**Hosted by Grand River Environmental Network (GREN)**

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150 Frederick, Kitchener

12 Participants

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All views are of the individuals, not of GREN as a group



1. **What revisions or enhancements do you feel are needed to the focus areas and strategic objectives? For example, was anything missed or need to be revised (please indicate relevant number)**
* Strategic Plan(ning) (general comments)
	+ Every page should have performance indicators set up – how are we measuring this? Are we reaching our goals? Be accountable
	+ Change your presentation to something more circular, a Prezi, to highlight the interrelatedness of all the Priority Areas
	+ Should include a section on progress for not just financial implications, but environmental implications
	+ The next year should be working within the numbers, not above them.
	+ Online forum issues – no submit button after entering a comment
	+ Does Environics offer the possibility for participants in the phone survey to have updates on the results of the survey in which they participated?
	+ StratChat pens – are they recyclable? Alternatives?
	+ Add “none of the above” to the clicker questions
	+ What is the difference between the Corporate Strategic Plan and the Department Strategic Plans? Which way does information flow?
* Environment Priority Area (general comments)
	+ Struck by the fact that there are only 2 new objectives and 5 ongoing ones. Surely in the 21st century in the Region of Waterloo, the region that prides itself on being the most intelligent region in Canada, there must be something else innovative we can do. If Woodstock can proclaim to be completely independent of emissions and greenhouse gases (GHGs) by 2050, then why can’t Waterloo do something more dramatic?
	+ Environmental considerations should be a part of every decision. This was in the last strategic plan but still does not appear to be implemented
	+ Economic development always appears first – environmental needs to be top priority
	+ What about the Climate Action Waterloo Region? Need more clarity around them and their role
	+ 6% emissions reduction by 2020 is not enough. Make better and more ambitious targets
	+ The appetite is there to do more, but nothing gets translated into actions
	+ The world has already created an environment that sustains us – let’s support it
	+ Use experts, such as GREN, to education the public
	+ Region needs to talk about what other communities do which affects us. Take a position on these things.
	+ We have a university here with a faculty of engineering that could help solve these things
	+ More collaboration between the Region and the universities (engineering, geography, water efficiency)
	+ Our councilors need to push these issues in their daily lives and their workplaces
	+ Guelph: uses a district energy instead of furnaces in each house – more centralized
	+ Aging infrastructure is a big concern
	+ What can we offset with natural solutions?
	+ A lot of 21st century thinking can be 17th century thinking (going back to more natural ways of doing)
	+ Take out environmental as a separate area and integrate it into everything else
	+ Values of land usage, projected needs, water budgets for each, regional budget allocations, etc should be public. I cannot know if we will have enough resources for the children of the future if I cannot see the resources of today. Need all the numbers on the same page (like an infographic or something similarly easy to read and understand).
	+ Health unit inspects restaurants. Could we parallel this with a unit that inspects those aspects of the environmental piece? Combine it with the PH inspections. Include water efficiency inspections
	+ Connections between health and environment and economy are huge.
	+ Need to move away from economic factors. Environmental factors cannot be reduced to economic factors
* 3.1: Develop alternative waste disposal technologies (eg, energy from waste, incineration)
	+ People are still talking about incinerators in this document, but when environmental people hear incinerators, they cringe.
	+ Locally sourced energy is a big sell. Tell people the value of green binning, that it offsets oil and other forms of energy. If we capture methane, we offset it.
	+ Do not agree with Energy from Waste (EFW) and incineration. Investigate something else. Incineration puts things into the air, which then impacts air quality.
	+ If we are successful at diverting, then all that’s left is plastics. But plastic industry is a big lobby for EFW/incineration
	+ Look at recycling plastics into logs, decks, etc
	+ Subsidize those businesses that are doing sustainable things, especially if they’re local
	+ Plastic is expensive to deal with in waste, but also expensive to collect
	+ Very difficult to tell people not to dump their nuclear waste but we still want the electricity
	+ Think in terms of sustainability options. The region has been good about this but they need to push more. How can we create incentives to reduce the load of new products on our electricity grid? Limit the damages to our landfill?
* 3.2: Work with community partners (eg, RARE, GRCA) to investigate the development of a park along the Grand River
	+ Will it be a manicured park or wildspace?
	+ Protect all of Hidden Valley – water supply, biodiversity, urban forest
		- GRCA water document ignored the possible development of an industrial park, a business park, and subdivision in Hidden Valley in the future.
		- Recently the federal government announced a new infrastructure fund of $150,000 with the intent to help build trail and park infrastructure. Region could apply for $5million to $X million to purchase all of Hidden Valley
	+ Bring the information to the Region that was presented to the City of Kitchener about the heritage and natural park along the river, including Hidden Valley
	+ Have it as an objective to pull together that strip as protected, public lands
	+ Need a trail fund
* 3.3.3: Advocate and lobby Provincial and Federal governments to improve recycling markets
	+ lobby and advocate stronger around legislation for reduced packaging on goods, environmental stewardship, etc
	+ bring back the targets around diversion (there was a target in 2008 at the provincial level that just never was enforced)
	+ region is paying the price for the province not doing their job
* 3.6: Promote Water efficiency, protection, and conservation
	+ Wonderful programs, great direction in terms of goals and ideas for addressing water conservation
	+ No new money for this initiative
	+ Using less water – we’re not going to have a pipeline, so where’s the money that would have gone into the pipeline going?
