



Town of Cochrane 2013 Strategic Plan



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STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR THE TOWN OF COCHRANE

“A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has”

Margaret Mead

This Strategic Plan for the Town of Cochrane is intended to provide the high level direction for the organization. Based on an analysis of key trends affecting the Town, a detailed review of the 10 Year Financial Plan, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis and the previous Strategic Plan, this Strategic Plan gives guidance for the Town as it moves forward into the next year.

The objective of this plan is to provide clarity on direction to allow for all levels of plans, actions and activities of the Town to align with this strategic direction, and with one another. Building on the vital day-to-day services that the Town provides to the community, this Strategic Plan indicates where the organization should focus its efforts in order to meet the challenges of the current environment as effectively as possible.

This plan provides the following key elements:

- Vision
- Mission
- Guiding Themes
- Strategic Directions

As a foundational document for the Town, the diagram below outlines the key rationale for why strategic planning is important:

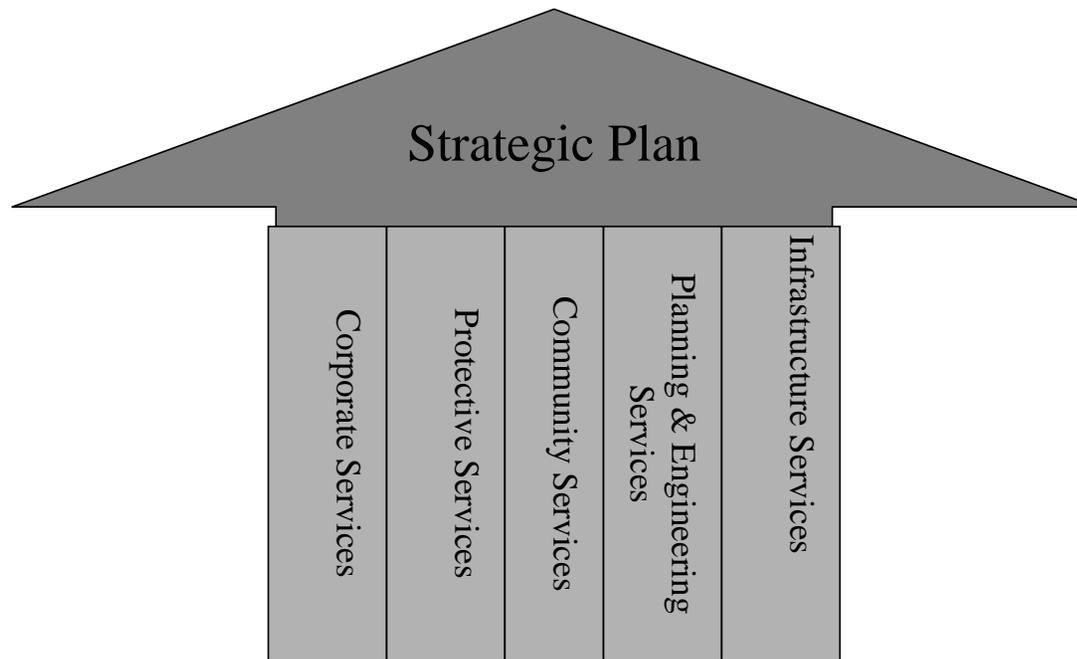


Source: <http://www.novamind.com/planning/mind-maps/strategic-planning-1-680.png>

CORE BUSINESS

The Strategic Plan is built upon the foundation of core business that the Town of Cochrane provides and spends most of its resources and focus on. The Strategic Plan provides the key direction for the Town to ensure that the organization is addressing the issues that the Town faces now and will face in the future. The diagram below illustrates the importance of the core business of the Town of Cochrane within the Strategic Planning process.

