



Rooted in community, embracing our future

Township of Southgate Community Strategic
Plan 2023-2027

Message from Brian Milne, Mayor

Dear residents of the Township of Southgate,

This Community Strategic Plan serves as a roadmap for the development and growth of our township. It outlines our collective vision, goals, and priorities, and provides a framework for decision-making and resource allocation. It is a document that reflects the aspirations and needs of our community, and it is essential that we all actively participate in its implementation.

This plan is not just a document prepared by our consultants; it is a product of extensive consultation and engagement with our residents, businesses, and community organizations. It represents the collective wisdom and desires of our diverse population. It is designed to ensure that our township remains a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable place to live, work, and play.

The importance of the Community Strategic Plan cannot be overstated. It provides us with a clear direction, enabling us to make informed decisions that align with our shared vision. It helps us identify and address our challenges, seize opportunities, and build a stronger and more resilient community. It guides us in making decisions about infrastructure, economic development, social services, environmental stewardship, and more.

Furthermore, the Community Strategic Plan fosters collaboration and partnerships among various participants. It encourages us to work together towards common goals, leveraging our collective strengths and resources. By actively engaging with this plan, we can build a stronger sense of community, enhance our quality of life, and create a brighter future for generations to come.

I encourage you to familiarize yourself with the Community Strategic Plan and actively participate in its implementation. Attend public meetings, provide your input, and get involved in community initiatives that align with the plan's goals. Together, we can shape the future of our township and ensure that it remains a place we are all proud to call home.

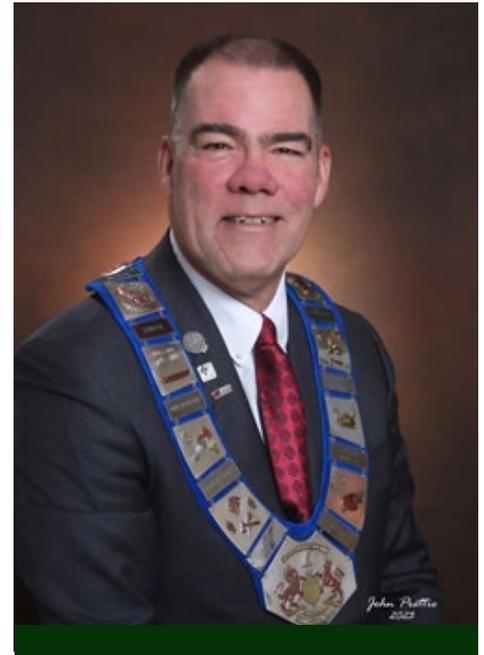
Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication to the Township of Southgate. Let's continue working together to make our community an even better place for everyone.

Sincerely,



Brian Milne

Mayor of the Township of Southgate

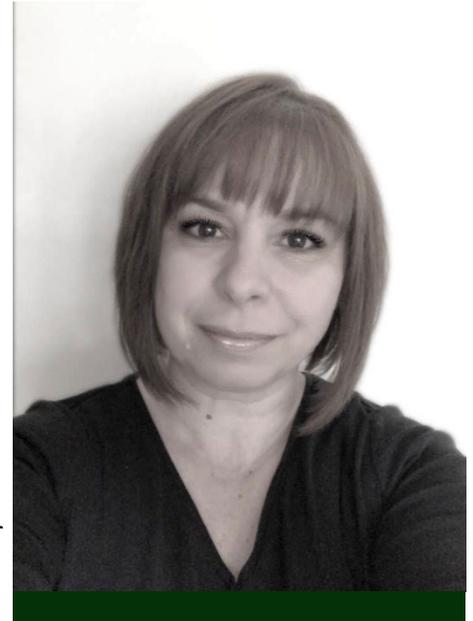


Message from Dina Lundy, CAO

Dear Residents of the Township of Southgate,

The Township of Southgate Community Strategic Plan is the result of extensive collaboration between our dedicated team of professionals, community leaders, and most importantly, you – the residents who make Southgate a truly special place to call home.

One of the bases upon which our strategic plan was developed is our unwavering dedication to building the community. We recognize that a strong community is built on the foundations of heritage, inclusivity, social cohesion, and a sense of belonging. To achieve this, we will work tirelessly to enhance community engagement, foster partnerships with local organizations and businesses, and create opportunities for residents to come together and actively participate in shaping the future of Southgate.



