



Strategic Development Plan

Town of Sutton

May 2017



ESPACE STRATÉGIES

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A WORD FROM THE MAYOR

It is with great pride that I present Sutton's Strategic Development Plan. This document marks an important milestone for the future of Sutton. It singles out five overall objectives that underline the importance of consolidating local recreational tourism focused on the town's nature-culture signature, supporting Mont Sutton's development projects, strengthening the village core, making the town more appealing, particularly for young families, and developing the town—without diminishing the quality of life.

These objectives are accompanied by a series of action plans that will guide our choices for years to come.

As you know, this reflection on the future of Sutton did not begin with the writing of this strategic plan. In fact, the document in your hands represents the integration of a variety of previous efforts, such as *Sutton . . . vers 2035*, the town's Families and Seniors Policy, and its cultural policy.

I invite the entire community—citizens, merchants, vacationers, entrepreneurs, developers, artists, artisans and stakeholders from the various economic, environmental and social groups—to participate in this collective effort to support the well-being of Sutton. Know that your town council is always looking for ways to balance economic growth with the protection of the environment. These action plans matter to us all. Your involvement is essential if the future of Sutton is to be determined by everyone in the community .

Louis Dandenault
Mayor of Sutton



2- INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Sutton is part of the territory of the Brome-Missisquoi MRC (that is, RCM, or the Regional County Municipality), in the administrative region of the Montérégie. Located in the southeast corner of the MRC, Sutton covers an area of about 243 square kilometres and its permanent population is approximately 4,000. Seasonal residents increase the population to between 7,000 and 8,000 people.

The municipality of Sutton plays an important role in the MRC, due to the presence of the Sutton mountains (ski resort, ecotourism and so on), a vibrant village core, dynamic tourism (accommodations, restaurants, artists) and various historic buildings representing a remarkable architectural heritage. In addition, the town has also been named a regional “tourist centre” in the heart of the MRC.

In 2014, CDÉS (that is, CEDS, or the Corporation of Economic Development of Sutton) came out with a document entitled *Sutton ... vers 2035* as part of its role supporting the municipal administration’s work on an economic development plan for the town. In 2015, the town council and the administration began a three-year process to develop a strategic framework for this plan. This process formed part of a continuum that included public participation overseen by CDÉS, and it culminated in the presentation of a framework that reflects the vision, mission, values, and concerns of the town’s citizenry.

At this point the Town of Sutton decided to call on a firm of professional consultants. Their task was to come up with an integrated strategic development plan that would embrace both the multifaceted community inputs and the policies that had already been undertaken by the town, such as its cultural policy (2007), the Action Plan for Cultural Development (2012) and the Families and Seniors Policy (2012). The goal of this effort was to establish a coordinated vision for long-term development (10–12 years) along with a well researched strategic development plan.



3- ANALYSIS

KEY ELEMENTS OF OUR SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

This section presents a breakdown of Sutton's key territorial, social and economic characteristics. The facts and figures are drawn from a variety of documents, notably Statistics Canada (censuses of 2006 and 2011). A bibliography is included in the Appendix.

- ❖ **Sutton had 3,981 residents in 2015, increasing to about 7,000 – 8,000 during high season with the arrival of seasonal residents.**
- ❖ **Between 2006 and 2011 there was weaker population growth in Sutton than in MRC Brome-Missisquoi and Québec** (Sutton 2.7%, MRC 5.4%, Québec 4.7%).
- ❖ **The population is older.** In 2011, the average age in Sutton was 54.8 years, 46.4 years in the RMC and 41.9 years in Québec.
- ❖ **The educational level was slightly higher in Sutton than in the MRC and Québec** (College: Sutton 24%, MRC 18%, Québec 16%; University: Sutton 23%, MRC 22%, Québec 24%).
- ❖ **The average income was slightly lower than in the MRC and Québec** (Sutton \$31,605, MRC \$36,975, Québec \$41,693).
- ❖ **The majority of Sutton's population is francophone.** In 2011, 63% of the population spoke French as their first official language and 37% spoke English as their first official language.
- ❖ **The rate of unemployment is relatively low** (Sutton 4.5%, MRC 5.7%, Québec 7.2%).
- ❖ **Economic activity centres on tourism** (in 2014, Sutton had 52 tourist business generating 575 jobs).
- ❖ **In 2011, 77% of the 1,920 private households owned their homes.**
- ❖ **In 2011, Sutton had 1,180 families, of which only 380 included 3 or more members.**