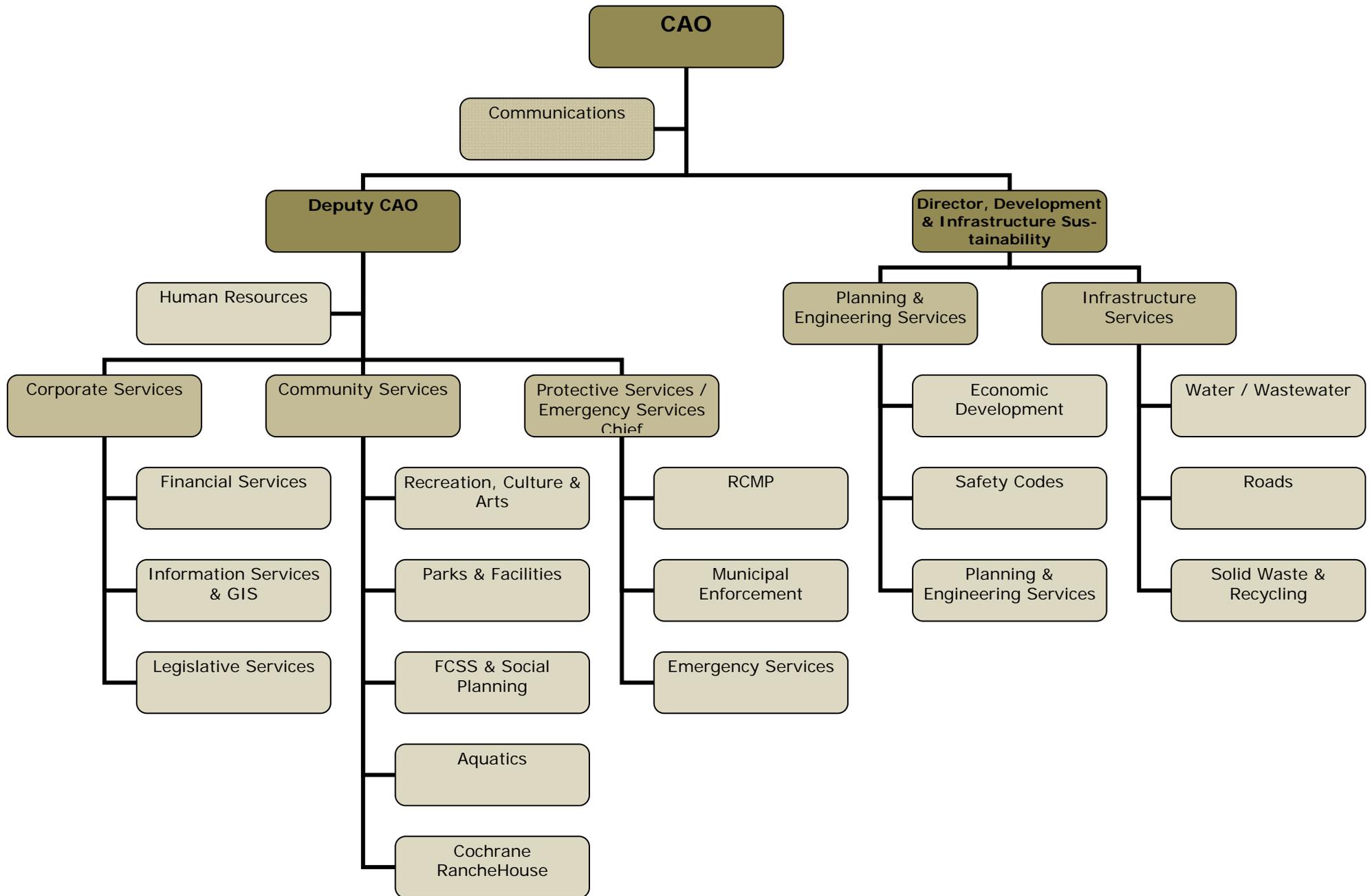
COUNCIL PRIORITIES



The Strategic Plan builds on the core business of the organization and sets the key direction for the Town of Cochrane.

