



## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

**OCTOBER 2011**

# Township of Strong Strategic Plan

## Mission Statement:

“Working together for a Strong Tomorrow”

To this end Strong Township Council will:

- Provide responsible stewardship of the Township’s resources;
- Work with and maximize all community resources;
- Encourage new economic growth that will support our existing businesses;
- Work towards more growth and revitalization;
- Strive to ensure a good quality of life for all residents.

## Background & Purpose:

The strategic plan was developed in 2011 as a tool for the current council to use when planning and making decisions that in turn will affect the people they have been elected to represent.

Some of the areas of concern were raised at the Fall 2010 “all candidates meeting” and these have been addressed in this plan.

We polled our stakeholders for input and received only one formal response. Council then proceeded with the plan as originally intended.

Actions will be listed throughout this document in an effort to reach our outlined goals. We have purposely tried to keep this whole plan as simplified as possible to make our initiatives realistic. Many areas have had recent studies completed in greater depth and rather than being repetitive we will include these studies as appendices.

## Communication:

**Public** – brochures/information bulletins will be available on the web site – at the municipal office, libraries, arena for easy access by the public. Brochure includes groups/organizations and contact/meeting night information, special events that are held throughout the year. Upgrading the website, ensuring accurate links are listed, including pictures that show the beauty of Strong Township. Include an events calendar with links, better marketing strategies to promote Strong Township

### **Between Head of Department and Staff.**

Regular Staff meetings will be held to keep staff informed of council’s plans/directions etc. Staff are to report to Department Head as required should they feel they require extra assistance to complete a project. Staff should feel they are able to discuss issues with Department Head and or the Mayor and Council as requested.

**Between Departments** – Departments Heads will meet to discuss concerns/issues each department may be having.

**Between Council and Staff** – Council will participate in the employee reviews of all personnel and sit in on staff meetings.

**Between Residents to Council & Staff:**

Residents are welcome to attend each council meeting and agenda's are posted on the website 4 days before the meeting date.

Any potential for success in any venture must first and foremost be communicated to all parties involved. This can take several different methods or means and with the ever moving pace of technology, council must also take that into consideration. Good communication is already happening but we can show how this is happening and include suggestions for improvements.

**Objectives:**

1. To make sure residents know their concerns are being heard;
2. To ensure Council is open and available to listen to and act on concerns of staff;
3. To encourage open communication with all departments as each department matters to the whole operation of the Township;
4. To keep council connected and communication between council meeting;
5. Severe weather policy for roads.

**Actions:**

1. Previous councils have had the foresight to start having comments/complaints in writing. We will continue this avenue and reinforce to staff the importance of responding to comments/complaints as quickly as possible.

We will also promote more use of doing this via email to move things along a little quicker.

Responding is a key responsibility of staff to ensure residents are being heard.

2. In 2011 the pay equity plan was updated. This year, 2011 also saw the updating of the Health and Safety Policy. Since 2006 council had a staff appreciation dinner and in 2010 council implemented a job performance evaluation plan for all staff. All of these updates and plan are actions from council to improve the working environment for staff. Future plans in the upcoming years will include more communication with all the staff as opposed to limiting it more towards the supervisors of the department. Bi-annual or quarterly meetings with all staff and council will be started.
3. The office is the centre of the Township activity. All departments need access to the office staff and this is currently done by telephone, email or coming into the office in person. The Roads Department staff each carry a cell phone as they are usually out working in the Township.
4. Council also stays in touch with each other by way of phone and email. The future could lead to higher technology in their meeting – lap tops to reduce paper and texting to communicate with each other that will be looked into.
5. Severe Weather Policy--Roads Department – Building and maintaining roads are an important aspect for the Township and the Roads Department ensure all necessary maintenance and repairs are performed in a timely manner.

It is recognized that during the winter months Public Works Staff are on standby on the weekends. It is also recognized that the usual policy has been that two staff work one

weekend and two staff are off. It is also understood that should the Road Superintendent and/or Assistant Road Superintendent/Council deem it necessary – all staff will be called in to clear the roads.

## **Concerns – Present & Future.**

As this Strategic Plan is being compiled one of our biggest concerns is already being realized. That is the By-pass of our area by the Four laning of Highway 11. To this end “Central Almaguin Economic Development Association” was formed. This group, representing the four municipalities affected by the highway project, has already completed a Strategic Plan, (Appendix H).

