

Summary Report: 2011 Retreat and Strategic Planning Workshop

Presented to:
City of Streator, Illinois

October 31, 2011



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PROCESS SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

It was a pleasure for us to work with you to conduct the City Council Retreat and Strategic Planning Workshop. As an organization, you have now placed yourselves among the special class of municipal governments that engage in formalized strategic planning and goal-setting. Long-term planning is not a new phenomenon for progressive organizations, and the value of sessions such as yours continues to be recognized by governing boards in public sector organizations. Strategic planning is a preferred approach to guiding the City's future—it helps leaders become proactive, rather than reactive, and lessens the need to manage crisis by crisis. Overall, the workshop provided a very positive setting to methodically and strategically determine where it is you want to go as a City government, as an organization, and as a community over the next several years.

The Council was able to hear a report from the staff at Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC) on the focus group data that was gathered as part of the process. During the course of the day, Council members exchanged a lot of ideas among themselves and with the senior staff. It was beneficial for the staff to not only participate in the process but to also listen to the strategic issues of importance being raised by the Council. The group's working dynamics were very open and effective. While some differences of opinion on a few items was evident, different views are to be expected on particular issues or policies. That's democracy in action! We have no doubt the group will work through issues together to find viable solutions for the many goals and aspirations that were identified and prioritized.

COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

As a group, you shared a wide range of aspirations and ideas during the retreat. Your invitation for input from community members through focus group sessions was a great addition to the process. A picture of Streator's present and future was in strong evidence as was the desire to move forward. Keep in mind that your goals will only be realized through the judicious use of your staff resources and your financial capital. As you all realize from your experiences in and out of government, quality work requires adequate staffing, expertise, time and resources. Setting and sticking to your priorities will be an important step. Only a limited number of objectives, goals and services can be effectively managed and implemented at a given time. Resist the temptation to "re-arrange" priorities as the fiscal year moves along. Stick to the results of your efforts throughout this process and your budgeting process and meetings throughout the year.

Your deliberations, careful review and consistent approach will assure that your most important goals identified through the process will be initiated, accomplished, or well underway by this time next year.

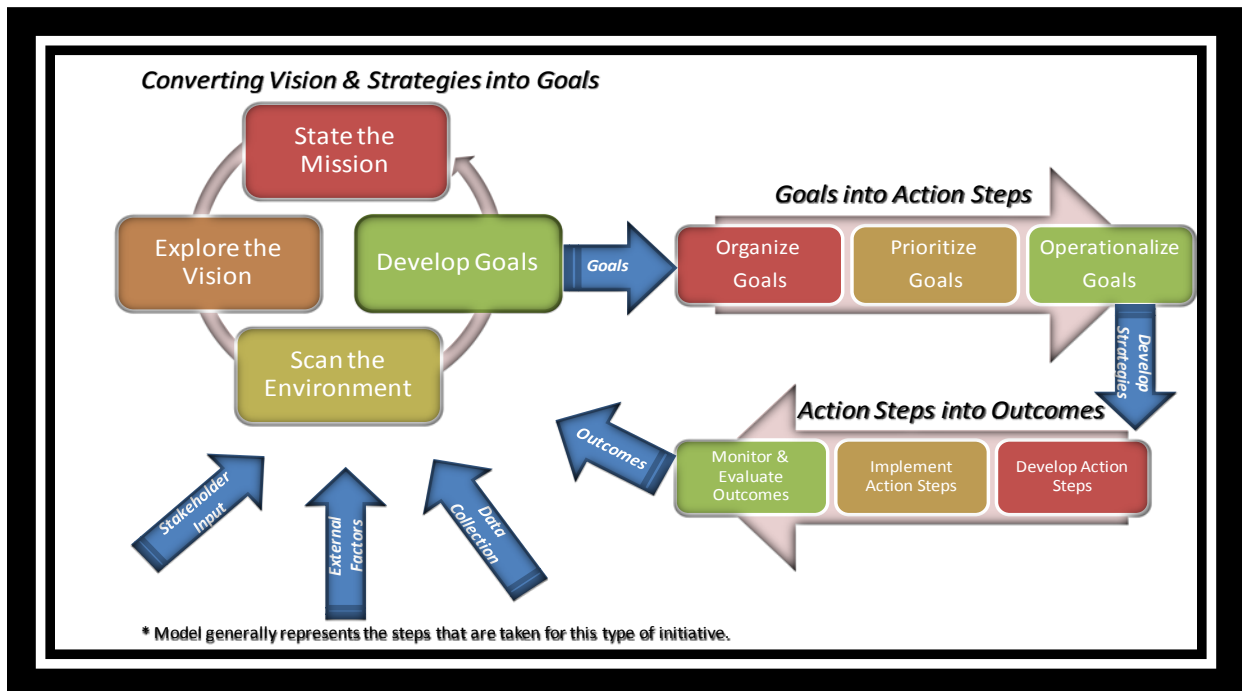
WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