CONTRIBUTING TRENDS AND FORCES AT PLAY

This section highlights the major trends and forces at play influencing the development of the Town of Sutton that must be considered when analyzing the current situation.

Economic context

- ❖ **The municipality's economy relies heavily on recreational tourism and culture** (Créneau Plein Air, Nature).
- ❖ **The popularity of outdoor recreational activities is rising**, 46,000 visitors per year have been recorded.
- ❖ **There is little economic diversity**, and no industrial activity to speak of.
- ❖ **There is a lack of commercial activity.**
- ❖ **The chief sources of employment** are Mont Sutton ski centre (300), IGA, CHSLD, the Town of Sutton, Hyland's (call centre), Huttopia, au Diable Vert.
- ❖ **It has difficulty retaining people** because so much of the employment is seasonal (many jobs are in the tourism sector) and the town is far from larger urban centres.
- ❖ **The three jewels of recreational tourism** are Huttopia, Au Diable Vert and Mont Sutton ski centre.
- ❖ **It is a wealthy municipality** with property values surpassing a billion dollars and it ranks fourth highest in the MRC.
- ❖ **The local economy** is considered fragile.
- ❖ **There is extensive agricultural land** (50%), but it is under-developed.
- ❖ **The collaboration among the various stakeholders** (merchants, entrepreneurs, etc.) in the socioeconomic sector needs improvement.

CONTRIBUTING TRENDS AND FORCES AT PLAY

Municipal and social context

- ❖ **There is difficulty keeping young people** in the municipality.
- ❖ **There is a high vacancy rate in the summer.** Many vacationers in the summer, but ski village condos are empty in the summer.
- ❖ **House prices too high for many citizens.**
- ❖ **A healthy balance is needed** between economic development, protection of the natural ecosystems and cost of municipal services.
- ❖ **There are frequent changeovers at Town Hall;** elected officials routinely change over every four years (except on one occasion).
- ❖ **There has been a growth in recreational activities** (two golfing clubs, tennis, X-trails, walking trails, etc.).
- ❖ **Sutton is known as a cycling hub.**
- ❖ **There are a number of conservation reserves** (land acquired by foundations), fragmenting the territory.
- ❖ **Sutton has a very active community spirit** (34 community groups exist in Sutton) **with a strong volunteer base.** **Many sports, cultural and social activities supported by volunteers** (34 community groups in Sutton).
- ❖ **Cultural context**
- ❖ **The town's cultural hub is the Salle Alex et Gérard Pelletier** known as *Le Cœur du Village*.
- ❖ **Sutton has a thriving artistic community;** it is one of the highest ranking towns in Canada in terms of the number of artists per capita.
- ❖ **Sutton is a regional cultural centre;** it now forms part of the Tour des Arts and includes 5 art galleries, 11 visual arts organizations, 8 performing arts venues.
- ❖ **Sutton hosts various cultural festivals;** spring and autumn festivals draw many tourists (e.g., music festivals, and others).
- ❖ **Sutton's activities lack coordination;** there is not enough collaboration among parties organizing wide-ranging events (e.g., Jazz and Blues, X-trails. ...) and the activities going on at the Coeur du Village.



