



CITY OF WEST LAKE HILLS, TEXAS
NOTICE OF CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Wednesday, October 2, 2024 at 12:00 PM

Notice is hereby given that the City Council of the City of West Lake Hills, Texas, will hold a Workshop on the 2nd day of October 2024 at 12:00 noon, in the Janet Room, Municipal Building, 911 Westlake Drive, West Lake Hills, Texas, at which time the following items will be discussed, to-wit:

1. Call to Order
2. Citizen Communications The City Council welcomes public comments at this point on any issue. If the issue is listed on the agenda, the speaker may choose to comment during the Public Comment period or when the specific agenda item is taken up by the Council later in the meeting. The Council cannot respond to or discuss matters not listed on the agenda. The Council may provide factual information, refer the item to a staff member, or request the item be added to a future meeting agenda. Speakers shall limit their comments to five (5) minutes each.
3. Administration Discussion regarding the West Lake Hills Firewise Action Plan.
4. Administration Discussion regarding strategic planning.
5. Administration Discussion and review of the City Council Focus Areas regarding fire prevention, finance, drainage manual review, compatibility standards, economic development/wastewater, and code enforcement inclusive of the development process.
6. Adjournment

Approved by: James Vaughan, Mayor

Certificate

I certify that the above Notice of the October 2, 2024 City Council Workshop was posted on the bulletin board at the Municipal Building, 911 Westlake Drive, West Lake Hills, Texas on Friday, September 27, 2024 by 5:00 pm. and will remain posted continuously until said workshop is convened.

Signed by: Terry Blanchard, City Secretary

The City of West Lake Hills is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Reasonable accommodation and equal access to communications will be provided upon request.

All items on the agenda are for discussion and/or action. City Council reserves the right to adjourn into executive session at any time during the course of this meeting to discuss any of the matters listed above, as authorized by Texas Government Code Sections 551.071 (Consultation with Attorney), 551.072 (Deliberations about Real Property), 551.073 (Deliberations about Gifts and Donations), 551.074 (Personnel Matters), 551.076 (Deliberations about Security Devices), and 551.086 (Economic Development).



City of West Lake Hills City Council

AGENDA REPORT

Meeting Date:	<u>October 2, 2024</u>	Item Number:	<u>3</u>
Department:	<u>Administration</u>		
Prepared By:	<u>Trey Fletcher</u>	Cost / Budget:	<u>n/a</u>
	<u>Firewise Risk Assessment</u>		
	<u>(April 2023)</u>		
Exhibits:	<u>Firewise Action Plan 2021</u>	Source of Funds:	<u>n/a</u>

Subject

Discussion regarding the West Lake Hills Firewise Action Plan.

Recommendation

No action is being taken.

Discussion

Fire Prevention is among the City Council Focus Areas identified in May, 2024.

The City of West Lake Hills participates in the Firewise USA program. Progress reports to sustain our participation are submitted annually via a portal. Last year, a community wildfire risk assessment was performed. Participants from the Texas A&M Forest Service, Westlake Fire Department, and the City of West Lake Hills conducted the assessment. A copy is attached to this agenda item.

The Firewise Action Plan must be updated at least every three years. The current (2021) plan is attached to this agenda item. The priorities and components of the proposed 2024 action plan for the next three years will be discussed.

Firewise renewal applications are due November 15, 2024.



City of West Lake Hills

Firewise Action Plan

In Cooperation with the Westlake Fire Department



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Statement of Intent

The community of West Lake Hills is a perfect example of Wildland Urban Interface. The wildland beauty is coexisting with the urban sprawl and residential / commercial development. The community is completed, and only periodic construction and remodeling is present at this time.

The residents here are aware of the wildfire hazards but have never experienced nor do they understand the magnitude of the effect a major wildfire in this community will have. The largest wildfire that occurred in this area was in 1962 and did come close to the city limits. At that time the city was not "built out" and most residents now were not present during that fire.

It is the intent of this Action Plan to collaborate with the residents, show an effort by the leaders in the city government and the fire department to bring forth mitigation education, and to identify structure ignitability.

Community Fire Safety Task Groups have been successful in indentifying the hazards in the community, bringing those hazards to the attention to the city government and of the need to enact city ordinances that require home defensible space and building codes that require Firewise construction. This Action Plan aims to be a continuation of the efforts that have already taken place within the Firewise Community.

The City of West Lake Hills is committed in demonstrating the efforts of the community to reduce hazards in the home ignition zone and still maintain an esthetic neighborhood where the natural beauty of the wildland is compatible with the community. It is this commitment and action that the city believes will allow it to continue to be a Firewise Community in Texas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Linda Anthony".

Mayor Linda Anthony

Fire History of the Westbank

In 1947, Osceola Heard Davenport, a wealthy Rio Grande Valley widow of an oilman, came to Austin to buy land to start a ranch. The Walsh brothers, owners of the Thomas Chambers Survey (1280 acres) asked Emmett Shelton, Sr. to show Mrs. Davenport the property. Mrs. Davenport always dressed the part and on this occasion was outfitted as a cowgirl with boots, fringed buckskin and a cowboy hat.

The Chambers survey is a long, narrow rectangle, fronting on Lake Austin. They traveled by pickup truck out Bee Cave Road to the Roy Ranch, then cross-country along an old trail to the highest hilltop to view the land. Mrs. Davenport was pleased and when told the price was \$40,000 declared she would take it and paid cash. With a handshake to seal the deal, she then pulled a flask of whiskey from her hip pocket, took a swig and passed it among the men. Returning to town, Mrs. Davenport complained that the purchase price of the ranch would take a whole month's income.

Emmett Shelton told her that she couldn't put more than a single head to a hundred acres because the land was so thick with trees and shrubs. The new ranch owner set about having the property cleared. Huge brush piles were stacked across the land. She employed workers to cut trees and stack them for burning. Many of these stacks of drying timber and brush when burned set sparks flying onto the property of others like Emmett Shelton who had moved into the West Lake Hills area.

Mrs. Davenport built a small stone ranch house, but despite her efforts the only area where cattle could graze were the same 200 acres at the far north end of the peninsula used by the Walsh brothers. She soon grew tired of her venture and never put any cattle on any other areas of the land.

When Emmett Shelton returned from World War II, he wrote Mrs. Davenport a letter warning her of serious consequences if she were to keep burning brush and causing fires. She quit burning the brush piles that were still there in 1961 and caused considerable impact on the vegetation, extending into the part of the ranch now included in the Wild Basin preserve. [Information compiled by Kathryn Respass with anecdotal information from Emmett Shelton, Sr. April 14, 1961]

About 9 a.m. on Friday, April 14, 1961, a motorist traveling along St. Stephens School Road on the western boundary of the Roy Ranch carelessly tossed a lighted cigarette out the window and ignited a grass fire. A strong wind out of the west quickly spread the flames east across the Roy Ranch and onto Davenport Ranch. There the fire leaped from one old brush pile to another and fed on dried vegetation in canyons and ravines leading southward. There were no roads into the area and at least a dozen contractors in town sent bulldozers to help build a fire lane and to try to control the inferno.

More than two hundred students from The University of Texas and St. Edward's University volunteered to fight the fire. An intensive two-day community effort stopped the fire short of Bee Creek. All of Wild Basin north of a line parallel to Bee Creek and

just north of the creek, burned in the fire. However, many big trees, including cedar trees, did not burn [newspaper account, April 18, 1961]. Shelton regards the woods along Bee Creek as having been untouched by any disturbance, cutting or fire.

The halting of the fire's progress at the line north of Bee Creek was by means of a fire lane, cut by bulldozers. The '61 fire came only four years after the end of the worst drought in weather department records for the area. When the fire began just east of St. Stephen's School Road, Emmett Shelton, Jr. thought they could put it out by stamping or beating it, but the grass fire quickly ignited the brush and it was too late for quick action.

Some main factors affecting the fire which spread to about 4000 acres were: (1) the extremely dry conditions preceding the fire (Jan. to March had been drier than the same period at any time during the drought of the 50s); (2) the wind shift to the west, and then the strong cold front that brought winds, NNW and N up to 25 knots; (3) the difficulty of getting into the canyons with equipment; and (4) the piles of brush on the Davenport Ranch.

The fire began about 9 a.m. on Friday, April 14 and was still burning on Sunday evening. Some spots flared up again on Monday, April 17. Emmett Shelton, Sr. reported that the fire tended to follow the canyons, which run roughly east-west and the winds were mostly NW and NNW. He felt the dry leaf litter and Davenport brush piles enabled the fire to spread quickly and remarked that "the large living cedar trees were slow to catch fire, though, when they do, they explode like anti-aircraft fire".

After the fire, the rest of April and the first weeks of May continued to be without rain. However, good rains in May and June appeared to help the trees and shrubs make good growth. The rainfall for '61 and '62 was average; '63 was another drought year; and in '64 the normal rains returned. The environment that developed after the fire, new growth of live oak, Texas oak, evergreen sumac and silk tassel interspersed on open grassland, provides excellent habitat for many birds and animals.

City of West Lake Hills Community Profile

The city of West Lake Hills was founded and incorporated as a village on September 9, 1953.

The city today is comprised of 2,560 acres (four square miles) with approximately 40 miles of public streets. The population is 3,242 (2020 Census) with approximately 1,000 homes and 200 businesses.

The higher parts of the city (Red Bud Trail) are located on a series of primary ridge lines with concave or convex slopes with saddles in between. There are box canyons in between the ridge line streets that are full of decades of slash, duff, branch litter among small to medium size cedars and oaks.

The north side of West Lake Hills is bordered by the Wild Basin Preserve, operate by St. Edwards University. This preserve is located in between a ridge line that borders Capital of Texas Hwy and steep slopes and box canyons on the northern edge of West lake Hills.

Most homes in the city have brick or stone veneers and are well maintained. There are some older homes that were built in the 1960's that still have wood siding. These are probably the greatest risk for wildfire but some of these are being remodeled and upgraded. Most have grass yards that create some defensible space. However, in some areas the tree canopy and vegetation have grown over the road creating an elevated ladder fuels. The most popular building sites are facing into the canyons and some have views of the City of Austin. Many homes are built on the sides of the canyons.

The locations of the commercial structures are along the Bee Cave Rd (FM2244) a four-lane state highway and usually have plenty of defensible space. Occasionally, some of the commercial structures back to heavy to medium brush mixed with cedar and oak trees.

West Lake Hills is governed by a Mayor and City Council. Residents are asked to participate in Building Design Committee, Zoning and Planning Commission, Wastewater Commission, and Transportation Commission. Special Fire Safety Groups have been formed over the past 20 years.

The City of West Lake Hills has its own police department, but fire service is provided by Travis County Emergency Services District #9 (Westlake Fire Department). ESD#9 covers about 14 square miles including the cities of Rollingwood, West Lake Hills as well as some unincorporated areas in southwest Travis County.

Electric utilities are provided by Austin Energy and most lines are overhead. Some of the newer developments are underground. Water is provided by Water District #10. There is gas service in the City provided by Texas Gas Service.

Emergency Services District #9 (Westlake Fire Department) is governed by five Board Members who live in the District. The District is bordered by Lake Austin to the north and east, MoPac Expressway and the city of Austin to the south and Barton Creek to the west.

The City of West Lake Hills is in the Eanes School District. There are eight schools in the District but only three in the West Lake Hills city limits. The largest school is Westlake High School which resembles more of a college campus than a high school. It has around 2,000 students and has a large sports stadium and other facilities that could be used as a shelter. ESD#9 has an Interlocal Agreement with the Eanes School District to use their buses and facilities in case of a large-scale emergency. The Eanes School District is also a state and county emergency shelter that was utilized for Hurricane Rita.

The City of West Lake Hills has ordinances that require that certain building and fire codes be followed. Vegetation requirement and replacement requirements are in the ordinances.

Community Prescription: A Plan for the Future

Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project(s) – Cleanup Plans by WLH

In the winter of 2007, a large winter storm engulfed most of Texas and even produced snow and ice accumulation not seen in years in the area. The storm damaged many trees in the City of West Lake Hills. The result was that almost every home had some downed tree limbs or whole trees that fell blocking roads and littering yards. The City would provide a pickup service if the residents would cut the debris in somewhat manageable sections and stack it near the roadway. The plan worked well and as spring approached some residents suggested that the City should continue the effort to address wildfire hazards.

This became a Prescribed Cleanup by the City of West Lake Hills and is a key part in the maintenance for our Firewise Community. Without the cleanup effort, this community would not be able to decrease the hazards in the Home Ignition Zone.

Semi-Annual Brush Pickup

The current City of West Lake Hills Administration is financing a semi-annual brush pickup at a cost of \$250,000.

Right of Way Cleanup

West Lake Hills has hired crews to trim the vegetation along the city right of way along the major roads including Bee Cave Rd., Red Bud Trail and the surrounding side streets.

Treatment of Structural Ignitability – Public Education and Outreach

The Texas Forest Service, the Westlake Fire Department and the Fire Safety Task Force have teamed together to educate the citizen about defensible space and the Home Ignition Zone.

The following actions will continue to take place to enforce our outreach efforts:

- Mailings, community messages, and/or social media postings to residents about defensible space by the City of West Lake Hills.
- Proclamations by the City of West Lake Hills during Wildfire Awareness Week.
- The Westlake Fire Department's participation in National Night Out and July 4th explaining and providing literature to residents about defensible space.
- The Westlake Fire Department and City of West Lake Hills hosting an open house at the fire station involving public safety messaging on wildland prevention efforts.
- The Westlake Fire Department provides residents literature at local stores and at community events.

- The Westlake Fire Department provides Home Assessments for residents at no cost to educate them on defensible space.

Emergency Facilities/Equipment Enhancement

The City of West Lake Hills has two building that encompass the City Offices, West Lake Hills Police Department and the City Council Chambers. The building has an emergency generator for the Police Department and Dispatch Center.

There are no community centers or other public building that could be considered emergency facilities and, consequently, the city has made no recent improvements in this area. The city has a bond election for a new city hall and police station that may be able to be used for emergency facilities in the future.

Emergency Response, Evacuation and Wildfire Response Plan

The Westlake Fire Department (Travis County ESD#9) has developed a Wildfire Action Plan. The Plan covers more areas than just the City of West Lake Hills as does the coverage area of the Department. It should be noted that the Westlake Fire Department is not governed by the City of West Lake Hills and has its own taxing authority, equipment, and facilities. The City of West Lake Hills has established and adopted a city-wide evacuation plan. The city, its residents, and the fire department should review the plan for any needed updates on an annual basis.

The City of West Lake Hills participates in Annual Emergency Planning Sessions. These sessions, sponsored by the Westlake Fire Department, include members from local law enforcement agencies, the Eanes School District and the Travis County Office of Emergency Management. Together the group discusses plans for evacuations, identifies resources that will be needed during large scale emergencies, communications and transportation issues that will affect all of us should the community experience a large wildfire.

Enhancement of Utilities and Infrastructure

Underground Utilities

West Lake Hills does not own the utilities in the city. Electricity is provided by the City of Austin and the majority of the electrical service is above ground. Only in the newer developed areas of West Lake Hills are the residential hookups below ground.

Water Improvements

The City of West Lake Hills has no real control over the water system. That service is provided by Water District #10. The infrastructure has been in place for many years and major water improvements have been made by Water District #10 over the last several years. The Firewise community will continue to collaborate with the Water District on fire safety efforts that benefit the area.

Planning Commitments by the City of West Lake Hills

The City of West Lake Hills have made the commitment to encourage residents to create defensible space. The city will continue to provide information and vegetation

pickup for residents on a semi-annual basis when the budget allows. The Mayor and City Council are committed to learn more about the action the city can take to make the community safer from the threat of wildfire.

Biomass/Utilization

If the City of West Lake Hills allowed the vegetation debris and refuse that is collected as a result of the semi-annual vegetation cleanup to be left on the ground it would add to the years of duff and create additional hazard during wildfire season. The city educates its vendors and requires that the vegetation must be taken away from the city and recycled. This provides a useful product from the vegetation and allows the City of West Lake Hills to help the community maintain a cleaner environment.

Timetable

Media Releases

Media releases on the Firewise Action Plan will be made two weeks before the Firewise Day. The event will be a commitment from the community to continue working on defensible space, education for residents and identifying / problem solving wildfire hazards.

Tracking of Progress/Fire Planning Checklist

1. Continue to support and staff the Wildfire Safety Task Force.
2. Continue Semi-Annual Vegetation Pickups
3. Notify and educate residents about creating defensible space semi-annually before the Semi-Annual Vegetation Pickup including education on city ordinances regarding tree and vegetation removal.
4. Continue to clear the right of way of dead limbs and vegetation debris.
5. Create defensible space around the City of West Lake Hills Council Chambers, Police Department and City Offices.
6. Educate and create City Ordinances that encourage builders and residents to use Firewise building construction materials and designs.
7. Participate in National and Statewide Wildfire Events such as Wildfire Awareness Week.
8. Collect data on the hours / cost the community spends on Firewise progression and report that data annually to the Texas Forest Service and the Travis County Office of Emergency Management.

Firewise Days

Firewise Days will occur each year during Wildfire Awareness Week (usually in the spring, annually). The West Lake Hills City Council, like many other cities in Travis County, makes proclamations each year declaring the week to be Wildfire Awareness Week. Together with the Texas Forest Service and other local fire departments, the Westlake Fire Department participates in events during the week. Visits to local schools, shopping centers and demonstrations of Firewise construction materials and vegetation are the normal activities during Wildfire Awareness Week.

Conclusion

The City of West Lake Hills maintains its commitment to complete this Action Plan and continue to develop the cities Firewise efforts. The city values its partnership with the Westlake Fire Department and looks forward to its ongoing collaboration to keep the community as safe as possible in the wildland urban interface.

West Lake Hills

Firewise Risk Assessment

Travis County



April 2023



Introduction

The Firewise USA[®] program is designed to provide an effective management approach for preserving wildland living aesthetics while preparing communities for wildland fire. The program can be tailored for adoption by any community or neighborhood association that is committed to ensuring its citizens maximum protection from wildland fire. The following community assessment is intended as a resource to be used by West Lake Hills leadership for creating a wildfire safety action plan. The plan developed from the information in this assessment should be implemented in a collaborative manner, and updated and modified as needed, no less than every three years.

The Firewise USA[®] program acknowledges that there are many reasons and values that lead a person to live in the wildland urban interface (WUI) and that there may be a desire for certain flammable components to exist on their property. It is important for homeowners to understand the implications of the choices they are making as they directly relate to the ignitability of their home ignition zones during a wildfire.

