

Town of Hardisty

Website: www.hardisty.ca

Strategic Plan 2023-2025



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Executive Summary

A partial strategic plan was previously developed by a different group of councilors, and facilitated by Civic Solutions Inc, in 2016. On November 9, 2022, the current Town of Hardisty councilors, executive staff and a facilitator gathered for another strategic planning session. It was agreed to not borrow heavily from the past exercise, but to develop a new strategic plan by considering the current operating environment and the intuitions of the current council.

In November of 2023 council and executive staff re-convened and determined the goals and the strategies to accomplish those goals. Utilizing the information from the previous SWOT session, council was determined to create a plan to provide a clear vision for the Town of Hardisty for the next 3 years. Undeterred by the previous information provided a new plan with tangible goals was created.

Those six goals that have been highlighted to focus on for the duration of this strategic plan are as follows and will be explained in greater detail throughout the plan:

1. Maintain and strengthen Town of Hardisty strong financial position
2. Develop infrastructure plans and then prioritize
3. Review Bylaws
4. Attract/Retain skilled Professionals
5. Improve Capital Spending for Public Works Equipment.
6. Strengthen Emergency Management Capabilities

By giving attention to the base set of priorities that drove the decision making process to assess these as the 6 goals, council has determined a path forward that is clear and attainable.

Vision

To strive to represent the Town of Hardisty as a town to live, work and play. A town where there is “more than you imagine”.

What is SWOT?

SWOT Analysis was a technique developed in the 1970's that is frequently used in strategic planning. SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats and is a structured planning method that evaluates those four elements of an organization. A SWOT Analysis is a simple and effective framework for leveraging the organizations strengths, improving weaknesses, minimizing threats and taking advantage of opportunities. It is through this analysis technique that the Council of the Town of Hardisty structured the strategic plan as presented.

SWOT Components:

Strengths What do you do well? What unique resources can you draw on? What do others see as your strengths?

Weaknesses What could you improve? Where do you have fewer resources than others? What are others likely to see as weaknesses?

Opportunities What opportunities are open to you? What trends could you take advantage of? How can you turn your strengths into opportunities?

Threats What threats could harm you? What is your competition doing? What threats do your weaknesses expose to you?

Town of Hardisty Strengths

A good starting point for any strategic planning exercise is to consider physical, environmental, administrative, and financial factors that contribute to overall strengths of the town of Hardisty. The following listing of strengths was compiled:

- Small town ambiance - friendly, respectful, simplified networking
- Strong partnerships/relationships with volunteers and volunteer groups
- Proximity to huge energy storage/distribution terminal (jobs/businesses)
- Town owned Professional Building
- Strong municipal financial status
- Knowledgeable and reliable staff - Public works and administrative
- Excellent recreation infrastructure including Golf Course, Hardisty Lake, Fish Lake, rodeo grounds, stampede, hockey arena, curling rink, walking trails,
- Strong council - working together in common direction
- Major travel corridors (highway 13 and SH 881)
- Nestled into environment with natural beauty (lakes, river, trails)
- Several choices for schooling in area
- Many amenities of life (health, groceries, hardware, mechanic, conveniences, etc.)
- Citizens and businesses are generous with money and hands on assistance
- Potential for development of industrial lands/lots
- Relatively low crime rates
- Affordable housing at provincial and national scale
- Low tax rates.
- Improving relationship with County
- \$4,064,591 in accumulated municipal reserves (2021)
- Asset to Liability ratio is strong (5.11 to 1 which is very good)

A quick comparison of the list from the 2016 plan was reviewed and we found our list included all relevant strengths identified in the previous process.

Town of Hardisty Weaknesses

Part of a full Environmental Scan requires that council determines and acknowledges intrinsic weaknesses or barriers to progress. The following list was developed:

- Temporary closure of Emergency Room in Hospital
- Age and capability of current public works equipment
- Highly transient population with many properties owned exclusively for rental income.
- High-cost rental market - because most renters are short term, rents are high relative to communities that have many longer-term rental accommodations.
- Higher costs of consumables, ostensibly because we are rural and difficult to service.
- Relative proximity to larger centers allows residents to easily shop elsewhere
- Town-owned properties are costly (airport, river campsite, numerous residential lots)
- Main street lacks vitality. Some owners are local, some are absentee
- Infrastructure is aging - current reserves cover 59.75% of depreciation
- Population decline - decline about 10% between 2016 -2021
- Aging population
- Difficult to attract professional services - lawyer, accountants, therapists, etc.