4- OBSERVATIONS

STRATEGIC IDENTITY

Our unique character

Our special identity

- **Strong branding of *Ski Mont Sutton***
- **Local recreational tourism activities are focused on Nature and Culture as the town's signature**
 - ✓ **Nature:** The mountains of Mont Sutton represent a valuable natural asset with myriad hiking trails (40,000 visitors a year) and the town's countryside serves as a bicycling hub and includes a natural conservation area.
 - ✓ **Culture:** The village has a high concentration of artists and includes a well-known cultural hub offering programming year round.
- **Authentic and vibrant village core**
 - ✓ Strong and engaged community base
 - ✓ Close links with Mont Sutton ski centre
- **Community energized by a lively, engaged and mixed population**
 - ✓ Community of creative individuals exploring innovative socioeconomic solutions
 - ✓ Bilingual community
 - ✓ Strong volunteer base
 - ✓ Social mix of founding families and urban transplants

Potential assets

Opportunities/Strengths

Needing a proactive approach

- Four-season centre for outdoor recreation and tourism
 - ✓ Access to an internationally known network of trails
 - ✓ Hiking – 40,000 people a year
- Commercial development aligned with the needs of the clientele
- Affordable housing in the village sector
- Agrotourism
- Promotion of self-employed workers (through collaboration)

When opportunities arise

- Industrial development
- Responsible development of agricultural sector

What to avoid

- Lack of vision
- Activities that are incompatible with natural environment and village life





VISION AND VALUES

Taken from – *Sutton...vers 2035* (2014)

Vision: Where do we want to go?

1. By 2035 . . . the citizens of Sutton will be from all over. They will reflect all kinds of perspectives and make up an inclusive, respectful community. They will be Sutton’s richest asset.
2. Sutton will be living up to its recreational tourism signature, “culture and the outdoors,” in its own unique way.
3. Sutton will be characterized by its demographic balance and economic diversity, its values grounded in a respect for the principles of sustainable development.
4. Sutton’s decisions will have been guided by its respect for the surrounding natural environment landscape, its strong village appeal and the quality of life of its citizens.

Values

- Integrity and transparency
- Respect and tolerance
- Responsibility and accountability
- Respect for the principles of sustainability
- Respect for consensus, while respecting a sustainable development, considering the need for a balanced approach for development

MAJOR ISSUES

The results of roundtables as well as an overall evaluation of the contributing trends and forces at play in Sutton caused a number of major issues to emerge, of which five were deemed by the municipality and its stakeholders as priorities in the strategic plan.

Primary issues

1. Economic diversification (the town as a seasonal recreational tourism destination, the sustainability of its tourism role, the availability of space for industry)
2. Development of Mont Sutton's ski centre
3. Maintaining Sutton's local elementary school
4. Retention of town's youth / Ageing of town's population
5. Housing for lower-income residents

Other issues

1. Limited residential space in the town (village core, limited urban zone)
2. Divergence between the original population and vacationers and newcomers, a slight francophone / anglophone dichotomy
3. Communication and partnerships among merchants and community and cultural organizations must be improved (different organizations manage activities on the mountain, no coordination among them)
4. High-speed Internet access (fibre optic cables don't extend beyond Forté)
5. Safety of pedestrians and bicyclists (difficult coexistence between various types of users of local road network)
6. Lack of public transport
7. Limited water availability due to increased demand by tourism and vacationers and newcomers (water availability on the mountain)
8. Local agriculture not developed enough / agricultural land under-used
9. Conservation of the countryside and the natural environment
10. Waning volunteer base





5- STRATEGIC PLAN

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

Sutton's development plan outlines five objectives designed to strengthen the development of the town. These objectives are in line with Sutton's advantages and desired direction. They are the outcome of a collaborative planning approach and were elaborated by analyzing the town's strategic identity and primary issues. The five overall objectives are the following:

- 1.** Develop and implement strategic initiatives designed to encourage and diversify economic activity and strengthen the town's recreational tourism focused on its nature-culture theme or signature.
- 2.** Support Mont Sutton's ski centre development projects as they relate to municipal development (the village-mountain relationship), always in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.
- 3.** Strengthen the vitality of the village core.
- 4.** Reinforce the town's appeal to a socially diverse population base, and particularly for young families.
- 5.** Ensure a healthy balance between the various aspects of the town's development and improving the quality of life of its citizens.

