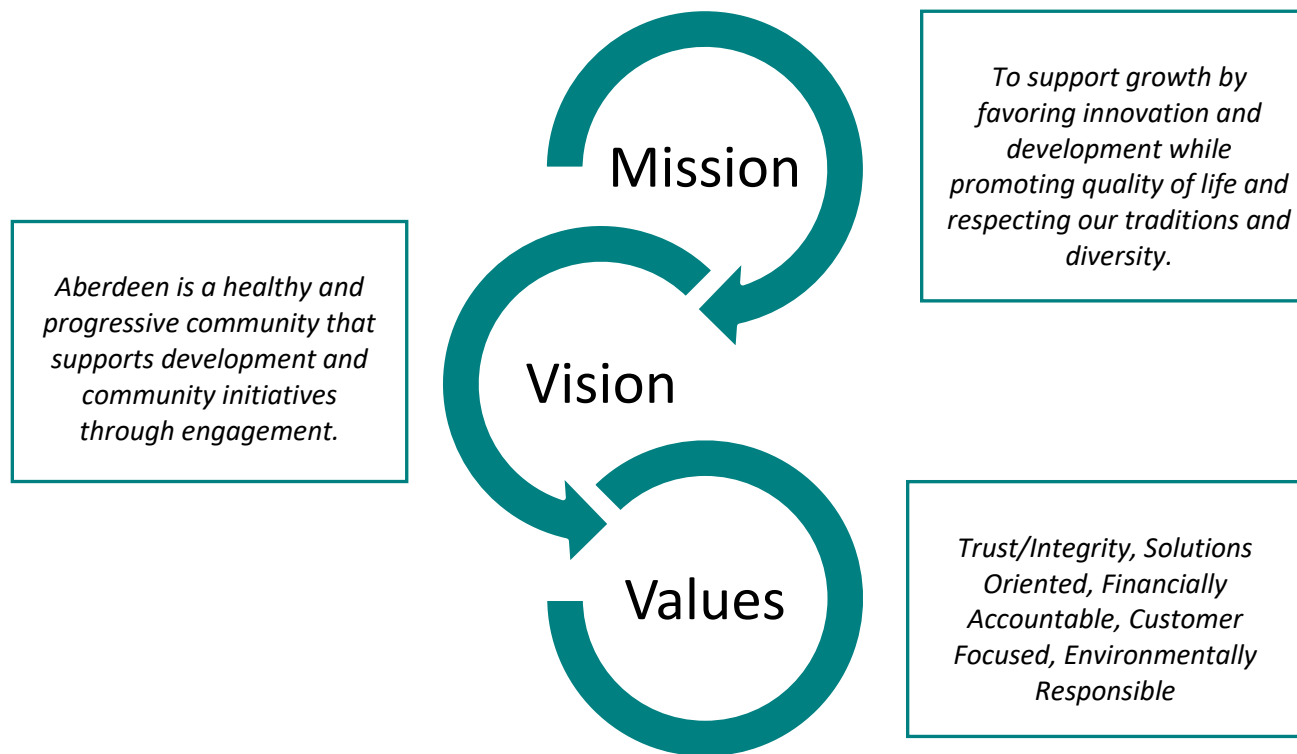
Our Intended Outcomes

We set the following intended outcomes as we began development of our Strategic Plan:

1. Engage the members of our community in this effort to better understand their priorities for Town of Aberdeen
2. Clearly define our municipal vision, mission and values
3. Establish realistic strategic priorities consistent with our vision and mission
4. Identify the outcome, objective, task(s) and action timeline for each strategic priority
5. Create an effective Communication Plan

1. Vision, Mission, Values

The foundation of our Strategic Plan began with the development of our Vision for the community, our Mission, and a statement of our Values.



Our Mission

Our Mission is to *support growth by favoring innovation and development while promoting quality of life and respecting our traditions and diversity.*

Our Vision

Our Vision is that *Aberdeen is a healthy and progressive community that supports development and community initiatives through engagement.*

Our Values

Our values are our shared beliefs, behaviours and attitudes that guide us in our decisions and in the delivery of service to members of our community.

Trust/Integrity:

- We are honest, forthright and keep our promises
- Our decisions are made with consideration for the collective good versus a single group or individual

Solutions Oriented:

- We strive to look beyond “why we can’t” to “how we can” by applying collaborative and creative approaches to finding solutions
- We know the results we are trying to achieve
- We can monitor and report our results
- We use comprehensive information to support recommendations and Council’s decision-making
- We track data over time to monitor trends and seek improvement

Financially Accountable:

- We can demonstrate and report on our financial performance
- We have solid evidence supporting our decisions in setting annual budget targets
- We can measure efficiency
- We can demonstrate cost-benefit
- We are fiscally responsible with the community’s dollars and ensure we manage our assets with a long-term view

Customer Focused:

- We know who our customers and key stakeholders are
- We listen to and seek to understand our customers’ needs and expectations
- We have defined service levels
- We focus on solutions
- We have a “can do” attitude

Environmentally Responsible:

- We will conduct our work in a manner that values, protects and enhances our natural assets (air, land, water and natural features) for future generations
- We consider our impact on the environment, both positive and negative, in our approach to business
- We take responsibility to learn from our community and to ensure that environmental matters are considered in our decisions.

