

TOWARD
STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN
For the
TOWN of ESPANOLA
2023-2027

Council/Steering Committee workshop

April 12, 2023

AGENDA FOR THE DAY

● REMINDERS

- – What's a strategic plan and why bother
- - If it's not in the Plan: good work, carry on
- - The 5 strategic planning time horizons
- - 3-level structure of the Plan

● REPORTS

- - the Public Survey
- - the “Just One Thing” Priorities
- - the Community Group consultations
- - Prior commitments for the 2023-2026 term

● GROUP WORK

- - 6 Temporary Goals
- - Potential 2023-2027 Strategic Directions and Priorities
- - Potential 2023-2027 Initiatives

What are we aiming to produce?

A public document expressing Council's view of:

- **What you will have to/ want to deal with**
- **What you want to – and believe you can - achieve in your term**
- **What is most important and how you will make choices**
- **What your community should expect from their municipal government**
- **Where you are looking for initiative from your staff**

Indicators of Success

Your Action Plan will be a success if:

- Council's message is Clear, Communicable, Collective
- Council and staff use it when making future decisions
- Council and staff use it to set priorities (time/resources)
- It motivates staff and others to work with you
- It doesn't sit on a shelf: Staff reports on progress and Council reports to the community

The Value of Planning Ahead



STRATEGIC PLANNING IS ABOUT CHANGE

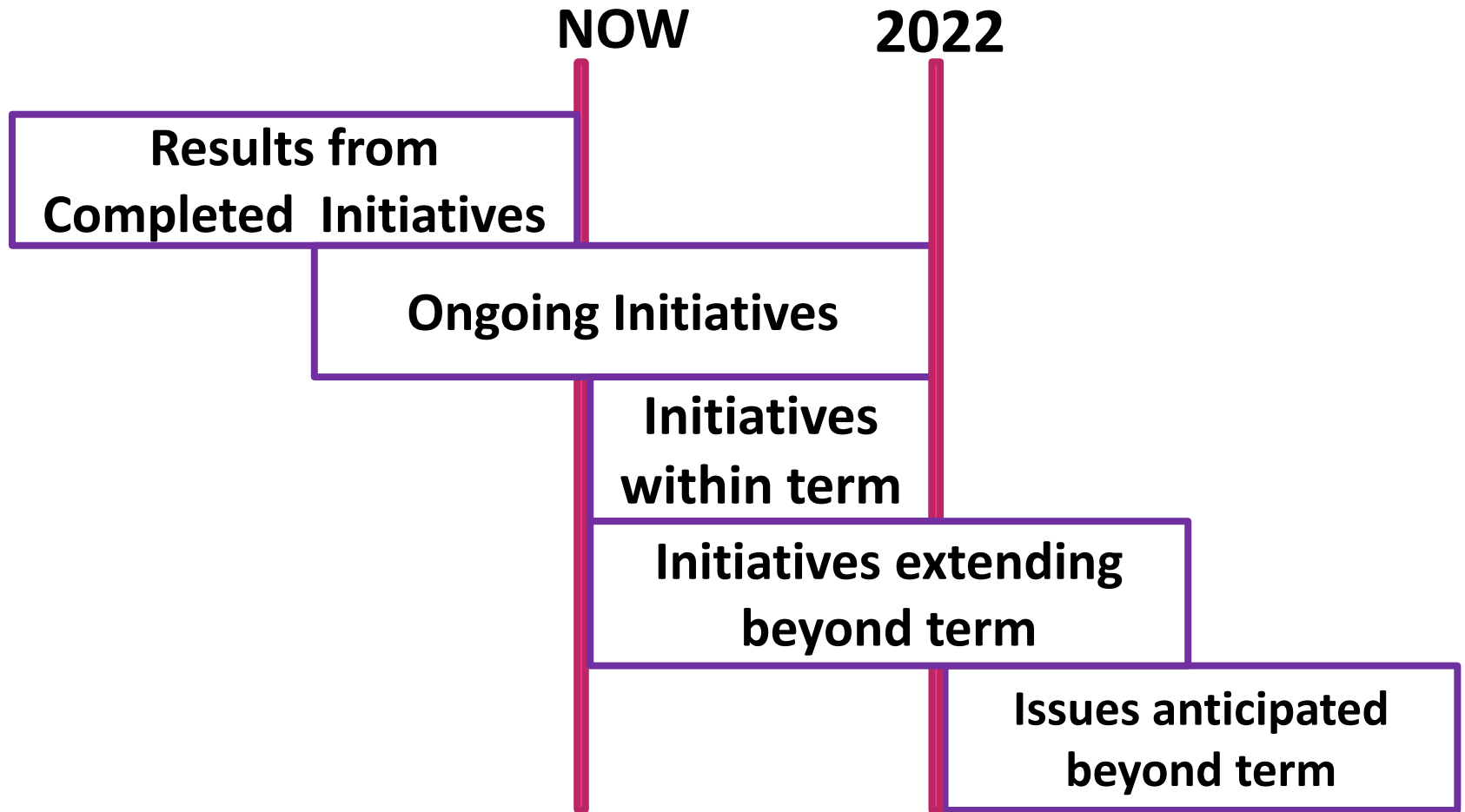
In order to IMPROVE or PROTECT, you will

- **Do something new**
- **Do something differently**
- **More of something/Less of something**
- **Capitalize on something/**
- **Resist something**

Otherwise, assume that...

- **snow will still get ploughed**
- **buildings will still be inspected**
- **minutes will still be taken**
- **etc.**

TIME HORIZONS to CONSIDER



WHAT'S "BAKED IN"

