



Town of
East Gwillimbury

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REPORT P2012-27

To: Committee of the Whole Council

Date: May 7, 2012

Subject: “*Thinking Green!*” Sustainability Strategy
Refresh and Work Plan Program

Origin: Development Services Department
Economic Development & Sustainability Branch

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** Development Services, P2012-27, dated May 7th, 2012 re: *Thinking Green!* Sustainability Strategy Status Update, be received;
2. **THAT** the *Thinking Green!* Sustainability Strategy revised work plan attached to this report be endorsed by Council.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a work plan to update the *Thinking Green!* Sustainability Strategy. As background, the report identifies an overview of the four *Thinking Green!* theme areas with a process mapped out to revitalize the *Thinking Green!* Sustainability committee (See Appendix 2). The review and update process is a platform to deliver an annual report on the Town’s *Thinking Green!* Strategy using a visible and concise *Thinking Green!* Charter.

BACKGROUND:

The *Thinking Green!* Sustainability Strategy was first assembled and approved by Council in 2009 (see Appendix 1). The primary purpose of the preparation of the *Thinking Green!* Sustainability Strategy was to create a comprehensive package to define the Town’s various program and policy initiatives that were developed by Council between 2005-2009. Over the last few years, the Town has achieved recognition for various sustainability initiatives under the *Thinking Green!* program brand including the following:

- FCM Sustainable Communities Award 2007 (Energy Star Policy)
- Toronto Clean Air Partnership Award 2007 (Green Building Policies)



In addition, the Town has been recognized for its leadership in sustainable policy by the Ontario Power Authority with an Achievement Award. The Town is a member of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) along with more than 200 municipalities across Canada as well as 4 other municipalities in York Region. The PCP program provides access to FCM's Green Municipal Fund (GMF) funding opportunities along with programs and information that enable municipalities to carry-out and deliver environmental initiatives for staff and residents of the community.

Through the Town's continued policy work and advancement with its new Official Plan, Community Energy Plan, and Council's Strategic Plan, East Gwillimbury is well-positioned to continue its leadership role in the sustainability area. The *Thinking Green!* Strategy is imbedded into the Town's Official Plan. The following section on the *Thinking Green!* Strategy is strategically included in the Preamble and Basis Section of the Official Plan to highlight the Town's commitment and support for developing a sustainable community:

Section 1.2.2. Thinking Green! Strategy

"The Town's Thinking Green! Strategy represents an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan for the Town, organized under four distinct areas of policy development:

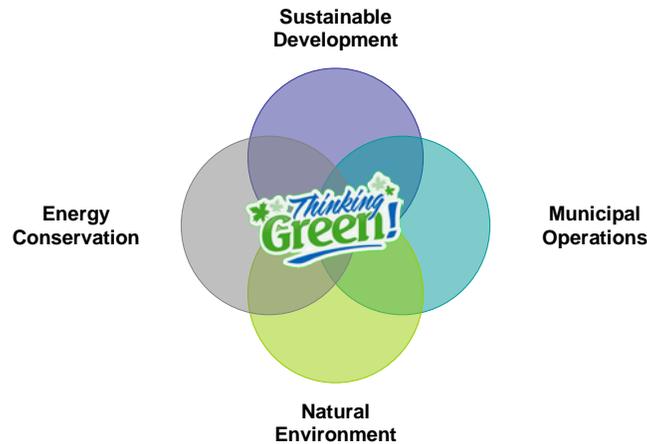
- i) Municipal Operations*
- ii) Sustainable Development*
- iii) Energy Conservation*
- iv) Protection of the Natural Environment.*

The Town's vision for a sustainable community is outlined in Section 2 of this Plan and provides the foundation and guiding objectives for the policy framework of this Plan."

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS:

Structure and Format of the *Thinking Green!* Sustainability Strategy

The *Thinking Green!* Sustainability Strategy has been organized to capture the various municipal-lead initiatives under four broad categories which are set out below:



Sustainability AREA No. 1- Sustainable Development

To provide policies, requirements and guidelines that will ensure growth and development occurs in a sustainable fashion now and in the future. These policies will continue to grow and be built upon to create advanced and up to date communities that exemplify good planning and environmental initiatives. The Town's *Thinking Green!* Development Standards as an example.

Sustainability AREA No. 2- Energy Conservation

To reduce energy consumption and waste through improving policies and technology at the Town. Energy conservation can occur in the Town through municipal operations, new developments, as well as through programs and tips to encourage energy conservation by residents and businesses. As an example, the Town's CEP includes a variety of strategies aimed at energy conservation generally.

Sustainability AREA No. 3- Natural Environment

To protect the natural environment by preserving and enhancing areas of significance such as forests, wetlands and watercourses. It is also important to allow the connection of people to the natural areas which surround them, which can be achieved by promoting and developing trail systems and other outdoor recreation areas. Examples of initiatives in this area include the Town's involvement with the York Region Land Securement Working Group and the Mercury Switch By-Law.



