



Town of Halton Hills Strategic Plan 2023-2026

DECEMBER 2023



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Message from the Mayor

On behalf of Halton Hills Town Council, I am proud to present our 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. This plan identifies the shared vision, mission and priorities that will guide the town over this term of Council. It provides a roadmap for delivering on our commitment to positive growth while maintaining our unique character.

The plan is supported by all members of Council and it considers current social and economic conditions as well as aspirations voiced by residents. Councillors appreciate the feedback collected through telephone and online surveys, focus groups and comments on our interactive letstalkhaltonhills.ca.

Council's priorities are to ensure a thriving economy; increase and protect our natural areas and heritage features; ensure resiliency in our municipal infrastructure and continue to nurture our Halton Hills character as a safe and welcoming community.

Prospects for the next four years are positive!

Ann Lawlor,
Mayor



Introduction

The Town of Halton Hills unites urban centres and open countryside in the communities of Georgetown, Acton, Glen Williams, Norval, Stewarttown and smaller hamlets. The town has a strong historical identity and a commitment to preserving the character and heritage of its neighbourhoods.

The Niagara Escarpment and Bruce Trail run through the town, which also forms part of three watersheds flowing into the Grand River, Credit River and Sixteen Mile Creek. The town has a network of well-maintained trails and environmentally significant natural areas, such as Hungry Hollow.

The town's 63,000¹ residents enjoy the quality of life that Halton Hills offers, with safe communities, green spaces, cultural facilities and vibrant shopping districts. With an active volunteer base and organizations that contribute to the town's social, cultural, environmental and economic wellbeing, Halton Hills is an engaged and purpose-driven community.

Located in Ontario's Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, Halton Hills is actively engaged in development of employment lands and attraction of investment in advanced manufacturing, agri-business, food processing and clean technology sectors, while supporting the growth and expansion of existing businesses and commercial areas.

Town Council and staff are dedicated and professional, known for their respectful and open communication with residents, businesses and community organizations.² Committed to responsible stewardship of the town's resources and environment, they are also preparing for the opportunities and impacts of growth, actively seeking out information that will support effective planning for the town's future needs.

The Town continues to manage the services and programs expected by the community and will advance implementation of plans that have received Council adoption in previous months. There are important actions within these plans that further support the future direction of Halton Hills. Town of Halton Hills Strategic Plan 2023-2026 represents Council's priorities looking out over the next four years.

This strategy has been developed in consultation with the community, Staff and Council and with input from municipal subject matter experts. The plan's strategic priorities and objectives are a path toward Council's vision for Halton Hills' future – a growing, nature-rich community that is proud of its small-town feel and urban rural mix where all people feel welcomed, safe, and connected.

¹ Halton Hills most recent population count was 62,951. Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population