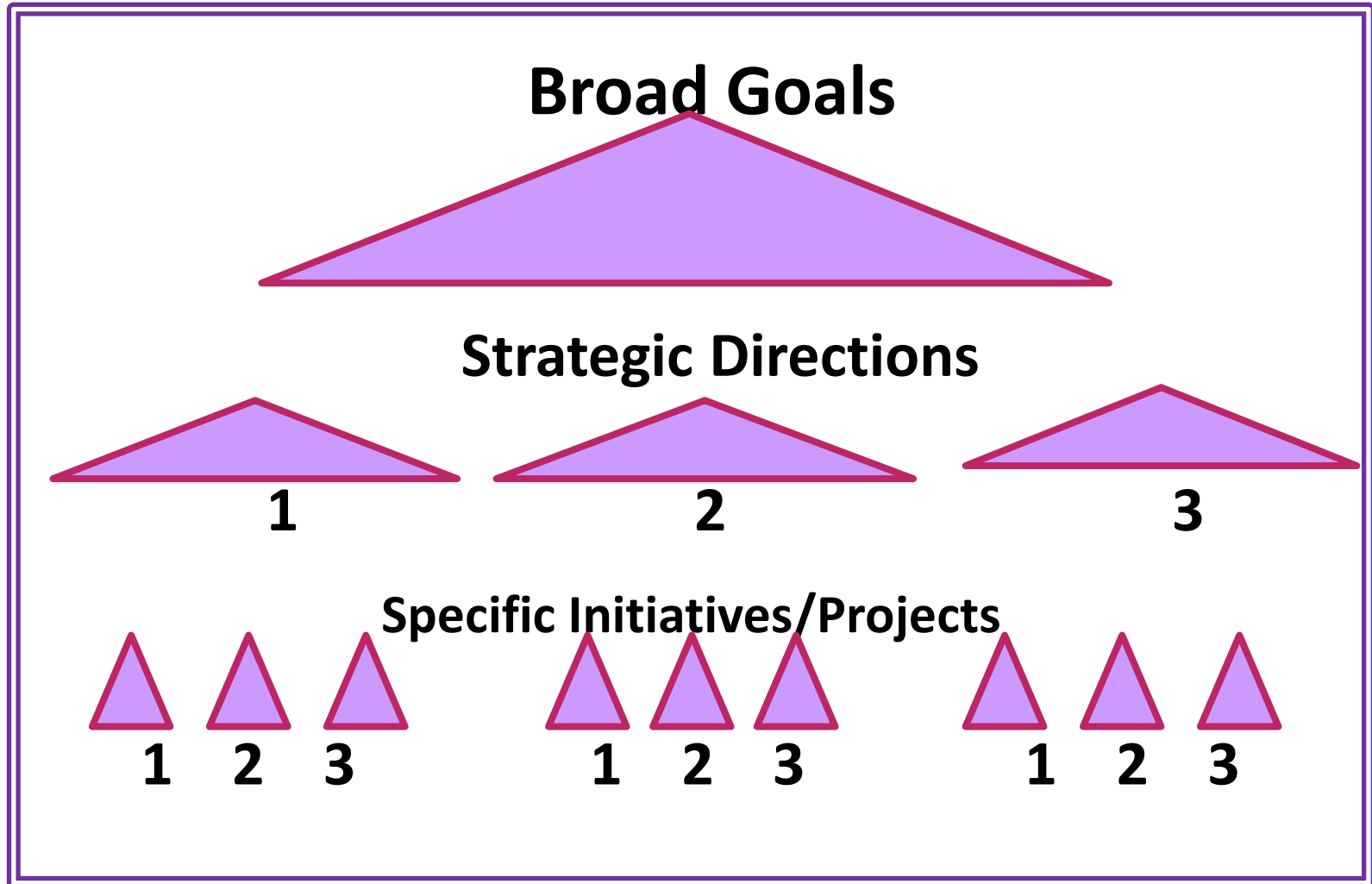
For the 2023-2026 term?

That will require further significant
Council attention, and/or
Staff time, and/or
New funding

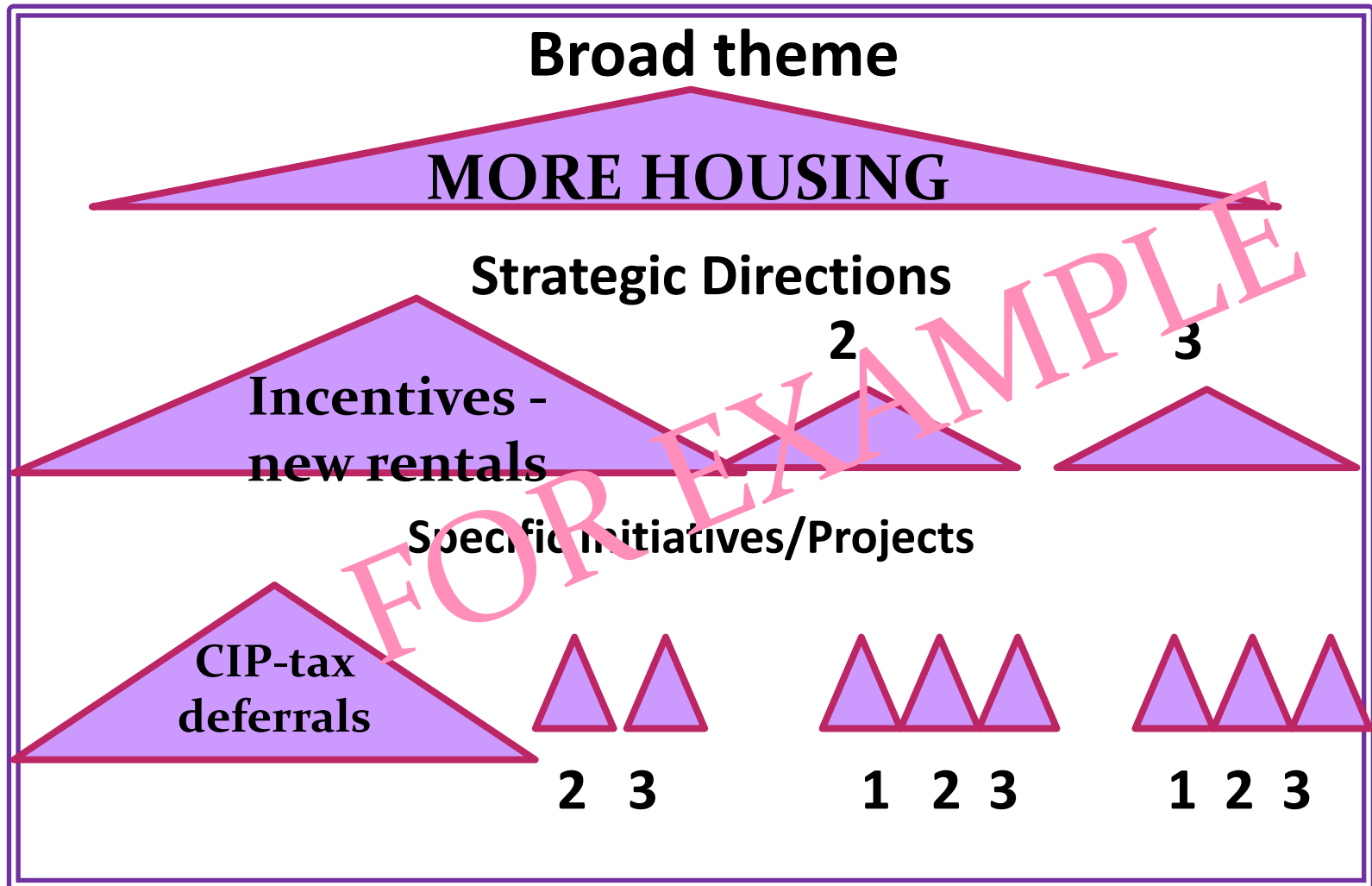
- **Mandates from senior levels of Government**
- **Fallout from last term's projects/initiatives**
- **Ongoing projects/initiatives begun in last term**
- **Strategic decisions already taken in this term**



Levels of Abstraction



EXAMPLE – Levels of Abstraction



BROAD GOALS

***PROVE YOU'RE LISTENING**

*** TEND NOT TO CHANGE MUCH**

- 1. A Plentiful and Varied Supply of Housing**
- 2. A Prosperous Local Economy**
- 3. A High Quality of Life**
- 4. A Place We're Proud to Live in**
- 5. Adequate and Reliable Infrastructure**
- 6. Effective and Affordable Governance**

TEMPORARY



OUR CONSULTATION FINDINGS

Survey/Interview results to date:

- Staff interviews –February 8, 2023
- Council interviews –February 9, 2023
- Meetings with Local Organizations, Committees, Boards and Interest Groups –March 22-24, 2023
- Public Survey Results
- “Just One Thing Results”

Staff Interview Results

What has the Town achieved over the past few years that provide a good foundation to build on?