One of the main goals of the Firewise USA[®] program is for residents to focus on those items that they know they can control. Becoming aware of the threat wildland fire presents is the first and most important step any landowner can take. After that, making an effort to work on the items that the residents do have control over, whether big or small, will reduce the chance of home and structure loss in a wildland fire.

Assessment Process

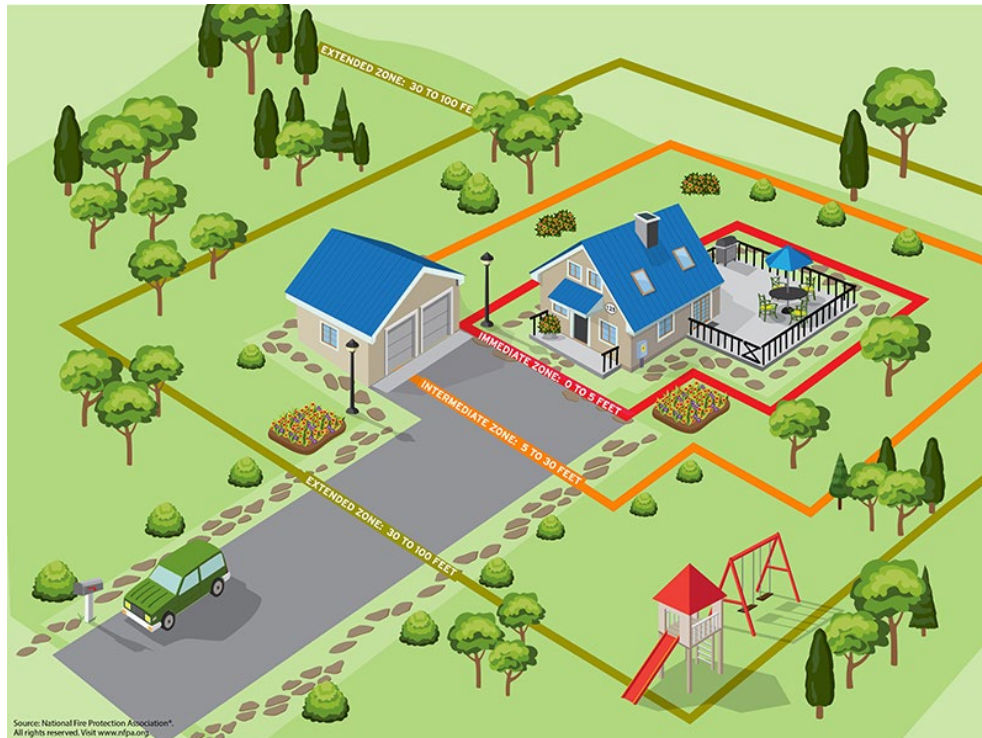
The site assessment was completed by Walter Flocke, Wildland Urban Interface Coordinator with the Texas A&M Forest Service on April 14th, 2023. Chief Michael Lacey of Westlake Fire Department and City of West Lake Hills City Administrator Trey Fletcher accompanied Walter. The site assessment included discussing local conditions, ongoing and future mitigation projects, and a drive through the city to assess structure vulnerability and broader ecological conditions.

Included in this written assessment are observations made while visiting West Lake Hills. The assessment examines the ease with which structure ignitions could occur under severe wildfire conditions and how these ignitions might be avoided within the home ignition zones of affected residences. The assessment does not focus on specific homes but examines the residential community in West Lake Hills as a whole.

West Lake Hills is in the wildland urban interface, defined as urbanized areas that abut directly with canyonlands of natural vegetation where ignitions could occur and threaten structures on those perimeters. Wildfires will happen--exclusion is not a choice. The variables in a wildfire scenario are when and where the fire will occur. The good news is that by addressing community vulnerabilities, residents will be able to substantially reduce their exposure to loss. Relatively small investments of time and effort can reap great rewards in wildfire safety.

Definition of the Home Ignition Zone

A structure burns because of its interrelationship with its immediate surroundings. To avoid a home ignition, a homeowner must prepare their structure to withstand ember attacks and minimize the likelihood of flames or surface fire touching the home or any attachments. The landscaping and construction choices made in the home ignition zone (HIZ) determines the potential for home ignition during a wildland fire. The HIZ includes a house and its immediate surroundings up to 100 to 200 feet from the foundation. The HIZ often includes other structures, highlighting the need for action to take place on a community scale, instead of through piecemeal actions.



Diverting fire's path through modification of material in the HIZ is an ongoing task that can result in avoiding home loss or damage. To accomplish this, flammable or vulnerable structural items must be modified or removed to prevent flames or embers from contacting or entering a structure. Reducing the volume of combustible material such as live and dead vegetation, and ladder fuels will affect the intensity of the wildfire as it enters the home ignition zone. The goal is to reduce the intensity of wildfire as it approaches our built environment.

Residents of West Lake Hills can reduce the risk of destruction during a wildfire by taking proactive actions within their home ignition zones. The Firewise USA® program offers risk reduction efforts of all complexity for homeowners to choose from when looking to reduce their chance of loss.

Description of Severe Case Wildland Fire Characteristics that Threaten the Area

Fire intensity and spread rate depend on the fuel type and condition (live or dead, moisture content, etc.), the weather conditions prior to and during ignition, and the topography. Generally, the following relationships hold between wildfire behavior and the fuel, weather and topography.

- Fine fuels, defined as fuel with a diameter less than 1/4in (ex. grasses, needles, twigs), ignite more easily and spread faster with higher intensities than coarser fuels, generally fuels greater than 1/4in in diameter (ex. large branches, logs, shrubs). For a given fuel, the more there is and the more continuous it is, the faster the fire spreads and the higher the intensities. Fine fuels take a shorter time to burn out than coarser fuels.
- The weather conditions affect the moisture content of the dead and live vegetative fuels. Dead fine fuel moisture content is highly dependent on the relative humidity and the degree of sun exposure. The lower the relative humidity and the greater the sun exposure, the lower will be the fuel moisture content. Lower fuel moisture produces higher spread rates and fire intensities.
- Wind speed significantly influences the rate of fire spread and fire intensity. The higher the wind speed, the greater the spread rate and intensity.
- Topography influences fire behavior principally by the steepness of the slope. However, the configuration of the terrain such as narrow draws, saddles and so forth can influence fire spread and intensity. In general, the steeper the slope, the higher the uphill fire spread and intensity.

Anticipated wildfires in the Hill Country region of Texas are expected to be driven by the combination of high wind speeds, low relative humidity, and long periods of time with elevated temperatures. The combination of these weather characteristics with dry fuels such as grasses, shrubs, and trees, especially those in close proximity to a house, can often lead to structure loss. Due to the rugged terrain common in this area, access for structural and wildland firefighters is often an issue. Fire in the hill country can be expected to move quickly uphill in vegetated canyons and will often have unpredictable movement due to shifting wind patterns manipulated by changing topography.

Embers are another characteristic of a wildfire that are not often considered by homeowners. Embers are small burning pieces of vegetation or wood that are carried by the wind ahead of a wildfire. An ember shower can be carried over a mile away from a wildfire and creates spot fires, which ignite vegetation on the roof, gutters, garden beds, and enter vents. Ember showers lead to structure loss even if the wildfire is not within the boundaries of the neighborhood. Wildfire researchers know that embers are the leading cause of home loss in a wildfire based on postfire assessments.

Site Description

The City of West Lake Hills, Texas is an incorporated community to the west of Downtown Austin in Central Travis County. The enclave city is surrounded by the jurisdictional limits of the city of Austin as well as the city of Rollingwood.

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the population of West Lake Hills is 3,444 residents in 1,193 households. Development is primarily single-family residential and vary from modern architecture to mid-century ranch style homes. Most homes sit on lots between a half-acre, to up

[illegible]

Roadways are all paved surfaced, clearly marked and accessible. Many driveways are too steep or too narrow for large fire truck access or turn around, and in the case of an

Initial Observations and Recommendations

Most of the structures observed are built with fire-resistant roofing materials, including metal, composite shingle, and clay tile. Most roofs do have mature tree canopy partially covering them. In Texas, leaves drop twice a year depending on the species. Live oaks drop leaves in the spring while deciduous trees drop leaves in the fall. This means for most areas that cleaning gutters and eaves should be done at least twice a year depending on the species around a home. Leaf cast accumulation in gutters, roofline valleys, and on porches are common ignition points for a embers, where enough fuel is available to potentially ignite a structure.

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There are also many characteristics of the site that residents are unable to change:

- Topographical features such as slopes, canyons, and chimneys that can increase rate of spread and flame length.
- Predominate vegetation characteristics across the city as a whole.
- Infrastructure such as roadways and utility line rights-of-way.

The Immediate Zone of the HIZ includes the structure itself and the area within 5 feet surrounding it. This is the most important area in which to take immediate action as it is the most vulnerable to embers and where even small flames can come into direct contact with the structure. Both research and firefighters' first-hand accounts tell us that a well-prepared Immediate Zone makes the biggest difference in home survivability and first responder safety.

Home ignition zones in West Lake Hills vary from native shade tolerant plants to turf grass lawns, or xeriscape landscaping. In the photo below, maintenance of overgrowth of vegetation has not been done for at least a few growing seasons and fuel has accumulated around the structure, creating a continuous pathway for surface fire from natural vegetation to the structure. A low-cost mitigation strategy to reduce risk of this home would be to remove all leaves of debris in the first 5 feet and prune up the yaupon into single stemmed trees in the 5–30-foot zone.



Many homes in West Lake hills have wooden porches or balconies. These areas are of high importance for maintenance. It is recommended to keep porches and the area below them clean of leaf debris that can harbor an ember fire. Firewood should be kept 30 feet from a structure when not actively being used, and potted vegetation should be kept live and healthy. Patio furniture and other appliances on porch areas should also be treated as a possible fuel in a wildfire. Store patio furniture pillows inside when not in use, and during times of high fire danger move flammable items such as gardening, and home improvement supplies to a garage. Remember that porches are a part of the structure, and the home ignition zone begins at the boundary of these attachments, not just the home.

It is important to pay attention to bushes planted around a structure's foundation. If these shrubs are not maintained by annual pruning to remove dead growth and keep growth from touching the structure, they can act as ladder fuel. It is recommended to have all shrubs or trees at least 5 feet from a structure to provide the best chance of structure survival. Ladder fuels function as a stepping on point where a low-intensity surface fire can climb vertically in a receptive fuel bed. The higher off the ground a fire is, the more risk to the structure and first responders. Ladder fuels include anything flammable growing or stored under another flammable objects. Spare

lumber and firewood often act as ladder fuels when stored under wooden porches or near sheds much like how shrubs and small trees do the same when under or near mature canopies and near eaves, wooden fences, etc. When choosing a new ornamental shrub consider something with less dense branching patterns. Keep shrubs healthy, pruned, and away from vulnerable spots in structures like windows and vents that could fail under high heat or allow embers into a structure.

“Limbing up” vegetative ladder fuel around a house is a great way to keep the yard attractive and also reduce the risk of a surface fire being able to climb into the canopy. Note in the photo to the right, the property owner has taken positive action by keeping mature native trees in place, but also maintained the understory to reduce ladder fuels. Keeping vegetation healthy, properly pruned, and removing dead vegetation and old leaves on or near a house, is a great way to keep your yard “lean, clean, and green.” Decreasing the competition for space and resources such as water and nutrients helps the remaining vegetation in the long run.



Most all residential structures observed have a mature shaded tree overstory. National recommendations for tree spacing require that no tree limbs are within 10-feet of a house, and while that is a great way of decreasing the potential for a crown fire to spread to the structure, this is usually not a desirable course of action for owners and is often not necessary with no flammable ladder materials to carry fire into the crown of trees in maintained yards. As



mentioned above, flammable material under the mature crown should be reduced in height or removed, the debris the mature tree creates should be cleared from the roof and not allowed to gather around the base of the structure and it’s wooden attachments (especially during high fire

danger), and the crowns of mature trees should be isolated from other stands of mature trees. In the example to the right, the home is near multiple mature oak trees that are valuable additions, ecologically, to the landscape. From a wildfire perspective, the main risk presents itself in the debris dropped which gathers on the roofline or the landscaped beds along the structure. The potential for the crown to become involved if the vegetation below ignites is highly unlikely due to absence of ladder fuels.

For more information on ways residents in West Lake Hills can reduce risk of fires with proper tree care, visit the Austin Energy website: <https://austinenergy.com/residential/residential-services/tree-trimming>

Using non-combustible material around structures and access roads provides a buffer where a surface fire cannot continue horizontally. Substituting mulch with rock landscaping in the immediate zone reduces continuity of surface fuels and keeps embers from igniting fuels adjacent to a structure's foundation. The wooden fence shown here could carry fire from the natural surroundings toward structures, however it becomes a fire-resistant metal fence before reaching the structure, mitigating this risk.



The highest risk of WUI fire impacting the community lies along its boundary with the Wild Basin Preserve. Homes along this area should take highest priority for further assessment and for ensuring home hardening techniques to withstand the rare possibility of a wildfire moving from Wild Basin into West Lake Hills. While Firewise USA outlines actionable items to the individual homeowner, identifying collaborative efforts with outside neighboring properties is encouraged.

These examples are not intended to cover all potential considerations leadership should be aware of when moving forward with the Firewise USA™ program. The immediate zone, vegetation management, fire resistant landscaping, and evacuation routes are simply items that were noted during the onsite assessment.

Successful Wildfire Resilience Modifications

The Firewise USA™ program seeks to create a sustainable balance that will allow communities to live safely while maintaining environmental harmony in a WUI setting. Homeowners already balance their decisions about fire protection measures against their desire for certain flammable components on their properties. It is important for them to understand the implications of the choices they are making. These choices directly relate to the ignitability of the home ignition zones during a wildfire.

When adequately prepared, a house can likely withstand a wildfire without the intervention of the fire service. Further, a house and its surrounding community can be both wildfire resilient and compatible with the area's ecosystem. The Firewise USA® program is designed to enable communities to achieve a high level of protection against WUI fire loss even as a sustainable ecosystem balance is maintained.

Communities must focus attention on the home ignition zone and eliminate a step in the fire's potential relationship with the house. This can be accomplished by disconnecting the house from high and/or low-intensity fire that could occur around it. Combining fire-resistant construction with fire-resistant landscaping will increase the probability of surviving a wildfire. Solutions to "harden a home" from a wildfire include:

- Using noncombustible roofing, siding, fencing, and decking materials.
- Installing metal screens over vents and underneath decks to reduce the chance of embers entering the structure or finding receptive beds of material to slowly build up heat.
- Installing double-paned or tempered glass windows with metal frames when replacing older windows.
- Boxing in eaves with non-combustible material.
- Installing metal gutters and gutter guards to reduce the build-up of flammable material.

Next, residents should work to follow fire resistant landscaping principles. This means cleaning out plant beds near their homes, removing flammable materials such as mulch, dead leaves, and needles. In addition, plants within the immediate zone are recommended to be pruned back, especially beneath windows and other higher risk points, such as near wooden structures or when touching the house directly. Ladder fuels should be removed or trimmed so that fire cannot reach the crowns of trees. It is recommended that trees be pruned up six to ten feet from the ground; shorter trees should not exceed 1/3 of the overall tree height. Visit <https://agrillife.org/treecarekit/planting-tree-maintenance/how-to-prune-a-tree/> for more details on tree pruning.

For more examples of proper principles, please visit [Firewise.org](https://www.firewise.org).

Next Steps & Final Thoughts

For more information on the HIZ topic visit <https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/ProtectYourHome/>

For an interactive, virtual course, register at <https://www.nfpa.org/wildfirepreparedness> for "Reducing Wildfire Risk to Property: Protecting Your Home or Business" a free, 1-hour session.

After reviewing the contents of this assessment and its recommendations, the West Lake Hills Firewise Board will determine whether it wishes to continue seeking Firewise USA® recognition.

If the site assessment and recommendations are accepted and recognition will be sought, the West Lake Hills Firewise Board will continue to create agreed-upon, area-specific solutions to the recommendations and update their written action plan every three years-

Assuming the assessment area seeks to achieve national Firewise USA® recognition status, it will integrate the following standards into its continued plan of action:

1. Maintain a local Firewise board comprised of residents and other applicable stakeholders. This group will collaborate on developing the site's risk reduction priorities, develop a multi-year action plan based on the risk assessment, and oversee the completion of the annual renewal requirements needed to retain an "in good standing" status. Action plans are a prioritized list of risk reduction projects/investments for the participating site, along with suggested homeowner actions and education activities that participants will strive to complete annually or over a period of multiple years. Action plans are developed by the board and need updating at least every three years.
2. At a minimum, each site is required to invest the equivalent of one volunteer hour (currently \$29.95) per dwelling unit in wildfire risk reduction actions annually (the rate is based on the 2023 annual National Hourly Volunteer Rate, which is updated every year in April when the new amount is published). Qualifying expenditures include contractor costs, rental equipment, volunteer hours, etc. Residents completing select home modifications, along with any qualifying work performed at their home and in the adjacent home ignition zones can contribute related hours and/or costs towards meeting the site's collective investment amount.
3. Each participating site is required to have a minimum of one wildfire risk reduction educational outreach event or related activity annually.
4. Every year participating sites must submit an annual renewal to maintain their "In Good Standing" status. The annual renewal application can be accessed through the Firewise USA™ online management portal (<http://portal.firewise.org/>).



City of West Lake Hills City Council

AGENDA REPORT

Meeting Date:	<u>October 2, 2024</u>	Item Number:	<u>4</u>
Department:	<u>Administration</u>		
Prepared By:	<u>Trey Fletcher</u>	Cost / Budget:	<u>Approximately \$12,200.</u>
Exhibits:	<u>Proposal</u>	Source of Funds:	<u>FY 25 General Fund</u>

Subject

Discussion regarding strategic planning.

Recommendation

No action is being taken.

Discussion

This briefing is to discuss the selection of SGR and facilitator Hilary Shine, and the goal setting and strategic planning process in the scope of work in preparation for the retreat scheduled for October 30.

Attached is a publication from the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) that provides an excellent background for the development, implementation and maintenance of a strategic planning process.



STRATEGIC PLANNING IN SMALL COMMUNITIES A MANAGER'S MANUAL

September 2022

STEPHANIE DEAN DAVIS, Ph.D.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



STEPHANIE DEAN DAVIS, PH.D., is a collegiate assistant professor and the program director for the Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia.

Prior to her position with Virginia Tech, Davis served in local government for 20 years as a budget and management analyst; finance, human resources, and information technology director; and as vice president/consultant for a national consulting firm. Her research interests include public sector budgeting, regional collaboration, and inter-local relations.