In addition to building a strong community, we are equally committed to operational excellence. We understand the importance of efficient and effective governance, as it enables us to deliver the highest-quality services to our residents. We will continue to prioritize transparency, accountability, and innovation in our operations, ensuring that taxpayer dollars are used responsibly and that our services are delivered in a timely and professional manner.

As our community evolves and new challenges arise, we will adapt and refine our strategies accordingly. We value your input and encourage you to actively participate in the implementation of our plan. Your ideas, feedback, and support are vital to our success.

Together, we have the power to shape the future of the Township of Southgate; to cultivate a community that embraces diversity, encourages innovation, and provides a high quality of life for all residents.

Thank you for your continued support and for being an integral part of our journey towards a brighter future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dina Lundy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dina Lundy
Chief Administrative Officer
Township of Southgate

Acknowledgements

Township of Southgate Council Members

Brian Milne, Mayor
Barbara Dobreen, Deputy Mayor
Jason Rice, Councillor
Jim Ferguson, Councillor
Joan John, Councillor
Martin Shipston, Councillor
Monica Singh Soares, Councillor



Township of Southgate Staff

Dina Lundy, CAO
Adam Mighton, Treasurer
Bev Fisher, Chief Building Official
Clinton Stredwick, Planner
Derek Malynyk, Southgate Fire Chief
Jim Ellis, Manager of Public Works
Kevin Green, Recreation Manager
Lacy Russell, Librarian C.E.O.
Kayla Best, HR Manager
Lindsey Green, Clerk
Holly Malynyk, Legislative & Records Management Coordinator
Elisha Milne, Legislative & Planning Coordinator
Brenna Carroll, Economic Development Officer
Ethan Henry, Recreation Programming Coordinator

Prepared by the team at:

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Introduction

The purpose of a Community Strategic Plan is to establish a shared vision and priorities for the future improvement of a community. As the Township of Southgate navigates a period of significant transformational change and growth, Township Staff and Council members will use this Community Strategic Plan as a guiding framework from now through to 2027. The goal of the Community Strategic Plan is to provide direction for Staff and Council to improve the quality of life for people who live in the Township.

In this report, you will find:

- Information about the Township of Southgate and the Community Strategic Plan development process.
- An overview of what we heard from Southgate residents and people who work here.
- The Community Strategic Plan, including a Vision, Mission, and Values to help guide the Township from 2023 to 2027.

The Community Strategic Plan development process

An impactful Community Strategic Plan is rooted in local input and reflects the realities of life in the community. To develop the Community Strategic Plan, a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process was completed with people across the Township of Southgate.

Kick-off meeting

- Meeting with Township staff to discuss the project process and opportunities to engage the community

Background review

- Review of Township and County documents, policies, and reports to inform the Community Strategic Plan process
- Review of relevant industry reports and key data

Council and staff engagement: Workshop 1

- A two-hour session with Staff and Council to identify strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats for the Township of Southgate over the next four years

Community engagement

- Community survey: 252 responses
- 8 interviews with community members
- Virtual focus group with Southgate community members (5 people)
- Youth focus group (8 youth from ages 10-15)
- 3 Township visits to engage with residents (spoke to residents at the Southgate Soccer Program, Holstein General Store, and Frank Macintyre Building)

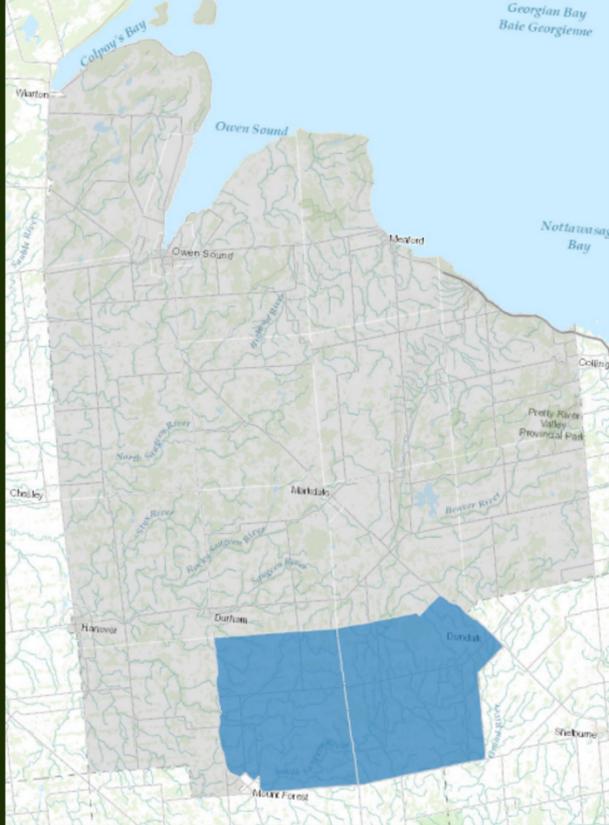
Council and staff engagement: Workshop 2

