



Town of Cobourg

Review of Strategic Plan Report of the Facilitator

April 1, 2021

John Matheson

The Review of the Strategic Plan

Purpose:

- Council of the Town of Cobourg, supported by SMT, met in a public meeting on April 1, 2021 to review the Cobourg Community Strategic Plan:
 - to determine if there were any amendments that needed to be made to it to address emerging priorities
 - to assess the relative priorities of different plan items, to better guide the development of staff operational plans.
- The meeting was conducted online and facilitated by John Matheson of StrategyCorp Inc.

Process:

- Prior to the session, SMT members and all members of Council were interviewed by the facilitator.
- Based on the interviews, a Draft SWOT Assessment (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) was prepared for consideration by Council.
- In addition, the existing Strategic Plan was annotated to reflect the aggregated priorities of different initiatives, as identified by Council in the interviews.
- Council considered and validated the draft SWOT and priorities over the course of a six hour meeting.
- The results of Council's deliberations are recorded below.

Results:

- The evolution of the strategic plan occurs on slides 4-12
- The SWOT analysis, as validated by Council, including the comments made by Council, appears in Appendix 1.

Results of Council Session

Key to Pages 5-12

Slide	Description
Slide 5	Draft, Presented to Council at the beginning of the session, of the Existing Plan, Colour-Coded to Reflect Council's Current Priorities , as reflected in the pre-session interviews.
Slide 6	Strategic Plan as Revised by Council: The priorities are arranged in the original order from 2018 plan)
Slides 7-11	One slide for each of the 5 themes , showing how different priorities were reordered as a result of Council's deliberations.
Slide 12	Strategic Plan as Revised by Council: The priorities are re-arranged in the order of priority assigned by Council at the workshop.

Draft Presented to Council of the Existing Plan, Colour-Coded to Reflect Current Priorities

Priority Colour Code

Highest Priority

More Work Needed
this Term

Adequate Planned
Progress

Ok to Defer

Based on the interviews, these colour codes were used to sort the priority of items in the existing Plan. At the Council Session, the priority of each was discussed and validated. The following pages reflect those deliberations

