



Corporate Strategic Plan 2024-2029 Final Report



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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Township of Perth South wished to develop a new Corporate Strategic Plan that would:

- 1) Focus on the Township's mission, services, values and vision for the future;
- 2) Engage residents, businesses, community organizations, municipal council, committees of council, municipal staff and other key agencies and individuals in the process of developing the plan; and
- 3) Collect information from stakeholders with the intent of using this information to help municipal personnel in the advancement of other corporate project plans such as a Community Services Master Plan or Fire Services Master Plan.

Through an RFP process, the Township selected Capital Park Consulting Inc. to assist in the development of the new plan by:

- Assisting Council and staff in implementing a process to gather robust input from the community and other stakeholders to inform the development of the new strategic plan including services, vision for the future, values, mission, etc.
- Ensuring that Council is aware of municipal sector strategic plan precedents and "best practices" in the various components of a municipal strategic plan so that these can be considered when Perth South is drafting its new strategic plan
- Helping to identify and review possible indicators that can be used to measure the Township's success in achieving the goals it established in the new strategic plan
- Soliciting input from staff and ensure that the new strategic plan makes sense and is clearly understood from the staff perspective
- Ensuring meaningful participation and engagement of the public throughout the project
- Ensuring that the plan developed strikes an appropriate balance between being flexible enough to ensure that it is relevant if circumstances change, while also specific enough that it can be implemented decisively and measured clearly
- Ensuring that the new strategic plan builds on the municipality's current initiatives and existing services

METHODOLOGY

Capital Park's work plan included the following components:

1. Kick-off meeting
2. Review background materials and research Strategic Plan precedents
3. Internal stakeholder engagement through interviews with members of Council and Township management staff
4. Virtual workshop with Township management staff

5. External stakeholder engagement through focus groups, online survey and public meetings
6. Two-day in person planning session with members of Council and Township senior management
7. Development of the contents of the Strategic Plan
8. Review of draft Strategic Plan by Council and senior staff, amendment as required, and issuance of final version

APPROACH

The approach that was taken is summarized in this graphic.



PURPOSE OF THIS FINAL REPORT

The purpose of this final report is to:

- Consolidate the information contained in the four interim reports produced during the project
- Serve as resource material in the future for councillors and senior staff
- Provide additional information about the strategic planning process for other interested parties

SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT REVIEW AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

PESTEL ANALYSIS

A PESTEL analysis was used to summarize the external factors affecting the Township. PESTEL is an acronym for Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal factors. It is a strategic planning tool that focuses on these six influences to gather information about various external factors affecting an organization.



The PESTEL Analysis is a method for conducting an environmental scan; its advantages include:

- It's a simple framework
- It is comprehensive and facilitates an understanding of the wider environment
- It encourages the development of strategic thinking
- It can enable an organization to anticipate future threats and take action to avoid or minimize their impact
- It can enable an organization to spot opportunities and exploit them fully

A PESTEL Analysis is often used in conjunction with other planning tools, such as a SWOT Analysis, which looks at Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. During the planning session the participants used the results of the PESTEL Analysis to conduct a SWOT analysis for Perth South.

POLITICAL FACTORS

Municipal governments are affected a great deal by decisions made and policies implemented by higher levels of government, i.e. provincial and federal. It can be difficult to predict what changes will take place, particularly if there should happen to be a change in leadership of a governing party or an election that results in a different party coming into power. Here are some of the recent predictions that have been made:

Federal Outlook

“The Parliamentary Budget Office has trimmed its forecast for Canada’s economic growth this year.

The PBO’s latest economic and fiscal outlook predicts the economy will grow by 1.0 per cent this year followed by 1.6 per cent in 2024. The outlook compares with the agency’s October forecast for growth of 1.2 per cent for 2023 and 2.3 per cent in 2024.

It expects a decline in residential investment and weakness in consumer spending in the first half of the year, while businesses reduce their inventory investment over the course of 2023 as the growth in sales slows. The PBO also predicts the Bank of Canada will keep its key interest rate target on hold at 4.5 per cent for the rest of 2023 before starting to cut in 2024.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/9523302/pbo-economic-forecast-2023-interest-rates/>

This prediction turned out to be inaccurate, as the Bank of Canada raised the prime rate to 5% on July 12th. On July 24th, 2023, the Globe and Mail reported:

“Since COVID-19, the economy has stagnated. Canada’s per-person GDP (adjusted for inflation) stood at \$56,206 in 2019, declined sharply in 2020 before recouping some of the losses in 2021. However, despite economic recovery from COVID, by the third quarter of 2022, GDP per person remained below prepandemic levels.”

“A 2021 study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that Canada will record the lowest level of per-person GDP growth among 32 advanced economies during the periods of 2020 to 2030 and 2030 to 2060. Countries such as Czechia, Estonia, Israel, South Korea, New Zealand, Slovenia and Turkey, which currently have lower levels of average per-person GDP, are expected to vault past Canada and achieve higher living standards by 2060.”

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/commentary/article-canada-economy-trudeau-freeland>

In October 2023, Bank of Canada governor Tiff Macklem appeared before the House of Commons Finance Committee to provide an update on bank policy and economic projections.

“In response to questioning from Conservative MP Jasraj Singh Hallan, Macklem said government spending is working at cross purposes with the central bank's efforts to bring inflation down.

The governor said that according to federal and provincial budgets, government spending aggregate will grow faster than supply in the economy over the next year, adding upward pressure to inflation.

“It would be helpful if monetary and fiscal policy was rowing in the same direction,” Macklem said.” <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2023/10/31/news/bank-canada-head-fiscal-monetary-policy>

The most recent economic projections are starting to predict high inflation and high interest rates into 2025. What impact will high interest rates and sluggish growth have on Perth South? Will it affect long-term debt, maintenance of infrastructure, etc.?

Provincial Outlook

The March 2023 provincial budget projects a small deficit for the current fiscal year and surpluses in future years.

“Overall, Budget 2023 is fiscally prudent and sets the Ontario government on a course for surplus next year, well ahead of schedule. Spending is limited to targeted areas for maximum impact and savings have been generated from a balanced pool of revenue streams.”

“While health care is getting the lion’s share of new spending, the government is planning to invest more in education, social services and “other programs.” <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/insights/sprinting-to-surplus-ontario-budget-2023>

It is noteworthy that that new provincial spending will focus on services that are not the responsibility of lower tier municipalities. (The one possible exception is additional funding for “infrastructure”, which will likely include municipal projects.)

“This provincial budget will be a challenge for municipal finances. There was no mention of replacing municipal revenues lost as a result of Bill 23. The City of Toronto and municipalities generally did not receive any funds to address pressures resulting from COVID. A failure to support municipalities will result in reduced services and higher property taxes locally. At the same time, there were no obvious cuts or signs of austerity from the Ford government as many had predicted.” <https://omssa.com/blog-report-on-2023-ontario-budget-march-2023.php>

Housing Affordability

Housing affordability has become one of the most dominant issues at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. There is a consensus emerging that the primary challenge at all levels of government is to increase the supply.

The province of Ontario recently passed Bill 23, which has made fundamental changes to the land use planning system in Ontario through changes to the Development Charges Act, Planning Act, Municipal Act, and others. Although this legislation does not apply to all municipalities, it indicates the policy direction of the provincial government.

There is also a movement to have “complete communities”, i.e. the optimal mix of people, activities, and transport modes in each neighborhood. Should Perth South adapt this policy for future residential and economic development? What will need to be done?

On June 16th, 2023, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation issued a report warning that we are moving in the wrong direction on housing affordability.

“Canada’s federal housing agency is worried affordability will deteriorate unless the country acts on supply challenges and other housing measures soon.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation rang alarm bells last summer when it estimated the country needs to build 3.5 million more homes by 2030 than it is on track for, to reach some semblance of affordability.

While 271,000 homes were built two years ago and roughly 260,000 last year, chief economist Bob Dugan is now forecasting between 210,000 and 220,000 will be constructed this year.

Dugan believes this is a sign that the country is moving in the wrong direction and he is not optimistic that the country is on track to double the pace of housing starts.

Construction efforts have been constrained by labour shortages, higher interest rates and costs for materials, along with zoning issues and NIMBYism.

Dugan admits his outlook is not rosy but on the positive side, says moments of crisis can lead to innovation, which could positively alter the current housing forecast.”

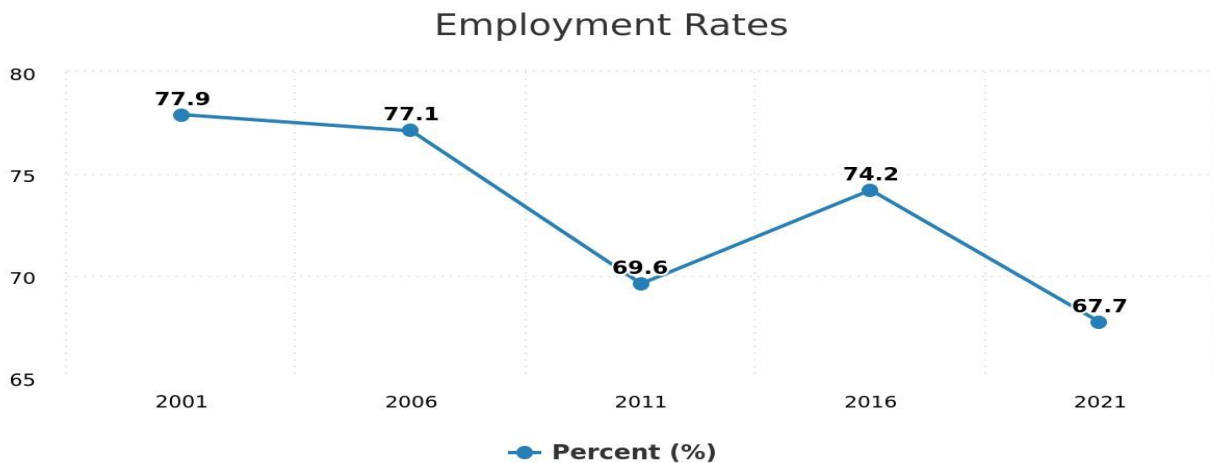
<https://www.cp24.com/news/housing-affordability-will-deteriorate-unless-we-act-soon-cmhc-chief-economist-1.6444323>

ECONOMIC FACTORS

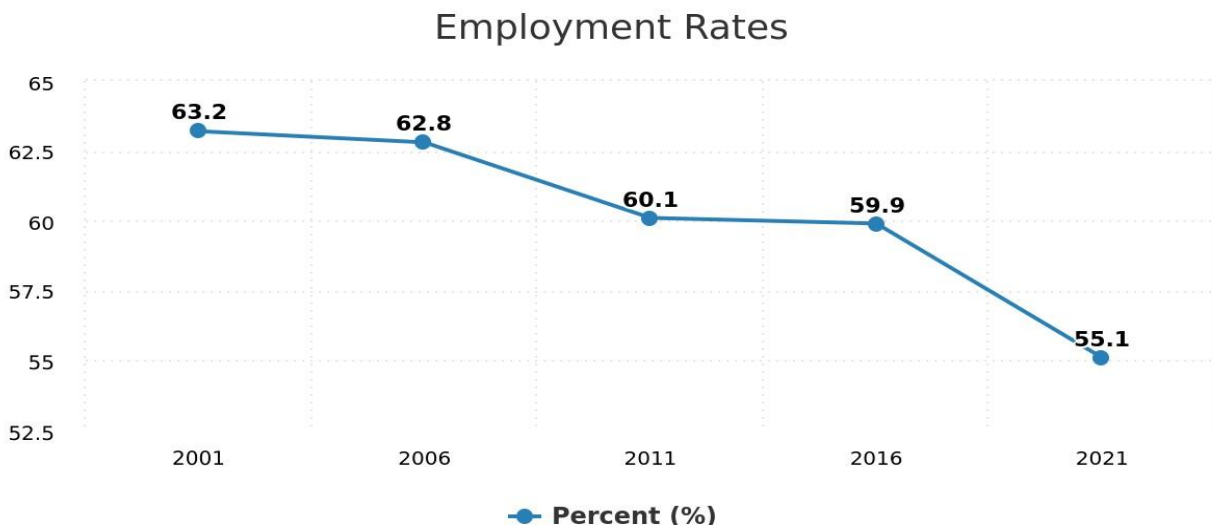
Statistics from the 2021 Statistics Canada Census are provided on the following pages. Much of the analysis comes from <https://townfolio.co/on/perth-south/summary>. Please note StatsCan and Townfolio often round figures to the close number divisible by five.

Please note that the employment data from the 2021 Census should be read with caution, as they appear to be overly negative. This data, although reported in 2021, was the average for the three years from 2018 to 2021. Since this time period included the COVID lockdowns, the numbers are likely not representative of the situation in 2021. This information has been included because the data from 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016 may be of some interest in identifying trends.

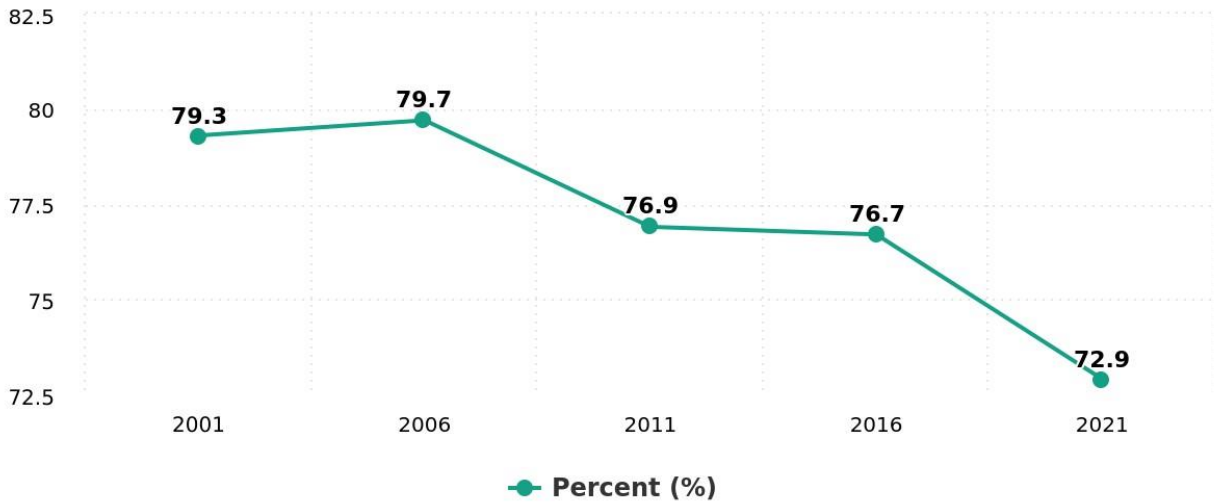
EMPLOYMENT



The employment rates charts show the percentage of people of working age who were employed for each of the past three census years. The Perth South graph, above, shows a significantly higher rate than the Province of Ontario graphs, below.

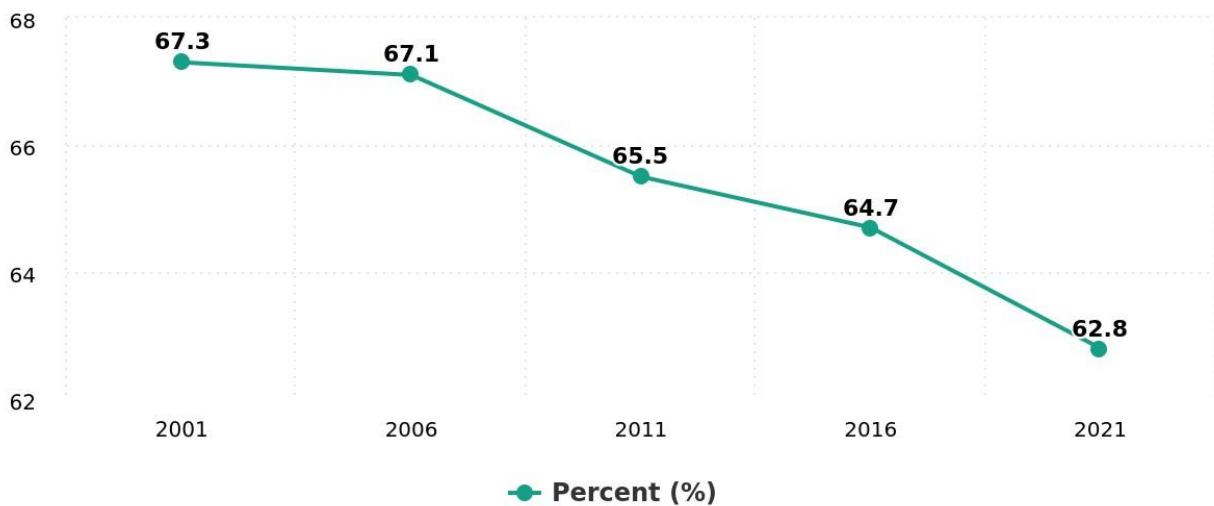


Participation Rates

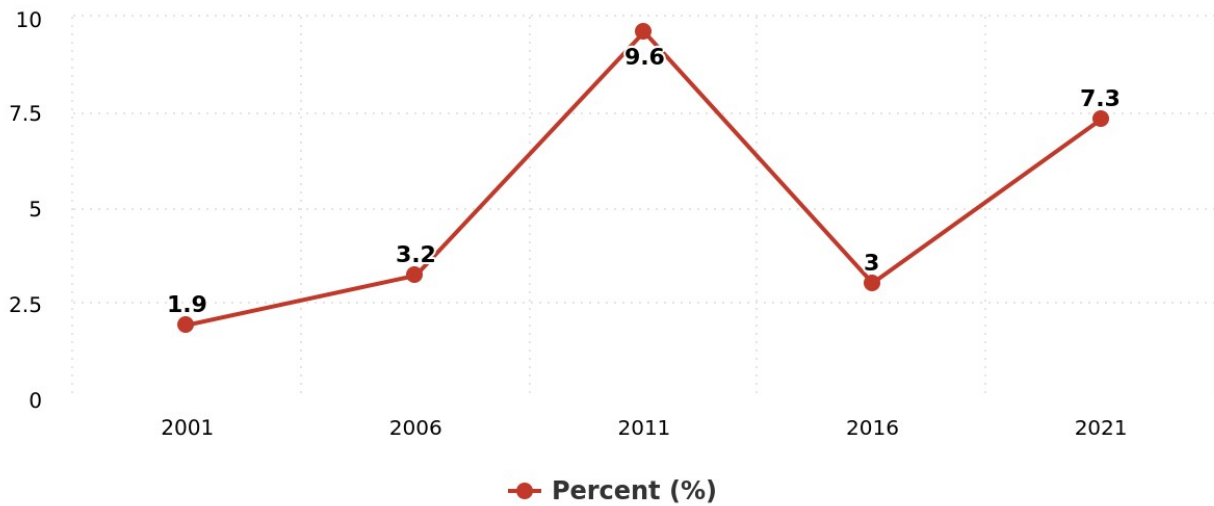


The participation rates chart shows the percentage of people who were either employed or are actively looking for work. A growing participation rate signals more people coming into the labour force whether younger people looking for first jobs, people of working age switching careers or jobs, or people re-entering the job market after job disruptions. Migration can significantly affect this economic metric. The Perth South graph, above, shows a higher participation rate than the provincial average, shown below.

Participation Rates

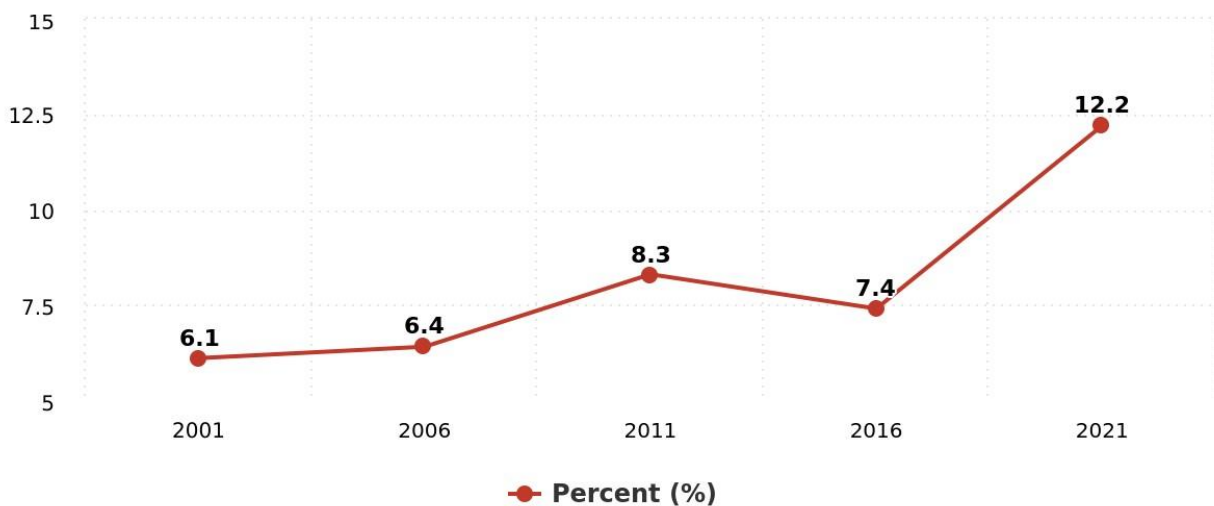


Unemployment Rates



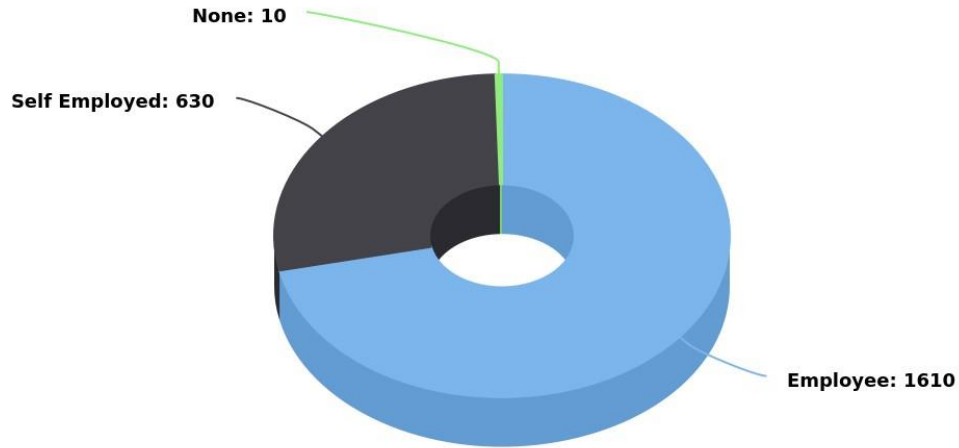
The unemployment rate chart shows the number of unemployed workers and people searching for a paid job expressed as a percentage of the labour force. An increasing unemployment rate signals an “employer’s market” where there are more job seekers compared to the number of jobs available. People receiving the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) during Covid would appear as unemployed. Perth South, above, appears to have significantly fewer unemployed residents than the provincial average, shown below.

