



# CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2023-2026



## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We respectfully acknowledge that Dufferin County resides within the traditional territory and ancestral lands of the Tionontati (Petun), Attawandaron (Neutral), Haudenosaunee (Six Nations), and Anishinaabe peoples. We also acknowledge that various municipalities within the County of Dufferin reside within the treaty lands named under the Haldimand Deed of 1784 and two of the Williams Treaties of 1818: Treaty 18: the Nottawasaga Purchase, and Treaty 19: The Ajetance Treaty. These traditional territories upon which we live and learn, are steeped in rich Indigenous history and traditions. It is with this statement that we declare to honour and respect the past and present connection of Indigenous peoples with this land, its waterways, and resources.



## A MESSAGE FROM THE WARDEN

On behalf of my fellow County Councillors, I am pleased to present Dufferin County's 2023-2026 Corporate Strategic Plan.

Our updated Strategic Plan presents a collective vision for the future of Dufferin County: ***A community that grows together.*** It also provides a roadmap that builds on our strengths and successes and will guide us as we plan for and make decisions and investments designed to help us realize this vision.

The Plan outlines five priority areas, all of which are integral to our overall success as a County and a community: **Climate & Environment, Community, Economy, Governance and Equity.**

We know that the challenges before us, and most other municipalities, are significant. That's why our Strategic Plan takes a holistic perspective and highlights the interconnectedness of what we want to achieve – supporting the creation of more housing across the affordability spectrum, for example, is not only key to how we will manage our growth but also to ensuring a robust local economy and an inclusive, caring, and equitable community.

This Plan also emphasizes the collective and collaborative effort required to deliver on these goals, by County Council: between the County, its local municipalities and across every County department.

As part of this updated Strategic Plan, we are also – for the first time – adopting Climate and Equity Lenses that will be applied across the entire County administration. As we move forward in implementing the goals and initiatives within this Strategic Plan, we will embed equity and climate change considerations into our decision-making and how we deliver the services community members rely on every day.

I want to thank my fellow members of County Council, County staff, residents, business owners and community partners for their participation in the creation of this Strategic Plan.

It is our great privilege to serve the community of Dufferin County, and we invite you to join us on this journey over the coming years to transform our vision into reality.



**WADE MILLS**  
County of Dufferin's Warden



## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

We are pleased to share the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan for Dufferin County.

This plan was developed through collaboration with the community, Council, and staff. It reflects our shared vision, mission and values and outlines our key priority areas, goals, and initiatives for the next four years and beyond.

Our strategic plan is organized around five key priority areas: **Climate & Environment, Community, Economy, Governance and Equity**. The goals and initiatives are interconnected and support multiple priorities, cutting across traditional areas of responsibility. This is an ambitious plan that aims to tackle some of the biggest challenges facing all communities and organizations: impacts of climate change, housing affordability, community safety, employee well-being, and racism and discrimination.

The strategic plan guides our work; it forms the foundation of operational plans, the annual budget, recommendations to Council and day-to-day decision making. This plan is grounded in our values of **collaboration, accountability, innovation, compassion, and courage**. We are also using a **Climate Lens** and an **Equity Lens** to further guide our actions. As we move forward, we will create an implementation guide that will assign responsibilities, identify required resources, and establish a timeline for implementation of each goal.

The strategic plan is a living document that will be monitored, evaluated, and updated regularly to ensure we are on track and responsive to changing needs and opportunities. We will report on our progress and performance to staff, County Council, and the public. Measuring our progress and celebrating milestones will be critical to long term success.

We are proud of the work we have done to create this strategic plan, and we are excited about the future of our county. We invite you to join us as we work to be a **community that grows together**.

### Dufferin County's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan is our compass.

Every municipality must make choices regarding what services to provide, what to build and where to invest. The Strategic Plan articulates the path forward, setting out our vision for the future of our community and framework to guide us as we decide where to prioritize and invest public resources.