- Hiring an Economic Development Officer
- New Geographic Information System (GIS)
- I.T. Infrastructure Security work underway
- Hiring a Full Time Recreation Complex Manager

Staff Interviews Results Cont...

What projects or recent initiatives on the go will consume staff time and/or money into 2023/2024?

- Hwy. #6 Trunk/Water Main work and repaving
- Water & Sewer Plant Upgrades
- Public Works Building- upgrades to meet Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

Staff Interview Results Cont....

What factors, both in the community and beyond, and within the Town government and operations will Espanola benefit from in the next few years?

- New businesses in Espanola
- Increased building activity, interest from developers
- Low tax arrears
- Building Code compliance improving

Staff Interview Results Cont....

What factors, both in the community and beyond, as well as within the Town government and operations are working to the disadvantage of Espanola in the next few years?

- Limited number of serviced lots available for development
- Aging demographic
- Lack of volunteers
- Absentee owners of vacant commercial properties
- Property Standards issues
- Cannot purchase or rent a house

COUNCIL Member Interviews

Two or three specific initiatives you want to get done?

- Continued upgrading of water, sewer, roads, rec facilities
- Establishment of an aggressive Housing action plan
- New recycling alternatives and the implementation of composting to offset new bag limits on garbage
- An investment in outdoor recreation projects/activities
- Increased recreation programming and use of the Espanola Regional Recreation Complex
- Revitalization and beautification of Downtown
- Replacement of the Public Works Building
- Opportunities and funding to retrofit municipal buildings with green energy alternatives...offset hydro costs and/ or sell back to the grid

Council Interviews Cont

Four years from now, what will allow you to look back and feel satisfied that your term has been a success?

- **More housing is accessible**
- **The Town is on the path to growth and sustainability**
- **Young people were represented, and their interests were considered**
- **A better working relationship with our neighbouring First Nation Communities was established**
- **A commitment was made to long term investment in our infrastructure and the beautification of the town.**

Council Interviews Cont..

The Town can't be all things to all people. So, what would like both Town staff and Town residents to know about where your priorities lie?

- Plans in place and projects completed to replace aging infrastructure and to support growth within the Town
- Affordable housing and geared to income housing. However, the Town should not be the owner
- Affordable taxes, comparable to other communities our size.

Council Interviews Cont...

What factors, both in the Espanola community and beyond, as well as within the Town government does Espanola have going for it, that Council would be able to capitalize on?

- **Great supportive staff in all departments**
- **Espanola is full-service town with rail and road access, a large industrial employer, and abundant potential for economic growth through the forest industry**
- **A hub for health care, commerce, and court services**

Council Interviews Cont...

What factors, both in the Espanola community and beyond, as well as within the Town government does Espanola have going for it, that Council would be able to capitalize on?

- **Small town pride and community activities**
- **Indoor and outdoor Recreation facilities attractive to young families**
- **Gateway to the Manitoulin. Thousands of people travel through Espanola on their way to Manitoulin Island in the summer months or from the Chi-Cheemaun Ferry.**

Council Interviews Cont...

What factors, both in the Espanola community and beyond, as well as within the Town government are working to the disadvantage of Espanola?

- Aging population
- Single industry town
- Exodus of youth
- Underfunded public works
- Inadequate taxation levels
- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of industrial lots



Consultations with local Organizations, Committees, Boards and Interest Groups

Who we met with (or with representatives of)

- Espanola Real Estate Agents
- Lion's Club Executive
- Manitoulin Sudbury District Social Services Board
- Espanola Senior's Club
- Community Care Planning Network
- Boogie Mountain
- Espanola Non-Profit Housing Board
- Espanola Recreation and Culture Committee
- Espanola Library Board
- Espanola Area Developers
- Espanola Hospital & Senior Staff
- Espanola Firefighters

Highlights - Housing

17+ comments/recommendations received:

- Any housing – particularly single-family units and good rental units – needed to attract Domtar workers, doctors, nurses, childcare workers, young families/new households, etc.
- As a separate issue, there is also a high demand for affordable housing for low-income households, including seniors

Highlights - Housing Cont....

- Publicize and change (if necessary) zoning, to permit granny flats, basement apartments (with building permit!), garage conversions, etc. for rental units
- Provide tax deferrals for any increase in assessment because of new rental unit
- Incentivize seniors housing near hospital; build on the existing spectrum of housing types
- Extend services to open new areas for residential development (recoup costs as development takes place)

Highlights – Housing Cont.....

- Use zoning + other tools so developers build apartments meeting seniors' needs (e.g., 2-brdm, one floor or elevators)
- Assign a “navigator” member of staff or consultant to help applicants through the planning/building approval process
- Remove barriers. Identify all requirements up front
- Develop a separate Housing Action Plan pulling together all interested parties

Bottom line:

Housing (market + rent geared to income) is a huge issue.

Town should collaborate with all available partners/pull out all the stops/use all its tools to get things done ASAP

Highlights- Economy (includes tourism)

- Capitalize on the traffic passing through to/from Manitoulin Island
- Re-establish Farmers Market - attracts local artisans and visitors
- Use abandoned rail line to Manitoulin, or create bike lanes on Hwy 6 from Hwy 17 to Little Current to encourage cycling tourism
- Erect a “looking for developers sign” like the one in Little Current
- Seek out immigrant entrepreneurs to start downtown businesses
- Market Espanola as a place to invest in, live, work and play
- Make Espanola a “destination” - Invest in community activities and events to attract visitors

Highlights - Quality of Life

(Includes health, safety, recreation, culture, community events)

- Revive/adhere to Espanola Active Community Charter
- Plan for active transportation (cycling, walking etc.)
- Remove barriers to encourage volunteers
- Support events with Indigenous themes
- Display/recount the Town's history

Highlights - Quality of Life Cont....

- Bet on the winners and build new elements/activities onto them e.g., Black Creek Trail, Snowmobile Trails, Boogie Mountain
- Expand the hours of the Care Van program beyond 3 PM and/ or provide two shifts; use Care van to take people to shopping, etc., not just to doctor/specialists' appointments
- Need service for wheelchair riders...kneeling bus, assistance by driver
- Hold a forum (agencies, service clubs, LaCloche municipalities, businesses, cab company, etc.) to develop a transportation action plan

Highlights -Pride of Place

(Including Centre street improvement, beautification, property standards)

- Install Public art, e.g., children's art; indigenous flavour, forestry theme.
- Enforce property standards
- Arrange for an Electric Vehicle (EV) charging station along Centre Street
- Get something on former Texaco property, develop a partnership to enhance the appearance of this Brownfield site
- Pre zone portions of Centre St to permit redevelopment
- Work with the School Board re: the former E.B. Ellis School to beautify the portion of the property that fronts on Centre Street

Bottom line:

Big issue... Espanola now projecting a poor image. Town needs to be aggressive... beautification + property standards + redevelopment

Highlights- Infrastructure

(Includes snowploughing, trails & municipal parks)

- Get a clear picture of available water and wastewater capacity to determine the additional number of units that the Town can accommodate
- Re-allocate unused capacity held for subdivided lots but not built within a certain time period
- Municipal Infrastructure drives development. The Town's infrastructure plan should foster growth.