Unemployment Rates



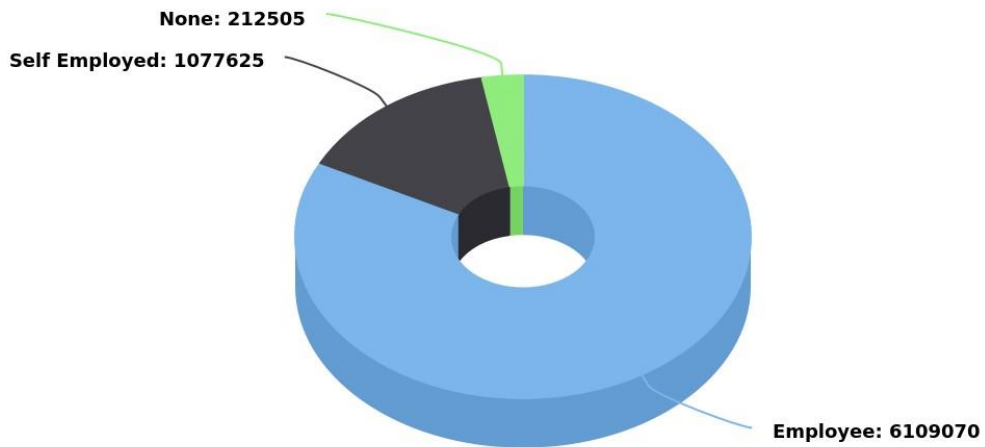
LABOUR FORCE

Worker Classes

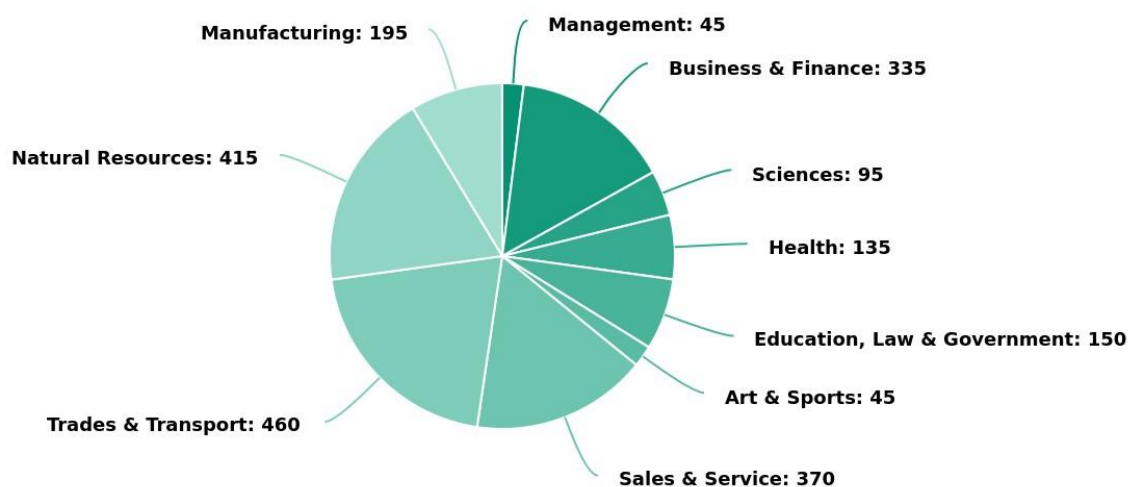


Perth South has a much higher percentage of self-employed residents, at over 39% of the population. The provincial average is less than 18%.

Worker Classes



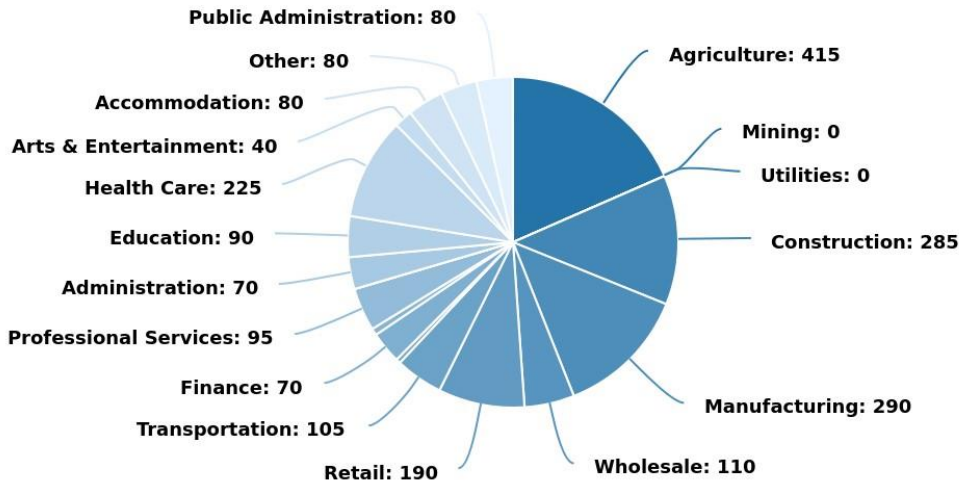
Labour Force by Occupation



Occupation	Number	Percentage
Trades & Transport	460	20.49%
Natural Resources	415	18.49%
Sales & Service	370	16.48%
Business & Finance	335	14.92%
Manufacturing	195	8.69%
Education, Law & Government	150	6.68%
Health	135	6.01%
Sciences	95	4.23%
Management	45	2.00%
Art & Sports	45	2.00%
Total	2,245	100.00%

The labour force in Perth South is relatively diverse, as shown in the pie chart and table above.

Labour Force by Industry

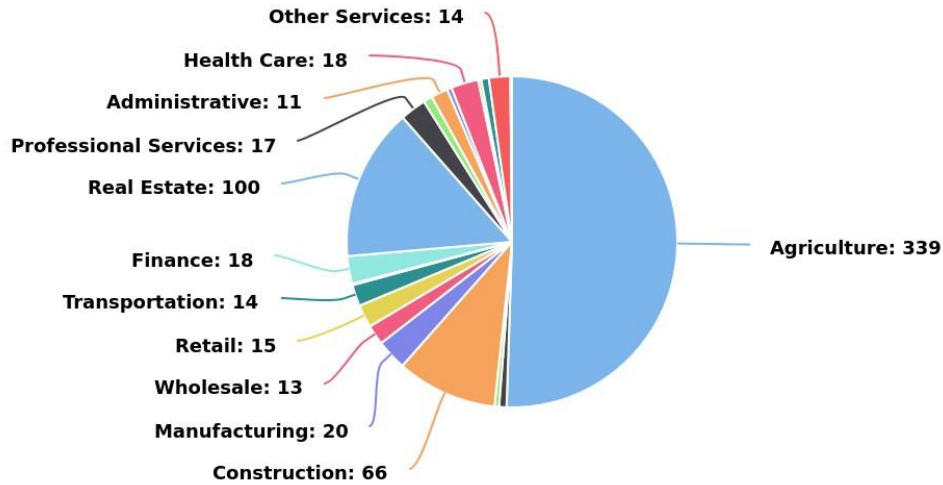


Industry	Number	Percentage
Agriculture	415	18.44%
Manufacturing	290	12.89%
Construction	285	12.67%
Health Care	225	10.00%
Retail	190	8.44%
Wholesale	110	4.89%
Transportation	105	4.67%
Professional Services	95	4.22%
Education	90	4.00%
Accommodation	80	3.56%
Other	80	3.56%
Public Administration	80	3.56%
Finance	70	3.11%
Administration	70	3.11%
Arts & Entertainment	40	1.78%
Real Estate	15	0.67%
Information	10	0.44%
Mining	0	0.00%
Utilities	0	0.00%
Management	0	0.00%
Total	2,250	100.00%

Although agriculture remains the largest economic sector by number of people employed, there is significant diversification.

BUSINESSES IN THE TOWNSHIP BY INDUSTRY

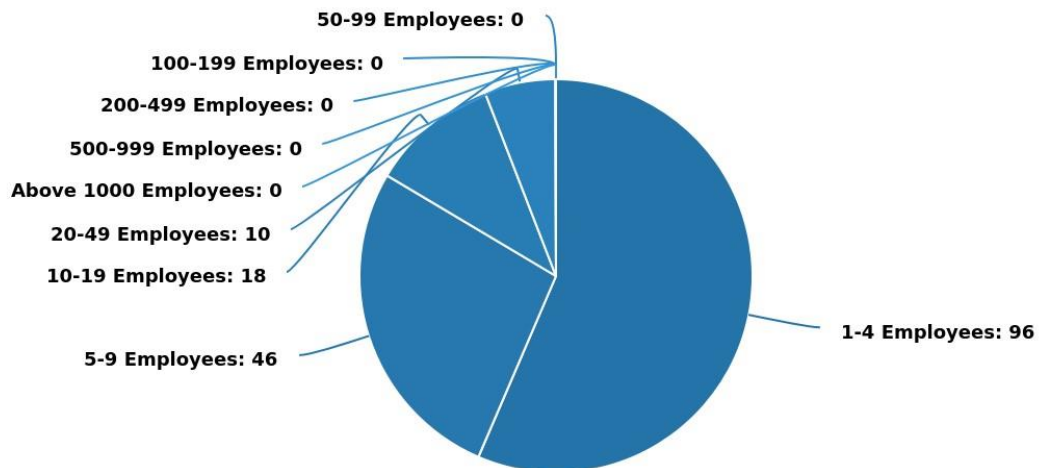
Business Industries



Over half of all businesses in the Township are in the agricultural sector.

There are no businesses with more than 49 employees; 83.5% of all businesses have fewer than ten employees.

Business Sizes



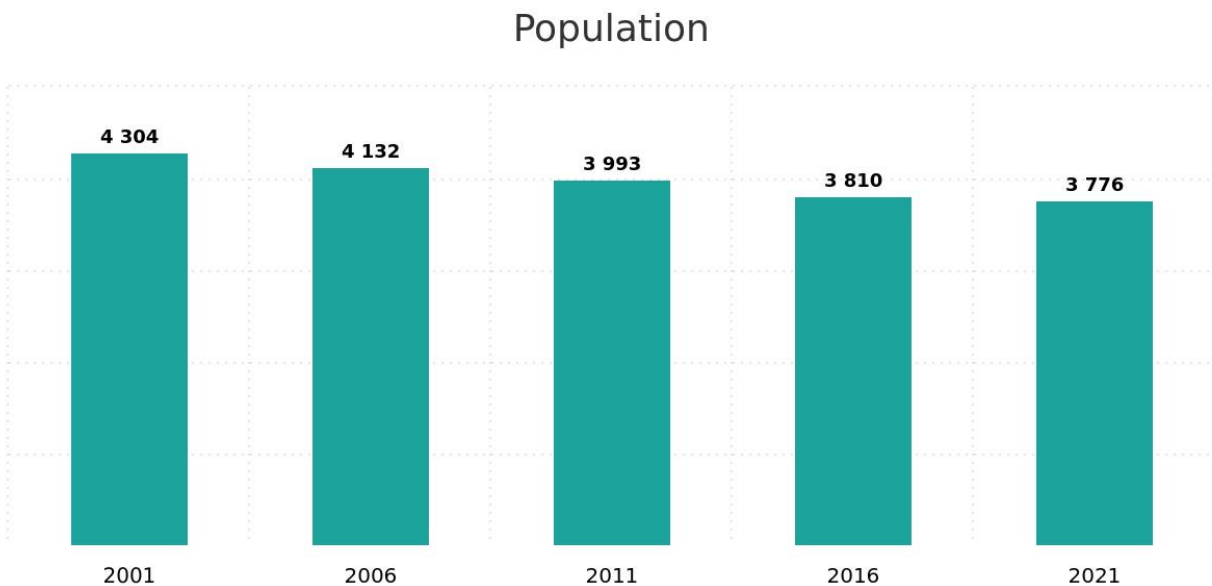
SOCIAL FACTORS

Social factors include demographics. Is the population growing, shrinking, or remaining constant? Is the age distribution of residents changing? What are the socio-economic indicators?

Most statistics in this section relate to the 2021 Statistics Canada Census. Much of the analysis comes from <https://Townshipfolio.co/on/Perth South/demographics>.

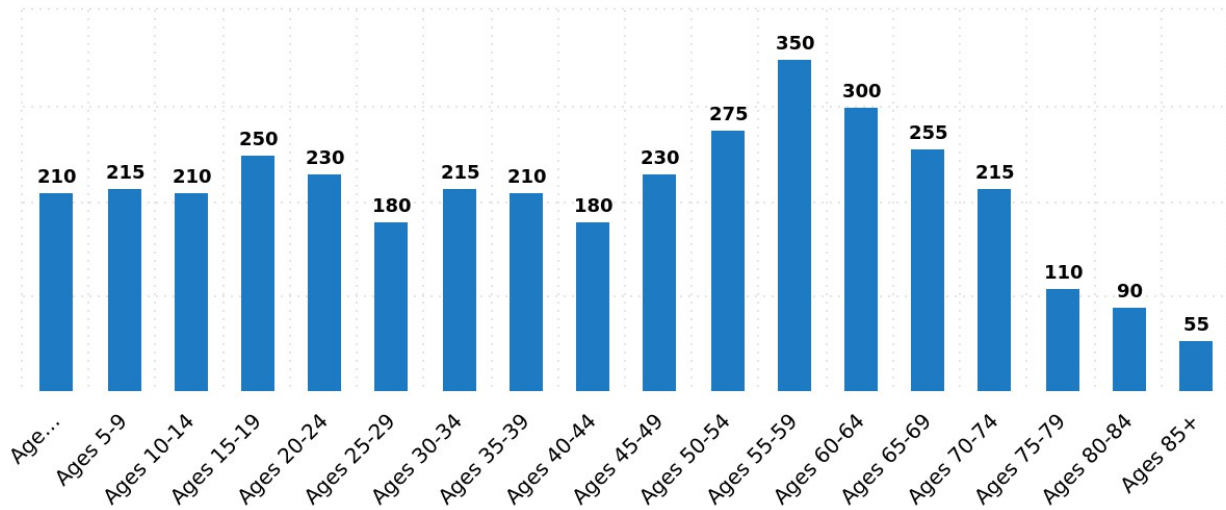
POPULATION

The population of Perth South has been in decline from 2001 to 2021. Over the same period the Townships of Perth East and Perth West have had relatively stable populations. North Perth has seen significant growth, likely due to growth in Listowel and other settlement areas.



AGES AND GENDER

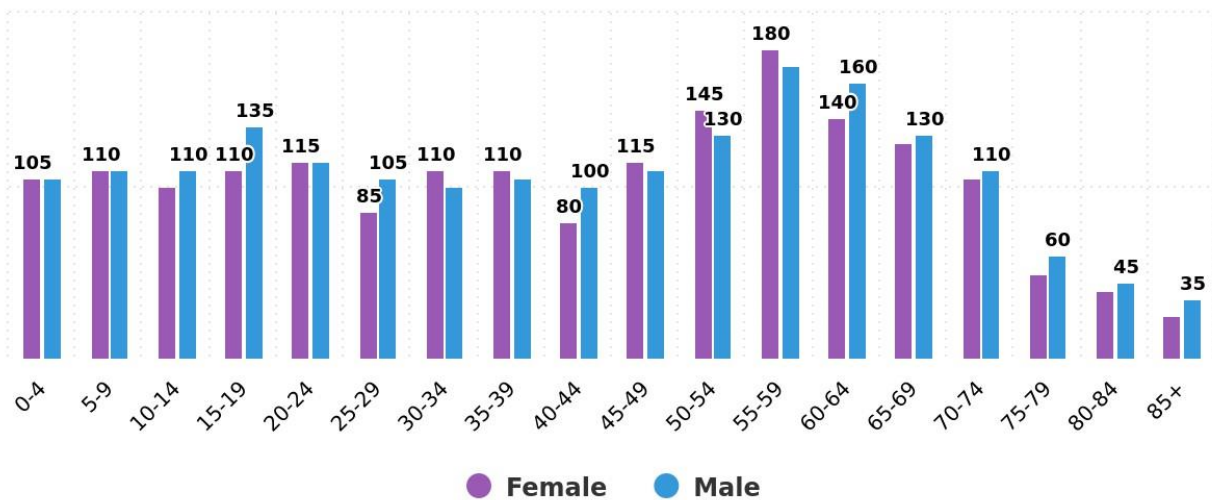
Ages



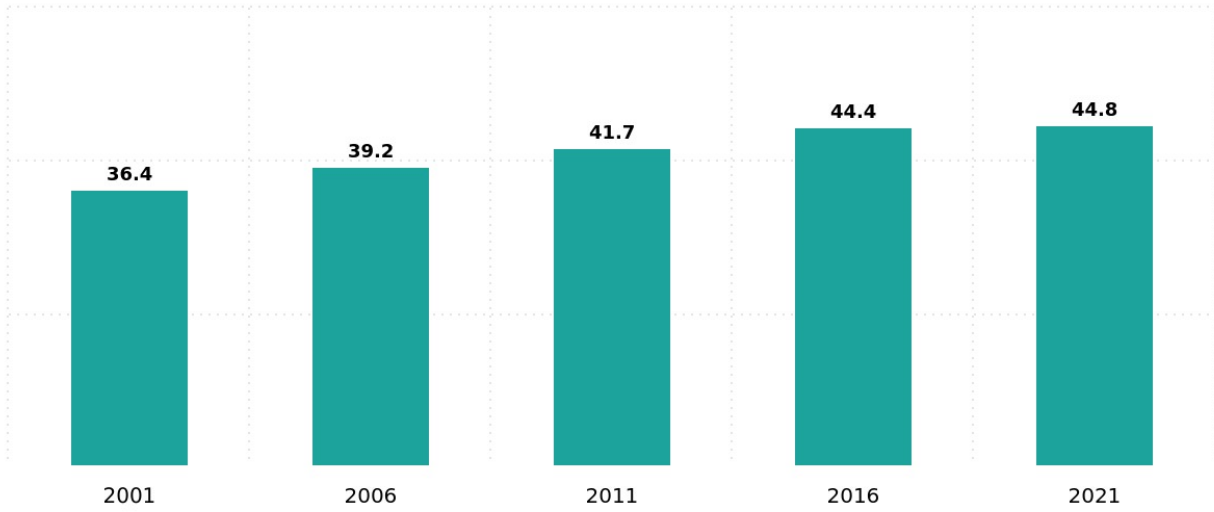
There is a “bulge” in the 50 to 74 age cohorts due to the baby boomer generation.

There are somewhat fewer residents in the young adult age groups, likely due to residents who left the township for post-secondary education and did not return, (or have not yet returned and may do so later in life).

Gender

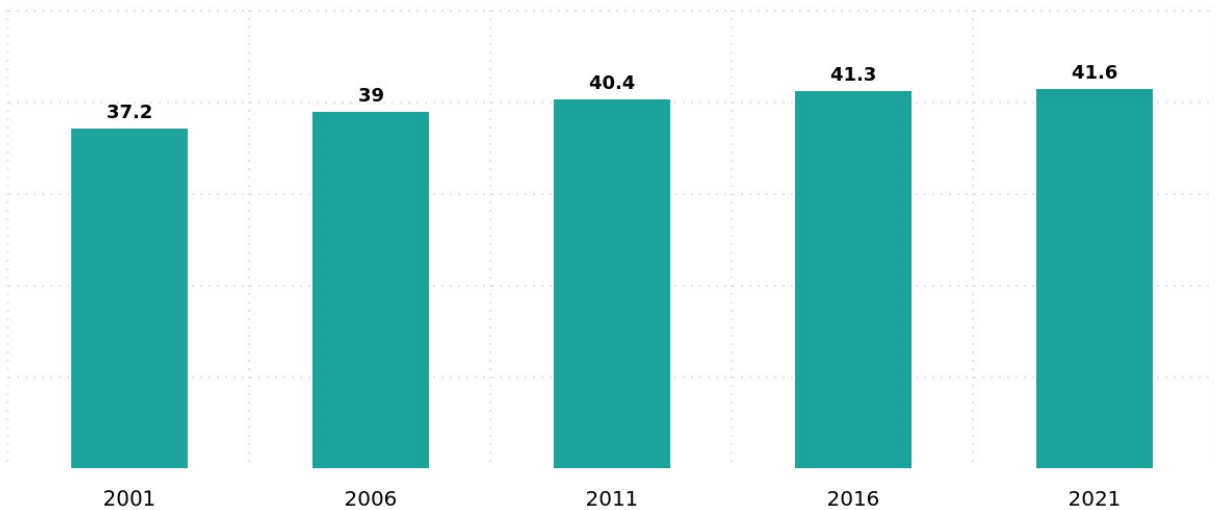


Median Age



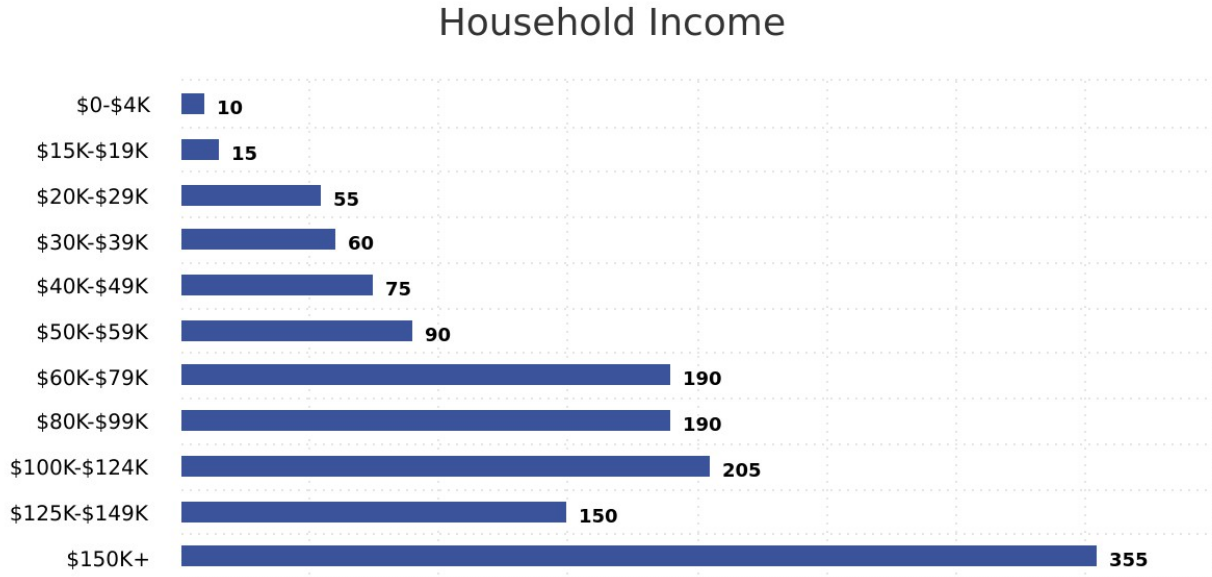
The median age indicates the age separating the population group into two halves of equal size. Most municipalities have seen a steady increase in the median age over the past 20 years. Perth South Township, above, currently has a slightly older median age than the provincial one, shown below.