OVERVIEW

The following pages capture the discussion sessions that comprised the strategic planning workshops for 2011. It's important to note that the format for all of the discussion sessions employed a highly participative and interactive methodology. The process utilized a group discussion approach known as *Nominal Group Technique* where participants were assured equal opportunities to speak and share opinions with the facilitator. During the activities, individuals had the opportunity to generate and share ideas, weigh alternatives, and further explain or refine their thinking.

An overview of the strategic planning model that was used for the City's 2011 process can be seen in the illustration below. Strategic planning is a multi-phase process that most closely resembles and on-going cycle of information gathering, assessment, decision-making and follow-through.

Strategic Planning Process Model- G. Kuhn



PART I: REFLECTIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF STREATOR

FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

The kick-off session included a review of the focus group ideas gathered from community members by the staff at IVCC. Community members from two cross-section groups were asked to pause and reflect on how they might describe Streator's present and future. The focus group input was thoughtful and provided a great launching point for the rest of the day's discussions. Ms. Jamie Gahm, Director of Continuing Education and Business Services, and her colleagues at IVCC, are to be commended for their work in bringing community members together to share ideas and visions of the future with the Mayor, Council and staff. A summary of the focus group input can be found in the **Addendum** section of this report.

PART II: VISIONING

Each workshop participant was asked to articulate what he or she perceives to be the "preferred" or predicted future state of the City, ten to twenty years down the road. Council members and staff were asked to jot down their ideas ahead of time and then be ready to share them with the group during the first session. This was a brainstorming exercise—any and all ideas about the City's desired future were encouraged and shared. No evaluative or judgmental debate was permitted during this session.

Participants engaged in this exercise by responding to the phrase: *"In 15 – 20 years when I return to Streator, I hope to see..., or, what I think I'll see is..."* The notes presented below are the unedited thoughts and views as recorded by the facilitator on flip chart paper.

CITY COUNCIL VISION STATEMENTS:

- Hope to see all our homes occupied—upgraded
- I hope I don't see the # of empty homes here now
- Every street in City re-paved***
- Continued improvement in schools
- Similar population
- Many residents will be commuting to work
- Jobs of future will be less "physical"—more tech based
- Our core will be hospital, education, etc.
- More shared use of services, facilities, etc.*
- Expansion of our ag base / agri. businesses
- Without solid leadership & commitment, community could be stymied or go backwards

- Progressive leadership needs to be institutionalized
- Family friendly community
- Rebuilt infrastructure*
- Pride in home ownership
- Mfg. of 50 – 500 employees*
- Downtown renovated
- Folks spending \$ here
- Revised / updated housing stock & new housing developments
- Surrounding areas annexed into the City
- 4-lane highway connected to I-39 & Ottawa*
- Increase industry & commerce
- Fairer reporting of accomplishments & problems in media
- New bridge in park
- Become renewable energy capital of the world

STAFF VISION STATEMENTS:

- I see more technology in use as we move forward
- Use of broadband & wireless network for public safety
- More use of cloud technology to store data offline / programs offline
- Solid financial footing—good reserves*
- All our records / forms are electronic
- More efficient office space
- City sponsored network for private commercial user
- All utilities will be underground & some may not exist
- Recycling of asphalt materials (resurfacing would be using own materials)
- Labor intensive services will remain

