

STRATEGIC PLAN

TOWNSHIP OF EAR FALLS

December 2011

ear falls



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In October 2010 a new Council was elected in the Township of Ear Falls. Council retained Meridian Planning Consultants Inc. to prepare a Municipal Strategic Plan in the spring of 2011. This Plan will guide the actions and decisions of Council and staff over the term of Council. The Plan also provides strategic direction beyond this term of Council to assist residents and staff to achieve a more desirable, viable and sustainable community well into the future.

This Plan was developed through a series of meetings with Council, staff and the public. It sets out a Vision Statement that describes the desired future for the community and Objectives that have the considerable support of Council, staff and the community. This Plan identifies a number of specific Strategic Actions to be undertaken by the Township and the community and outlines the roles and responsibilities of staff, Council and the community in completing those actions.

2.0 BACKGROUND SCAN

The Township of Ear Falls started from the Community of Gold Pines located at the westerly limit of Lac Seul. Goods and materials were shipped from the rail station in Hudson, just outside of Sioux Lookout across Lac Seul to Gold Pines to service forestry and mining activity in that area. In 1927 the dam was built at Ear Falls to control water as part of the Lake of the Woods Control Board. Two years later, Ontario Hydro established a hydro-generating facility at the dam. In 1935, the first large-scale generator was built. The first road in the Ear Falls area was developed as a roadway between Ear Falls and Red Lake, so that materials could be



shipped by water from Hudson to Ear Falls and then by road to Red Lake. That road was paved in the 1960's when high school students from Ear Falls were being transported to Red Lake. The roadway from Ear Falls, southerly to Highway 17, was not finally developed and paved until quite later.



Ear Falls has suffered a boom and bust economy related to the resource industry. The largest operator, the Griffith Mine operated in 1967. The second mine, the South Bay Mine operated until 1970. The community developed as a service centre for mining and forestry operations in Northwestern Ontario. At one time, the population of Ear Falls was 2,200. It is now approximately 1,200.

In 1997, Avenor built a \$60,000,000.00 wood processing facility (sawmill) in Ear Falls. That facility closed in 2009. There continues to be mining exploration in the area and renewed interest in iron ore reserves at the old Griffith Mine.



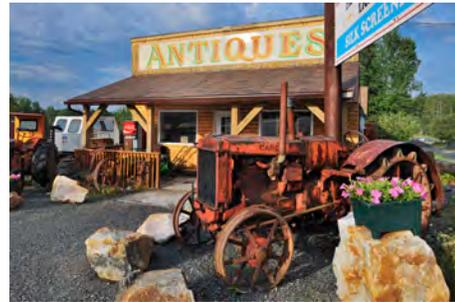
Ear Falls has excellent recreation opportunities. The hunting and fishing in the area is exceptional. The Municipality also operates one of the best golf courses in Northwestern Ontario.

The Province of Ontario initially built the sewage treatment and water treatment plants in the Municipality. The plants were built when the population was increasing rapidly and have design capacity of about 5,000 persons. As a result, there is plenty of available capacity to accommodate new residential, commercial and industrial growth on full municipal services.

3.0 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Council is elected to represent the people of the Township and to direct staff to implement policies and direction established by Council. To assist the new Council in establishing direction, a Council Meeting was held in March 2011. The purpose of this session was to provide a basis and understanding of the Ear Falls community and the shared values of Council with respect to the community of Ear Falls. A second Council Meeting was held with Council and staff in May 2011. This session was designed to identify specific issues that need to be addressed by the Township in the next ten years. At that stage specific strategic actions were identified.

In a somewhat parallel process, the Township of Ear Falls Economic Development Committee has been working on an Economic Development Strategy for Ear Falls. The draft Economic Development Strategy was prepared in May 2011. Given the considerable overlap between an Administrative Strategic Plan and an Economic Strategic Plan, Council felt it appropriate to combine the strategies in an effort to create a broad based Community Strategic Plan that would include economic, social and community aspects.



The first community workshop was held on August 10, 2011. Approximately 22 people attended the session and engaged in a number of discussion exercises relating to the



development of a Strategic Plan. The discussion exercises were intended to ensure that the participants' comments were consistent with the input received during the previous sessions of the Economic Development Committee, Council and staff.

From these sessions the following Strategy has been developed. It is intended that the following represents a draft Strategy for the Community. Further consultation with the Community occurred in September 2011. At this session the

draft Strategic Plan was reviewed and public comments were received in a formal Council Meeting. The final Council review of the document was completed in November, 2011.