Median Age



HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The household incomes chart shows how many households in Perth South fall in each of the income brackets specified by Statistics Canada.



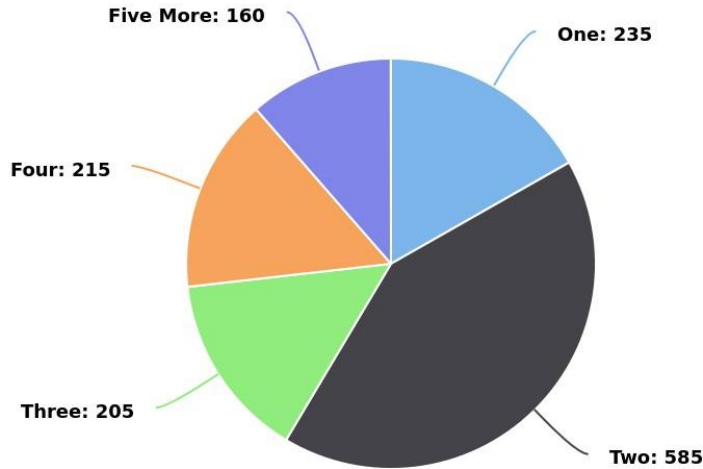
The number of households in Perth South with incomes above \$150,000 is noteworthy.

The median income indicates the income bracket separating the income earners into two halves of equal size. This table shows the median household income by province and territory in 2021. At just over \$100,000, Perth South's median household income is slightly above the provincial average.

Census Year 2021	Median Household Income Before Taxes
Canada	\$92,764
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$87,392
Prince Edward Island	\$74,210
Nova Scotia	\$76,797
New Brunswick	\$72,786
Quebec	\$77,306
Ontario	\$97,856
Manitoba	\$85,373
Saskatchewan	\$93,942
Alberta	\$125,522
British Columbia	\$90,354
Yukon Territories	\$98,739
Northwest Territories	\$134,794
Nunavut	\$115,823

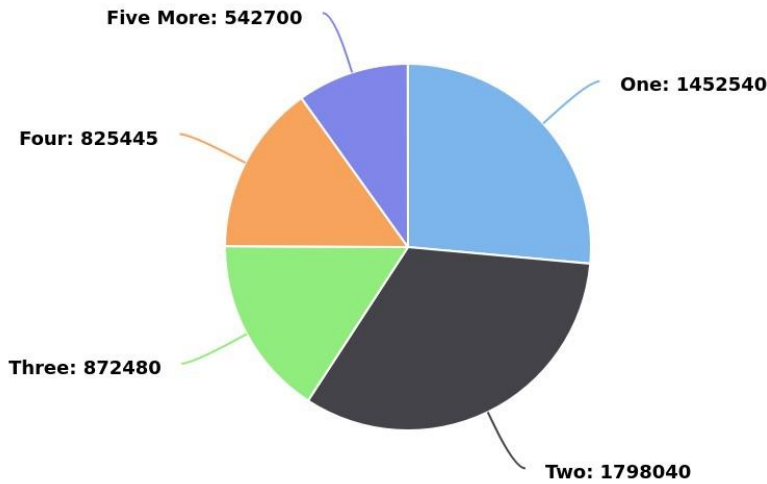
SIZE OF HOUSEHOLDS

Household By Size



The size of households in Perth South, above, is quite consistent with the provincial average, below.

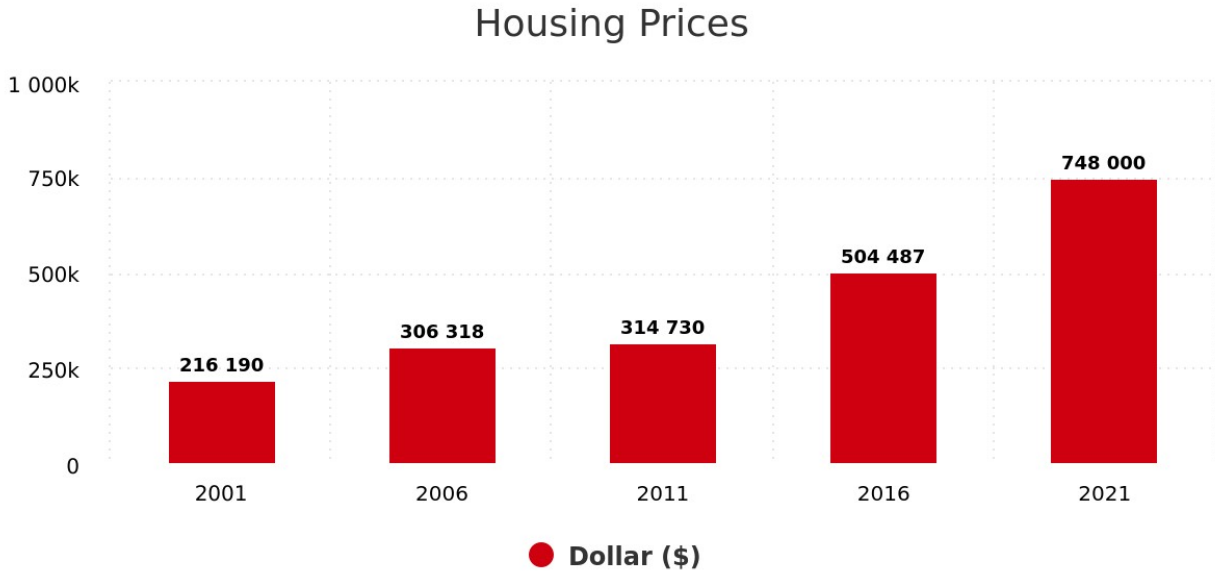
Household By Size



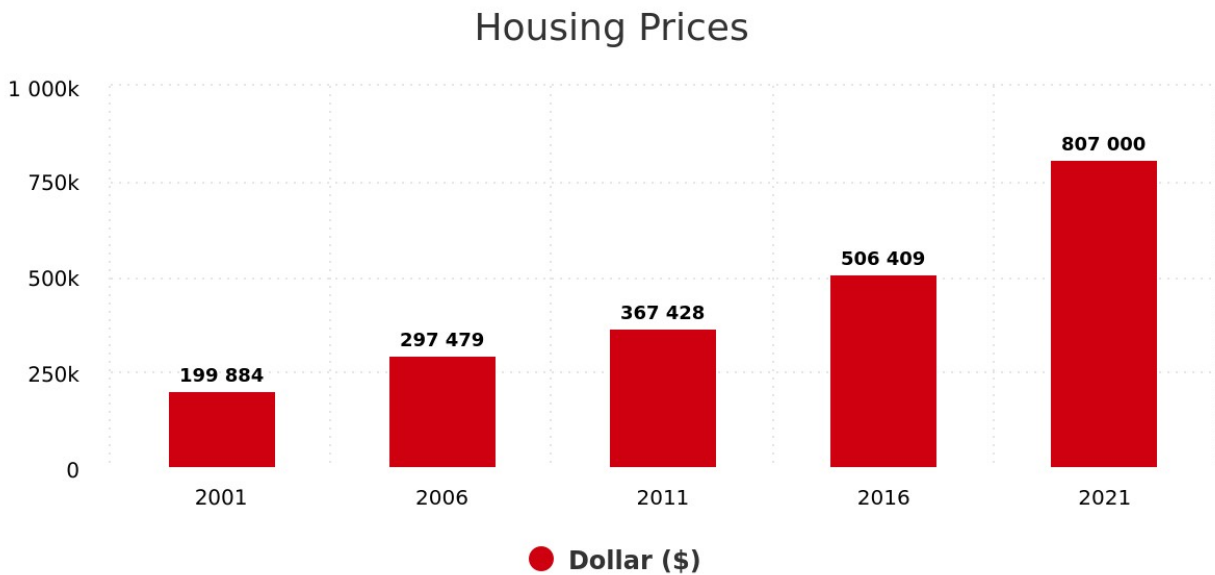
CHILDCARE

Childcare is a major challenge for municipalities across Canada. Lack of childcare options inhibits residential growth, limits the employment choices of parents, and causes a great deal of stress. A municipality that can resolve this challenge will have significant advantages over other municipalities.

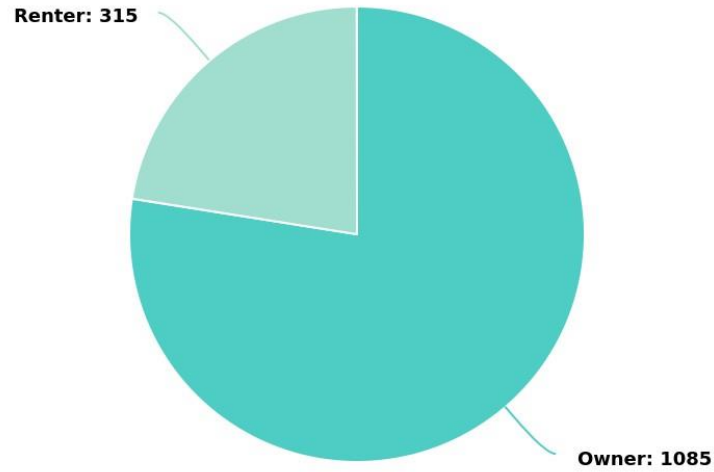
HOUSING



- The chart above shows average housing prices for Perth South from 2001 to 2021.
- The chart below shows the same information for the Province of Ontario.



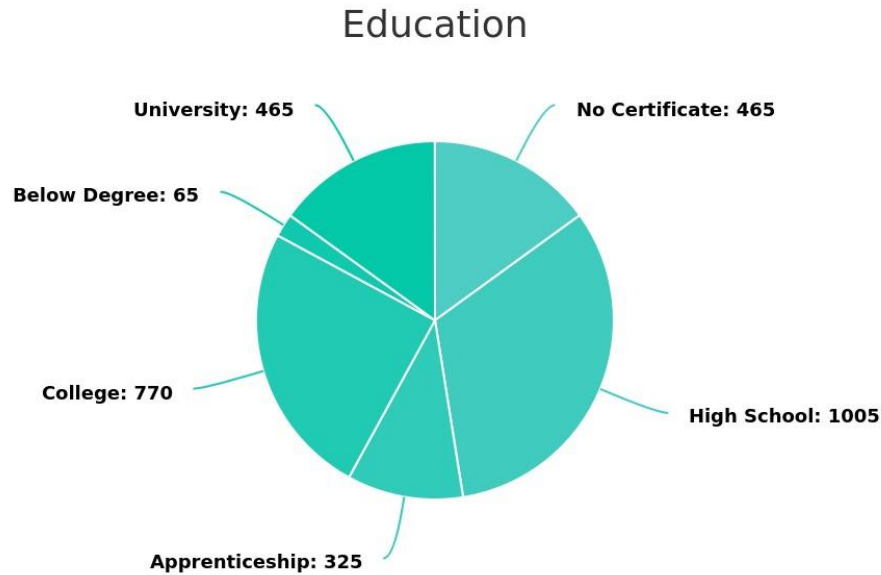
Home Ownership



Status	Perth South	Ontario
Home-Owner	77.50%	68.53%
Renter	22.50%	31.47%

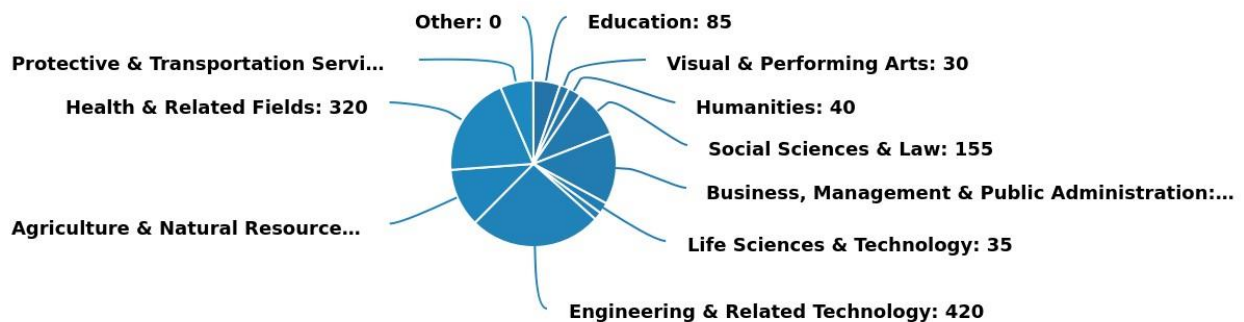
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment refers to the highest degree of education an individual has completed, and this chart shows the number of residents for each level of education.



The major field of study chart shows the predominant disciplines or areas of learning or training of a person's highest completed postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree classified by Statistics Canada.

Major Field of Study



TECHNOLOGICAL FACTORS

From one year to the next, technological change proves constant—and new technology brings both challenges and opportunities. Automation trends and innovations can make it challenging to meet the evolving expectations of ratepayers, provide training to help municipal staff adjust to new roles, and juggle the human impact of eliminating jobs to pay for automation.

- The technology boom of the early 21st century increased the quality of life for millions of people, making it easier than ever to access critical goods and services with a few taps on a phone. As a result, citizens have come to expect quick, efficient, and highly-responsive services — which local governments don't always have the resources to provide.
- A technologically connected world has increased cybersecurity threats, including the number of ransomware and malware attacks that public organizations experience. Many local governments invest in cybersecurity and other IT technology solutions to counter these attacks. Cloud-based infrastructure helps governments get up and running more quickly after a cyber attack — and with less data loss — than those that rely on physical servers alone.
- Paper-based workflows slow down government processes, making it challenging for municipal employees to do their jobs efficiently and effectively.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

In an era of ecological crises and climate change concerns, it's more important than ever for municipalities to pay attention to environmental issues as they arise.

There is growing public concern about the impact of climate change. *“Municipalities have influence over roughly 50% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Canada. By adopting practices that reduce, remove or avoid GHG emissions and pursuing meaningful ways to adapt to changing climate realities, municipalities can improve their residents' quality of life while saving money in operating costs.”*

<https://fcm.ca/en/programs/municipalities-climate-innovation-program>

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has published numerous reports on environmental stewardship. *“There are many municipal roles related to environmental stewardship. To illustrate, listed below are a few examples of AMO's environmental policy files.*

Waste Diversion

Municipal waste diversion programs reduce the amount of garbage dumped in landfills and waste disposal sites. Municipal governments play a crucial role in ensuring that residential waste is properly managed to safeguard the health of our communities and our environment. This means ensuring that waste is managed safely, including litter clean up, managing residual waste in our wastewater treatment facilities, and through recycling and disposal programs. While significant progress has been made in developing integrated waste management systems that divert about half of Ontario's residential waste stream, household recycling has stalled, the amount of waste keeps increasing along with costs to manage it while municipalities have little control over the waste that is produced.

Extended producer responsibility (EPR) refers to a policy that places financial and operational responsibility for the end-of-life management of a product or packaging to those who produce it – such as manufacturers, packagers, or retailers. Municipal governments have been strongly supportive of EPR as it creates economic opportunities, incentivizes innovation, improves our environment, and reduces the burden on Ontario's taxpayers.

Climate Change

Climate change is a growing global concern, and its effects are being experienced on a local level, including across Ontario. When dangerous heat waves, flooding and storms occur, municipal services are often the first to respond. Combatting climate change has been a longstanding advocacy issue for AMO because municipal governments across Ontario are at the forefront of climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts. Over the years, municipal councils have declared climate change emergencies and developed climate change action plans to complement the municipal energy plans they are required to complete and help address the local impacts of climate change.

Environmental Assessment

Federal and provincial legislation on Environmental Assessment (EA) lays out the framework and process for evaluating the potential environmental effects of a project. AMO and municipal staff associations, including the Municipal Engineers Association (MEA), have long called for changes to streamline the EA process to make it easier and faster to undertake projects that communities need to increase prosperity while protecting important ecosystems and natural capital.”

<https://www.amo.on.ca/advocacy/energy-climate-change/municipal-environmental-stewardship> (abridged to shorten the length of the article)

LEGAL FACTORS

This PESTEL factor differs from its political counterpart because it focuses on current laws rather than potential ones. In order to maintain both integrity and sustainability, a municipality must observe evolving intellectual property, antidiscrimination, and privacy laws as well as numerous more traditional legal issues.

Municipalities face unique legal challenges as creatures of statute having to adapt to quickly changing provincial, national and even international regulatory contexts and market forces. Recent court cases in Canada have included cases related to the following issues:

- land acquisition, assembly and expropriation projects
- urban renewal and other projects combining land acquisition and land use planning
- brownfield redevelopment
- infrastructure and environmental assessment matters
- conservation authority matters
- cultural heritage designations and disputes
- development charges and other fees and charges
- other revenue tools and cost-sharing agreements
- municipal governance matters
- code of conduct and integrity matters
- opinions on municipal powers
- preparation of bylaws
- bylaw challenges
- cannabis retail, production and related matters
- emerging sectors such as autonomous vehicles, cutting-edge service delivery technologies, etc.

Many municipalities are now dealing with the relatively new issue of Short-Term Rentals such as Airbnb. A short, non-exclusive list of issues includes:

- taxes
- neighbourhood relations/quality of life
- land use/zoning
- safety
- garbage
- parking
- fire and building safety
- neighbourhood character

INTERVIEWS

The consultants interviewed each member of Perth South Township Council and each member of the Township's staff as part of the Internal Stakeholder Engagement activities. Participants were requested to read Interim Report No. 1, Document Review and Research, prior to the interview, and to consider the following questions:

- 1) What is your long-term vision, (approximately 20 to 25 years), for the Township of Perth South?
- 2) In your opinion, what will be required for the Township to achieve your vision?
- 3) For the next five years, what are your top three priorities for the Township ranked in order of priority?
- 4) What innovative ideas or opportunities would you like the Township to pursue?
- 5) What would you change if you could improve or modify anything about the Township of Perth South.
- 6) Is there anything else that you would like to tell us?

COUNCIL MEMBERS INTERVIEWS

LONG-TERM VISION (20-25 YEARS):

Overall, the council members emphasized the need for balanced growth, improved services, enhanced infrastructure, and sustainability while grappling with challenges associated with funding, bureaucracy, and a shifting population. They envisioned a Perth South Township that evolves while retaining its unique identity and quality of life. Key components included:

- Encouraging growth and development, particularly in areas like Sebringville and Kirkton, while ensuring sustainability without encroaching excessively on agricultural land
- Prioritizing infrastructure improvements, including roads, sewage systems, sidewalks, and green spaces, aiming for ongoing enhancements rather than maintaining the status quo
- Fostering a diverse and self-sufficient community with improved social services, more housing options, and a focus on retaining youth
- Addressing environmental concerns, such as climate change, waste reduction, and reforestation efforts

REQUIREMENTS TO ACHIEVE VISION:

To realize these long-term goals, the township will need:

- Increased focus on efficient service provision, especially for an aging population and mental health services
- Collaboration and improved relationships with neighboring municipalities, enhancing partnerships for services like waste management and infrastructure development
- An enhanced economic landscape, with a diversified tax base that includes residential, commercial, and industrial areas

TOP PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS (RANKED):

- *Fiscal responsibility and efficiency:* Finding ways to save costs, exploring alternative service provision models, and evaluating reserves for sustainability
- *Infrastructure management:* Focus on roads, bridges, and equipment maintenance while exploring innovative solutions like evaluating gravel roads more effectively and transitioning to electronic systems
- *Economic and community development:* Encouraging industrial growth, facilitating secondary farm operations, and providing opportunities for youth entrepreneurship

CHALLENGES AHEAD:

The identified challenges for the township included:

- Limited tax base due to heavy reliance on agriculture
- Retaining and attracting quality staff while ensuring their training and skill enhancement
- Overcoming bureaucratic hurdles in approving developments, managing funding limitations, and addressing issues arising from population changes

INNOVATIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO PURSUE:

- Exploring innovative ways to address infrastructure needs, like adopting new technologies for equipment maintenance and road assessment
- Encouraging natural gas availability for houses and farms, reducing costs and increasing sustainability
- Considering internal planning processes and more direct service provision for enhanced community services

DESIRED MODIFICATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- Streamlining bureaucratic processes, reducing red tape, and embracing more efficient electronic systems
- Seeking increased autonomy from the county to have more control over services like libraries and fire protection
- A greater focus on sustainability, community engagement, and collaborative efforts among residents

MUNICIPAL STAFF INTERVIEWS

LONG-TERM VISION (20-25 YEARS):

Municipal staff envisioned a future for Perth South that emphasizes sustainable growth, community engagement, and an improved quality of life. Their priorities aligned with ensuring financial stability, expanding recreational opportunities, and addressing bureaucratic challenges to facilitate township growth and development. The staff's vision involved:

- Increased opportunities for young people through enhanced recreational facilities managed by the township
- A sustainable financial model that reduces dependence on the county for various services, focusing on becoming a well-managed bedroom community
- Maintaining and nurturing the rural character while allowing for measured growth in residential, commercial, and industrial areas
- Prioritizing quality of life enhancements and community engagement as economic drivers

REQUIREMENTS TO ACHIEVE VISION:

Achieving this vision would necessitate:

- Reevaluation and streamlining of human resources
- Shifting from manual to electronic platforms
- Strategizing for a thriving bedroom community
- Fostering recreational opportunities
- Leveraging assets
- Ensuring community amenities are not just facilities but offer programmed activities

TOP PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS (RANKED):

- Financial sustainability, utilizing existing assets for revenue generation and establishing consistent approaches for infrastructure maintenance
- Expanding recreational opportunities and amenities to serve as economic drivers
- Data-driven decision-making, specifically focusing on Asset Management Plans and more efficient budgeting processes

CHALLENGES AHEAD:

The identified challenges included:

- Balancing service provision with a small population and tax limitations
- Overcoming bureaucratic roadblocks from external agencies like conservation authorities
- Diversifying the tax base and overcoming obstacles related to development and assessment

INNOVATIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO PURSUE:

- Promoting agri-tourism and supporting residents' innovative ventures
- Enhancing systems for record management, software utilization, and improving infrastructure like roads and natural landscaping
- Providing natural gas throughout the township for farms and residences

DESIRED MODIFICATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- Striving for stable policies from higher government levels
- Improved branding to distinguish Perth South
- Emphasizing staff augmentation for menial tasks
- Stable planning policies
- Better cycling amenities

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS:

- Adapting Public Works facilities for better functionality and efficiency
- Collaborating more effectively with neighboring authorities for mutual benefit

COMMON THEMES

Overall, the Council and staff shared a vision for Perth South that encompasses sustainable growth, community engagement, and enhanced quality of life. Their priorities converge on financial sustainability, improved infrastructure, and overcoming bureaucratic hurdles to foster the township's development and progress.

