



County Council

Meeting Date: January 19, 2021
Submitted by: Warden Cathy Burghardt-Jesson
SUBJECT: 2021-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN AND PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

BACKGROUND:

In January 2020, Middlesex County Council began to consider the development of a strategic plan and the process in which to use to achieve the development of the strategic plan.

February 18, 2020 - County Council received a presentation from staff outlining the proposed goals to be achieved through the strategic planning process as well as a strategy to accomplish them. During this presentation Council took the opportunity to refine the goals and to provide direction as to how to undertake the strategic planning process.

Throughout the month of June 2020, County Council and staff participated in a number of breakout sessions and working group meetings.

Following the breakout sessions, the strategic planning working group developed the first draft version of the strategic plan for Council's review and consideration. Staff presented County Council with its first draft version of the strategic plan on July 14th, 2020. During this time, Council had significant and thoughtful discussion in regard to the strategic priorities, goals, objectives and guiding principles. Through this discussion, County Council's final draft strategic plan was developed.

October 13, 2020 – County Council approved the Strategic Focus, Goals, Objectives and Guiding Principles that were developed through the strategic planning process.

ANALYSIS:

It is an exciting time as we move forward with our collective vision and strategic focus for Middlesex County. This Strategic Focus document will help to ensure Council and staff remain committed and aligned with the direction of Council and to ensure we are moving forward in a calculated and deliberate way.

Attached to this report is the final, and branded version of the 2021 – 2024 Strategic Focus (strategic plan) document.

Implementation

The County has always been very good at strategically navigating our internal and external environments by aligning administrative actions and resources with Council priorities. However, it's time to take the next step in the County's strategic planning and management evolution.

Typically, the next step after Council approves its strategic focus is to have Council and staff identify and prioritize ways in which the strategic focus can be implemented throughout the plans term (2021 to 2024).

Given that we are entering budget discussions in February, the following and incremental implementation of strategic management is proposed as next steps through 2021 and into 2022.

Budget Process

The draft budget presented to County Council in March, will identify alignment with Council's Strategic Focus.

This will provide Council with insight into the first step toward ingraining strategic planning and management into the organization.

Council Discussion

In addition to the budget process identified above, it is proposed to have a Council Strategic Planning and Management discussion in the fall of 2021 to better identify Council priorities that will result in the development of an Implementation Plan. This Implementation Plan will inform the 2022 budget process.

This Council Discussion will come generally in the form of a handful of meetings, where Council and staff will start with an idea generation session, and then work toward ensuring the ideas fit Council's Strategic Focus and identifying when they can be implemented.

Council Staff Report Template

Staff have worked together to develop a new staff report template (attached) that will help staff and Council understand how each report interacts with Council's Strategic Focus. Please note that some reports may not fit Council's Strategic Focus given the operational or opportunistic manner of the matter being discussed. When this occurs, staff will be asked to recognize this situation in their report.

Annual Report Card

An Annual Report Card is a high-level document that allows Council and staff to measure the success and status of the way in which Council's Strategic Focus is being implemented. Staff will develop a report card for Council in 2021 that will generally look like below:

EXAMPLE ONLY

Action(s)	Strategic Focus Reference	Outcome(s) / Output(s) / Measure(s) of Success	Measure of Success Response for Report Card	Status / Comments
Strategic Focus Objective	Strategic Focus	Action identified through Implementation Plan	Response from staff	Status or additional comments
Create an environment that enables the attraction and retention of businesses, talent, and investments	Strengthening Our Economy	Develop Economic Development Strategic Plan	Economic Development Strategy developed in partnership with MCI. Economic Development department to work with Council to implement actions resulting of strategy.	Ongoing

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Middlesex County 2021 – 2024 Strategic Plan be approved as presented.