Sustainability AREA No. 4- Municipal Operation & Practices

To provide environmentally sustainable programs and initiatives that will protect and enhance the natural environment and promote resource conservation. Almost every aspect of the Town's municipal responsibilities will be affected by the *Thinking Green!* Strategy; from hybrid vehicles and light sensors in municipal buildings, to reducing road salt. For example, initiatives in this area include the procurement of the light-duty hybrid vehicles and paperless agenda program.

Since 2009 Town staff have implemented and are moving forward on a number of initiatives under the *Thinking Green!* Strategy which will be further documented and reported on through a comprehensive review of past initiatives at the Town. The "refresh" program outlined in this report will explore potential opportunities suitable for the Town's present needs and future aspirations. Ongoing initiatives will continue to be developed and continue to evolve the Town's *Thinking Green!* Corporate Sustainability plan in the coming months. A report to be presented to Council on outcomes of meetings being held between May – September 2012 is targeted for the fall.

With the support of Council's adoption of the original *Thinking Green!* Strategy Start in 2009, the following significant events and policy initiatives have taken place:

- The approval of the Towns' Comprehensive Community Energy Plan in 2009
- Adoption of the New Official Plan in 2010
- The Provincial Green Energy & Economy Act was enacted by the Province together with Ontario Regulation 387/11 which requires GHG Reporting for municipal buildings starting in 2013
- The Town has developed and approved a set of sustainability criteria for new development – *Thinking Green!* Development Standards – approved in February 2012

The Need for an Update and Review of the Thinking Green Sustainability Strategy (TGSS)

A municipal sustainability strategy, although not required by statute, is a valuable instrument to help build support for sustainability initiatives, provide a framework for policy work and help demonstrate a commitment to building a sustainable community. In this manner, the TGSS can reinforce the general intent of the Town's overall Strategic Plan and Official Plan with concrete initiatives. The *Thinking Green!* Strategy has practical advantages in terms of continuing to show compliance with the requirements for receiving Gas Tax Funding from the Federal Government under the agreement with the Association for Municipalities of Ontario (AMO).

The Strategy itself is somewhat dated and may very well benefit from new ideas and initiatives which may be identified through the proposed review and consultation process. The previous *Thinking Green!* Strategy, initiative and policy work was partially the result of the various comments, suggestions and ideas which stemmed from the cross-functional staff team and public input process. It is appropriate to again involve Council, Town staff and the public.



Overview of the Work Plan to Update to the Thinking Green Strategy

Attached to this Report as Appendix 2 is the general outline of the various steps involved in developing an updated *Thinking Green!* Strategy. As with the initial *Thinking Green!* Strategy, a cross-functional staff team will be assembled to work through the review over the next few months. In addition, staff will meet with various stakeholder groups, Town advisory committees and hold a public information session. Staff will also explore the opportunity to partner with other agencies and NGO funders to facilitate sustainability training for Town staff as an initial step toward assembly of the staff “Green Team” which will work on the review process over the next few months. Part of the process will include the reestablishment of the staff cross-functional team which will enable new ideas, suggestions and programs to be revisited and reported back on in order to develop next steps with tangible results for the Town’s *Thinking Green!* Sustainability Strategy.

Sustainability Makes Good Business Sense

The business case for imbedding sustainability into the organizational culture and operations vary from sector to sector. In the Town’s case, the Business Retention and Expansion Study highlighted the need for energy conservation and efficiency opportunities that would reduce business operational costs, support the Town’s *Thinking Green!* Sustainability Strategy and provide new innovative energy solutions for East Gwillimbury Businesses. Many private companies now recognize the value of pursuing green business practices as a key strategy to reducing operational costs, increasing brand recognition, meeting stakeholder expectations, managing risk and meeting new and evolving government regulations. The benefits of being recognized as progressive and giving attention to sustainability and the future is not only important to business for the reasons noted above, but also for the benefits for the Town which may result in increased economic development activity and interest from progressively minded business and investment. As private organizations continue to see value and further solidify their commitment to corporate sustainability, municipalities like the Town of East Gwillimbury are well-positioned to offer and compliment the business development community with sustainability support services.

Thinking Green Strategy include an Annual Reporting Process with Performance Indicators

One of the primary objectives of the *Thinking Green!* Strategy refresh will be to establish, where possible, quantifiable measurement and key performance indicators for improvements in any of the key focus areas of sustainable development, energy conservation, municipal operations and the natural environment. Staff is keenly interested in developing a Sustainability Strategy which includes meaningful elements which create meaningful change both in behavior and results in terms of performance. For example, the recent electronic waste diversion initiative held in partnership with Artex Environmental on March 31 helped the Town divert 5.43 Tons of e-waste



from reaching the landfill. One of the options to be explored will be the development of green house gas tracking and monitoring which ties into the Town's Community Energy Plan target for green house gas reductions, the PCP Milestones and the requirements for municipalities under the Green Energy Act.