People

Housing strategy

Implement a Youth Program

Encourage Healthy Lifestyles

Pursue Age Friendly Community Designation

Invest in Accessibility

Place

Investigate Additional Heritage Conservation Districts

Create Climate Change Action Plan

Consider Arts Culture and Tourism Division

Continue Downtown Vitalization

Asset Management Plan

Repair and Rejuvenate East Pier

Partnerships

Explore Community Hub

Explore partnerships with Venture13

Work with Sustainable Cobourg on Green Initiatives

Integrate transit services

Facilitate Collaboration with citizens

Programs

Develop IT Strat Plan

Develop Record Management System

Explore Enhanced Sidewalk Snow Clearing

Review third Party Contracts

Explore Communications priorities

Prosperity

Develop policy for shovel ready lands

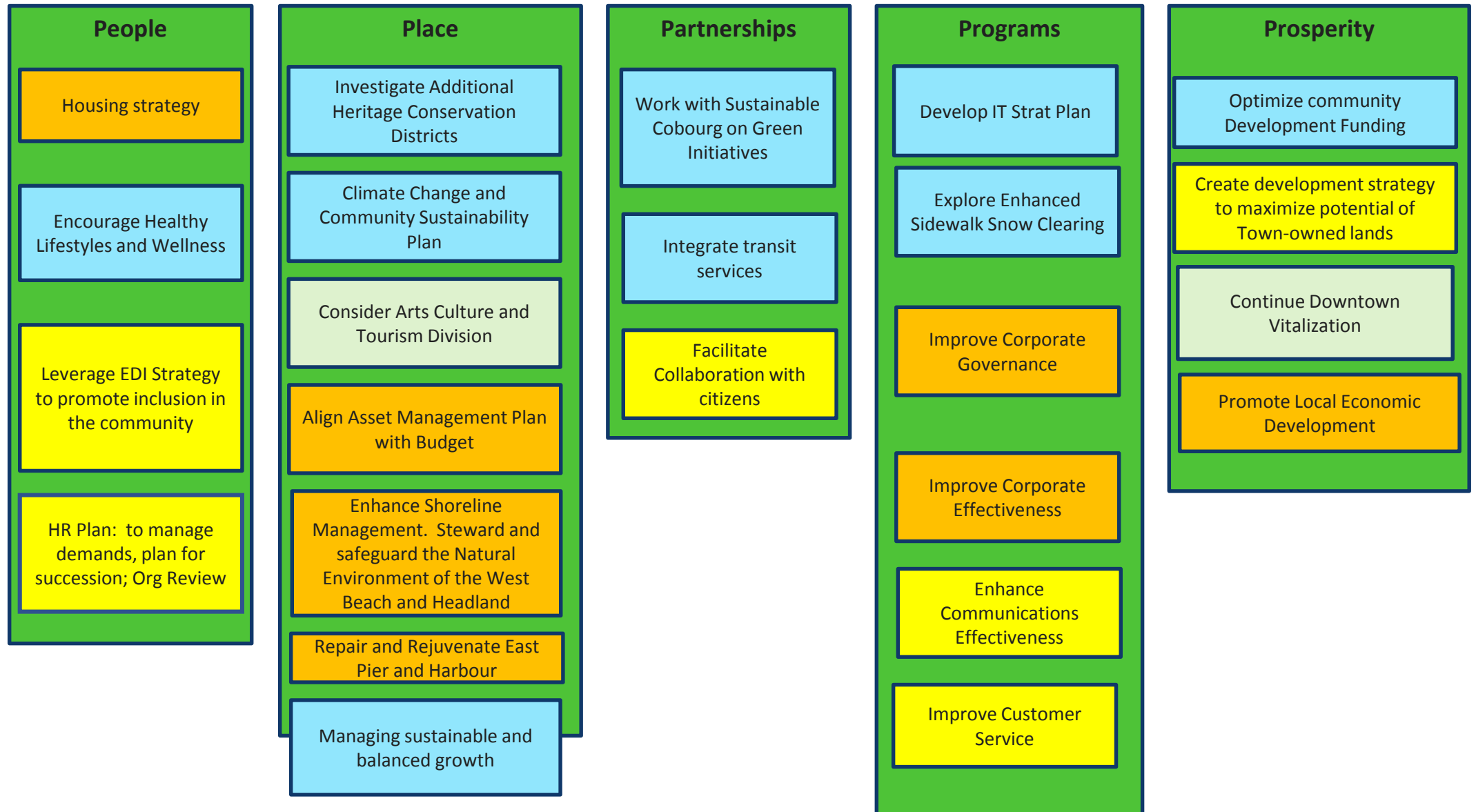
Optimize community Development Funding

Review Expanding Northam Ind. Park

Explore improving links btwn waterfront and downtown

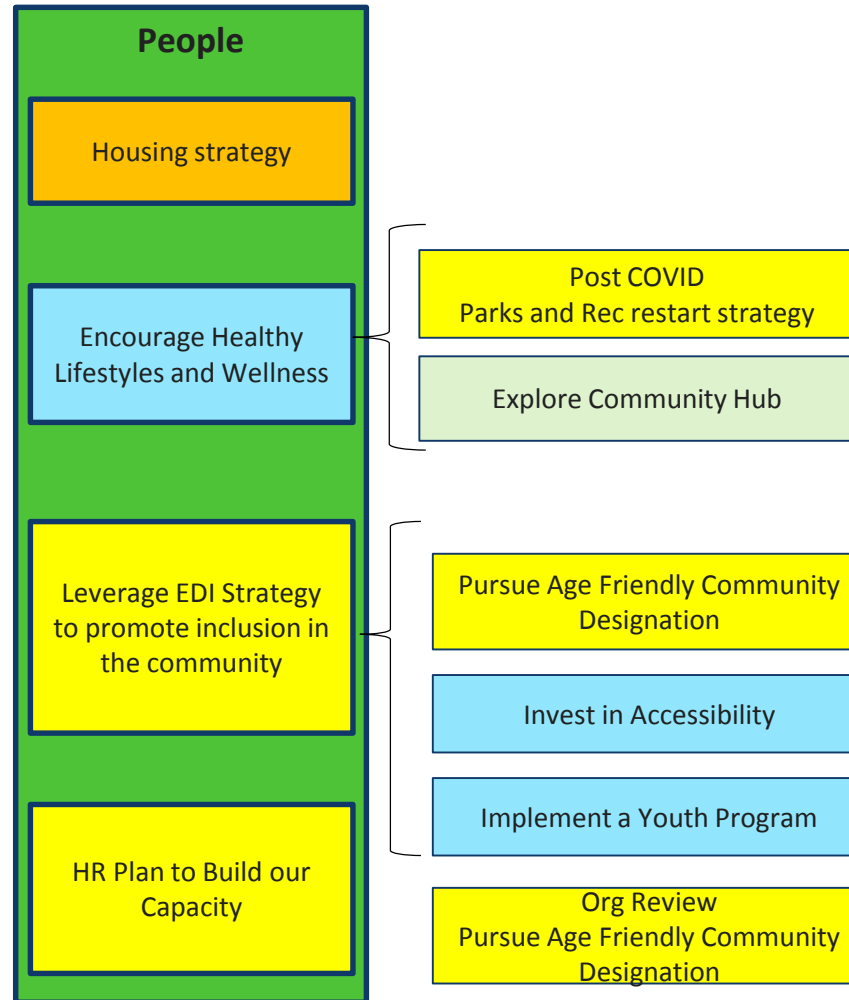
Develop Resources to support small business