SHARED LONG-TERM VISION (20-25 YEARS):

Both Council and Staff envisioned a Perth South that balances growth and sustainability. They planned to create a community that retains its rural charm while embracing measured development in residential, commercial, and industrial sectors. This shared vision emphasized improved quality of life, enhanced recreational opportunities, and a sustainable financial model.

KEY REQUIREMENTS TO ACHIEVE THE VISION:

Both groups highlighted the need for modernization and efficiency improvements, transitioning from manual to electronic systems for better management. They advocated for a strategic approach to resource allocation, fostering community engagement, and leveraging existing assets for revenue generation.

TOP PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS (RANKED):

Council and Staff converged on priorities focusing on financial sustainability, asset management, and enhancing recreational amenities. They shared a commitment to data-driven decision-making, recognizing its importance in setting service level standards and guiding budget allocations.

CHALLENGES AHEAD AND INNOVATIVE OPPORTUNITIES:

Both groups acknowledged challenges related to service provision with limited resources, bureaucratic hurdles from external agencies, and the need for diversified tax bases. They highlighted the opportunities in promoting innovation, agri-tourism, and leveraging technology for better infrastructure management.

DESIRED MODIFICATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

Council and Staff expressed common desires for stable policies, improved collaboration with neighboring authorities, and investment in infrastructure like roads, public amenities, and record management systems. They emphasized the need for streamlined processes and better staffing to handle the workload efficiently.

DIFFERING VIEWS

There was very little divergence in the input provided by the members of Council and municipal staff. Both groups shared a commitment to the township's growth and sustainability but diverged in their emphasis. Council focused more on external relationships and larger-scale development, while municipal staff prioritized internal efficiencies and community-centric approaches.

LONG-TERM VISION DISPARITIES:

Council members tended to emphasize the need for more urban development, expressing interest in subdivisions and industrial growth on the outskirts of neighboring towns. They leaned toward a vision that includes amalgamation, while also stressing the importance of retaining and enhancing community facilities.

On the other hand, Municipal Staff focused more on fostering a sustainable financial model and improving quality of life, particularly in recreational opportunities and community engagement. Their vision leaned towards more controlled growth and maximizing existing assets.

APPROACH TO ACHIEVE VISION:

Council emphasized the need for policy changes, particularly in the planning department, and more strategic relationships with neighboring authorities. They advocated for exploring ways to attract major businesses and industries, often citing bureaucratic challenges as a barrier.

Municipal staff highlighted the importance of modernization within the township's operations, focusing on resource reallocation, staff efficiency, and better use of electronic platforms. They emphasized a more community-oriented approach and improved internal systems to achieve the vision.

PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS:

Council's priorities revolved around infrastructure development, roads, and addressing taxation issues, especially in diversifying the tax base and reducing reliance on specific forms of taxation.

Municipal staff prioritized data-driven decision-making, enhanced asset management, and staff retention, emphasizing the importance of service level standards and revenue generation through existing assets.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

Council members perceived challenges in financial sustainability and bureaucratic hindrances from external agencies as primary concerns. They expressed eagerness for more significant development and tax diversification.

Municipal staff, while acknowledging similar challenges, stressed the importance of record management, collaborative relationships, and efficient resource utilization as keys to overcoming obstacles. They highlighted opportunities in fostering innovation and promoting agri-tourism.

DESIRED MODIFICATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS:

Council advocated for policy changes, more staff, and enhanced relationships with neighboring authorities, focusing on promoting economic growth and development.

Municipal staff emphasized improved internal systems, streamlined approval processes, and better staffing within the township, focusing on operational efficiency and sustainable growth without overwhelming infrastructure.

PLANNING WORKSHOP

Members of Perth South Council and Senior Administrative Staff planned to meet on Friday January 12th and Saturday January 13th in a two-day planning workshop. Because of the storm warnings, it was agreed to work through lunch and extend the Friday session to complete the work in one day. The agenda is provided below.

Start	Duration	Description	Notes
9:00 AM	15 minutes	Introductions	Around the table
9:15 AM	10 minutes	Overview of the Project	Presentation
9:25 AM	20 minutes	Notes from Research and Stakeholder Engagement	Presentation and discussion
9:45 AM	25 minutes	SWOT Analysis	Breakout groups
10:10 AM	20 minutes	SWOT Analysis	Plenary presentations & discussion
10:30 AM	10 minutes	COFFEE BREAK	
10:40 AM	15 minutes	What makes a great Strategic Plan?	Presentation
10:55 AM	45 minutes	Review of exemplar municipal strategic plans	Breakout groups
11:40 AM	20 minutes	Findings from review of exemplar strategic plans	Presentations/Discussion
Noon	60 minutes	WORKING LUNCH	
Noon	30 minutes	Strategic Plan Contents – Best practices	Presentation and discussion
12:30 PM	60 minutes	Mission and Vision Statements	Presentation and breakouts
1:30 PM	15 minutes	Values Statements	Presentation and discussion
1:45 PM	30 minutes	Best Practices for Strategic Priorities	Presentation and breakouts
2:15 PM	25 minutes	Plenary Report on Strategic Priorities	Presentation and discussion
2:40 PM	30 minutes	Strategic Actions	Breakout Groups
3:10 PM	30 minutes	Strategic Actions	Presentations and discussion
3:40 PM	30 minutes	Desired Outcomes and Targets	Breakout groups and presentations
4:10 PM	10 minutes	Turning Vision into Action	Presentation
4:20 PM	20 minutes	Desired Outcomes and Targets/KPIs	Presentation
4:40 PM	20 minutes	Capacity to Deliver	Discussion
5:00 PM	15 minutes	Contents of Strategic Plan	Discussion
5:15 PM	10 minutes	Expectations from External Stakeholder Engagement	Discussion
5:25 PM	5 minutes	Next Steps	Discussion

SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT is an acronym for **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats**.

- Strengths are the things that an organization does particularly well, or resources and assets that it has, that distinguish it from others.
- Weaknesses are internal attributes and resources that an organization lack.
- Opportunities are a set of external circumstances that, with the right decisions, can grow an organization or put it in a favourable strategic position.
- Threats are external forces that constitute a risk to an organization.

The participants completed the following SWOT analysis:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective council/staff relationship with shared goals and willingness to embrace creative thinking • Asset Management Plan has been developed into a powerful tool • Excellent geographic location near urban centres • History of being able to make difficult decisions • Physical recreation assets • Beautiful setting • Strong household incomes • Excellent farmland and very capable farmers • No onerous physical assets • Great relationship between staff and residents • Minimal unemployment; lots of entrepreneurs • Contributions made by local service clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declining population • Aging population; lack of young adults and families • Declining school population • Little opportunity for growth • Strained relationship with Upper Thames Conservation Authority • No involvement with land that has been annexed to Stratford • Lack of housing • Shortage of labour • Lots of bridges and culverts to maintain • Difficult to plan for drainage issues • Lack of water and wastewater services inhibit growth • County structure, especially Planning, inhibits growth • No urban area within the township

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnering with neighbours for growth • Lots of space to add secondary dwelling units to existing houses • Residents have the financial resources to build more • Some farmhouses are vacant and can be occupied with or without severance • Ready access to urban populations and amenities • Opportunities to provide more recreational programs for all ages • Great internet infrastructure • Potential to upgrade internal computer software 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amalgamation • Declining population • “Gray wave”/aging population • Loss of independence • Volunteer core is aging, including volunteer fire fighters • Aging infrastructure • Time and resources required to work with County and Province • Rising equipment costs, worsened by currency fluctuation • Flat revenues • Consolidation of farms leads to fewer residents • Lack of competition in response to tenders • Increased costs, especially insurance • Upper levels of government decisions appear to be made for large cities and have negative impact on rural townships

REVIEW OF EXEMPLAR STRATEGIC PLANS

The participants reviewed the Strategic Plans of other municipalities and identified the features that they liked and want to emulate, as well as the features to be avoided. These plans were selected for a variety of reasons, including:

- Some were from townships similar to Perth.
- The Strategic Plan for the County of Perth is of interest to the lower tier townships.
- Some plans had interesting formats or design features.
- And others had intriguing content or wording for some aspects.

Likes	Dislikes
<i>Town of Cobourg</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic actions included ways to measure success and follow-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too long
<i>County of Perth</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too vague • Too much “motherhood”

Likes	Dislikes
<i>City of Quinte West</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concise mission and vision statements • More action items • Topic-based • Attractive pictures • Good design • Layout with goals and actions • Simple and easy to read • Concise • Graphic connects goals and actions 	
<i>Township of Scugog</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concise • Focus on infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too high level/vague • Missing time frames • Text heavy • Poorly organized
<i>Township of Zorra</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too ambitious

VISION, MISSION AND VALUES STATEMENTS

The participants:

- reviewed best practices for Vision, Mission and Value Statements
- examined examples of strong statements
- evaluated the current statements in Perth South’s most recent strategic plan

VISION STATEMENTS

<p>What makes a great Vision Statement?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulates the ideal future position, dream, grand purpose • Succinct and easily understood, remembered • Broad – covers all perspectives • Inspiring and uplifting • Requires “big thinking” – beyond what we can easily achieve 	<p>Sample Vision Statements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A just world without poverty (Oxfam) • A computer on every desk and in every home (Microsoft, 1980) • Best training. Healthy residents. Unparalleled care. (RDoC) • A better everyday life for the many people (IKEA) • Transportation that makes Canada safe, healthy and prosperous (TAC)
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Perth South's Current Vision Statement

We are small, but we have ambition.

We are open to change. We want to keep the identity that we have, we want to maintain that identity and we want to build and maintain a community that people value.

Keeping that community means keeping the local feel that we value. It particularly means retaining and protecting our productive agricultural lands. And it means keeping the community involved in the community.

We want to promote entrepreneurship, and do so by leveraging the strengths that we have. That includes promoting on-farm business and agri-tourism. We want to keep our youth, and keep attracting young families. That means keeping the school access that makes our community attractive to them.

We want our residents to experience exceptional service. We have staff that go the extra mile, and we want to keep that. We want to demonstrate what exceptional municipal leadership looks like.

To be successful in all that, we need to work together. We want to collaborate and pursue partnerships wherever there is a willingness to collaborate and pursue partnerships.

We also want to grow, but to grow responsibly, where growth happens at a level that we can manage and that we can sustain.

The participants felt that the current vision statement is too long. There was a consensus to develop a new statement that would be more memorable.

Ideas and Concepts for a Vision Statement

The participants worked individually to develop ideas for a new Vision Statement. The alternatives developed included:

- Perth South is a small community where residents are able to enjoy great quality of life
- Perth South: strong, diverse and proud
- We are a progressive, open and proud community
- Perth South: a small, strong community where ideas and families flourish
- Perth South: a community with a big heart, a proud past, and a vision for the future
- Perth South: people thrive here
- Cultivating vibrant, rural spirit for future prosperity
- Life is better here

- Live your best life here
- Where quality of life is important
- Quality space, quality life
- Imagine the possibilities
- Here is where we work; here is where we wander; here is where you need to be

The participants returned to this topic later in the afternoon. After discussion, the following draft Vision Statement was adopted:

Perth South: where ideas and families flourish

MISSION STATEMENTS

What makes a great Mission Statement?	Sample Mission Statements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes what the organization wants to do and why • Outcome oriented • Inclusive and broad enough to be relevant to all constituents • Inspiring and uplifting message from Cobourg’s decision makers to all stakeholders • As succinct as possible (fit it on a t-shirt?) – not always possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrating animals, confronting cruelty (Humane Society) • To empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more (Microsoft) • To inspire lifelong learning, advance knowledge, and strengthen our communities (New York Library) • To spread the power of optimism (Life is Good) • Making every day matter (Tri-County Mennonite Homes)

Perth South’s Current Mission Statement

Perth South is a progressive agricultural community that offers quiet country living and pastoral landscapes with robust, productive farmlands. The community is highly innovative, strongly entrepreneurial and staunchly agricultural while remaining tightly connected to the rest of the world through exceptional technology and transportation linkages. Residents are proud of their community, respectful of each other and dedicated to the long-term success of Perth South. Neighbours look after neighbours, community service is an essential value and stewardship of the land is a fundamental trust.

Participants agreed that a new, shorter Mission Statement should be developed. The participants worked individually to develop alternatives. The suggestions included:

- Staff and council will continue to provide excellent services
- Staff and council will continue to provide timely, efficient services
- We strive to be different. We take pride in where we live. We want to grow with you.
- We will listen. We will plan. We will act.

The participants returned to this topic later in the afternoon. After discussion, the following draft Mission Statement was adopted:

We listen; we plan; we act.

VALUES STATEMENTS

What makes a great Values Statement?

- Highlights an organization's core principles and philosophical ideals
- Is used to both inform and guide the decisions and behaviors of the people inside the organization
- Signals to external stakeholders what's important to the organization
- Should be memorable, actionable and timeless
- Short phrases are better than long paragraphs

Perth South's Current Values Statement

- Responsive. We have excellent, skilled and supportive staff that are responsive to the needs of the community.
- Service Oriented. We strive to provide excellent service and exceptional customer service.
- Collaborative. We are open to collaboration in ensuring that we effectively deliver services to the community.
- Fiscally Responsible. We are cost effective, prudent and restrained in how we invest and spend our financial resources.
- Effective. We are a small, streamlined, efficient and well-run municipality that delivers services well.
- Resourceful. We do the best that we can with the resources available to us.

The participants requested the deletion of "Resourceful" and "Effective", since they appear to duplicate other values. The other four values should be retained.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The best practices in developing strategic priorities include:

- They are action-oriented "baskets" into which organizational actions (projects, initiatives, plans) can be grouped
- Typically it is best to describe three to six of them; more than this and there tends to be priorities that are "on the cusp"
- Some organizations mix actions with concepts at this level of strategy in their strategic plan
- Other strategic plans add a separate level called "areas of focus" or "theme areas" to categorize their main paradigms

The participants worked in small groups to develop a set of Strategic Priorities for the next several years for the Township of Perth South. When the participants met in plenary session, the following Strategic Priorities were identified:

1. Long-Range Sustainability
2. Infrastructure
3. Recreation
4. Bylaw and Policy Review
5. Growth
6. Quality of Life
7. Technology Improvements

After discussion, it was agreed to combine some of the suggestions into these four:

1. Sustainable Growth
2. Quality of Life
3. Physical Infrastructure
4. Service/Organizational Excellence

The small groups reconvened and developed the following lists of topics to be included under each Strategic Priority.

Sustainable Growth

- Lifecycle funding for all assets
- Environmental/climate
- Use of non-agricultural land
- Forms of energy
- Diversity, equity and inclusion
- Increasing densities
- Responsible growth
- Infilling lots
- Diversity of housing stock
- Respect the farmland
- Industrial growth
- Shovel ready projects if possible

Quality of Life

- Recreation opportunities
 - Leisure activities
 - Cultural opportunities
 - Access to all services
 - Community engagement
 - Festivals and events
- Community involvement, including social interaction
- Youth retention
- Places to live and work

- Environmental issues
- Library services
- Cemeteries/burial alternatives

Physical Infrastructure

- Maintain what we have
- Enhance what we can
- Reduce what we can
- More bike paths
- Continue to expand fibre access
- Natural gas expansion
- Comprehensive road review
- Enhanced software use
- Best “bang for the buck” long-term
- Climate change resiliency
- Drainage issues
- Asset Management Plan improvements

Service/Organizational Excellence

- Implementation of HR/payroll software
- Review all bylaws and policies
- Better communication of maintenance standards for roads
- Maintain personal contact rather than non-personal
- Continue to adapt to different needs of different residents
- Continue to support a range of options for planning and building
- Development of service standards
- Responsible governance

DESIRED OUTCOMES AND TARGETS

The best practices in municipal metrics were discussed as well as the desired outcomes to be achieved through the Corporate Strategic Plan. It was noted that:

- **A Measure:** Every Outcome should have a measure. The best ones have more specific or expressive measures.
- **A Target:** Every Outcome needs to have a target that matches your measure and the time period of your goal. These are generally a numeric value you’re seeking to achieve.
- **A Data Source:** Every Outcome needs to have a clearly defined data source so there is no gray area in how each is being measured and tracked.
- **Reporting Frequency:** Different measures may have different reporting needs, but a good rule to follow is to report on them at least quarterly.
- **Owner:** Identify who will be responsible for tracking, reporting, and refining specific Outcomes.

The participants broke into small groups and developed preliminary lists of potential metrics to measure progress.

Sustainable Growth

- One percent increase in population
- Tree replacement; number trees planted per year (not including grant-funded plantings)
- Housing statistics for housing options
- Discussions with Conservation Authority and Planning about use of non-viable farmland
- DEI training
- Increase in commercial and industrial land

Quality of Life

- Number of patrons enrolled in programs
- Introduction of one new recreational activity
- Survey of services
- Development of one Perth South event
- Higher profile/promotion of the Perth South Hop

Physical Infrastructure

- Investment, year over year
- Investment, per capita
- Condition of assets
- Depreciation and reinvestment
- Traffic counts/utilization of asset
- Natural gas hookups
- Fibre hookups
- Kilometres of sidewalks
- Number of potholes per kilometre

Service/Organizational Excellence

- Master list of policies and bylaws – most recent updates
- Master list of policies and bylaws – revised per year by department

CONTENTS OF THE CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN

The participants agreed to the following contents for the new plan, subject to further review:

- Message from the mayor and council
- Vision Statement
- Mission Statement
- Values Statement
- Strategic Priorities
 - Goals/Objectives
 - Actions
- How We Will Use This Plan

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The planned external stakeholder engagement activities included:

- An online survey of residents (already live at the time of the planning session)
- Focus groups with selected interest groups
- Public meetings

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus group sessions were held on February 29th, 2024, on the following topics:

- Agriculture
- Business and Industry
- Environment
- Generations (Changing Needs ranging from Young Children to Seniors)
- Housing
- Tourism
- Volunteers and Service Groups

Residents who wished to participate but were unable to attend a session because of scheduling issues could provide their input in a variety of ways, including telephone interviews, zoom interviews and submission of written responses.

Prior to the sessions, participants were provided with Interim Report No. 1, Summary of Research and Document Review, as well as the following questions to consider:

1. What changes do you envision in the future?
2. What will be the greatest challenges for Perth South?
3. What will be the greatest opportunities for Perth South?
4. What would you recommend as the top three priorities over the next four years for the Township to respond to these challenges and to pursue these opportunities?
5. What steps should the township take for each of these priorities?
6. Is there anything else that you would like to say on this topic?

AGRICULTURE

1. Envisioned Changes in the Future

Participants in the agricultural sector do not expect significant changes in the future for Perth South. The township is seen as a good place to live and raise children, but there are few employment opportunities. The lack of a significant urban area and industry contributes to this perception.

2. Greatest Challenges for Perth South

The greatest challenges identified by the agricultural sector include the increasingly expensive maintenance of roads, bridges, and culverts. Participants noted that not graveling roads last year was a mistake, as it has led to visible deterioration. There is a need for more paved roads.

Additionally, the absence of a community centre and pool within the township can lead to conflicts with neighboring areas like South Huron. These facilities are important to attract and retain young families.

3. Greatest Opportunities for Perth South

The agricultural sector believes Perth South is a great place to live, but there is a shortage of labour to work on the farms, which often rely on foreign workers.

The decline in the total population is worrisome. To attract more residents, there should be housing available, preferably adjacent to urban areas like St. Mary's. Participants also suggested more encouragement for farmhouses being severed, rather than to remain vacant and become derelict.

There is little potential for large industry, but agri-business and small "mom-and-pop" operations can thrive. The participants recommended simplifying paperwork, especially for agri-businesses.

4. Top Three Priorities for the Township

The agricultural sector recommends prioritizing infrastructure, specifically more paved roads, replacement or resurfacing of some bridges, and better maintenance of gravel roads.

Continuing to operate the community centre and pool are also crucial to attract and retain young families.

5. Steps for Each Priority

For infrastructure, the township should invest in more paved roads, prioritize the replacement or resurfacing of bridges, and improve the maintenance of gravel roads.

It was noted that a community centre and pool are not physically located within the Township of Perth South. It is essential that Perth South prioritize the continued operation of these facilities.

6. Additional Recommendations

Participants expressed concern about newcomers moving into severed farmhouses who may not understand the needs of farm operations. They recommend that the council have rules in place that allow farms to continue to operate.

It was noted that the public schools in the township are well attended and should be supported by the township to retain families.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

1. Envisioned Changes in the Future

Participants in the business and industry sector envision more light industrial activities in the township that do not require municipal water and sewers. They believe that many products currently imported from China could be manufactured in Perth South. Some farms in southern Ontario have started with industrial activities servicing the agricultural sector and then expanded into producing consumer products.

2. Greatest Challenges for Perth South

The greatest challenges identified by the business and industry sector include the need for more land for industrial and commercial activities, especially with highway exposure for retail. Balancing industrial activity with protecting agricultural land and farm operations is crucial.

Participants also highlighted challenges related to aging population, declining population, lack of young families, lack of a large urban center, and NIMBYism (Not In My Backyard).

3. Greatest Opportunities for Perth South

Participants believe that agri-business will flourish in Perth South and can expand into other areas. The example was cited of a farm, that opened a store, and then expanded into a farm restaurant.

It was noted that there are industrial parks in other lower-tier municipalities that could serve as examples for Perth South.

Suggestions were made to modify severances of farmhouses to permit severance of both the house and an unused barn, potentially allowing young entrepreneurs to live in the house and to use the barn as workspace for start-up businesses

4. Top Three Priorities for the Township

The business and industry sector recommends encouraging diversified farm use to enable rural businesses to start in the township and move to larger centers, or an industrial park, when they grow.

Providing commercial space on major highways with high visibility on land that is not prime agricultural is also recommended.

Participants suggested exploring the feasibility of permitting farms to have small campgrounds, as provincial campgrounds are often full.

5. Steps for Each Priority

To encourage diversified farm use, the township should provide education to residents about on-farm diversification and additional dwellings on properties.

Enabling severances of both farmhouses and bank barns that are not needed for agriculture could provide space for start-up businesses.

6. Additional Recommendations

Participants emphasized the need for housing as the biggest issue, suggesting that while there is one subdivision in Sebringville, much more housing is needed. They questioned whether Perth South can survive without population growth and highlighted the importance of managing infrastructure costs.