- Streator would be seen as a success by regulators—a “model” infrastructure
- That residents and visitors will have a shared/positive view of Streator
- More advanced communications (narrow band mandate)
- Combine assets to do high rescues (wind mills)
- Technology will increase ability to fight fires safely and efficiently
- No crime!
- Improved interagency communication
- Laws revised for victims
- More cyber crime
- More officers and a new station
- Streator pointed to as a model (City manager community that adapted, changed and making progress)
- Regional thinking will be more pervasive, a C.O.G., more working together on common interests
- Continued need to professionalize city staff—new skills, abilities to facilitate change
- “1” Streator w/common views, goals, identity
- Balanced, diversified economy (not all our eggs in one basket)
- Institutionalized stable, elected leadership

PART III: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

The next workshop session of the strategic planning process was a review and accounting of the internal and external factors present in the environment that can potentially impact the success of the City, both negatively and positively. This is a fundamental exercise in any strategic planning process.

Participants were asked, in two different exercises, to identify what constraints and practical difficulties are likely to be encountered, or would make it difficult, to achieve the desired future described in the vision statements. Furthermore, the exercises called on participants to explore the organization's strengths and weaknesses. The notes that follow are the thoughts and views shared during the environmental scan, as captured by the facilitator on flip chart paper.

EXERCISE A: SURRENDER OR LEAD ACTIVITY

Participants were introduced to a scanning/Pre-SWOT exercise entitled "Surrender or Lead." The premise is that sub-groups of participants work to develop responses to some simple, but extremely effective and thought-provoking questions. All participants were broken-up into random working groups and asked to respond to the series of structured questions. The participants' responses were recorded and discussed. Groups were also assigned to name their group—offering a spirit of camaraderie among group members. The responses provided by each group are presented below:

Group Name: The 'Ain't Men!

1. **We want to:** Complete all infrastructure,
But: We didn't have complete plan & \$ strategy.
2. **We can't:** Annex everyone,
Because: We don't have a policy, plan & strategy.
3. **If it weren't for:** Poor infrastructure,
We would: Afford depreciation & build reserves.
4. **We have to:** Accelerate response to infrastructure,
Because: It is a necessity.
5. **We need to finally:** Add "QOL" amenities!
6. **???:** A change to a positive perception of Streator
Will be our measure of success.

Group Name: Movers & Shakers

1. **We want to:** Improve the image of the city,

But: Need to get the citizens on board.

2. **We can't:** Fund certain projects,

Because: Of lack of funds.

3. **If it weren't for:** Money,

We would: Upgrade WWTP, squad cars, pave all streets, repair Marilla Park bridge, fix all problem sewers.

4. **We have to:** Solve all these problems,

Because: We want Streator to survive.

5. **We need to finally:** Accept change and end combative attitudes.

6. **???:** Time and the opinions of the community,

Will be our measure of success.

Group Name: The Big 3!

1. **We want to:** Build a bandstand in City park,

But: How to fund?

2. **We can't:** Do everything at once,

Because: Of inadequate funding.

3. **If it weren't for:** State statute limitation,

We would: Be able to annex all surrounding residential areas.

4. **We have to:** Prioritize projects,

Because: Of limited resources.

5. **We need to finally:** Convince citizens to stress Streator's positives & not negatives.

6. **???:** Community growth (economic, employment, population, & citizen satisfaction),

Will be our measure of success.

EXERCISE B: RAPID SWOT IDENTIFICATION

Participants were next asked to use the outcomes from “Surrender or Lead” as a starting point to develop and discuss the internal and external factors that can potentially impact the success of the City, both negatively and positively. The participants’ responses, categorized as either strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, or threats, appear below. It is important to note that some items may appear in several or all categories.