Highlights - Municipal Government

- Produce a Strategic Plan annual report
- Hold a public meeting to report on implementation of plan + forge partnerships for future projects
- Make it easier for volunteer/community groups to operate, provide events/activities. Ask : “How can we help you”?
- Consider the effects of climate change into all Strategic Plan actions
- Increase Council visibility in the community



Findings – Public Survey

Survey said! Respondent Characteristics –Age

<i>StatsCan 2021 Census - Espanola</i>		<i>2023 Strategic Plan Survey</i>	
Age Cohort	% of population aged 20+ (n=4165)	Age Cohort	% of Survey respondents (n=544)
20-34	19.3%	18-34	23.3%
35-49	20.4%	35-49	29.1%
50-64	29.1%	50-64	29.5%
65 up	31.3%	65 up	18.1%

The 35-49 age cohort is over-represented among survey respondents compared to the town's population generally; the senior citizen cohort is under-represented.

Gender- 64% of respondents identified as female (51% of town population); 34% identified as male (49% of town population)

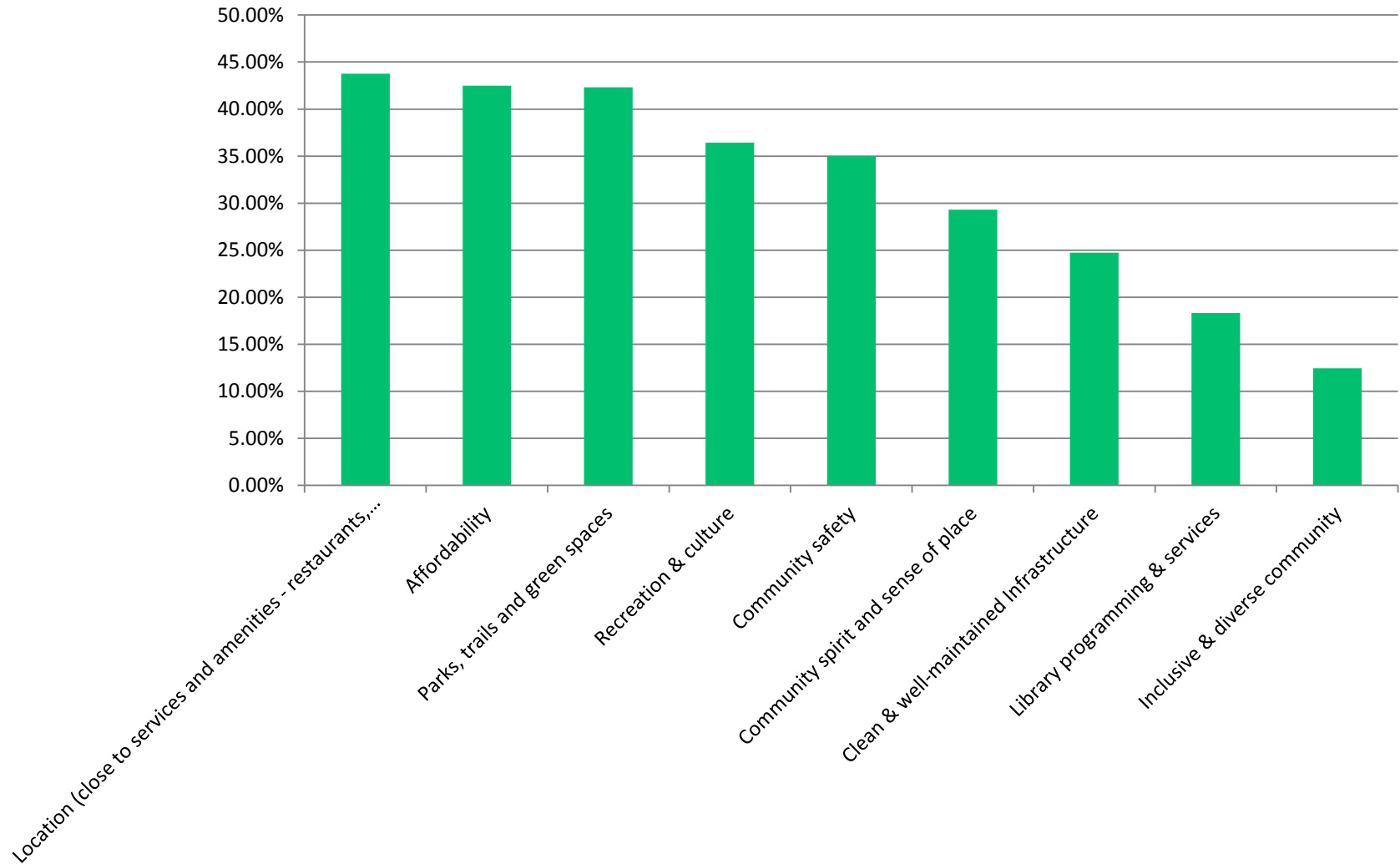
Housing Tenure -82% of respondents are homeowners; 14% rent (question NA to 4%).

- 76% of Espanola 2305 homes are owned by occupants (note that this is not the number of people in owned homes, which is likely to be a somewhat larger percentage). 24% of homes in Espanola are rented (note again that this is not the number of people).
- 86% of respondents report being in a stable housing situation. 6% report housing insecure.

Place of work- 60% of respondents report working in Espanola, compared to 71% of the Espanola workforce at large (however, note that this Census data includes regular part-time work and all members of the regular workforce, age 16 and over).

- 40% of respondents work elsewhere (vs 29% of the town's workforce as per 2021 Census).
- The 60/40 split is likely representative of Espanola's 1250 full-time adult workforce in 2021.