Town of Hardisty Opportunities

After an introspective of the strengths and weaknesses of the Town of Hardisty, we have enough background to begin evaluating what opportunities might be available for council to consider when moving forward. The following list of opportunities became apparent as the group considered this approach:

- Industrial Park - Town of Hardisty has substantial lands available for industrial/commercial development adjacent to one of the largest industrial complexes in central Alberta.
- Manitou Stone attraction - Province of Alberta has recently announced plans to develop an indigenous attraction revolving around the Manitou stone in or around Hardisty. Also, Hardisty Buffalo Pound is a significant archaeological site across the highway from Hardisty which is under recognized and could materialize as an important Alberta tourism site - perhaps coupled with Manitou Stone site? It is

important to recognize that considerable funding might be available for indigenous cultural investments.

- With proximity to two important highway corridors and the industrial complex, Hardisty seems perfectly located for a major truck stop.
- With the town owning a professional building, there is opportunity to expand its use to include legal, accounting, chiropractic, massage therapy and other professional services in a one stop location, if marketed appropriately.
- The Bethany Group Manor is perennially underutilized and could be used as a simple steppingstone to potential residents considering Hardisty as home - a risk free introduction to the community before investing.
- Town of Hardisty has some excellent venues (indoor and outdoor) that would lend themselves to locations for hosting events (music, horsemanship, trade fairs, etc.)
- Old school building has potential for lots of private business or recreational uses.

Town of Hardisty Threats

While opportunities allow us to consider what might be, we must also consider the external realities that might thwart our dreams. The following list of realistic threats to Hardisty's growth was developed:

- *Green House Gas/ Carbon Free Future policies and agendas could have a strong impact on the industrial complex over the mid to long term.*
- *Every year, infrastructure gets one year older and one year closer to needing replacement. What will be our future infrastructure needs and will we have the money to do what we need?*
- *Declining population thwarts growth*
- *Aging population may impact future community priorities*
- *The number of residential (lease) and business properties that are vacant hurts financial and cultural future of the community*
- *Will climate/weather changes have an impact on municipal responsibilities?*
- *What is the future of government funding to rural municipalities?*
- *Rural crime is growing, and governments are considering alternate ways to police municipalities. What impact will this have on Town of Hardisty?*

Town of Hardisty - Mid-Term Goal Setting

With a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) analysis completed, we have a common sense of the potential available and restraints that might get in the way as we begin the process of determining municipal goals (key areas in which we would like to see some measurable results in the near to mid term future). The next step is brainstorming positive changes that we would like to see. The following list of Key Result Areas was developed with no thought to relative importance, ranking or prioritizing:

- Develop a culture of collaboration with business, government, industry, business volunteer groups and individuals.
- Streamline permitting processes to make establishing new businesses quicker and easier (i.e. consider simplifying/streamlining development bylaws)
- Maintain and strengthen strong financial position
- Improve capital spending on Public Works Equipment
- Re-open Emergency room in Hospital
- Develop Infrastructure plan and establish priorities
- Attract and Retain Skilled Professionals in all aspects of community
- Focus on culture of 'exemplary service' with municipal staff and council
- Support existing business and encourage new business
- Develop Battle View Business Park
- Hold Major events
- Develop Plan for Divesting unwanted properties.

This step of the plan was often circular and resulted in revisiting ideas from different perspectives. In the end, we were comfortable that most of the major areas we would like to see progress in the midterm are on the list.

All agreed this list is too long and some method of prioritizing the goals is required. Each participant was allowed to rank the list by selecting only their 5 top choices. They also provide weight to their choices by giving 5 points to their top choice, 4 points to second choice, and so on. A summary of total points was tabulated, with the above list being reduced to the following six priorities for Town of Hardisty over the next 2-3 years:

1. Maintain and strengthen Town of Hardisty strong financial position
2. Develop infrastructure plans and then prioritize
3. Review Land Use Bylaws
4. Attract/Retain Services
5. Improve Capital Spending for Public Works Equipment.
6. Strengthen Emergency Management Capabilities

These six priorities can be viewed as over-arching themes for council and staff to consider when making day-to-day operation decisions for the Town of Hardisty. While not the total focus of operations, these themes can help direct decisions towards a council driven municipal planning direction. Each theme or Priority Goal can have one or several clear objectives for the short term (2023) and the mid term (2023-2025). The trick is to keep these priority goals top-of-mind in all discussions and planning exercises related to the operations of Town of Hardisty.