Strategic Plan as Revised by Council (arranged in the Original Order from 2018 plan)



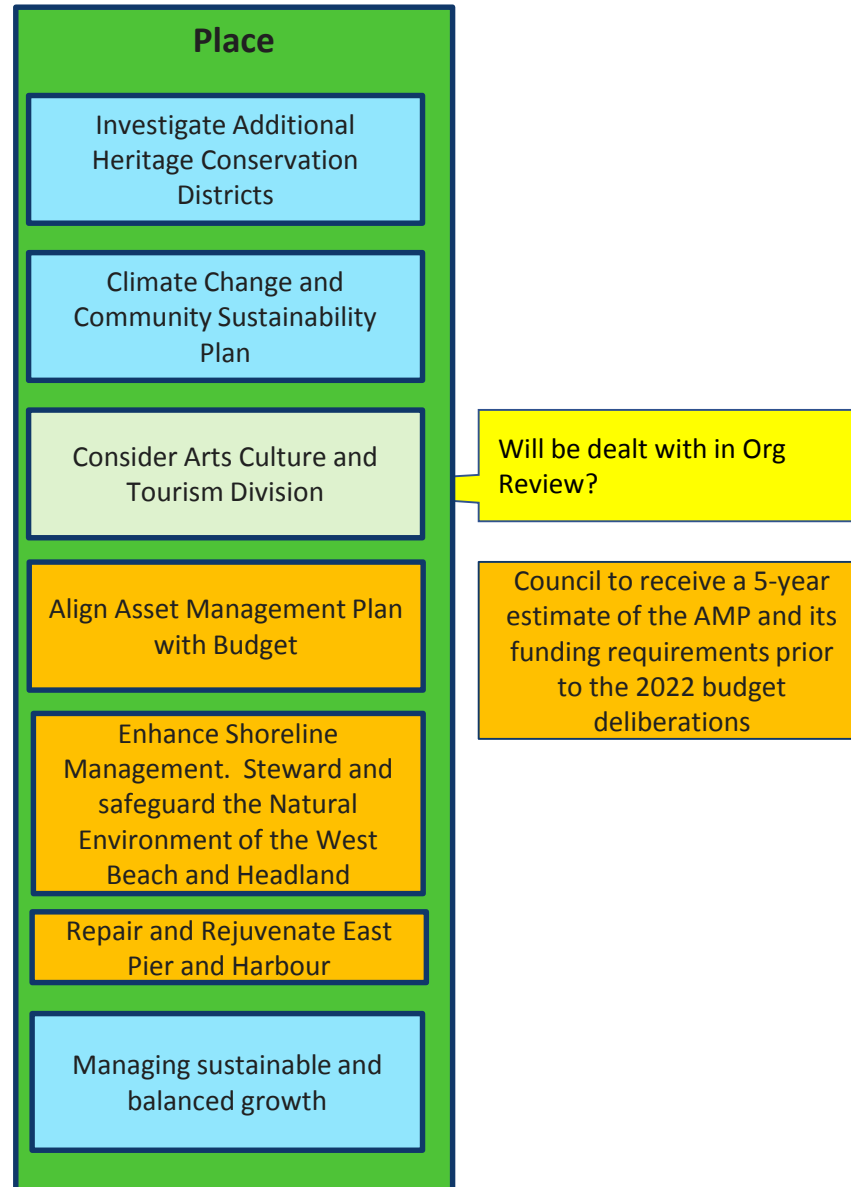
People (as revised by Council)

- The Green Box reflects the amended “People” section as validated by Council.
- Items outside the box are to become specific activities tracked by staff in operating plans, but have been removed as high order priorities for the Plan.