There was a suggestion to consider a 30-year planning period for the township, similar to the approach taken in business, to ensure long-term survival.

ENVIRONMENT

1. Vision for the Future:

Participants emphasized the importance of remaining an agricultural community and expressed concern about the declining level of tree canopy. They highlighted the need to protect existing tree canopy and add to it.

2. Greatest Challenges:

Participants identified the need to preserve natural areas and farm bush lots, which are shrinking. They also noted that lots of land would be better kept natural rather than being mowed as lawn.

3. Greatest Opportunities:

Participants suggested implementing regulations for a minimum ratio of natural area to agricultural land as an opportunity to preserve and enhance the natural environment.

Some participants noted that the Conservation Authority makes recommendations to landowners on environmental issues, such as installing berms along riverbanks and planting trees, but do not implement these recommendations on the land that they own themselves. They urged leadership by example.

4. Top Three Priorities for the Next Four Years:

- Protect and enhance the tree canopy and natural areas.
- Implement regulations for minimum natural area to agricultural land ratio.
- Preserve farm bush lots.

5. Steps for Each Priority:

- Encourage property owners to plant trees and preserve existing natural areas.
- Work with agricultural stakeholders to develop and implement regulations for natural area preservation.
- Provide incentives for landowners to preserve and enhance natural areas.

6. Additional Comments:

Participants also highlighted the importance of considering unintended consequences, such as the situation where property owners who planted trees on their land for environmental reasons subsequently found themselves losing the ability to construct anything further on the land due to designation as green space, underscoring the need for a balanced approach to environmental protection and development.

7. Integration with Other Focus Groups:

Environmental issues were also raised in other focus groups.

Housing Focus Group:

Participants in the Environment focus group highlighted the importance of preserving natural areas and incorporating green spaces into housing developments.

Generations Focus Group:

The Environment focus group's emphasis on preserving natural areas aligns with the desire of different generations for a high quality of life and access to nature.

Agriculture Focus Group: Preserving farm bush lots and natural areas supports the agricultural sector by maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services.

GENERATIONS (CHANGING NEEDS BASED ON AGE)

1. Vision for the Future:

Participants envisioned intergenerational housing options and the retention of young adults in the township. They emphasized the importance of not tearing down houses and the need for flexibility in housing options.

2. Greatest Challenges:

Protecting farmland and farm operations was identified as a significant challenge. Participants also highlighted the need to attract and retain young families and the challenge of not having enough revenue to maintain infrastructure.

3. Greatest Opportunities:

Participants identified the use of land not suitable for modern farming and the retention of surplus farmhouses as opportunities. They also noted the benefits of being close to big cities, good schools, and services, which could attract more people to the township.

4. Top Three Priorities for the Next Four Years:

- Provide innovative housing options for seniors and young adults.
- Provide activities for seniors, including volunteer opportunities.
- Attract and retain young families.

5. Steps for Each Priority:

- Engage new residents and make them feel welcome and involved.
- Consider the Mennonite model of multiple generations living on the same property.
- Attract more businesses to the township.
- Implement programs to help young families settle in and feel part of the community.
- Protect farmland and farm operations while accommodating new housing options.

6. Additional Comments:

Participants praised the Optimist Club for organizing activities for kids and expressed a desire for more social opportunities for seniors. They stressed the need for the township to engage with new residents and protect the community from absentee landlords.

HOUSING

1. Vision for the Future:

Participants envision innovative housing solutions, such as adapting the student housing model for foreign workers and promoting multi-generational living on the same farm or lot. They also highlighted the need for more housing options, noting the subdivision in Sebringville as a positive step but calling for more developments. Agriculture was seen as remaining the biggest sector, with a focus on keeping the villages viable and facilitating their growth.

2. Greatest Challenges:

The ability of Perth South to survive without population growth was a major concern for participants. They also identified infrastructure costs as potentially too high for the township to manage. Participants noted that rural development is not a priority for federal and provincial governments, and they highlighted the challenge of changing culture and rules that discourage innovation. Other challenges included the need for more revenues and a higher tax base, as well as cooperation from the Upper Thames Conservation Authority.

3. Greatest Opportunities:

Participants saw opportunities in developing strong local leadership to provide input into creative solutions and encouraging growth on land not viable for farming, like former quarry sites. They also suggested supporting non-profits, like churches, in constructing housing to strengthen the community. Proximity to Stratford, St. Mary's, London, and Kitchener were seen as strategic advantages.

4. Top Three Priorities for the Next Four Years:

- Increase growth through infilling and other means, while simplifying the development process and avoiding unnecessary red tape.
- Address housing affordability to prevent higher taxes and lower wages.
- Explore collaboration with neighboring municipalities and possibly amalgamation, since Perth South is currently able to negotiate from a position of strength.

5. Steps for Each Priority:

- Ensure farmers and other landowners are involved in land use planning policy changes.
- Establish a committee on land use development and planning that encourages diverse opinions.
- Increase transparency in the Official Plan revision process.
- Permit additional dwelling units on one property with restrictions on total size.
- Implement zoning changes to protect farm operations after a severance.
- Encourage innovative housing solutions through policy changes.
- Simplify the development process, speed it up, and avoid unnecessary red tape.

6. Additional Comments:

Participants emphasized the importance of aligning housing and land development policies with local needs and ensuring that housing is fundamental to the sense of community in Perth South. They also stressed the need for the township to adopt a welcoming mindset to attract both visitors and new residents.

TOURISM

1. Vision for the Future:

Participants envision more growth for agri-tourism in Perth South, with increased collaboration among providers. They highlighted programs like “Discover More Flavour,” which currently includes 85 farms in the county offering a range of experiences from self-serve stands to large commercial operations.

2. Greatest Challenges:

Residential growth was identified as a significant challenge, with housing availability being a major obstacle for the entire county. This challenge could impact the tourism industry by affecting the availability of accommodations for visitors.

3. Greatest Opportunities:

Participants believe Perth South can capitalize on its countryside rural charm to become one of the top tourism destinations in the county. They see potential for more growth, particularly in attracting day trips from nearby cities. Collaborating with the City of Stratford was also highlighted as an opportunity, as Perth South is already one of the most popular tourism destinations among Perth's four townships.

4. Top Three Priorities for the Next Four Years:

Participants recommended adopting a welcoming mindset to attract both visitors and new residents, eliminating NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard), and being open to growth opportunities. These priorities are seen as crucial for fostering a positive environment for tourism and economic development.

5. Steps for Each Priority:

To attract visitors and new residents, participants suggested collaborating with county departments for economic development and implementing youth attraction and retention programs. They also recommended celebrating the rural charm and open spaces of Perth South and using similar promotional language as the county, such as "Escape the City," to attract visitors.

7. Additional Comments:

Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance between tourism growth and preserving the rural character of Perth South. They also highlighted the need for infrastructure improvements to support tourism, such as better signage and amenities.

VOLUNTEERS AND SERVICE GROUPS

1. Vision for the Future:

Participants expressed concerns about the sustainability of township operations due to a small population base and limited funds. They anticipate changes in farming practices, including fewer family farms and larger farms, as well as an increase in absentee landowners leading to a decrease in land stewardship quality. The township is seen as strategically positioned between Stratford and St. Mary's, attracting visitors for games and events.

2. Greatest Challenges:

The aging population was identified as a significant challenge, particularly as older farmers retire and leave the farms. Maintaining a sufficient population to support the township's services was also highlighted, along with the dilemma of balancing housing development for tax base growth while preserving the rural character. Infrastructure costs, including labor costs, were cited as ongoing challenges, given the stagnant tax base and limited local businesses.

3. Greatest Opportunities:

Participants noted that providing amenities like fiber optic cables could attract more residents to Perth South. The township's success in brownfield remediation was seen as an opportunity for further development. The ability to work from home was highlighted as an advantage for those choosing to live in the township. Perth South's agricultural strength was recognized as one of the best in the region, offering potential for economic growth.

4. Top Three Priorities for the Next Four Years:

Participants recommended focusing on bridges and roads, supporting police services and schools, and maintaining infrastructure. They emphasized the importance of community amenities, such as parks and community centers, to enhance the quality of life and attract new residents and businesses.

5. Steps for Each Priority:

For infrastructure, participants emphasized the importance of quality work and well-trained public works staff. They praised recent improvements in road maintenance and highlighted the need to maintain road shoulders for large farm equipment. They also emphasized the importance of supporting community facilities and maintaining good relationships with service clubs and volunteers.

8. Additional Comments:

Participants stressed the importance of retaining good staff and volunteers and protecting farmland and farm operations. They recognized the changing demographics in the township and the need to adapt while maintaining the rural character and community spirit.

ONLINE SURVEY

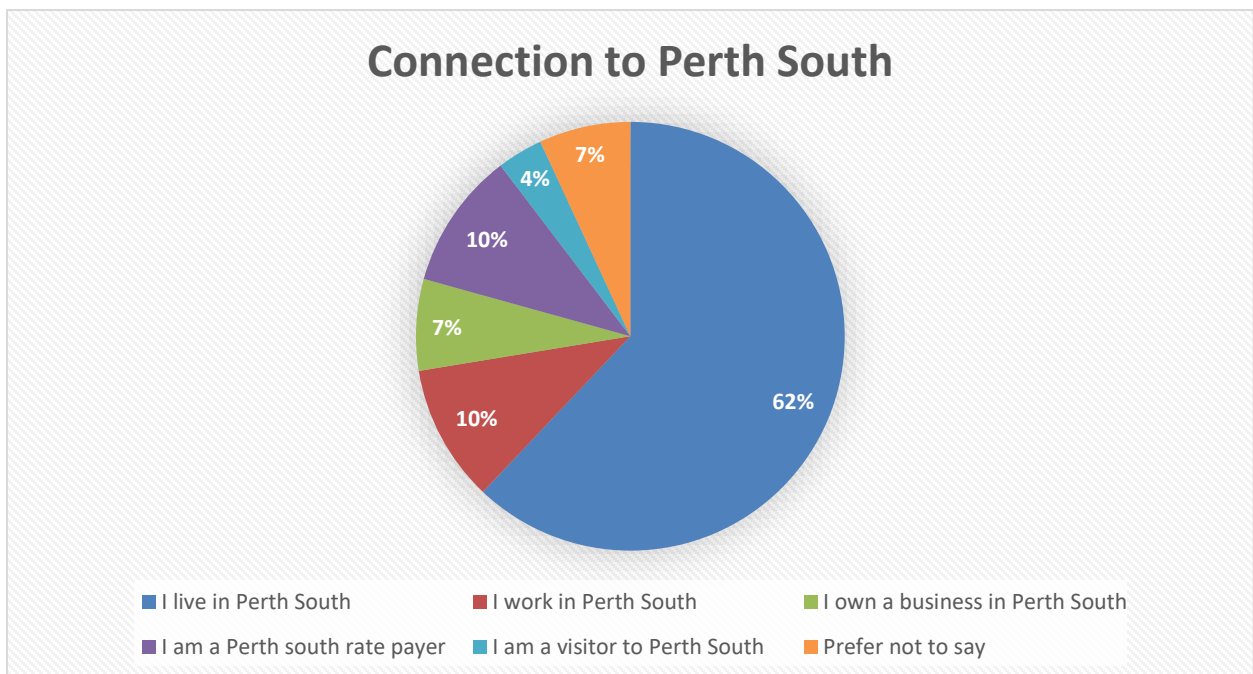
The online survey was available to residents and other stakeholders from October 4th, 2023, to March 26th, 2024.

There were 16 responses submitted by registered users of Perth South’s Bang the Table electronic engagement platform and 13 anonymous responses for a total of 29 submissions.

It is important to exercise caution when interpreting the results of the survey as the sample size may not be representative of the entire population of Perth South. The number of responses needed to be statistically valid depends on several factors, but a common rule of thumb is that a sample size of at least 100 responses is considered the minimum for statistical validity.

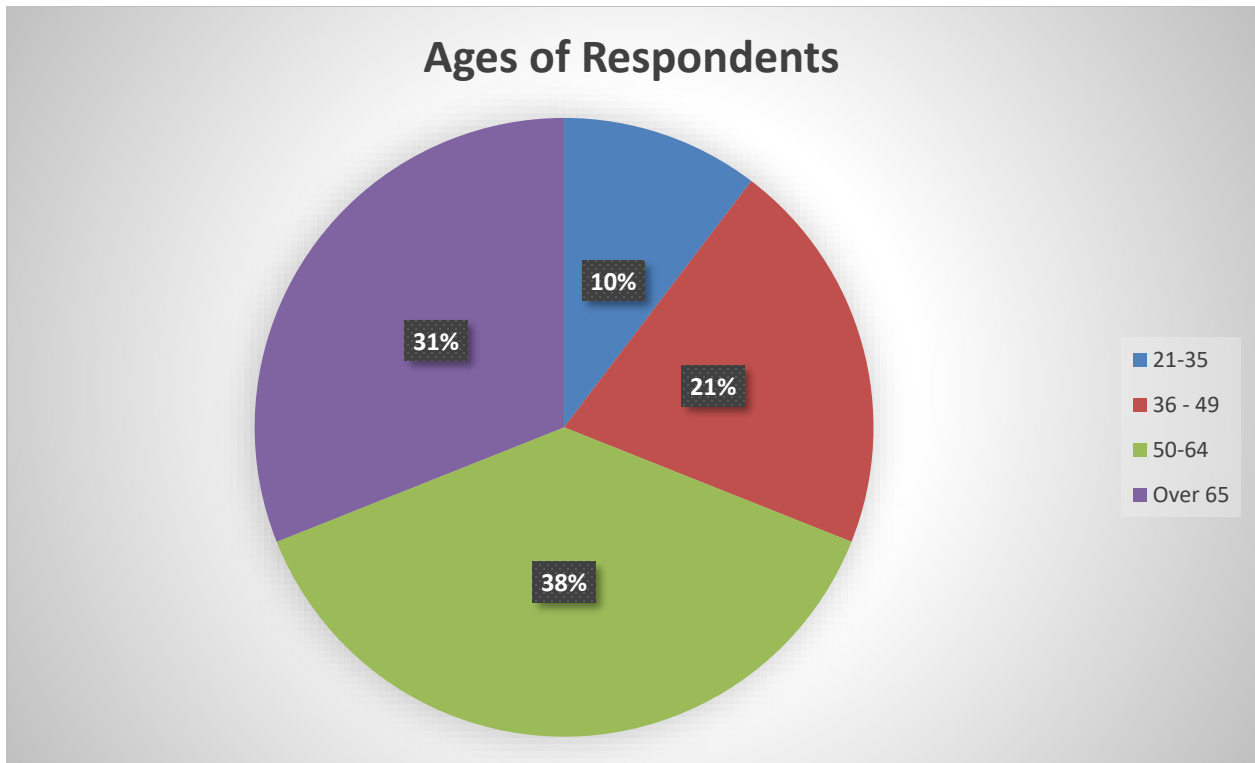
WHAT IS YOUR CONNECTION TO PERTH SOUTH?

Answer Choices	Responses	
I live in Perth South	18	62.07%
I work in Perth South	3	10.34%
I own a business in Perth South	2	6.90%
I am a Perth south rate payer	3	10.34%
I am a visitor to Perth South	1	3.45%
Prefer not to say	2	6.90%
Total	29	100%



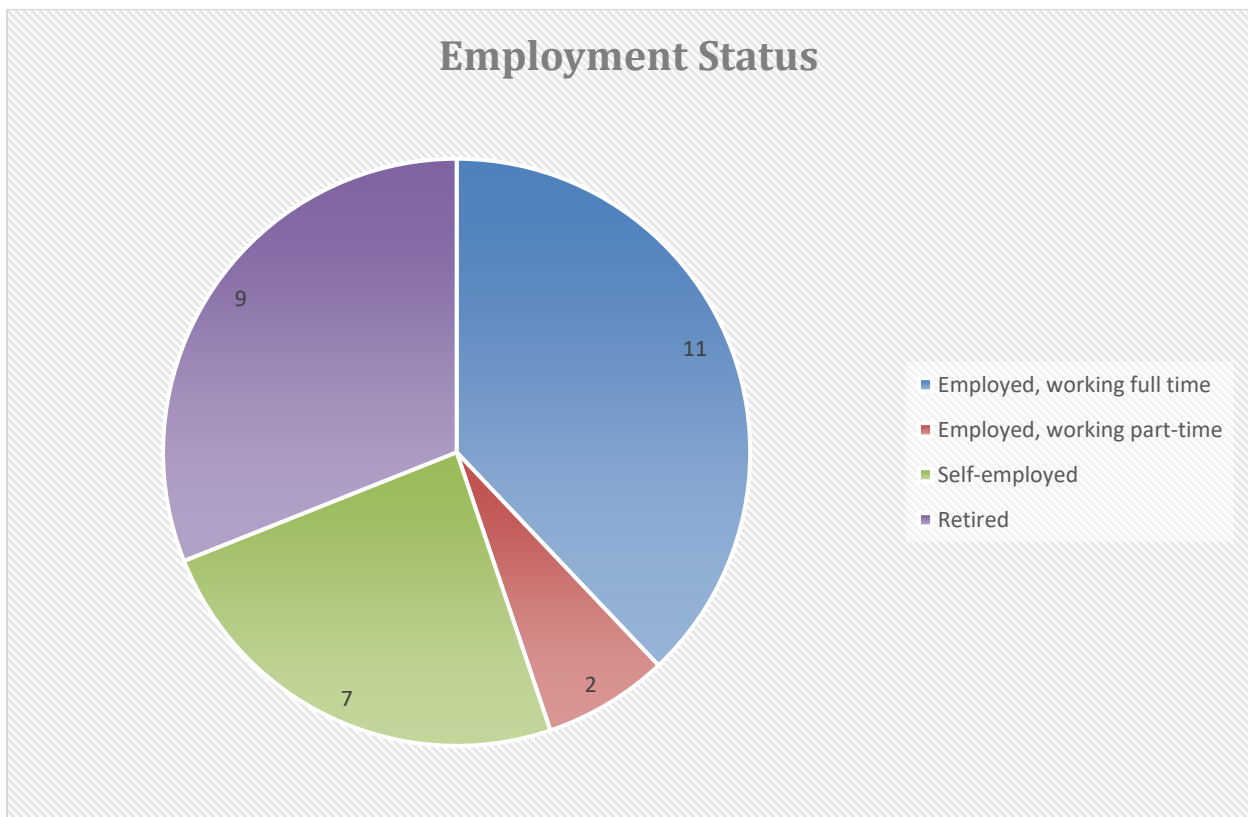
QUESTION 1: PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF: YOUR AGE

Answer Choices	Responses	
Under 21	0	0.00%
21-35	3	10.34%
36 - 49	6	20.69%
50-64	11	37.93%
Over 65	9	31.03%
Total	29	100.00%



QUESTION 2: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR EMPLOYMENT STATUS?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Employed, working full time	11	37.93%
Employed, working part-time	2	6.90%
Self-employed	7	24.14%
Not employed, looking for work	0	31.03%
Not employed, NOT looking for work	0	0.00%
Retired	9	0.00%
Not able to work due to health reasons, disability, etc.	0	0.00%
Total	29	100.00%



QUESTION 3: THREE REASONS FOR LIVING IN PERTH SOUTH

When speaking with out-of-town guests, what three reasons do you tell them to explain why you make Perth South your home?

Reason 1: Community and Environment

Residents highlighted several factors that contribute to their choice of living in Perth South. Many appreciate the area's small-town charm and the sense of community. They value the quiet and peaceful environment, describing it as a well-managed township with mostly rural settings, offering open spaces, bush, rivers, and sparse neighbors.

Families with long-standing ties to the area, some dating back to the 1800s, find a sense of belonging and pride in maintaining the buildings and lands. They enjoy rural living with a slower pace, larger properties, and greener spaces compared to urban areas. The proximity to a wide range of services, amenities in nearby towns, and great farmland are also significant attractions.

Residents emphasized safety, a strong community spirit, and a preference for rural living over urban sprawl. They value the proximity to idyllic countryside, good schools, hospitals, and shopping, making it an ideal place for families and individuals seeking a peaceful, community-oriented lifestyle.

Reason 2: Economic and Lifestyle Factors

Low taxes, a simple and healthy lifestyle, and the beauty of the landscape are also key reasons for choosing Perth South. Residents appreciate the lack of urban congestion, with the worst traffic being the occasional tractor. They enjoy living close to Stratford and London for employment and leisure opportunities.

The community's friendliness, access to nature, and proximity to amenities like hospitals, parks, and pools are also cited as major benefits. The area's cleanliness, smaller community personalities, and relaxed atmosphere compared to larger cities are attractive features. Additionally, residents value the economic contributions of self-employed individuals in the community.

Reason 3: Family-Oriented Environment

Perth South is seen as a great place to raise a family, with a focus on agriculture and family values. Residents praise the local school system and community festivals, emphasizing the convenience of the location between London and Stratford. They enjoy the benefits of rural living, including less pollution, reduced crime, and lower taxes, while still being close to larger centers for work and leisure activities.

The area's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and tranquility are also highlighted as reasons for choosing to live in Perth South. Residents appreciate the unique combination of rural living and proximity to larger cities, allowing them to enjoy a peaceful lifestyle with access to urban amenities.

QUESTION 4: THREE WAYS TO MAKE PERTH SOUTH EVEN BETTER

Please list three things that you believe would make Perth South an even better place to live.

Opportunity #1: Digital Transformation and Connectivity

Residents are enthusiastic about the potential of Quadro fibre to expand digital transformation in rural areas. They emphasize the need for improved internet connectivity and access to digital services, stating that this would enhance communication, education, and business opportunities in Perth South. Residents believe that a strong digital infrastructure would attract more residents and businesses to the area, contributing to its growth and prosperity. They suggest working closely with Quadro and other service providers to ensure that the digital transformation is comprehensive and benefits all residents.

Opportunity #2: Tourism and Local Business Support

The proximity to major tourist spots like Stratford presents an exciting opportunity to increase local tours and small business visits. Residents feel that Perth South has much to offer tourists and believe that promoting local attractions and businesses would boost the local economy and create more job opportunities. They suggest partnering with tourism organizations and investing in marketing strategies to attract tourists and support local businesses. Residents also emphasize the importance of preserving the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Perth South to enhance its appeal to tourists.

Opportunity #3: Affordable Housing and Community Engagement

Residents express a strong need for affordable housing options in Perth South. They suggest building Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) or granny flats to increase housing supply and affordability. Residents also recommend implementing regulations to correct house and rent prices, ensuring that they remain affordable for residents. Additionally, residents emphasize the importance of community engagement and suggest creating more opportunities for residents to get involved in local events and festivals. They believe that these initiatives would strengthen community ties and improve the overall quality of life in Perth South.

QUESTION 5: THREE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

When you get together with neighbours and relatives, what are three things you most often say needs to be improved in Perth South?