**A focus on the future:** This Strategic Plan was designed with a forward-looking focus to guide the organization as we plan, make decisions, and invest in the future of our community. It will help us seize new opportunities and tackle challenges, including those that may stretch beyond the horizon of a four-year term of Council. However, this plan is also a "living document" that will be periodically reviewed to ensure it remains relevant and aligned with the community's and the administration's priorities.

**An interconnected and integrated Plan:** This Strategic Plan differs from previous plans as it is centred on the intersections among the County's strategic priorities, as opposed to viewing them as distinct with their own discrete action plans, resources, and outcomes. Each strategic priority and goal represent a critical piece of the puzzle to achieving our shared vision, building on one another to create a cohesive and interconnected roadmap that has the potential to transform our community and all who live in it.

**A plan for everyone:** The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan places a renewed focus on equity and inclusivity and sets out the County's commitment to create a community where all can thrive, regardless of individual circumstances. It is also a testament to the internal work underway to ensure that the County is a fair, equitable and inclusive employer that enables and empowers employees to succeed.

**Putting strategy into action:** The Strategic Plan is grounded in the County's vision, mission and values and will guide Council and staff in the day-to-day work of realizing progress on the priorities set out in this document. This will be done by linking the Strategic Plan to the County's annual business planning and budget processes. Further, building into the plan a system of performance measurement means that it can be an anchor for accountability and transparency to the community we serve.



**SONYA PRITCHARD**  
Chief Administrative Officer

## ***Moving Forward Together: A Plan for Dufferin County***

For 2023-2026, we present a refreshed Strategic Plan that includes the following key elements:

- ∞ A new **vision** that reflects our aspirations for the administration and the community of Dufferin.
- ∞ An updated **mission** that articulates our purpose and how we will achieve our vision.
- ∞ A set of core **values and lenses** that will guide everything we do, from making policy decisions, delivering services, making investments, and engaging with community members.
- ∞ **Five strategic priority areas** key to our future success and the **goals** that cut across each of these priority areas that will deliver positive outcomes in line with our vision, mission and values.
- ∞ Specific **initiatives** for this four-year planning cycle that will support implementation and help us deliver on our goals.
- ∞ **Measures** for each goal that we will track and measure to understand if we are making progress against what we set out to do.



## **THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

The journey to update Dufferin County's Corporate Strategic Plan included an in-depth analysis of the County's internal and external environment and input from numerous stakeholders, including the Warden and County Council, staff, and community members.

Over a six-month period, we have heard from over 450 stakeholders who shared their input and perspectives as part of this process. Our engagement process involved the following key activities:

- ∞ Twenty-two (22) interviews with the Warden, Council Members, and Senior Management Team
- ∞ Two (2) workshops with County Council
- ∞ One (1) workshop with local municipal Councils
- ∞ Three (3) workshops with the Senior Management Team and Managers
- ∞ Three (3) sessions with staff
- ∞ Digital staff survey (87 responses)
- ∞ Two (2) focus groups with community partners and service providers
- ∞ Digital community survey (415 responses)
- ∞ Four (4) community engagement sessions

This extensive and comprehensive consultation process informed the creation of the Strategic Plan and ensures that it is grounded in the needs, aspirations, and priorities of Dufferin community and key stakeholders.

## WHAT WE HEARD

**Growth is on the horizon for Dufferin.** In recent years, the community has grown as more individuals and families seek to take advantage of the quality of life available in the County. The COVID-19 pandemic signaled an important shift as a growing number of people departed the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) for Dufferin in search of more affordable living and more green space. Looking ahead, Dufferin will continue to grow, and it is essential that the County proactively plan for this growth so that the infrastructure and services required to support it are in place.

**Dufferin County's natural environment is its strongest asset and critical to its identity.** A mix of small urban centres and rural agricultural communities, the forests, rivers and streams, and vast farmland are key reasons people choose to live, work or visit the County. As Dufferin grows, it will need to find the appropriate balance between enabling and embracing this growth and preserving and protecting Dufferin's unique natural landscape and urban/rural mix. This Strategic Plan is reflective of this balance.