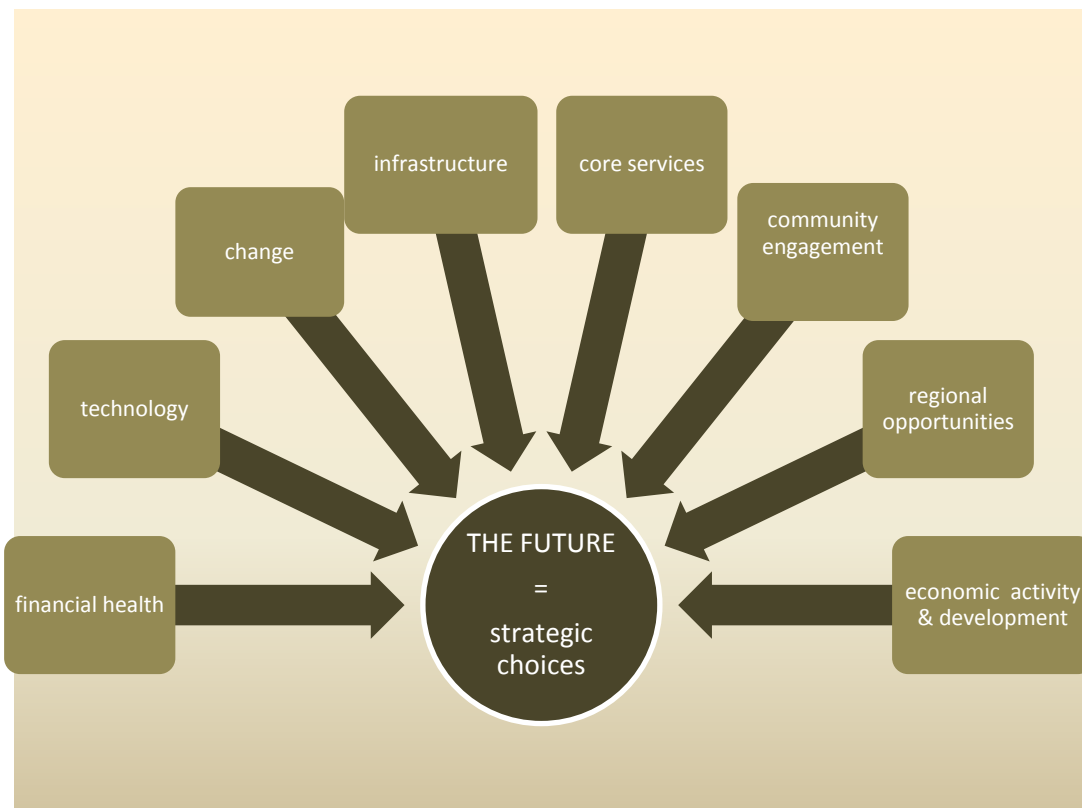
Strengths	Weaknesses
Excellent staff	Citizens
Stable elected leadership	Lack of direct access to interstate highway
City manager form govt.	Succession planning
Experienced problem solvers	Lack of motels
Diversified employers	Lack of stores
Railroad	Lack of restaurants
Citizens	Lack of downtown plan (development / redevelopment)
Location interstate highway	Community organizations
Hospital / healthcare	Lack of fine dining
Community organizations	Reliance other govt. entities
Volunteers / volunteerism	No F.T. economic development
Commercial retail	Mass transit
Growth	Revenue flows
School system	Undeveloped river
TIF district	No local higher education
Ag. & Ag. Businesses	Our businesses resist competing in whole county
Perception of City as a good retirement location	Brain drain loss
Family friendly community (not just for young starters)	Downtown CBD not a family destination (shopping /dining)
Ace hardware	Railroad
Vermillion River	Public attitude
Public attitude	No State facilities in Streator
Historic structures	Community appearance / code enforcement
Youth sports	
Tourism plan / organization	
People	
Spring Lake	
Renewable energy	

Opportunity	Threat
Railroad	Other govt. units / decisions
Location to interstate highways	Condition of housing
School system	Lack of housing alternative for MC /UMC level
Broadband	Revenue flows
Community organizations	Economy / economic condition
Need for fine dining	State of all financial situation
Form a better coalition w/other communities	Brain drain / loss
Need for balanced housing alternatives	Lack of funding to implement river improvement
Mass transit	Public attitude
Commercial retail	\$ to preserve historic buildings
Retirement living	Difficulty in engaging & including folks
Raise bar professionalism	State legislature
Perform all City employee evaluations	Connecting w/Ag. & Ag. Businesses
Brain drain rebound	
River	
Public attitude	
Plan to preserve historic buildings	
Further expand tourism	
Fully developed rafting / canoeing facility & business	
City festivals	
James St. complex	
Spring Lake	
Renewable energy movement (windmills, etc.)	
Ag. & Ag. Businesses	
Cultivate political alliances & networking	