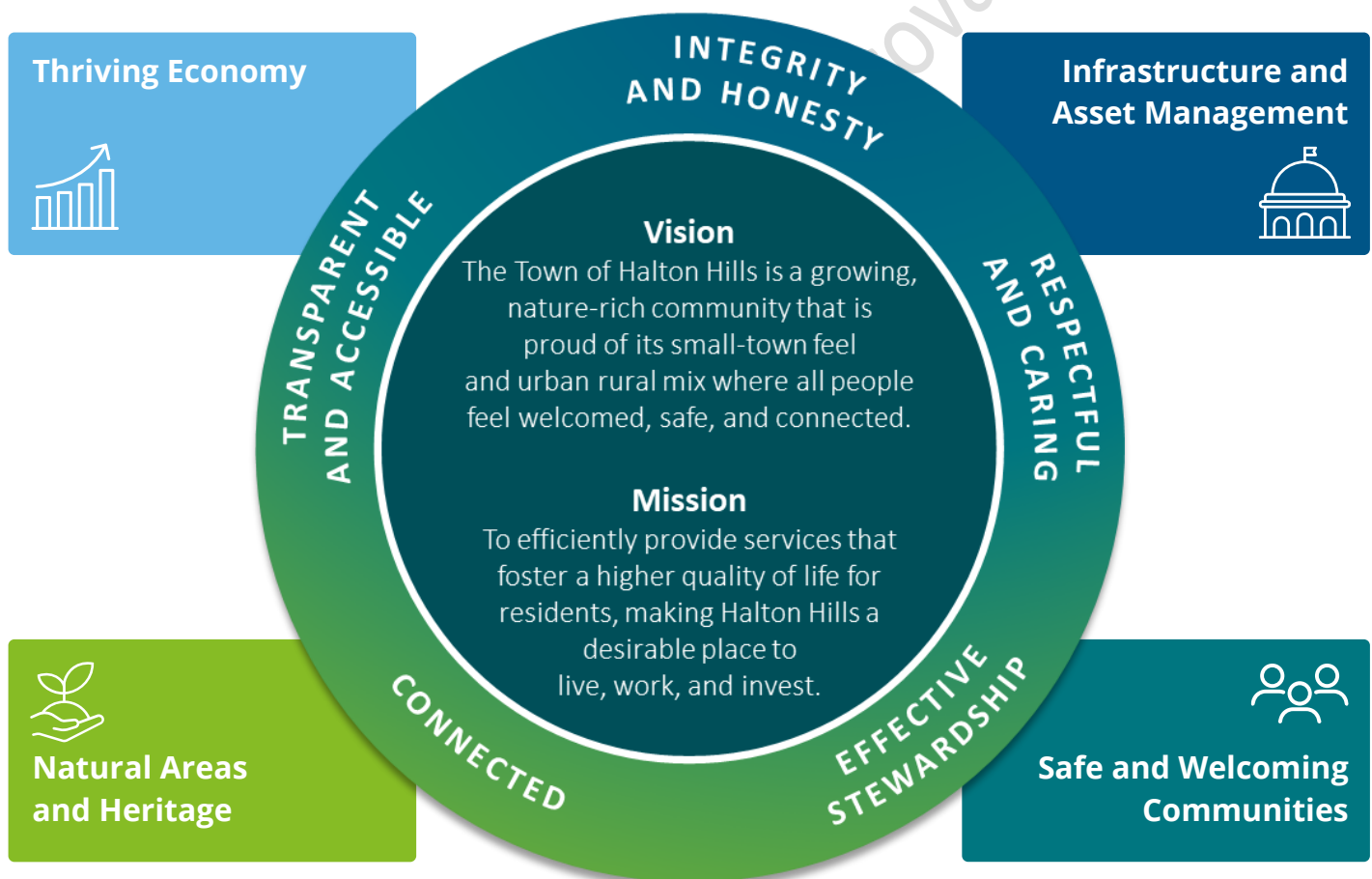
² Based on feedback collected during interviews and surveys

Executive summary

The Town of Halton Hills Strategic Plan 2023-2026 will guide decisions, planning and budgeting over the next four years. The plan includes validated priorities and objectives that will inform the development of departmental business plans and performance metrics. The strategic planning process included a review of existing plans and strategies, with input from the community, Staff and Council.

The most frequent themes across every engagement activity all relate to growth.

Over the next four years, Council will strategically plan for growth that promotes a vibrant community, with a focus on building a thriving economy, protecting natural areas and heritage, managing infrastructure and assets, and creating safe and welcoming communities.





Strategic Plan 2023-2026: Engagement

TOWN OF HALTON HILLS

Engagement

Development of the Town of Halton Hills's Strategic Plan 2023-2026 included a mixed-mode survey, with a statistically valid randomized telephone survey (land lines and cellular) and an online open link survey through the Town of Halton Hills *Let's Talk* platform. The survey was promoted through a media release, social media posts, and newsletters. The survey collected 534 completed online surveys and 450 telephone interviews. Results from both modes were very similar, with residents in both surveys indicating high satisfaction with life in Halton Hills.

Once the town survey was completed, three focus groups were conducted with 22 participants to further explore areas of focus that emerged from the survey and to gain additional insights from community members. Four of the participants reside in a rural area of the town, and the remaining reside in an urban area. Respondents from the town survey who expressed willingness to participate in focus groups were randomly selected and contacted to participate in the consultation.

Internal engagement included one-to-one interviews with councillors to gather their insights into factors and trends that will have an impact on the town, areas of strength and weakness, constituent feedback, and the internal and external services most needed to respond to future growth in Halton Hills. The Senior Management Team also provided insights, through one-to-one interviews and information sessions.

Four planning sessions were held with Council to review engagement findings and identify priorities based on the emerging themes. During one of these sessions, Mayor and Council engaged with a panel of subject matter experts to identify factors and trends that might impact the future of Halton Hills and how the Town should prepare for growth.