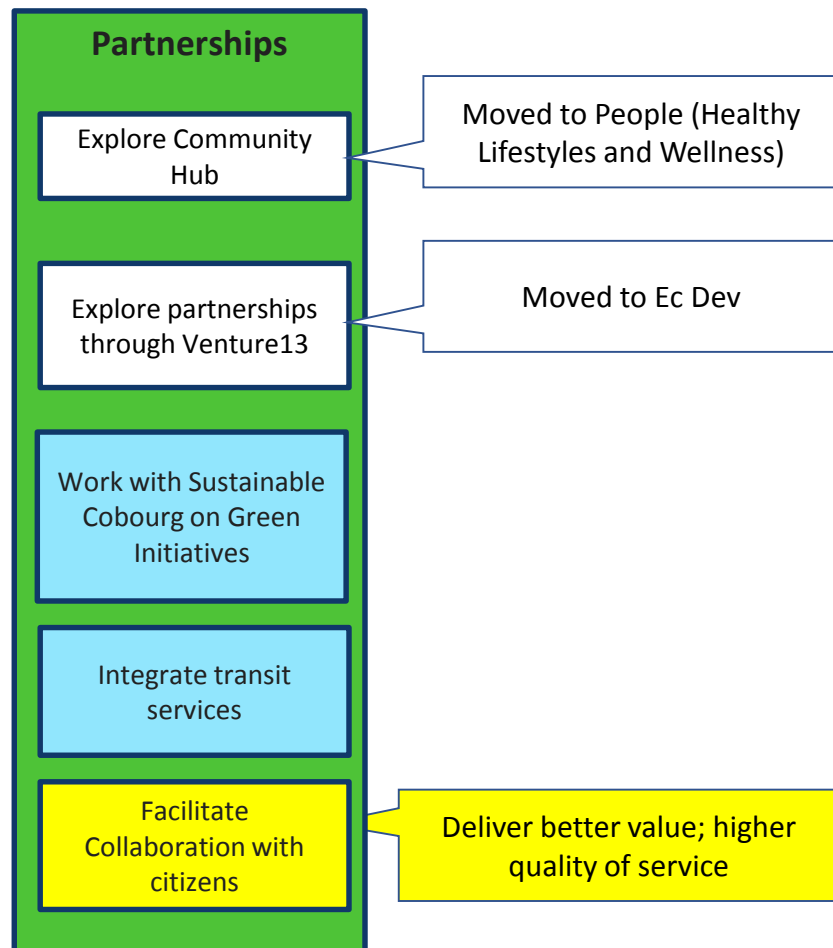
Places (as revised by Council)

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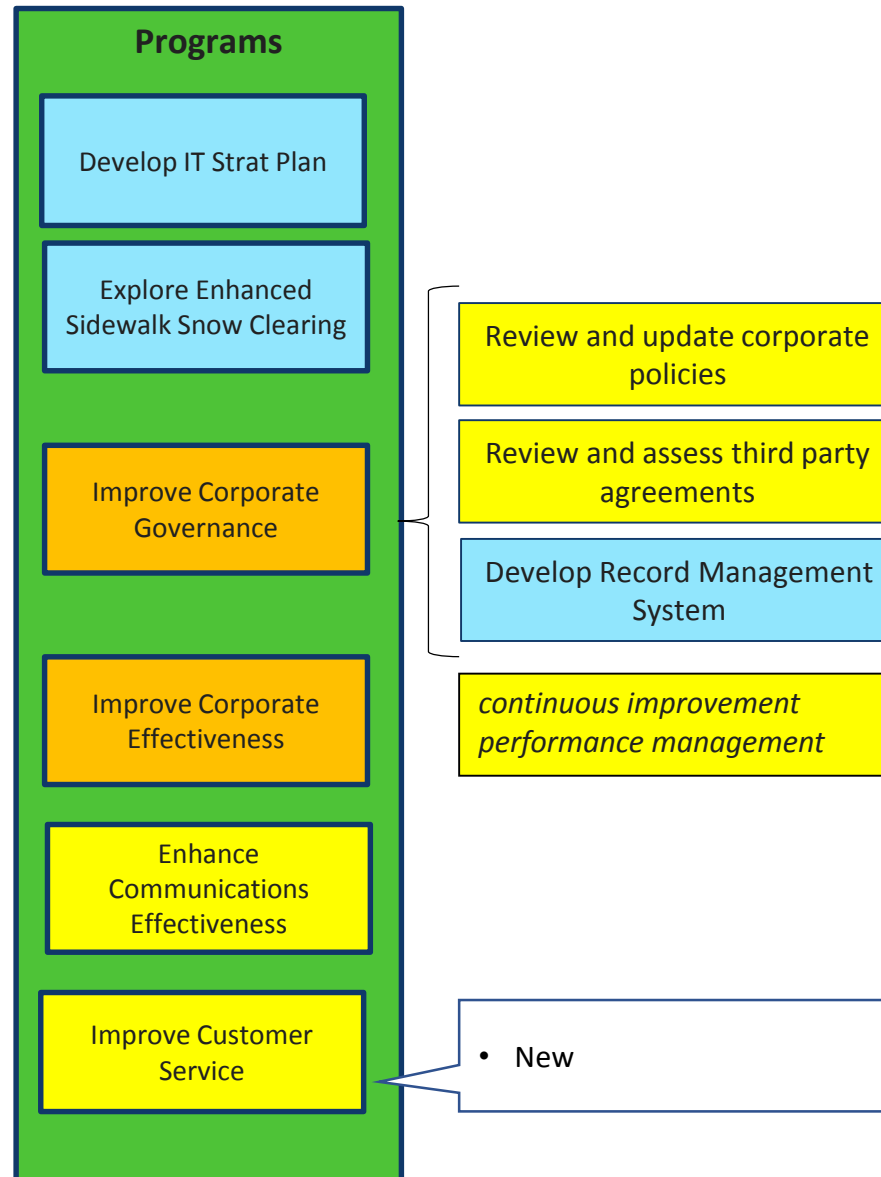
Partnerships (as revised by Council)

