



TOWN OF INUVIK

EMBRACING OUR FUTURE

TOWN OF INUVIK'S STRATEGIC PLAN

2016 - 2021





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INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the Town of Inuvik has worked to take a planned approach to setting priorities and enhancing our community by creating comprehensive strategic plans. After the fall 2015 election, the new Council decided it was time to refresh the Town’s strategic outlook, given the many changes underway and the time that had passed since the last Strategic Plan, which was produced in 2009 as part of the Integrated Community Sustainability Planning process.

This Strategic Plan presents the desired future vision for our community and offers a strategic approach to address key priorities identified as important right now and into the future. This is also a roadmap for Council and Administration that can guide work-planning, budgeting and resource allocation, ensuring everyone keeps their focus on the important priorities for Inuvik. As well, this Strategic Plan works as an accountability mechanism providing Council, Administration and the public with a framework to measure performance and achievements.

PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

In general, strategic plans attempt to answer:

- Where are we right now?
- Where do we want to be in the future?
- What strategies do we need to focus on and implement to get there?
- What internal and external factors are out there that will help or hinder us in achieving our goals?

Strategic Plans are very beneficial in that they:

- Promote strategic, big picture thinking and action

- Focus attention on the important priorities so that everyone is on the same page
- Confirm clear direction for Council and staff – and reaffirm their respective roles and responsibilities
- Communicate the Town’s directions to residents
- Provide direction for work-planning, budgeting and allocating resources

Our Strategic Plan is intended to clearly define the vision, mission, values and priorities for the Town, while also providing Council and Administration with a framework for decision-making. The Strategic Plan will guide the Town, and subsequently the community at large, so that we can use our strengths to take advantage of opportunities emerging before us.

Council is laying out a five-year plan, which it acknowledges is longer than its term in office. However, in doing so, the intent is to work towards big picture goals and priorities that residents have raised and which will take time to achieve. Council is working to be both proactive and realistic in our strategies to get from where we are now to where we, as a community, want to be.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

After being elected in October 2015, Council worked quickly to address immediate issues, undertake Council orientation and training, review and approve the 2016 budget, and set the timeline to undertake strategic planning. Council determined that the time was right to revise, refresh and update the Town’s strategic plan and vision, given major shifts in the economy and emerging opportunities previously unforeseen.

Council was assisted by an external consultant during the development of the draft vision, mission, values and priorities. These are being presented as a draft to residents and partners for review and provide feedback before the 2016-2021 Strategic Plan is finalized.

OUR OPERATING FRAMEWORK

The Town of Inuvik’s Council and Administration work to provide good governance to the community. As the locally elected public government, mandated to provide municipal and local services to residents, Council takes their job seriously. The Town’s mandated responsibilities are spelled out in a number of key documents, including NWT legislation, funding and reporting requirements, as well as Town bylaws, policies and procedures.

Council leads the Town in meeting our core responsibilities, which guide our operating framework. These include:

- Providing good leadership and representing the community as a whole
- Establishing the Town’s vision and priorities through comprehensive planning

- Establishing and overseeing policies and programs
- Making decisions in the best interest of Inuvik through good analysis of comprehensive information
- Communicating effectively with citizens, Town staff and amongst ourselves
- Managing Town resources prudently
- Doing everything that we can to make Inuvik safe, healthy and vibrant

VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

A key part of Council's role is to confirm a vision, mission and values for Inuvik, based on what Council members have heard from residents, an environmental scan and internal and external influencing factors. Council undertook this work in May 2016 and confirmed the following.

Vision

The vision statement describes the desired future state for our community overall, as well as the Town – what do we want the future of Inuvik to look like.

Inuvik is a welcoming, culturally diverse community that celebrates its Arctic context while demonstrating innovation, excellence and economic strength for the benefit of residents, neighbours and visitors.

The Town of Inuvik supports a caring community, with quality programs and services, including abundant recreation and arts options, healthy infrastructure and environmentally sustainable practices.

Inuvik's stable, diversified economy, partnership with our Aboriginal neighbours and emphasis on innovation and emerging technologies positions the community for success and sustainable ongoing development.

Mission

The mission statement describes the reason the Town of Inuvik exists – what we are here to do and how.

The Town strives to maintain and enhance the quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors in Inuvik through respectful, collaborative leadership and effective, responsive programs and services.

Values

Values are the guiding principles that the Town embraces and stands for. We believe in these and strive to reflect them in the programs and services we offer, and the way in which both Council and Administration conduct business on behalf of the Town.

