

# Best Practice

## Our Humboldt Strategic Framework

### CONTACT

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Project Date: 2016

### THE PRACTICE

In response to local growth, Humboldt city council developed and implemented a framework setting out a vision and strategy for the city, and used it to align policy and the budget process for the municipality.

### THE PROCESS

The development of a new vision and renewed strategic plan began in 2013 as the city council, senior administration and a local advisory committee worked with the Canadian Urban Institute to devise a collaborative planning and engagement initiative to create a community-designed strategic plan. The plan was organized into three stages with the first focusing on community engagement. Stage two saw the development of the plan's strategic direction and stage three included council's formal adoption of the plan and its public release. Humboldt Council formally adopted the plan in January 2014. It was the first values-led strategic plan adopted by a Canadian municipality. Incorporating the plan, council adopted a priority-based budgeting approach, meaning resources are allocated depending on how effectively a program or services achieves the priorities, goals and objective that are of greatest impact and value to the community. The final strategic driver was the renewal of the City of Humboldt's Official Community Plan (OCP). The city worked closely with contracted planners to create a values-led OCP that aligned with the strategic plan. The OCP was organized in four phases – identifying a steering committee; reviewing mapping and policies, gathering data, and community consultation; preliminary policy development and further consultation; and OCP approval from both the council and the ministry. The Humboldt 2035 Official Community Plan was approved by council in May 2016 and the Ministry of Government Relations in July 2016. More than 150 individuals provided input during a 10-month period for the city's OCP.

### THE RESULTS

Having an overarching plan ensures council and staff are included and accountable for managing the way Humboldt grows and changes. Community agencies, organizations and others are also encouraged to align their work with the framework, demonstrating need and relevance.

By engaging the community and allowing everyone the opportunity to share their views and concerns, the framework created transparent, legitimate, and accountable ways to make decisions and improve policy for the community.

### LESSONS LEARNED

Having an overarching plan is critical in driving alignment throughout a strategic framework, and setting priorities helps simplify the decision process.

Engaging citizens and stakeholders is key, as a community will not embrace or support change if they are not involved, and accessing alternative funding or in-kind sources can bring other interested partners to the table. It is also important to stay flexible, because in order to continuously adapt and respond to changing environments, work will continue on the framework to ensure municipal staff and council committees are appropriately structured, resourced and support to work towards priorities.