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- Items outside the box are to become specific activities tracked by staff in operating plans, but have been removed as high order priorities for the Plan.



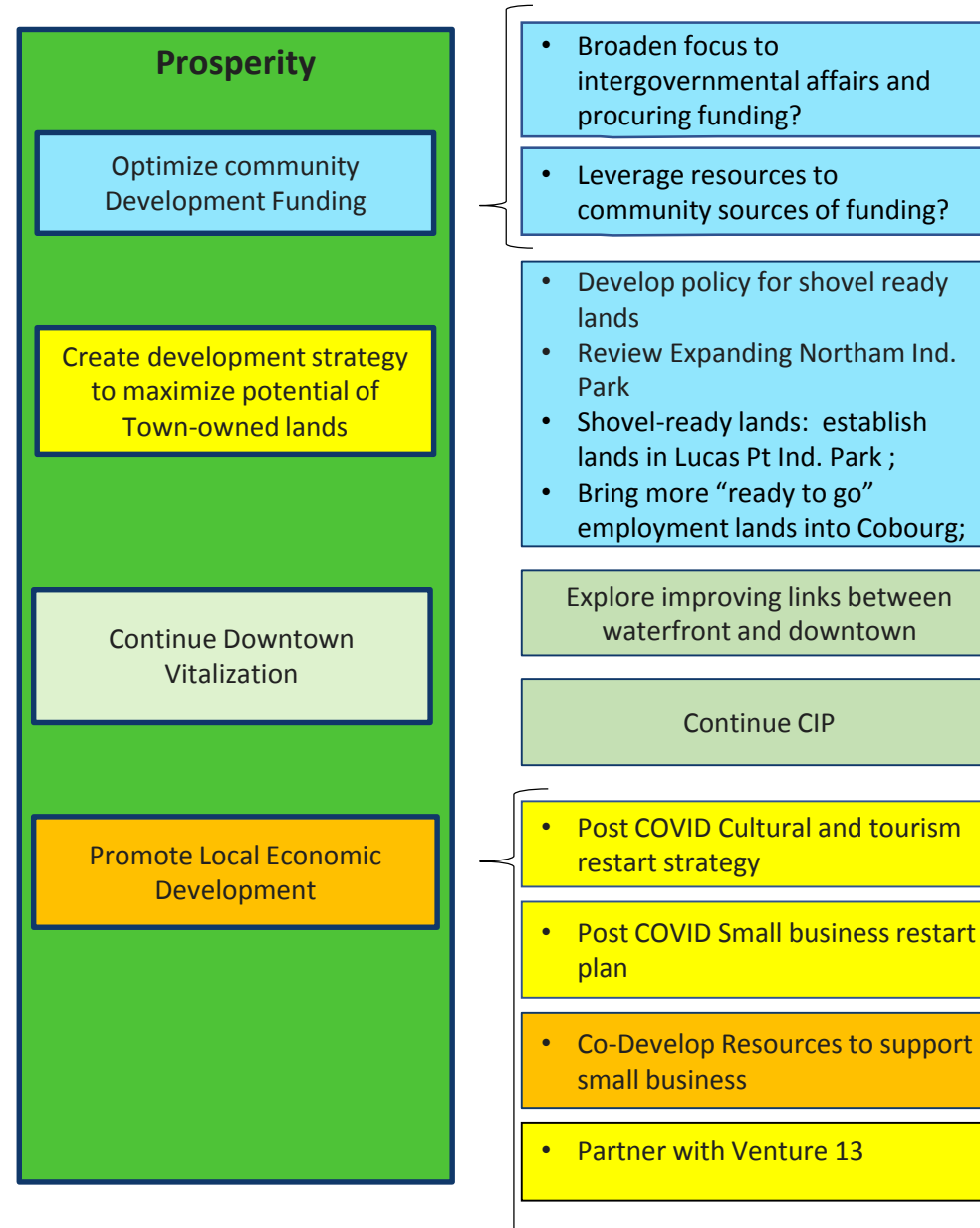
Programs (as revised by Council)

- The Green Box reflects the amended “Programs” section as validated by Council.
- Items outside the box are to become specific activities tracked by staff in operating plans, but have been removed as high order priorities for the Plan.