**Like most other places, the availability and affordability of housing is a major concern across the board** – for Council, the County administration, local municipalities, and community members. There is real concern that although Dufferin may be more affordable than the GTA, housing is becoming less accessible and affordable for many community members. Moving forward, the County will need to work with its eight area municipalities to explore process, policy and partnership opportunities to increase housing supply, accessibility and affordability. There is no single solution that can address the reality of today's housing crisis. As a result, collaboration is required among all levels of government to ensure that everyone in Dufferin in need of a home has one.

**Creating a community where everyone can live and thrive.** The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated – but did not create – the social challenges that are impacting the community fabric of Dufferin and many other communities across Canada. These include poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, and mental health and substance use challenges. As a one of the smallest – but no less mighty – social service managers in Ontario, the County works



directly with service providers and partner agencies to help ensure people have the supports they require, but the need far outstrips available resources. As with the housing file, supporting our most vulnerable community members will require ongoing and sustained collaboration with the County's community partners, such as DC MOVES, and advocacy with the provincial and federal governments.

**Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility is a key priority.** Dufferin's community is becoming more diverse and demographics are shifting as more newcomers, younger families and people from equity deserving groups are calling Dufferin home. Individuals from all walks of life recognize the high quality of life Dufferin has to offer, and in turn, our community fabric and culture are further enriched. Looking ahead, it is critical that the County continue to be a welcoming and hospitable place for all people, regardless of gender, sex, age, ethnicity, ability, and income level. To do so, it will need to ensure its services and delivery models evolve with the community and embody the principles of equity, inclusivity and accessibility. It is also critical that, as an organization, we build on the findings and recommendations of the County's recent **Equity Audit** and foster a fair, equitable, and inclusive work environment for all employees.

**Growth of the economy must occur in step with population growth.** The County has strong agricultural and manufacturing sectors, celebrated small businesses, and desirable tourist attractions that enable the success and strength of the local economy. In the current uncertain economic climate, it is important that the County help foster an "open for business" environment to support continued economic prosperity. The County can play a role in economic development through supporting key enablers, such as local workforce development, housing supply and affordability, and access to critical and emerging technologies, all of which can help draw new businesses to Dufferin and support the expansion and continued success of existing businesses.

**Investing in asset renewal and enhancement must continue to be top-of-mind.** Dufferin County has made important strides in how it manages and invests in its assets and core infrastructure, which is a significant accomplishment given that the County stretches across nearly 1,500 square kilometres and is made up of both urban and rural communities. However, like most other municipalities, Dufferin has a sizeable state-of-good-repair backlog and will, as it grows, see increased demands and pressure on its assets and infrastructure. As a result, the County must continue to invest in and make progress against its **Asset Management Plan**, while also proactively planning for what infrastructure will be required to support future community needs.

**Significant efforts are underway to take action on climate change.** In the past several years, the County declared a Climate Emergency, committed to net-zero by 2050, and adopted several guiding documents including the County's first **Dufferin Climate Action Plan** and **Together for Change: Dufferin's Climate Adaptation Strategy**. Advancing climate mitigation and adaptation efforts in the corporation and in the wider community continues to be an important priority, as the County looks to support long-term resiliency for residents, businesses and the organization itself.

**The County administration is on the right track.** The County is committed to a culture of continuous improvement and continues to explore opportunities to drive innovation and transformation to improve service delivery, support enhanced coordination among the area municipalities, and achieve meaningful outcomes and benefits in the community. As Dufferin grows and evolves, the County administration will need to ensure it has the internal capacity to meet shifting community needs. The County has a strong, dedicated staff team, and continuing to engage and empower our people is key to serving the best interests of individuals, families and organizations that make up our community.

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

The County conducted a digital survey to gather data and input on key priorities and issues from the community's perspective.

## "Beautiful", "Friendly" & "Community"

Most popular attributes used to describe Dufferin County.

64%

of participants said that access to the natural environment, parks, trails and green spaces is what they like most about living in, working in or visiting the County.

90%

of participants want to see the County keep taxes affordable and focus on value-for-money in service delivery.