GOAL	MAINTAIN STRONG FINANCIAL POSITION
Strategies to Accomplish Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LIQUIDATE VACANT PROPERTIES • ENCOURAGE COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT • PRUDENT BUDGETARY PRACTICE
What Changes Will Occur if Goal is Achieved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WITH INCREASED COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT COULD REDUCE RESIDENTAL TAX BASE=REDUCED COSTS TO RESIDENTIAL TAX-PAYERS • INCREASED DEVELOPMENT = INCREASED POPULATION = INCREASED BUSINESSES = INCREASED DEVELOPMENT
Who Will Carry Out?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COUNCIL- ADMINISTRATION
When Will it Take Place? Timeline?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTIVE AND ON GOING
What Resources Required (financial, people, equipment) to Achieve Goal?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CURRENT STRENGTH – STRONG FINANCIAL POSITION • RESERVE POSITON – STRONG • THE TOWN OF HARDISTY HAS A STRONG FINANCIAL POSITIN, AND COUNCIL IS COMMITTED TO MAINATINING THAT STRENGTH THROUGH PRUDENT BUDGETORY PRACTICE.
Communication to Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANNUAL REVIEW BY COUNCIL. • PRESENT AT OPEN HOUSE
Potential Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INFLATION • UNFORSEEN EXPENSES – LEGAL, INFRASTRUTURE • EMERGENCY/WEATHER EVENT
Potential Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SURROUNDING MUNICIPALITIES • PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

GOAL	DEVELOP AND PRIORITIZE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANS
Strategies to Accomplish Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IMPLEMENT ASSET MANAGEMENT PROGRAM • DEVELOP 5-10 YEAR ASSET PLAN • WATER/SEWER/STREET MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
What Changes Will Occur if Goal is Achieved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IMPROVED SERVICES • IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE • LESS REACTIVE MAINTENANCE
Who Will Carry Out?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COUNCIL – ADMINISTRATION
When Will it Take place? Timeline?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTIVE AND ON GOING • COMPLETED BY DECEMBER 2024
What Resources Required (financial, people, equipment) to Achieve Goal?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTILIZE THIRD PARTY CONTRACTORS TO DETERMINE CONDITION/PRIORITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE • TOWN STAFF • MUNICIPAL COLLABORATION TO ACCESS THIRD PARTY KNOWLEDGE
Communication to Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANNUAL REVIEW BY COUNCIL. • PRESENT AT OPEN HOUSE • PUBLIC WORKS AND THIRD PARTY SUBJECT EXPERTS (PROJECT SPECIFIC) DETAILING ASSET MANAGEMENT PROGRAM UPDATES
Potential Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL FUNDING CUTS • UNEXPECTED ASSET FAILURE •
Potential Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MUNICIPAL COLLABORATION TO ACCESS THIRD PARTY KNOWLEDGE • SURROUNDING MUNICIPALITIES • PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

GOAL	REVIEW BYLAWS
Strategies to Accomplish Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REVIEW AND UPDATE LAND USE BYLAW AS REQUIRED • MONTHLY REVIEW OF BYLAWS • ELIMINATE IRRELEVANT BYLAWS
What Changes Will Occur if Goal is Achieved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIMPLIFY THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND APPLICABILITY • RED TAPE REDUCTION • FAMILIARIZE COUNCIL WITH BYLAWS • KEEP BYLAWS RELEVANT TO CURRENT NEEDS
Who Will Carry Out?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COUNCIL-ADMINISTRATION
When Will it Take Place? Timeline?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTIVE AND ONGOING • COUNCIL MEETINGS - MONTHLY
What Resources Required (financial, people, equipment) to Achieve Goal?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COUNCIL – ADMINISTRATION - LEGAL • PUBLIC FORUM (WHEN REQUIRED)
Communication to Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE • WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA
Potential Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEGAL CONSTRAINTS • REGULATORY (MGA) • TIME CONSTRAINTS
Potential Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLANNING COMMISSION