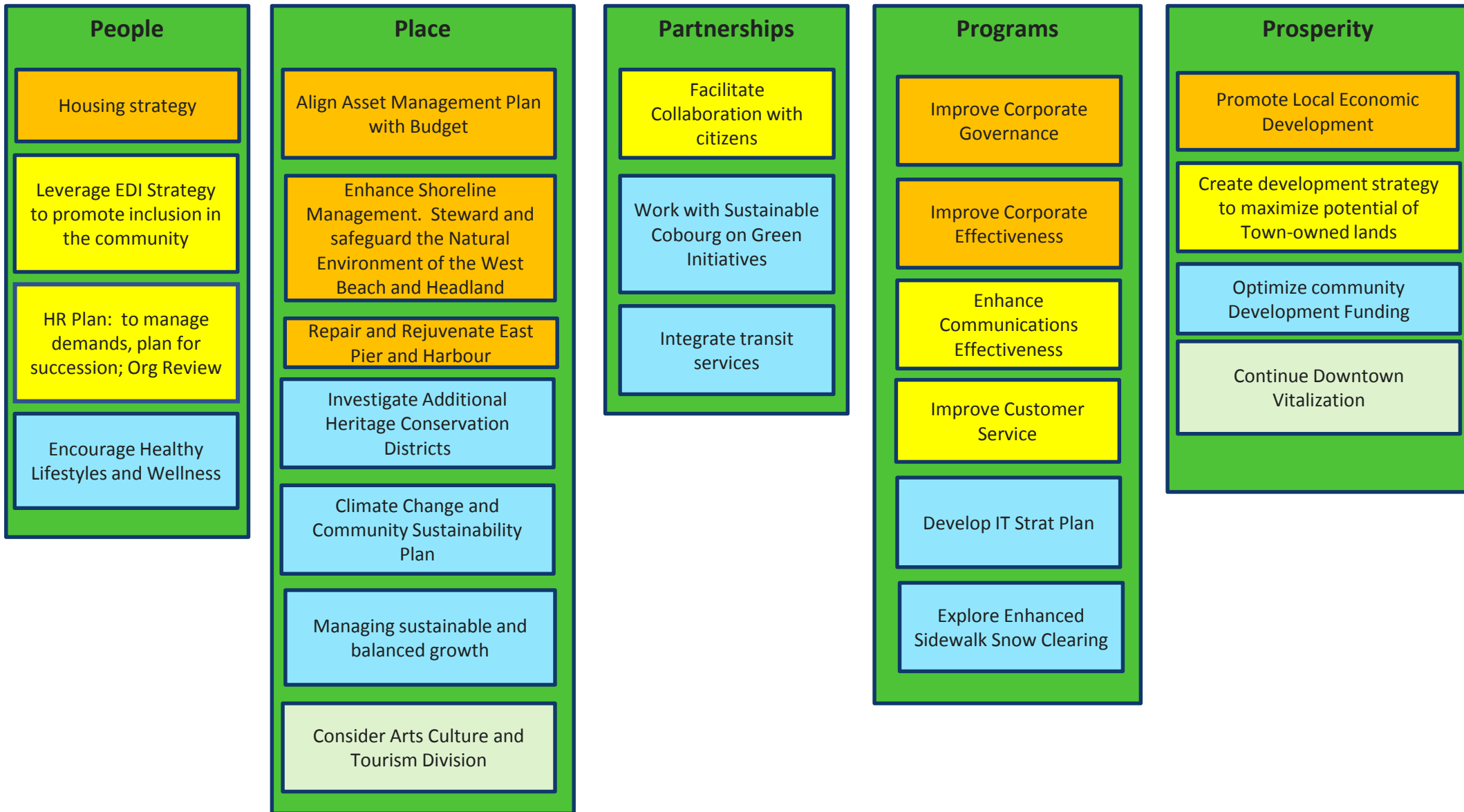


Prosperity (as revised by Council)

- The Green Box reflects the amended “Prosperity” section as validated by Council.
- Items outside the box are to become specific activities tracked by staff in operating plans, but have been removed as high order priorities for the Plan.



