

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Wednesday, October 16, 2019

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: DRAFT GREEN DIRECTIONS VAUGHAN 2019

FROM:

Jason Schmidt-Shoukri, Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

To seek input from City Council on the draft version of Green Directions Vaughan 2019 and to provide a summary of the feedback collected by City staff between June 2019 to August 2019.

Report Highlights

- Green Directions Vaughan (the “Plan”), first approved in 2009, has been updated to reflect evolving priorities and build on the City’s sustainability accomplishments
- The revised sustainability actions in the Plan are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the World Council on City Data framework
- Green Directions Vaughan 2019 includes 69 sustainability actions, down from 84 in the 2009 Plan, which are delegated to 17 City departments
- Community consultation in late 2017 to early 2018 informed current revisions to the Plan
- The need for community collaboration and collective action is emphasized in the draft Plan and the sustainability actions are described as outcomes to better track progress
- A community engagement effort from June 2019 to August 2019 provides validation that the City is moving in the right direction as it relates to continuing to foster a sustainable future

Recommendations

1. THAT City Council direct appropriate staff to incorporate comments received from City Council and the community engagement effort into the final Plan, prior to its approval at a future meeting of the Committee of the Whole.

Background

In April 2009, Council approved Green Directions Vaughan, the City's Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan. Green Directions Vaughan contains a set of recommended actions to drive implementation of sustainability in corporate functions and the city-building process, where "Sustainability means we make decisions and take actions that ensure a healthy environment, vibrant communities and economic vitality for current and future generations."

In September 2016, staff provided an update on the proposed revision of Green Directions Vaughan to the Committee of the Whole. Identified at the time as a critical component of the proposed revision of the Plan was the alignment of the sustainability actions with the changing policy landscape at the Provincial and Federal levels. Several key themes were identified and explored as part of the revision, and included the following:

- better alignment with the objectives of health agencies
- more attention to climate change mitigation efforts
- a new focus on climate change adaptation and resilient communities

Two additional criteria guided the revision of the Plan:

- describing the sustainability actions as outcomes to better track progress
- acknowledging the importance of collective action and encouraging community partners to collaborate on sustainability actions

The revision of the Plan began in late 2016 to fulfill a Service Excellence Strategy initiative. It resulted in modifying sustainability actions following departmental consultation, a policy review and municipal benchmarking. In 2017, IndEco Strategic Consulting Inc. helped structure the City's community engagement effort in support of the Plan revision. IndEco's engagement report is appended as Attachment 1.

City staff prepared the draft Green Directions Vaughan 2019 in-house with the assistance of ongoing internal departmental consultation by way of a Technical Advisory Committee. Through 2018 and into 2019 staff finalized the 69 sustainability actions that implement the Goals and Objectives of the Plan. Graphic design and document layout

of the updated 2019 Plan was done with assistance from the Corporate and Strategic Communications department. The draft Green Directions Vaughan 2019 document is appended as Attachment 2 and was made available as part of the public comment period from June 2019 to August 2019.

Public comments on the revised Green Directions Vaughan 2019 will be incorporated into the final version for City Council approval in December 2019

Public consultation is a vital part of the city-building process. City of Vaughan staff planned and undertook a comprehensive community engagement effort, which was undertaken completely in-house, from June 2019 to August 2019 on the draft Green Directions Vaughan 2019. The main objectives were to generate awareness of Green Directions Vaughan and validate that the City is moving in the right direction in relation to how the community imagines a sustainable Vaughan. The community engagement effort was developed as a partnership between the Policy Planning and Environmental Sustainability department and the Corporate and Strategic Communications department and included a wide variety of engagement techniques. City staff capitalized on the summer season and endeavoured to reach a wide range of citizens and stakeholders with a “go-to-where-the-people-are” approach.

The following engagement techniques were employed:

- social media messaging
- promotion in the City Update eNewsletter and Council eNews
- direct follow-up with stakeholders and residents who participated in the community engagement effort in 2017
- retail pop-ups at strategic locations, such as Vaughan Mills and Promenade Mall
- telephone and web surveys
- attending Concerts in the Park and partnering with Vaughan Public Libraries to participate in youth programming
- informal community meeting garden social

Graphic design and document layout of the final Green Directions Vaughan 2019 publication will be finalized by the Corporate and Strategic Communications department and will be used to improve ongoing communications of the Plan. Design elements, such as photographs that were sourced throughout the summer, will be added to the publication. A few areas of the document still require technical content updates.

