



Town of
East Gwillimbury

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REPORT P2012-73

To: Committee of the Whole Council

Date: October 15, 2012

Subject: The New “Thinking Green” Sustainability Strategy (TGSS)

Origin: Development Services Department
Economic Development & Sustainability Branch

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **THAT** Development Services Department, Economic Development & Sustainability Branch Report P2012-73, dated October 15, 2012, regarding the New “*Thinking Green*” Sustainability Strategy, be received;
2. **THAT** the set of Draft “Thinking Green” Sustainability initiatives set out in Appendix A under the four theme areas of Energy, Natural Environment, Municipal Operations and Development, be received and referred to the Senior-Management Team for further refinement and review;
3. **THAT** staff continue to plan for and organize the “Energy and Conservation Public Workshop” set out in Appendix B and Thinking Green Sustainability Strategy Event” scheduled by November 12, 2012 including a Town Hall meeting to present the Draft Initiatives.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to advise of the substantial completion of the New Thinking Green Sustainability Strategy refresh program identified in the 2012 Business Plan and Budget. In addition, the report provides information on the work of the staff team over the last 6 months as well as an outline for the community open house and TGSS public event scheduled by November 12, 2012.

BACKGROUND

In 2009, Council adopted the Town’s first comprehensive sustainability strategy under the “Thinking Green” brand. The TGSS is organized in four broad theme areas to capture the wide range of programs and initiatives that can be undertaken by the Town or in partnership with others. These are:

- 1) Municipal Operations

- 2) Natural Environment
- 3) Energy
- 4) Sustainable Development

The 2012 Budget and Business Plan identified the TGSS as a key priority, requiring a refresh and review to address current policy, new legislation and to identify new initiatives.

The initial work plan for the Thinking Green refresh was presented to Council in May of this year. Since that time, staff have been working through a comprehensive consultation program involving a cross-functional staff team comprised of Town staff from across the organization. In addition, staff have consulted with and have received feedback and input from the public and Council Advisory Committees as well as conducting research of best practices with other municipalities.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

a) Public Engagement

As part of the TGSS refresh, staff have engaged with the public in a variety of ways to solicit input and ideas for new sustainability initiatives, including; setting up an atrium display drop-box, on-line submission form for residents, meeting with community, committees and a library kiosk with a drop-box. The staff team has considered all initiatives, which have been included in the collection of new initiatives outlined in Appendix A.

b) Cross Functional Staff Team

A cross-functional staff team was assembled in late spring and has been actively engaged throughout the process. Key business areas for the Town have contributed on the cross-functional team and input of Thinking Green ideas from the following areas:

- Chief Administrative Office
- Public libraries
- Building Branch
- Finance
- Operations
- Planning Branch
- Economic Development and Sustainability Branch
- Engineering

The cross-functional team has been instrumental and critical to developing the New Thinking Green initiatives outlined in Appendix A, as well as providing valuable input in terms of the resource requirements for each initiative.

c) Organizing and Evaluating the New Initiative

The New Thinking Green Initiatives attached as Appendix A have been organized under the four areas and for each initiative, the Appendix outlines:

- Status of the initiative
- Work effort and costs
- Primary responsibility for implementation
- Implementation goals in terms of short, medium and long-term

An important aspect of the categorization of initiatives is the identification of the expected impact for each initiative as well as key performance indicators. As part of the ongoing development and implementation of the TGSS, key performance indicators will be developed in order to assist with annual reporting and ongoing review. The staff team considers it important to be able to track and record the impact of a specific initiative so it can be measured through a relative and meaningful metric related to meeting Town goals and the strategic plan. In addition, no specific priority will be given to any initiative at this time, with the understanding that staff resources to support any project or task will require collaborative efforts from across the organization. A review of the initiatives with Senior Management will further identify specific priorities, resource availability, and projects to be carried out in early 2013 after the Thinking Green Sustainability Strategy Initiatives Event.

d) Going Forward – Keeping Momentum

Following the completion of the New TGSS and associated programs and initiatives, the cross-functional staff team will continue to work on implementation. In this manner, the staff team will help identify initiatives for short-term implementation. The team will conduct necessary research, explore resource and costing and identify key performance indications to track success and achievements.

The cross-functional staff team will continue to act as champions for the TGSS and help to drive projects. In addition, annual reporting will be undertaken to measure the success of the TGSS and identify new projects and initiatives.

e) Creating a Culture of Sustainability in the Corporation

Corporate Sustainability is a growing area of interest for business and government, where it is imbedded and woven as a fundamental organizational strategy for both North American and global organizations. Within the region, many municipalities have become members of Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) and have also defined and implemented corporate sustainability plans. In addition to the Region, the Town of Richmond Hill, City of Markham, City of Vaughan, and Township of King are examples of municipalities that have both corporate

sustainability plans as well as dedicated staff resources to carry-out and implement objectives outlined in the plan. In order for the TGSS to be truly successful in the Town of East Gwillimbury, the concepts of sustainability and the TGSS need to be imbedded into the Town's operations and activities.

According to Verdantix - an independent analyst firm in the UK, the Canadian Sustainable Business market is expected to grow to \$3.7 billion in 2014 from \$2.3 billion in 2010 as reported in its Canadian Sustainable Business spending report, 2009-14. As the growing interest and presence of corporate sustainability rises in Canadian organizations over the next few years, East Gwillimbury must continue to position itself within the market, increasing the Town's *Thinking Green* brand among residents, community groups and stakeholders alike, while reducing operational costs and increasing efficiencies across the organization in the process. In addition to developing a comprehensive listing of new initiatives for the TGSS, the cross-functional staff team has recommended a number of programs around public awareness and education, both for internal use and for the general public. Appendix A includes a separate table of activities under the banner of Public Outreach and Awareness which will help to increase awareness around the TGSS and the Town's commitment to sustainability. Simple examples include reinstating the Thinking Green tip in the Town page as a regular and consistent messaging around sustainability concepts.

NEXT STEPS

It is recommended that Council receive the Thinking Green initiatives outlined in Appendix A and that staff continue to refine and modify the specific programs with the input from the senior management team. The TGSS will be completed by staff with the final set of initiative attached. The TGSS initiatives will be shared at the Town's Thinking Green Sustainability Strategy Town Hall event scheduled for Nov. 12, 2012 (Appendix B). The public event will take place following an open house session the same day featuring guest speakers and information booths from several partners.

The public open house will be targeted to the general public as well as business owners and other community stakeholders. This event is being coordinated by staff with the support of event sponsors; CMHC and Enbridge Gas Distribution.

NEED FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The public has been engaged throughout the TG refresh program, including community committee outreach, Thinking Green booth at East Gwillimbury's Farmer's Market, on-line idea submission for new Thinking Green initiatives, Civic Centre atrium display and submission box, and a library kiosk with Thinking Green display for residents to submit ideas.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

The updating of the Town's Sustainability Plan is consistent with the objective of the Town's Strategic Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A high level review of both staff and resource requirements for implementing the TGSS have been identified in Appendix A as part of the initiative description. Specific initiatives requiring capital budget or new resources will be subject to Council's considerations.

The ongoing coordination of Thinking Green initiatives and supporting the efforts of the cross-functional team will require dedicated staff resources in and for the TGSS to be successful. In addition, the management of energy initiatives associated with the CEP implementation also necessitates a certain set of skills and staff support. It is recommended that the staff resource recruitment for the sustainability function be referred to budget discussions for 2013.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A- Draft "Thinking Green" Initiatives

Appendix B – Agenda for the Nov.12 Community Energy Workshop and Thinking Green Event

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