

10-year strategy targets economic development in Shelburne

The Town of Shelburne's Economic Development Strategy was presented by Trudy Parsons, Executive Vice-President of MDG Insight.

It contained priorities and specific actions that represent the most important steps the Town must take in order to achieve their vision.

With the continued growth Shelburne continues to experience, it has become apparent that the Town needs to further transform the community's vibrancy, sustainability and attractiveness.

With its close proximity to major centers, an affordable cost of living compared to its neighbours, and a climate that fosters a small-town feel, the commute to and from work has been recognized as a 'cost of living' as people look for more affordable ways to capture and maintain a quality of life for themselves and their families.

As markets and boundaries expand, affordability becomes diminished by increased real estate costs.

As such rural community settlements have become more desirable with affordability and quality of life being key factors. For areas such as Dufferin County, and Shelburne in particular, this has become even more attractive with the advantage of transportation routes that position the municipality halfway between cottage country and many major large cities.

'This is not lost on developers and consumers, as is evidenced in the rapid rate of population growth over the last two census periods, and residential development boom that is forecast for completion in 2016,' Ms. Parsons explained. 'The local administration is also aware they are sitting on the cusp of major opportunity, and are pushing out previous growth targets assigned to the Town by the Province of Ontario.'

That being said, Ms. Parsons went on to note that 'that alone will not be enough to ensure that the future unfolds in a manner that effectively harnesses all that Shelburne has to offer.'

This new strategic plan is a guide that clearly sets out all necessary steps the Town of Shelburne has to take in order to improve its competitive position and encourage increased collaboration among the various community stakeholders that will benefit from the town's long-term success.

'With the Town of Shelburne influencing the county official plans and laying the foundation for meeting services requirements and density targets to support increased growth, the desire to grow is strong, but there is also a respect for the community's heritage and a value placed on small town charm and livability, all of which increases the town's appeal to newcomers,' noted Ms. Parsons.

The recommendations set forth in the plan placed hiring of an Economic Development Officer (EDO), a position responsible for economic development services, at highest priority. An EDO would bring Shelburne on par with other municipalities who have dedicated staff and more comprehensive programs and materials to support their economic development efforts.

An EDO was followed by establishing a business retention and expansion program supporting and building on the existing business base.

Next, the plan recommends bringing the business community, business tourism organization and economic development service delivery agencies to inform and engage in the economic development strategy actions.

The Town would then need to establish development guidelines to facilitate the industrial and commercial development process.

From there, the Town would engage existing businesses and organizations as community ambassadors.

This Plan is a ten-year vision and has several components of implementing all stages with clearly stated timelines in order to move Shelburne closer towards achieving its Economic Visions and goals.

By Michelle Janzen