Previous Reports/Authority

Previous reports considered by City Council regarding the Plan can be found at the following links:

[Green Directions Vaughan Annual Update 2016](#)

[Green Directions Vaughan Annual Update 2018](#)

Analysis and Options

The main content of the revised Plan includes 69 sustainability actions, down from 84 actions in the 2009 Plan, through the integration of departmental business plans and minimizing overlap and duplication. The sustainability actions are delegated to 17 City departments for implementation.

The Plan also describes the governance framework to ensure accountability, including ongoing tracking of community indicators, and a 'Best Practices' section. This provides a measurement of progress to support Environmental Stewardship as a strategic priority area in the 2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan.

Green Directions Vaughan is aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Although the definitions of sustainability, environmental ethic and operating principles derived for the first iteration of Green Directions Vaughan continue to guide the new Plan, the City has aligned the revision of the sustainability actions in the Plan with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and the World Council on City Data (WCCD). Through the successful implementation of the sustainability actions, the City contributes to the achievement of ten SDGs.

The City of Vaughan was the second Canadian city to become a member of the WCCD when it joined in 2016. The WCCD provides a global platform for standardized city data and acts as a hub to help strengthen partnerships across cities, international organizations, corporate partners, and academia. Standardized indicators and membership with the WCCD enable the City of Vaughan to assess its performance, measure progress toward the UN SDGs, and draw comparative lessons from other cities both locally and globally.

The revised sustainability actions reflect evolving priorities and include two new objectives

The robust structure of the goal areas, objectives and sustainability actions is retained in Green Directions Vaughan 2019. All sustainability actions are updated, and the

revised Plan contains two additional objectives. The new objectives recognize: (i) the importance of the Agricultural System, urban agriculture and local food opportunities in Vaughan, and (ii) the need for more attention to climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts to create a resilient City and a low carbon economy.

In support of the Aboriginal territorial acknowledgement passed by Council on June 5, 2017, 'Acknowledgement' has been added as a sustainability principle. This principle recognizes the traditional territories of the Indigenous people who continue to live or have lived in Vaughan.

A governance framework ensures tracking of Plan implementation

A governance framework is included in the Plan to monitor progress on the implementation of Green Directions Vaughan and demonstrate City accountability. Milestones being developed for each sustainability action are one component of the governance framework. Milestones are key achievements to deliver project outcomes and can be aligned with departmental business plans. This is an internal gauge allowing departments to keep track of the progress of the sustainability actions assigned to them, and to simplify annual reporting to Council in a dashboard style. While the 2009 Plan had an implementation and reporting structure, the milestone approach as described above is new to the 2019 Plan.

In 2012, City of Vaughan Council approved 24 quantitative indicators to track progress on the implementation of Green Directions Vaughan. The quantitative indicators are carried forward as a component of the governance framework. Three indicators are updated as part of the revision of Green Directions Vaughan to allow for more meaningful annual tracking and to align to the WCCD.

The draft Plan will require technical updates that will be presented to Council in 2019

Staff review of the draft Green Directions Vaughan 2019 document revealed that technical updates are required before final approval by Council at a future Committee of the Whole meeting. The following recommendations will be incorporated into the draft Plan:

- When referencing SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), identify that Green Directions Vaughan only contributes to SDG 2.4 (sustainable food production systems)
- Revisit the Best Practices section to include additional achievements and ensure that external information is sourced accurately, including:
 - Canada has joined the Drive to Zero Pledge

- Additional Canadian cities are striving for net zero emissions
- Include, in the Achievements section under Objective 2.1, that the City of Vaughan has declared a climate emergency
- Revise Action 5.1.2 to include increased education to youth on sustainability issues
- Revise assignment of actions to responsible departments based on corporate restructuring

The community engagement effort undertaken by staff has validated that the City is moving in the right direction

Throughout June 2019 to August 2019, Policy Planning and Environmental Sustainability staff re-engaged the public to present concepts from the updated Green Directions Vaughan 2019 Plan. The comprehensive community engagement plan was designed with two main objectives, to obtain a ‘green thumbs up’ indicating a community-supported plan and to raise awareness of Green Directions Vaughan as the City’s community sustainability plan.

A summary of the engagement effort is documented in Attachment 3 and goes into detail about the various engagement techniques used and in-person sessions organized. Attachment 3 includes observations, captures verbatim comments, and reflects on an analysis of each outreach effort, including recommendations and next steps. The City of Vaughan undertook the engagement process completely in-house; work which would have been valued at approximately \$50,000 in the private sector.