Davis holds a Ph.D. in public policy and administration, a master of public administration, and a bachelor of science in economics. She serves on the Commission on Local Government for the state of the Virginia, the GFOA Budgeting for 2020 and Beyond Task Force, and GFOA's Educational Advisory Committee.

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This report was completed as part of ICMA's Local Government Research Fellowship program. ICMA Research Fellows are practitioners and academics that conduct action-oriented research addressing important trends, drivers, and issues facing local governments. Their work advances ICMA's strategic priority to provide thought leadership and resources that support members and other local government stakeholders in creating and sustaining thriving communities throughout the world.

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Foreword

Like everything else in the time of the pandemic, strategic planning has become more difficult. Between the intensely partisan and divisive politics of 2020 and the complete uncertainty of budget numbers, thinking about mission statements or visionary goals seems superfluous to many elected officials and nonsensical to others. Elected officials find themselves inundated at public hearings by residents demanding answers to national COVID policies, when the virus will be stopped, or when they can go back to their regular life. Residents want to debate the merits of critical race theory and how to address an individual's preferred pronouns in school. Meanwhile, making sure basic services or needs are met or that employees have what is needed to do their work becomes secondary to the headline of the day or the budget crisis du jour.

Who has the time or energy to think about what the community would look like if it were perfect when there is so much energy focused on what is wrong, wrong, wrong in this very moment? Yet, somehow, good government must move past what is wrong and refocus energy on what is right—and what is possible. Our communities are places of unity, cohesion, and pride. In our lifetime, there has never been a harder time to find consensus on a future vision and remain focused on local priorities. Strategic planning, linked to the locality's budget process, allows facts to be known and shared, goals to be established, and priorities to be set. Through this process, small communities can remember what makes them unique, focus their efforts on what unites them, and move toward a better future, and do so in a way that pulls the community closer, rather than drives it apart.

In 2021, in the midst of so much antagonism and angst, ICMA funded this fellowship to help managers remember what they already know—our time and energy, as well as our budgets, should reflect what matters to our

community and what makes the community a better place. Dr. Stephanie Davis, with local government budgeting experience in localities small and large, serving as a professor in the School of Public and International Affairs at Virginia Tech, was the ideal person to bring us all back around to what matters. Strategic planning — that involves the community, incorporates the unique vision and goals of the community, is agreed to by the elected body, and tied firmly to our budgets — will keep residents, staff, and elected representatives focused on the business, as well as the vision, of government and how to make the community a better place. Davis uses data from communities around the country to show the current status of strategic planning in small communities and best practices to refocus the process. She knows of what she speaks. She has facilitated these retreats and held the hands of many managers as they navigate this tumultuous time and sacred duty.

Strategic planning and a better budget process won't solve all your community's problems. But it will help your community remember that while the national debates and discussions over issues of incredible importance matter deeply to us, good governance must go on. Revenues must be predicted, budgets balanced, bills paid, and services rendered. And, if we want to be more than we are already, we must do these things with a future in mind. Otherwise, our community is stagnant. So, in this time of chaos and noise, the way forward is simple and elegant. Processes already exist to assist local governments in refocusing their energies on their mission, vision, and values. This study will help each of us to remember what we know and to find additional tools to do our budgeting and strategic planning better.



Sara McGuffin
Town Manager
Amherst, Virginia

Introduction

“If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll end up someplace else.”

Yogi Berra, former New York Yankees catcher

For many local government managers, the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the priorities of the local government to mitigation and response to the public health crisis. The ability to set aside time with elected officials, staff, and other key stakeholders to develop a plan for action is severely limited. Quite frankly, strategic planning is just not a priority.

But at some point, strategic planning should be considered a priority. In my experience with small communities in a challenging area of the country, the ability to prioritize resources is essential *because of the lack of resources*. Strategic planning is a necessity to align human and financial resources with the priorities of the community.

A strategic plan is a tool for you, your elected officials, and your residents for the effective and efficient delivery of services in your community. The strategic plan provides you and your elected officials with the answer to the question “Why are we doing this?” The strategic plan is the elected official’s vision for the community and provides the guide for budgeting new resources or reallocating existing ones. Whether created through formal or informal processes, complicated or simple, a strategic plan is unique and tailored to fit your community’s needs.

This report is intended for first-time administrators and/or those working in communities without a strategic plan, specifically for those in small communities with populations 20,000 and below. It provides an overview of the benefits of having a strategic plan from managers who have them, use them, and encourage them. Most importantly, this report provides managers with guidelines on “how to” and items to consider before starting the process. The case studies at the end of the report provide detailed information directly from small community managers on how they built the case for, created, and implemented their own strategic plan.

Report Organization

This report is composed of five sections. **Why Do Strategic Planning** provides an overview of the benefits, including utilizing the plan as an accountability tool, a prioritization tool, and a communication tool. **Strategic Planning in Action** provides the reader with process guidance, examples, and key questions to consider when moving forward with a strategic plan process. **We Have a Strategic Plan, Now What?** details steps of adoption, updates, reporting

on progress, and linking to the budget. **Conducting Performance Management** introduces performance management and how it overlaps with strategic planning. The final section provides five **Case Studies** and an in-depth review of the processes and procedures used by the communities to develop their strategic plan.

Overview of the Research Report and Process

This research report was developed in phases over a period of six months. In July 2021, the academic and professional literature was reviewed. Virtual interviews were conducted with 13 local government officials in Virginia. The purpose of the interviews and the research review was to collect data to inform the development of a survey to be distributed to local governments. The communities who participated in the initial interviews are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Interview Participants

Virginia Local Government	Population	Local Government Official
Pearisburg	2,909	Town Manager
Bedford	6,657	Town Manager
Ashland	7,565	Town Manager
Scottsville	524	Town Manager
Amherst	2,732	Town Manager
Crew	2,465	Town Manager
Bland County	6,270	County Administrator
Alleghany County	15,223	County Administrator
Patrick County	17,608	County Administrator
Norton	3,687	City Manager
Emporia	5,766	City Manager
Falls Church	14,128	Deputy City Manager
Poquoson	12,460	City Manager
Bristol	17,219	City Manager

A strategic planning survey, distributed in August 2021, provided a snapshot of strategic planning initiatives in small communities throughout the United States and is referenced throughout this report. The survey was piloted with International City/County Management Association (ICMA) staff and 14 local government managers in Virginia to review the flow and structure of the survey.¹

The final survey was then distributed in August 2021 by the Virginia Municipal League (VML), Virginia Association of Counties (VACO), Virginia Local Government

Management Association (VLGMA) and ICMA. Data analysis was conducted during the month of September 2021.

The survey was completed by 95 local government officials in 24 states, the District of Columbia, and one international respondent. Tables 2A, 2b, and 2C below detail the types of local government, the population of the representative governments, and the local government official completing the survey.

The respondents included local government managers, assistants or deputy managers, department heads, elected officials, and others, including clerks, interim managers, and retired managers. The respondents represented a balance of city/town and county governments and 70% were from communities with populations less than 10,000.

Local government officials were asked if they had a strategic plan, were in the process of developing one, or had some components of a strategic plan. About half of the officials responding noted they have a strategic plan. A majority of respondents had experience with strategic planning with either some components of a plan or a plan in development. Whether or not they have a complete or partial plan, they were able to offer insights into the advantages and challenges of strategic planning in small local governments.

More information on the strategic planning survey can be found in Appendix A.

Tables 2A, 2B, 2C: Survey Respondent Demographics

Type of Local Government (n=93)	Percentage
City	47%
County	9%
Town	44%

Population Range (n=95)	Percentage
0-5,000	36%
5,001-10,000	34%
10,001-15,000	14%
15,001-20,000	16%

Position Held by Respondent (n=95)	Percentage
County, city, town manager	65%
Assistant or deputy manager	13%
Department head	4%
Elected official	6%
Other (e.g., town clerk, interim appointment, retired manager)	12%

Why Do Strategic Planning?

“The strategic plan helps us decide where our energy and resources go.”

Sara McGuffin, Town Manager, Amherst, Virginia

From the survey, communities with strategic plans identified several benefits to having a strategic plan:

- The strategic plan provides clear guidance on the goals of the governing body to the manager.
- The strategic plan is used as a communication device for staff.
- The strategic plan communicates to employees that what they do is important and has a purpose.
- The strategic plan helps local government managers prioritize the work in the organization and the limited financial resources available during the budget process.
- Local government managers stated the strategic plan has helped the elected officials make decisions on controversial issues.

The benefits of having a strategic plan have been documented in previous reports and articles^{2,3,4,5,6} and are identified in three major categories for the purpose of this research project: as an accountability tool, a prioritization tool, and a communication tool.

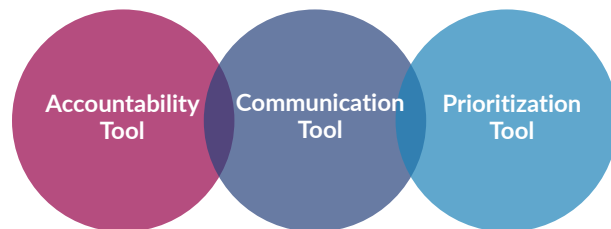
As an Accountability Tool

“We use the strategic plan as an accountability tool in the manager’s and deputy’s annual evaluation.”

Cindy Mester, Assistant City Manager, Falls Church, Virginia

The strategic plan serves as a framework for the local government manager to achieve the goals and priorities of the governing body. From the survey, 91% of local governments who had a strategic plan agree the strategic plan provides clear guidance on the goals of the governing body to the manager. The framework provides the direction, goals, and strategies to accomplish the vision of the elected officials. As such, the strategic plan serves as an accountability tool in several ways. First, local government managers can report progress on goals and strategies in monthly or quarterly reports to the governing body. Reporting progress should be relatively simple, straightforward, and easy to understand. By providing regular updates in the elected officials meeting packets, there are no surprises on progress and elected officials are kept well informed.

Figure 1: Strategic Plan Benefits



Second, elected officials can use the strategic plan as part of their annual evaluation process of the local government manager. Both the manager and the elected officials can discuss the goals achieved or accomplishments over the past year and can discuss improvements, successes, and challenges in the context of the goals and strategies adopted by the governing body.

Finally, providing regular updates in the governing body’s packet also provides updates to the public. Residents can track progress on projects, goals, and strategies on a regular basis. This activity provides a level of transparency as well, giving real-time information on key issues in the community.

As a Prioritization Tool

“If you don’t prioritize, council may prioritize everything and that can’t be done.”

Joshua Farrar, Town Manager, Ashland, Virginia

A key benefit to a strategic plan is the ability to prioritize resources to achieve the goals of the community. Of the respondents to the survey who had a strategic plan, 83% agreed the strategic plan is used as a prioritization tool for the work in the organization, 79% agreed it helped prioritize budget requests, and 85% agreed it helped them prioritize staff and financial resources as the manager. Using a strategic plan as a prioritization tool ensures that the staff, elected officials, and the local government manager are working together on the same goals and works in several ways. First, the local government manager can allocate staff resources to the priorities of the governing body. As vacancies arise, the manager, in consultation with key department heads, can evaluate the position and duties and determine if the position should be reclassified or reallocated to a different department or function to support the goals of the elected officials.

Second, the elected officials can appropriate financial resources through the annual budget process to support

their agreed upon priorities as identified in the strategic plan. Stevenson, Washington, developed a strategic plan to help prioritize and plan for \$16 million in mandated sewer updates that were burdening their already limited budget. The use of the strategic plan in the budget process provides the local government manager with the justification for new positions, new programs, and new initiatives. In addition, as new financial resources are allocated toward the goals defined in the strategic plan, the elected officials can communicate with the community on how their tax dollars are being spent in accordance with the strategic plan.

Finally, the connection to the strategic plan and the financial resource allocation through the budget process also supports transparency in the use of public funds. The staff in the organization understand why dollars are used in certain areas as opposed to others and residents can clearly see how their tax dollars are being used to achieve the overall vision of the community. By utilizing the strategic plan as a “explanatory tool,” we can answer the question, “Why did they do that?”

As a Communication Tool

“For new councilmembers, the strategic plan is really helpful.”

Joshua Farrar, Town Manager, Ashland, Virginia

A strategic plan communicates the vision to both internal and external stakeholders in the community. Of the respondents to the survey who had a strategic plan, 89% agreed the strategic plan is used as a communication device for staff; 79% agreed that the strategic plan is used as a communication device for residents. Falls Church, Virginia, provides an annual report to the community on the progress of achieving the vision called the “Community Report Card.” A strategic plan is used to communicate to residents the vision of the elected officials and what they want to achieve as their representatives. The strategic plan communicates to the local government manager what is important and where to allocate staff and financial resources. Further, the strategic plan communicates to staff why they do what they do and how they support the vision of the governing body. As noted above, a strategic plan is very helpful to new councilmembers as a communication tool of the previous governing body’s vision for the community.

“I have been a city manager in four communities for over 24 years. In every community, a strategic plan was developed

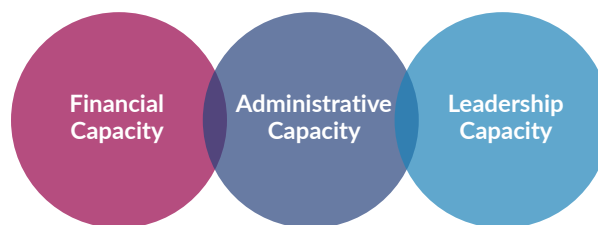
and prioritized. This is my smallest populated community, and the strategic plan still works like it should; providing guidance and focus to local government policies and budget.”

Survey Respondent

Organizational Capacity Challenges in Small Communities

Small communities, defined as cities, counties, and towns with a population of 20,000 or below, face several challenges in the delivery of services in their communities.⁷ In general, they lack organizational capacity for strategic planning initiatives. Organizational capacity is composed of financial capacity, administrative capacity, and leadership capacity.⁸

Figure 2: Organizational Challenges in Small Communities



FINANCIAL CAPACITY

“In a small town, where we live hand to mouth, we can’t help but operate day-to-day. Strategic planning is a luxury we just can’t afford.”

Survey Respondent

Financial capacity refers to the level of financial resources available for local governments to spend on operational and capital needs. With limited financial capacity, local governments prioritize financial resources for mandated and direct services in their communities. For many small communities, the lack of financial capacity for discretionary funding initiatives is a major barrier to strategic planning. When faced with a broken water line or strategic planning services, most small communities understandably will choose to invest in infrastructure and delay the strategic planning process. As shown in Table 3, 64% of local government survey respondents who did not have a strategic plan agreed they do not have the

funding available for a strategic planning process. While the total body of respondents to this series of survey questions is small, results are still included in this section as a complement to interview perspectives.

Table 3: Financial Barriers to Strategic Planning Question

We do not have funding available for a strategic planning process. (n=17)	
Strongly disagree	12%
Somewhat disagree	12%
Neither agree nor disagree	12%
Somewhat agree	29%
Strongly agree	35%

ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

“...lots of things we could do, and we are trying to do...we just don't have the staff time to do everything...”

Survey Respondent

Administrative capacity refers to having the appropriate staff to deliver efficient and effective government services and the capability of those staff in terms of training, skills, and experience. The individual staff member's capacity to take on additional duties, such as support the logistics and planning efforts necessary for a strategic planning initiative, is challenging as they prioritize providing basic services daily.

In small communities, in contrast with large local governments, staff wear “many hats” and are responsible for a wide variety of services and programs. For many small communities, the lack of administrative capacity, in terms of number of staff and capabilities of staff, is a major barrier to strategic planning. Among local governments without a strategic plan shown in Table 4, 44% agreed they do not have the time to do a strategic plan and 42% agreed they do not have the staff expertise to do a strategic plan.

Table 4: Administrative Barriers to Strategic Planning

n=18	We do not have the time to do a strategic plan.	We do not have the staff expertise to do a strategic plan.
Strongly disagree	11%	18%
Somewhat disagree	11%	18%
Neither agree nor disagree	33%	24%
Somewhat agree	33%	18%
Strongly agree	11%	24%

LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

“If they (elected officials) are not ready to put the work in that is needed for strategic planning, it is a waste of time.”

Survey Respondent

Leadership capacity refers to the support of elected officials and local government managers to engage in a particular initiative or activity. Elected officials are the biggest barrier to any new local government initiative and without their support no initiative will be successful. Without elected officials support, there is little chance a new program, initiative or goal can be achieved. Of the respondents who did not have a strategic plan, shown in Table 5, 39% of local governments agreed that elected officials are not interested in developing a strategic plan.

However, an interesting finding from the interviews was that the local government managers who did not have strategic plans believed that their councilmembers or commission members generally agreed on the direction of the local government in terms of policy and budget decisions. Because there is consensus on general issues by the governing body, the local government managers did not believe they needed a strategic plan.

“The current council has a very good rhythm, no major problem, they know what they want.”

Survey Respondent

Local government managers without a strategic plan did say that a plan would be necessary if there was disagreement, or the governing body lacked consensus on issues. For some communities with challenging elected officials and a lack of consensus on the vision of the local government, a strategic plan can help navigate contention and refocus energy on the broad goals of the organization.

Table 5: Leadership Barriers to Strategic Planning

n=18	Elected officials are not interested in developing a strategic plan.	The elected officials cannot agree to do a strategic planning process.
Strongly disagree	17%	28%
Somewhat disagree	11%	11%
Neither agree nor disagree	33%	33%
Somewhat agree	33%	17%
Strongly agree	6%	11%

“Small towns and villages struggle implementing these plans, many times over power struggles that elected officials have, they lose power by committing to a long-term plan...”

Survey Respondent

Strategic Planning in Action

Strategic planning is an active process that engages elected officials and the local government manager and staff to develop a vision for the community.⁹ With over 89,400 general purpose and special purpose governments in the United States, there are 89,400 ways to deliver public services in communities.¹⁰ The findings of the survey and interviews are that each local government conducted a unique strategic planning process.

This section provides a road map for the development of a formal strategic plan for your community. For this report, a formal strategic plan is the document that is developed that details the mission, vision, values, and goals as adopted by the elected officials. Goals are supported by strategies to achieve those goals and serve as operationalized tasks. This model process assumes a fundamental core element of creating a strategic plan that includes a strategic planning committee and a retreat or event where the elements of a plan are developed.

While this report outlines a formal process small communities can follow to create a complete strategic plan, this might not be possible in your community for a variety of reasons. However, there is value in adopting aspects of a full strategic planning process to help steer your community. Some planning is better than none.

Key questions, helpful tips, and examples of strategic planning elements in the field are included throughout the following section, providing strategies to develop the strategic plan and to help everyone, including elected officials, through the process.