Strategic Plan as Revised by Council (re-arranged in priority order)



Appendix 1: SWOT Analysis Reflecting Council Inputs

The Plan Overall: Some Pros and Cons

Pro	Con
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“The Strat Plan works pretty well.”</i>• <i>“Its a good snapshot of what we thought at the time. Of course, there have been changes.”</i>• <i>“No obvious misses by way of ‘new things’ we should cover.”</i>• <i>“It still, more or less, covers most of the appropriate priorities.”</i>• <i>“Staff reports are regularly linked back to the Plan.”</i>• <i>“We have made tremendous overall gains; in many categories of activity, and the plan helps keep track of that.”</i>• <i>“Now, we have a window of opportunity to further refine what we want to achieve before the end of this term, and what can wait.”</i>• <i>“We have a chance to prioritize; maybe combine some matters, maybe take some off the list.”</i>• <i>If we each championed one, we could make sure we saw things through...</i>• <i>Need to prioritize: they are all important; need to pick a couple to follow through on...</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“Its totally fair to point out that half of us were new at the time and might see things differently now.”</i>• <i>“Not all the different issues are of equal weight.”</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“[relative] priority is only rarely discussed.”</i>• <i>“No one could have predicted COVID. We need to update it.”</i>• <i>“The Plan gets left on the shelf too often.”</i>• <i>“Not widely used in organization on a day-to-day basis.”</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“Too many priorities, not enough focus.”</i>• <i>“The Strat Plan has not informed our budget plans.”</i>• <i>“There are some areas where regular business cannot be linked back to the strategic plan.”</i>• <i>“Lack of confidence in some of the progress reporting.”</i>• <i>“Staff try to draw linkages to the plan, but sometimes it has to be tenuous, because of how it is written.”</i>• <i>“Each initiative requires a champion. We have too many initiatives.”</i>• <i>“We can’t do everything.” “Need to be critical of how we link new projects back to the plan.”</i>

Strengths

Thinking of the civic administration...	Thinking of the community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>...heading in the right direction/on the right track</i> • <i>... have a very good staff;</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Have started to focus on training and succession planning, and HR improvements</i> • <i>Our upcoming Planned Org Review will help resolve some issues</i> • <i>Improving awareness of long-term financial outlook</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>...Increased focus on Asset Management Plan (but lots to do to fully fund the program)</i> • <i>Overall, we deliver good services</i> • <i>Innovative approach to service delivery: e.g. innovative transit pilot</i> • <i>Growth: a good plan for growth management and a good planning team</i> • <i>COVID created opportunities to find new efficiencies</i> • <i>Our Corporate Policy Review Committee is rally important</i> • <i>Our CIP has worked well (Housing and Downtown renewal)</i> • <i>We have a big inventory of completed, high-quality, long-term plans.</i> • <i>Solid relations with Ontario, MPP; track record in grants</i> • <i>EDI strategy progress; formulating a committee</i> • <i>Institutional memory</i> • <i>“terms of engagement” in communicating with public</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Quality of life is incredible;</i> • <i>Still has a small-town feel, but home to a wide range of regional services</i> • <i>“Architectural heritage”</i> • <i>A beautiful town in a beautiful part of the province...</i> • <i>Cobourg is inviting;</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Attractive downtown in proximity to waterfront</i> • <i>Growth is coming (but we must manage it)</i> • <i>Still relatively affordable (compared to GTA) but becoming more expensive</i> • <i>Wide range of community organizations and culture of civic involvement ...but we can do better)</i> • <i>The strength of the people who make Cobourg home “the people make the place”</i> • <i>Location: Proximity to 401; GTA; lake</i> • <i>Growth: a positive, but also a threat (increased costs of services, infrastructure)</i> • <i>Tourism: festivals; add to economy</i> • <i>High degree of volunteerism: eg Vaccination centre at CCC has 500 volunteers</i> • <i>Groups: PFLAG, Lions, etc.</i>