The creation of a Vision, Mission and Values Statement for our community is important. Each of these statements will serve as the foundation to which all decisions will be measured against.

2. Community Engagement

Why does it matter? While research regarding the benefits and importance of community engagement varies,

several key opportunities are commonly identified. Among these are:

- Increase the likelihood that projects or solutions will be widely accepted.
- Create more effective solutions. Drawing on local knowledge from a diverse group generally creates solutions that are practical and effective.
- The more we know; the better it is. Greater knowledge allows each of us to see multiple sides of the problem including the opportunity.
- Empower and integrate people who, otherwise, might not have the opportunity to get to know each other.
- Create local networks of community members. The more people who know what is going on and who are willing to work toward a goal, the more likely a community is to be successful in reaching its goals.
- Create several opportunities for discussing concerns. Regular, on-going discussions allow people to express concerns before problems become too big or out of control.
- Increase trust in community organizations and governance. Working together improves communication and understanding. Knowing what government, community citizens and leaders, and organizations can and cannot do always brings positive results.

We are committed to engaging the members of our community as we move forward. The development of a 'community engagement' plan is included as one of the objectives in our Communication Plan.

The following approach was used to gather the most significant amount of information possible for the strategic planning session.

Survey: The previous survey was completed prior to the pandemic and many things had changed in the community since that point. The majority of the data collected is of value for planning to go forward, however there were a few questions that required additional information. The updated survey contained six questions and was distributed on the town website, Facebook, by email, and the sharing of the survey information on how to participate at the doorstep of each household. An amended survey was also distributed through the school to grades 8 through 12.

132 surveys were completed and submitted by community members. Here's a quick look at what best describes what the participants do:

Survey respondents identified:

- 24.3% identified the Professional category
- 18.40% identified the Health Care category
- 17.56% were retired
- 14.50% identified the Trades category
- Categories with between 6% to 13% identified in Agriculture, Education, Entrepreneur Sales and Marketing, and Stay at Home parents
- Categories between 1% and 5% identified in Hospitality, Information Technology, and Law enforcement

Recurring themes for Features:

Business:

- *Marketing*
- *Services*

Community:

- *Trails for Walking*
- *Green Space*
- *Outdoor Skating Rink*

Infrastructure:

- *Paved Roads*
- *Paves sidewalks*

Recurring themes for Services:

- *Grocery Store*
- *Medical Clinic*
- *Pharmacy*
- *Day Care*

The analysis of all surveys resulted in the identification of these three recurring themes:

Infrastructure/Resource Management

Community Development

Business Development

28 surveys were completed by students from Grades 8 – 12. The features that were identified as key were an outdoor skating rink, skate park and sports facilities (i.e., Basketball, volleyball)

Think Tank Session: The think tank session was an opportunity for influencers in our community to start to prioritize the things that are important to them as taxpayers. It provided an opportunity for open communication and learning. To prioritize programs and services wanted and needed and will encourage active participation from within the community. It is also an acknowledgement that building a community cannot be the sole responsibility of the Mayor and Council and should be a joint responsibility of all stakeholders. The suggestions will lead towards quality of life, increased willingness to actively participate in the programs and services suggested and an openness to work effectively with the Mayor and Council.

The Think Tank session was held on November 22, 2023. Thirty Community members expressed an interest and the evening was attended by 26 people. The group was broken into 4 working groups to complete brainstorming sessions. The discussion topics were:

1. What type of 'Physical Spaces' would you like to see developed? (i.e., green space, walking trails)
2. What type of 'Programs' would you like to see developed? (i.e., organized programs)
3. What type of 'Activities and Events' would you like to see developed? (i.e., occur annually; seasonal; trade shows)
4. What type of other 'Businesses and Services' would you like to see in your town? (i.e., you would pay for these services.)

Recurring themes for Physical Space:

- Camping/Picnic Area. Dedicated spot with trees, electrical, water.
- Walking Paths with trees, benches and lights
- Main Street Aesthetics
- Shelter Belts with trees, shrubs

Recurring themes for Programs:

- Elderly Programs (support services, quality homes, shuttle service to Saskatoon, Health services.
- Tracks for ATV's, Bikes, Quads and Skidoos

Recurring themes for Activities and Events:

- *Event Coordinator*
- *Farmers Market/Indoor market for thanksgiving and Christmas*
- *Shared space for Arts, Crafts*
- *Drama Club/Dinner Theatre/Game Nights*

Recurring themes for Business and Services:

- *Mechanic Shop*
- *Assisted Living Health Centre*
- *Day Care/Preschool Centre*

Strategic Planning Session: Members of the November think tank session and members of Council attended this session which was held on January 6th, 2024. The purpose of this session was to ensure two-way communication and an opportunity to create mutual respect between the community and the Council. To have a greater understanding of everything that is involved when growing a community (i.e., costs, time, committees). To gain a greater appreciation for the importance of the community's role in volunteerism and committee organizers. The results from this session were distributed to all 30 community members who expressed and interest including those that could not attend on the scheduled date due to previous commitments.