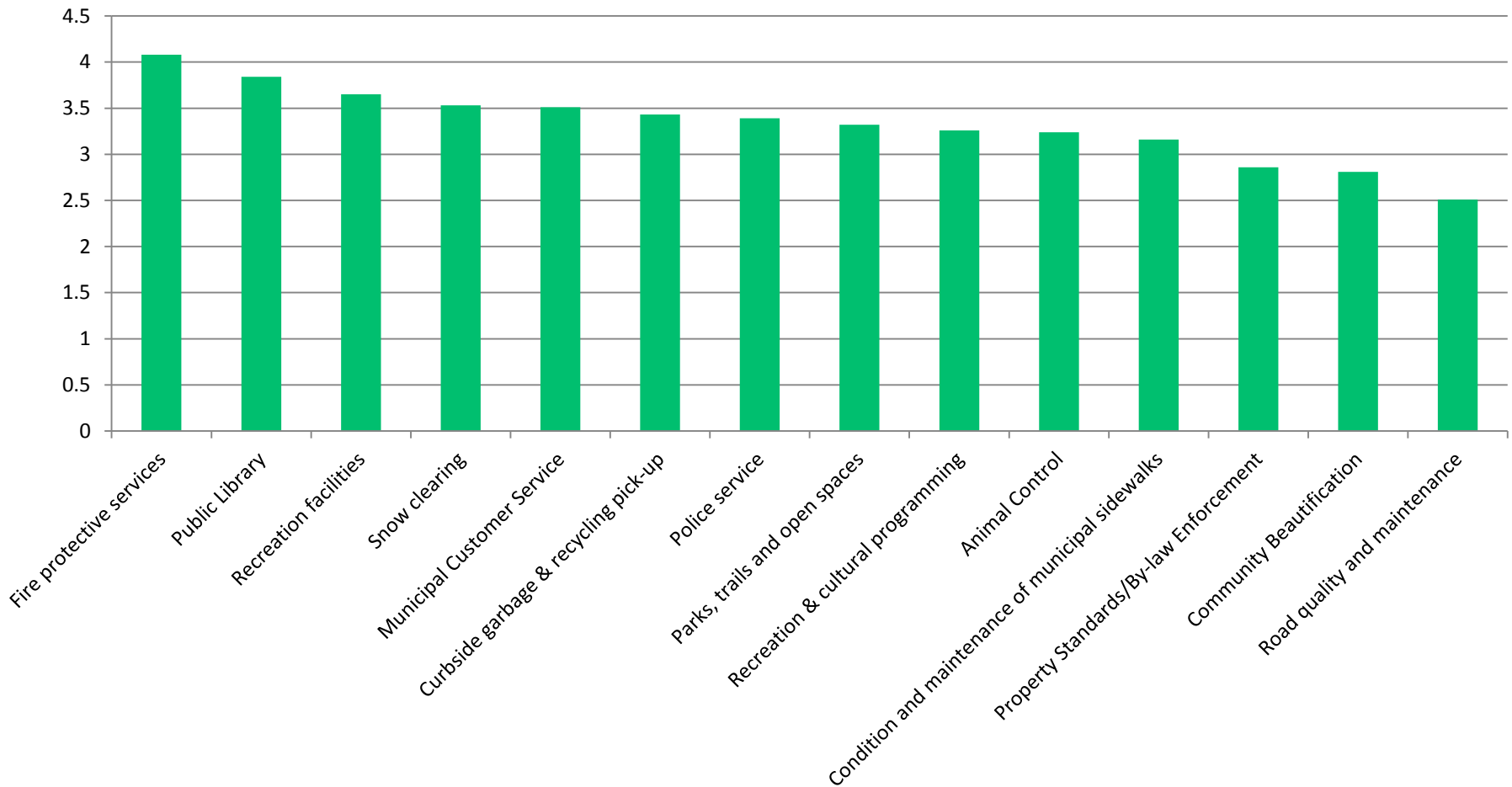
What are the most appealing things about Espanola as a community?



Headlines

- **Its location and its affordability (both presumably vis-à-vis Sudbury), as well as its parks, trails and greenery are considered Espanola's primary attractions, followed by its recreation and culture activity and its safety**
- **Not to say they are not important, but its inclusiveness and diversity as a community, and its library, are not seen to draw people to Espanola**

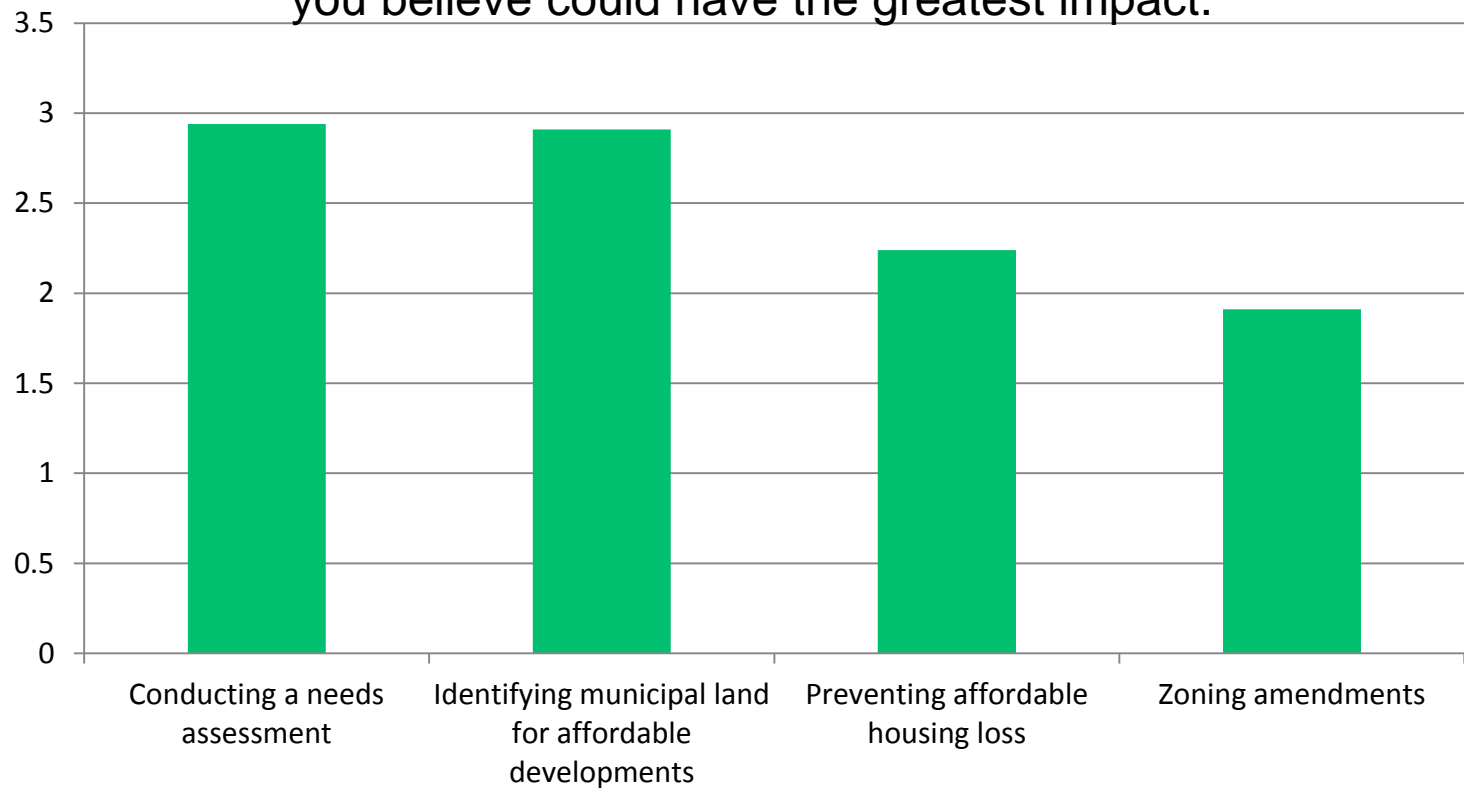
Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of the following services offered by the Town of Espanola?



Headlines

- **Mild net dissatisfaction with road quality and maintenance**
- **Community beautification and property standards: tending to the negative**
- **Clear satisfaction with Fire service, library, and rec facilities**
- **Mild net satisfaction with snow clearing and municipal customer service**
- **All other services: tending to the positive**

Here are four areas in which municipalities can have an impact on the Affordable Housing Crisis. Please rank the following options from 1 to 4, based on what you believe could have the greatest impact.