Attachments



2021 - 2024
STRATEGIC PLAN

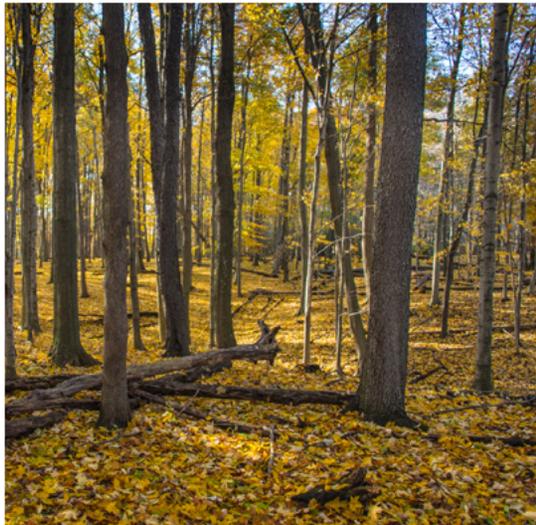




2021 - 2024

THE MIDDLESEX
INITIATIVE

BREAKING
NEW GROUND



GREETINGS FROM THE WARDEN

On behalf of Middlesex County Council, I am pleased to present our **2021 to 2024 Strategic Plan**. The development of this plan was a priority of mine when I became Warden for the County of Middlesex. This year has been a year unlike any other in recent memory; however, I am very thankful that staff and Council were able to embrace the challenge!

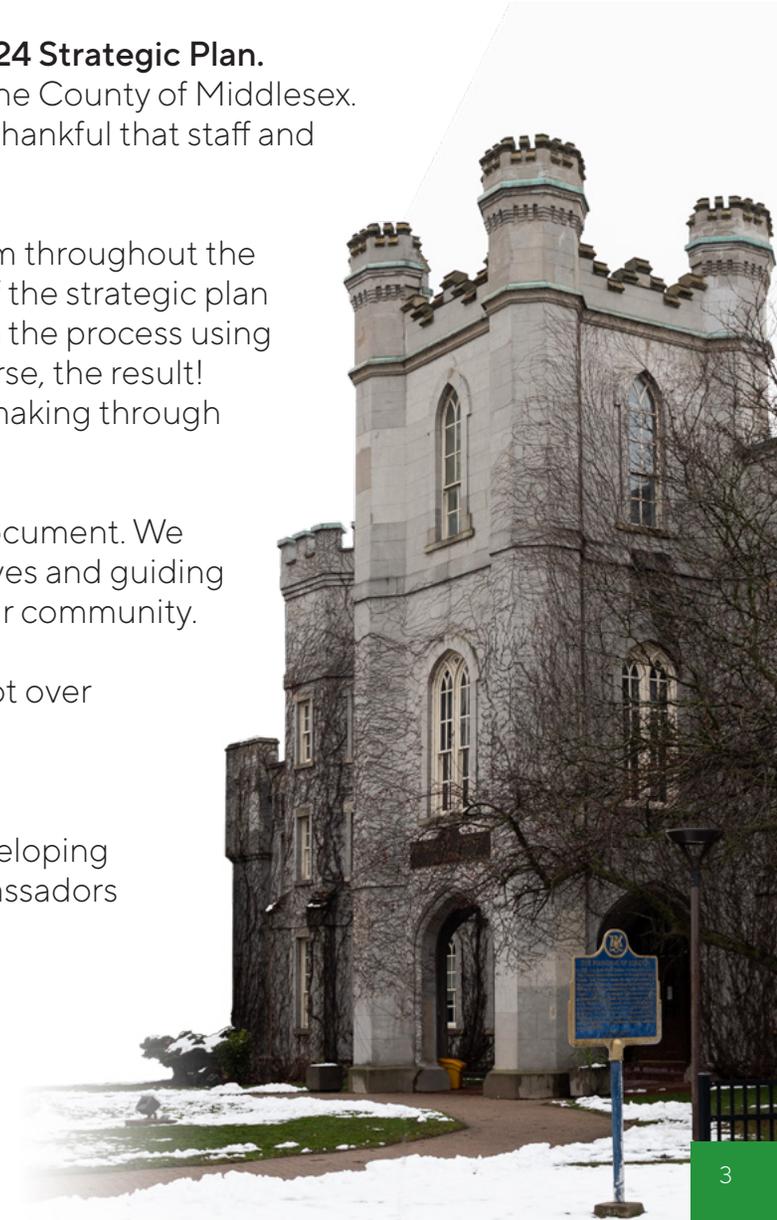
I would like to thank my Council colleagues for their participation and enthusiasm throughout the strategic planning process. When we first started discussing the development of the strategic plan at the beginning of the year, I did not imagine that we would be working through the process using video conferencing. However, I couldn't be happier with the process and, of course, the result! We have been able to develop a plan that will guide Council and staff decision-making through meaningful and deliberate action over the course of the next few years.