	+ Need to be much more bold and aggressive, fund it, and do the public education piece
	+ There are 4 restaurant audits out of 3000 restaurants in the Region – not aggressive enough
	+ The Region sells water, so there is a conflict of interest for the Region to reduce water consumption – reduced consumption means reduced revenues. Being responsible for both conservation and income = conflict of interest. I’d hate to think that there is a hidden agenda around water efficiency here… It explains something that otherwise does not have a good explanation – understaffed, underfunded, great ideas, but no muscle behind them.
	+ Water efficiency master plan: working under the assumption of no new funding
	+ Water efficiency has saved 1B capital expenditure, so if they are taking a long-term perspective, it should be obvious to choose and support efficiency
	+ Using cisterns may not save the homeowner much money, but it saves the community
	+ Cisterns could be done fairly cheaply, but plumbers need to be trained. For that, we need money to be able to train them.
	+ Cisterns also protect erosion and infrastructure. Cisterns can offset stormwater runoff
	+ We need to adapt quick, and cisterns can help us do that
	+ Is there a water extraction company in Waterloo? Laurel Springs?
	+ San Francisco has gone bottled-water free – can we do that too?
	+ Advocate for a permit to extract water
	+ Charge more for water use
	+ There was a water strategy at the Federal level, and no money has gone into it. Region should create a resolution to ask what is the plan and how much has been allocated
	+ We are capped on our water supply so we need to work within it
* 3.7: Preserve, protect, and enhance environmentally sensitive lands and farm lands ”Farmers feed cities”
	+ If the best thing about WR was that it maintains a balance between access to services and small town feel, then people are saying they don’t want to grow – this is not reflected in the plan
	+ We have exceptional farmland here, that people beyond our region are going to rely on
	+ I would love to see a little more wild land. Create an appreciation of wild land – it is not “wasted” space or something that is “undeveloped” or “unimproved”, we need the biodiversity.
	+ Farmland is still developed land. We need to be cautious about the techniques that are being used for farming on those lands.
	+ Be careful about what’s coming off the farmlands: pesticides, herbicides, manure, etc.
	+ Farms can be paid for land that they cannot farm on – see Norfolk county Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS)
	+ Environmental sensitive lands filter the water system to make it healthy for us to drink. Prioritize those lands so that at the provincial level they cannot even consider developing those lands
	+ If we lose those environmental sensitive lands, we are going to die.
	+ We need to stop replacing frogs with pesticides
	+ Land settlement offer: advocate overhauling or abolishing Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) – how else can you have any say?
	+ Protections for class 1-2-3 soils
	+ Grow the greenbelt to include Waterloo
	+ Wetland protection has not been met
	+ What does the new settlement agreement really mean? Can the developers come back in a few years to come get the rest of the lands they wanted? Bring in Kevin Eby to update GREN about OMB and the land settlement
	+ My concern is that this is a missed opportunity for the Region to promote conversion to organic farming. Necessity to convert to total reliance on organic agricultural practices
	+ Reduce/prohibit the use of known carcinogenic and endocrine disruptors (eg, PBDE, atrazine)
	+ Advocate to practice the precautionary principle that pesticides/herbicides are causing problems – reduce risks by reducing/prohibiting use
	+ Need to plan ahead – mitigate the risk
	+ Pharmaceuticals are also going into the water as well
	+ Contact organic council of Ontario to get their input
	+ Create a forum or townhall specific to organics
	+ Beekeeper at St Jacobs is trying to do more education, but is up against a brick wall
	+ Lots of conflict of interest based on our faulty economic system – people have blinders on
	+ Protect pollinators
	+ Sustainability in every decision – eg, France, Germany, all of Europe, etc
	+ How do we frame this in a way where people don’t turn you off because you’re scaring the daylights out of them? Show them the interconnectedness (eg, healthy bees = healthy corn – need both!). Need to start changing the hearts and minds of folks.
	+ Stop focusing on children – adults are supposed to be setting the example
	+ Adding a value system to a lot of these environmental decisions – need to get people to value the value!
	+ A frog is a natural capital asset if it is preventing the need for the use of other pesticides
	+ What are the possibilities here that are not electronic, mathematical, scientific?
	+ There **are** solutions out there
	+ We don’t value the things in nature that are doing the same things that we are trying to do with chemicals
	+ There is a farmer in Montreal who is doing farming with only 4 people. Plowing is not good.
	+ There are organic farmers in this Region who are doing very well economically. How can we help them to spread their influence?