Although this Strategic Plan is focused on the Town of Cochrane as an organization, it is important to acknowledge the role that Council plays. Two critical roles that Council plays is in the creation of public policy and the allocation of public resources. The Town is then tasked with the implementation of the policies and priorities set by Council. In order to ensure the integrity of the Strategic Plan, Council will use the Strategic Plan to inform it's decision-making.

The Town of Cochrane's 2013 organizational structure is outlined below:



VISION AND MISSION

Vision

Proud of Cochrane's heritage, embracing our future, we are a dynamic organization creating municipal excellence.

Mission

To protect and promote Cochrane as a unique community through our dedication to public service.



CORPORATE VALUES

Our corporate values describe how we will act while accomplishing our vision and mission. This is the way we do our business and the principles that guide our daily behaviors. (Listed alphabetically.)

Accountability

We conduct ourselves with integrity in a responsible manner to build trust and confidence.

Continuous Learning & Development

We acquire ongoing success and personal growth through continual learning and development.

Customer Service

We serve the public interest with a positive attitude.

Fun

We believe that the use of respectful humor, laughter and plain old fun are important and that it contributes to our individual and organizational well-being.

Healthy and Safe Work Environment

We enhance the quality of life by minimizing risk and creating an environment where people are valued as individuals.

Innovation

We are a creative leading-edge organization embracing new ideas and new technologies.

Open Communication

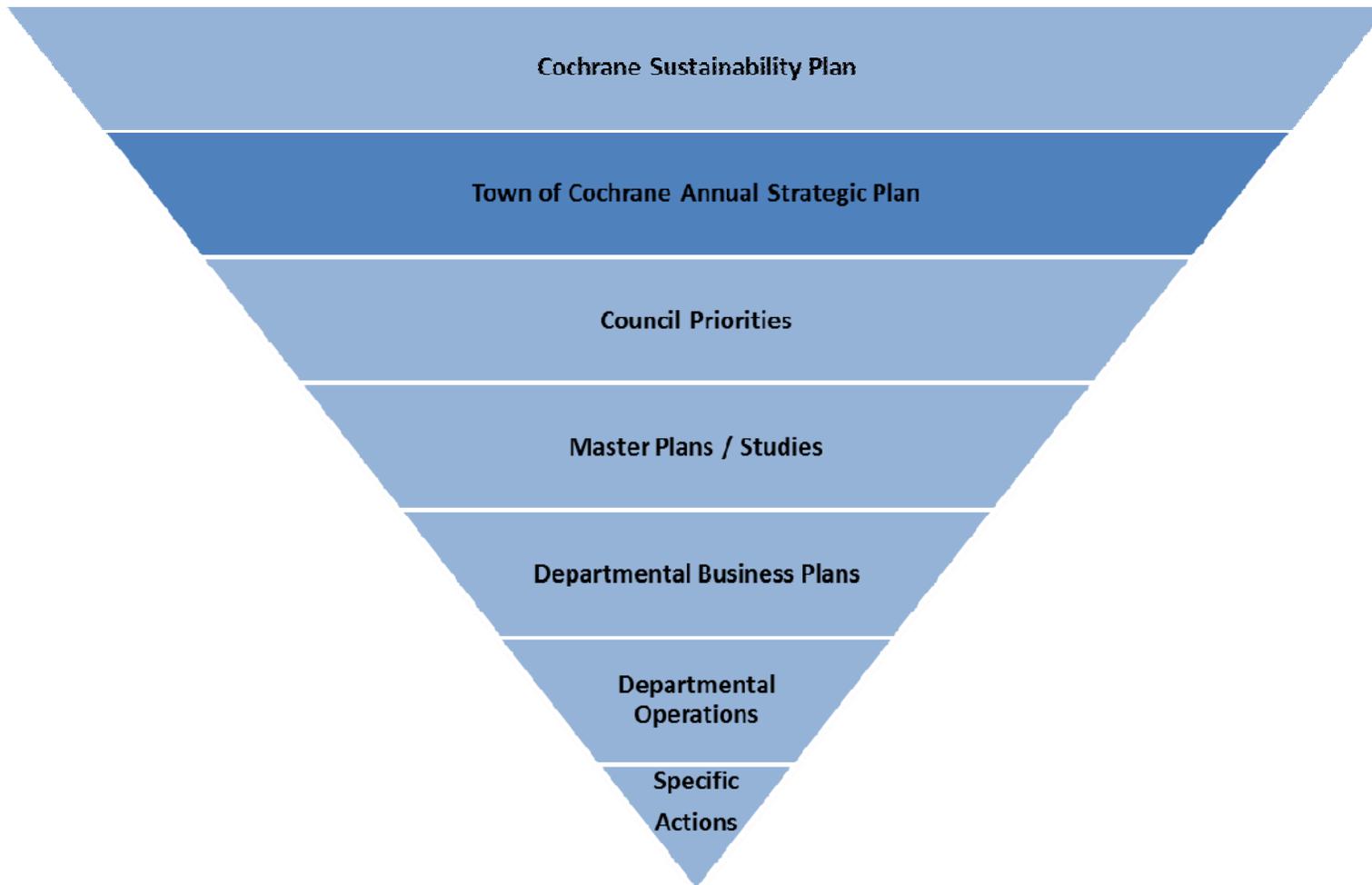
We communicate openly, respectfully and promptly.

