

Executive Summary

The Community Sustainability Plan aims to improve quality of life for Oxford's current and future generations and to balance Oxford's collective economic, community, and environmental interests.

Background

Located in the heart of southwestern Ontario, Oxford has a population of approximately 109,000 residents. Oxford is "growing stronger together" through demonstrated partnerships with residents, businesses, the County of Oxford, and the eight area municipalities: Blandford-Blenheim, East Zorra-Tavistock, Ingersoll, Norwich, South-West Oxford, Tillsonburg, Woodstock, and Zorra.

One of Ontario's foremost farming communities, Oxford's location at the crossroads of Highways 401 and 403 has contributed to the development of a significant commercial and industrial sector. Oxford is home to a thriving local arts, culture, and culinary community, and boasts conservation parks, natural areas, and more than 100 kilometres of scenic trails.

What is Sustainability?

Sustainability is an approach to meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. It takes into account the short and long-term ecological, social, and economic consequences of our actions and emphasizes both environmental and human well-being as essential ends in themselves.

Oxford has adopted the lens of sustainability to create an integrated and effective approach to addressing challenges, including economic and social inequities, human health, ecosystem decline, and community development.

Figure 1: Sustainability Framework

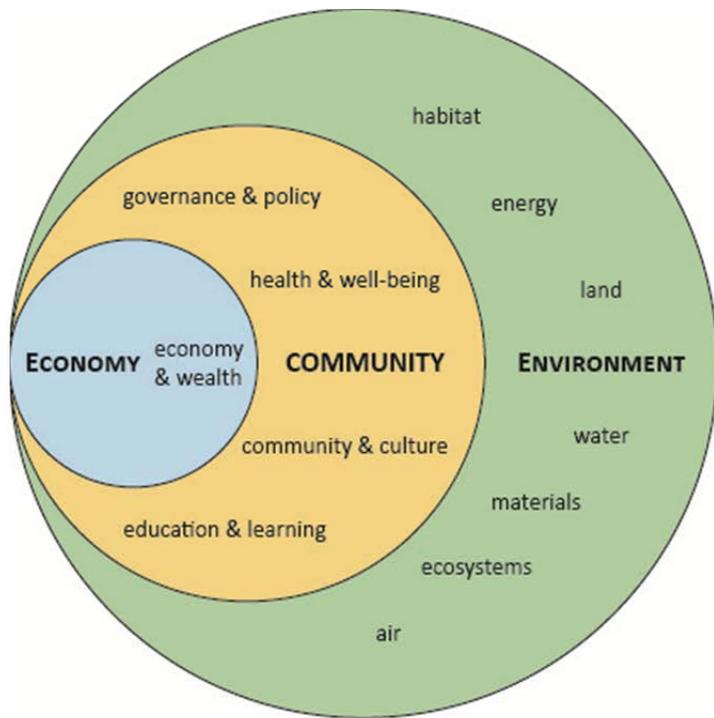


Figure 1 illustrates a sustainability framework of nested circles, recognizing that community and economic activity occurs within environmental, or ecological, limits.

This framework provides a guide through which Oxford can work together to build a sustainable, resilient, and vital future. The goal of Future Oxford is to articulate how we balance these interests in a model that informs decisions about our future.

Words from the Steering Committee

Community sustainability represents a vision of how Oxford can work together to build a sustainable, vital and more resilient future. Giving shape to that vision, and informing the plan and tools that will make it happen, has been a key component to the Future Oxford initiative.

The Community Sustainability Plan Committee has guided the development and implementation of Future Oxford. The Steering Committee was selected to represent the community on the basis of both geography and areas of focus for sustainability (economic, community, and environment). It includes the following members:

Chris Friesen (Chair)
Jeff Surridge
Dave Steenburg
Ian Stevens

George Klosler
Marilyn Price
Bryan Smith
Nicole Langlois

Jay Heaman
Jason Smith
Ian Heikoop
Jurgen van Dijken

David Gilvesy
Cher Sprague
Joan Morris

In working towards a collective vision for a sustainable future, the Community Sustainability Steering Committee needed to consider the viewpoints of community members throughout the County. Our goal has been to connect and engage as much of Oxford as possible to inform and inspire the vision, goals, actions, and targets of Oxford's Community Sustainability Plan.

Over the last few months, Oxford residents have come together to listen, brainstorm, and ultimately dream, about what our community can look like in 2020 and 2030 through a series of innovative community engagement initiatives. The Community Sustainability Plan is a reflection of that community spirit and thought.

The Steering Committee has integrated all the ideas that have emerged from our community into the goals, targets, actions, and objectives of this plan, reflecting the diverse needs and aspirations of Oxford. The elements of this Community Sustainability Plan will assist Oxford to become a leading resilient, sustainable, and thriving County.