4.0 COMMUNITY VISION

The current population of the Township has declined from a high of over 2,200 to its current level of about 1,200. While this population level results in a tight-knit community with all of the small town qualities that make it an attractive place to live, safety, family oriented recreational opportunities and high quality of life, the population is too small to continue to maintain and support much of the social and physical infrastructure that supports the community. The vision expressed by participants in this process can be summarized as:

To encourage and support the growth of Ear Falls in a manner that will result in a sustainable, complete community while maintaining that small town community character that makes the Township a desirable place to live, work and play.

5.0 OBJECTIVES

The Objectives flowing from the Vision are as follows:

1. To grow the community to fully utilize the available infrastructure and service levels.
2. To attract new investment in the community and maintain existing business and residents.
3. To encourage community involvement, pride and spirit.



6.0 STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The following Strategic Actions should be completed by the Township and the community over the next four years and beyond.

6.1 HIGH PRIORITY

1. Engage in further studies regarding Nuclear Waste Management.

Consideration of becoming a potential location for a deep repository for spent nuclear waste has been a controversial topic in the community. Council will not commit to supporting this use at this time. However, becoming a potential site for this facility provides considerable economic and community benefits and is in keeping with the Vision and Objectives of this Plan. There is general support in the community for on-going investigations into the suitability of the Ear Falls area for this use.

2. Continue to improve communication between the staff, Council and the public.

The current Council and administration have made considerable effort to improve communication and openness of government in this term of Council. Regular Town Hall Meetings or open forum opportunities with Council will ensure that residents have access to Council. Regular newsletters with tax bills, posting of important meetings and the creation of Committees that are comprised of members of Council and the public will increase the opportunities for grass roots consultation and transparency in government.

3. Plan for a Community of 5,000 people.

This action supports a number of other strategic actions identified by Council, staff and the public in this process including:

1. Support business retention and expansion.
2. Make youth retention a priority.
3. Ensure that serviced residential lots are available.
4. Ensure adequate training and educational opportunities locally.

This long-range land use and infrastructure planning will provide a greater sense of certainty about the future of the community and assist in be development ready to respond to the historic booms in the resourced based economy. As part of this process the Township should prepare an economic pro forma for potential home builders to provide certainty about the costs of developing in the community.

6.2 MEDIUM PRIORITY

1. Develop an Asset Management Plan.

The Township needs to ensure that it can remain financially sustainable over the long-term. This action is necessary to determine what major expenditures on infrastructure and services should be expected in the future and to determine how to finance those expenditures. Once completed, residents and business should appreciate the stability of the tax rates necessary to support the level of services provided by the Township. Decisions can then be made in keeping with the Vision and Objectives of the Strategic Plan regarding the level of services that can continue to be provided by the Municipality. This action should be coordinated with another strategic action identified in the consultation process including building strong, strategic partnerships with neighbouring communities including Lac Seul and Wabauskang First Nations. Shared use of major facilities and services may enable residents of all communities to continue to enjoy a high level of service with lower costs.

2. Undertake an Operations Review.

The Municipality should complete an Operations Review every five years or so. Moving into the new Municipal Government Building is a good reason for reviewing operations. This action would be the final step in the Strategy to ensure that the Township can continue to provide a sustainable level of service while making the most efficient use of resources.

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION

The Strategic Actions identified in this Plan should be completed within this term of Council. Ultimately the responsibility of completing the Actions lies with the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). However, the CAO will need to delegate specific tasks to Department Heads/Supervisors. The community also needs to participate in many of the actions.



The following chart outlines roles and responsibilities and recommended implementation targets.

Strategic Action	Role and Responsibility	Completion Target
Engage in further studies regarding Nuclear Waste Management.	Council – pass resolution to support further studies and advise NWMO.	February, 2012
Continue to improve communication between the staff, Council and the public.	CAO – confirm dates and protocols for Town Hall Meetings and communication/notices for Meetings.	February 2012
Plan for a Community of 5,000 people.	Council/Consultants – budget for Official Plan Update and prepare Terms of Reference.	March 2012 – July 2013
Develop an Asset Management Plan.	CAO/Consultants – continue process started and include public consultation.	December 2012
Undertake an Operations Review.	CAO – develop a Terms of Reference and retain outside consultant.	March, 2013 – October 2013

8.0 MONITORING

Following adoption of this Strategic Plan the CAO should complete the following:

1. Each Staff Report going to Council should contain a section describing the relationship between the recommendation in the Staff Report and the Strategic Plan.
2. An Annual Report should be completed to review and summarize Council decisions and municipal actions that have been taken to implement this Plan. A meeting should be advertised and an opportunity for members of the public to address Council on the Strategic Plan should be provided.