The work that Council and staff have put into the plan can be seen in this final document. We were able to genuinely discuss and debate our strategic priorities, goals, objectives and guiding principles in a way that developed a thoughtful and relevant strategic plan for our community.

It is an exciting time for Middlesex County. We have been able to accomplish a lot over the years and I look forward to seeing what can be accomplished with a defined strategic focus.

Thank you to all of those who contributed their time, expertise, and talent to developing this important document and to those who continue to be champions and ambassadors of our Middlesex County!

Cathy Burghardt-Jesson
Warden, Middlesex County



THE MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY

Middlesex County is an ideal mix of rural and urban living. The County is strategically located in the heart of Southwestern Ontario and covers a sprawling area of over 2,800 square kilometres. The county is home to the municipalities of North Middlesex, Adelaide Metcalfe, Strathroy-Caradoc, Southwest Middlesex, Thames Centre, Middlesex Centre, Lucan Biddulph, and the Village of Newbury.

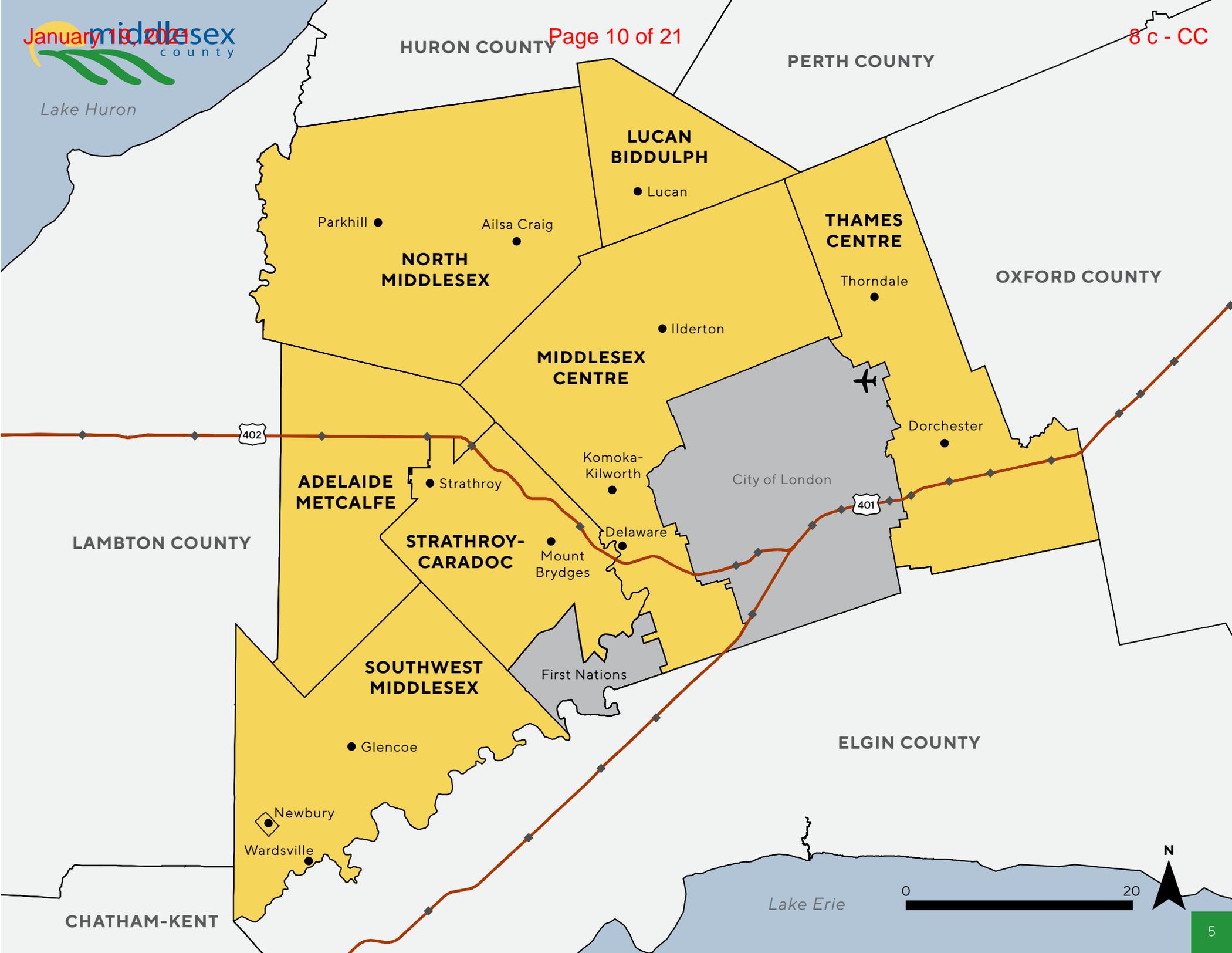
The County of Middlesex is an upper tier municipality that provides a range of services to residents including, roads, social services, economic development, emergency services, long term care, libraries, and planning.