Participation

We achieve productivity and success through involvement, teamwork and recognition.

STRATEGIC PLAN - CONTEXT AND HIERARCHY

The Cochrane Sustainability Plan is a unique plan in that it is a long-term, community-wide plan for action. While the objective is to see as widespread action as possible throughout the community, the Town of Cochrane has a large mandate to play in implementing this plan. The Strategic Plan represents the highest level plan of the Town of Cochrane and sets the direction for decisions throughout the organization. This Strategic Plan will align with the direction set out in the Sustainability Plan and ensure that the organization of the Town of Cochrane operates as effectively as possible in meeting its mandate – both as it relates to the Sustainability Plan and in its internal workings.



STRATEGIC PLAN – CONNECTION TO DECISION-MAKING

In order to ensure that the organization is as efficient and effective as possible, each level of plans and actions need to align with the next level above it, ultimately aligning with the Cochrane Sustainability Plan. Within the Town of Cochrane, the Strategic Plan represents the highest level direction and will influence the direction, priorities and accountability throughout the organization. The following table indicates the level of actions and plans and the key question to ensure alignment at the appropriate level.

Plan / Action	Key alignment question
Cochrane Sustainability Plan	
Town of Cochrane Annual Strategic Plan	<i>Does this align with the Cochrane Sustainability Plan?</i>
Council Priorities	<i>Do these align with the Town's Annual Strategic Plan?</i>
Master Plans / Studies	<i>Do these align with the Council Priorities?</i>
Section Business Plans	<i>Do these align with the Master Plans and Studies?</i>
Section Operations	<i>Do these align with our Section Business Plans?</i>
Specific actions	<i>Do these align with Section operations?</i>

GUIDING THEMES

The following four themes are the overarching ideas and principles we use to guide our actions and close the gap from where we are today to achieving our desired vision.

1.0 Sustainable Community Building

Together we create a complete community through a balance of environmental, economic, and social infrastructures

2.0 Communications

Together we enhance communication by working collaboratively, building positive relationships, and sharing information and resources.

3.0 Organizational Excellence

Together we create and enhance an effective organization, encouraging continual improvement, innovation and accountability.

4.0 People and Potential

Together we create an organizational environment that supports diversity and enables our employees to reach their potential and goals.

GUIDING THEME:

1.0 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BUILDING

Together we create a complete community through a balance of environmental, economic, and social infrastructures.

Strategic Directions:

1.1	Existing core infrastructure, facilities, and plans continue to be maintained, and life cycled to effectively manage Town assets.
1.2	Future infrastructure, facilities and plans be developed and implemented to accommodate growth.
1.3	Partner with the community and other orders of government to appropriately support municipal initiatives.
1.4	Promote/Advocate the Cochrane Sustainability Plan by aligning our plans and actions.