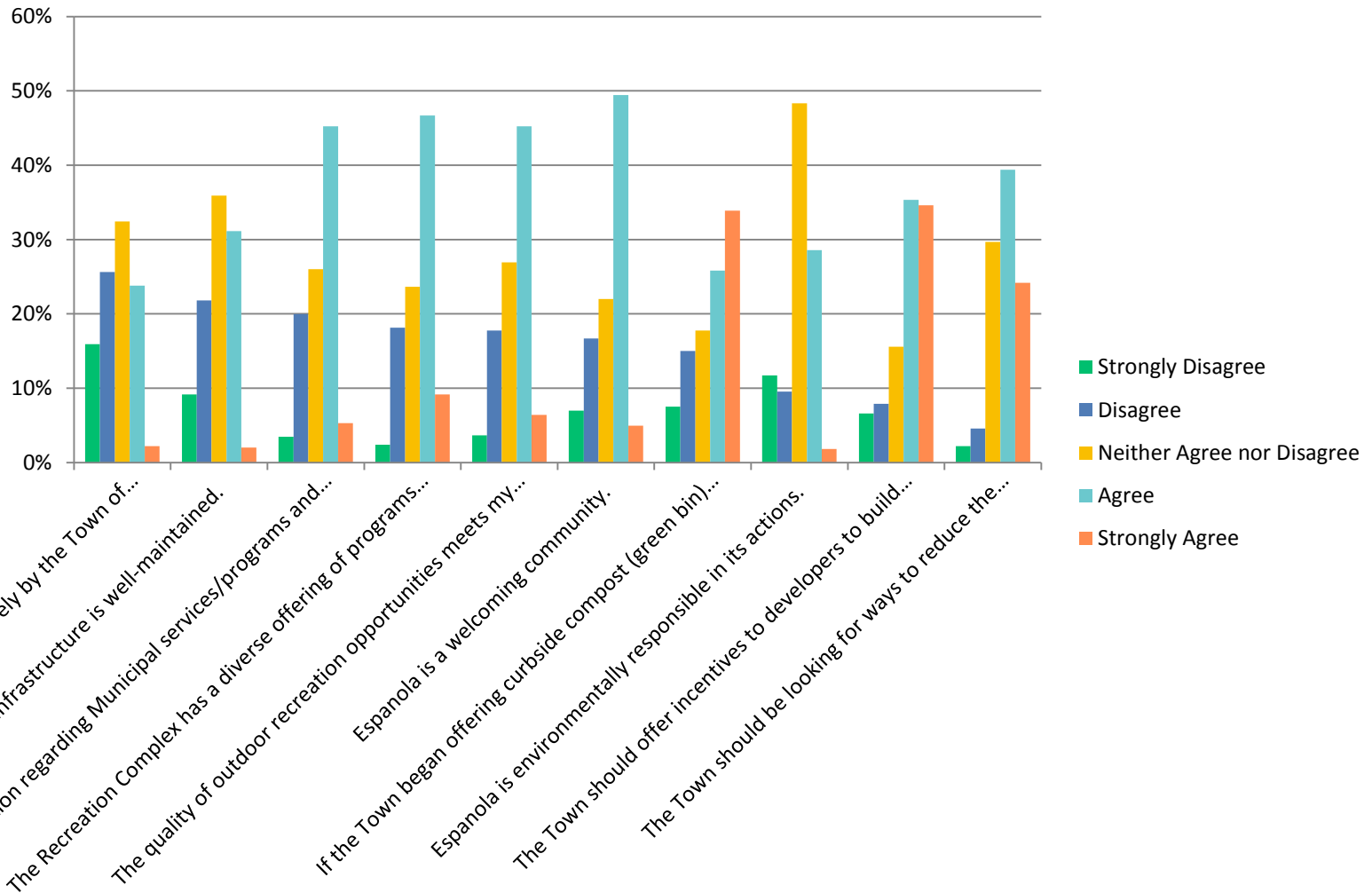




Headlines:

Among the options offered, making municipal land available for affordable housing, and conducting a needs assessment, were the most impactful.

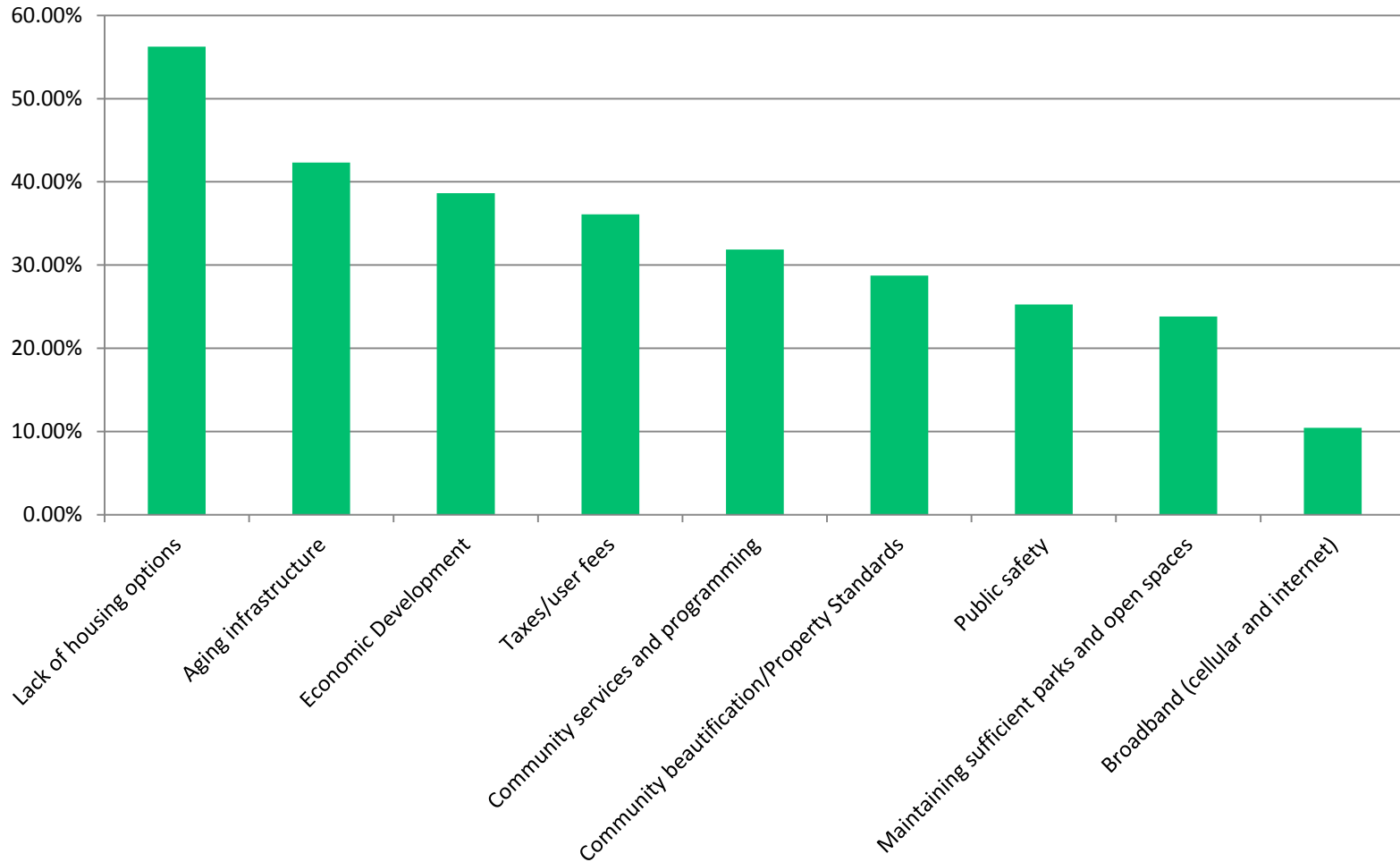
Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.