- Second workshop with Staff and Council to draft Community Strategic Plan content and identify tangible actions for Staff and Council to prioritize over the next four years

Develop Community Strategic Plan

- Prepare the Community Strategic Plan and refine with guidance from Township Staff and Council

About the Township of Southgate¹



Population profile

In 2016

7,354

In 2021

8,610

+18.5%

Average age

Southgate

37.6

Ontario

42

The Township of Southgate is a small rural community located in the southern part of Grey County, known as “the gateway to Grey County.”

Household & earnings

3,015

Households in Southgate



Average dwelling value **\$636,350**

Median dwelling value **\$600,000**

91%

Are single-detached houses

The average household income is **\$90,576²**

Southgate is rapidly growing³

The Township is estimated to grow by more than 12,500 people by 2046



The Township is estimated to add more than 5,300 households by 2046

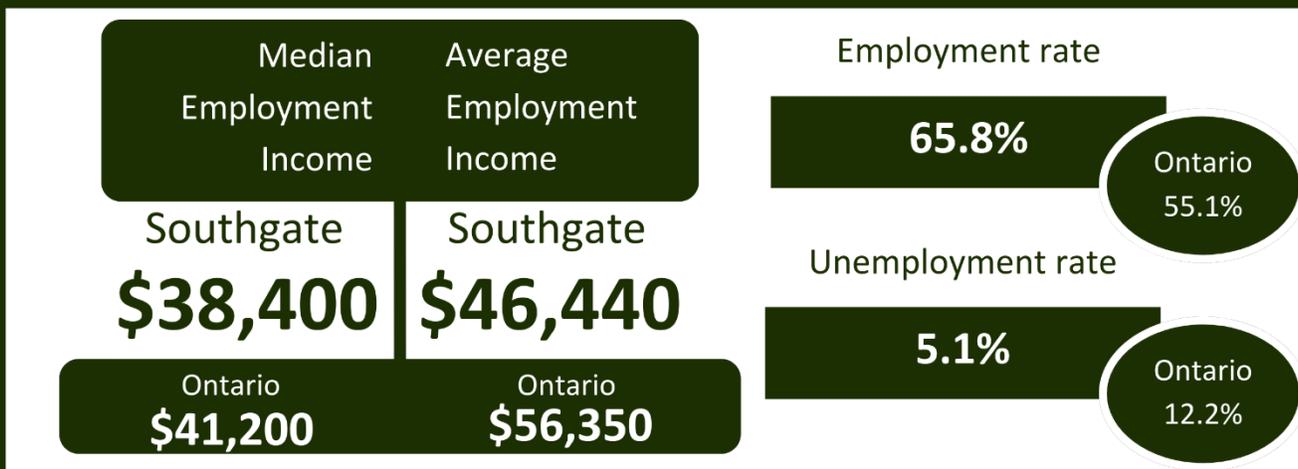


¹ Southgate Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population.

² 2020 Grey County Individual Municipal Profiles (2020). Retrieved from: <https://madeingrey.ca/community-profile>.

³ County of Grey Official Plan. (Consolidated May 8, 2023). Retrieved from: <https://www.grey.ca/government/land-use-planning/official-plan-and-policies>.

Labour force & local economy



Top 5 sectors by industry



Rural roots

Southgate has a rich history of livestock and crop farming. Today, **39%** of farms in Southgate produce beef cattle and **15%** produce grains and oilseeds.⁴

Southgate is home to several Mennonite communities that have rich histories and cultural traditions.