A large percentage of our residents are headed towards the aged population and that needs to be addressed. Also, retention of our youth to this area, working with the existing and new businesses to make this a place of opportunities are all concerns that need to be addressed. Council must also remember decisions are to be made at council meetings.

### **Objectives:**

1. Health care available for all seniors and for those planning on retiring in our community;
2. Adequate housing for seniors;
3. High Speed Internet needs to be available in the area. This affects youth and our business community.

### **Actions:**

1. Continue to work with the group currently working to return services to the Almaguin Highlands Health Centre. Provide the best possible facility to house doctors and other health care professionals. Educate council of the needs of our doctors and professionals to make our area an attractive and exciting place to open their practices.
2. Housing is already an issue for seniors. To date council has engaged in discussions with a housing company, Solterra Housing Co., which specializes in facilities for seniors. We need to continue to work with this company and find available space for them to build.
3. Council is currently working with Spectrum Communications to expedite the installation of more tele-communication towers. High speed internet is vital to attracting and retaining businesses. Actions are also addressed in a “Strategic Plan” project completed by students of Nipissing University. (Appendix I) References to the importance of Hi Speed internet are also addressed in Appendix H.

## **Tourism:**

Tourism to our area will maintain and sustain our businesses and in turn bring new residents. To this end Council, staff and businesses are hosting the Dimestore Fishermen in September of 2011. Along with a fishing show they will be producing a tourism video. People need to see what we have to offer year round for tourism, Lake Bernard is our biggest asset both in the winter and summer. While promoting the lake we also need to take care and protect it.

**Objectives:**

1. To promote the things that we enjoy as a resident;
2. To make use of the wilderness and nature while maintaining the standards of today;
3. To make this area the best experience a traveler will ever have.

**Actions:**

1. Continue to promote the action plan of the CAEDA strategic plan. (Appendix H);
2. Promote what we already have – bears/birds/deer. A suggestion to try in 2012 will be instead of tourist standing at the landfill gates to see the bears – open the landfill site up a few hours in the evening on a weekend to allow tourist the opportunity to see the bears closer – while staying in their vehicles and maintain a safe distance from the bears. As we have an abundance of birds setting up a winter feeding station is another idea. Promoting what we have is key- hunting and fishing etc.;
3. Friendly and fun need to be at every turn of the tourist's time in our area. We need to promote the value of tourists to our local residents.

**Protecting our Assets:**

Council considers some of our greatest assets to be the buildings, equipment and finances of the Township. Far greater reaching than that is the protection council feels necessary to provide for the continued long life of our landfills. Protection also needs to occur for water quality of our lakes, rivers and streams.

**Environmental**

It is evident that environmental issues are imperative when it comes to the future prosperity of the Township of Strong. The Council have expressed their concerns of issues that relate to the Township such as rebuilding of High Rock Road, protection of our lakes and expanding/improving recycling, extending the life of the two landfill sites. As a result of recent efforts, the Township of Strong have turned the recycling project into a profitable one. With the installation of a Baler Unit, magnetic separator and weigh scale the Township is in a better position to sort loads that have a higher return, know the weight of material being shipped out to track landfill usage, ship higher quality bales of material. The Township of Strong have recently completed the Waste Recycling Strategy which outlines goals and objectives for the Recycling Centre and Landfill Site. Summer staff will be hired as needed to assist in the promotion of recycling benefits which in turn will result in higher revenues.

The Township of Strong is in the process of developing an Operation Plan for Landfill Site # 2 to meet the current Ministry of Environment regulations which will provide clear direction for Landfill Site # 2 to ensure it is available for use for many years.

Landfill Site # 1 will undergo a revised Development and Operation Plan in the next two years to ensure we are on track and the integrity of the site is maintained.

Residents are required to drive to the Landfill sites to dump their garbage and recycling materials. Tipping fees apply and permits must be paid for at the municipal office prior to taking the loads to the landfill site. Refrigeration tags must be purchased at the municipal office as well and a contractor attends the landfill site on a regular basis to remove the Freon from the units. Residents must purchase a landfill site pass to gain access into the gated facility.