GUIDING THEME:

2.0 COMMUNICATIONS

Together we enhance communication by working collaboratively, building positive relationships, and sharing information and resources.

Strategic Directions:

2.1	Use effective inter-departmental communication mediums and processes to encourage collaboration across the organization.
2.2	Use effective communication mediums, processes and messages to provide transparency, support dialogue and develop understanding with external partners.
2.3	Develop and implement effective approaches to communication and public engagement.

GUIDING THEME:

3.0 ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Together we create and enhance an effective organization, encouraging continual improvement, innovation and accountability.

Strategic Directions:

3.1	Create efficiencies in processes and day-to-day procedures to achieve continual improvement.
3.2	Align departmental and Council priorities to ensure focus across the organization.
3.3	Promote and celebrate a culture of engagement, customer services, innovation, responsibility and accountability.
3.4	Provide municipal programs, goods and services through a financially sustainable framework.

GUIDING THEME:

4.0 PEOPLE AND POTENTIAL

Together we create an organizational environment that supports diversity and enables our employees to reach their potential and goals.

Strategic Directions:

4.1	Provide opportunities and resources for knowledge transfer, learning, accreditation, employee and career development.
4.2	Continue to support the attraction, retention and engagement of quality staff.
4.3	Promote and enhance the health, safety, wellness and quality of work life for our staff.
4.4	Support and recognize staff efforts related to continuous improvement and/or innovation.

APPENDIX A - COCHRANE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN VISION AND PATHWAYS

OUR COCHRANE

Innovative, bold and dynamic, Cochrane is a community that creates its destiny by building on our proud heritage. We are people of vision in environmental stewardship and economic vitality that was passed down to us through our strong and rich western Canadian foundation. At the heart of Cochrane we value our small-town atmosphere, distinctive big hills, escarpments, waterways and unique opportunities. We are a community forged by relationships supportive of our common desire to live long, fulfilling lives.

As pioneers of sustainability, we build on the legacy of our pioneering past.

We honour our heritage.

We celebrate our strong relationships.

We respect the land.

13 PATHWAYS TO THE FUTURE...

We Build a Culture of Responsibility

1. We are a socially responsible and empowered community.

We are Responsible Citizens of the Planet

2. We treat water as a precious resource.
3. We use energy responsibly and innovatively.
4. We contribute to the solution on climate change.

We Live Locally

5. We consume the bounty of our local economy.
6. Our local economy is healthy and diverse.
7. Everyone has an opportunity to pursue their potential in Cochrane.
8. We are a caring community that lives and celebrates together.

Cochrane is a Complete Community

9. Everyone has a roof over their head.
10. There's enough room for everything a community should have.
11. Wherever you are in Cochrane, you're close and connected.
12. There are diverse options for getting around.
13. We build Cochrane on the strengths of our natural and cultural heritage.

APPENDIX B – KEY TRENDS AND SWOT ANALYSIS

- Updated in April 2012 by Council and the Leadership Team as part of the Strategic Planning process.

Sustainable Community Building

Strengths

- ❖ We have a great community with strong community buy-in.
- ❖ Current state of infrastructure (Roads, Water, Sewer, Storm) is in generally good shape...no significant infrastructure deficit
- ❖ Cochrane Sustainability Plan
- ❖ We are on the cusp of change and the Town has so much potential that can leveraged to create an amazing future
- ❖ Long range visioning, documents and priorities
- ❖ Commitment to initiatives and projects promoting environmental stewardship
- ❖ Focus on growth facilities
- ❖ Forward looking. As a group we are all trying to look beyond the immediate needs
- ❖ Organization identifies sustainable community as key for success
- ❖ Our rolling 10 year financial strategy is a great tool