Vision: A vibrant, prosperous, and responsible Oxford for all.

Mission: To achieve community sustainability throughout Oxford.

Goals

1. COMMUNITY

GOAL 1i: An Oxford that is accessible for all citizens

OBJECTIVES		ACTIONS
1iA	<p>Provide high-quality and accessible health care, social services, support programs, and housing that meet the needs of all citizens.</p> <p><i>Targets:</i> Reduce core housing need in Oxford by X% by 2020 and Y% by 2030.¹</p> <p>Reduce % population living in poverty by X% in 2020 and by Y% in 2030</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create partnership opportunities that encourage the private sector to invest in affordable housing. 2. Foster collaboration among citizens, community partners, and all levels of government to advance preventative health (including decreasing substance abuse and improving mental health) through active living and building social capital. 3. Encourage infill development including mixed-use projects and/or small homes, secondary homes, and in home suites on existing lots.
1iB	<p>Develop accessible intercommunity transportation options to reduce reliance on personal automobile ownership.</p> <p><i>Target:</i> Reduce the average distance driven per resident by X% from 2007 levels by 2020 and by Y% by 2030.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Provide frequent, cost-efficient transportation options that connect all of Oxford and larger to hubs outside of Oxford. 5. Provide real time transportation information on-site, online, and in an Oxford transportation guidebook to highlight routes, connections, and timetables.

OBJECTIVES		ACTIONS
1iC	<p>Promote and support volunteering.</p> <p><i>Target:</i> Increase the percentage of the population that volunteers by X% by 2020 and by a further Y% by 2030.</p>	<p>6. Increase the use and awareness of the Volunteer Opportunities Directory in Oxford.</p> <p>7. Enhance the capacity of volunteer organizations through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expanded recruitment programs; • training support for all ages; • a public recognition program; and, • addressing transportation needs of volunteers.
1iD	<p>Ensure that affordable, healthy food options are accessible to all residents.</p> <p><i>Target:</i> To be Determined in conjunction with development of the Food Security Plan</p>	<p>8. Develop a food securityⁱⁱ plan that supports food affordability and accessibility of food to all of Oxford's population.</p> <p>9. Promote backyard gardens, community gardens, and community food hubs in partnership with community partners and schools.</p>
1iE	<p>Promote engagement in decisions that affect the public good.</p> <p><i>Target:</i> Increase voter turn-out rates to all elections by X% by 2020 and a further Y% by 2030.</p>	<p>10. Ensure broad communication, engagementⁱⁱⁱ and community awareness of government initiatives/plans and community programs/services.</p> <p>11. Develop a collaborative voter engagement program, including supporting volunteers to stimulate voter turnout and a voter information package on sustainability issues for all elections.</p>

GOAL 1ii: A knowledgeable and equitable Oxford

OBJECTIVES		ACTIONS
<p>1iiA</p> <p>Ensure access to affordable education for all ages.</p> <p><i>Targets:</i> Increase the number of residents with post-secondary education by X% by 2020 and to the Y% by 2030.</p> <p>X% functional literacy within Oxford by 2020 and Y% by 2030.</p>	<p>12. Work to develop a university campus in Oxford.</p> <p>13. Expand opportunities for post-secondary programs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-directed learning opportunities; • co-op programs; • skilled trade programs; • employment training programs; and • loans and grants for students. <p>14. Ensure high-speed/high-capacity broadband throughout Oxford.</p> <p>15. Provide access to collaborative spaces and services for people who are participating in online studies and support self-directed learning.</p>	
<p>1iiB</p> <p>Advance the community dialogue on sustainability issues.</p> <p><i>Target:</i> Increase the sustainability quotient by X% by 2020 and by Y% by 2030.</p>	<p>16. Create and support community sustainability roundtables to lead a region-wide dialogue on sustainability issues and the implementation of sustainability actions.</p> <p>17. Establish an environmental responsibility program in collaboration with schools.</p> <p>18. Support organizations and programs working to eliminate the use of fossil fuels.</p>	

GOAL 1iii: A creative Oxford

OBJECTIVES		ACTIONS
1iiiA	<p>Promote arts, recreation and culture.</p> <p><i>Target:</i> Increase the number of participants at arts, recreation, and culture activities by X% by 2020 and by Y% by 2030.</p>	<p>19. Encourage relevant organizations to convene to develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an arts and culture plan; and • a funding initiative and a strategy to use under-utilized facilities and spaces to support a thriving arts, recreation, and culture community in Oxford. <p>20. Support and promote collaborations among theatres, galleries, and museums (e.g. such as Oxford Creative Connections).</p> <p>21. Enhance and promote arts and recreation programming within schools and for residents.</p> <p>22. Develop a major arts and culture tourist destination in Oxford.</p>