- Environmental factors must be considered within Strong Township because it affects numerous businesses/industries' way of operating and their future livelihood. Examples of environmental factors include; levels of pollution, recycling initiatives, council attitudes towards the environment and current and future governmental changes in environmental policy.
- Strong Township has environmental protection areas which are described in the Official Plan and Zoning By-law which govern what is built and where. These laws are important as lands are zoned based on environmental protection and suitability.

**Objectives:**

1. Setting up a reserve account annually to upgrade our present fleet of trucks and equipment on a rotating basis;
2. Keeping the municipal buildings well maintained to ensure they have the longest life span possible;
3. Looking at the needs of the whole township and budgeting accordingly. Being ever mindful that residents bear the results of council's financial decisions;
4. To continue researching methods to prolong the life span of our landfill sites so the Township is not faced with the cost of closing a landfill and finding a new location;
5. There is evidence of higher phosphorous levels in Lake Bernard are deteriorating the quality of the water. Now is the time to put a stop to the deterioration and preserve the quality of water we have.

**Actions:**

1. Council has been very proactive in keeping equipment relatively new and updated. With prices always increasing it is important that reserves over the next few years reflect the increase;
2. We have had many new additions and renovations to real estate owned by the Township. Improvement can be made to recording maintenance and upgrades so when staff and council continue to change there is a log book or some easy form of access to what was done each year;
3. There is a good process in place but there are many factors to completing the Township budget. One suggestion is that committee's budgets that ultimately affect the township's budget begin at the end of the calendar year so they can be presented to council earlier. This would allow the Township to prepare their budget earlier in the spring;

4. There is so much we have already done to prolong the life of our landfill sites, but more needs to be done. In 2010 the Township of Strong completed the Waste Recycling Strategy (Appendix B). To that end, a Waste Recycling Promotion Director was hired for the summer of 2011. The main focus of this position was to educate the residents and making them aware of the recycling programs available to them. During the summer of 2011 the Township of Strong Blue Box Promotion and Education Plan was also developed (Appendix C). It contains a three year action plan which we will also use a guide line.
5. In the summer of 2011, the Lake Bernard Property Owners Association approached council to join in formatting a draft Lake Plan for Lake Bernard(Appendix D). A motion was passed by council on August 9, 2011 to support this in principle. Over the summer a draft plan has been made. Should this for some reason not continue to be developed by the Property Owners Association, council must move forward with it. For obvious reason the best solution is to work together with the parties involved from the beginning.
6. Culvert Needs Study – looking into funding opportunities for study, as per MTO Culvert Calculations, to conduct 20 yr flow study and replacing washed out culverts with larger sizes. The needs study can be monitored on the GIS program.
  - Continue to work with residents of Pool and Cheer Lake
  - Be aware of Provincial legislation regarding septic tank inspections and work with them in that direction
  - Try to work as many factors of the Lake Plan into our Official Plan when we re-do it in 2012 specifically maintain natural vegetation along the waterfront and pesticide use.
  - Education on household chemical use
  - Work within Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of the Environment and North Bay Mattawa Conservation Authority regulations.
  - Planning/severance/consents issues – the Township will continue to make planning decisions that compliment the official plan and zoning by-law, and the Provincial Policy statement.

## **Recreation & Leisure**

**Goal – To promote and encourage a healthy active lifestyle for all ages of our residents.**

### **Recreational:**

Council recently completed upgrades to parks which include picnic tables at Stirling Creek Park, South Lake Bernard Beach, Legion Park, Checker Board Park, Union Street, and the Municipal office.

Doggy bag stands have been placed at the Union Street Park and Stirling Creek Park. The Checker Board Park and South Lake Bernard Beach have been equipped with floating docks as well, South Lake Bernard had playground equipment installed.

At three of the parks local tourist information signs indicating the various locations of all parks located in the Township have been installed. This will promote residents and visitors to take advantage of public lake access. In the Official Plan, Section 2.11.4 states "All public accesses to Lake Bernard and other lakes shall remain public".

Council will review all unopened road allowances to the lakes to determine if they may be opened for public access.

Council will work with neighbouring municipalities to develop all season recreational activities suitable for all ages.

Council will work with the Sundridge Strong Joly Arena Committee to promote the facility.