Township assets

- The Southgate Public Library hosts regular adult, teen, and children’s programming.
- Southgate has several parks, baseball diamonds, pavilions, halls, and community centres available for public use.
- In 2022, Southgate’s waste and recycling program diverted **49.7%** of all waste from landfills.⁵
- The Township provides maintenance and construction on approximately **517 kms** of roads (approximately 210 kms hard surface, 298 kms gravel surface, and 9 kms earth).

⁴ Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (2022). West - Grey. Retrieved from: <https://data.ontario.ca/dataset/ontario-farm-data-by-county/resource/773ca42e-754a-48ec-8c36-7f292a8b9994>.

⁵ Year to Date Waste Volumes Report & Diversion Rates as of December 31, 2022. Retrieved from: <https://www.southgate.ca/en/municipal-services/resources/Waste--Recycle/YTD-Weights-Report-2022.pdf>.

What we heard

Milestones and successes from the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan

- Key economic development initiatives supported growth in Southgate, including the formation of a Chamber of Commerce, multiple investments in the Eco Park and the adoption of a Community Improvement Plan for settlement areas
- The Official Plan was updated in 2022 to provide flexibility for businesses and help to reduce processing requirements
- Southgate worked with South East Grey Community Health Centre consultants to complete and approve a [project site plan for a new health clinic](#)
- Renovations completed at the Dundalk arena that included an elevator lift and an expanded Early-On program with an improved accessible auditorium space
- The new water tower was erected in Dundalk in 2023, with an official ribbon cutting ceremony held in October
- Cancellation of the Vacancy Tax Rebate and creation of the Vacancy By-Law to promote restoration and re-use of vacant buildings
- The Township completed the Historic Southgate project highlighting hamlets of Southgate and installed signage to direct visitors to businesses and attractions in Southgate
- Completed a Building Condition Assessment of all recreation facilities in order to help determine future use
- Created the Township's Asset Management Plan for the timely repair, replacement and expansion of the Township's infrastructure and assets
- Created and implemented a new user-friendly and updated website to better serve the community
- Finalized an environmental assessment for wastewater treatment expansion
- Completed box culvert replacements with multi-culvert installations resulting in substantial cost savings

This Community Strategic Plan is not “starting from scratch.” Rather, several themes from the previous Strategic Plan remain relevant to our community today.

Themes from the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan that remain relevant today:

- Business attraction and retention, including the downtown revitalization of Dundalk
- Diverse housing options for Southgate residents
- Enhancing communication and engagement between the Township and citizens

At the same time, a lot has changed since 2019. In engaging with the Southgate community, some new themes emerged. These themes, in addition to the ones above, have been integrated into the 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan to create a blueprint for Southgate that reflects today’s challenges and opportunities for a vibrant future.

New themes that emerged:

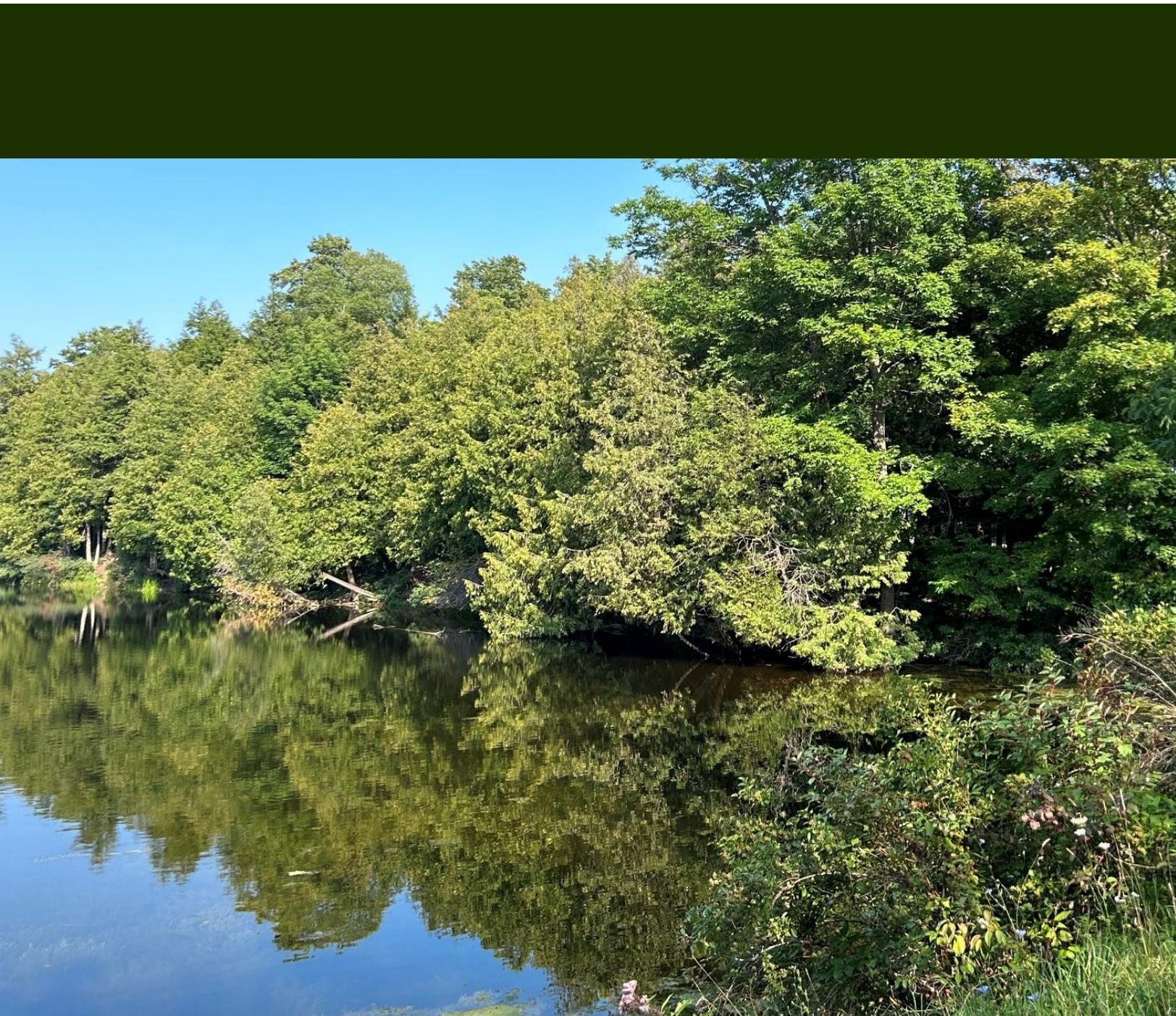
- The need for recreation and leisure opportunities for all ages and abilities all year round
- Opportunities exist to forge stronger relationships between new and existing community members
- The need to build complete and connected communities in Southgate

Township of Southgate Community Strategic Plan

2023-2027

Vision A vibrant community where people, the economy, and the natural environment thrive while embracing our rural and agricultural roots.

Mission To provide enhanced and reliable municipal services for Southgate's community and businesses to ensure sustainability now and into the future.



Core values

Core values are the things that we stand for as a municipality. Our core values will help lead us through decision-making in the Township.

Community

We embrace our small town, rural and agricultural roots, while always welcoming new community members.

Equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility

We accept our community – past, present, and future – and are committed to ensuring everybody has an exceptional quality of life in Southgate.

Collaboration

Southgate is stronger when we work together. Whether its municipal departments, community groups, or other organizations outside of Southgate, we embrace the power of partnerships.

Reliability and integrity

We conduct our work with integrity. In other words, we do the right thing even when no one is watching. Our residents can count on us to make life better for our community by providing quality and trustworthy services.





Guiding principles

The actions identified in the Community Strategic Plan will be conducted with each guiding principle in mind. The Township is committed to the following principles:

Fiscal responsibility

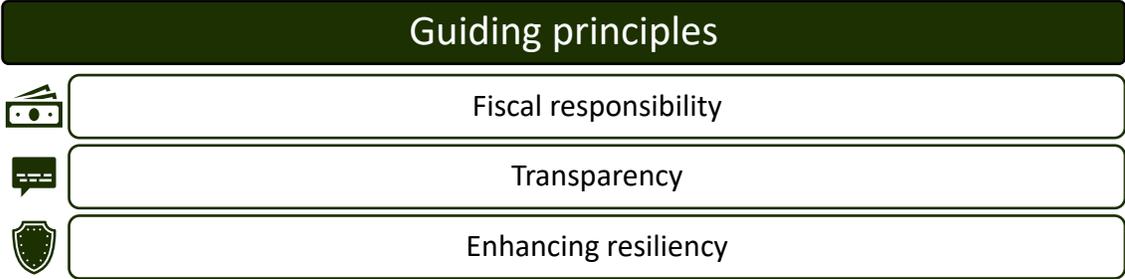
The Township of Southgate manages its finances to a high standard to ensure fiscal sustainability for years to come.

Transparency

The Township is governed with a high respect for public awareness and openness.

Enhancing resiliency

The Township will strengthen its resiliency to support people, businesses, and the environment in facing challenges like climate change.



Strategic priorities and goals

Strategic priorities are areas of focus for Southgate over the next four years. These priorities form the basis of several associated goals, and specific actions the Township will accomplish to meet our goals.

A thriving economy

1. Support the growth and development of existing businesses in Southgate.
2. Foster an 'open-for-business' mindset to build entrepreneurship in Southgate.
3. Attract new businesses to Southgate.
4. Revitalize Downtown Dundalk to enhance its beauty and restore pride-of-place in the downtown.

Healthy, happy communities

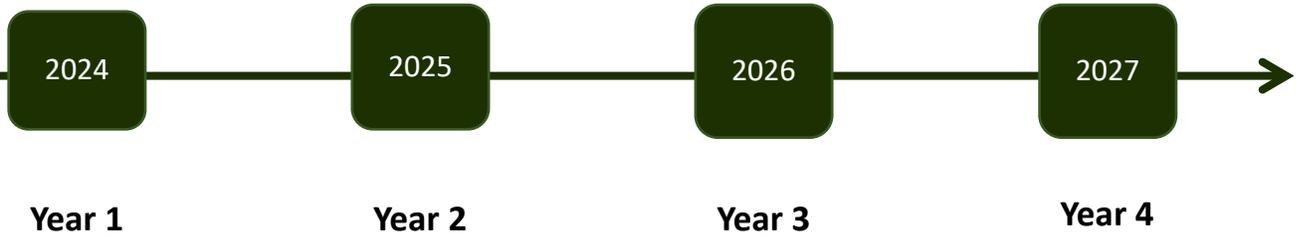
5. Develop spaces for recreation and leisure in the Township that meet the needs of the growing community during all seasons, for people of all ages, abilities, incomes, and cultures.
6. Improve access to services that contribute to physical and mental health and wellbeing.
7. Improve access to housing.
8. Enhance community safety.
9. Foster positive relationships between newcomers to the community and existing residents.

Operational excellence

10. Position Southgate as a leading small, rural municipal employer.
11. Provide excellent customer service to Southgate ratepayers and community members.
12. Ensure diligent maintenance and long-term sustainability of Township assets and infrastructure.
13. Advance strategic priorities and improve community engagement.

Action Plan

Each goal has a series of action items. Each action item has an associated timeline for completion:



Ongoing: Actions that will be undertaken by staff over the course of the next four years.



Strategic priority: A thriving economy

Goal 1: Support the growth and development of existing businesses in Southgate.

Action items	Timeline
1.A Conduct a Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) study and implement the results from the study. ¹	Year 1
1.B Leverage Grey County resources to facilitate staff training on regional economic development tools for local business.	Ongoing
1.C Ensure the distribution of technology and services to local businesses by referring them to correct supports.	Ongoing
1.D Ensure development charges are competitive and support the growing needs of the community (see Action 12.D).	Year 1
1.E Enable agricultural businesses to develop or enhance value-added opportunities on their farms (e.g., agritourism activities, buildings to support farm activities).	Ongoing

¹ Note: this is a requirement to participate in the Downtown Revitalization Program (Action 4.C).

Goal 2: Foster an ‘open-for-business’ mindset to build entrepreneurship in Southgate.

Action items	Timeline
2.A Develop an ‘open-for-business’ portal to provide information to entrepreneurs about starting a business in Southgate. The portal should include a fillable form to help put them in contact with the Economic Development Officer. ²	Year 1-2
2.B Develop an entrepreneurship and business hub (e.g., a shared workspace environment with access to internet to support small business enterprises). ³	Year 2-3

Goal 3: Attract new businesses to Southgate.