The Town of Inuvik values:

- Professionalism – We strive to bring competence, expertise and quality service into our work and interactions
- People first – We design our programs and services thinking first and foremost about our clients and serving their needs
- Accountability – We will answer for our decisions, use resources wisely and work to be timely and efficient
- Respect – We value clients, customers, partners and colleagues, and work to uphold mutually productive outcomes
- Adaptability – While we uphold our programs, policies and directions, we seek to respond constructively and fairly to all issues as circumstances change
- Knowledge – We respect, and seek to utilize the wisdom, experience and academic knowledge of elders, experts, each other and learning institutions in our programs and policies
- Open communication – We want thriving two-way communication with residents and clients to share information and know how we're doing
- Positive outlook – We believe the best in people and situations, and work to find the silver lining in every cloud that comes our way
- Sustainability and living within our means – We think long-term and consider the implications of our actions and decisions on Inuvik and on the viability of the Town
- Healthy community – We work to sustain the physical, mental, environmental, social and economic health of our community
- Diversity – We value having many perspectives – cultural, economic, programming and other - and appreciate the richness and variety this brings

THE CONTEXT FOR OUR FUTURE

Our Community

While the community of Inuvik came into being in 1958, Inuvik has a rich history influenced by the centuries-long presence of the Inuvialuit, Dene and Metis peoples in the region. The Mackenzie River has made us a natural transportation hub for centuries and we continue to play that role for the region well into the 21st century.

Non-renewable resource development – the oil and gas sector – has been a major driver of our economy, and we have learned to live with the fluctuations that the boom-bust cycle of single industry reliance can bring. Historical presence by the military and government have shaped our community as well, bringing many people to our community who have decided to make Inuvik home. Our rich cultural diversity makes us remarkable – we are proud to be located on the traditional lands of the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit, as well as home to the northern most mosque in North America – even more so that we model tolerance and celebration of our cultural differences.

A snapshot from NWT Bureau of Statistics of our current demographics and social indicators shows the following:

- Our population has declined over the past ten years (in 2004 it was 3,622; in 2015 it was 3,265)
- Our birthrate has remained pretty static since 2003
- Overcrowding and housing availability has improved – the % of households with 6 or more people has declined significantly (from 10.3% in 1981 to 3.2% in 2014)
- Housing adequacy, as indicated by the % of households in core need, has remained relatively static
- The violent crime rate has trended downwards
- The number of Income assistance beneficiaries has trended upwards
- The % of Inuvik residents with a high school diploma has trended up since 1986
- Employment Rate has trended downwards over the past 30 years

Integrated Community Sustainability Planning (ICSP)

In 2009, as a condition of federal infrastructure funding, community governments in the NWT had to develop Integrated Community Sustainability Plans. These required the development of a Strategic Plan, a Human Resource Plan, an Energy Plan and a Capital Plan. The Town of Inuvik developed a thorough and comprehensive set of plans that formed the blueprint for much of the work undertaken in subsequent years. At that time, the operating context and external environment shaped much of the content. Economic prosperity and a healthy vibrant community were the two key themes that dominated the strategic priorities in 2009 (for elaboration on the strategic priorities, please refer to the ICSP – available on Inuvik.ca).

While many things have changed since the 2009 Plan, there are a number of consistent trends that continue. This Strategic Plan will build on the momentum of many of the responding strategies, while focusing on and responding to more recent developments, including emerging technologies, cost of living, regional engagement and partnerships with educational institutions and other previously untapped collaborators.

Shifting Opportunities

While we have long benefitted from the oil and gas sector, we know that single industry reliance can make us vulnerable to the changes in international commodity prices. We boom and then we bust, which is hard on our residents, our businesses and our community overall.

The 21st century has brought research interests and technological opportunities that are new to us and which we are eager to embrace. The Mackenzie Valley fibre optic link will fundamentally change electronic accessibility and connectivity in Inuvik and the

Beaufort Delta region, opening doors for many ventures that were previously unworkable.

As well, our unique location positions us to take advantage of emerging technological fields, such as satellite tracking through the Inuvik Satellite Station facility. We are adaptable and have worked to take advantage of the shifting opportunities – one clear example of this is our work to change the Inuvik Petroleum Show/Conference into the Inuvik Arctic Energy and Emerging Technologies Conference and Tradeshow (AEET).

Politically, we know that changes are afoot. We recognise the work of both the Inuvialuit and the Gwich'in to both reach respective Agreements in Principle for Self-Government. This will change the political landscape of the region, and to some degree the Town itself, and we want to be ready, as active supporters and partners to work collaboratively with these Aboriginal governments.