Thirteen members of the Community were able to attend this session and five members of council. The session focused on the "Strategic Doing Approach" looking at:

1. **Possible Future.** What could happen locally, regionally, provincially and globally but are not likely to within 3-5 years. All possible futures should be monitored.
2. **Probable Future.** Trends, developments, and events that the group is confident will occur in 1-3 years. It represents the status quo. Some items in the probable future will become part of a plan as they represent current strategic direction.
3. **Preferred Future.** A future the group would like to have in 3-5 years, is under our control and able to start now to work towards achieving it.

Strategic Planning Session - Doing Action Plan

Upgrade Water Reservoir

Goal: Increase the reservoir capacity to meet the water needs of 1100 people

Lead: Council

Council Communication: Facebook, Newsletter, website, word of mouth

Main Street and Town Beautification Plan

Goal: To address the empty building on main street as well as abandoned properties within the town. Consider opportunities to relocate the downtown area to another location within the community.

Leads: Abandoned Buildings (Council)

Empty/inactive businesses (Community Committee)

Relocate Downtown (Community Committee)

Council Communication: Facebook, Newsletter, website, word of mouth

Paved Roads

Goal: To build upon the existing plan to move forward with paving of the roads

Leads: Council
Community Committee

Council Communication: Facebook, Newsletter, website, word of mouth

Event Coordinator:

Goal: To confirm if there is a desire and capacity for additional Council funding and employment capacity for an Event Coordinator to develop grant proposals.

Lead: Council

Communication: Facebook, Newsletter, website, word of mouth

Strategic Doing is an approach to planning that enables you to continuously develop strategies in small manageable steps to measure progress and ensure you do not “spin your wheels” as you implement those opportunities discussed and as new opportunities.

3. Communication Plan

Communication plays a fundamental role in each of our lives. Here is why an effective communication plan is important to Town of Aberdeen:

1. **Builds and maintains relationships** - Relationships are built and can be maintained by experiencing positive encounters with others. Communication is key to this planning process.
2. **Facilitates innovation** - When each of us feels comfortable in openly communicating new ideas, cooperation and innovation will be at an all-time high.
3. **Builds an effective team** - Open communication will build a more cohesive and effective community team. Good communication also tends to boost community morale. When everyone is well informed good things happen.
4. **Contributes to growth of our community** - Communication can also lead to productivity and helps to avoid unnecessary delays in the implementation of policies, the resolution of issues, the identification of opportunities and the implementation of new programs and services.
5. **Ensures transparency** - A direct outcome of regular communication is transparency. This will be important in building trust in our community, in our brand, and in our programs and services

The first step in our communication plan included the survey, the think tank and strategic planning sessions. The objective of getting together was to share the strategic plan process with members of the community, ask the participants for input and any changes necessary to begin the work of implementing our Plan.

Also to determine from those in attendance their preferred communication method, and frequency. For those residents unable to attend direct contact will be made. The development of an ongoing communication strategy must be a high priority on the Council's agenda.

4. Strategic Priorities

The Town of Aberdeen plays a critical role in helping to shape our quality of life, creating a sense of place and providing fiscal stability for the community.

A sustainable community requires a sustainable economy. A sustainable economy means that residents can find appropriate employment and afford to live in the community; that businesses are able and encouraged to start, remain and expand in the community; and that everyone can expect quality municipal services and sustainable infrastructure. This Strategic Plan will serve as our roadway to achieving our sustainable community.

Each of the three strategic priority areas is further discussed in the appropriate Appendices (A, B and C) and identify specific outcomes, objectives, tasks and action timelines associated with the priority area. Each outcome identified in the Strategic Plan will require further detail in terms of tactics and targets for timelines, budget allocations, or other resources that may be required. That required detail will be determined during the annual planning cycle for the Town of Aberdeen as it prepares municipal budgets.

In order to achieve our Vision, we intend to focus on the following strategic priority areas:

Infrastructure and Resource Management priority areas:

- A robust asset management plan and improvements (maintenance and repairs, reservoir upgrade, street paving, sidewalks)
- Asset Management Plan and recommendations for ongoing maintenance (drainage, water systems, Town building)
- Improving the street appeal of our community (beautification)

Community Development priority areas:

- Communication strategy for community involvement and increasing engagement
- Coordinated approach for green space and recreation
- Safety and Protective Service

Business Development priorities:

- Increase market presence
- Business attraction Strategy

As a council we believe that our local government can make better decisions and have a greater positive impact in our community if we increase the frequency, diversity and level of engagement of our residents.

Thank you to Sage Hills for the Strategic Planning Grant and Prairie View Consulting for the expertise and guidance given to us by Cherylynn Walters and Sharon Sambrook. Without which this process would not have been possible. THANK YOU