87%

of participants see protecting Dufferin's natural environment as a key priority for the County.

86%

of participants want the County to continue to support local economic growth and job creation.

400+

Community members participated

# STRATEGIC PLAN AT A GLANCE

## Vision

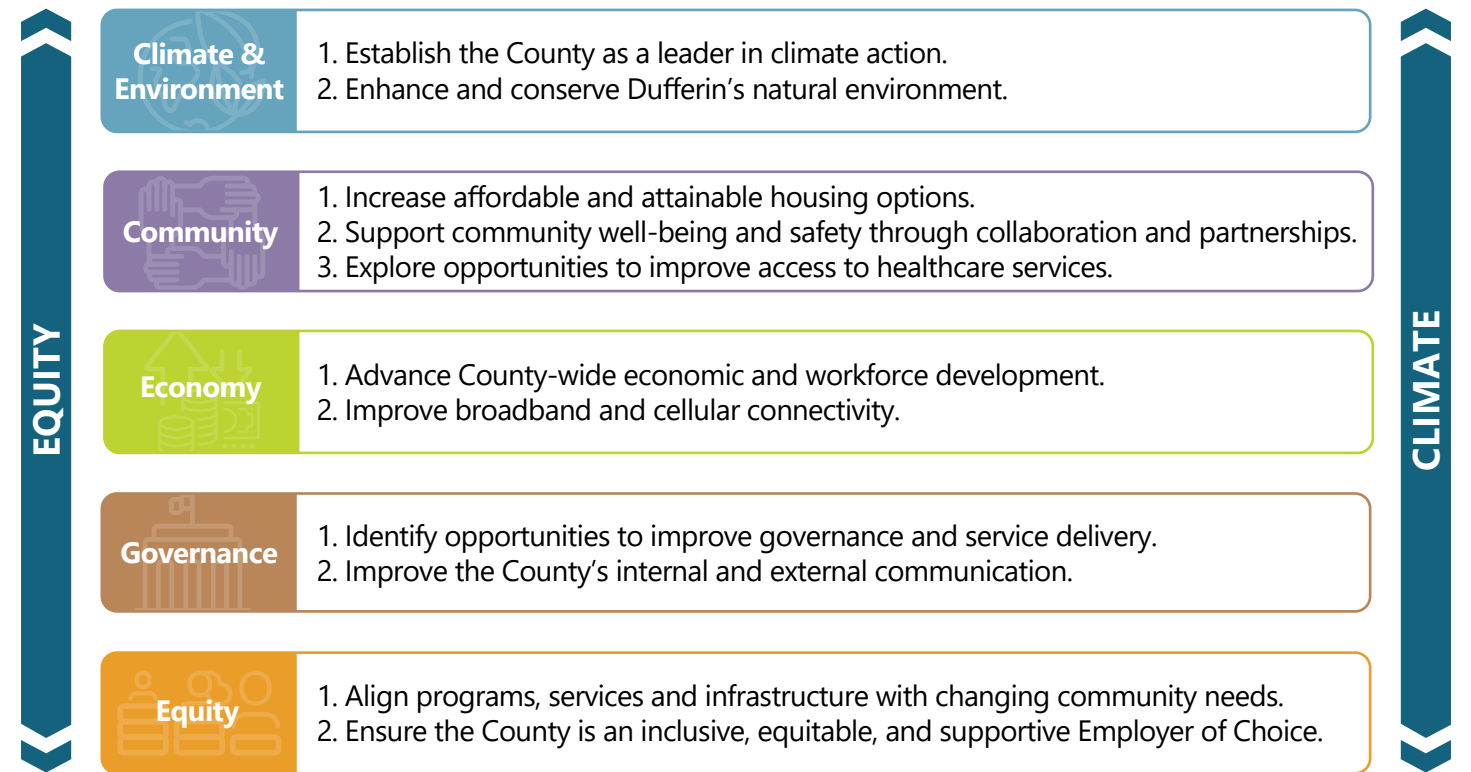
A community that grows together.