Weaknesses

Thinking of the Administration	Thinking of the community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Improve the budget process.”</i> • <i>Burden of capital requirements and so far unfunded demands of AMP (state of good repair; AODA)</i> • <i>Expensive transit system; unmet transit need</i> • Council and Committees? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Explore measures to reduce length of meetings...”</i> • <i>“Some working well; potentially too many...”</i> • Council-Staff Role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Avoid micro-management”</i> • <i>Ensure adherence to Council Staff relations policy and avoid adversarial tone</i> • <i>Manage Council requests for staff reports</i> • <i>“be careful to not overburden staff;” “respect workloads”</i> • “COVID has interrupted personal touch in service delivery” • Legacy policies and contracts in need of being updated • Legacy IT resources in a time of constant innovation and security threat • Need to do more in HR: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lack of structured performance reviews; training, promotion strategy;</i> • <i>Some under-resourced departments (planning)</i> • Lots of unfunded Master Plans; need to be more integrative in what we design and what we can afford 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harbour and East Pier have significant, expensive capital needs • “There is a perception of there being high taxes here, whether it is fair or not.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Inadequate communications assets to manage external criticism and negativity.” • County Relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“There are always concerns about the fairness of arrangements with the County...”</i> • <i>“We pay for about 30% of the services at the County;</i> • <i>“There are misunderstandings about jurisdiction and ‘who does what?’”</i> • Planning and Growth: <i>“Perception in development community we are “slow” or difficult to deal with on approvals</i> • Increasingly limited supply of affordable and attainable housing • Aging population • Emerging EDI issues <i>in need of improvement in community; Education process is important. Training.</i> • Aging Population: <i>Need to better understand the Pandemic effect on our seniors; how it impacts age in place strategy.</i> • We lack a tourism philosophy: <i>The Victoria Park Beach; lacking a tourism philosophy; work required</i> • Tourism strategy: <i>Need to assess the ROI on our tourism budget; strategy of it</i> • Youth services and engagement: <i>need to consider the suitability of our services to all our core demographics</i>

Opportunities

Thinking of the civic administration...

- **Establish shared vision of financial goals**
 - *“Live within our means...”*
 - *“Debt reduction: only borrow for things we really need.”*
 - *“Focus on value for money.”*
 - *“Show them just how boring it is when it is done right!”*
- **Human Resources:** Need to be sensitive to workload demands on staff given COVID especially
 - *“Staff are tired; we need to respect the morale issue.”*
 - *“We need to respect that and let them catch up.”*
- **COVID Restart:** *“Once COVID is done, we will need a strategy to get the most out of the “new normal”*
 - Small business restart
 - **Tourism Restart:** *“help our operators get back on their feet”*
 - **Cultural strategy:** *“help our vibrant groups, theatre get going again.”*
 - **Parks and Rec** *“will need to have plan to make sure we get people and groups get back to our facilities.”*
- **New corporate branding**
- **Implement improvements from Recent Service Delivery Review and upcoming Org Review:** opportunities to implement improvements

Thinking of the community

- **Strategic Focus**
 - ...Confirm intentions of Strategic plan re: prioritization...for the Town, not just the administration
- **Be ready to manage growth:**
 - **More immigration from GTA will drive growth**
 - *“We expect a big 10 years for Cobourg...”*
- **Planned provincial Budget Investment in the Restart**
- **More Inter-municipal collaboration on shared services** (county, neighbours, inter-municipal purchasing cooperatives, etc.)
- **Historic Federal and Provincial investments in broadband**
- **Opportunities for significant developments**
 - **Tannery site**
 - **Brookside site**
 - **Repurposing of Memorial Arena**
 - **Revitalization of Harbour**
- **Municipal Comprehensive Review:** *We need to review our OP plan before July 2022; will reconfirm our growth plans; linked to County review*

Threats...

Thinking of the civic administration...

- **Asset Management and Reserves**
 - Too many capital project “surprises”
 - Need to build reserves
 - big projects on the horizon
 - **Human Resources**
 - Succession planning and staff retention issues esp. in Fire Department
 - Adequacy of staffing resources to deliver on strategic objectives
 - **AODA requirements:** next steps in achieving compliance
 - **Need to be more accountable more transparent generally**
 - Operational areas: e.g. Marina; Dredging; Campground
 - Introduce performance management /KPIs
 - **Allocation of tasks to unfinished business list** (important not to keep adding tasks without regard to existing workplans) and management of list
 - **Update out-of-date policies**
 - Fees and contract review
 - **Customer Service:** Need a more advanced customer service procedures
 - **Intergovernmental relations:** improve collaboration with County
- **Need for measures to support “restart”**
 - **Equity diversity and inclusion:** need to increase inclusion activity of all sorts
 - **Lack of common vision of “what tourism means to Cobourg.”**
 - **Beach access:** what is our strategy re: beach access? Is it a tourism asset or community asset
 - **Climate change and adverse weather events; flooding risk**
 - **Significant loss of existing parking in downtown** due to planned developments
 - **Risks Associated with Rapid Development Pressure:**
 - Challenge of timely processing of increased applications
 - Need for updated Council strategic guidance or posture towards growth
 - **Cybersecurity Threats**