STRATEGIES AND POTENTIAL ACTION PLANS

#1 Overall objective: Develop and implement strategic initiatives designed to encourage regional economic diversity and strengthen the town's recreational tourism focused on its nature culture theme or signature

Strategies	Potential action plans	Priorities
1.1 Strengthen the town's positioning and marketing of its nature-culture signature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a <u>tourist campaign</u> for Sutton focused on its nature-culture signature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Target audiences – Hospitality strategy – Development strategy 	
1.2 Encourage projects focused on the town's nature-culture signature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and evaluate projects with the potential of enhancing the town's long-term recreational tourism plan. Projects could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Highlighting activities with strong and distinct cultural components, for example, a major recurring cultural event – Creating a multifunctional cultural centre – Developing a regional nature park – Becoming an eco-tourism destination – Improving the John Sleeth community and cultural centre – Bringing the history of Sutton to life, using actors and storytellers to set the scene. Also strengthening existing heritage tour and supporting existing initiatives that flow from there • Increase the integration of work by local artists in other areas of tourism as part of the town's promotional efforts (as included in town's cultural policy) 	
1.3 Step-up communications that promote the town's public image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a branding focused on the nature-culture signature • Develop and distribute a <u>communications plan</u> designed to reinforce the town's nature-culture identity • Set up a communications committee 	

STRATEGIES AND POTENTIAL ACTION PLANS

#1 Overall objective: Develop and implement strategic initiatives designed to encourage regional economic diversity and strengthen the town’s recreational tourism focused on its nature culture theme or signature

Strategies	Potential action plans	Priority
1.4 Support the development of four-season recreational tourism activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and mobilize local stakeholders already involved in the development of Sutton’s creative and distinctive four-season tourism activities Help sustain links between Mont Sutton and the development of four-season recreational tourism activities 	
1.5 Support agricultural sector development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support start-up cooperatives related to organic farming, production and local sale Work with local partners and governmental organizations to support the agricultural sector in the western part of the county and the Missisquoi Valley (conserve green spaces, maintain a certain level of agricultural activity, etc.) Collaborating with the MRC and concerned organizations in order to assist needy families by the distribution of excess harvests 	
1.6 Stimulate opportunities for self-employed workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the protection of agricultural heritage Encourage collaborative projects among self-employed workers Identify and undertake activities aimed at improving access to high-speed internet over the entire region Develop job opportunities in the region 	
1.7 Explore the potential of developing the industrial sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate, in cooperation with local stakeholders, any real potential of developing the industrial sector Explore the possibilities of setting up an incubator/university research centre in the region 	

STRATEGIES AND POTENTIAL ACTION PLANS

#2 Overall objective: Support Mont Sutton's development projects as they relate to the municipal ecosystem (the village-mountain relationship), always adhering to the principles of sustainable development

Strategy	Potential action plan	Priority
2.1 Nurture the village-mountain identity as an economic and distinctive asset	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage a greater synergy between local tourist attractions, merchants and the Mont Sutton ski resort• Maintain projects that strengthen the village-mountain relationship and encourage it year round and in the interests of all• Complete the remainder of the Village-Mountain Trail and make it accessible• Post a map of the trails in the centre of town• Develop a plan for Maple Street to make room for alternative travel options (walking, biking...)	

STRATEGIES AND POTENTIAL ACTION PLANS

#3 Overall objective: Strengthen the vitality of the village core

Strategies	Potential action plans	Priority
3.1 Showcase the village core	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve signage on routes entering the town centre: use a distinctive design that highlights Sutton's landscape • Design a walking tour through the town centre that includes, among other things: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the bicycle path – the river • Create a public meeting place in the town centre for people to assemble • Pursue the plan to improve parking in town and improve signage • Enhance the town's visual appeal to create a distinctive ambience • Formulate a land use strategy for the Filtex site 	
3.2 Continue efforts to develop the town core as the location of major cultural activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the cultural policy, complete it and apply its action plan • Implement the public art policy • Explore new ways to link the village and the hiking trails • Assist in the development of ways to encourage cultural tourism such as a booklet featuring cultural activities and best rates 	
3.3 Elaborate a proactive urban approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep applying the architectural and heritage plan, <u>Site planning and architectural integration program (PIIA)</u> for Sutton, which takes into account the architectural characteristics of each of the three sectors of Sutton (mountain/agriculture/town) • Implement and maintain our built heritage to conserve the town's village appeal and heritage features 	