The Sundridge Strong Union Public Library requires members for locals to use their services. Once a member of the library, some of the services available are:

- Books- a variety of books of interest to members of all ages. There is also a collection of large print books for those with a vision impairment. The Library also has access to books in foreign languages upon request;
- Magazines are also offered at the library;
- Inter-Library Loan services is available along with video cassettes, talking books, local history collection, children's programs, photocopying, internet and laminating services.

#### **Sundridge Strong Joly Arena:**

The Sundridge Strong Joly Arena is located within the Village of Sundridge and offers winter ice. Several youth and adult hockey teams play at the arena and specialty programs are offered during March Break and the Christmas Holiday season. The Arena Program Director is implementing summer programs – baseball, soccer, ball hockey for youth at a nominal fee. The Arena Hall is available for rentals which includes a full kitchen and bar. There is a Municipal Alcohol Policy in place and renters are required to submit proof of Alcohol Liability Insurance to rent the facility. The Arena Hall is also rented to Small Claims Court and Provincial Offences Court which provides increased revenue to the facility.

#### **Sundridge Strong Recreation Committee:**

This is a committee consisting of volunteers and council representation that hosts Canada Day Activities, Family First Activities (Tree Lighting Ceremony and Family Day Celebration) each year.

#### **High Rock Lookout Committee:**

This is also a committee consisting of volunteers and council representatives that ensure the High Rock Look Out is maintained and takes care of any bookings of the park by public users.

In short the Township of Strong needs to be a great place to play and relax. To this end all age groups need to be considered. Encourage a healthy lifestyle benefits the whole community.

#### **Objectives:**

1. The Sundridge Strong Joly Arena is already a facility we are using to promote a healthy lifestyle. We need to continue the maintenance and upgrading needed to meet the needs of this and outlying communities;
2. Our library has so much to offer our community and like the arena we need to continue with upgrades for space and technology to meet the needs of the people;

3. Year round activities need to be looked at and enhanced. In 2012 Highway 124 extension should bring in paved shoulders as the road is upgraded to Highway 11. Perhaps add to that more camping, ATV's, hunting and fishing;
4. In 2010 we saw grant money through Infrastructure programs that were available for upgrades to the parks in the Township. This was built upon by adding port-a-potties to one additional beach location which now makes a total of 3 beaches with this service. Also on staff is a part time seasonal maintenance staff that looks after the beaches and parks as well as inspecting the playground equipment.

**Actions:**

1. Developing more uses at the arena to target the younger and older residents, eg. games nights or fitness classes for seniors, day camps for younger persons. The target area seems to be hockey enthusiasts and with such a great facility we need to make better use of it.
2. In the next couple of years it is imperative that we come up with a larger facility to house the current library. It is an integral part of our community doing a great job in very cramped quarters.
3. There is much to do in the area of year round activities. Some have been addressed in the CAEDA Document (Appendix A). Council needs to take the initiative and budget annually to increase and improve some of the year round activities that are already in existence.
4. The year 2010 was the start of making our existing beaches user friendly with the simple addition of rafts, portable toilets, tables and benches. In 2012 council will work on improved parking at the Lake Bernard Public Beach to make it safer. Each additional year council will look at the beaches and determine if they are meeting the needs of the residents.

**Agriculture:**

**Goal – To continue to support farmers to address market demands and long term sustainability.**

A study commissioned by the Sudbury East and Nipissing Parry Sound Federation of Agriculture has provided sound economic impact analysis that clearly demonstrates the importance of the farming section in the local and regional economy.

The area is seeing an increase in local farmers markets/farm stands and the interest and desire to purchase locally to reduce our carbon footprint. Surrounding areas are working with local restaurants/hotels/farmers to use locally produced meats/vegetables/fruit etc. This has resulted in an increase in local farmers markets and farm stands. Consumers are looking to purchase products so they “know where the products come from” promoting a healthier lifestyle and environment.

There needs to be a greater effort to provide support to our agricultural community. Council should consider developing policies specifically encouraging and supporting agricultural operations.

**Objectives:**

1. Encourage roadside vendors to U-Picks and assist with promoting these farms;
2. Develop a database that will track farm operations and provide information to help support the industry in the long term;
3. Continue to support the Agricultural Fall Fair;
4. Consider development of an Agriculture Advisory Committee with representation from Council.