Look for these icons throughout the manual:

-  KEY QUESTIONS
-  TIPS
-  EXAMPLES

Initial Steps for Developing the Strategic Plan

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

The biggest challenge to strategic planning can be garnering elected official support and buy-in for the process and outcome. The mayor or chair may be key figures in moving the process forward. Have a conversation about some of the challenges your community is facing and how a strategic plan may help to guide resources in the organization to solve some of these key issues.

At this stage, the manager should work with the elected officials to define the purpose of the strategic plan and the audience. Typically, the strategic plan is a document that guides the activities of the organization toward the achievement of a vision for the community. It serves as an internal guide for the manager and staff. It is important for the elected officials to agree on the purpose because this information will inform the other steps in the process. If the terminology of a strategic plan is making your

Figure 3: The Strategic Planning Process



elected officials wary, try giving it a different name or integrating the components into existing structures like the annual budget. As one survey respondent shared, their “board is wary of a single strategic plan, but have essentially participated in developing a group of plans that together provide a strategic vision.”

TIPS

Elected officials can be resistant to developing a strategic plan for a variety of reasons, such as a fear of losing control or a lack of understanding the purpose. At the beginning of the process, take time to outline the benefits of creating a plan with your elected officials, such as:

- Serves as a communication device for elected officials, staff, and the public.
- Helps prioritize organizational work and the limited financial resources available.
- Serves as a decision-making tool for controversial issues.
- Creates clear guidance on the goals of the governing body to the manager and can serve as an accountability tool for their performance.

“We’re fond of saying that we don’t want buy-in, we want ownership. Our elected officials had ownership in the strategic plan because they directed staff to put it together and were involved in the process.”

Dallin Kimble, Administrative Officer, Mariposa County, California

KEY QUESTIONS

Elected Officials’ Support

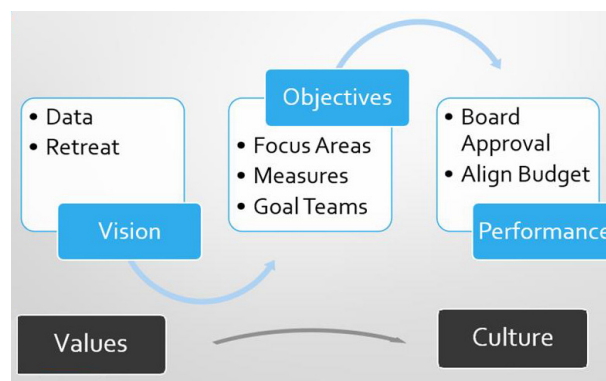
- Is there an advocate on the governing body that can help to garner support for the process?
- Do neighboring communities have a strategic plan?
Is so, share the example.
- Will the strategic plan only be used as an internal document that is developed by the elected officials or as a document that includes resident input to the vision of the community?
- What other existing plans (i.e., budget, comprehensive plan, capital improvement plan) can inform the strategic plan?

ESTABLISHING A STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Once the elected officials have agreed to the idea of developing a strategic plan, a process should be established to guide the activities of the process. Typically, a strategic planning committee will be established for this task. This committee should include the elected officials, the manager, key deputies or assistants, and department heads.¹¹ For small communities, this may be the mayor, town, or city manager and one or two staff members. This committee should begin with a discussion establishing ground rules and defining the roles and responsibilities of the committee.

Figure 4: Mariposa County, California Strategic Planning Process

Source: Mariposa County, 2019



TIPS

Strategic planning processes can be perceived as “top down” and out of touch by staff responsible for implementing the plan. When possible, find ways to include staff from all levels of the organization throughout the process to help develop and check that the plan has meaning and practicality to the daily operations of your local government. This could be accomplished by including front-line staff on the strategic planning committee or by requiring committee members to update and solicit feedback from their staff throughout the planning process.



EXAMPLES

Both Lindenhurst and Mariposa County included staff early in the planning process using focus groups. Lindenhurst began its process with a focus group that included staff and the community that informed their elected body's development of the mission, vision, and values of the community. Mariposa County had staff teams of six-eight members create the goals and strategies of each focus area of their strategic plan



KEY QUESTIONS

Strategic Planning Committee

- Should elected officials be on the planning committee?
- Which staff should be members of the planning committee?
- Who will be the coordinator of the planning committee?
- How frequently will the committee meet?
- Have you clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of the committee? What are the expectations of the committee and what are the deliverables?

DETERMINING THE LEVEL OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Determining the elected officials' preferences on community engagement is a key decision for the start of the process.¹² Thinking about community engagement in

the strategic planning process, there are generally four levels: inform, consult, collaborate, and empower.¹³ Local governments often prefer the inform or consult levels of engagement, particularly if this is a new initiative. If the elected officials use the inform method of community engagement, then social media, print materials, fact sheets, and website distribution are key methods to showcase the proposed plan and obtain community input. If the elected officials want to use the consult method of community engagement, then create a community survey and set up town hall meetings and focus groups. For small communities, these activities may be only one or two meetings given the size of the community.

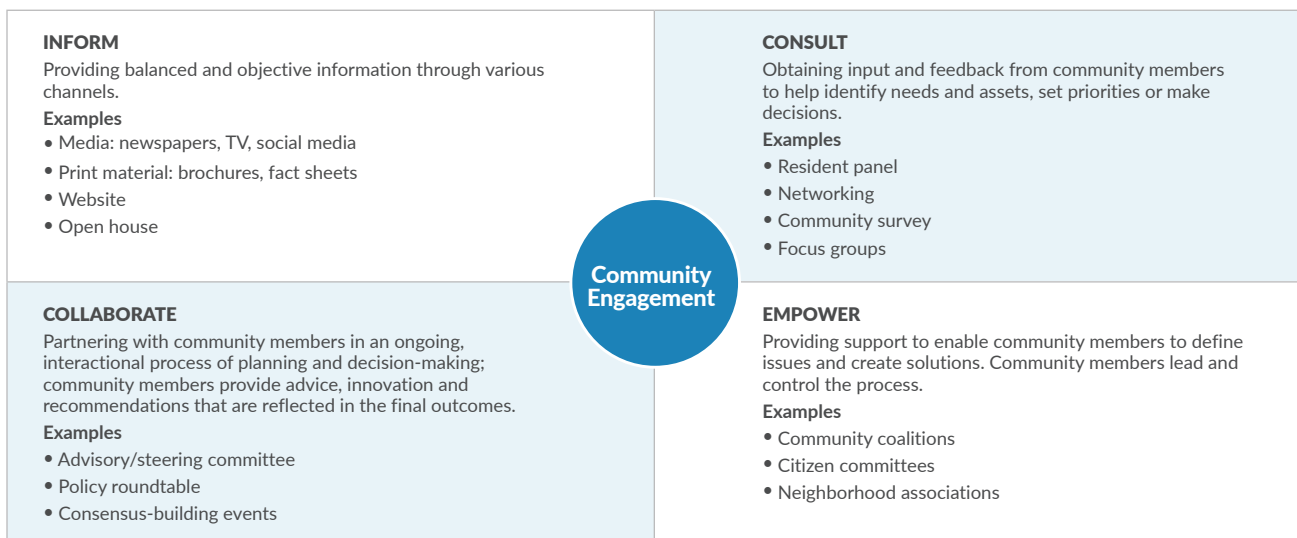


TIPS

The strategic plan is the elected official's vision for the community and the local government organization. Community input, whether formal or informal, provides guidance in the development of the plan, building credibility for residents.¹⁴ Community focus groups can be utilized at different points in the planning process as a way to connect the strategic plan to residents and were common methods of engagement in the case study communities. Whether you use formal or informal engagement, find a clear connection to community input to your strategic plan. At the very least, other initiatives, such as community engagement surveys or comprehensive plans that include an engagement process, can feed into the strategic plan and provide that link.

Figure 5: Levels of Community Engagement

Source: Trent, Sheryl (2021). How to Facilitate Inclusive Community Outreach and Engagement. *Public Management Magazine*.





EXAMPLES

For their initial strategic plan, Stevenson, Washington, leveraged the community input gathered from their comprehensive plan process, but plan to include an improved community engagement process in their next update.

Rolesville, North Carolina, held two facilitated community input sessions at the outset of the planning process to obtain feedback directly from residents and stakeholders in the community about their vision for the future of Rolesville.



KEY QUESTIONS

Level of Community Engagement

- Is the strategic plan seen more as internal guidance, or more of a public document? How should our engagement strategy change?
- Inform: Does the governing body want to develop the strategic plan and then get community input on the plan?
- Consult: Does the governing body want to obtain community perspectives prior to the strategic planning retreat? Where might the public provide the most useful guidance in this process?
- None: Does the governing body feel comfortable moving forward with the process without formal community engagement? If so, what previous processes, if any, are feeding into the strategic plan, and how was the public involved in those processes?

DETERMINING PREFERENCES FOR FACILITATION

A key question for the strategic planning initiative is to determine if an outside facilitator will be engaged in the process. To ease the administrative burden on staff, almost 60% of governments responding to the planning survey used an outside facilitator. Outside facilitation can be expensive, so you will need to develop a request for proposals to obtain service and cost estimates for outside facilitators. You might also consider university and college resources or community members who specialize in group facilitation. Look to resources like your surrounding communities, state associations, or ICMA for sharing information on other community's facilitation experience, including a sample request for proposal.



KEY QUESTIONS

Facilitation

- Should we use a facilitator or in-house staff to facilitate the process? Can we bring in a facilitator at certain points in the process or should they be there from start to finish?
- If we use a facilitator, how much would that cost?
- If we use a facilitator, how will we procure this?
- Are there other communities that have a sample request for proposal as a guide?
- What resources have other local governments used in my region?



TIPS

Choosing to engage a facilitator is one decision, but finding the right facilitator is another. Ideally, you will want someone experienced and familiar with the unique constraints of small communities who can easily build a rapport with your elected officials and key personnel. If you decide to hire a facilitator, engage your strategic planning committee in the process of selecting one and ask potential facilitators these questions:

- What experience do you have working in small communities and within their unique constraints?
- What facilitation style do you utilize? Do you follow academic theory or are you more flexible?
- What kind of questions do you like to ask the group? How do you encourage deep conversation during the planning process?
- How do you move from discussions to action?
- What local governments can we contact for references?

CONSIDERING THE COSTS AND FUNDING AVAILABLE

One challenge for the development of a strategic plan is the cost. The case study communities provided information on the costs of their strategic plan ranging from \$2,000 to \$19,000. This amount does not include staff time or other indirect financial resources utilized for the process.

Many factors can influence the cost of strategic planning, including the level of citizen engagement, use and choice of a facilitator, and the length and location of the process. While there are many ways to structure the process, focusing on intentional community engagement and limiting the time a facilitator is engaged can be key factors in keeping costs low. Finding ways to couple strategic planning with existing processes like the budget may be additional ways to capitalize costs.

? KEY QUESTIONS

Funding the Strategic Plan

- Are you using a facilitator?
- Are you developing a survey for residents?
- Is there a cost for the location/facility for the retreat?
- Do we have funding available for this process? Do we have surplus funds we could use for the process? Do we request additional funding for the process?



EXAMPLES

While a price tag of \$19,000 to create a plan can seem overwhelming, Stevenson made it work with a small investment of \$2,000 by hiring an outside facilitator to run the retreat and using staff to complete other components of the process. Costs listed here include expenses associated with the planning process, such as citizen engagement, facilitation, and retreats.

Table 6: Sample Strategic Planning Budgets

Local Government	Cost	Inclusion
Mariposa County, CA	\$19,000	Consultant facilitator for retreat, community survey
Town of Vinton, VA	\$2,000	Consultant facilitator for retreat
City of Stevenson, WA	\$2,000	Consultant facilitator for retreat
Village of Lindenhurst, IL	\$16,900	University facilitator for retreat and development, community survey, and focus groups
Town of Rolesville, NC	\$16,200	University facilitator for retreat and development, community focus groups

CONDUCTING A STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES (SWOC) ANALYSIS

Have each elected official individually conduct a SWOC analysis exercise prior to the strategic planning retreat to save time and to ensure complete and thoughtful responses. The purpose of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges analysis is to assess the internal and external factors that impact the local government's ability to achieve the elected officials' vision. Elected officials can brainstorm in a word document or on paper, but the purpose is to gather their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities that are facing the local government, both internally and externally. This analysis will be used as a baseline and guide the development of the strategic plan. You will need to ensure enough time to gather the SWOC analysis data and compile the information prior to the strategic planning retreat.

? KEY QUESTIONS

SWOC Analysis

- Have you developed a template for the SWOC analysis?
- How will you compile the information from all the elected officials?
- Have you allowed for sufficient time for this to be completed and shared prior to the strategic planning retreat?



TIPS

While it may seem daunting to invite input on negative topics, it is critical to clearly define problems facing your community that need to be addressed to achieve your vision. Local governments face complex, multifaceted issues and the SWOC analysis is your opportunity to dissect and clarify these problems. Once a problem is defined, causes and their prospective solutions help create your goals and strategies.



EXAMPLES

The Government Financial Officer Association (GFOA) and ICMA's "Defining the Problem" offers an additional resource to help further define problems more clearly that include six design principals: reject zero-sum thinking, provide procedural justice, create psychological safety, recognize and mitigate cognitive biases, go beyond positions, and understand interests and introduce constraints.

Table 7 shows a simple SWOC analysis framework that has been used in small communities and can be used as is or tailored to your community as needed.

Table 7: SWOC Analysis Framework

Strengths	Weaknesses
What are our major internal or present strengths?	What are our major internal or present weaknesses?
Opportunities	Challenges
What major external or future opportunities do we have?	What major external or future challenges do we face?

PLANNING FOR THE LOGISTICS

Once the committee has been formed and questions related to cost/budget, level of community engagement, and outside facilitator or in-house staff have been determined, the next step is to schedule a strategic planning retreat. There are nuances to discuss with your planning committee on where to hold the retreat.

Table 8: Strategic Plan Components

Strategic Plan Component	Answer the Question	Description
Mission	What do we do today?	The mission states what the local government does now; it communicates to residents, businesses, nonprofits, and other key interest groups what you do on a day-to-day basis.
Vision	What do we want our community to look like in 10-15 years?	The vision states what you want your community to look like in 10-15 years; it communicates to the external environment what you want to achieve and how the governing body sees itself in the future.
Values	What values are important to the governing body when we make a decision?	The values (typically four-five values) communicate guiding principles that the governing body uses to make decisions for the community (ethics, efficiency, equity, etc.).
Goals	What are the goals to make progress toward our vision?	The goals are broad statements or affirmations the governing body agrees on to achieve the vision of the community.
Strategies	What do we need to do now to achieve those goals?	Strategies are action items that establish how you will achieve those goals in the next one-two years.

Generally, the event should be held in a site outside your normal setting to help focus the group on the task at hand. This can be another facility you own or an off-site space, depending on what the budget allows.

If your local government has chosen to use the consult method of community engagement, this is the time to send surveys and hold town halls or focus groups to gather community input. You will need to ensure enough time to gather community input and compile that information prior to the strategic planning retreat.



EXAMPLES

Vinton, Virginia, kept costs low by hosting the retreat in a facility they owned, providing their own supplies like snacks and writing material, hiring a facilitator from a local nonprofit, and limiting on-site time to half a day by emphasizing preliminary work.



KEY QUESTIONS

Planning for the Logistics

- Where will the retreat be held? At an on-site or off-site location?
- What are your open meeting requirements for publicizing and accessibility? Have you reviewed and summarized community engagement data and SWOC analysis if applicable?
- What advance arrangements need to be made for supplies, refreshments, A/V equipment, etc.?

STRUCTURING THE RETREAT

The purpose of the retreat is to develop the strategic plan and the deliverable at the end of the meeting should be a draft that includes a mission, vision, values statement or values, goals, and strategies to achieve the goals. The retreat should include an agenda with time allocations for the individual components of the strategic plan. Appropriate materials such as flip charts, markers, post-it notes, pens, etc., should be provided at the meeting.



TIPS

Don't forget to plan for documenting the discussion, and don't put this burden on those expected to actively contribute to it. Whether the strategic planning retreat is a few hours one afternoon or spans across multiple days, it will be a dense conversation with rich information to pull from. It is important to establish how the meeting will be captured and who is responsible. Outline a record keeping plan with staff or your hired facilitator in advance and clarify deliverables expected following the meeting.



KEY QUESTIONS

Structuring the Retreat

- Have you or the facilitator developed ground rules on the engagement among the elected officials during the retreat (all ideas are judgment free, respect for diverse opinions, etc.)?
- Have you or the facilitator developed an agenda with key components identified?
- Have you or the facilitator planned for time allocated to each component?
- Who will take notes and compile the information during the retreat?
- Who will be responsible for compilation of the strategic plan after the retreat?
- What is the timeline for a draft plan to be developed?

Developing the Strategic Plan

DEVELOPING THE MISSION

The mission statement is typically defined as the reason the local government exists. The mission statement communicates the purpose of the local government to residents, staff, and other key stakeholders. The mission statement clearly states what your local government does, why you provide those services, and for whom. When you draft the mission statement, consider if it answers the questions: “Who are we? What do we do? For whom we do it? Why is it important?” The mission statement should be easily understandable, clear, and concise and does not need to be updated regularly.

? KEY QUESTIONS Mission Statement

- What do you do?
- Why do you do it?
- Who do you serve?
- Why is it important?
- Is it clear, concise, and understandable?

Examples of Mission Statements

Village of Lindenhurst, Illinois

The Village of Lindenhurst, in partnership with our community, continuously strives to provide a safe, healthy, and vibrant environment through quality customer service, public safety, progressive leadership, and financial responsibility.

Town of Vinton, Virginia

The Town of Vinton provides valuable services to residents, visitors, and businesses through transparent, efficient, and responsible governance while protecting its unique character and values.

Mariposa County, California

We improve the quality of life in Mariposa County through active community engagement and the efficient delivery of outstanding public services.

Town of Crewe, Virginia

To provide quality services to residents, businesses, and visitors in an efficient, effective, and equitable manner.

Town of Woodstock, Virginia

To encourage and facilitate economic growth, to provide a safe environment for a diverse community, and to provide high quality and efficient services to the public,

while emphasizing the Town's unique character, planning for the future, and leading by example through the implementation of best practices.

DEVELOPING THE VISION

The vision statement reflects the governing body's view of the ideal community in 10-15 years. This statement communicates the governing body's picture of success and serves as the “goal post” to be achieved. The vision statement should answer the question, “Where do you want to be in 15 years?” It should provide a clear picture of the organization's future and does not need to be updated every year.¹⁵

? KEY QUESTIONS Vision

- Is it inspiring for the residents and staff?
- Is it believable?
- Does it answer the question: Where do we want to be in 15 years?
- Is it clear, concise, and understandable?