Our Community offers both rural and urban opportunities with vibrant downtown cores, a dynamic and diverse population, economic diversity, high quality of life and bountiful recreation and cultural choices in a picturesque setting.

KEY COMMUNITY FEATURES

- Part of a growing, prosperous region with a population in 2019 of approximately 77,000 residents. Based on recent planning data in 2020 the population is expected to grow by 7%.
- Strategic location for business and industry due to its proximity and access to major highways including the 401 and 402 highway corridor, airports and railway lines, lower commercial business rents, and land values compared to large urban areas and regions.
- Diverse economy, including a strong foundation in agriculture, agri-food, healthcare professional services and manufacturing and growing retail, logistics, construction and service sectors.
- Highly skilled, educated and ready workforce with a reputation for quality and a strong work ethic. In 2019 there is an estimated 40,538 people who are part of the Middlesex County labour force.
- Affordable, relaxed and family oriented lifestyle which is enhanced by the proximity of quality healthcare and urban opportunities.
- Variety of licensed child care, early years programming and educational institutions, including close proximity to renowned Western University, Fanshawe College and Lambton College.
- The unique villages, towns and rural communities have great attractions for residents and tourists, including museums, parks, nature trails, golf, historical buildings, campgrounds, sugar bushes, crafts, entertainment and much more.





THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The strategic plan will establish a clear direction and focus for the County for the four year period of 2021 to 2024. As the community is constantly growing and changing, strategic planning will assist in developing the right goals and targets to help everyone focus their efforts into achieving them. It will also ensure that the County of Middlesex is well positioned to capitalize on future opportunities that arise.

The discussions regarding the strategic planning process started in January 2020 and the 2021 to 2024 Strategic Plan was approved by County Council in September 2020.

The goals of the strategic planning process were:

- Governance focus
- Actionable and timely
- Communication tool
- Identify new opportunities and issues
- Stimulate internal and external discussion
- Focus on key questions and less on mission statements

PHASE 1 DATA COLLECTION

SETTING THE STAGE AND GATHERING INFORMATION

The objective of this phase included planning, process development, collection of department data and business profiles, development of a survey and landscape review.



PHASE 2 REVIEW

REVIEWING, DISCUSSING AND CREATING FUTURE STRATEGIES

Council reviewed the information and created the strategic priorities, goals and objectives to be considered in the overall plan. Council also developed a list of guiding principles to be applied to program development, program review, and service delivery.

PHASE 3 APPROVAL

CONFIRMING AND FINALIZING THE PLAN

Council reviewed the draft version of the strategic plan and had significant and thoughtful discussion in regard to the strategic priorities, goals, objectives and guiding principles. Through this discussion, County Council's final strategic plan was developed and approved.



WHERE WE'RE GOING

2021-2024 is the time for Middlesex County to lead into the future. Growth and opportunity are at the heart of the county's future.