Weaknesses

- ❖ Many priorities, limited funding
- ❖ Steps to sustainability are too small and too slow
- ❖ Growth pressures need to be managed
- ❖ Increasing community demands and shrinking resources will require creativity and patience
- ❖ Important planning policies to better manage growth have not been completed
- ❖ Budgetary challenges. Our costs of providing existing services are increasing while demand for new services is also increasing

Opportunities

- ❖ Leveraging new amenities as catalysts for economic growth
- ❖ Revitalize Cochrane's downtown with quality development in the Quarry area
- ❖ Public consultation or information sessions on all future 10 Year Financial plans so community understands council priorities
- ❖ Increase economic development through new development opportunities
- ❖ Being a leader in sustainability
- ❖ Continuation of long range planning
- ❖ Focus on quality of life of citizens with development of new facilities and planning for open space
- ❖ Recommitment to sustainability plan
- ❖ Glenbow Ranch Park - can benefit Cochrane economically with minimal investment on Cochrane's side

Threats

- ❖ Community expectations, limited commitment to tax increases to meet those expectations
- ❖ Financial pressures
- ❖ Provincial funding gaps, operating dollars
- ❖ Being able to meet community wants and needs with respect to infrastructure and facilities/services
- ❖ Financial sustainability of the Town of Cochrane could be a risk
- ❖ Economic downturn, halting downtown development
- ❖ Being able to successfully close the operating gap that continues to grow
- ❖ Diminishing investment in sustainability plan

Communications
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Building capacity and innovation within the Communications Department ❖ Quick response to concerns ❖ strong communication team
<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ We need to continue to build capacity in terms of internal communications. We seem to have difficulties keeping everyone in the loop ❖ Expectations from citizens and staff too high for resources available
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Expanding and learning through public engagement process ❖ Given the recent Transit Engagement Launch event, it is clear we are moving quickly and setting the bar higher in terms of innovative public engagement tools and process ❖ Revamp of town website ❖ Improved communication strategy (priority on community); stronger public engagement
<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Public scrutiny through engagement process ❖ There are still staff feeling out of the loop ❖ Strong community interaction needs to continue to ensure we are truly listening and engaging the public to build trust - this can be easily lost

Organizational Excellence
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ High level of service delivery within the "hard services" sector of the municipality ❖ Culture of excellence ❖ Good cross functional communication ❖ Supportive Council ❖ Alignment of our Strategic Planning / Business Planning / Budgeting cycle ❖ Strategic approach vs. tactical responsiveness ❖ Staff levels; staff skill and expertise ❖ Customer Service
<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The organizational structure may be hard to maintain due to financial constraints. ❖ Budget restraints due to limited revenue sources ❖ In the Planning and Engineering department there are still process improvements that need to be identified and implemented to ensure customer service levels and efficiencies are maximized ❖ Relationship with the community ❖ Administrative capacity
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Building trust in the community through more public consultation ❖ More cross functional teams ❖ Increase number of young employees
<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Growth of Organization matching growth of community - is there enough \$ support ❖ Staff attraction and retention

People & Potential

Strengths

- ❖ Knowledgeable, loyal staff, effective structure
- ❖ Commitment to staff development and succession within the organization
- ❖ Support for growth and continuing education
- ❖ There is a strong work place culture and staff dedication and commitment which we need to work to sustain.
- ❖ Talented workforce
- ❖ Strong capable employees
- ❖ Staff that are committed to this community.
- ❖ Willingness to help

Weaknesses

- ❖ Our ability to retain and attract qualified staff continues to be a challenge and will become more prominent over the next few years
- ❖ Problems attracting/retaining qualified staff due to wage and cost of living ratio
- ❖ Current staff workloads

Opportunities

- ❖ Staff have opportunities for innovation in their service areas
- ❖ We have a very competent employee base where skills and knowledge are apparent.
- ❖ Transit engagement process can lead to a better way of engaging the public in our overall decision making process