Improvement #1: Infrastructure and Community Services

Residents strongly recommend implementing weekly garbage pickup to improve waste management in the area. They believe that regular garbage collection would significantly enhance the cleanliness of Perth South, contributing to a healthier environment and a more attractive community for residents and visitors. Improved waste management practices could also help reduce littering and illegal dumping.

Residents also suggested expanding the YMCA in St. Marys to include a pool as an enhancement to recreational opportunities, albeit recognizing that the Y is outside of Perth South.

Improvement #2: Fiscal Responsibility and Core Services

Residents emphasize the need for lower taxation and a focus on delivering core services at a high level. They believe that reducing taxes would make living in Perth South more affordable for residents, particularly those on fixed incomes or with limited financial resources. Lower taxes could also encourage new businesses to establish themselves in the area, stimulating economic growth and creating job opportunities.

Furthermore, residents stress the importance of maintaining and improving core services such as road maintenance, waste management, and public safety. They believe that investing in these essential services is crucial for the well-being of the community and the overall quality of life in Perth South. By focusing on delivering core services effectively and efficiently, the township can ensure that residents receive the support and infrastructure they need to thrive.

Improvement #3: Housing Affordability and Community Well-being

Residents express concerns about the house and rent price crisis in Perth South, suggesting regulations to correct pricing and ensure affordability. They believe that affordable housing is essential for a thriving community and that measures should be taken to prevent price gouging and ensure that housing remains accessible to all residents. They also advocate for more independent food stores to provide affordable options and reduce reliance on giant corporations. Residents feel that supporting local businesses is key to promoting a sense of community and well-being.

Additionally, residents highlight the need for community tool swaps and more encouragement for biking. They believe that these initiatives would not only promote sustainability but also foster a sense of community spirit and cooperation. By providing opportunities for residents to engage with each other and share resources, Perth South can become a more connected and cohesive community.

QUESTION 6: THREE MOST IMPORTANT TOWNSHIP SERVICES

Please list the three most important services provided by Perth South, starting with the most important.

Most Important: Health and Wellness Services

Residents express overall satisfaction with health and wellness services in Perth South, particularly appreciating the expansion of these services. They specifically mention the availability of health services, including access to COVID-19 vaccinations. This indicates a strong emphasis on maintaining and improving the health and well-being of residents. Health was an interesting choice, since these are not services provided by the Township and are delivered primarily in the neighbouring municipalities.

Second Most Important: Roads and Infrastructure

Residents prioritize roads and infrastructure, emphasizing the importance of road maintenance, both in summer and winter, and infrastructure maintenance, such as bridges and municipal drains. They also highlight the need for reliable garbage collection and snow removal services. These services are crucial for ensuring safe and efficient transportation and waste management in the community.

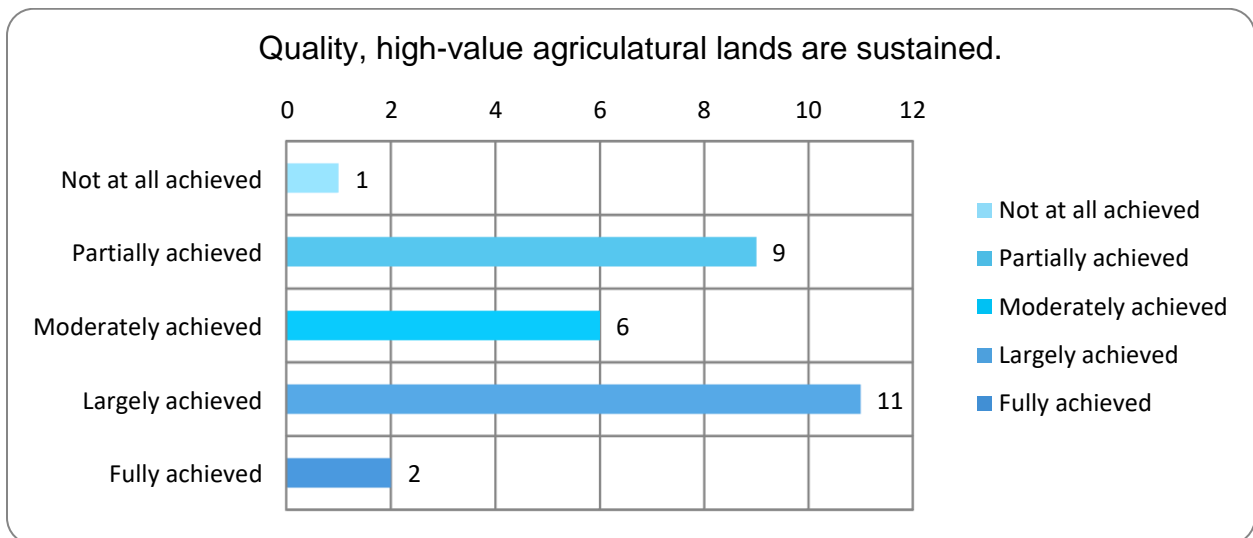
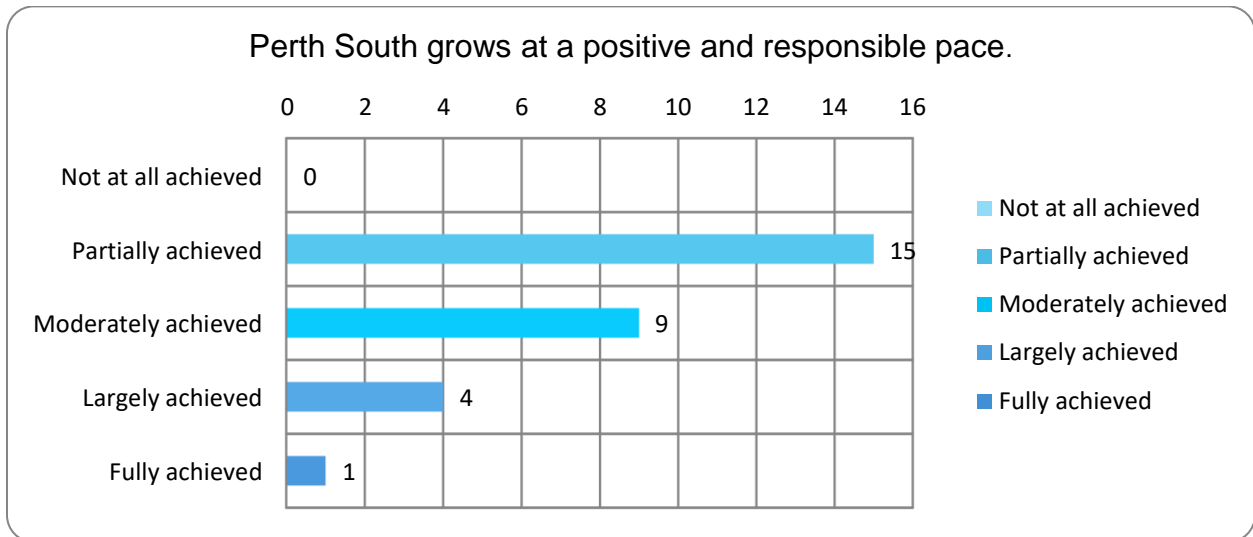
Third Most Important: Emergency Services

Emergency services, including fire, ambulance, and police, are also highly valued by residents. They appreciate the proximity of these services, particularly the hospital, fire department, and ambulance services. Residents emphasize the importance of these services in ensuring the safety and well-being of the community.

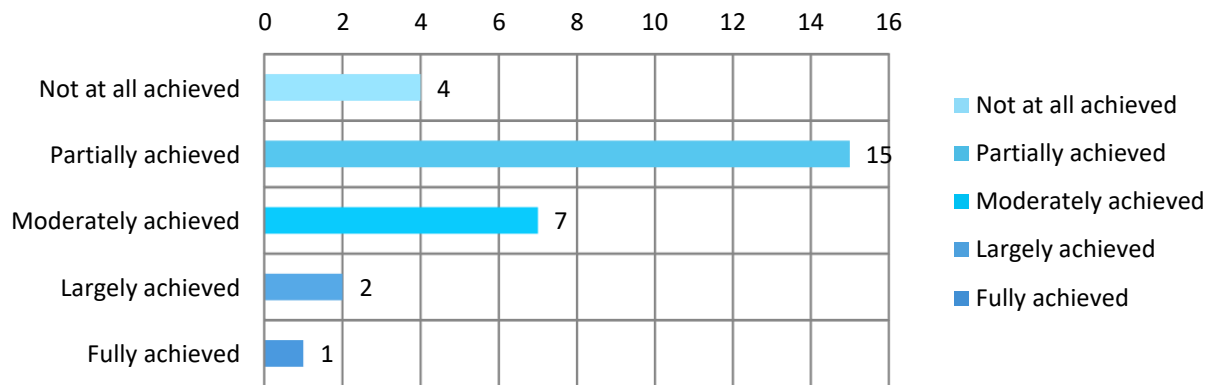
QUESTION 7: EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE SINCE LAST PREVIOUS STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2019, the Township identified five areas of focus and laid out strategic priorities for each of them. Please tell us how we are doing.

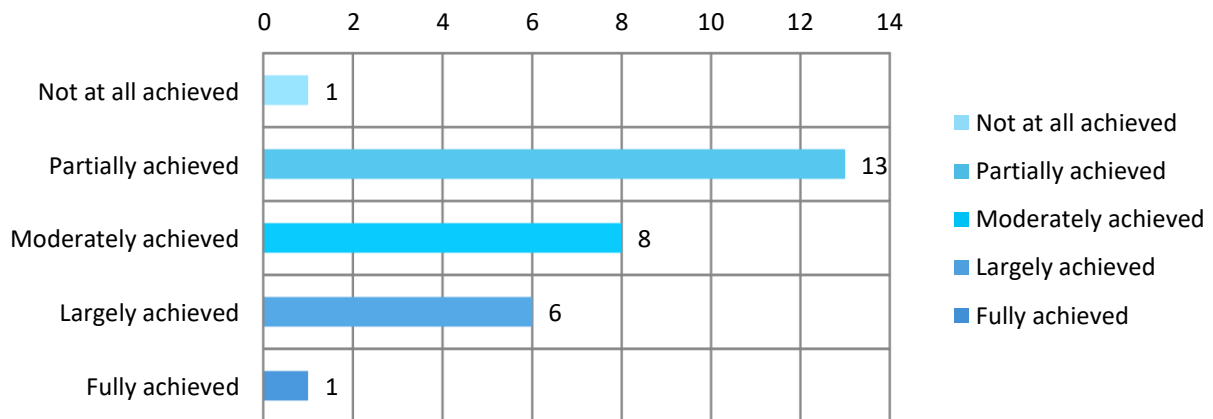
Growth and Development



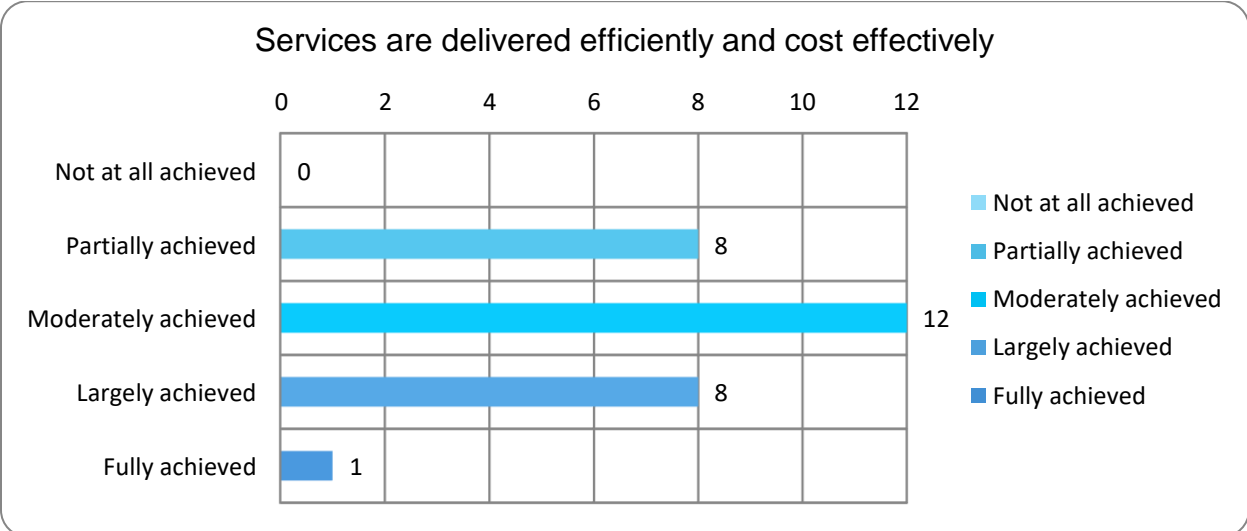
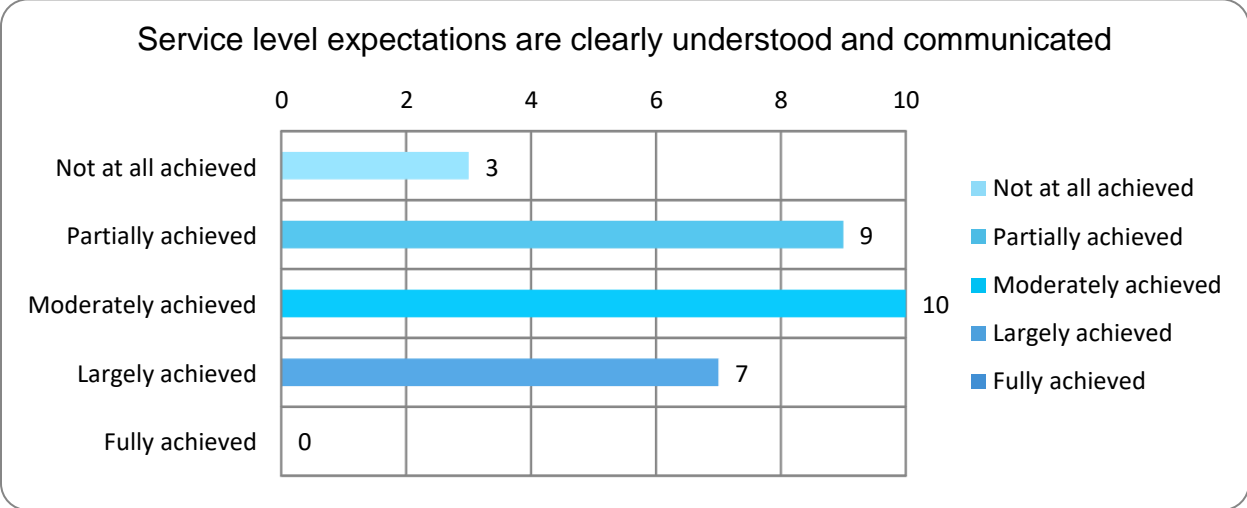
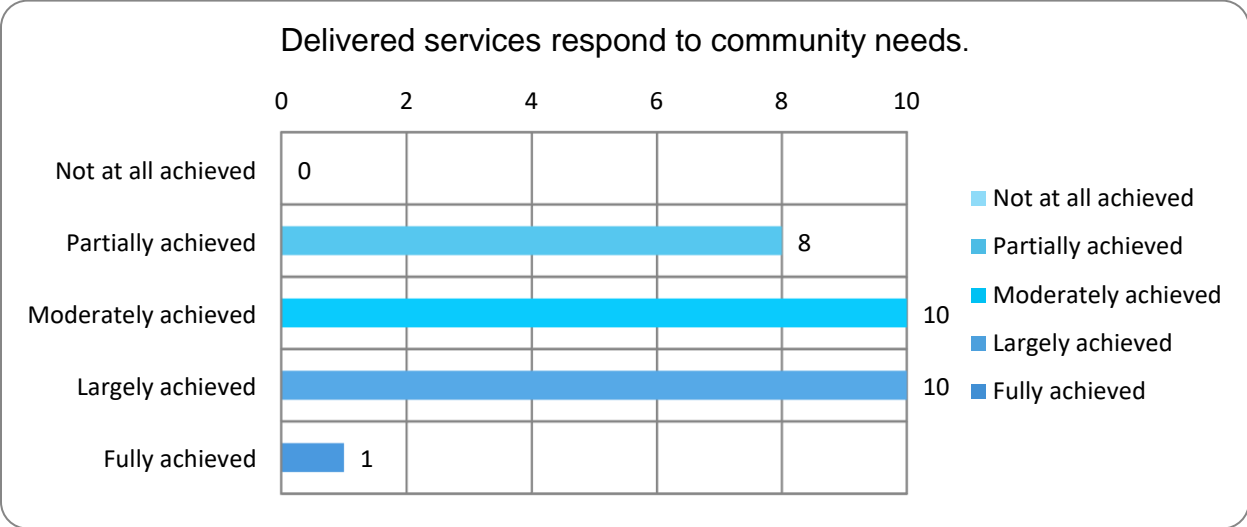
Perth South has diverse housing options and improved housing density



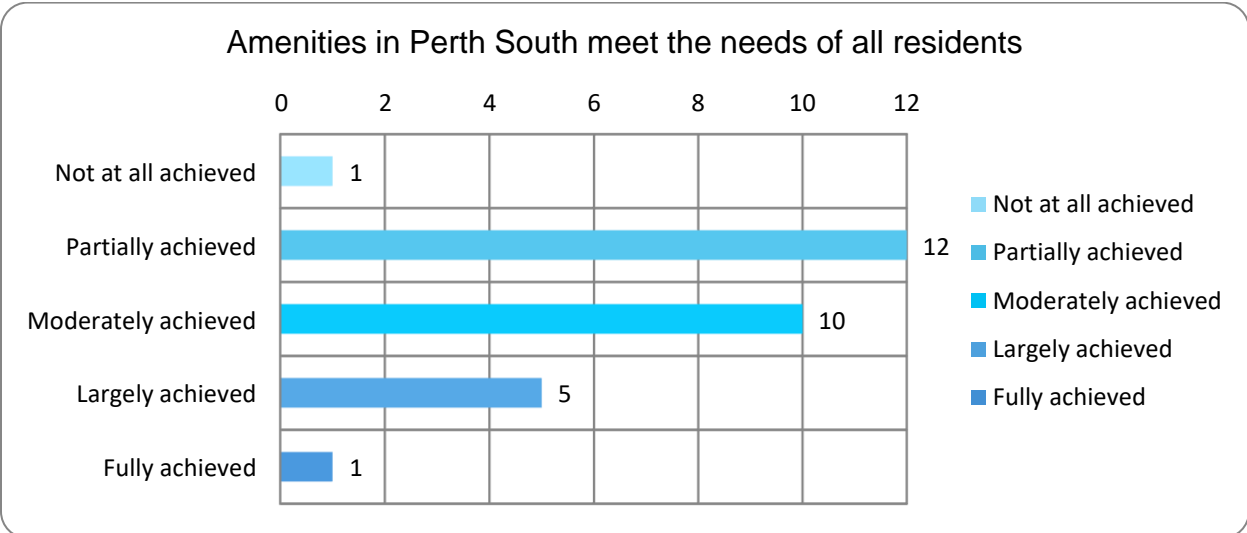
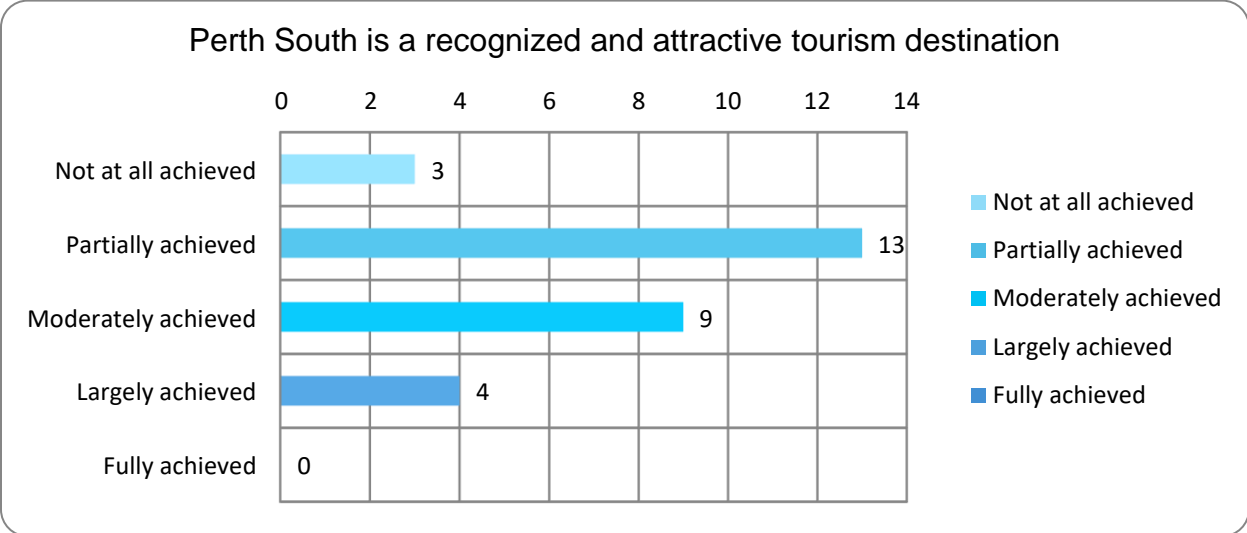
Perth South is a thriving entrepreneurial community