Action items	Timeline
3.A Continue to attract businesses to Southgate’s employment lands and Eco Park, with a focus on clean-energy and eco-friendly businesses and medium-large employers.	Ongoing
3.B Move forward in the co-development of 150 acres with frontage on Hwy 10 including a future by-pass road with connection to the current Eco Park Way to Ida Street.	Year 1-4
3.C Provide industrial/commercial parcels for development, focused on bringing jobs to the community.	Year 1-4

² For example, the portal may include information on the steps required to open a business, including zoning/building requirements.

³ For example, see innovative spaces like [LaunchIt Minto](#). The hub could be considered for the new, multi-use facility (see action 11.A).

Goal 4: Revitalize Downtown Dundalk to enhance its beauty and restore pride-of-place in the downtown.

Action items	Timeline
4.A Implement strategies to reduce vacancies (e.g., enforce the vacancy bylaw to encourage economic activity downtown Dundalk, connect vacant building owners with prospective businesses ⁴ and facilitate improvements to bring downtown buildings to code).	Ongoing
4.B Increase participation in Southgate’s Community Improvement Plan (CIP) Program (e.g., Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Program, Façade & Building Improvement Grants, etc.) in Dundalk and across the Township through enhanced promotion.	
i) Streamline the application process for the CIP program.	Year 1
ii) Set annual targets for CIP participation.	Ongoing
4.C Participate in the Downtown Revitalization program that includes developing a vision for downtown beautification in consultation with the community. ⁵	Year 2
4.D Host a Southgate business mixer with potential commercial and industrial building landlords and prospective businesses as a means of attracting new and expanding businesses into the downtown core.	Year 3

⁴ For example, see the “[Win This Space](#)” program overview from the Rural Ontario Institute.

⁵ Note: eligibility requirements for the Downtown Revitalization Program include completing a First Impressions Community Exchange and/or Business Retention and Expansion project.

Strategic priority: Happy, healthy communities

Goal 5: Ensure spaces for recreation and leisure in the Township meet the needs of the growing community all year-round, for people of all ages, abilities, incomes, and cultures.

Action items	Timeline
5.A Update our Recreation Masterplan to include parks and culture, in consultation with the community. Key areas to explore include a needs assessment to inform opportunities for a multi-use facility that would potentially be integrated with a new administration centre (see Action 11.A), partnership opportunities with surrounding member municipalities, and providing programming for all demographics.	Year 1-2
5.B Conduct a needs assessment for recreation programming and create an implementation plan.	Year 2-3

Goal 6: Improve access to services that contribute to physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Action items	Timeline
6.A Attract healthy living services/businesses (e.g., mental health, dental care, another grocery store, café, multicultural food stores, etc.) to the Township. (See also action items under Strategic Priority 1.)	Ongoing
6.B Support opportunities to bring new or expanded healthcare programs to Southgate residents through strategic partnerships. ⁶	Ongoing
6.C Explore funding opportunities to maintain and/or expand public transit service. ⁷	Ongoing
6.D Maintain open and active communication and collaboration with local school boards to support planning for schools to meet the needs of the growing community.	Ongoing
6.E Maintain open and active communication and collaboration with Grey County staff to support planning for childcare services to meet the needs of the growing community.	Ongoing

⁶ For example, see [Grove Youth Wellness Hubs](#) with locations across Ontario.

⁷ For example, see Wellington County's [Ride Well program](#).

Goal 7: Improve access to housing.

Action items	Timeline
7.A Determine and implement a process to initiate affordable housing agreements on Township properties with developers.	Year 1-4
7.B Work with developers and landowners to increase rental housing opportunities in the Township (e.g., explore opportunities to encourage rental housing development through the development charges study).	Ongoing
7.C Determine pathways to streamline planning processes and approvals for housing development in Southgate.	Year 2-3

Goal 8: Enhance community safety.

Action items	Timeline
8.A Develop a Fire Services Master Plan to ensure that fire services meet the needs of the Southgate community.	Year 2
8.B Design public spaces to enhance community safety (e.g., adequate lighting, accessibility, space for active transportation).	Ongoing

Goal 9: Foster positive relationships between newcomers to the community and existing residents.