534

Completed online
surveys

450

Completed
telephone surveys

22

Focus group
participants

Focus group insights

Three focus groups were conducted to gather more input on five areas of focus that emerged during analysis of the town survey results. Twenty-two participants, who were randomly selected from survey respondents, shared their thoughts.



Population growth

Focus group participants said it's important for the Town's infrastructure to be able to support a growing population. Participants were primarily concerned about the current infrastructure and the Town's plans to accommodate the needs of a growing population. Participants were most concerned about the impacts of growth on roads and traffic, recreational facilities/programming, housing, green space and farmland, and Town services.



Climate change

Group participants emphasized the value of emergency preparedness measures to protect residents from climate change-induced extreme weather events. Participants also believed it was important for the Town to communicate ways residents can individually reduce emissions.



Health and other social services

Group participants expressed concerns about access to doctors, specialists, and long wait times. Participants noted that they have seen some improvements to healthcare services since the Town has become a part of the Halton Region healthcare system. Participants also expressed that the Town needs long-term care facilities and hospice services.



Housing availability and affordability

Focus group members suggested enabling more mixed-use buildings or smaller dwellings due to the high property costs in the town. Participants suggested that the Town should encourage mixed-use developments that combine residential and commercial development.



Transportation

Focus group members highlighted the importance of planning for a public transit system despite concerns about cost. Some participants noted that it is difficult to commute to other areas in the GTA from Halton Hills. Regarding active transportation, participants felt that the Town has done a good job of improving walking paths and bike lanes in urban areas of Halton Hills. Participants noted that in rural areas of the Town the roads do not accommodate pedestrians and can be dangerous.



Recreational amenities and programs

Participants said that the Town has done well with outdoor recreational amenities, with many parks and trails available to residents. Some participants also expressed that the Town has great programming for seniors. Many participants noted that indoor facilities need improvement as they are not suitable for all types of recreation. Participants suggested for the Town to make better use of the current facilities or to consider developing additional multi-functional facilities as the Town's population grows.



Natural features

Participants expressed satisfaction with the Town's management of natural features such as the trails and escarpment. Noting future growth and development, participants expressed that the Town should ensure these natural features are preserved. Participants also agreed that there could be more communication to the community from the Town regarding keeping the trails and parks clean.





Strategic Plan 2023-2026: Vision, mission, values

TOWN OF HALTON HILLS

Vision

The vision statement for an organization is an aspirational description of what the community would like to achieve or accomplish in the mid-to long-term future. It provides a clear guide for choosing current and future courses of action. The vision for the Town of Halton Hills is:

The Town of Halton Hills is a growing, nature-rich community that is proud of its small-town feel and urban rural mix where all people feel welcomed, safe, and connected.

Mission

A mission statement defines an organization's reason for being, and describes its purpose, intentions and overall objectives. The mission statement for the Town of Halton Hills is:

To efficiently provide services that foster a higher quality of life for residents, making Halton Hills a desirable place to live, work, and invest.



Values

Values provide a broad philosophy that encompasses the guiding principles of the Town of Halton Hills. These values serve as a lens through which to evaluate all decisions and support a culture where everyone understands what is important.

Integrity and honesty

We are truthful, make fact-based decisions, and act in the best interests of the town.

Transparent and accessible

We welcome communication and information sharing in an open and receptive manner.

Effective stewardship

We build on our collective strengths to achieve the best possible outcomes as stewards of our community, corporate assets, resources, and the natural environment.

Connected

We stay informed and engaged with our community.

Respectful and caring

We demonstrate appreciation and support for all through our inclusive and collaborative approach.



Strategic Plan 2023-2026: Priorities and objectives

TOWN OF HALTON HILLS

Strategic priorities

Strategic priorities are designed to connect vision to action. They guide the development of specific objectives to be achieved during the plan's timeframe. The collective aspirations of Town of Halton Hills's Council, leadership and residents are reflected in these four strategic priority areas:



Thriving Economy

The Town is eager to build on recent successes in foreign direct investment and business concierge services to help attract new businesses and grow jobs in Halton Hills. Attracting new investment in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, food and beverage, cleantech and agribusiness, can provide the non-residential revenue needed to support quality of life and sustain the Town's financial health.