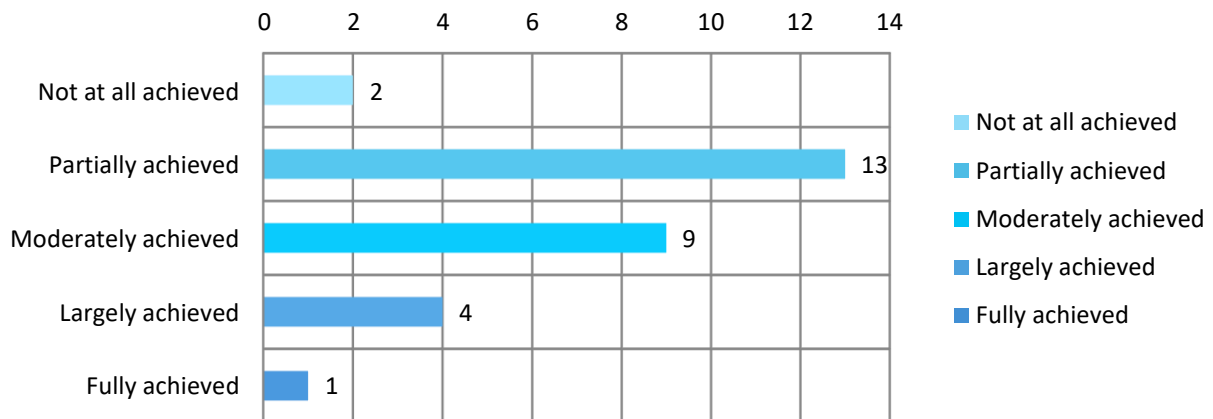
Service Effectiveness



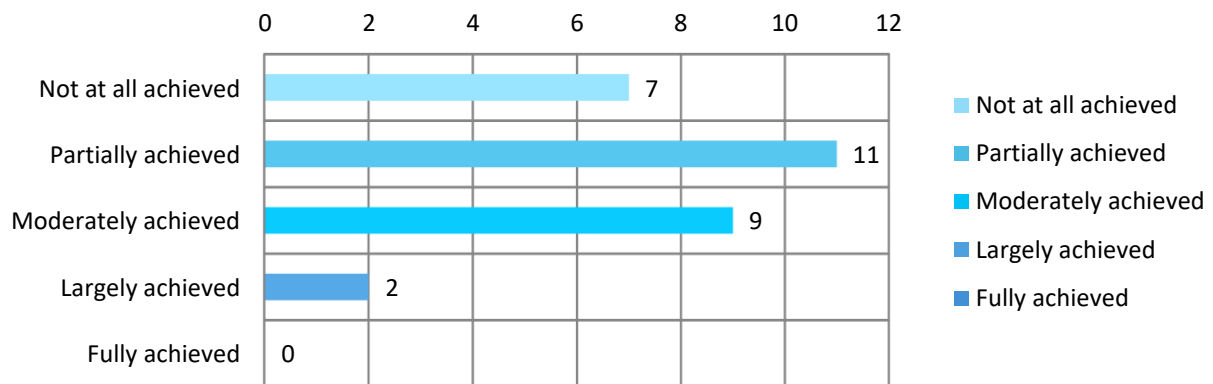
Community Development



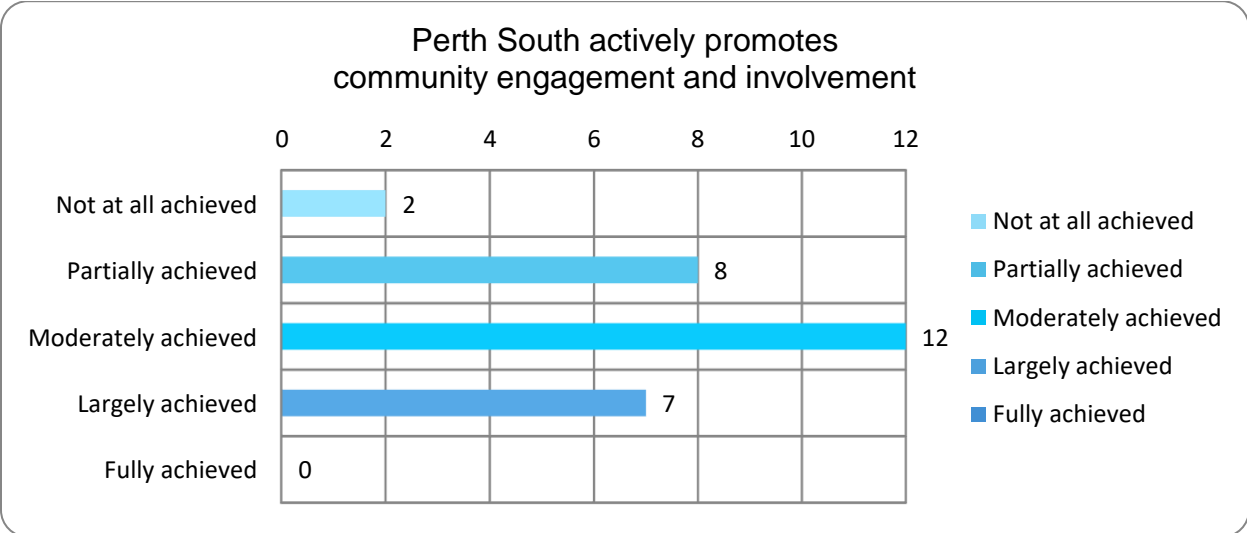
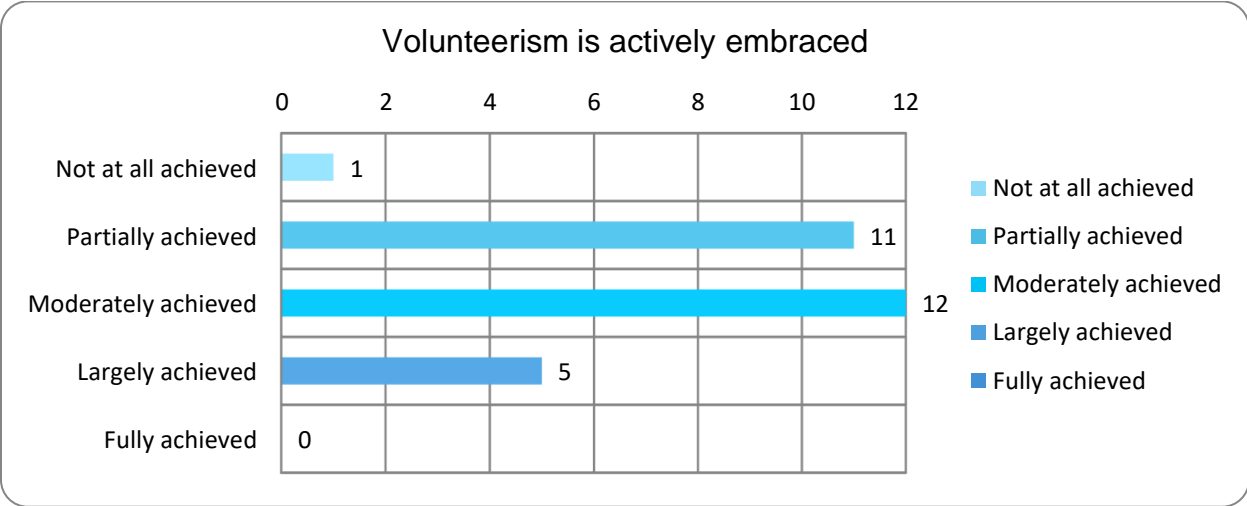
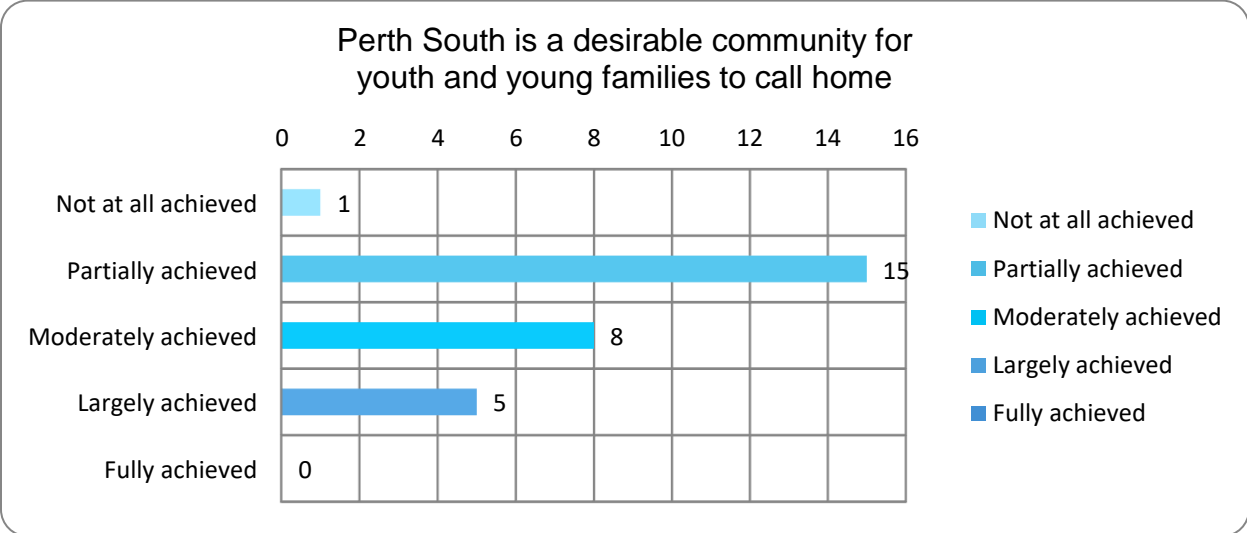
A variety of educational opportunities are available in the municipality



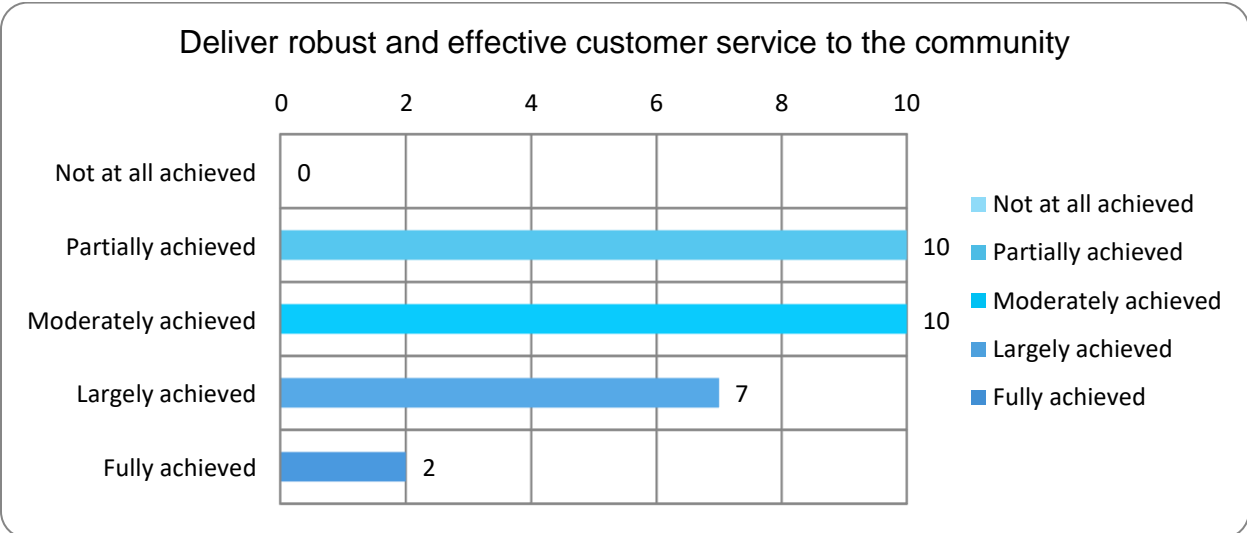
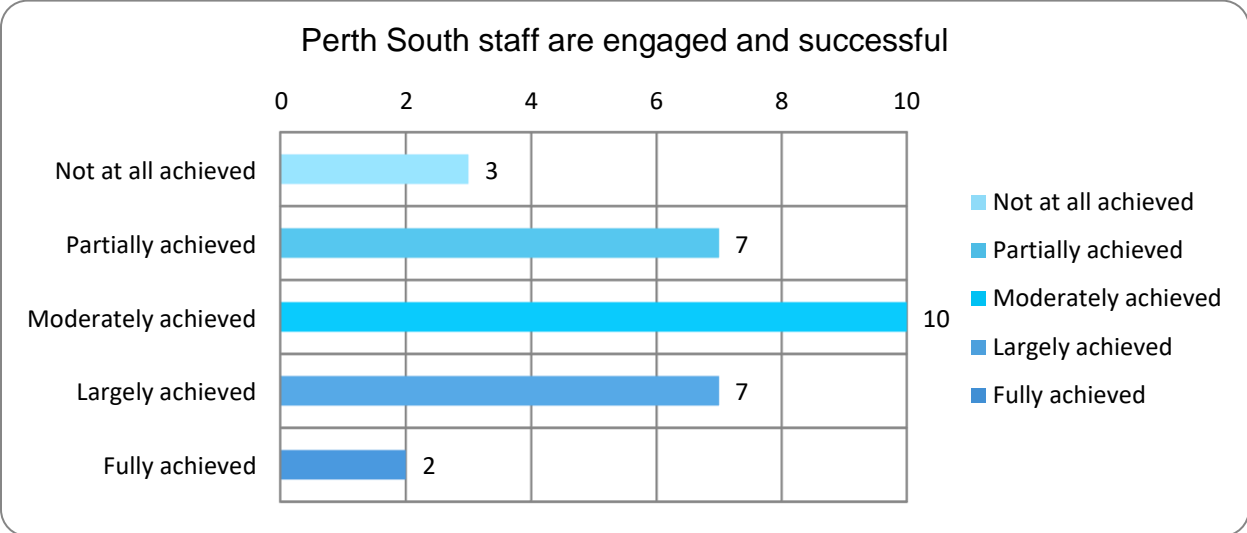
There are a variety of transportation options available within the community



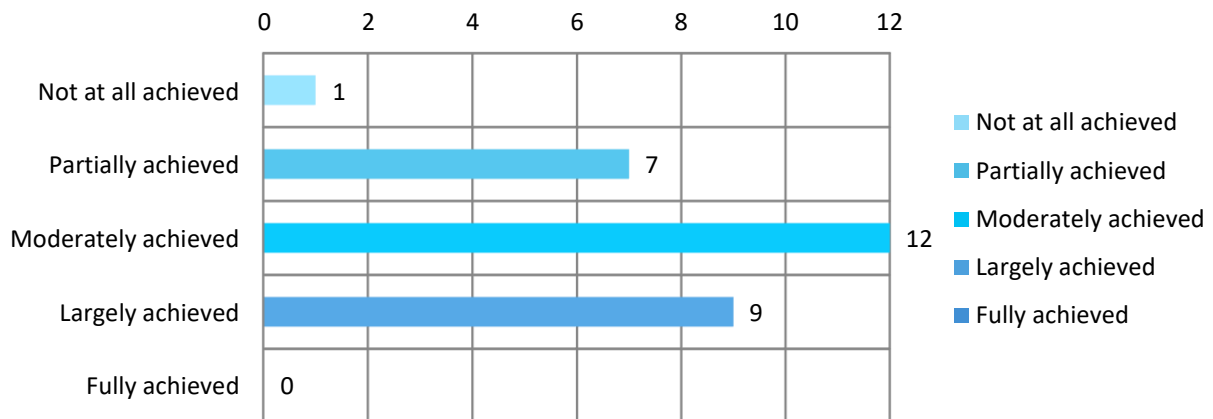
Community Involvement and Participation



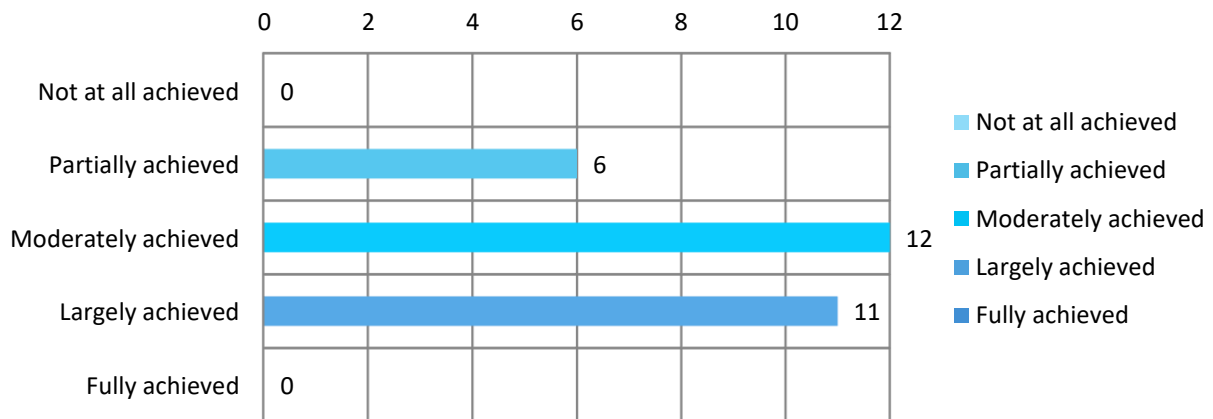
Corporate Sustainability



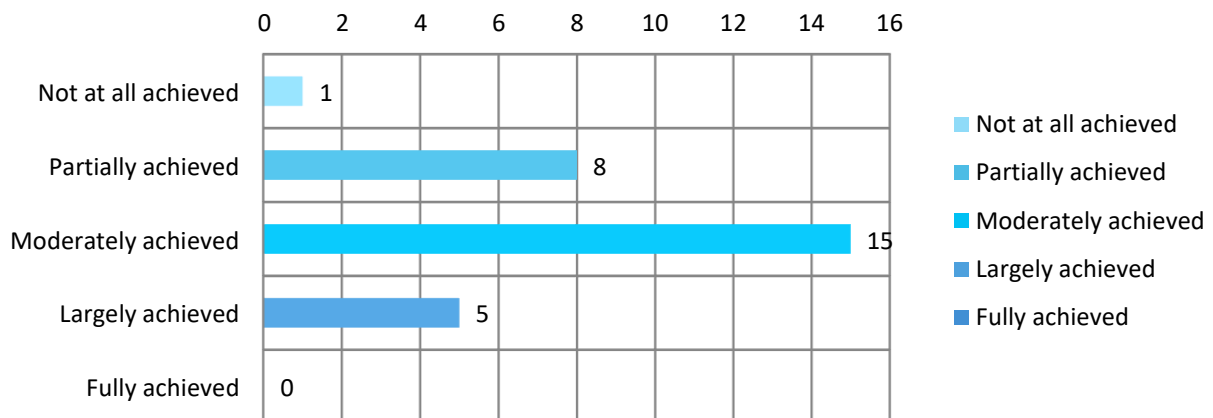
Municipal infrastructure is robust and sustainable