The Strategy should be subject to annual reviews and the incorporation of new initiatives and policies as the Town continues to advance in the area of sustainability. A public launch event will be held along with a half day information and training session on energy conservation in the workplace for businesses and homeowners.

The Development of a *Thinking Green!* Strategy Charter to Build Acceptance & Buy-in

The proposed work plan for the review and update of the *Thinking Green!* Strategy, will involve the preparation of a Charter document which will be finalized for concurrent release with refreshed *Thinking Green!* Strategy at a Fall launch event. The Charter is intended to be a high-level symbol of acceptance for the *Thinking Green!* Strategy and would be executed on a voluntary basis by anyone engaged with the Town, from volunteer members of the public to the multitude of community building stakeholders.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue to develop and promote existing *Thinking Green!* projects while exploring new initiatives. The *Thinking Green!* cross-functional staff committee will hold regular meetings to establish and explore new sustainable initiatives and programs that will imbed a culture of sustainability while reducing costs, improving productivity and demonstrating the Town's commitment to enhanced environmental performance. Attached to this report is the *Thinking Green!* Sustainability Strategy Refresh Work Plan outlining various tasks and initiatives in lead up to the Town public launch event slated for Fall 2012.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN PILLAR

This report is aligned with the third Pillar of the Strategic Plan – the Natural Environment. The pillar recognizes the natural environment as a key strategic area of focus for the Town and states “to protect, restore and enhance the Town's natural resources while working for a cleaner environment”. The Town's Natural Environment pillar is broad in scope to include the impacts transportation, commercial and residential developments have on the Town's natural resource base.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



At this time no specific financial constraints or challenges have been identified, as the refreshing of the *Thinking Green!* Strategy is primarily an internal “staff initiative”. Associated costs such as meeting expenses, Lunch and Learn programming, sustainability training and specific environmental projects will be reviewed by management to ensure any financial support allocated to refreshing the *Thinking Green!* Strategy results in improved productivity, reduced operational costs and meets the goals and objectives of the Town’s strategic plan on an annual basis. As it relates to the Fall Launch event, staff have arranged a partnership to hold an education training session with Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation support and will be pursuing other partnership funding to support the event.

ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix 1 - *Thinking Green!* Sustainability Strategy 2009 – Hard Copy (distributed under a separate cover)
- Appendix 2 – *Thinking Green!* Sustainability Strategy Refresh 2012 Work Plan

This report has been reviewed by the Senior Management Team.

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APPENDIX 2: P-2012-27

Thinking Green! Sustainability Strategy Refresh Work Plan			
Task #	Task	Description	Date
1	Development Services Department Lunch and Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set up initial staff meeting to introduce program - Gather ideas, input and suggestions from department staff 	April 13 th , 2012
2	Green Connections York Annual General Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EG will host Green Connections York, presenting the Town's TGSS and CEP Plan - Mayor to open AGM with remarks welcoming the group to the Town 	April 25 th , 2012
3	Town Hall Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TGSS presentation will be given to all staff, sharing work plan and strategy updates with internal staff during 	May 7, 2012
4	Review and Update Thinking Green! Strategy Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update and report on presentation to Council 	May 7 th , 2012
5	Stakeholder Committee Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EG Trails Committee - Business Development Committee - Environmental Advisory Committee - Other groups and committees 	May – June 2012
6	Sustainability Training Plan: Pre-Staff Team Assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainability training through the Region for Corporate-Wide information/awareness day 	May 2012
7	Assemble Staff Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Town-wide call for Sustainability Committee/Green Team members to join and contribute to the TGSS 2012 revision process 	May 2012



8	Staff Working Group Meetings	- 5 meetings will be held with Green Team Staff between May – September to create Key Performance Indicators and Metrics for the Town’s Annual Corporate Sustainability Reporting Process	5 Meeting Dates May – September 2012
9	Public Input Session	- Advertised Public consultation meeting on TGSS update	Late July – Early August
10	York Region Municipal Energy and Sustainability Group	- Gathering input, support and advisory services from local contacts managing municipal energy portfolio’s including monitoring, reporting and conservation initiatives	June – July 2012
11	Staff Report with Revised and Charter	- Staff Report to be presented to Council with a revised and refreshed version of the TGSS and draft TG Charter	September 2012
12	Thinking Green! Day Launch Event	- Thinking Green! Community launch event with Mayor remarks and open house for community residents to learn about the Town’s sustainability strategy - To be held with coincidence day-time education seminar with CMHC for residents and local businesses	October 2012