Economic Development Strategy

Recognising the fundamental shift in the oil and gas sector, and wanting to stabilize the economy through diversification, the Town undertook the development of an economic development strategy in 2015. This strategy lays the groundwork for a multi-faceted approach that will increase the economic vigor of Inuvik in a variety of sectors, including tourism, small business and entrepreneurship, northern sciences, arts and crafts and local foods and natural resources. Specific opportunities around the following need to be maximized: Inuvik to Tuk highway, the satellite receiver stations, the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic line, the Ikhil gas project, Aurora College/Aurora Research Institute, the Western Arctic Research Centre and special events and festivals (such as the Great Northern Arts Festival, End of the Road Music Festival, Sunrise Festival, AEET, etc.).

'SWOT' ASSESSMENT

As a community, we have a lot of things going for us. We are also mindful of the potential barriers to being able to realize our vision. Reviewing our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) is a way for us to assess our competitive advantage; we can plan to use our strengths to both take advantage of opportunities and mitigate weaknesses and threats.

Strengths

Strongly connected, culturally rich community

Inuvik is a cohesive regional centre where people are friendly and welcoming and there is a small town 'can-do' attitude. Building on the proud histories of both the Inuvialuit and the Gwich'in peoples, Inuvik has worked to create a multicultural community with representation from around the globe that demonstrates tolerance and celebrates the uniqueness that all people bring. The international connections our residents have – whether from their country of origin or as a result of travels – reaffirm for them how

good life is in Inuvik. As well, Inuvik has built a reputation for high quality cultural events such as the Great Northern Arts Festival, the End of the Road Music Festival, Muskrat Jamboree and the Sunrise Festival.

Strategic location

Most obviously, Inuvik has been and remains well positioned for oil and gas development, as well as transportation using the Mackenzie River. However, recent technological advancements also position Inuvik to be a North American leader for international satellite facilities. Inuvik is the only large Canadian regional centre located above the Arctic Circle that can boast year round road access while at the same time, provide immediate access to pristine wilderness, the Mackenzie River and be within sight of the Richardson Mountains.

Strong economic past and promising economic future

Inuvik has a proven resilience that will take it through boom and bust cycles that its historical dependence on non-renewable resource development has yielded. Ups and downs over the years have strengthened the community's resolve to diversify the economy, while continuing to be a regional centre for governments and a pioneer in arctic energy and emerging technologies. Inuvik is good at promoting the opportunities in the region through events such as the inaugural Arctic Energy and Emerging Technologies Conference and Tradeshow, which replaced the Inuvik Petroleum Show.

Impressive amenities

For a town of its size, Inuvik has terrific facilities, including the regional hospital, new school, Aurora College, Midnight Sun Recreation Centre and other recreational opportunities. As well, the Town has ensured solid, well run and well maintained municipal infrastructure that serves the community well.

Scientific and Technologically Advanced

As the home of the Aurora Research Institute, and with so much innovation taking place related to satellite technology and advancements, Inuvik is evolving into a scientific powerhouse. The Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic line, and the secondary line coming from Whitehorse, will act to strengthen Inuvik's e-links to the outside world in unprecedented ways.

Weaknesses

Cost of Living

A significant challenge to sustaining and expanding the community is the cost of living – expenses related to housing, heat, power and food/retail are all factors that have a negative impact on small business sustainability, and residents' ability to live

comfortably while putting away modest savings. The isolated location and distance to more reasonably priced goods and services has an impact on the cost of living. These costs are most often cited when people make the decision to move away and can be a perceived disincentive to people who are considering relocating to Inuvik.

Governance Profile and Coordination

There is a lot of governance in Inuvik and the community could benefit immensely if there was greater coordination amongst all levels, particularly the Town and the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit, on shared interests. Regular leadership meetings to coordinate and connect on issues impacting the region could result in meaningful coordination and positive change. As well, Inuvik is a distant regional centre – from Yellowknife and from Ottawa – and as such can be left out of major initiatives.

Social Issues

Inuvik struggles to support residents in need and disadvantaged persons. As a regional centre, Inuvik experiences homelessness, substance abuse and addictions on a more intense level, often with people from outlying communities being some of the key clients. This creates issues that require coordinated solutions with all levels of government and other partners/non-government agencies being involved. The Town is the most immediate level of government and thus under pressure to make some positive change – for the directly affected persons, and for the community overall.

Limited Services and Amenities

While Inuvik has great facilities, people lament the lack of services including expanded retail, movie theatres, wifi, restaurants and other hospitality-related amenities. This can be a disincentive to tourism, and to people deciding to make Inuvik home.

Labour Market Challenges

At this time, Inuvik lacks a skilled workforce that is ready to take advantage of some of the potential new opportunities that are coming related to new technologies and other forms of knowledge dissemination and development. People looking for work in the community do not have the education or skills for the sorts of positions that will be coming. This is a gap that needs to be addressed so that residents and Northerners can take advantage of the work that will come with emerging technologies and other economic factors.