Examples of Vision Statements

City of Williamsburg, Virginia

One Williamsburg that is courageously leading, innovating a modern city, prioritizing safety and wellness, engaging our partners while connecting the world.

Village of Lindenhurst, Illinois

The Village of Lindenhurst endeavors to be the friendliest and most appealing community in Lake County, Illinois; enriched by small-town values and traditions, fostering an atmosphere where residents and businesses can thrive.

City of York, South Carolina

York is an historic city with charming neighborhoods, caring residents, abundant opportunities, and an innovative and inclusive economy.

Town of Rolesville, North Carolina

Genuine community thrives in Rolesville as we seek to build a place that is focused on walkability, with connections to parks, greenways, and gathering spaces.

ESTABLISHING VALUES

The adoption of core values as a part of the strategic plan reflects the foundations underpinning policy decisions and actions taken by the governing body. The values (or values statement) are a tool to build organizational culture and should communicate to the public what is

important to the elected officials when they are making decisions. The values or values statement express the behavioral expectations in the day-to-day operations of the local government, whereas the mission and vision communicate the aspirations of the local government.

? KEY QUESTIONS

Values/Values Statement

- What do the values say about what is important to the governing body?
- What do the values say about what is important to your community?
- Are the values reflected in decision making?

Examples of Values

Town of Ashland, Virginia

Sustainability, Community, Integrity, Equity, and Excellence

Mariposa County, California

Collaboration, Integrity, Sustainability, Transparency, Excellence

Town of Rolesville, North Carolina

Inclusive, Collaborative, Ethical, Transparent, Excellent

DEVELOPING GOALS

Goals are developed and adopted by the governing body and communicate broad initiatives or activities. Goals should be a two-four-year view of priorities that the local government establishes to achieve the vision of the community.

💡 TIPS

There is a tendency to become overly prescriptive when creating goals. As goals look two-four years in the future, there should be room for flexibility to accommodate for changing circumstances.¹⁶ Additionally, goals that are too specific may be rooted in current governmental practices, rather than encouraging innovation and creativity. Focus on creating three-five goals that describe guardrails rather than specific actions.

? KEY QUESTIONS

Goals

- Do the goals support the mission and vision?
- Are the goals realistic?
- Are they easy to read and understand?
- Are they measurable?

Figure 6: Town of Rolesville, North Carolina's Goals or Key Focus Areas

Source: Town of Rolesville, 2020



“We’ve debated back and forth between a thorough plan with estimated budgets, specific performance targets and timelines, and a simpler conceptual plan. For our first time, we opted for simple and now think we should make it even more simple. One page would be ideal to make it a frequent reference that is easy to remember and use.”

Dallin Kimble, Administrative Officer, Mariposa County, California

Examples of Goals

Town of South Boston, Virginia

- Reinvent Riverdale as a gateway park.
- Remove and redevelop blighted and derelict buildings.
- Revitalize downtown/redevelop Randolph Hotel.
- Improve Westside/Westend services.
- Create a succession/contingency plan.

Village of Gambier, Ohio

- Support a vibrant mix of institutional and village-serving land uses that respect environmental restraints, promote a high quality of life, and plan for long-term growth.
- Preserve, enhance, and market Gambier’s natural resources, parks, and trails as vital community assets.
- Preserve existing neighborhoods while increasing opportunities for diverse housing options within the village and conservation development on future residential land.
- Promote an identity that encourages collaboration, fosters community spirit, and capitalizes on Gambier’s historic and environmental strengths.
- Strengthen the built environment to safely and efficiently move people, goods, and services within the village and to regional destinations.

City of Emporia, Virginia

- Pursue economic development opportunities through collaboration and partnerships to increase and improve employment for our residents.
- Support a culture of educational achievement and lifelong learning in order to develop and sustain a productive workforce ready for the 21st century employers.

- Develop cultural facilities while supporting our existing recreational providers.
- Vitalize the overall appearance of the city to create an atmosphere that is attractive and appealing to residents, businesses, and visitors.
- Upgrade infrastructure throughout the city.

Town of Vinton, Virginia

- Enhance the town’s infrastructure and livability.
- Maintain an efficient and high-performing government.
- Ensure the town’s continued financial viability by actively pursuing quality economic development.

City of York, South Carolina

- Resilient Infrastructure
- Economic Development
- Dynamic Community
- Efficient and Effective Government

DEVELOPING STRATEGIES

Strategies are the action steps needed to be taken to achieve the broad goals of the community.¹⁷ The strategies describe specific tasks, outputs and/or outcomes, typically within a one-two-year completion period. The number of strategies assigned to each goal will vary and are typically between three and seven.

KEY QUESTIONS

Strategies

- Are the strategies realistic in terms of budget?
- Do the strategies identify a time frame for completion?
- Have key personnel responsible for those strategies been identified?
- Can you, as the manager, report progress to the elected officials?



EXAMPLES

Rolesville, North Carolina, leadership developed specific workplans that could be addressed to achieve goals in a two-year work period. These initiatives are collected into the Staff Progress Report, which is updated three times a year and provided to the governing board in their agenda packet and publicly posted on the town’s website.

Examples of Strategies

City of York, South Carolina

- Review and deploy advanced meter reading technology through city-wide implementation of a wireless meter reading system.
- Provide tools for customers to better understand utility usage.
- Develop programs to assist low-to-moderate income households with utility bills and infrastructure improvements.

Village of Lindenhurst, Illinois

Explore the possibility of implementing a TIF District to help with redeveloping Linden Plaza/Grand Avenue commercial corridor.

Town of Woodstock, Virginia

- Conduct an economic base analysis.
- Support an evaluation by a qualified firm or other professional to identify strategies that will help the town strengthen economic development opportunities.

Town of Vinton, Virginia

- Aggressively pursue economic development opportunities to enhance local retail and dining options.
- Conduct a thorough organizational efficiency review in municipal offices and implement changes based on results.

City of Stevenson, Washington

- The city will continue working toward lifting the commercial sewer connection moratorium, building efficient, sustainable, and affordable wastewater system updates with added BOD capacity by the spring of 2023.
- The city will partner with Skamania County Fire District 2 and the Skamania County Department of Emergency Management to build a new fire hall that meets the needs of the agencies, is affordable to the community, and is a valued asset of Rock Creek Drive.

We Have a Strategic Plan, Now What?

Developing a strategic plan is just the beginning. Finding ways to integrate the plan into daily processes and decision-making is key to making the plan meaningful. Adjustments will need to be made to keep the strategic plan relevant and a “living document.”

Adopting the Strategic Plan

Provide the draft document to the governing body for any corrections, amendments, or changes. Because the strategic plan reflects the vision of the elected officials, they should have an opportunity to comment on the draft report prior to distribution to the public or others.

If your local government is using the inform method of community engagement, once the governing body has completed review and changes have been incorporated, the draft document should be distributed through the local government's website, social media, and print to gather community input on the draft strategic planning document. If your local government is not utilizing community engagement for the process, the document can be approved at the next governing body meeting and posted to the local government's website, social media, and print media for distribution.



EXAMPLES

Once the Town of Rolesville, North Carolina, had adopted their strategic plan, they focused on regular communication to keep the plan alive and relevant. They created 11" x 17" copies of the plan and placed them in front of the elected officials at all board meetings, hung them on staff bulletin boards, and included copies in their new hire onboarding packets. According to Town Administrator Kelly Arnold, “These easy-to-find copies of the plan help ensure it remains accessible to all and relevant to decision-making.”



KEY QUESTIONS

Adopting the Strategic Plan

- Did the governing body adopt the strategic plan through a formal vote?
- Have you placed the adopted strategic plan on your website?
- Are there copies available in the town hall or administration building?
- Have you posted to the local government's social media pages?
- Can you meet with a local newspaper reporter and conduct an interview on the plan?

Figure 7: Village of Lindenhurst, Illinois Online Dashboard

Source: Village of Lindenhurst, 2022

Community Branding & Engagement		
Goal	% Complete	Notes
Enhance communication & engagement between Village & community	60	Instituted Communications Plan; Began using Buffer and other programs to increase visibility
Work to engage stakeholders to create a community brand & defined identity for Village	5	Using focus group information to jump start brand identity
Capital Infrastructure Planning & Improvements		
Goal	% Complete	Notes
Implement a long term Capital Improvement Plan focused on proactive infrastructure repairs & sustainability	15	Capital improvement plan forecasts certain capital expenditures, reviewing Public Works software for better asset management
Explore possibilities & workable approaches to mitigate flooding issues	50	Instituted Culvert Replacement Program
Prioritize current stormwater needs & develop plan to fund and implement stormwater projects	80	Projects prioritized and list is funded partially annually
Business Recruitment & Retention		
Goal	% Complete	Notes
Explore the possibility of implementing a TIF district to help with redeveloping Linden Plaza/ Grand Commercial corridor	100	TIF Adopted 5/9/22
Identify and explore business attraction strategies	50	N/A
Develop and implement a redevelopment plan for Linden Plaza and Grand Avenue commercial corridor	40	May be included in feasibility study
Execute identified business attraction strategies	10	N/A
Responsible Growth & Development		
Goal	% Complete	Notes
Exploring annexing property, especially at Routes 132 & 45 to establish defined boundaries	20	Initial conversations have been conducted
Innovative Planning & Practices		
Goal	% Complete	Notes
Conduct an organizational review and advancement study to evaluate staff roles and responsibilities; identify efficiencies, explore technology upgrades and improvements	15	N/A
Continue to explore and evaluate potential additional revenue sources	20	Enterprise fund fees and charges evaluated

Reporting on Progress

Timelines, staff responsibilities, and budget impacts should be included within the plan or as supplementary resources. This can be used by the local government manager to report progress to the governing body. In addition, local government managers can use this as a discussion tool in the annual evaluation meeting with the elected officials.



TIPS

Sometimes included goals become outdated and are no longer relevant. When reporting on the strategic plan, take time to identify any goals that are no longer serving the mission, vision, or values of the community and exclude them moving forward.



KEY QUESTIONS

Reporting on Progress

- Have your elected officials communicated how they would like progress reported?
- Will you report quarterly, monthly, once a year?
- What format will you use to report progress on the strategic plan?
- Will you use progress updates in your annual evaluation process?
- How will residents know about progress on goals and strategies in the community?

Table 9: Town Council Planning Retreat Summary – Saturday, January 12, 2019

Source: Town of Amherst, Virginia

Topic Area	Items to Accomplish by June 30, 2019	Work Plan for July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020	Goals for December 31, 2020	Long-Term Goals
Recodification	Town code recodification completed	Zoning and subdivision ordinance recodification	All code in Municode	
Pay Policies and Practices	Career development policy and COLA + merit (Step) policy implemented	Policies and practices implemented		
Brockman Park	Marketing material updated via Sweet Briar Partnership	Implement new marketing plan		Full capacity at Brockman Park
Town Park	Park available for "initial" public use	Formulate vision of park and implement vision	Create park and trail master plan	Implement park master plan
Town Square	Resurrect the project, work with stakeholders	Work with CVPDC to identify grant funding for the project	Project implementation	Implement town square
Trail	Complete project scope for water and sewer relocation	Relocate water and sewer	Construct the pedestrian/ bike trail to college	Provide recreational opportunities
Downtown	Create a vision for downtown	Identify strategies to implement vision for downtown	Implementation of vision for downtown	Effect downtown revitalization
Utilities		Committee to reconvene and start new negotiations	Implement new arrangements re water service to college	Implement new arrangements re sewer service to college
Police Department Building Renovation	Determine space utilization and develop RFP	Construction project out for bid, complete constructions		
Various	Move to paperless agendas; utilize tablets			Add attractions for young adults, new businesses, and housing options (i.e., for senior residents)
	YMCA: complete market analysis			More downtown events
	Improved capital improvement plan (CIP)			



EXAMPLES

Table 9 is an example of a small community's strategic plan with timelines. The manager uses this document to report to the town council monthly and uses this document during their annual evaluation. This is a simple spreadsheet that is easy to understand and easy to update.

Linking to the Budget

Once the strategic plan has been adopted, using the document to inform budget decisions is a key implementation tool for the local government. Over 80% of the respondents to the survey stated that the strategic plan is used to prioritize and justify budget requests during the annual budget process. For small communities, it may be a challenge to formally link the budget to the strategic plan but there are simple ways to accomplish this goal.

At the beginning of the budget process, review the strategic plan goals and strategies with the elected officials. Identify and prioritize budget requests and funding needs based on how they align with the goals and strategies in the strategic plan. A simple spreadsheet that lists the funding requests and identifies the corresponding goal is sufficient to communicate this information.¹⁸



KEY QUESTIONS

Linking to the Budget

- Have you identified funding requests and budget priorities prior to the start of the budget process?
- What format will you use to communicate funding allocations that support the goals of the governing body?
- Have you worked with department directors; do they understand how to connect their budget and funding requests to the strategic plan?



EXAMPLES

Rolesville, North Carolina, has been recognized by GFOA for their effort to incorporate their strategic plan into their annual budget conversation. Department heads are required to tie requests for new initiatives to the strategic plan. These linkages are further reinforced within the annual budget document to help communicate to the public how the strategic plan is being accomplished.

Table 10 consolidates the annual budget requests from departments for the town. Three of the five budget request support town goals/topic areas from the example used in the "reporting on progress" section above. Elected officials can quickly see all requests, identify the connections to the strategic plan, and prioritize funding based on the connections to the strategic plan.

Table 10: Town Annual Budget Requests

Source: Town of Amherst, Virginia

Goal	Department	Budget Request	Funding Requested
Town Park	Parks and Recreation	Park and Trail Master Plan Development	\$50,000
Recodification	Administration	Municode Update	\$5,000
Brockman Park	Economic Development	Marketing Material	\$2,500
Utilities	Utilities	Administrative Assistant	\$30,000
Various	Administration	Internship Program	\$3,000

Updating the Strategic Plan

Once the initial plan has been developed, elected officials and managers inquire as to the frequency of updates to the strategic plan. Having a strategy for reviewing and updating your strategic plan is helpful—but this process is dependent on the local government, and as demonstrated in the report, all local governments are unique.

In the survey, local governments reported updating their strategic plans anywhere from annually up to every five years (Q8, Appendix A).



EXAMPLES

Rolesville, North Carolina, operates on a two-year cycle to correspond with local elections. This allows new the new town board to set their own short-term direction as they start their terms. While the mission and vision doesn't need to be updated annually, it may be appropriate to look at these components with a new board. Mariposa County set out hoping to update their plan annually but found in practice their first update happened 2.5 years after the initial adoption. Remaining flexible allowed them to spend limited staff time and resources when it will have the most impact.



TIPS

Avoid having your review process become too routine or just to “check a box.” Strategic plans and their goals should be flexible and shift when appropriate. Try different approaches to reviewing your strategic plan each time you update, focusing on key issues or aspects of the plan that invite conversation and change moving forward.



KEY QUESTIONS

Updating the Strategic Plan

- Has the governing body communicated to you, as the manager, when they want to update the full strategic plan?
- How will the update be similar to and different from the first strategic planning process?
- Do you need to plan for financial resources for the update in the upcoming budget?
- Will you need to hire a facilitator for the next update?
- What is a realistic timeline for you, as the local government manager, given the organizational capacity challenges in your community?

Conducting Performance Management

What is Performance Management?

“Performance management includes identifying, collecting, analyzing, and reporting on indicators that show how well the organization performs, both internally and in the delivery of services to the public, and how that performance compares with its targets or with peer organizations. More importantly, as a management tool, performance data is intended not as an end result, but rather as a means to more informed decision making and a more engaged community”

ICMA, *Getting Started in Performance Management*¹⁹

For small communities with limited financial and administrative capacity, the idea of a formal performance management system is overwhelming. The focus of this report is on developing a strategic plan and utilizing the plan in the budget process to inform decision-making and to support communities. However, performance management is often an important component of strategic planning and connects strongly to the goals and strategies of the strategic plan.^{20,21} As such, this report seeks to provide guidance to small communities on how to implement performance management easily, concisely, and clearly.

First, interviews with the local government managers revealed that performance management does take place in small communities, but it is often on an ad hoc or as needed basis as opposed to a formal, annual process. Managers reported that the task of collecting and analyzing data takes place when an issue arises.

What do small communities need to conduct ad hoc performance management?

Small communities reported in interviews that they recognize performance management in their day-to-day work, and for many local governments performance management means answering questions, such as:

- Are we coming in under budget?
- Did we meet our fund balance target?
- How long did it take to fix the water main break?
- What is our police department's response time?
- How many people are participating in the summer program?

- How many books are being checked out at the library?
- How much is the city paying entry level police officers?

All those questions and ones like them can be a small community's version of performance management. But small communities can start measuring performance by thinking about those questions in different ways, such as:

- What are our general fund budget and tax rates compared with other communities?
- What is our fund balance percentage as compared with other communities?
- How long does it take other communities to fix water main breaks?
- What are the response rates for police in other communities?
- Do other communities have summer programs? What kind? How long?
- What services do other community's libraries provide?
- What are other communities paying entry level police officers?

By thinking about the issue your community is having and changing the question to “What are other communities doing?,” you can compare your local government to other communities that are similar in size and service to gauge your performance.

IDENTIFY BENCHMARK COMMUNITIES.

The first step is to identify benchmark communities. Benchmark communities are local governments that your local government competes with in terms of new employees, they share a border with your jurisdiction, and they are similar in size, budget, and services. Typically, local governments will identify five-seven local governments for comparison purposes.

Local government managers and key staff should develop a professional relationship with their counterparts in the benchmark communities to share data and information. Make sure you have their contact information for requesting information.

? KEY QUESTIONS

Benchmark Communities

- Who do we “compete” with for employees and business?
- Which local governments do we share a jurisdictional boundary with?
- What other local governments have a similar population, budget, and service portfolio?

IDENTIFY COMMON QUESTIONS TO DEVELOP AN ANNUAL LIST OF PERFORMANCE MEASURES.

The next step is to identify frequently asked questions that are requested by the elected officials (i.e., tax rates, number of employees) and collect that data on an annual basis. Identify frequently asked questions by the manager to department heads (i.e., number of sidewalks maintained, capacity of wastewater treatment plan). The data collection will also provide your local government with trend information as you build three-five years of data. Managers and department heads should offer to share the information with the benchmark communities as well and can include findings in annual documents like the budget.