Headlines:

- **Significant net support for the Town to offer incentives to developers in return for affordable housing, to find ways to reduce the environmental impact of its services, and to offer curbside compost pickup**
- **Mild net disagreement that the Town uses tax dollars effectively**
- **Mild net agreement on the diversity of programs in Rec complex, on the quality of outdoor rec opportunities, on the welcome offered to the Espanola community, and on the accessibility of information about municipal services/programs**
- **Net indecision as to whether infrastructure is well maintained, and if Espanola is environmentally responsible**

In your opinion, what are the top three issues the Town of Espanola should address within the next four years? Select up to three.



Headlines

The lack of housing options is by far the most serious issue identified by respondents for this term of Council.

While well behind the housing issue, the other potential issues offered by the question are rated in a regular descending order pattern, beginning with aging infrastructure and economic development.

Concern about taxes and fees is 4th, trailing housing, infrastructure and economic development.

Interesting to note that the primary concerns for the term, as expressed in response to this question, vary somewhat from respondents' more immediate priorities as expressed in response to the "Just One Thing This Year" question.

If there were JUST ONE specific thing that the Town could do THIS YEAR to make Espanola a better place, what would that ONE THING be, in your opinion?

- **546 responses received on the public survey.**
- **Another 45 responses were obtained from the consultants' meetings with Town staff and community organization representatives.**
- **As such, 14% of Espanola's adult population voiced their priority for Town action in response to this question.**

Recreation Programming / Community Activities

The largest cluster (121) of respondents' priorities focused on recreation and generally more activities in the community.

The largest theme (25) was a desire for activities for children and youth. While a few offered more specifics, the typical desire was generally to keep kids active.

- A further 10 people specified a need for non-sports programming, mainly but not only for kids.**
- A further 12 specified summer programs for kids, most commonly "bring back the Parks program".**
- A further 10 specified a desire for a skate park.**
- A further 3 specified outdoor programming.**

The next largest response (39), worded in a number of ways, was a general desire for community events and activities.

- 19 of these expressed this wish in general terms, sometimes with hopes for "a fun place" or "an active community" or "family-friendly".**
- 20 of these responses focussed on special events or attractions, commonly with reference to attracting visitors and raising the town's reputation. Festivals, shows, tournaments, and concerts were the most common references, but also such specifics as:
Farmers market (x3); Pumpkinfest (x2); Car show (x2); Driving range (x2) Music Festival, Rib Fest, Santa Clause parade, and several other suggested events and attractions**

25 responses related to existing rec facilities... 7 involved the skating Oval, 3 the activities at Boogie Mountain, 3 the Clear Lake Beach, 12 had recommendations for the Rec Complex

Community Appearance (104)

The second largest cluster (104) of priorities among survey respondents is to improve the appearance of Espanola, particularly Centre Street. This sentiment was often expressed in strong terms, alleging that the current appearance shows a lack of community pride and a damaging image to visitors.

30 want improvement generally (9) or beautification generally (21).

In the public realm, 20 recommend some combination of planters, flower boxes, trees, hanging baskets, or public art. A further 3 mentioned decorative lights in the bridge.

36 respondents had often-forceful recommendations for the private realm on Centre Street. 21 urged the Town to force owners of vacant or run-down buildings either to spruce them up or to tear them down. A further 15 want to see something done with vacant lots on Centre Street... trees/plantings, landscaping, or availability for housing, businesses, or outdoor activities.

15 respondents want to see more enforcement of property standards generally throughout the town.

Housing

Housing is the priority for 84 respondents.

40 people stated, “More affordable housing”, usually with little detail, although some with poignant testimonials to the impact of high rents on their family life. 3 specified “for large families”; 2 specified “for young workers”; 3 specified rent-geared-to-income for disabled people; 2 suggested apartments or a hostel for “unhoused” residents.

14 more respondents prioritize more affordable housing specifically for seniors, and a further 7 voiced specialized needs - more long-term care, assisted living units, homemaker support so seniors stay in their homes.

15 indicated “More housing” in general, with little detail.

6 urged various forms of support for developers

Infrastructure (“hard”)

63 respondents focussed on “hard” infrastructure in one way or another (streets, sidewalks, pipes).

18 just said “Fix roads”

7 more cited Mead; 4 cited Queensway

16 focussed on Hwy 6/Centre. 10 just want the repaving completed. The others:

Lights at all intersections

Stoplights... Tim’s or Queensway; Queensway not Tim’s

More left turn lanes

Crosswalks... at Secord, at Wilson

- **3 want more sidewalks (including Lee valley Rd)**
- **5 have recommendations for better snow clearing**
- **5 gave priority to water and sewer... ensuring capacity for more development; extending water line on Second Street**
- **10 just said “infrastructure”**

Infrastructure (“soft”) (40)

40 prioritize Infrastructure of other kinds.

- **15 prioritize walking and/or cycling trails**
- **14 prioritize a dog park**
- **5 cited parks issues**
 - Maintenance x2
 - safe play structures,
 - more playgrounds,
 - another splash pad
- **4 mentioned bus service, including”**
 - Improve Care-Van hours x 2
 - Bring Ontario Northland bus stop into town

Economic Development

Economic development generally and the availability of jobs was the priority for 11 respondents, while a further 6 specified making incentives available for new businesses and 3 felt it important that the Town do more to market Espanola and its many advantages.

8 gave priority to attracting tourists (without specifying by means of festivals, concerts, and special events). However, as noted earlier under “community activity”, a further 20 prioritize festivals, concerts, markets, tournaments, etc. Most of those mentioned their importance to attract visitors

Other ideas: "make properties on the main street available for purchase by new businesses coming to town"; "take advantage of fibre optic cable"; "develop a municipal campground"; "create a huge regional park next to A and W, with a concert amphitheatre and everything for tourists and drivers otherwise travelling though"

Community Safety (33)

33 respondents raised concerns about community safety.

The chief concern of 19 was a lack of police presence in the town (sometimes coupled with a desire to return to a Town force).

A priority for a further 10 was to have “drug users” removed or “the drug problem” addressed (2 suggested that the community needs an addiction services worker.)

3 respondents are chiefly concerned about controlling speeding traffic.