## Mission

Providing programs and services that foster a thriving, equitable and resilient community in an ever-changing world.

## Values

Collaboration | Accountability | Innovation | Compassion | Courage





## VISION AND MISSION

## OUR VALUES AND LENSES



### VISION

The vision is the shared aspiration for the future of Dufferin County.

**A community that grows together.**



### MISSION

The mission statement articulates Dufferin County's core purpose and how it will work to achieve its future vision.

**Providing programs and services that foster a thriving, equitable and resilient community in an ever-changing world.**

The actions, conduct and decisions of County Council and the administration are guided by a core set of values that speak to who we are and how we work together to serve our community and achieve our collective vision.

#### **Collaboration**

We actively engage and partner across departments and with community members, stakeholders, and other organizations to collectively address our challenges and achieve our shared goals.

#### **Accountability**

We are transparent and take responsibility and ownership for our actions and decisions.

#### **Innovation**

We embrace a culture of continuous improvement and creativity, seeking innovative solutions for an ever-changing community.

#### **Compassion**

We act with kindness and demonstrate empathy and understanding in serving our community.

#### **Courage**

We lead with conviction and act in the best interest of the County and our community.



## OUR LENSES: EQUITY AND CLIMATE

As part of the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, the County is introducing two lenses – Equity and Climate – that will be integrated into our day-to-day operations, policy design, and decision-making processes. These lenses will help us understand and evaluate the impacts of new or changing County policies, programs and services, ensuring that we are making decisions with social and environmental considerations foregrounded and in alignment with our long-term objectives.

**The Equity Lens** serves to help analyze or diagnose the impact of the design and implementation of policies and programs on under-served individuals and groups that experience marginalization, and to identify and potentially eliminate systemic barriers. The purpose of an equity lens is to be deliberately inclusive as an organization. It helps decision makers focus on equity in both their processes and outcomes. It is important to note we use an equity lens to address systemic and structural barriers to groups that experience marginalization and not due to any unfounded or false beliefs that marginalized groups are deficient in any way.

**The Climate Lens** serves to help identify, analyze and evaluate potential climate and/or environmental impacts of policies, services and programs. Through use of the lens, we will be better positioned to make informed recommendations and decisions that consider possible impacts to the climate (such as greenhouse gas production) or impacts resulting from the climate (such as increased flood risk). It also aligns with our ongoing actions to address climate change impacts through mitigation and adaptation initiatives.



### Priority Area: CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT

Our natural environment is our greatest asset. We are committed to taking action on climate change, starting from within the administration and reducing our corporate contributions to greenhouse gas emissions. **Our Dufferin Climate Action Plan** and **Together for Change: Dufferin's Climate Adaptation Strategy** provide a roadmap to empower our community members to participate and embrace climate solutions so that we can advance a more sustainable and resilient community. Ensuring the long-term vibrancy of Dufferin's natural environment – our trees, forests, waterways – and embracing new opportunities in a changing climate requires collective effort. We, as the County, are the stewards of this effort.

## OUR GOALS

### 1. Establish the County as a leader in climate action

#### How can we achieve this goal?

- ∞ Implement action items outlined in the **Dufferin Climate Action Plan** and **Together for Change: Dufferin's Climate Adaptation Strategy** that are focused on several priorities, including the following:
  - o Creation of a Green Development Standards to ensure new development is environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable
  - o Development of programs for home retrofits for reducing energy use and building resilience
  - o Support the transition to low-greenhouse gas transportation systems, including electrification and active transportation
  - o Creation and support for programs that increase climate resilience in agricultural and natural systems
  - o Institutionalization of climate action in municipal programs policies and budgets
  - o Provide education to empower the community to participate in climate solutions

#### Measured by:

- ∞ % reductions in GHG community emissions
- ∞ % reductions in GHG corporate emissions
- ∞ \$ spent on adaptation projects or programs

### 2. We will enhance and conserve Dufferin's natural environment

#### How can we achieve this goal?

- ∞ Update the Long-Term Waste Management Strategy, including an audit to identify improvement areas