? KEY QUESTIONS

Frequently Asked Questions

- What questions do I get asked frequently from elected officials?
- What information do I need from other local governments?
- What statistics are important to the elected officials?
- What data do we need on an annual basis, during the budget process, during the year?
- What are our general fund budget and tax rates compared with other communities?
- What is our fund balance percentage as compared with other communities?
- How long does it take other communities to fix water main breaks?
- What are the response rates for police in other communities?
- Do other communities have summer programs? What kind? How long?
- What services do other community's libraries provide?
- What are other communities paying entry level police officers?

PREPARE FOR AD HOC REQUESTS AT ANY GIVEN TIME BY STARTING SMALL.

With a list of benchmark communities and key contacts, local governments are now able to respond to ad hoc requests from elected officials or other key stakeholders for performance data. Most importantly, make sure you are asking the right question to the benchmark communities.

There are hundreds of performance measures that could be and are being compiled by local governments. Develop a list of 10 or fewer to begin with; think about the most frequent questions and start there.

CONSIDER WHAT TYPES OF MEASURES TO USE.

Table 11 below identifies three common performance measures, what they are measuring, and basic examples.²² It is important to recognize that one data point is insufficient to gather information; trend data meaning collection of data over a three-five-year period will inform you and the elected officials on activity—is it increasing, decreasing, or remaining stable. Starting now, your local government can begin to build a robust set of data for answering the most frequently asked questions.

Table 11: Sample Measure Types

Types of Measures	What are they measuring?	Examples
Workload	How many of something; raw counts of outputs	Calls received, work orders completed, zoning applications processed
Efficiency	Ratio, relationship between outputs and inputs, can be expressed in percentage	Cost per job reviewed, cost per capita, application processed per analyst, calls per police officer, building permits per inspector
Outcome	Effectiveness, obtains quality, if a program or service is having an impact	Resident satisfaction, impact of a program, response time of 5 minutes or less



EXAMPLES

Lindenhurst, Illinois, staff identified some measures that indicate performance with their overarching strategic planning themes. They update this data monthly to show elected officials and the broader public how they are performing in specific areas. Internally, their staff have a quarterly discussion to report on progress with action steps identified by the village's strategic plan.

Case Studies/Best Practices

As part of the survey distributed to local governments, respondents were asked to share their strategic plans and if they would be willing to serve as best practice communities for the report. After the data analysis was completed, five local governments from across the country were selected for more in-depth analysis of their process. The five local governments describe their strategic planning process in detail in the following section.



Mariposa County, California (Home of Yosemite)

Population: 17,100

Dallin Kimble, County Administrative Officer
(January 2017 – Present)

<https://www.mariposacounty.org/1780/Strategic-Plan>

What was the process?

Our strategic planning process began with data collection, including a community survey. After several informative presentations about different aspects of the county, the board of supervisors met with department heads and

then on their own to complete a facilitated analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. The board identified our mission, vision, values, and focus areas, along with a few key objectives for the future.

Staff then organized interdepartmental committees of six-eight staff for each focus area to flesh out the objectives and initiatives. The work of the committees was presented to the department heads and the CAO, who made a few minor tweaks primarily removing duplicates that appeared in multiple focus areas. The final draft was considered and approved by the board.

How did you obtain elected officials buy-in?

We're fond of saying that we don't want buy-in, we want ownership. Our elected officials had ownership in the strategic plan because they directed staff to put it together and were involved in the process.

How much did the process cost and did you use an outside facilitator?

We spent about \$11,000 on a community survey and about \$8,000 on a facilitator. We used primarily in-house staff except for the resources/costs noted above.

How much time to do the strategic planning process?

Our strategic plan took about six months to put together.

Did you engage residents in the process?

The county had recently completed a community-by-community process to gather input for the economic vitality strategy. Staff also conducted our first community survey, sought input on social media, and received public comment at various meetings along the way.

Did you use a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC) analysis?

Yes.

Table 12: Comparison of Case Study Local Governments

Local Government	Population	Cost	Time for the Process	Facilitation	Community Engagement	SWOC Analysis	Updates	Reporting
Mariposa County, CA	17,100	\$8,000	6 months	In-house staff	Consult using survey data prior to the plan's creation	Yes	Annually	Annually
Town of Vinton, VA	8,128	\$2,000	6 months	Consultant	Inform residents after the plan was created	Yes	Annually	Annually
City of Stevenson, WA	1,700	\$2,000	9 months	Consultant	None	No	Annually	Annually
Village of Lindenhurst, IL	14,406	\$16,900	10 months	University	Consult using survey data and focus groups prior to the plan's creation	Yes	3-4 years	Monthly and Quarterly
Town of Rolesville, NC	9,359	\$16,200	3 months	University	Consult using community input sessions	Yes	2 years	Quarterly

How often do you update the strategic plan?

We aspire to update the strategic plan annually. In practice, we're beginning our first update of the plan about 2.5 years after adoption.

How often do you report progress on the strategic plan?

Progress on the strategic plan is reported annually and as significant milestones are reached.

Lessons learned or what you would do differently?

We've debated back and forth between a thorough plan with estimated budgets, specific performance targets and timelines, and a simpler conceptual plan. For our first time, we opted for simple and now think we should make it even more simple. One page would be ideal to make it a frequent reference that is easy to remember and use.

The right facilitator makes a big difference. We're glad we used a facilitator when we did; in the future, we would use facilitators in the staff committees as well. Along the way, we met several facilitators who were too academic or would not have been a good fit with our community and/or our staff. We also met a few who did, or we felt would have done excellent work consistent with our community.



Town of Vinton, Virginia

Population: 8,128

Richard "Pete" Peters, Town Manager
(January 2021 – Present)

[https://www.vintonva.gov/486/
Town-of-Vinton-Strategic-Plan-2020-2025](https://www.vintonva.gov/486/Town-of-Vinton-Strategic-Plan-2020-2025)

What was the process?

Over the past decade, Vinton had primarily conducted yearly planning retreats with members of staff and town council to develop annual goals and targets for establishing operating and budget priorities for the upcoming fiscal year. In 2020, the town underwent a

more comprehensive strategic plan update, with a desire to establish operating and budget priorities for the next five years (2021-2025).

How did you obtain elected officials buy-in?

Council supported the concept of establishing a longer-term planning document to provide more mid-range guidance to staff for CIP and operational planning. Annual planning to establish immediate priorities had been sufficient in recent years due to flat revenues—although given new revenue growth attributed to economic development projects, such as new restaurants and pari-mutuel gaming—a longer-term approach was necessary.

How much did the process cost and did you use an outside facilitator?

The town used a facility that it owned for the half-day retreat and the only expenses associated were snacks and the consultant contracted to facilitate the discussion and draft the written plan. The town contracted with Council of Community Services, a not-for-profit organization located in Roanoke that facilitates many community service activities on behalf of various local and state governments. The contract rate was \$2,000 for their work.

How much time to do the strategic planning process?

Council and staff met with the consultant over a half day, although the consultant had sent out surveys to participants several days in advance to establish much of the preliminary work.

Did you engage residents in the process?

Once a draft plan was created, council solicited feedback via requesting public comment on the concepts and direction of the strategic plan.

Did you use a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC) analysis?

A SWOC was used as part of the preliminary feedback gathered by the initial surveys sent to council and staff.

How often do you update the strategic plan?

The plan is reviewed annually as part of the annual operation and CIP budget development, as budget priorities are being tied back to strategies associated with the strategic plan.

Lessons learned or what you would do differently?

The method that we undertook to develop the plan went extremely well and was a very efficient process. Council has been very supportive of the annual updating practices being tied to the annual budget adoption and are very pleased with the outcomes being accomplished by the document and the activities the plan has generated.



City of Stevenson, Washington

Population: 1,700

Leana Kinley, City Administrator
(September 2017 – Present)

<https://www.ci.stevenson.wa.us/citycouncil/page/council-strategic-goals>

What was the process?

Historically, the city goals and priorities were presented by department heads and discussed during the budget process. Leading up to the city's first strategic planning process, there were multiple projects that identified a need for the city to have a better long-range plan. During the update of the general sewer plan and facilities plan, the estimated cost to upgrade the city's system was \$16M and the residential base rates were projected to reach \$185/month. The upgrades were mandated by a state Department of Ecology Administrative Order issued to the city in 2017 for violations of its National Pollutant Discharge and Elimination System (NPDES) permit. At the same time, the city recently purchased land and was looking to design and build a new fire hall. There were also two recent street rebuild projects that moved forward without adequate improvements to the underlying water and sewer infrastructure. With limited staff and resources, decisions needed to be made on which projects were a priority and what needed to be pushed out or delayed.

With a new mayor and city administrator, we were looking to improve the planning process. Our first step was a half-day council retreat, facilitated by a community member, to set the stage for a strategic planning session. This was conducted two months into the mayor's first term (February 2018) and was a good starting off point to establish overall council direction.

In October of the same year, we held our day-and-a-half strategic planning retreat. Prior to the retreat, we sent out a survey on goals, priorities, and other feedback. It

consisted of an initial half-day session where we reviewed the previous goals from February, reviewed the survey, and proposed new goals and priorities. The next day, we reviewed the previous day, prioritized the goals, and developed strategies for meeting those goals. This was done by an outside facilitator and the result was a five-year strategic plan with a vision, mission, and SMART goals.

How did you obtain elected officials buy-in?

The mayor was on board to begin with and recent events at the city created the impetus for council to change direction and look at a better way to plan for the future.

How much did the process cost and did you use an outside facilitator?

We used a consultant who facilitated meetings for another local group. The cost was \$2,000 for their services.

How much time to do the strategic planning process?

The initial meeting was a day-and-a-half.

Did you engage residents in the process?

We have not engaged residents in this process yet. We are in the process of developing a community engagement and public participation plan that will be incorporated into this process.

Did you use a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC) analysis?

No.

How often do you update the strategic plan?

Annually. Every year council holds a retreat, ideally in Q1, and goes over the progress on the plan and discusses changes. These are then reviewed and confirmed at the beginning of the budget process. All plans and updates can be found on our website <https://www.ci.stevenson.wa.us/citycouncil/page/council-strategic-goals> and the progress of past goals are listed in each subsequent plan.

How often do you report progress on the strategic plan?

Annually, see above.

Lessons learned or what you would do differently?

Going forward, there is a need to better involve the community on the strategic plan. Goals and priorities on the list were compared to the city's comprehensive plan, which has an engagement process, and they were not in conflict, but there was no public component of the strategic plan. When we come up on the end of the initial five-year plan, a reset will be needed, and we can incorporate an improved community engagement process to inform a new strategic plan.



Village of Lindenhurst, Illinois

Population: 14,406 (2020)

Clay Johnson, Village Administrator
(September 2017 – Present)

<https://www.lindenhurstil.org/department/division>

What was the process?

After contracting with the Center for Governmental Studies out of Northern Illinois University (NIU), the Village of Lindenhurst reached out to various community stakeholders, staff, and residents to set up a series of focus groups to gain feedback on village performance and direction. The feedback from those focus groups was compiled into a single document and presented to the village board in a planning workshop.

Using the information gained from the focus groups, the mayor and village trustees went through a number of analytical exercises during a workshop session to develop a series of priorities that respond to the themes of the focus groups and analyses. In that same workshop, the priorities were organized in terms of their completion date and complexity. Our partners at NIU took these goals, and then sent them to our elected officials to rank in terms of priority. The results of the prioritization were then shared with elected officials and staff.

Once again with the help of the representatives from NIU, staff reviewed the newly developed goals and prepared a series of action steps that led to accomplishing a particular goal. Each action step was assigned a primary staff lead and timelines were established for updates and goal completion. The action steps also included any resources or outside agency assistance that may be needed.

Finally, after all goals and action steps were completed, the full strategic plan was publicized and adopted by the village board. After adoption, staff sent the strategic plan to all those who participated in the planning process.

How did you obtain elected officials buy-in?

Our village board has always prioritized long-term planning, but never took the time to solicit feedback from stakeholders and staff to drive the strategic initiatives of the village. Convincing the board to move in this direction was not a challenge as we sought to engage our public to a greater degree and increase transparency of village initiatives.

How much did the process cost and did you use an outside facilitator?

The village used the Center for Governmental Studies at NIU as consultants for our strategic planning process. Their representatives coordinated with village staff and led all focus groups and facilitators of our strategic planning workshop. Once all the data was collected, our partners drafted the strategic plan and worked with staff on action steps that would be used to meet the overall tenets of the plan. Cost was \$16,900.

How much time to do the strategic planning process?

From the moment we began to collaborate with NIU, the process took about 10 months.

How did you engage residents?

Before we began our strategic planning process, the village engaged a company to conduct a statistically significant community survey that would indicate how the community feels about various aspects of our local governments' approach and services. The community survey was then used as a data point in our strategic planning session. One of the first steps of the strategic planning process was the creation of three focus groups to provide their feedback on a variety of areas. Each focus group was facilitated by a representative of NIU and no village elected staff or management were present in the room during discussion. One focus group was composed of village staff, another with community stakeholders (schools, park districts, Chamber of Commerce), and the final group was with Lindenhurst residents.

Did you use a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC) analysis?

Yes, village board members, staff, and any attending public were divided into groups to each develop items that fit into a SWOC analysis. The group then reconvened to share their thoughts and ideas.

How often do you update the strategic plan?

We have not updated the plan as of yet, but we will likely update it every three-four years.

How often do you report progress on the strategic plan?

Village staff identified some measures that indicate performance with our overarching strategic planning

themes. We update this data monthly to show our elected officials and the broader public how we are performing in these specific areas. Internally, our staff has a quarterly discussion to report on progress with action steps identified by the village's strategic plan.



Town of Rolesville, North Carolina

Population: 9,359

Kelly Arnold, Town Administrator
(June 2018 – Present)

Amy Stevens, Finance Director
(2012 - Present)

<https://www.rolesvillenc.gov/strategic-plan>

What was the process?

Rolesville's governing board embarked on the development of a comprehensive strategic plan in late 2019. Since early 2017, the town had identified a simple series of goals and objectives that were updated annually through an informal process. These goals were generally completed as part of an annual budget retreat with the town board and town manager.

With a relatively new manager and board taking office after the November 2019 election, the town targeted the period of November 2019 through February 2020 to initiate and complete a more comprehensive, long-term strategic plan with a two-year work program.

After the November 2019 election, town staff worked with the consultant to create a systematic approach that would produce the desired product over a three-month span. The February 2020 completion time frame would allow the strategic plan to be used and featured in the budget development for the 2020-21 fiscal year, which started July 1, 2020.

Over the course of the three-month period, the following activities took place:

- Initial full-day retreat with the governing board, consultant, and lead staff to conduct a regional forecasting exercise and a SWOC analysis of the community and organization. The group began creating consensus around a community vision and high-level goals.
- Two facilitated community input sessions to obtain feedback directly from residents and stakeholders in the community about their vision for the future of Rolesville. To maximize participation, one session was held during the business day and one session was held in the evening.
- Half-day facilitated discussion with town manager and department heads to create consensus around a mission statement and core values, which are the more internally focused components of the town's strategic plan.
- Final full-day retreat with the governing board, consultant, and lead staff to review the work from the community and staff input sessions. The primary objective of this session was to refine and finalize the essential elements of the strategic plan.
- Presentation and adoption of the strategic plan components at the governing board meetings in March 2020, which led to the development of materials that are now used as part of the strategic plan.

The primary components of the adopted strategic plan that are essential to implementation are: the vision statement, four key focus areas, 16 goals, and the mission and core values of the internal organization.

How much did the process cost and did you use an outside facilitator?

In the fall of 2019, the board initiated a consultant selection process. This process called for experienced consultants to submit a request for proposal to assist with the development of the plan. A subcommittee with representation by the mayor, a town commissioner, and staff was formed, and this subcommittee conducted an interview process with the top candidates. The University of North Carolina School of Government was chosen for their experience, proposed process, and pricing. Their proposed process called for the School of Government consultants to direct development of the planning process, lead the facilitation of governing board and community input, and create the framework for the strategic plan. The cost for the services and materials was \$16,200.

How often do you update the strategic plan?

Over the course of the past two years, the strategic plan has been treated as an important roadmap providing clear guidance for the decision-making process regarding policy

adoption and budget development. The plan is referenced as part of cover memos that are written for governing board agenda items, and staff members routinely develop recommendations based upon whether the policy is in alignment with the strategic plan.

How often do you report progress on the strategic plan?

After the adoption of the strategic plan, town leadership further developed specific work plan priorities that could be addressed over the immediate two-year work period. These initiatives were collected into the staff progress report, which is updated three times a year and provided to the governing board in their agenda packet and posted on the town's public website.

Regular communication has been an important factor in keeping the plan alive and relevant. The key components were formatted into an 11" x 17" document that could be folded and used as a brochure or opened and used as a desk blotter or poster. A laminated version of the plan sits in front of elected officials at all board meetings. Copies of the plan were made available to staff and are part of the new hire onboarding packet. Staff members have copies of the strategic plan hanging on walls and bulletin boards. These easy-to-find copies of the plan help ensure it remains accessible to all and relevant to decision-making.

The strategic plan has been incorporated into the annual budget conversation. Department heads know that requests for new initiatives and staff should be tied to the strategic plan to be successful. These linkages are further reinforced within the annual budget document. With the

receipt of the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) 2021 Distinguished Budget Presentation Award, the town was recognized for meeting their standards for clearly communicating its strategic goals and the action plans developed to accomplish those goals.

Next Strategic Plan Cycle

For Rolesville, there is a two-year cycle associated with the strategic plan. While the vision statement is focused on the long-term development of the community, the specific goals and work plans are more suited to a shorter cycle of review and modification. A two-year cycle nicely corresponds with local elections and allows a new town board to set their own short-term direction as they start their terms.

The next strategic plan update, scheduled for late 2021, will follow a similar November through February time frame, but it will be more focused on minor modifications. Since this is a more limited scope of work, it will be facilitated by staff instead of an outside consultant. In the future, a more significant strategic plan process will proceed either due to the passage of time (i.e., the strategic plan is at least four years old) or a significant change of town board membership.

Going forward, there is a desire for the next major iteration of the strategic plan to include more participation of the staff leadership team, improved development of metrics to identify plan success, and incorporation of a biannual community survey in the alternating years.

Appendix A

Strategic Planning for Small Communities Survey

The strategic planning survey, distributed in August 2021, provided a snapshot of strategic planning initiatives in small communities throughout the United States. The survey was completed by local government officials in 24 of the 50 States, the District of Columbia and one international respondent.

The respondents included local government managers, assistants or deputy managers, department heads, elected officials and others including clerks, interim managers, and retired managers. The respondents represented a balance of city, county, and town local governments and over 68% were from communities with populations less than 10,000.