INNOVATION & READINESS

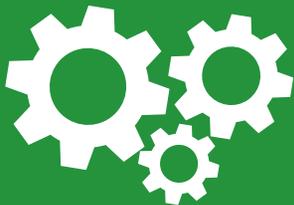


Innovation and collaboration are happening in Middlesex County, with numerous projects underway that we can leverage into the future. This readiness factor provides us with the ability to go where we want to go.

Innovation and collaboration in action in Middlesex County:

- Middlesex County Connect (Community Transportation)
- Community Safety and Well-Being Plan
- EarlyON Child and Family Centres
- Municipal modernization service delivery reviews
- Libraries shifting to community hubs and becoming a dynamic community destination
- Mobile COVID-19 testing provided by Middlesex London Paramedic Service
- Collaborative infrastructure projects with local municipalities

MODERNIZATION



The current environment surrounding all municipalities, including the County of Middlesex, has become focused on modernization and innovation. The Ontario government is looking to municipalities to examine all aspects of its work and to look for new ways to serve its residents.

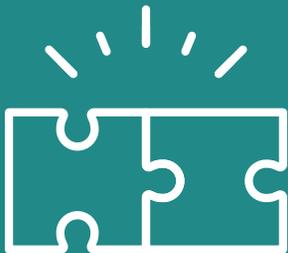
COLLABORATION & RELATIONSHIPS



The County of Middlesex has embraced an environment of collaboration, and is actively working with its local, neighbouring, and regional municipalities to achieve common goals. Some examples of this include:

- Provision of shared services (planning, IT, Legal) with local municipal partners
- Southwest Community Transportation – a transportation initiative involving County of Middlesex, Tillsonburg, Oxford County, Perth County, and Norfolk County
- Innovative economic development initiatives, such as: Our Hand to Your Table and the Middlesex County Economic Resiliency Task Force
- Unique Service Manager Agreements between the County of Middlesex and the City of London in relation to social housing, land ambulance, child care and Ontario Works services.

RESPONSIVE & RESILIENT



The COVID-19 pandemic has caused us to ask new questions and to leverage the learnings from the pandemic to encourage change, including how we support the prosperity of businesses in downtown cores, how we increase internet connectivity, and how we move forward with digital transformation and service provision in a changed environment.

Modernization of services, especially with the pandemic, has forced all organizations, including the public sector, to think differently about how to deliver services – embrace automation and new technologies.

VISION & LEADERSHIP



We are strategically focused and ready to respond and move into the future with a visionary council and expert senior staff.

“ County Council includes both progressive/modern ideas and attitudes, but also has a mind to the important history of the County.”

“ Our staff have a depth of knowledge and experience”

STRATEGIC FOCUS

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY VITALITY

CONNECTING THROUGH INFRASTRUCTURE

STRENGTHENING OUR ECONOMY

PROMOTING SERVICE EXCELLENCE

GOALS

Advance a diverse, healthy, and engaged community across Middlesex County.

Ensure communities are built on a sustainable foundation that is connected and thriving.

Encourage a diverse and robust economic base throughout the county.

Innovate and transform municipal service delivery.

OBJECTIVES

- Promote and support community wellness
- Innovate social and community services
- Attract, retain, and engage youth in our community
- Champion and encourage active transportation and public transit opportunities

- Encourage and advocate, through partnerships, the construction of scalable, equitable broadband infrastructure, recognizing our unserved and underserved areas
- Commit to a sound asset management strategy to maintain and fund critical infrastructure
- Use County infrastructure in an innovative way to provide a seamless service experience for residents

- Support opportunities to create a stronger and sustainable agricultural sector
- Create an environment that enables the attraction and retention of businesses, talent, and investments
- Attract visitors to Middlesex County
- Support the development and prosperity of downtown core areas in Middlesex County

- Anticipate and align municipal service delivery to emerging needs and expectations
- Engage, educate and inform residents, businesses, and visitors of county services and community activities
- Strengthen our advocacy and lobbying efforts with other government bodies
- Collaborate with strategic partners to leverage available resources and opportunities
- Build organizational capacity and capabilities



OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES ARE...