Struggling Economy

Inuvik has historically been a single industry town, relying on oil and gas as the key private sector economic drivers. That sector is currently in an economic slump, given the current low commodity prices. As a result, Inuvik's economy struggles to cope with this and recalibrate to new options.

Opportunities

Emerging Technologies

Inuvik can position itself as a leading edge locale for many new market needs - satellite stations and other emerging technologies, such as computer server/data banks are attracted to the community given advantages of location. Research and scientific opportunities can be limitless, given our location and the emerging accessibility that the fibre link brings. Climate change, cold weather testing, emerging arctic technologies, seismic activity are all potentially viable new options.

Economic Diversification

The Economic Development Strategy that the Town commissioned lays out a clear map of possibilities that need to be explored fully. All options related to tourism – adventure/wilderness tourists, aurora viewers, RVers from across Canada and the USA taking advantage of the (currently) low Canadian dollar, emerging Asian markets – all need to be strategically considered and welcomed with appropriate hospitality, touring options and activities.

Transportation Links

The Inuvik-to-Tuk highway as well as the viability of the Northwest Passage as a transport route can indicate more traffic to, through and adjacent to Inuvik. This can open up possibilities for businesses, industry, tourism and travel in general beyond the current accessibility we have with the Dempster.

Threats

Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Funding

The Town relies on the GNWT (MACA) for a significant chunk of its operating and capital funding. As well, regional offices of the GNWT located in Inuvik require operational funding in order to deliver quality programs and services for the Beaufort Delta and Sahtu regions. The GNWT is experiencing some cost pressures that impact their ability to flow funding that supports the community. In particular, formula funding to the 33 NWT community governments has been confirmed through joint studies between MACA and the NWTAC as being short \$40 million overall; however, GNWT does not appear to be in a financial position to correct this in the near future. In fact, given the Government's tight fiscal situation, further cuts to departments and programs may be on the horizon.

National/International Economic Drivers

As always, commodity prices for non-renewable resources has a direct and immediate impact on Inuvik – for exploration and development, and for secondary industry/support services. As well, an overall economic slump in Western Canada drives the economic prospects of the NWT, including Inuvik.

Highway Accessibility

The Dempster Highway is a lifeline to Inuvik. Given that most of the highway traverses the Yukon, through some very remote geography with extreme weather, the reality of being cut off for a prolonged period of time, because of a snow storm or forest fire for example, is very much a reality. If this were to happen, Inuvik would be highly vulnerable and could face emergency situations given lack of fuel, food and other essentials.

Localized Risks

Forest fires, flooding, winter power outages, potential Northwest Passage incidents could all have an impact on Inuvik, and the community's ability to manage the risk could be an issue.

STRATEGIC GOALS/PRIORITIES

Members of Council spent some time reviewing their own respective goals and interests, and worked to combine these into one set of goals and priorities for the Town. These are as follows:

1. Diversify and strengthen the economy – Clearly a robust economy has ripple effects across the community. Ensuring a healthy and diverse economy where small business, industry and traditional pursuits can all thrive and take advantage of existing and new opportunities is a key goal.
2. Address the cost of living – We acknowledge that the cost of essential products and services will be somewhat higher in Inuvik than in southern Canada given our location. The Town wants to do everything possible to keep Inuvik affordable and address these costs where it can in order to keep Inuvik as an attractive destination and a liveable community.
3. Promote and showcase Inuvik – Inuvik is an incredible place - with diverse cultures and terrific amenities, on the edge of breathtaking wilderness above the Arctic Circle – and we need to let the rest of the world know. We have a lot to be proud of so let's spread the word and entice others to come live, work, play and do business here.

4. Strengthen Partnerships – We believe the best way to ensure positive development with all the opportunities emerging in our community and region is to work collaboratively with partners on shared interests. Partnering with other governments, business and industry, research and scientific agencies, citizens groups and other stakeholders makes good business sense. We've done this in the past and plan to work even more proactively to strengthen partnerships into the future.
5. Enhance operations within the Town – Our local government is recognised as one of the most efficient and effective in the NWT. Let's not rest on our reputation, but strive to be even better for the benefit of our residents and partners. We can continue to review and seek input on programs and service delivery in order to find ways to be even better.

ACTION PLAN

Once the Strategic Plan is approved, the Town will develop corporate actions that support each of the five strategic goals and priorities. These will include specific tasks, identify partners, confirm required resources and include performance measures so that we can determine success.

A draft framework for the Action Plan follows.

Approved by Town Council Resolution 131/07/17