Q1 Is your local government a city, county, or town?		
Local Government Type	Percentage	Number
City	47.3%	44
County	9.7%	9
Town	43.0%	40
Total	100%	93

Q2 What is your local government's population?		
Answer	Percentage	Number
0-5,000	35.8%	34
5,001-10,000	33.7%	32
10,001-15,000	14.7%	14
15,001-20,000	15.8%	15
Total	100%	95

Q3 What state or country represented?	
Answer	Number
Alaska	3
California	4
Colorado	2
Connecticut	1
Delaware	1
Florida	2
Illinois	5
Indiana	1
Iowa	2
Maine	2
Maryland	2
Massachusetts	1
Michigan	2
Minnesota	2
Missouri	2
Nebraska	2
New York	1
North Carolina	3
Ohio	5
Oregon	1
Pennsylvania	3
South Carolina	2
Tennessee	1
Virginia	28
Washington	4
Wisconsin	2
I do not reside in the United States	1
Total	85

Q4 | What is your position?

Answer	Percentage	Number
County, city, town manager	65.3%	62
Assistant or deputy manager	12.6%	12
Department head	4.2%	4
Elected official	6.3%	6
Other (please specify)	11.6%	11
Total	100%	95

Q5 | A strategic plan is defined as a plan that is adopted by the governing body and includes a mission, vision, values or value statement and goals and objectives for the organization and community. Does your local government have a strategic plan?

Answer	Percentage	Number
Yes	49.6%	55
No	21.6%	24
We are in the process of developing a strategic plan.	10.8%	12
We have some components of a strategic plan but not all as defined above.	18.0%	20
Total	100%	111*

* Some respondents answered only this question and did not complete the full survey.

The following questions were answered by local government officials stating they had a strategic plan.

Q6 | What do you view as the benefits of having a strategic plan for the organization and the community?

Question	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Total
The strategic plan provides clear guidance on the goals of the governing body to the manager.	5.7%	0.0%	2.9%	20.0%	71.4%	35
The strategic plan is used as a communication device for staff.	5.7%	2.9%	2.9%	25.7%	62.9%	35
The strategic plan helps me to prioritize the work in the organization.	5.7%	2.9%	8.6%	28.6%	54.3%	35
The strategic plan communicates to employees that what they do is important and for a purpose.	5.9%	5.9%	14.7%	20.6%	52.9%	34
The strategic plan is used to prioritize budget requests.	8.8%	2.9%	8.8%	29.4%	50.0%	34
The strategic plans serves as an accountability tool for the governing body during the manager's evaluation.	6.1%	12.1%	24.2%	21.2%	36.4%	33
The strategic plan serves as a communication device for the citizens in the community on the goals of the governing body.	5.9%	2.9%	11.8%	38.2%	41.2%	34
The strategic plans helps me, as the manager, prioritize staff and financial resources.	5.9%	2.9%	5.9%	29.4%	55.9%	34
The strategic plan prioritizes resources from a organizational-wide perspective.	5.9%	2.9%	14.7%	41.2%	35.3%	34

Q7 | The strategic plan is a resource for local governments during times of crisis. Consider the following questions and select your level of agreement.

Question	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Total
The strategic plan helped prioritize services during the COVID-19 pandemic.	20.6%	11.8%	41.2%	20.6%	5.9%	34
The strategic plan helped to prioritize funding when revenues declined during the pandemic.	23.5%	8.8%	29.4%	26.5%	11.8%	34
The strategic plan is helping to prioritize funding allocation through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).	23.5%	2.9%	32.4%	23.5%	17.7%	34
The strategic plan has helped prioritize resources during economic crisis.	20.6%	5.9%	26.5%	26.5%	20.6%	34
The strategic plan has helped the elected officials make decisions on controversial issues.	11.8%	8.8%	23.5%	26.5%	29.4%	34
The strategic plan has helped prioritize resources as a result of a natural disaster in our community.	17.1%	17.1%	37.1%	20.0%	8.6%	35

Q8 | How often does the governing body update or review the strategic plan?

Answer	Percentage	Number
Annually	25.7%	9
Every two years	31.4%	11
With each election	8.6%	3
Other	34.3%	12
Total	100%	35

Q9 | At what stage of the strategic planning process is your local government?

Answer	Percentage	Number
Strategic plan is adopted and available.	45.7%	16
Strategic plan is completed and available and the budget is tied to strategic priorities.	40.0%	14
Strategic plan is completed, we appropriate funds for strategic priorities and we have developed performance measures to track strategic goals and priorities.	14.3%	5
Total	100%	35

Q10 | Was your strategic plan developed with in-house staff or with an outside facilitator?

Answer	Percentage	Number
In-house staff	42.9%	15
Outside facilitator	57.1%	20
Total	100%	35

Q11 | Did you conduct any citizen engagement (surveys, town hall meetings, emails) to gather citizen input on the mission, vision or goals for the local government during the strategic planning process?

Answer	Percentage	Number
Yes, we gathered citizen input	60.0%	21
No, we did not gather citizen input	40.0%	14
Total	100%	35

Q12 | If you did not conduct any citizen engagement to inform the strategic plan process, identify the reasons below. (select all that apply)

Answer	Percentage	Number
In a small local government, citizen engagement happens daily.	85.7%	12
Our elected officials work closely with citizens because we are small and can communicate their needs sufficiently.	78.6%	11
Not enough time.	28.6%	4
We did not have staff resources to conduct citizen engagement.	64.3%	9
Other	21.4%	3
Total		14

The following questions were answered by local government officials who stated they did not have a strategic plan at all. Not all questions were displayed to each official depending on their answers to previous questions.

Q13 | What are some challenges for your local government to developing a strategic plan?

Question	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Total
Elected officials are not interested in developing a strategic plan.	16.7%	11.1%	33.3%	33.3%	5.6%	18
We do not have the time to do a strategic plan.	11.1%	11.1%	33.3%	33.3%	11.1%	18
We do not have the staff expertise to do a strategic plan.	17.7%	17.7%	23.5%	17.7%	23.5%	17
We do not have funding available for a strategic planning process.	11.8%	11.7%	11.8%	29.4%	35.3%	17
We feel the comprehensive plan is sufficient for strategic planning.	17.7%	29.4%	29.4%	17.7%	5.9%	17
We use a priority setting process during the budget process in lieu of a strategic plan.	5.9%	5.9%	29.4%	52.9%	5.9%	17
The elected officials cannot agree to do a strategic planning process.	27.8%	11.1%	33.3%	16.7%	11.1%	18

Q14 | If you wanted to do a strategic plan, what resources would you need?
(select all that apply)

Answer	Percentage	Number
Financial resources - money to do it.	38.9%	7
Staff resources - staff to help pull the document together.	44.4%	8
Time resources - dedicated time outside the office to hold a strategic planning workshop.	61.1%	11
Elected officials buy-in - having the elected officials agree to hold a strategic planning workshop.	50.0%	9
Outside facilitator - someone neutral to facilitate the process.	50.0%	9
Other	0.0%	0
Total		18

This section was completed by local government officials who identified having some components of a strategic plan or were in the process of developing a strategic plan. Not all questions were displayed to each official depending on their answers to previous questions.

Q15 | At what stage of the strategic planning process is your local government?

Answer	Percentage	Number
Strategic planning process has been initiated but not complete. (Please note in the box what activities have been initiated.)	42.9%	3
We have some components of the strategic plan but not all. (Please note in the box below what components are available.)	28.6%	2
The governing body has not adopted the strategic plan at this time, but they held a strategic planning retreat.	28.6%	2
Total	100%	7

Q16 | What are some challenges for your local government to developing a strategic plan?

Question	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Total
Elected officials are not interested in developing a strategic plan.	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3
We do not have the time to do a strategic plan.	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	3
We do not have the staff expertise to do a strategic plan.	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	3
We do not have funding available for a strategic planning process.	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	2
We feel the comprehensive plan is sufficient for strategic planning.	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	3
We use a priority setting process during the budget process in lieu of a strategic plan.	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	3
The elected officials cannot agree to do a strategic planning process.	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	3

Q17 | Will your strategic plan be developed with in-house staff or with an outside facilitator?

Answer	Percentage	Number
In-house staff	20.0%	1
Outside facilitator	80.0%	4
Total	100%	5

Q18 | Will you conduct any citizen engagement (surveys, town hall meetings, emails) to gather citizen input on the mission, vision or goals for the local government during the strategic planning process?

Answer	Percentage	Number
Yes, we will (or we did) gather citizen input	60.0%	3
No, we will (or we did) not gather citizen input	40.0%	2
Total	100%	5

Q19 | If you will not (or did not) conduct any citizen engagement to inform the strategic plan process, identify the reasons below. (select all that apply)

Answer	Percentage	Number
In a small local government, citizen engagement happens daily.	50.0%	1
Our elected officials work closely with citizens because we are small and can communicate their needs sufficiently.	50.0%	1
Not enough time.	100.0%	2
We will not have staff resources to conduct citizen engagement.	50.0%	1
Other	100.0%	2
Total		2

Q20 | Why did your local government engage in the strategic planning process?

Question	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Total
The strategic plan will provide clear guidance on the goals of the governing body to the manager.	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%	4
The strategic plan will help the manager to prioritize the work in the organization.	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	25.0%	4
The strategic plan will communicate to employees that what they do is important and for a purpose.	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	4
The strategic plan will be used to prioritize budget requests.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	75.0%	25.0%	4
The strategic plans will serve as an accountability tool for the governing body during the manager's evaluation.	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	4
The strategic plan will help to prioritize staff and financial resources.	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	5
The pandemic has changed what we do and how we do it.	20.0%	0.0%	20.0%	60.0%	0.0%	5
We had an election and new members were elected to the governing body.	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	5
The governing body has differing views on the overall direction of the local government.	20.0%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	5
We needed an overall plan for American Rescue Plan Spending (ARPA funding)	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	4
We are in a financial crisis.	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	4
We need consensus from the governing body on controversial issues.	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	3

Q21 | What components of the strategic plan do you currently have? (select all that apply)

Answer	Percentage	Number
Mission Statement	15.4%	2
Vision Statement	30.8%	4
Values or values statement	30.8%	4
Goals	76.9%	10
Objectives	61.5%	8
Other (please describe)	15.4%	2
Total		13

Q22 | Many small communities use other resources or documents to serve as the local government's strategic plan. What type of document or resource serves as your local government's strategic plan? (select all that apply)

Answer	Percentage	Number
Comprehensive Plan (20 year plan of land use)	69.2%	9
Budget	84.6%	11
Capital Improvement Plan	46.2%	6
Other Plan (please specify)	7.7%	1
Total		13

Q23 | Were the components of your strategic plan developed in-house or using an outside facilitator?

Answer	Percentage	Number
In-house staff	53.9%	7
Outside facilitator	46.1%	6
Total	100%	13

Q24 | Were the components of your strategic plan developed with citizen engagement?

Answer	Percentage	Number
Yes	30.8%	4
No	69.2%	9
Total	100%	13

Q25 | If you did not conduct any citizen engagement to inform the strategic plan components, identify the reasons below. (select all that apply)

Answer	Percentage	Number
In a small local government, citizen engagement happens daily.	44.4%	4
Our elected officials work closely with citizens because we are small and can communicate their needs sufficiently.	33.3%	3
Not enough time.	11.1%	1
We will not have staff resources to conduct citizen engagement.	11.1%	1
It is an internal document for the governing body and the manager.	22.2%	2
Other	44.4%	4
Total		9

Q26 | Why did your local government engage in some level of the strategic planning process? (strategic plan includes components of the plan)

Question	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Total
The strategic plan will provide clear guidance on the goals of the governing body to the manager.	0.0%	7.7%	7.7%	69.2%	15.4%	13
The strategic plan will help the manager to prioritize the work in the organization.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	69.2%	30.8%	13
The strategic plan will communicate to employees that what they do is important and for a purpose.	0.0%	7.7%	15.4%	53.8%	23.1%	13
The strategic plan will be used to prioritize budget requests.	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	53.8%	38.5%	13
The strategic plans will serve as an accountability tool for the governing body during the manager's evaluation.	0.0%	23.1%	23.1%	53.8%	0.0%	13
The strategic plan will help to prioritize staff and financial resources.	0.0%	0.0%	15.4%	61.5%	23.1%	13
The pandemic has changed what we do and how we do it.	15.4%	7.7%	61.5%	15.4%	0.0%	13
We had an election and new members were elected to the governing body.	15.4%	15.4%	38.5%	23.1%	7.7%	13
The governing body has differing views on the overall direction of the local government.	23.1%	7.7%	15.4%	30.8%	23.1%	13
We needed an overall plan for American Rescue Plan Spending (ARPA funding)	15.4%	7.7%	53.8%	15.4%	7.7%	13
We are in a financial crisis.	46.1%	30.8%	15.4%	7.7%	0.0%	13
We need consensus from the governing body on controversial issues.	15.4%	23.1%	30.8%	15.4%	15.4%	13

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ABOUT ICMA

ICMA, the International City/County Management Association, advances professional local government management worldwide through leadership, management, innovation, and ethics. Through partnerships with local governments, federal agencies, nonprofits, and philanthropic funders, the organization gathers information on topics such as sustainability, health care, aging communities, economic development, cybersecurity, and performance measurement and management data on a variety of local government services—all of which support related training, education, and technical assistance.

ICMA provides support, publications, data and information, peer and results-oriented assistance, and training and professional development to more than 13,000 city, town, and county experts and other individuals and organizations throughout the world.

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INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

777 N. Capitol St. NE, Ste. 500, Washington, DC 20002

202.962.3680 | icma.org

Proposal for: Strategic Planning Council Retreat

City of West Lake Hills, TX

September 3, 2024

This proposal is valid for 90 days.

Strategic Government Resources
P.O. Box 1642, Keller, Texas 76244
Office: 817-337-8581

Mike Mowery, President of Leadership
Development & Strategic Foresight
MMowery@GovernmentResource.com



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About SGR

Strategic Government Resources, Inc. (SGR) exists to help local governments become more successful by recruiting, assessing, and developing innovative, collaborative, and authentic leaders. SGR was incorporated in Texas in 2002 with the mission to facilitate innovative leadership in local government. SGR is fully owned by former City Manager Ron Holifield, who spent two high-profile decades in city management and served as a City Manager in several cities.

SGR's business model is truly unique. Although we are a private company, SGR operates like a local government association. Most of SGR's principals are former local government officials, allowing SGR to bring a perspective and depth of local government expertise to every project that no other firm can match.

SGR's Core Values are Customer Service, Integrity, Philanthropy, Continuous Improvement, Agility, Collaboration, Protecting Relationships, and the Golden Rule.

SGR is a full-service firm, specializing in providing solutions for local governments in the areas of recruitment and retention, leadership development and training, innovation and future readiness, and everything in between.

With 28 full-time employees, 1 part-time employee, 27 recruiters, 17 facilitators, and multiple consultants who function as subject matter experts on a variety of projects, SGR offers comprehensive expertise.

The company operates as a fully remote organization, with team members located in Texas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Missouri, Montana, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, and South Carolina.

View all SGR team members and their bios at: <https://sgr.pub/MeetTeamSGR>.



*To help your
people achieve
greatness...
prepare them
BEFORE
you promote
them.*

SGR understands that creating a leadership development pipeline, a strong overall succession plan, and a healthy culture for your organization is a high priority. Let us help you promote team engagement and provide team members with training and professional development opportunities that are tailored to specifically meet the needs of local government.

We appreciate the opportunity to help you strengthen your training and leadership development programs!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron Holifield". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Ron Holifield
CEO of Strategic Government Resources

Why Invest in Leadership Development?

Leadership Development focuses on the competencies needed for upper-level managers and senior executives who have the responsibility of shaping the organization's culture and systems to facilitate excellent performance. Leadership Development events help leaders navigate how they can effectively shape and mold the future.

How Do Live Events Work?

SGR's Leadership Development Events are highly customizable and can be tailored to meet the specific needs of your organization. Certain needs may simply require a customized agenda while others may require confirming other specifics such as preferred topic, duration, target audience, intended outcomes, budget, and more.

SGR organizes its catalog by "format", which simply indicates the intended event experience. Available formats include the following:

- Retreats for elected officials
- Workshops for Management Teams
- Executive Book Briefings
- Round-Table Discussions on Values-based Leadership
- Strategic Foresight Workshops
- Servant Leadership Conferences
- Executive Coaching and Mentoring

Whether you are interested in scheduling a retreat, workshop, executive book briefing, or other available service, SGR will work with you to create an agenda that fits your needs.

Scope of Work

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this proposal to facilitate a Strategic Planning Council Retreat for the City of West Lake Hills, TX. This proposal includes event details, facilitator background information, and the cost of services. The specific agenda for the event will be established in collaboration between the SGR facilitator and the City.

Session Title	Facilitator	Date/Time	Location
Strategic Planning Council Retreat	Hilary Shine	October or November 2024 TBD	TBD

Process Overview:

1. Advance interviews with Mayor, Council Members & Identified Stakeholders
2. Strategic Planning Council Retreat with a Good Governance Refresher
3. Delivery of report detailing key takeaways from the event

Advance Interviews:

Building rapport between the facilitator and participants is an important component of holding a successful retreat. SGR utilizes a process called “advance interviews” which equips the facilitator with the knowledge needed to address the most important issues within your organization as well as customize the agenda for the retreat based on your needs. Prior to the retreat, the SGR Facilitator will conduct advance interviews with the City Council. Interviews are approximately 45-60 minutes in length and are normally done via telephone, however, in-person interviews can be arranged upon request.

Process for Scheduling Advance Interviews:

1. Once an agreement has been fully executed, SGR will introduce the host organization to the SGR facilitator for the retreat via email. The facilitator will provide their availability based on dates they have reserved for this purpose.
2. SGR requests that someone within your organization schedules the interviews for each participant to meet with the facilitator. Once scheduled, participants should be given the facilitator’s email address and phone number for convenience.
3. Once the interviews have been scheduled, the city will send the facilitator the names, email addresses, and phone numbers of the participants being interviewed along with the day and time the interview is scheduled.

4. If a participant cannot schedule an interview for any of the times the facilitator provided, please contact the facilitator to see if they can schedule a different time for that individual.

Below is a sample email that the city can share with participants:

“Our city has scheduled a Council Retreat with SGR that will be held on (Event Date.) In preparation for the retreat, SGR will be conducting advance interviews with all the participants by telephone. These interviews will be one-on-one between you and the facilitator and will last approximately 45-60 minutes. No preparation will be required on your part for the advance interview as the questions will be intended as an opportunity for you to give your opinions about the direction and future of the city.