Natural Areas and Heritage

The Town's natural assets are an immense source of pride for the community. The trails and forests along the escarpment and waterways flowing through town offer many benefits beyond their recreational uses. Along with urban cooling and carbon storage benefits, natural areas divert stormwater and reduce flooding. The Town is committed to preserving and enhancing special places like Fairy Lake and Hungry Hollow and understands the value of biodiversity and important watershed and land features.



Infrastructure and Asset Management

To meet the needs of the growing community and new housing developments, Council recognizes the importance of managing existing assets and developing new infrastructure. More frequent and intense weather events are expected to put more pressure on Town facilities and infrastructure. Impacts will be mitigated through green infrastructure and ensuring the resilience of Town buildings, roads and operational systems.



Safe and Welcoming Communities

As Halton Hills grows and welcomes new residents, expanded services, programs and facilities will be needed to meet the town's evolving needs. Preserving the town's quality of life and connected community are important considerations for growth planning.

Strategic objectives

Strategic objectives are high level goals that outline what an organization wants to achieve. Objectives provide focus for the development of specific actions and initiatives, while serving as a framework for performance measurement and reporting. The objectives that Council has committed to achieving during the next four years are identified under each priority area



Thriving Economy

Objectives:

- Expedite development of employment lands.
- Attract and retain businesses that align with town's priorities.
- Promote redevelopment and growth of commercial areas.
- Support agricultural business viability.
- Advance residential intensification, where planned.



Natural Areas and Heritage

Objectives:

- Increase public access to parks, natural areas and green spaces.
- Protect and enhance biodiversity, the river valley watershed, and Niagara Escarpment landforms.
- Preserve built and natural heritage features of our communities.



Infrastructure and Asset Management

Objectives:

- Ensure that the town has resilient infrastructure to reduce impacts on the community.
- Ensure that Town assets, infrastructure and services keep pace with population and housing growth.
- Improve road safety.
- Maintain and renew green infrastructure.



Safe and Welcoming Communities

Objectives:

- Ensure that facilities and programs meet the evolving needs of the community.
- Support community-driven and partnered recreation and sport programming.
- Ensure emergency services align with town growth.
- Enhance outreach and engagement within our communities.



Strategic Plan 2023-2026: Implementation

TOWN OF HALTON HILLS

Strategy implementation

Successful implementation of a strategic plan requires ensuring that the elements of the plan are supported through communicating, resourcing and tracking progress towards the identified goals. There must be firm commitment and mindfulness by Council and Senior Management to understand the course that has been set, and the willingness to provide the necessary support to achieve meaningful outcomes.

Building from the priorities and objectives outlined in the strategic plan are specific actions, tactics, and initiatives that advance the strategic goals and objectives. Actions may enhance or create new services, augment existing programs, and support strategy implementation. These actions are generally identified in annual departmental business plans and considered during the budget process.

Initiatives and associated actions are subject to Council approval via budget and business plans, subject matter staff reports/recommendations, long range financial planning, legislation and previously approved plans already in progress, unless otherwise stipulated via Council direction. Given the multi-year nature of the strategic plan, actions will be monitored, reported on, and updated as necessary throughout this council term.

Town of Halton Hills Strategic Plan

- Vision
- Values
- Mission
- Strategic priorities and objectives

Departmental business plans and budgets

- Operating and capital budgets
- Secondary plans
- Master plans
- Official Plan
- Departmental strategic plans

Performance measurement

Performance measurement enables the Town to monitor and communicate about implementation, outcomes and impact of the actions taken to carry out the strategic plan. Metrics that evaluate progress toward the strategic objectives will enable Council and staff to assess the following:

- Have we achieved what we set out to do?
- Have our efforts had the desired impact?
- Are we closer to achieving our strategic goals because of these efforts?

Establishing the framework

The Town of Halton Hills should monitor progress on the strategic plan regularly, including in advance of the annual budget review process. Establishing a performance measurement framework begins with aligning performance metrics with strategic objectives. The framework should include key performance indicators (KPIs) that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound). A framework linked to departmental business plans ensures consistent measurement between the day-to-day actions and the strategic planning framework.

Communicating results

Effective communication of progress supports transparency and accountability. While evidence-based decision making may call for detailed, technical information, community reporting calls for simplified, accessible information. Published report cards, or creation of an on-line dashboard are two examples of a visual representation of strategy progression that is easy to understand and interpret. These can be shared on the Town's website and in reports.

Disclaimer

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