- ∞ Increase collaboration with community groups, NGOs, businesses and other orders of government to develop and implement conservation initiatives and programs
- ∞ Encourage community awareness and participation in programs implemented by the Conservation Authority, Province of Ontario, and County of Dufferin (e.g. Rural Water Quality, Experimental Acres and tree planting programs) to support protection and enhancement of our natural environment
- ∞ Improve active transportation options and County trail infrastructure

**Measured by:**

- ∞ % waste diversion rate
- ∞ Participation rate in conservation and land stewardship programs



Priority Area:  
**COMMUNITY**

Dufferin County is a vibrant, caring, and welcoming community, built on a shared sense of purpose and a collaborative spirit. We also know that there is work ahead to address key social challenges and ensure that our most vulnerable community members have the supports they need when they need them. As a County, we will continue to collaborate with our local community partners and service providers who know our community best and drive the outcomes we seek: a community where everyone can thrive.

**OUR GOALS**

**1. Increase affordable and attainable housing options**

**How can we achieve this goal?**

- ∞ Develop County-wide Housing Strategy to address the following:
  - o Streamline planning policy and processes
  - o Increase supply for owners and renters
  - o Improve options to ensure appropriate housing that is adequate, accessible and affordable
  - o Address the need for supports for vulnerable populations

**Measured by:**

- ∞ Average affordability indicators for ownership and rental housing in the County and by municipality

**2. Support community well-being and safety through collaboration and partnerships**

**How can we achieve this goal?**

- ∞ Advance implementation of the County's **Community Safety and Well-Being Plan (2021-2024)** in collaboration with local municipalities
- ∞ Work as part of DC MOVES (Dufferin County – Managing, Organizing, Validating, Engagement Strategies) to collaborate and integrate efforts to address local human services challenges
- ∞ Offer more granting and funding opportunities to community partners and organizations to support capacity-building

**Measured by:**

- ∞ Community Safety and Well-Being Index

### 3. Explore opportunities to improve access to healthcare services

#### How can we achieve this goal?

- Explore initiatives to support physician recruitment
- Advocate to improve access to mental health and addiction services and supports in the community
- Advance the work of the County's local Ontario Health Team (Hills of Headwaters Collaborative)

#### Measured by:

- # of physicians per capita



A growing economy contributes to a thriving community. With its strong agricultural foundation, expanding urban centres and strategic location near the Greater Toronto Area, Dufferin is well primed to support business expansion and growth, investment attraction, and high-quality jobs. The County can support this vision by focusing on the key enablers – the people, processes, and tools – for economic success.

## OUR GOALS

### 1. Advance County-wide economic and workforce development

#### How can we achieve this goal?

- ∞ Create a Workforce Development Strategy
- ∞ Develop an Investment Attraction Strategy to address income insecurity and help advance higher paying jobs
- ∞ Implement the **Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2021-2026**
- ∞ Build awareness of programs and supports for businesses in the community
- ∞ Improve alignment/harmonization on economic development between all lower and upper-tier municipalities

#### Measured by:

- ∞ Community Safety and Well-Being Index
- ∞ Workforce participation (%)
- ∞ Job vacancy rate (%)
- ∞ Unemployment rate (%)

### 2. Improve broadband and cellular connectivity

#### How can we achieve this goal?

- ∞ Advocate to provincial and federal governments for additional funding programs to support remaining underserved areas
- ∞ Continue to lobby Internet Service Providers (ISPs) for local investment in the County's network
- ∞ Develop a service gap map

#### Measured by:

- ∞ % increase in coverage map year-over-year



## Priority Area: GOVERNANCE

Public service is at the heart of Dufferin County. As the County continues to grow, we will maintain our focus on public service excellence through a program of continuous improvement. This means continuing to explore opportunities to ensure effective and efficient service delivery, advance organizational transformation and modernization, and promote enhanced engagement both within the administration and with the people we serve.

