



Town of Minto

Strategic Plan

January 19, 2006

Letter from the Mayor

The Town of Minto, through the strategic planning process has recognized that the growth of our community is of outmost importance to ensure a prosperous future. This strategic plan was developed by Town Council, staff, and community members, and focuses on eight important issues, which include: Economic Vitality, Fiscal Responsibility, Health, Destination, Agricultural Identity, Leadership, Linkage, and Retail/Downtown. This document will assist us in achieving orderly growth in all areas of the Town of Minto. Now, implementation of this important plan is of the highest priority for all concerned, Council, staff and citizens at large.

About Minto's Strategic Plan

This strategic plan is the document that provides the vision and leadership for the Town of Minto. It serves as a guide for planning initiatives and service delivery activities within the Town. The strategic plan outlines what Council wants to achieve for Minto and how the Town Council and Staff can work toward this vision.

The plan contains the vision statement and core values for Minto; and the strategies the Town will follow to achieve the vision. The strategies are focused on eight key areas: economic vitality, finance, health, destination, agriculture, leadership, linkage, and retail.

Each theme area has a strategy and sub-strategies that provide direction for the Town Council and Staff to achieve the vision.

The Strategic Planning Process

Developing a strategic plan for the Town of Minto was an important project for the current Council and the Town's Administration.

The process of developing the plan began in the spring of 2005 with a brand positioning exercise. The brand project resulted in the new tagline: 'Minto. Where your family belongs.' The tagline is explained earlier in this document.

Once the brand position was approved; it was a logical step to put a strategic plan for the Town in writing, using the family position as the core idea. All strategies, on some level, support the goal that Minto will be the place where your family belongs.

Seeking input from key stakeholders and groups was a second important part of the planning process. To achieve this, a strategic planning committee was formed with representatives from Council, Administration, MEDC, Minto Chamber of Commerce and the Agricultural Societies. The committee was responsible for providing existing research and background information, writing portions of the plan and providing feedback on the plan as it was being written.

Further, ideation sessions and 1:1 interviews were conducted with key groups and individuals. This included women with children, youth and seniors.

Below is a chronological list of the milestones for developing the strategic plan.

Key Dates:

Brand Strategy

- April 5/6, 2005 -- Branding brainstorm sessions with Town representation including council, staff, residents and businesses
- April 26, 2005 -- Planning session with brand committee
- May 17, 2005 -- Creative brief provided to brand committee
- June 3, 2005 -- Draft of brand and communication framework provided to brand committee
- June 21, 2005 -- Brand and communication framework approved

Strategic Plan

- July 13, 2005 – Strategic Planning Launch Meeting
- July 14 -- Form a sub-committee to draft strategies and sub-strategies
- August 10, 2005 – Strategic Planning Meeting #2. To review strategies and sub-strategies.
- August 15 - September 23, 2005 -- Information gathering / research.
- August 24, 2005 -- Community Ideation Sessions. To gather input from key groups such as youth, seniors and service clubs.
- September 2005 -- 1:1 research interviews of Town leaders
- October 25, 2005 – Strategic planning meeting #3 to review working paper
- November 22, 2005 – Strategic planning meeting #4 to review draft plan
- December 2005 -- Strategic Plan Draft available for public comment
- January 2006 -- Council approves strategic plan

Department Plans

- January 31, 2006 -- Departmental plans complete

Town of Minto Background

The Town of Minto was founded in 1999 with the amalgamation of the village of Clifford, Town of Palmerston, Town of Harriston and the surrounding rural area of Minto Township.

Located in the heart of mid-western Ontario, each of the communities that now form the Town of Minto, have a rich history dating back to the 19th century. Today, our combined population stands at over 8,000 residents and is growing.

The local workforce of over 4,000 is employed in such sectors as auto parts manufacturing, primary and secondary agricultural, retail trade, health care, transportation, leisure & hospitality, and wholesale distribution.

An elected mayor, deputy mayor and five councillors govern the Town of Minto.

Vision Statement and Core Values

We celebrate the values of country living and community life.

Neighbourliness and togetherness.

Stability, safety and affordability.

Volunteerism for the benefit of each other, and for the good of our town.

Responsible economic growth.

Respect for nature and what it provides.

These values are what make us unique, and what make Minto the community where families belong.

Strategic Directions and Outcomes

1. Economic Vitality

Economic vitality refers to the health of the Town's economy and includes such factors as employment opportunities, skilled workforce, competitiveness with other towns, investment and affordability for living and working in the Town of Minto.

Strategic Direction: Establish sustainable economic development strategies.

Strategic Sub-directions:

1. Increase our population from 8,500 to 11,000 within five years (January 2011).
2. Provide sufficient serviced/serviceable land for prospective businesses and residents.
3. Encourage a healthy, clean, interesting quality of life that will attract and retain engaged citizens.
4. Encourage business enterprises to develop and expand.
5. Develop an urban development strategy for the Town of Minto utilizing the expertise of both internal and external resources such as an urban planner.
6. Determine if a mega-project (ie. A very large factory employing several hundred people) is feasible for Minto.