2. ECONOMY

GOAL 2i: A thriving local economy

OBJECTIVES		ACTIONS
2iA	<p>Build a vibrant economy.</p> <p><i>Target:</i> Grow the total number of jobs in the region in relation to projected population growth targets by X% by 2020 and by Y% by 2030.</p>	<p>23. Enhance collaboration between all local and regional economic development officers and agencies.</p> <p>24. Develop a mechanism to enhance support of local business expansion and retention.</p> <p>25. Support companies that can process Oxford-based agricultural products (e.g. dairy, soy, corn, market vegetables, and fruit).</p> <p>26. Amend zoning to encourage on-farm processing.</p> <p>27. Promote emerging employment opportunities to youth.</p> <p>28. Encourage high-tech manufacturing in Oxford.</p>

OBJECTIVES		ACTIONS
2iB	<p>Cultivate entrepreneurship throughout Oxford.</p> <p><i>Target:</i> Increase the number rate of successful new start-ups per year (including youth) by X% by 2020 and by Y% by 2030.</p>	<p>29. Enhance employment mentorship programs for new entrepreneurs.</p> <p>30. Provide incentive programs to support equity and diversity.</p>
2iC	<p>Encourage production and consumption of locally produced food and products.</p> <p><i>Target:</i> Increase the quantity of local food consumed/purchased by 25% by 2020 and 50% by 2030.</p>	<p>31. Enhance the visibility and capacity of farmers' markets to showcase Oxford farmers and local products for Oxford residents and beyond.</p> <p>32. Incentivize and encourage local restaurants and grocery stores to use or sell local products.</p> <p>33. Ensure preservation of farmland through proactive land-use and other policies.</p>

GOAL 2ii: A local economy that supports and fosters community sustainability

OBJECTIVES		ACTIONS
2iiA	<p>Grow the sustainable economy.</p> <p><i>Target:</i> Oxford has the highest percentage of sustainability related jobs in the province by 2020.</p>	<p>34. Develop an Oxford job strategy that stimulates the sustainable economy, including an inventory of sustainability related jobs.</p> <p>35. Develop incentives to support ecological farming approaches or techniques.</p> <p>36. Ensure appropriate access to Community Employment Services across Oxford.</p> <p>37. Support local business through procurement policies and full-cost accounting^{iv} by government and public sector organizations.</p> <p>38. Encourage green entrepreneurship through incentives and programs.</p> <p>39. Organize job fairs in each community and promote existing online employment resources.</p>

3. ENVIRONMENT

GOAL 3.i Oxford is recognized, within and by the world, as a leader in environmental action

OBJECTIVES		ACTIONS
<p>3iA</p> <p>Protect and restore the ecosystem.</p> <p><i>Targets:</i> Plant 10,000 native species trees per year.</p> <p>Restore and/or rehabilitate X ha of native species, grasslands, wetlands, and natural features per year.</p> <p>X% tree cover in settlement areas by 2020 and Y% by 2030.</p> <p>X% overall tree cover by 2020 and Y% by 2030.</p>	<p>40. Develop a green infrastructure plan including a tree planting strategy.</p> <p>41. Create a biodiversity plan to preserve and enhance biodiversity in Oxford, with a focus on native species. .</p> <p>42. Establish a Natural Heritage System within the Official Plan to increase and connect green space to support biodiversity and to protect significant natural features in Oxford.</p> <p>43. Encourage sustainable agricultural practices.</p> <p>44. Develop a plan that encourages restoration of abandoned pits, quarries and brownfield sites.</p> <p>45. Create a region-wide plan for adaptation to climate change.</p>	
<p>3iB</p> <p>Move away from fossil fuels and enhance low carbon transportation.</p> <p><i>Targets:</i> Reduce Oxford greenhouse gas emissions by X% below 2013 levels by 2020 and by Y% by 2030.</p> <p>100% Renewable Energy by 2050</p>	<p>46. Develop an Oxford Energy Plan and reduction target strategy.</p> <p>47. Provide incentives for renewable energy, retrofits, zero-energy homes, passive housing, and other advanced low-carbon strategies.</p> <p>48. Encourage local electric utilities to use renewable electricity through a renewable energy (solar) lease program.</p> <p>49. Develop a marketing strategy and campaign to educate elementary and secondary students and the public at large about energy conservation initiatives.</p> <p>50. Develop a plan to ensure Oxford is carbon-positive by 2050.</p> <p>51. Develop a plan to ensure Oxford achieves 100% Renewable Energy by 2050.</p> <p>52. Evaluate the impact of new developments on Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.</p>	