Action items	Timeline
9.A Continue to participate on Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership, Welcoming Communities, Age Friendly Communities and other County committees and initiatives, bringing items and collaborative efforts forward for support and action.	Ongoing
9.B Collaborate with community groups to champion and host an annual Welcome Mixer and Volunteer Celebration event to help foster community relationships. ⁸	Ongoing

⁸ For example, see Wellington North’s [volunteer and newcomer celebration event](#).

Strategic priority: Operational excellence

Goal 10: Position Southgate as a leading small, rural municipal employer.

Action items	Timeline
10.A Develop a human resources plan for the Township to formalize staff attraction and retention initiatives.	Year 1-3
10.B Conduct and implement an organizational review to assess existing structure and current practices against leading municipal trends and practices to improve efficiency and effectiveness throughout the organization.	Year 1
10.C Encourage a culture of excellence throughout the Township through education and continuous improvement initiatives.	Ongoing
10.D Conduct an annual employee satisfaction survey.	Year 2 and ongoing

Goal 11: Provide excellent customer service to Southgate ratepayers and community members.

Action items	Timeline
11.A Initiate planning process to build a new multi-use Township Administration Centre closer to the urban area, which will include the Council Chamber, staff office space, community meeting rooms, and potential integration with recreation and culture program space (See Action 5.A).	Year 1-4
11.B Conduct and implement an operational and service delivery review to ensure the Township’s services will meet the growing needs of the community.	Year 1-2
11.C Continue to collaborate across Township departments to streamline by-laws, policies, and programs to ensure services are in line with legislative requirements and industry standards. Implement at least one streamlining initiative annually. ⁹	Ongoing
11.D Modernize administration of services through optimization of technology to meet or exceed industry best practices.	Ongoing
11.E Continue to provide high-quality waste and recycling services and upgrade waste services to ensure Southgate can meet the needs of the growing community.	
i) Update the Waste Diversion Strategy.	Year 3
ii) Complete the Dundalk Transfer Station upgrades (e.g., hydro, water/wastewater services, buildings, concrete saw tooth wall).	Year 2-4

⁹ For example, see the City of [Kawartha Lakes’ ‘Make it Better’ improvements](#).

Goal 12: Ensure diligent maintenance and long-term sustainability of Township assets and infrastructure.

Action items	Timeline
12.A Update the Municipal Asset Management Plan.	Year 1-2
12.B Continue to foster partnerships and explore opportunities to access funding for municipal infrastructure projects throughout Southgate.	Ongoing
12.C Enable Township of Southgate initiatives related to managing municipal and public assets to align with the Grey County Climate Change Action Plan (2023-2026).	Ongoing
12.D Conduct a Development Charges Study Update to document growth-related projects/infrastructure not previously considered in 2022.	Year 1
12.E Finalize the water/wastewater servicing strategy for planned urban growth, revise as needed and incorporate updates into the Township capital plan (including new groundwater source exploration).	Year 1 and ongoing
12.F Evaluate and prioritize roads and bridges by using criteria such as age, condition, importance of route (e.g., for emergency response rates), current traffic counts, etc.	Year 1 and ongoing
12.G Provide efficient and effective building and by-law services by enhancing the reporting and follow-up system for by-law infractions. ¹⁰	Year 1-2
12.H Review our fee structures to ensure we are receiving fees scaled to the services we provide.	Year 2-3

¹⁰ For example, see [Centre Wellington’s “Report It” tool](#).

Goal 13: Advance strategic priorities and improve community engagement.

Action items	Timeline
13.A Develop a communications and engagement strategy to increase the quality of communications with the public for transparent government/operations and to enhance citizen participation.	Year 2
13.B Develop a communications plan that identifies opportunities for more frequent and impactful communications with the public including new and current residents (e.g., improve communication with residents who rent, rather than own, property within Southgate).	Year 2 and ongoing
13.C Explore the possibility of adding a partial or full ‘Communications and Community Engagement’ position.	Year 3
13.D Improve accountability and transparency measures and efficient/effective meeting practices.	Ongoing
13.E Increase opportunities for Council to engage with the public through events and outreach.	Ongoing