- 1** Balancing the rural-urban qualities of the County
- 2** Building relationships and working in a collaborative and supportive way
- 3** Leading through innovation, evaluation, and continuous improvement
- 4** Recognizing the uniqueness of our local municipal partners
- 5** Maintaining financial sustainability
- 6** Focusing on diversity and inclusion
- 7** Being flexible and responsive

FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION

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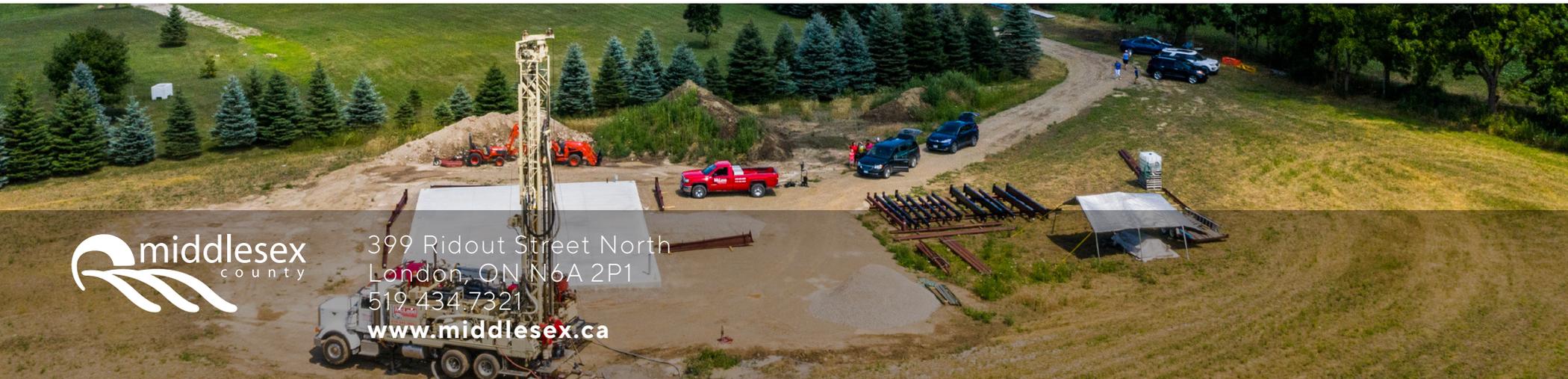




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County Council Committee of Whole

Meeting Date: *<insert meeting date, ex. January 4, 2021'>*
Submitted by: *<insert name(s) and title(s)>*
SUBJECT: *<insert TITLE OF REPORT in capitalized letters>*

BACKGROUND:

ANALYSIS:

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

<insert and highlight all relevant financial information that may impact outcomes of this report>

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC FOCUS:

<this section of the report is to provide Council with an understanding of how this report, or the outcome of this report, ties to Council's Strategic Focus>

<the report has been updated to include Council's 2021 to 2024 Strategic Focus; please delete all irrelevant Strategic Focus connections, leaving only the ones that connect or support the staff report>

This report aligns with the following Strategic Focus, Goals, or Objectives:

Strategic Focus	Goals	Objectives
Cultivating Community Vitality	Advance a diverse, healthy, and engaged community across Middlesex County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and support community wellness • Innovate social and community services • Attract, retain, and engage youth in our community • Champion and encourage active transportation and public transit opportunities
Connecting Through Infrastructure	Ensure communities are built on a sustainable foundation that is connected and thriving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and advocate, through partnerships, the construction of scalable, equitable broadband infrastructure, recognizing our unserved and underserved areas • Commit to a sound asset management strategy to maintain and fund critical infrastructure • Use County infrastructure in an innovative way to provide a seamless service experience for residents
Strengthening Our Economy	Encourage a diverse and robust economic base throughout the county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support opportunities to create a stronger and sustainable agricultural sector • Create an environment that enables the attraction and retention of businesses, talent, and investments • Attract visitors to Middlesex County • Support the development and prosperity of downtown core areas in Middlesex County
Promoting Service Excellence	Innovate and transform municipal service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate and align municipal service delivery to emerging needs and expectations • Engage, educate and inform residents, businesses, and visitors of county services and community activities • Strengthen our advocacy and lobbying efforts with other government bodies • Collaborate with strategic partners to leverage available resources and opportunities • Build organizational capacity and capabilities

RECOMMENDATION:

That

Attachments