STRATEGIES AND POTENTIAL ACTION PLANS

#4 Overall objective: Reinforce the town’s appeal to a socially diverse population base, and particularly for young families while encouraging our seniors to remain living in the community

Strategies	Potential action plans	Priority
4.1 Develop a plan to attract new citizens, especially young families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a committee to work on ways to attract new citizens and especially young families as outlined in the Families and Seniors Policy • Promote and develop relevant recreational services (library, parks, etc.) 	
4.2 Implement initiatives to make housing more affordable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support the building of accessible and affordable housing • Promote multigenerational housing • Keep in place tax credit policies associated with new construction (for homes of \$300,000 or less) 	
4.3 Collaborate with local stakeholder to maintain and develop Sutton’s school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in integrating an international or sports schooling component at the school • Evaluate the potential of developing links between the school and innovative university projects 	

STRATEGIES AND POTENTIAL ACTION PLANS

#5 Overall objective: Ensure a healthy balance between the various aspects of the town’s development and improving the quality of life of its citizens

Strategies	Potential action plans	Priority
5.1 Establish an appropriate supply of water and oversee its management for the long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a study and carefully establish needs • Develop and implement guidelines and actions necessary to meet future demand 	
5.2 Protect Sutton’s landscape and natural assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the preservation of Sutton’s country flavour and natural environment ... through regulation 	
5.3 Encourage initiatives aimed at maintaining the health and well-being of the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Families and Seniors Policy (2012) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Communicate relevant information better and make the information more easily available – Protect the natural environment and landscape, important features for families and seniors • Encourage networking among the various partners and stakeholders who can provide assistance to families and seniors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Assist the flow of information about health, social and community services for families and seniors (youth clinic, breastfeeding drop-in centre, etc.) – Collaborate with the CSSS in order to ensure that families have local access to all services • Support the development of public transport and encourage alternative traveling options that improve access to health, social and community services • Promote community services offered in the town that help seniors stay at home • Encourage the collaboration and support of local volunteer organizations • Help promote projects that keep seniors in Sutton (residences for independent seniors as well as for residents with decreasing autonomy and facilities for dependent seniors, with diversified services, intergenerational housing, integrated projects) 	

STRATEGIES AND POTENTIAL ACTION PLANS

#5 Overall objective: Ensure a healthy balance between the various aspects of the town's development and improving the quality of life of its citizens

Strategies	Potential action plans	Priorité
5.4 Reinforce the local transport infrastructure and encourage active and safe travel throughout the town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue initiatives related to the <i>Ma municipalité à pied, à vélo!</i> project • Ensure the safety of citizens (Families and Seniors Policy) • Study the possibility of modifying the bicycle path to improve its connectivity in the best and safest way • Review the town's snow-removal plan to ensure sidewalks are safe for families and seniors • Improve infrastructures relating to active transportation modes (benches, cycling network, sidewalks) 	
5.5 Diversify available activities to bring together various segments of the population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize and implement a <u>master plan for municipal parks</u> including recreational facilities • Improve the resources dedicated to event programming and organization • Establish a specific activity program for each age group • Work in partnership with the community to maintain, develop and promote inter-municipal agreements for recreation • Promote the use of libraries and recreational / community facilities 	
5.6 Promote the development of community spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the local day camp (eight weeks) with a permanent facility • Make premises available for cultural and community organizations 	
5.7 Ensure a sustainable and harmonious development of the municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a regulatory threshold that safeguards the town's landscape and nature (Sutton's DNA) while allowing a thoughtful and sustainable development of the territory • Encourage and maintain accessible charging stations for electric cars • Apply the principles of sustainable development to municipal services 	

FOR CONSULTATION

APPENDIX



APPENDIX – BIBLIOGRAPHY

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