City staff participated in the following 14 events:

- Eight pop-ups at City-run events
- Two pop-ups at retail locations in Vaughan
- Four facilitated sessions

Two feedback boards were used to educate and collect feedback – one included a summary of the GDV goal areas and main themes in the Plan, and the other provided open space for residents to write their comments. City staff were always on hand to facilitate discussions about the Plan, answer questions, gather feedback and seek approval of the Plan. A total of 78 comments and 195 ‘thumbs up’ stamps were received. The facilitated sessions provided a more intimate opportunity to connect with residents, deliver personalized presentations on GDV, allow for more in-depth, two-way conversation and focused question-and-answer, and collect detailed feedback on the Plan. A total of 55 community members attended the facilitated outreach sessions.

The majority of the feedback received from the community is reflected in the revised Plan, including comments such as increasing education, preserving and enhancing greenspace, waste reduction initiatives, addressing traffic and electric vehicle support. Other ideas expressed by the community are outside the scope of work for the municipality, such as expanding subway lines and reducing transit fares.

The City's corporate channels were used to promote the wide array of opportunities to provide feedback — both in person and online. These channels included:

- The project website at vaughan.ca/GreenDirections
- The City's corporate social media channels
- The City's corporate eNewsletter City Update
- The City's digital channels, including Vaughan TV, digital signs and homepage presence
- Providing content to Council to include in their eNews and social media channels

Emails were also sent to stakeholders who were initially consulted in the 2017 engagement effort, as well as others that represent key community groups. Effort was also made to contact registered ratepayer groups and seniors' groups. The emails informed the stakeholders of the draft 2019 Plan and provided them with an opportunity to review and submit feedback. Access Vaughan deployed a short telephone survey for a two-week period starting on August 26, 2019 which received 269 responses. The results of the survey will be used to help inform ongoing communications related to the Plan.

Though most residents at the events were unaware of Green Directions Vaughan, they were pleased to know that a new sustainability plan is underway which prompted them to voice their support for it. The engagement effort revealed that ongoing community outreach is necessary not only to continue to raise awareness about the Plan, but to demonstrate how the actions in the Plan affect residents and how residents can contribute to a sustainable Vaughan. The feedback received during the engagement effort validates that the City is moving in the right direction in regard to how our community envisions a sustainable Vaughan.

Financial Impact

Budget from the Policy Planning and Environmental Sustainability department Capital Project ES-2521-15 covered the costs of the community engagement process. Communication efforts through the website, social media and eNewsletters, as well as the design of communications and print material was provided in-kind by the Corporate and Strategic Communications department.

Departments will strive to integrate sustainability into everyday business operations by demonstrating the contribution to Green Directions Vaughan 2019 in departmental budgets, business plans and Master Plans across the organization. Many of the sustainability actions in the revised Plan already align with the current goals and initiatives set out in the respective Master Plans. This integration is financially efficient, as implementation of the actions will already be included in business plans.

Environmental sustainability can often contribute to financial sustainability. The Environmental Sustainability team will work with colleagues in other departments to develop a financial framework for each sustainability action, as needed, to track the incorporation of the actions into City budget processes. In addition to informing operating and capital budgets, the financial framework will consider items such as:

- Anticipated cost savings
- Revenue generation potential
- Return on investment
- Grant/funding opportunities

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Green Directions Vaughan 2019 is aligned with York Region Vision 2051 and the revised Service Excellence Strategic Plan.

Conclusion

A community engagement effort throughout June 2019 to August 2019 for the revised community sustainability plan, Green Directions Vaughan 2019, generated awareness in the community and provided residents with a chance to validate the new Plan. Ongoing community engagement of Green Directions Vaughan will aim to foster collective action to build partnerships and capacity in the local community. Working together increases the chance to succeed in creating a sustainable Vaughan.

The revision process will produce an updated Green Directions Vaughan 2019 publication that can be used to inform the Official Plan Review and the revision of the long-term strategic plan.

Success of the sustainability actions relies on local collective action that involves residents, community groups, environmental organizations, businesses, industry leaders, and other levels of government. To achieve our goals, it will take collaboration and integrated planning, including through participation in individual and neighbourhood-scale actions. We need to build partnerships and capacity in the local community.

For more information, please contact: Alanna MacKenzie, Sustainability Coordinator, Policy Planning and Environmental Sustainability, ext. 8941.

Attachments

1. GDV Engagement Report 2018-04-10, IndEco Strategic Consulting Inc, April 9, 2018
2. DRAFT Green Directions Vaughan 2019
3. GDV Summer Engagement Report 2019

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