7. Research and set up criteria to make decisions based upon economic impact.

2. Fiscal Responsibility/Financial Strategies

Fiscal responsibility/financial strategies imply that the strategies included here support the goal of being a fiscally responsible municipality.

Strategic Direction: Establish sustainable financing mechanisms and sources. They are sustainable because they can be maintained over time. They don't require extraordinary time, money or expertise to implement and upkeep.

Strategic Sub-directions:

1. Work with federal and provincial governments to ensure Minto receives its fair share of grants and revenue-sharing programs.
2. Work with neighbouring municipalities and the county to devise mutually beneficial cost-sharing arrangements.
3. Continue a blend of capital financing methods including long-term debt, user fees, grants, internal reserves and taxation.
4. Increase reserves to the point where Minto does not need to rely on borrowing or tax increases in order to finance major capital expenditures.
5. Encourage group fund-raising activities.
6. Monitor debt burden and ensure the Town is able to comfortably service its debts.
7. Analyze proposed capital projects and determine if they are financially feasible.
8. Ensure facilities and programs are operated as efficiently and effectively as possible.

3. Health

Health refers to the health of the citizens of the Town of Minto. This is affected by many factors including the environment, accessible healthcare and recreational opportunities.

Strategic Direction: Ensure a safe, healthy environment for our residents.

Strategic Sub-directions:

1. Town Council and Staff will continue to cultivate strong relationships with the healthcare community and to take a leadership role in moving health initiatives forward.

2. Appoint and direct the health board representative on Town Council to oversee this portion of the strategic plan and stay informed of issues such as the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN).
3. Continue to assist the local medical community with recruitment and retention of doctors, nurse practitioners and other medical personnel.
4. Ensure the local fire department follows the latest fire prevention and public education standards.
5. Continue the implementation of the Town's emergency plan including public education and training exercises.
6. Council and Staff will devise and implement strategies to complete a Physical Activity Plan in partnership with other healthcare stakeholders including Active 2010.
7. Increase public awareness of the guidelines for pesticide use, hazardous chemicals and noxious weeds.

4. Destination

Destination implies a place where people go or travel to. In a broader sense, it can include tourists, businesses and families.

A. Strategic Direction: Establish a successful and sustainable tourism product.

Strategic Sub-directions:

1. Increase awareness of "Minto" as a family destination.
2. Facilitate businesses and/or groups offering a range of agri-tourism offerings including those intended to educate children and families about agriculture.
3. Utilize Minto's heritage/culture to create a unique family destination.
4. Increase tourist use of recreational facilities & attractions.
5. Maintain dialog with the local retail sector in tourism 'destination' development.
6. Write a tourism and marketing plan based on these strategies that includes tactics, timing and evaluation.

B. Strategic Direction: Provide an attractive destination for business to be conducted.

Strategic Sub-directions:

1. Increase the awareness of Minto as a place for family friendly businesses, a place that has a thriving business district, and a place to visit and shop.
2. Secure funds for infrastructure enhancement after determining, through an urban planning exercise, which enhancements are needed.
3. Provide a strong family image and activities to attract more family oriented businesses.
4. Continue to improve the cosmetics of the community.

C. Strategic Direction: Provide a welcoming, attractive and safe location for families to reside in.

Strategic Sub-directions:

1. Continued support for effective local Police, Fire and Ambulance Services.
2. Determine service and activity requirements for the Town's citizens.
3. Establish a "Welcome Wagon" program.
4. Utilize resident testimonials to promote Minto.
5. Define a target proportion of housing in the urban plan. For example, X% dedicated to detached housing and X% toward townhomes.

5. Agricultural Identity

Minto, by nature of its location in the heartland of Ontario surrounded by farmland, has developed a strong agricultural identity. Minto is recognized as a farming area and community. The strategies below embrace and build upon Minto's history and future as a farming community.

Strategic Direction: Expand Minto's agricultural image / identity and encourage developments of agri-industry and agri-tourism.

Strategic Sub-directions:

1. Increase awareness of Minto's agricultural identity.
2. Strengthen and expand existing agricultural-related products and services, and develop new ones.
3. Assist & encourage current farming businesses and family farms in diversifying into tourism.
4. Provide a range of agri-tourism offerings including those geared toward educating children and families about agriculture. Ensure they are fun.
5. Strengthen the relationship between agriculture and retail.
6. Attract farm related industries.

6. Leadership

Leadership is the capacity or ability to lead. In this strategic plan, Town Council and Staff are given the primary task of implementing and following the direction of this plan. However, the importance of identified roles for community leaders is also a critical element of success.

Strategic Direction: Create a leadership platform/web/map for all constituents and programs that will engage and direct the community.