**Actions:**

1. Provide assistance with space and advertising for any group or groups that wish to sell their farm fresh products through a farmer's market style venue.
2. Through the municipal web site, we can post any new government programs or grants that pertain to agriculture. There are some farmers that already take advantage of the program for lost livestock but we need to make sure everyone with livestock is aware of this program. This can also be placed on the municipal web site or our newsletter that is sent out with the tax bills.
3. Strong Township is currently a big supporter of the Agricultural Fair. We currently have two staff and a council member actively involved and the Township will continue to be behind them as they make plans to move forward. Support and promote a local farmers market in co-operation with the Strong Agricultural Society on the Society's grounds.
4. If there are people involved with Agriculture that would like to form an advisory committee, council would be on board with working together in that capacity.

**Fire Department:**

Strong Township shares fire protection with the Village of Sundridge on a 50/50 basis. The Township of Joly pays for service on user fee basis. The Fire Station is located within the Village of Sundridge. Burning Permits can be obtained at the Municipal office during normal office hours and are picked up on a regular basis by the Fire Chief. Council has passed a by-law to allow incinerator burning for a season at a time. The Fire Chief updates staff of burning regulations and fire bans as required.

The Township administrative staff have worked with the Fire Chief through our GIS mapping, allowing the fire department dispatcher limited access to this program. In the event of a fire, the dispatcher can locate the quickest route to the fire, as well water sources have been highlighted on the mapping and the dispatcher can provide this information as well. In the future the Fire Department would like to highlight high risk areas, special needs individuals to better assist the Fire Department when called out.

**Policing:**

Policing Services are provided by the Almaguin Highlands Ontario Provincial Police. Their offices are located in Burk's Falls.

By-Law Enforcement is provided under a contract with Jim Mahoney.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion this Strategic Plan has given council 19 realistic actions to work towards over the duration of their term in office. This exercise will keep the current council focused on the objectives and give them direction in planning and budgeting. It is also the hope that this brief document will also give the future council a vision of what was and what is to come as we all work together for a "Strong" tomorrow.

**Documents available to the Township of Strong in developing/implementing a Strategic Plan**

Official Plan and Zoning By-law: Although these documents are over 10 years old and require updating in 2012 they are the basis in which Council determines how development should occur in the Township. They provide policies to be implemented when new construction occurs as well as severances. The Council has implemented a Pre-Consultation by-law requiring land owners to discuss their lot severance ideas with council prior to submitting the application to the Central Almaguin Planning Board. This enables council the opportunity to review the zoning and official plan designations for the property to determine if this is the kind of development the Township wishes to see. Council has also passed a policy regarding the sale of Shore Road allowance. Applicants are required to submit consent forms from the adjacent property owners prior to approving "in principle" any application. This assist council in making a decision.

The Waste Recycling Strategy which was completed in 2010 outlines the goals and objectives of the Township of Strong for the future of Landfill Site # 1 and # 2.

The Blue Box Promotion and Education Plan completed in 2011 provide goals and objectives for recycling programs for the Township.

The Lake Bernard Property Owners Association are working on a "Lake Plan". This document will provide suggestions/concerns to maintain Lake Bernard as a healthy Lake.

Road Needs Study which was completed in 2009 outlines the work needed on the Municipal roads to ensure safe travel. This document also provides council with information to use in budgeting for infrastructure repairs.

Bridge Study which was completed in 2010 inspected the Bridges that are under the control of the Township. This document also aids in budget preparation as it outlines the work that is required on these bridges in the next few years.

Development and Operation Plan for Landfill Site # 1 & # 2: Council is currently working on developing an operation plan for Landfill Site # 2 which will assist council in determining how best to ensure the long life of this site. Landfill Site # 1 Development and Operation Plan is over 10 years old and will be revised in 2012-2013 to ensure it is meeting the needs of the Township.

Central Almaguin Economic Development Association – Strategic Plan

Strong Township Strategic Plan developed by Students of Nipissing University.

Strong Township Industry Plan developed by Students of Nipissing University

Council has worked very hard to ensure policies and by-laws are implemented that will best reflect their goals and objectives for the Township.