OBJECTIVES		ACTIONS
3iB <i>(cont.)</i>	<p>Transition away from fossil fuels and enhance low carbon transportation. <i>(continued)</i></p> <p>Target: Increase the percentage of low carbon transportation usage by X% by 2020 and by Y% by 2030.</p>	<p>53. Develop funding initiatives to stimulate energy and demonstration projects, including district energy projects throughout Oxford.</p> <p>54. Advocate for Building Code revisions to reduce fossil fuel consumptions through green construction and retrofits.</p> <p>55. Develop an Oxford program to support companies tracking and reducing their GHG emissions (along the lines of Climate Smart).</p> <p>56. Develop a network of bike lanes throughout Oxford, including physically separated trails where feasible, paved shoulders and bike stands.</p> <p>57. Develop a transportation demand management strategy that includes programs and incentives for ridesharing (including school buses), active transportation, bike sharing, and workplace mode-shifting with a particular focus on marginalized residents.</p>
3iC	<p>Achieve Zero waste in Oxford.</p> <p>Target: Reduce total waste disposed per capita by 40% by 2020 and by 60% by 2030.</p> <p>Achieve the highest total waste diversion rate/capita in Ontario by 2020.</p>	<p>58. Develop a waste reduction and diversion strategy to ensure the Oxford County Waste Management site can meet Oxford's total landfill disposal needs of residents and businesses to at least 2060.</p> <p>59. Enhance and incentivize reuse and recycling programs</p> <p>60. Develop a composting strategy to divert 100% of organics from landfill.</p> <p>61. Actively investigate the potential for waste to energy projects that support renewable energy principles and targets.</p> <p>62. Advocate for sustainable packaging reform in Ontario.</p> <p>63. Prohibit the importation of contaminated excess soils.</p>

OBJECTIVES		ACTIONS
3iD	<p>Ensure long-term protection of all source water.</p> <p><i>Target:</i> Reduce municipal water consumption per capita served by X% by 2020 and by Y% by 2030.</p>	<p>64. Develop a County-wide water management plan to protect all source water, similar to municipal source water protection plans now in development.</p> <p>65. Enhance water efficiency programs, including conservation awareness, xeriscaping, and incentives for rainwater capture and grey water systems.</p> <p>66. Develop regulations for sustainable water use for quarrying and gravel extraction.</p> <p>67. Develop a penalty structure for industries that dump into or pollute water systems.</p> <p>68. Prevent importation of sewage from outside Oxford.</p> <p>69. Encourage river and stream bank soil erosion protection and water quality protection from manure and/or chemical products.</p> <p>70. Develop water metering throughout Oxford.</p>

Steps towards implementation

The goal of the Future Oxford community engagement process was to connect and engage as much of Oxford as possible to inform and inspire the vision, goals, actions, and targets of Oxford’s Sustainability Plan. Individuals throughout Oxford also took part in workshops, participated on-line and hosted their own round tables to comment, edit, and inform the Community Sustainability Plan.

The Community Sustainability Plan Steering Committee considered all community input in developing this “draft final” version of Oxford’s first-ever Community Sustainability Plan (CSP). A Multi-Criteria Assessment Tool has been included in the CSP as a means to inform major decision making and priority setting along with an Implementation and Reporting Strategy designed to foster community action and progress reporting throughout the delivery of the Community Sustainability Plan.

County Council and all eight Area Municipal Councils are now being presented the “draft final” Community Sustainability Plan, Multi-Criteria Assessment Tool and the recommended Implementation and Reporting Strategy for final comment. Following the final consultation process, the Steering Committee will ask Oxford County Council and all eight Area Municipal Councils to formally adopt the **Community Sustainability Plan, Multi-Criteria Assessment Tool, and the Implementation and Reporting Strategy.**

Endnotes

ⁱ Note that all targets refer to 2015 as a base year.

ⁱⁱ In 1996, countries at the World Food Summit agreed that: “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” World Health Organization (WHO). A food security plan is a plan for how this food security will be achieved for the County.

ⁱⁱⁱ Public engagement can occur in a variety of forms including but not limited to:

- attending Council meetings;
- emails to council and council members;
- communication via social media;
- one-on-one meetings with councilors on specific issues;
- voting at elections;
- formal and informal referendums;
- kitchen table discussions;
- delegations and;
- public meetings chaired by staff or elected officials.

^{iv} Full-cost accounting is a method of cost accounting that traces direct and indirect environmental, social, and economic costs throughout the lifecycle of a product.