Strategic Sub-directions:

1. Lead the implementation of the strategic plan.
2. Be a leader, among smaller municipalities, in aiding the provision of career/work solutions in Minto.
3. Be a leader in healthcare by continuing to be involved in projects such as the medical office space/library and funding the recruitment of medical personnel.
4. Increase the visibility of Town Council and community leaders among students, business owners and the general population.
5. Demonstrate innovation in municipal management practices acknowledging that a primary innovation is the use of a flatter management structure in place of a more traditional hierarchical approach to managing a municipality.
6. Identify the leadership needs in the community beyond traditional Town Council and Staff jurisdictions. Examine leadership needs of service clubs, sport and cultural associations, schools, and churches.

7. Linkage

Linkage refers to the ability of Minto to overcome the challenge of combining four former municipalities into one. It relates to the interconnectedness between different town elements including services, organizations, businesses, education, healthcare and tourism.

Strategic Direction: To provide a structure that supports 'one community' and improves communication between related town services, organizations, businesses, education, healthcare and tourism.

Strategic Sub-directions:

1. Town Council will lead the acceptance and integration of 'one community' by providing a clear vision for the Town of Minto.
2. Determine what overlapping services exist, if any, that the Town can work toward minimizing. This includes programs and organizations supported by the Town.
3. Provide a system to help coordinate event planning within the Town of Minto across multiple organizations. This could include an event calendar on the website that can be updated by different groups.
4. Determine areas of time/cost savings in Town communications material through conducting a communications audit of existing communication material. This includes all internal and external communication vehicles such as media relations, newsletters, bulletin boards, and tourism guides.
5. With the Chamber of Commerce, examine the feasibility of linking retailers through a loyalty shopping program for retail stores in Minto. Consider partnerships (ie. credit card company) and cross-promotional programs.
6. Implement amalgamation of three fire stations into one department.

8. Retail / Downtown Strategy

Retail refers to businesses with a store front and located in downtown Minto.

Strategic Direction: Ensure there is a downtown area that will encourage tourism and new business growth.

Strategic Sub-directions:

1. Reverse the flow of resident dollars so they flow into Minto's retail businesses vs. the surrounding municipalities.
2. Continue to invest resources into maintaining and improving the visual appeal of the downtown core.

3. As part of an urban plan, explore possibilities for building a stronger 'one-town' feel.
4. Follow zoning by-laws such as using commercial/retail space only for commercial/retail purposes.
5. Investigate and define the types of retail businesses that appeal to tourists seeking a family destination.
6. Investigate and define the types of retail businesses that can build upon the agricultural heritage of Minto.

Evaluation

The strategic plan is reviewed every three years following municipal elections. This allows new and returning Council members to gain consensus on the plan and lead the Town as one voice. Opening the plan to revisions once every three years ensures Council and Staff have time to achieve goals.

Further, annual goals are tracked on a quarterly basis. The Strategic Plan Oversight Committee and the municipal department heads are responsible for this. Department heads set goals annually and base them on the strategic plan. They report to the Oversight Committee quarterly.

The strategic planning committee has discussed evaluation metrics and preliminary measures have been developed. Department heads will finalize the metrics by April 2006. Municipal evaluation measures include items such as:

- Annual household income
- Unemployment rates compared to national averages
- Number of new housing starts per year

Timing

A detailed timeline for strategic plan implementation has been developed and is used by each department. It is based on the structure of the Town's Administration and committees. For example, there is a section specific to the public works department and another section for the recreation department. Mirroring the structure of the Town's operations makes tracking workflow easier and allows Staff and Council to determine if timing for goals is feasible.

Feedback

Please provide your feedback on this strategic plan by January 6, 2006. Your comments can be sent via email or mail.

1. Email to Belinda Wick, Business & Economic Manager, Town of Minto at belinda@town.minto.on.ca, or
2. Mail to:
Belinda Wick, Business & Economic Manager
Town of Minto
5941 Hwy 89
Harriston, ON N0G 1Z0

Strategic Planning Committee

David Anderson, Councillor, Town of Minto
Mayor David Burns, Town of Minto
Barbara Burrows, Councillor, Town of Minto
Mary-Lou Colwell, Minto Chamber of Commerce
Dale Connell, President, Minto Chamber of Commerce
Rick Davis, Creative Partner, Gilbert + Davis Communications
Judy Dirksen, Councillor, Town of Minto
Gordon R. Duff, Treasurer/Administrator, Town of Minto
Norm Fisk, PSS/Administrator, Town of Minto
Michael Gilbert, Managing Partner, Gilbert + Davis Communications
Mark R. MacKenzie, Deputy Mayor, Town of Minto
Wayne Martin, Councillor, Town of Minto
Randy Ruetz, Minto Chamber of Commerce
Lana Stoner, T G Minto
Dave Stonley, Recreation Coordinator, Town of Minto
David Turton, Councillor, Town of Minto
Sandra Wennerstrom, Account Director, Gilbert + Davis Communications
Belinda Wick, Business & Economic Manager, Town of Minto
Paul Wightman, Wightman Communications
Barbara Wilson, Town Clerk/Administrator, Town of Minto

Strategic Plan Oversight Committee

TBD in 2006.