Threats

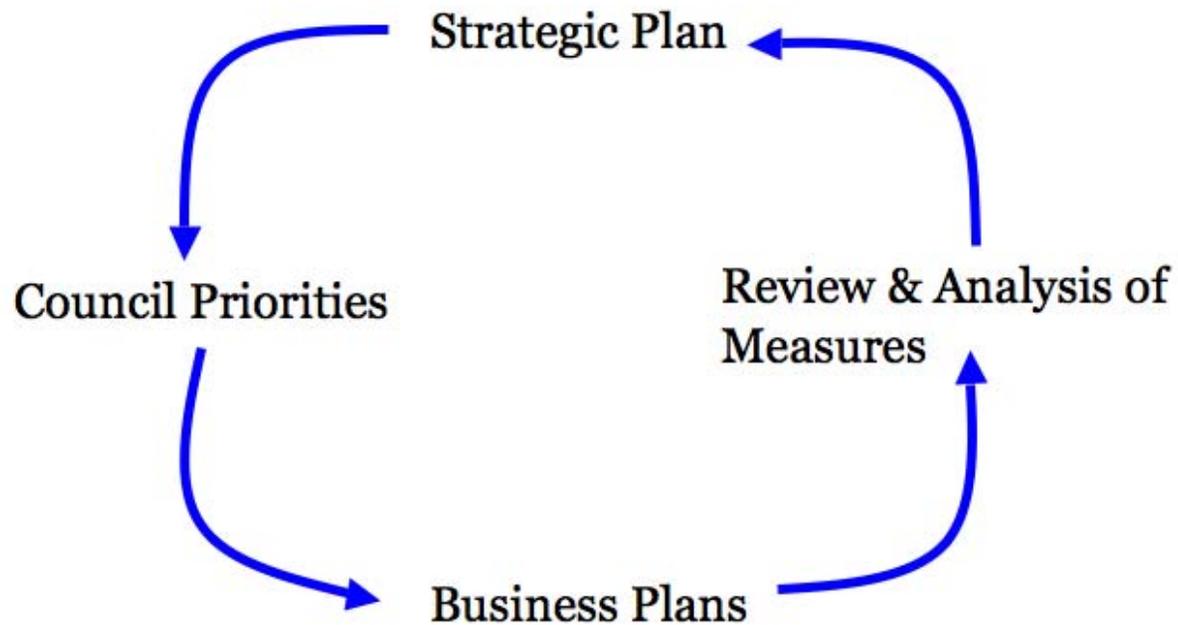
- ❖ The financial constraints faced could erode our culture
- ❖ Being able to maintain the high level of skill sets that are evident
- ❖ Retention of talented staff at risk due to burnout
- ❖ Budget pressures limit wage and personal growth opportunities for staff
- ❖ Increasing compensation of staff
- ❖ Union impact to financial sustainability

APPENDIX C – EVALUATION PROCESS

Adopted by Town Council and the Leadership Team as part of the Strategic Planning process.

EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING

In order to facilitate continuous evaluation, learning and improvement, it is important for Town leadership to have a process that flows effectively and provides timely information and reflection. The diagram below reflects the process that builds on existing systems to create a continuous loop of planning, action and reflection.



Step One: Identifying Strategic Links

Every element of a Section business plan should align with a Strategic Direction(s). When creating business plans, Managers will identify which Strategic Direction each statement aligns with.

Step 2: Sort by Strategic Direction. Review status and provide feedback to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

With the cross-reference to the Strategic Plan in place, the cumulative activities under each Strategic Direction can be evaluated. Using a simple red-amber-green system, a report from each Section can be sent for evaluation by the SLT. The evaluation system is as follows:

	Unacceptable level of progress – requires immediate attention
	Acceptable level of progress – requires monitoring and improvement
	Acceptable level of progress

Step 3: Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Evaluation.

With the evaluation for all items under each Strategic Direction, SLT can evaluate the organization's progress at the strategic level. The same red-amber-green system will be used for each of the 15 Strategic Directions. This then provides the necessary feedback for SLT as they begin the next year's Strategic Planning process, which will guide the next round of organizational planning.