Waste Management (26)

26 respondents gave high priority to waste management issues. 11 cited curbside compost pick-up. 15 stated other waste management concerns:

- Recycle more materials (3)
- Lower landfill fees (3)
- The Town operating its own landfill (2)
- Changing collection contractor (2)
- Bring back amnesty week
- A central drop-off depot for recyclables

Other Environmental Concerns (21)

21 raised various other environmental concerns.

- **6 prioritized dealing with climate change generally**
- **4 focussed on preserving green space**
- **3 want “poop and scoop” bylaws enforced**
- **3 emphasize keeping the beach clean**

Some other ideas

- **Permit backyard chickens**
- **Organize a community clean-up day, involving families**
- **Plant shade trees to prepare for a warmer climate**
- **Protect fisheries**

Taxes (26)

Taxes were the priority concern for 26 respondents.

19 said “Reduce.”

7 said “keep taxes as low as possible” or words to that effect.

Municipal Governance and Operations (28)

28 respondents noted a range of priorities related to municipal governance and operations, with no dominant theme among them.

From among the responses, here are some that drew our particular interest:

“Post on the website a schedule of ongoing and future projects so we know what’s happening where when”

“Avoid too much turnover on Town staff”

“Don’t let ‘insurance and liability’ become a barrier to supporting community-led projects”

“Communicate more effectively with the public about issues in the town and what is being done about them”

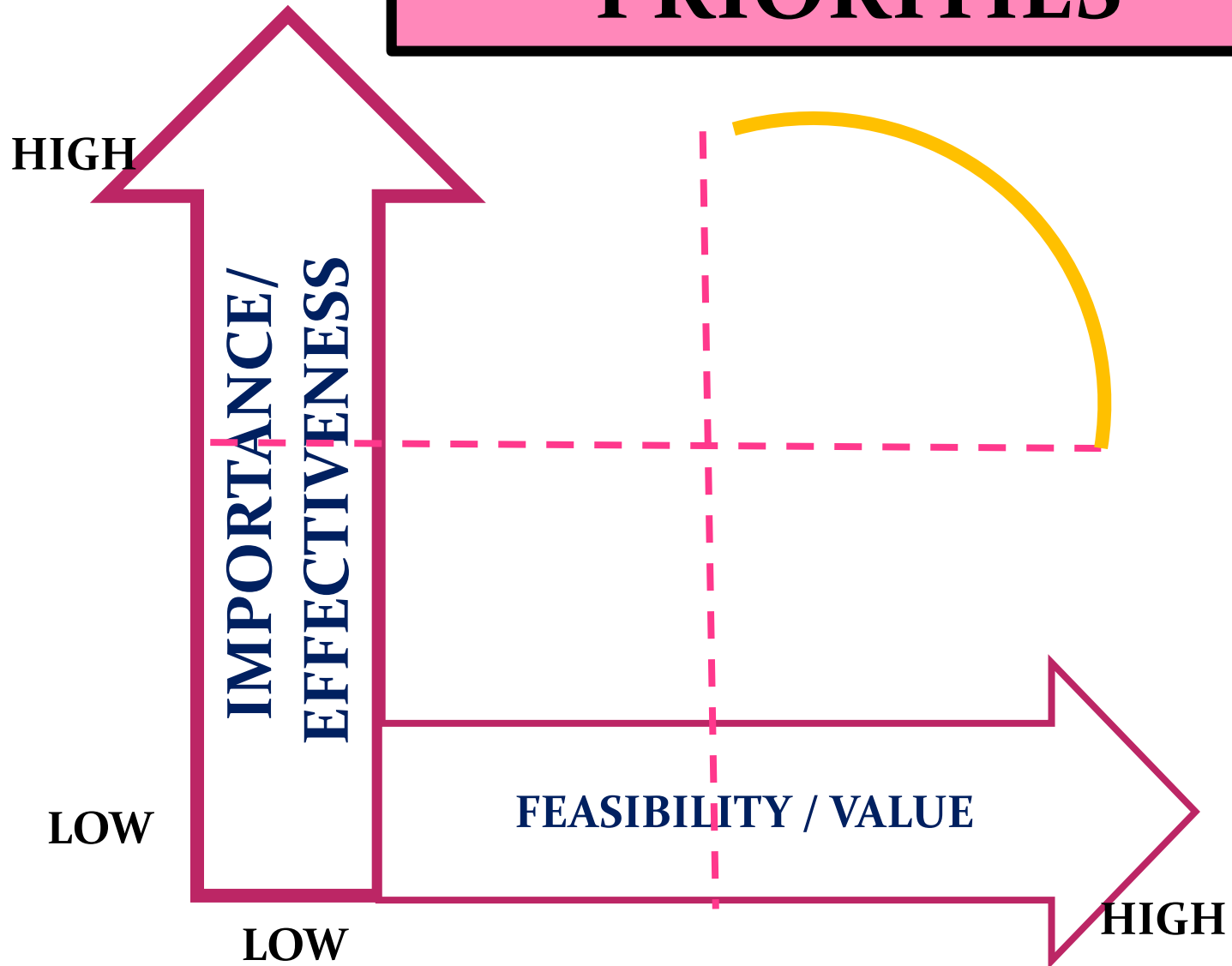
“Find ways to help organizations retain and recruit volunteers”

“More education to the public about bylaw requirements such as the placement of garbage containers”

TODAY

- What the Town would like to do/
would hope to be able to do
- A variety of possible approaches
 - Think big AND think small
 - Think direct action AND indirect
- - NOT A COMMITMENT -
- NOT FOR TODAY
 - Timing or sequence
 - Cost or revenue
 - Staff or Council time
 - Legal/technical/risk issues

PRIORITIES



IMPORTANCE

Some Criteria for Evaluating Importance of Potential Strategic Priorities and Initiatives



CHOOSING YOUR VERBS

Direct Primary Responsibility	Build, replace, repair, conduct, complete, etc.	
Shared Responsibility: Twp Initiative	Approach, identify, convene, facilitate, etc.	
Shared Responsibility: Twp Responsiveness	Sponsor, respond to, work with, partner with, etc.	
Minimal Responsibility	Encourage, promote, welcome, etc.	
No direct responsibility	Advocate, lobby, network with, etc.	
"study"	Study "whether to"?	
	Study "how to" ?	

CLARITY

- **Would staff and the public understand what you want to achieve?**
- **Does it reflect how much/how far you want to go?**
- **Is it continuing a past approach/initiative, or is starting something new?**

A large pink hexagon with a black border is centered on the page. Inside the hexagon, the words "GROUP", "WORK", and "AHEAD" are stacked vertically in a light gray, serif font with a subtle drop shadow. The background of the slide is white with decorative pink and purple wavy lines at the top.

GROUP
WORK
AHEAD

TEAM WORK



Work group 1

Work Group 2

Work Group 3

- **Potential STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS/PRIORITIES**
for each GOAL/THEME
- **Potential ACTIONS/INITIATIVES**
for each STRATEGIC DIRECTION
- **THINKING ABOUT**
 - Clarity/Verbs
 - Measures (We'd consider it progress if ...)
 - Why each Strategic Direction or Initiative is Important