	+ Urban gardens should be enhanced
	+ Region is very good with the community gardens but the cities are not collaborating – need more conversation between the two tiers
	+ Government sees all these community self-developing initiatives that volunteers are pushing, but these can only go so far. To really expand to its potential, the governments and the Region play a major role in supporting and enhancing those initiatives
	+ Plan now for drought, especially in regards to irrigation – that it is efficient – be proactive
	+ Decommissioning wells! This is critical! There is not a process to make sure wells are being decommissioned properly (farmer dumping manure into his well!)
	+ Fund the well-aware program
	+ Assist homeowners with properly maintaining and upgrading their wells and septic systems
	+ Why can’t water efficiency money be redirected towards sustainability initiatives
	+ Develop and sustain 21st century programs. This plan is very 20th century
	+ Growth management plan: country side line is only protected until a certain date. Then it can be opened up again. There needs to be a “forever” protection
	+ Provincial acknowledgement of the country side line as an extension of the green belt act would be a good start
* Economic Development Priority Area (general comments)
	+ We cannot have a healthy economy with a sick environment
	+ Whole cost accounting needs to be included in the plan.
	+ We are not creating prosperity if we are destroying the planet
	+ Economic growth is not capped by location (eg, telecommuting). If businesses have ways of reducing employees commute, if you can explore options to reduce footprint, then please do it.
	+ Need to get into a global mindset
* 1.1: Actively support the new Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation (WREDC), area municipalities, and other economic development partners to attract and retain businesses to create a value-added diverse economy
	+ WREDC needs to have environmental representation. Change the structure.
	+ Can’t be just the developers and corporate representation on that corporation
	+ I think people hear “economics – oh we need to talk business” but if this is going to be the common language, then environment and other things need to be in there
	+ Economy should be green economy
	+ Prosperity should be sustainability
	+ Work within the factual, physical limits (eg, limited land, limited water, limited resources). Business is an intellectual construct.
* 1.3: work with community partners to develop continuous and immediately available supply of employment land
	+ Not employment land, employment spaces. Can work remotely. We don’t need land.
* 1.4: Grow air service and aviation-related activities at and around the Region of Waterloo International Airport
	+ A person in another focus group wanted to commute to Toronto fairly regularly by air
	+ In Europe, there is no air service between cities that are closer than 200 miles. They were replaced by rail
	+ Air pollution issue is huge
* 2.1: Implement a Light Rail Transit System (ION) fully integrated with an expanded, accessible, affordable, and easy-to-use conventional transit system
	+ Improve bus routes/frequencies for 150 Frederick & WR Museum, especially at night, for council meetings or other community meetings
* 2.3.2: integrate regional and city trails
	+ Connect the offroad/protected bike trails!
	+ Maintain trails in the winter
* 2.4.3: Work with Regional Police to enhance road safety for cyclists
	+ Institute bike rider training (Do they ride on sidewalks or streets? Need to know where they’ll be!)
* 3.3: Reduce the amount of waste going to the landfill
	+ Post audits on how much a place produces (green vs other). Have someone checking
	+ Most municipal programs are only focused on residents. Half of waste is produced by industrial and commercial. There recycling rate is less than half, so one of the objectives needs to be for the ICI (industrial, commercial, institutional) sector to do a better job. Needs to be a priority.
	+ Say “we’re not going to accept mixed waste” at the landfill
	+ Make a tax on anything that could have been recycled or green binned, that comes to landfill.
	+ If a business comes in and we know that their product results in waste, we could add an extra tax. If they manage their waste better, we can provide incentives. Right now they are offloading their waste management cost onto the community
	+ What about businesses? They have a good display about where to put things, but then workers say that because people don’t put things in the right bins, then everything gets tossed together at the end anyway. They get to say they’re “green”, but it’s not really.
	+ More advertising dollars around where things go (in businesses) to have a staff person standing at the bins to help people.
* 3.3.1: Strengthen the green bin program
	+ Can’t get people to use their green bins.
	+ I went to Eco-Fest and got a demo of the new, larger green bin. Problems with it: it takes 2 hands to operate the locking system. If you are injured, you wouldn’t be able to use it. Secondly, it is to be wheeled, but due to the size, you need to bend over – needs a better handle to be easier to handle. Latch is difficult to operate and the bin is too low for people with back problems.
	+ Garbage men throw my green bin and it cracks and breaks
	+ Is there a way to do green bins in apartment buildings? This needs to happen.
	+ The Region has a good brochure about what goes where, but do we give them out? I only got one because I asked – need more of this
	+ We should advertise about the green bin on the sides of buses
* Urban tree canopy
	+ If you want to make the city walkable and busable, the shade is not where the people need to be. The heat off the pavement, the sunburn
	+ Native, diverse tree canopy at bus stops and along the LRT
	+ More female trees (apparently we have too many male trees which cause increase allergies)
* Other
	+ Protect community spaces where people can gather to have a grassroots democracy to be able to change these things before they become critical.
	+ Education should be not to just say “we are doing this” but also to show people that the information goes somewhere