Technology solutions support efficient and effective service delivery

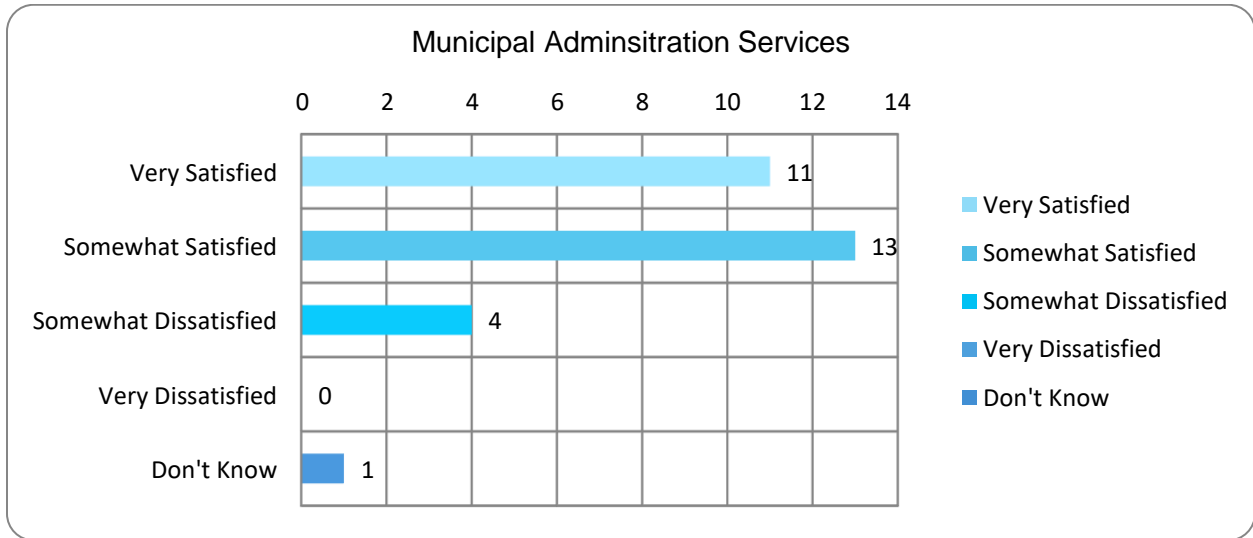


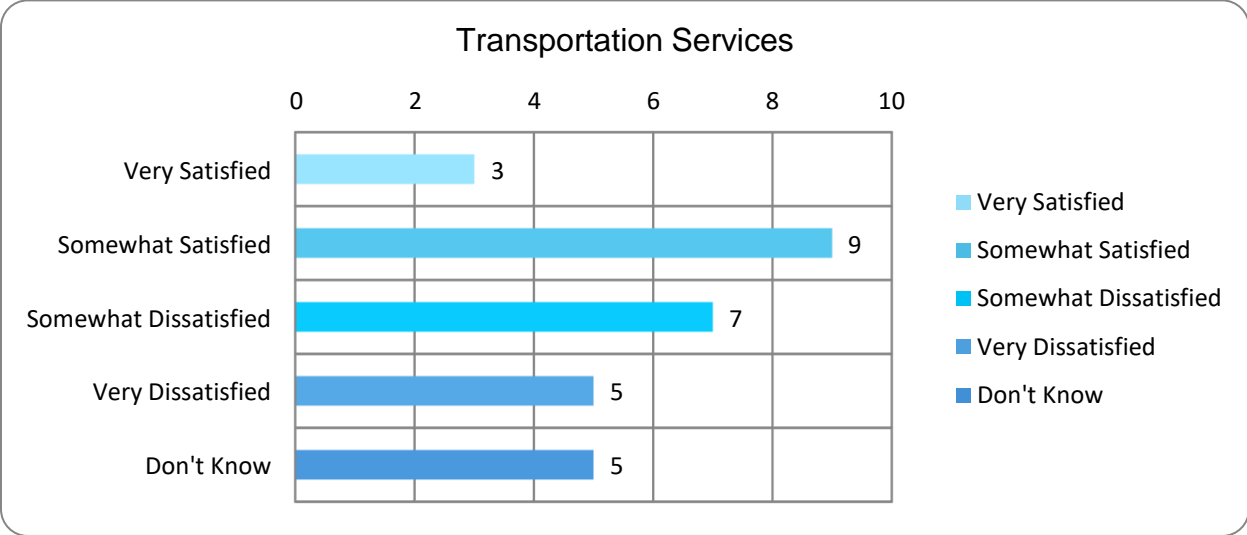
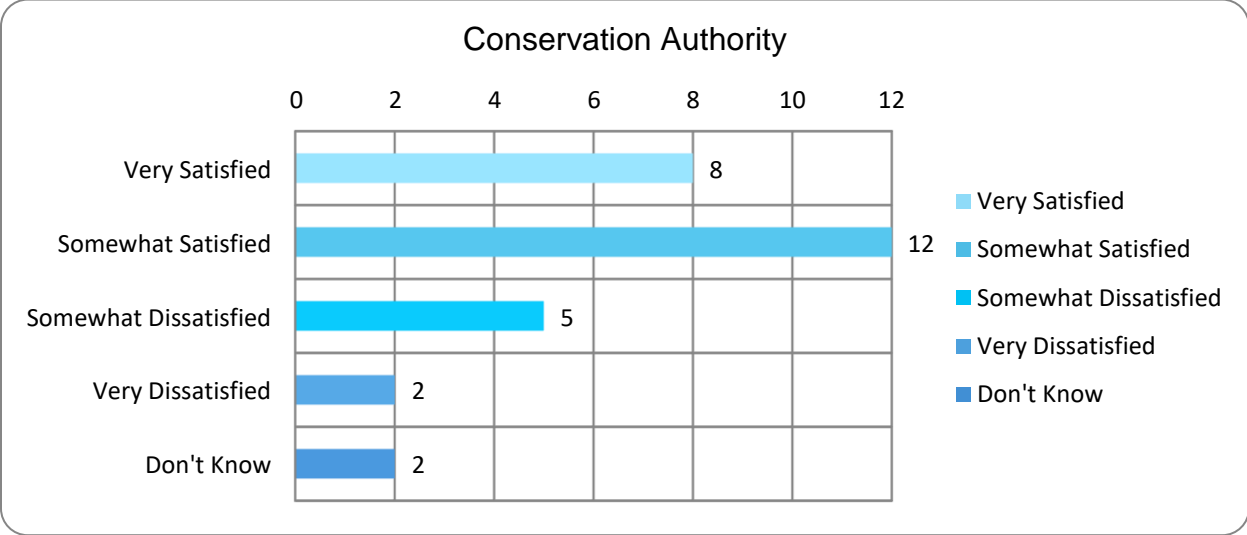
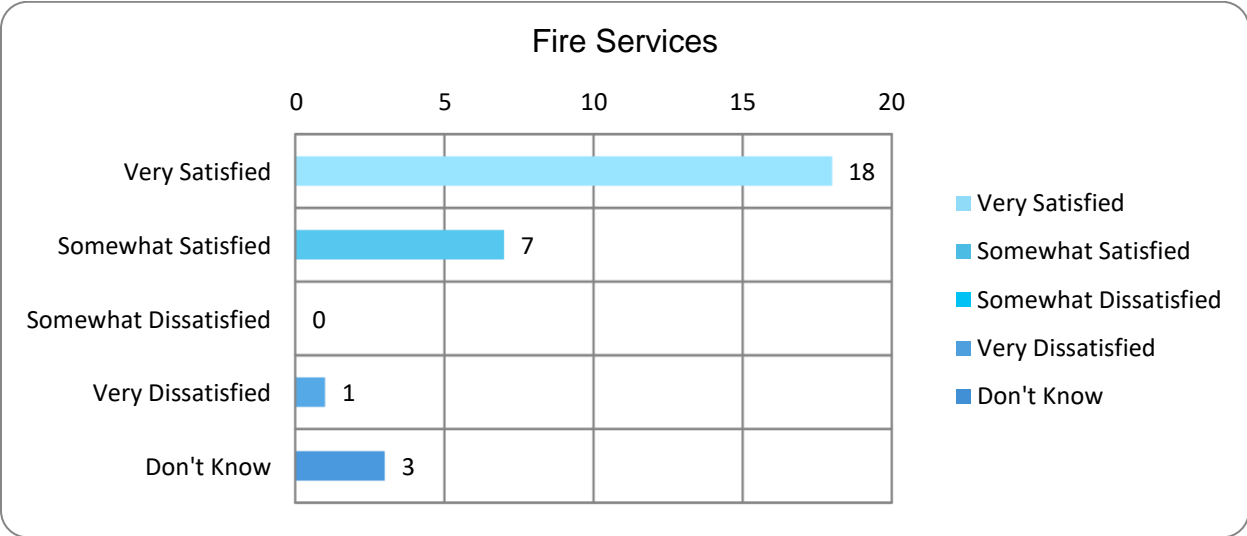
Perth South actively partners and collaborates broadly



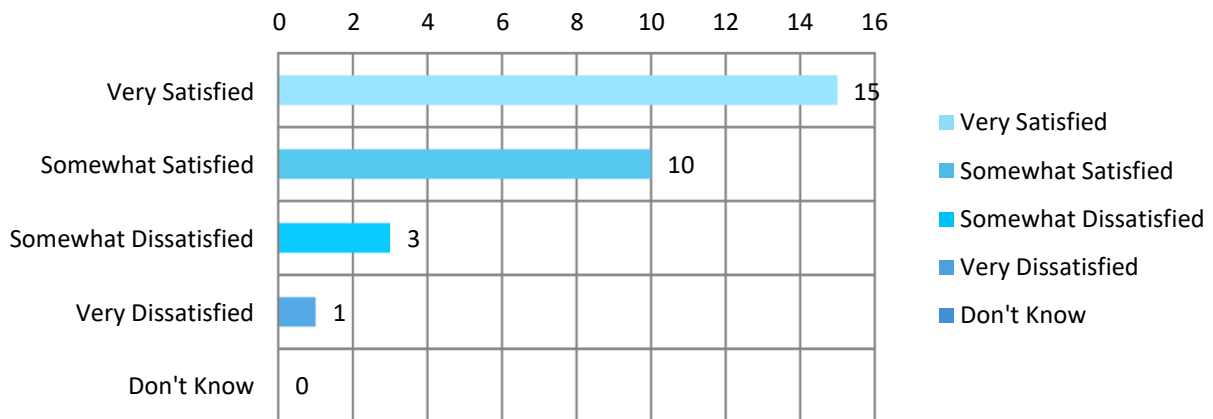
QUESTION 8: SATISFACTION WITH MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Please indicate how satisfied you are with each of the following services provided to Perth South.

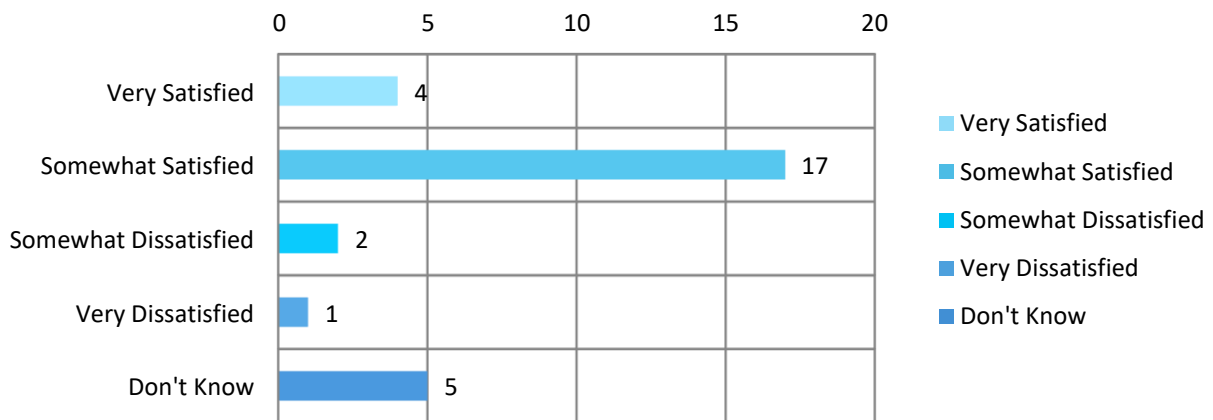




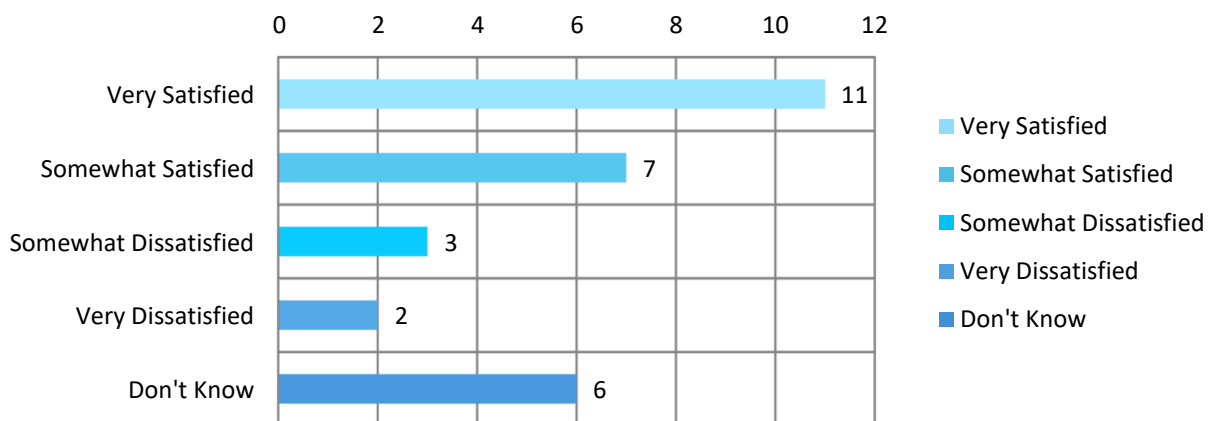
Waste and Recycling Services

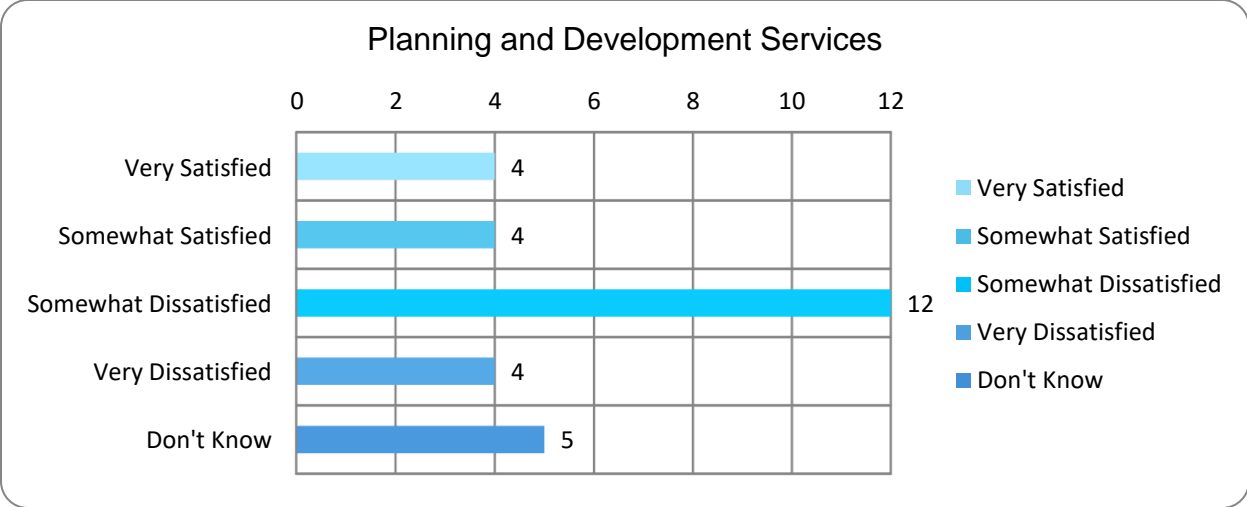


Recreation Services

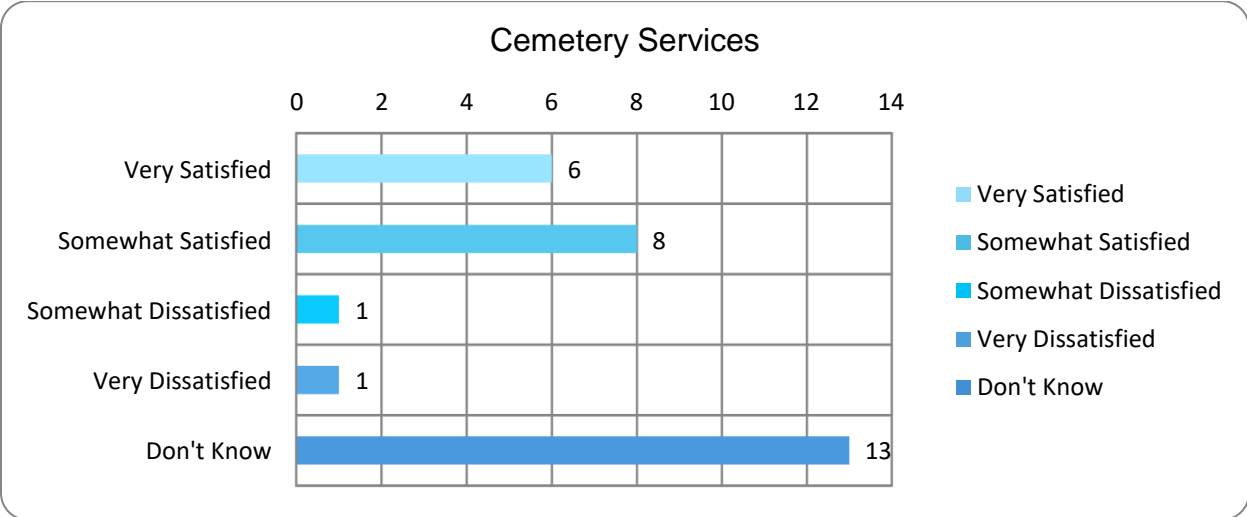
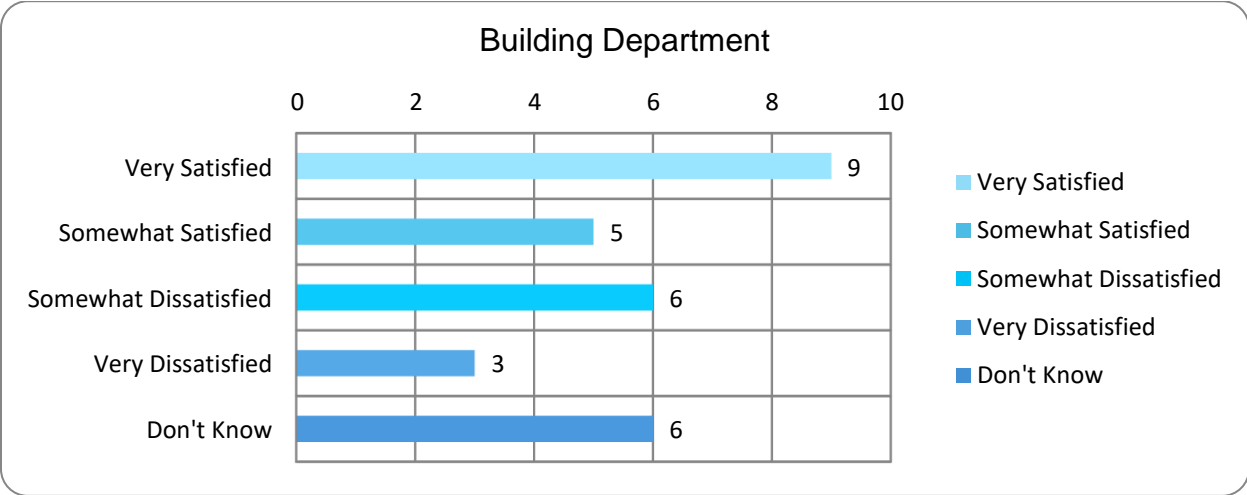


Library Services



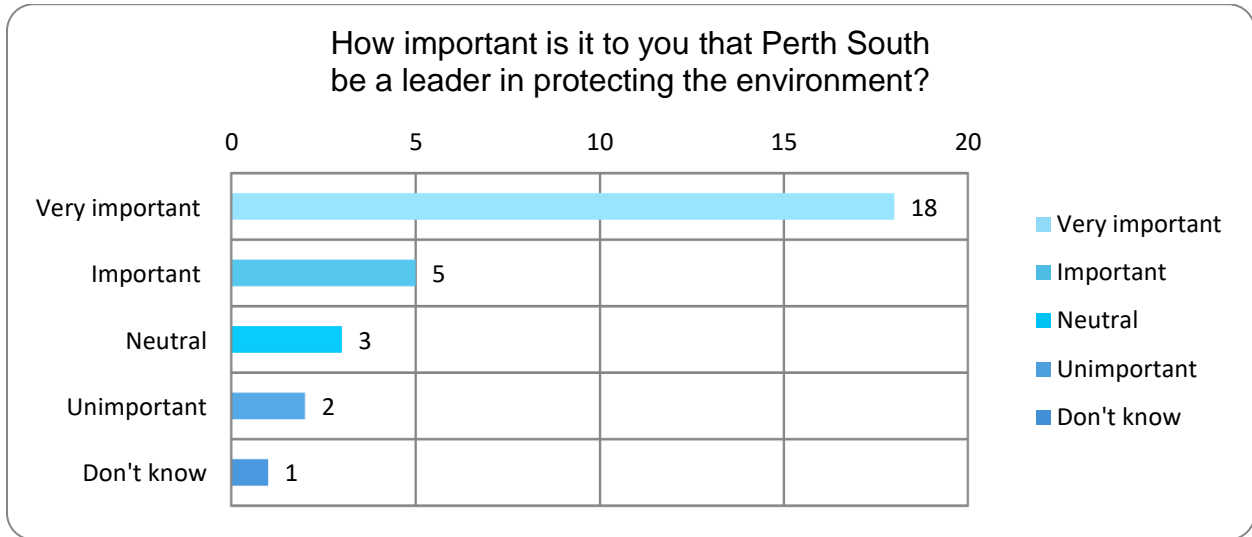


Note: Participants in the focus groups and interviews made it clear that their dissatisfaction with Planning and Development Services was not with the Township Planning Office, but with other regulatory agencies outside of the control of Perth South.



QUESTION 9: PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

How important is it to you that Perth South be a leader in protecting the environment?



QUESTION 10: PRIORITIES FOR INVESTMENTS

There are several areas in which Perth South could invest to improve the quality of life for residents and attract new residents. Please list the improvements, starting with the highest priority.

Highest Priority Improvements:

Reduce Taxation and Focus on Core Services:

Residents emphasize the need to reduce taxation while maintaining a focus on delivering core services at a high level. This indicates a desire for efficient use of tax dollars to ensure that essential services such as infrastructure maintenance, public health, and emergency services are prioritized.

Infrastructure Maintenance:

Residents highlight the importance of ensuring quality infrastructure and infrastructure maintenance. This includes maintaining roads for safety and accessibility, as well as investing in infrastructure projects that enhance the overall quality of life in Perth South.

Public Health:

Investment in public health services, including access to healthcare providers such as doctors, is seen as a high priority. This investment is crucial for maintaining and improving residents' health and well-being.

Affordable Housing:

Residents express the need for reasonably priced housing options in Perth South. They emphasize the impact of housing costs on the community's overall affordability and quality of life, indicating a need for diverse housing opportunities.

Road Safety:

Improving road safety is highlighted as a high priority. This includes measures to reduce accidents and improve traffic flow, such as implementing a roundabout at road 130 and line 20.

Support for Homeless and Displaced Persons:

Residents emphasize the need to find living, employment, and support solutions for homeless and displaced persons in Perth South. This indicates a desire for community support and resources to address homelessness and displacement issues.

Community Development and Planning:

Residents express a desire for responsible community development and planning. This includes limiting high-density development, discouraging commuter traffic on secondary roads, and maintaining a rural lifestyle.

Recreation Facilities:

Residents suggest improvements to recreation facilities, such as adding basketball hoops at Kirkton Park. This indicates a desire for enhanced recreational opportunities for residents.

Medium Priority Improvements:

Housing Diversity:

Residents express a desire for affordable single-detached neighborhoods with decent yards, garages, and driveways. They prefer rental apartment buildings and townhouses to be separate from houses. This indicates a need for diverse housing options that cater to different preferences and lifestyles.

Parks and Recreation:

Investment in parks and recreation facilities is seen as a medium priority. Residents suggest better trails and recreation opportunities, indicating a desire for improved outdoor spaces and activities for residents to enjoy.

Transportation Advocacy:

Residents highlight the need for advocacy around transportation, particularly in relation to the loss of the GO train through St. Marys. They suggest working with GO Transit to improve cost-effective transportation options to Toronto, indicating a desire for better access to transportation services.

Community Events:

Residents express a desire for more public events, indicating a need for increased community engagement and opportunities for residents to come together.

Seniors' Amenities and Services:

Investment in seniors' amenities, housing, and services is seen as a medium priority. This includes providing facilities and services that cater to the needs of seniors in the community.

Volunteer Engagement:

Residents suggest more volunteer engagement, indicating a desire for increased community involvement and participation in local initiatives.

Limiting Expansion of Large Animal Operations:

Some residents express a desire to limit the expansion of large animal operations, indicating a concern for maintaining a balance between agricultural practices and residential areas.

Land Severance Laws:

Residents suggest making land severance laws less restrictive, indicating a desire for more flexibility in land use planning and development.

Low Priority Investments:

Some residents suggest the following areas should be addressed with caution or are of lesser immediate importance compared to other needs in the community. It should be noted many other residents would not agree with all of the items on this list.

- Consultants and over-priced contracts.
- Development of big box stores.
- Improved communication.
- Managing population growth.
- Tree replacement along roads.
- Economic and business development.
- Expansion of the township's natural trail system.
- Extending Kirkton pool hours.
- Seniors housing.
- Road maintenance.

QUESTION 11: ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

Please share any other feedback or suggestions you would like Council to consider when developing our 2024-2028 Strategic Plan.

Financial Responsibility:

Residents emphasize the importance of fiscal responsibility, urging the council to tighten budgets, reduce taxation, find cost savings, and deliver core services efficiently.

Community Resources:

Residents express appreciation for community resources like the library and emphasize the need to collaborate with nearby recreation facilities, especially for those living farther from local amenities like Kirkton.

Land Use and Development:

There are concerns about limiting annexation of land to neighboring towns, reducing high-density housing expansions on valuable farmland, and ensuring future developments align with the rural character of Perth South.

Property Rights and Rural Protection:

Residents are concerned about potential changes in urban land use regulations affecting property values. They seek assurance that rural property owners' investments will be protected, and that the community's rural identity will be maintained.

Community Services:

Residents highlight the lack of public transit and the affordability of transportation in rural areas. They also express concerns about the capacity of volunteer fire services to handle densely populated subdivisions.

Respect for Existing Communities: T

here is a strong emphasis on respecting existing communities when planning new developments, ensuring that they align with the rural lifestyle and address residents' concerns.

FINAL STEPS

The following steps were taken to complete the project:

1. Capital Park, in consultation with township staff, developed a preliminary draft strategic plan.
2. An iterative process was used to revise the plan, based on comments received from staff.
3. Once the content was agreed upon, a graphic artist was instructed to prepare a draft presentation version.
4. The draft presentation version of the strategic plan was presented to Council at their regular meeting on April 2nd, 2024, for their review and comment.
5. The draft strategic plan was posted on the township website to provide an opportunity for residents, business owners and other stakeholders to provide input.
6. Based on the comments received, the draft plan was amended by Capital Park in consultation with township staff.
7. The final draft of the corporate strategic plan was presented to Council on May 7th, 2024, for approval.