The times for the interviews are as follows:

(Days and Times for the interviews supplied by the facilitator.)

The city will be reaching out to you to schedule the interviews. If you are not available for any of these times, please contact the city, and we will reach out to the facilitator to see if another time can be arranged.

The facilitator, (Facilitator’s Name), will be calling you from this number, (Facilitator’s Phone Number).”

Recommended Timeframe:

We recommend the executed contract be sent to SGR at least 30 days prior to the scheduled retreat, if possible. This allows for an adequate amount of time for the meeting agenda to be finalized, advance interviews to be scheduled and conducted, any necessary online surveys or personality profiles to be prepared and assigned, and efficient travel arrangements to be made. Since we generally do not connect you with the facilitator until after we have received the signed contract, we ask that you plan accordingly.

If the city desires to work personally with the facilitator to establish the exact date for the meeting, we can execute a contract with the date set as “to be determined.” The city and the facilitator can then coordinate on the exact date according to their mutual availability.

Deliverable:

SGR will provide a report including any updates or changes to the strategic plan that is suitable for internal use as part of our services at no additional cost.

Facilitator:

The facilitator for the retreat will be Senior Vice President Hilary Shine. Please see Hilary’s bio included in this proposal. To view the bios for all SGR Facilitators, please visit the facilitator section on the SGR website at: [Meet the Team](#)

Requested Logistical Support from the City:

1. A meeting location, break coordination, and expenses.
2. All AV set up, including a lapel microphone, laptop, Wi-Fi, and projector with power point capability, as well as the ability to play videos with adequate sound for a full room to easily hear.
3. Printing of all materials, if applicable.
4. Two chart-size “Post It” style pads with sticky backs and six different colored large size markers (wide tip).

Facilitator

Hilary Shine, Senior Vice President

HilaryShine@governmentresource.com

254-654-4961



Hilary Shine recently retired from a 20-year career in city government. As an executive leader, she honed her skills in effective communications, strategic advancement, program development, performance management and team building. Now a member of the SGR Leadership Development Team, she's excited to share her experience and expertise with local governments.

Hilary is a passionate community servant and has volunteered in leadership positions for local non-profits including United Way, Relay for Life and hospital, theater and education foundation boards. She is co-founder of Friends of Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery, which has ensured that every grave has been honored with a wreath each holiday season since 2006.

Hilary earned a B.S. in Communications from the University of Texas at Austin and holds various certifications in leadership, management, communications and emergency response.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FACILITATORS



DR. MIKE MOWERY



ANDY DUKE



LUIS FERNANDO



CRAIG FRESHLEY



WILL HAMPTON



KEVIN KNUTSON



BOB LASALA



TRACEY MADISON



RANDY MAYEUX

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FACILITATORS



CONNIE MINICH



DR. FRED NAPP



FRANCES PELLEY



OMAR REYES



TROY RIGGS



DR. CINDY RYAN



HILARY SHINE



DOUG THOMAS



DR. SCOTT WILLINGHAM

Professional Services Fees & Estimated Travel Expenses

Professional Service	Unit Price	Quantity	Subtotal
Strategic Planning Council Retreat Full-day	\$9,500	1	\$9,500
Advance Interviews The quantity of interviews is estimated in the proposal. The exact price will be calculated based on the actual number of interviews conducted.	\$300 per interview	9	\$2,700
Estimated Total for Services			\$12,200

Estimated Travel Expenses	Unit Price	Quantity	Subtotal
*Hotel The facilitator will stay at a hotel comparable to a Hampton Inn in your city. Price for hotel will be billed based on exact cost.	TBD	1 (Depending on start time)	TBD
*Mileage/Gasoline Per mile. Mileage is reimbursed per the IRS mileage reimbursement rate and will be included in the invoice for services.	\$0.67	140	\$93.80
Meals \$65 per day. Meals are based on a per diem daily amount per facilitator of \$15 for breakfast, \$20 for lunch, and \$30 for dinner.	\$65	1	\$65
Estimated Total for Expenses			TBD

**Other than meals, which are billed based on a per diem, travel expenses are billed at exact cost on invoice immediately following the date of service.*

AFI Member Discount

The Alliance for Innovation (AFI) is a nationwide non-profit association of local governments dedicated to promoting innovation and improving the quality of life in their local communities. Founded in 1994, the Alliance provides a platform for collaboration, learning, and sharing of best practices among its members.

AFI collaborates with SGR and leverages the expertise of their specialists to deliver professional foresight, innovation, and culture-building services. AFI and SGR are proud to offer a robust selection of offerings thoughtfully designed to guide local governments teams on their individual innovation journeys. Membership in AFI gives local governments a leg up on the activities most essential to building a prosperous future.

- **Become more proactive** – Our strategic foresight services help local governments anticipate change and design proactive strategies to build the future they envision.
- **Build a stronger team** – Our culture building services and events are designed to help local governments build cultures of enhanced innovation and foresight.
- **Get on the cutting edge** – Our innovation services help local governments stay up to date on the latest social innovations and pioneering technology.

In addition to membership benefits, Alliance for Innovation (AFI) Members receive a 10% discount on SGR Leadership Development services. For more information on becoming an AFI Member, please contact: AFI.Info@governmentresource.com.

Billing

SGR will send an invoice immediately following the date of service, which can sometimes result in multiple session offerings being represented in a single invoice *if* the event dates are all delivered within a relatively short period of time. Payment is due within thirty (30) days of receipt. If full payment is not made by the due date, SGR reserves the right to suspend the delivery of all future events until full payment is made. Balances that are unpaid after the payment deadline are subject to a fee of 5% per month or the maximum lawful rate, whichever is less, on the owed amount every month, charged monthly until the balance is paid.

Facilitator Travel & Related Expenses

Applicable travel expenses will be calculated on the day of the event (or preceding/post day(s) of the event based on the start/ending time of the events) and invoiced in addition to the Professional Service Fee(s). Estimated travel expenses are included in this proposal but may vary depending on the cost incurred for travel expenses. If the requested session requires that two or more facilitators be on-site at any time during the session, the client will be invoiced for each Facilitator's travel expenses. SGR makes every effort to be economically responsible for all facilitator-related travel expenses including:

1. Airfare + Applicable Fees. Air transportation will be billed to the client at actual cost (no mark-up) immediately following the date of service.
2. Ground Transportation
 - Personal Vehicle (round trip mileage at current IRS rate of \$0.67 per mile)
 - Rental Vehicle (rental fees + gas at actual cost with no mark-up).
3. Lodging. The facilitator will stay at a hotel comparable to a Hampton Inn in your city. Lodging will be billed to the client at actual cost (no mark-up) immediately following the date of service.
4. Meals. Meals will be reimbursed to facilitator based on a daily per diem amount of \$65.00/day per facilitator; \$15 for breakfast, \$20 for lunch, and \$30 for dinner. Facilitator(s) may claim meal reimbursement for the duration of the trip, including travel en route to and from the event (excluding any meals provided by the Organization in conjunction with the event.)

Purchase Order Number

If applicable, please provide the appropriate Purchase Order (PO). This PO number will be included on the invoice for services provided as part of this Professional Services Agreement.

PO #: _____

Response Request

For the purpose of efficient planning and coordination, we kindly request that your organization responds in a timely manner to our proposal, indicating whether you choose to proceed with the collaboration or explore alternative directions. Prompt feedback is of utmost importance as it enables us to create comprehensive plans and allocate necessary resources.

The proposal is valid for 90 days. If reservations for event dates are set prior to contract execution, they will be valid for 21 days. If SGR does not receive a response to move forward with the contract process within 21 days, we cannot guarantee an available facilitator for the requested date(s) and time(s). Your timely response ensures that both parties can effectively prepare, align strategies, and optimize outcomes. We greatly appreciate your commitment to this collaborative approach.

COUNCIL RETREATS

Experience the difference with SGR, the local government experts, serving to support local governments through facilitated retreats for your governing board.

SGR has a long history of helping cities create strategic visions, work together effectively as a team, and operate by the principles of great board governance.

Types of Retreats



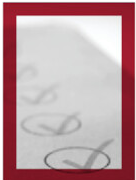
Strategic Vision Retreats

SGR will lead your board to consider a series of strategic questions about the future to help identify key priorities. Through these discussions, we will help create a shared vision for the future built around strategic priorities.



Team Building Retreats

Designed to identify obstacles to effective team work, this process helps elected officials deal with internal conflict and develop positive operating practices.



Governance Retreats

Focused on understanding the roles, responsibilities, and relationships of elected officials and staff, SGR will lead a discussion of the key components of the Council/Manager form of governance to achieve clarity and awareness to overcome challenges to good governance processes.



Multi-Purpose Retreats

Offered to accommodate unique time and budget restraints, this option allows the combination of one or more of these components into the same retreat with a customized agenda.

Email: training@governmentresource.com
to get started on creating a retreat tailored to your team's unique needs.

SGR STRATEGIC VISIONING RETREATS

SGR's Process for Strategic Visioning will equip governing boards with the dynamic tools needed to agree on, establish, and implement priorities... together.

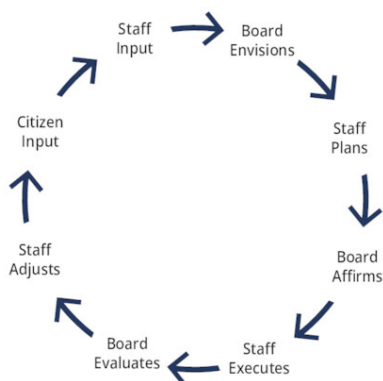
SGR's Philosophy of Strategic Visioning

We believe there is a difference between a Strategic Vision and a Strategic Plan. A vision is focused on where the organization needs to go in the future, and it is primarily the responsibility of the elected officials to develop that vision. A plan is focused on how to accomplish that vision, and it is primarily the responsibility of the staff to develop that plan.

SGR's Process of Strategic Visioning

1. SGR conducts individual interviews with each Council member to determine priorities.
2. SGR develops a custom retreat agenda with the organization to clearly set the purpose and expected outcome.
3. SGR designs a retreat around interactive discussion focused on strategic, future-oriented questions.
4. SGR leads the Council to identify and agree on priorities.
5. SGR leads the Council to identify milestones to achieve while pursuing their strategic priorities.
6. SGR provides a post-retreat report summarizing the work done by the Council, as well as a Strategic Vision succinctly presenting the organization's priorities.

SGR CYCLE FOR STRATEGIC VISION



This diagram illustrates the relationship between the key components in the cycle of creating and maintaining a Strategic Vision.

SGR eagerly meets organizations wherever they are in their planning process. We are flexible and enjoy working to meet the specific needs and requests of every organization.

Contact SGR at training@governmentresource.com for more information about the SGR Strategic Process.

**Agreement for Strategic Planning Council Retreat (“PROJECT”)
to City of West Lake Hills, Texas (“CLIENT”) between
CLIENT and Strategic Government Resources, Inc. (“SGR”)**

SGR and CLIENT (together, “Parties”) agree as follows, effective upon the date of the later signature below, in consideration of the mutual promises contained in this Agreement and other good and valuable consideration, the sufficiency of which each Party hereby acknowledges.

1. SGR promises and agrees:

- A. To perform the services described in SGR’s Proposal for PROJECT dated August 30, 2024 (“PROPOSAL”) substantially in the timeframe projected in the PROPOSAL.
- B. To comply with all applicable open records, public information and similar laws, and consult with CLIENT if SGR is asked for information before disclosure, unless prevented by court order or law from doing so.

2. CLIENT promises and agrees:

- A. To pay SGR promptly as billed or invoiced for such services in accordance with the amounts stated in PROPOSAL, including Reimbursable Expenses and costs of any Supplemental Services or Other Expenses that CLIENT selects.
- B. To respond to drafts of documents and reports in a timely manner; failure to do so may, in SGR’s reasonable discretion, extend timelines and can negatively impact the outcome of the process.
- C. To provide legal opinions to SGR regarding when and if any information relating to the PROJECT must or should be released in accordance with public information laws or legal process.
- D. That if CLIENT receives an open records request, CLIENT shall notify and share the request with SGR in writing as soon as possible but within no more than three (3) business days of receipt.
- E. To cooperate with SGR to enable SGR to perform its obligations to CLIENT.

3. Additional Terms and Conditions:

- A. SGR may substitute personnel other than those initially placed, who have substantially equivalent training and experience and subject to approval of CLIENT, due to factors such as SGR employee/consultant turnover, developing needs of the PROJECT, or CLIENT’s request.
- B. CLIENT grants SGR permission to use any name, logo, or other identifying mark of CLIENT in SGR’s social media content to refer to the relationship established by this agreement.
- C. Remedies

- i. CLIENT can terminate this agreement at any time for no reason upon giving SGR seven (7) days advance written notice of the termination date. In such an event, SGR will be compensated for all work satisfactorily performed up to and through the termination date.
 - ii. SGR can terminate this agreement upon seven (7) days advance written notice of the termination date to CLIENT if CLIENT has failed to promptly pay in full any undisputed portion of any bill or invoice (if the dispute is in good faith) or has failed to perform its contractual promises in a manner that materially impedes SGR's ability to perform. In such an event, SGR will be compensated for all work satisfactorily performed up to and through the termination date.
- D. There are no third-party beneficiaries to this Agreement.
- E. If any term or condition of this Agreement is invalidated by final judgment of a court of competent jurisdiction or becomes impossible to perform, the Parties will confer about whether to continue performance without amending the Agreement, without prejudice to either Party's right to terminate the Agreement without cause.
- F. This Agreement embodies the complete and final understandings, contract, and agreement between the Parties, superseding any and all prior written or verbal representations, understandings, or agreements pertaining to this PROJECT. This Agreement can be modified only by signed written amendment. Electronic communications purporting to amend this Agreement will be effective only if the electronic communication includes specific reference to this Agreement or PROJECT.
- G. This Agreement will be governed by the substantive laws of the State of Texas without regard to the jurisdiction's choice-of-law doctrines. Venue for any litigation relating to this Agreement will be exclusively in Travis County of the State of Texas.
- H. Notices related to this Agreement will go to the respective Parties as follows but either Party can change the addressee for notices to that Party by written notice to the other Party.
 - i. For the purposes of this Agreement, legal notice shall be required for all matters involving potential termination actions, litigation, indemnification, and unresolved disputes. This does not preclude legal notice for any other actions having a material impact on the Agreement.
 - ii. Any notice required be given by this Agreement shall be deemed to have been given within three (3) days of emailing or depositing in the mail.

Legal Notices:

SGR

Attn: Melissa Valentine, Corporate Secretary
PO Box 1642
Keller, TX 76244
Melissa@GovernmentResource.com

CLIENT

Attn: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____

PROJECT Representative:

SGR

Name: Mike Mowery
Title: President of Leadership Development &
Strategic Foresight
Email: MMowery@GovernmentResource.com
Phone: 817-337-8581

CLIENT

Name: _____
Title: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____

Billing and Invoicing:

SGR

Attn: Finance
Finance@GovernmentResource.com
817-337-8581

CLIENT

Name: _____
Title: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____

On-Site AV/IT Point of Contact (for day-of session needs):

SGR

Attn: Training
Training@GovernmentResource.com
817-337-8581

CLIENT

Name: _____
Title: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____

On-Site Event Coordinator Point of Contact (for day-of session needs):

SGR

Attn: Training

Training@GovernmentResource.com

817-337-8581

CLIENT

Name: _____

Title: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

- I. Unless sooner terminated, this Agreement shall terminate at such time as the PROJECT is completed and the requirements of this Agreement are satisfied, except that duties of payment, of information disclosure, and any representations and warranties survive this Agreement.
- J. The Parties and each individual who executes this Agreement on behalf of a Party represent and warrant to the other Party that as to each Party's respective signatory, that signatory is authorized by their Party to execute this Agreement and to bind their Party hereto.
- K. Time is of the essence to this Agreement.
- L. This Agreement may be executed in counterparts which together will comprise the Agreement.
- M. This Agreement is subject to appropriation of funds by CLIENT.
- N. Balances that are unpaid after the payment deadline are subject to a fee of 5% per month or the maximum lawful rate, whichever is less, on the owed amount every month, charged monthly until the balance is paid.

Strategic Government Resources, Inc.

CLIENT

Signature

Signature

Printed Name: _____

Printed Name: _____

Title: _____

Title: _____

Date

Date



City of West Lake Hills City Council

AGENDA REPORT

Meeting Date:	<u>October 2, 2024</u>	Item Number:	<u>5</u>
Department:	<u>Administration</u>		
Prepared By:	<u>Trey Fletcher</u>	Cost / Budget:	<u>N/A</u>
Exhibits:	<u>Presentation</u>	Source of Funds:	<u>N/A</u>

Subject

Discussion and review of the City Council Focus Areas regarding fire prevention, finance, drainage manual review, compatibility standards, economic development/wastewater, and code enforcement inclusive of the development process.

Recommendation

No action is being taken.

Discussion

The City Council defined City Council Focus Areas on May 22. This briefing is to discuss the status of each of the focus areas listed above and received direction and feedback as needed related to the same.

City Council Focus Areas

Staff Briefing

October 2, 2024 | Workshop



Focus Areas

- Code Enforcement inclusive of the Development Process
- Compatibility Standards
- Drainage Manual Review
- Economic Development/Wastewater
- Finance
- Fire prevention



Focus Area: Code Enforcement

- Code Enforcement inclusive of the Development Process
 - Amendments identified, drafted
 - ZAPCO recommendations, City Council on 10/9



Focus Areas

- Compatibility Standards
 - Code Amendments
 - Further evaluation of character zones, differentiation where appropriate of residential zoning districts and requirements



Focus Areas

- Drainage Manual Review
 - Discussed last week
 - Competing outcomes and differing conditions within the community
 - Current requirements leading to some unintended consequences related to site encumbrances and tree removal

Focus Areas

- Economic Development/Wastewater
 - City of Austin Resolution, Barton Creek WW
 - Staff met with AustinWater staff in September



Focus Area: Finance

- Finance
 - FY 2024-25 Budget was approved
 - Goal Setting & Strategic Planning, Oct 30



Focus Area: Finance

The Role of Strategic Planning

- Produce a long-term vision.
- Promote collaboration and open communication.
- Promote long-term thinking.
- Create the conditions for fairness.
- Link planning processes together.

Focus Areas

- Fire prevention
 - Firewise Renewal
 - Action Plan Update



Focus Areas

- Code Enforcement inclusive of the Development Process
- Compatibility Standards
- Drainage Manual Review
- Economic Development/Wastewater
- Finance
- Fire prevention