### OUR GOALS

#### 1. Identify opportunities to improve governance and service delivery

##### How can we achieve this goal?

- ∞ Explore identified opportunities within the **Service Delivery Review Report** and continue to improve County's governance structure
- ∞ Continue to advance digital transformation initiatives
- ∞ Review policies and procedures to enable implementation and application of Equity and Climate lens to all organizational initiatives and processes
- ∞ Continue to implement the County's **Asset Management Plan** to ensure the long-term viability of our assets
- ∞ Develop a Corporate Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Framework

##### Measured by:

- ∞ % customer satisfaction (annual community survey)
- ∞ State-of-Good-Repair backlog as % of total asset value (replacement value)

#### 2. Improve the County's internal and external communications

##### How can we achieve this goal?

- ∞ Create annual and timely strategic communications plans for corporate and departmental initiatives
- ∞ Update and/or establish standardized communications procedures across the organization

##### Measured by:

- ∞ Increase in earned media
- ∞ Increase in social media followers and social media post engagement
- ∞ Increase employee views and responses to internal messaging



## Priority Area: EQUITY

Dufferin County is a community for everyone. As we grow and evolve, we will work to ensure that our programs, services, and resources are responsive to the needs of community and reduce barriers to access. As an administration, we will lead by example and are committed to fostering a workplace culture that embodies the values of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.

### OUR GOALS

#### 1. Align programs, services and infrastructure with changing community needs

##### How can we achieve this goal?

- ∞ Implement the County's **Age-Friendly Strategic Action Plan** and its four priorities relating to transportation; communication and information; housing; and community support and health services
- ∞ Advocate for improved GO Transit services between the County and GTA
- ∞ Seek opportunities to support/enhance immigration and newcomer services
- ∞ Develop a Community Engagement Framework to guide future consultation and engagement opportunities

##### Measured by:

- ∞ Increase in services available for seniors to remain at home
- ∞ % of services used by immigrants/newcomers

#### 2. Ensure that the County is an inclusive, equitable and supportive Employer of Choice

##### How can we achieve this goal?

- ∞ Support staff well-being, development and engagement
- ∞ Implement recommendations from the County's **Equity Audit** and develop and implement a County of Dufferin Equity Strategy to foster an equitable corporate culture
- ∞ Increase feelings of trust, belonging and wellness at Dufferin County, specifically among Black people, LGBTQ+ people, Dufferin Oaks team members, and those with accessibility needs
- ∞ Complete a total compensation review
- ∞ Connect individual performance plans to team/department and corporate goals

##### Measured by:

- ∞ # of Equity Audit recommendations implemented
- ∞ Turnover/vacancy rate (%)
- ∞ % of employee satisfaction per Annual Employee Survey



## THE PATH FORWARD

This Strategic Plan sets out a vision for the future of Dufferin County and identifies the collective priorities of Council, staff, and the community. It will be our roadmap for the next four years as we look to contribute to positive and meaningful outcomes that make Dufferin a great place to live, do business and visit.

At the same time, many of the goals in this Plan will stretch beyond the horizon of this Strategic Plan. Our commitment is to move the dial on these goals over this term of Council through the strategic initiatives we have identified. This document is also a “living document” and ensures that Dufferin County can address emerging opportunities and challenges and be responsive to the changing needs of the community.

To put this Plan into action and remain accountable and transparent to the people we serve, we will:

- ∞ **Assign accountabilities and responsibilities:** We will work as a team to understand our roles and responsibilities in delivering on the goals set out in the Plan, mindful that the integrated nature of this Strategic Plan requires collective effort by Council and staff in addition to all departments and service areas.
- ∞ **Build internal capacity:** Staff will bring forward requests to Council for the necessary resources to advance the initiatives and goals in this Plan.
- ∞ **Monitor and report on our progress:** Using the indicators in the Strategic Plan, we will measure and track progress against our goals and report to Council and the community on an annual basis.
- ∞ **Celebrate successes:** We will communicate and share our achievements with our community members, partners, and stakeholders.

We are excited to work with community members, partner organizations and agencies, businesses, and others to build on the work we have done and continue to chart a path to a sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous future in Dufferin County.



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