GOAL	ATTRACT/RETAIN SERVICES
Strategies to Accomplish Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAX INCENTIVES • REASONABLE PRICED PROPERTIES • PROMOTE SHOP LOCAL • COLLABORATE WITH DEVELOPERS • WAYFINDING SIGN PROJECT (MAIN STREET)
What Changes Will Occur if Goal is Achieved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INCREASED AWARENESS OF POTENTIAL SERVICE DEVELOPMENT – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT • INCREASED SERVICES= INCREASED DEVELOPMENT=INCREASED TRAFFIC = INCREASED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT=INCREASED SERVICES • INCREASE TAX REVENUE = DECREASE RESIDENTIAL TAX BURDEN • DECREASE SHADOW POPULATION – INCREASE PERMANENT POPULATION
Who Will Carry Out?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COUNCIL-ADMINISTRATION • HARDISTY DEVELOPMENT GROUP
When Will it Take Place? Timeline?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTIVE AND ONGOING
What Resources Required (financial, people, equipment) to Achieve Goal?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEGAL • LAND USE BYLAW • THIRD PARTY COLLABORATION
Communication to Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE UPDATE • WEBSITE SOCIAL MEDIA
Potential Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OWNERSHIP – LACK OF
Potential Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SURROUNDING MUNICIPALITIES • PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL FUNDING GRANTS

GOAL	PRIORITIZE CAPITAL SPENDING FOR PUBLIC WORKS
Strategies to Accomplish Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IMPLEMENT ASSET MANAGEMENT PROGRAM-EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT PLAN • COST EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS – RENTAL VS OWNERSHIP • DEVELOP 5-10 YEAR PLAN
What Changes Will Occur if Goal is Achieved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IMPROVED DELIVERY OF SERVICES • IMPROVED ASSETS-LESS BREAKDOWN MAINTENANCE • IMPROVE ATTRACTION OF PUBLIC WORKS STAFF
Who Will Carry Out?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COUNCIL-ADMINSITRATION
When Will it Take Place? Timeline?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACTIVE - ONGOING • PHASE 1 – SPRING 2024
What Resources Required (financial, people, equipment) to Achieve Goal?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BUDGETARY PROCESS • COMMERCIAL PROPERTY USE
Communication to Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE • WEBSITE SOCIAL MEDIA
Potential Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INCREASED CAPITAL COSTS • INFLATIONARY RISKS
Potential Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL FUNDING GRANTS

GOAL	STRENGTHEN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES
Strategies to Accomplish Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IMPLEMENT A DEM/DEPUTY DEM • EMERGENCY RESPONSE TRAINING (INC)TABLE TOPS/LIVE EXERCISES • IMPROVE EOC • UPDATE MEP • INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS • DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS – MUNICIPAL, INDUSTRIAL, PROVINCIAL
What Changes Will Occur if Goal is Achieved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IMPROVED RESPONSE • INCREASED AWARENESS • INCREASING PUBLIC TRUST
Who Will Carry Out?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COUNCIL – DEM-DEPUTY DEM • ADMINISTRATION • AEMA
When Will it Take Place? Timeline?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JUNE 2024 – LIVE EXERCISE COLLABORATING WITH HMAG • COMPLETION OF EOC UPGRADE DECEMBER 2024
What Resources Required (financial, people, equipment) to Achieve Goal?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AEMA • INDUSTRY – HARISTY COMPLEX GROUP • FRESS
Communication to Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE • WEBSITE SOCIAL MEDIA • SHARING PROVINCIAL INFORMATION LINKS
Potential Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COST • COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN
Potential Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HMAG • SURROUNDING MUNICIPALITIES • PROVINCIAL AGENCIES • PROVINCIAL GRANT FUNDING

Conclusion

By utilizing the SWOT analysis and by robust and integrated discussion, council has produced a Strategic Plan that will guide the decisions for the Town of Hardisty moving forward. By prioritizing finances, yet realizing the opportunities for growth as well as realizing the areas that there needs to be improvement, the council has a very well rounded strategic plan. Considering all factors, council members determined goals that are achievable during the time frame sought out. Consequently, there are some strategies that will require ongoing maintenance, and by include them in the plan, will assure that these initiatives do not fall through the cracks and go dormant. Future planning can be based from this work and will allow for further enhanced progress for the Town of Hardisty.