EXERCISE C: EMERGING STRATEGIC THEMES

By summarizing the key ideas from all of the previous exercises, strategic themes were identified and named. The themes were then arranged in a model that reflected their linkages and impact on strategic policy choices faced by the City. The model below illustrates the key themes that emerged in the SWOT analysis:

- Financial Health
- Economic Development and Activity
- Technology
- Infrastructure
- Core Services
- Change
- Community Engagement
- Regional Opportunities With Others

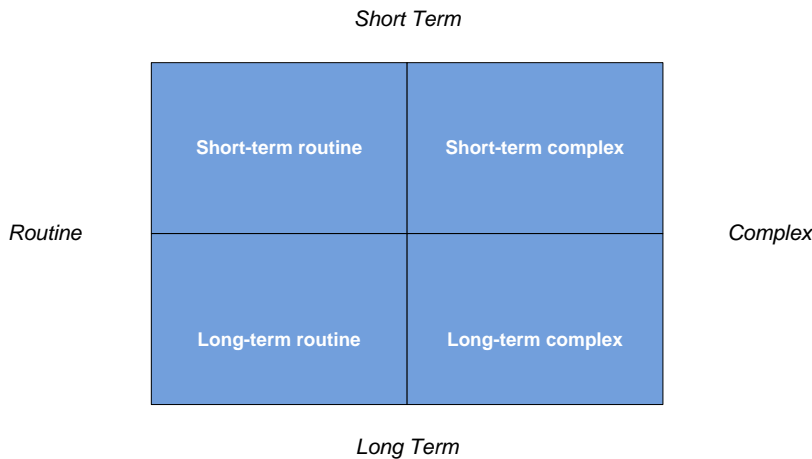


PART IV: GROUP GOAL IDENTIFICATION

The final discussion session provided a forum for the collaborative establishment of strategic goals and objectives necessary to achieve the future vision of the City. With the preceding sessions serving as a sound foundation for goal setting, the last session was a healthy presentation of ideas and of goals as expressed by participants, beginning with members of the City Council. Each participant was allotted time to highlight up to give of their most important policy/program goals that he or she thinks the City should accomplish in the next one to five years. After all had presented their ideas, additional goals were sought out until the group completed the process. It should be noted that participants were instructed that goals could be highly specific or general, to encourage people to introduce and discuss ideas of all types.

At the end of the open discussion, participants were asked to classify each goal according to a matrix model of complexity and time (created by Dr. Gerald Gabris and depicted below). Agreed criterion were used to classify a goal as short- or long-term and as complex or routine. The purpose of the exercise is to cluster goals of roughly the same “type” together so when prioritization occurs, participants can avoid the problem of comparing “apples to oranges.”

Goal Classification Grid (Gerald Gabris)



All goal statements were recorded on flipchart paper. The goals and their classifications as short- or long-term, complex, or routine are shown in the next section. The agreed-to criteria for the classifications were as follows: short-term goals were those that could or should be completed (or substantially underway) by the end of the coming fiscal year. Long-term goals were any that fall within a ten-year span. Complex goals were those that required extraordinary resources, specialists, funding, or the agreement of outside organizations or agencies. Routine goals, although not necessarily simple, were goals that could be accomplished upon unilateral decision of the Council and within present budget streams (or with minor revenue enhancements or reallocations).

PRIORITIZED GOAL RANKINGS

The final exercise of the 2011 Retreat and Strategic Planning Workshop was designed to produce a consensus ranking of short and long-term objectives. These rankings will aid the Council and staff in developing action plans and decision points required to attain the goals. Council members were given ranking sheets and next to each separately listed goal, they were asked to indicate their priority ranking as compared to others in the same category (i.e., prioritize all Short-Term Complex goals against one another, prioritize all Long-Term Routine goals against one another, and so on). The priority rankings were determined by computing the total and average scores for each goal from the ranking sheets used by facilitators for tabulation. A summary of the prioritized goals, organized within the time and complexity matrix, can be found below:

CITY OF STREATOR 2011 STRATEGIC PLANNING SHORT-TERM ROUTINE GOALS		
GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
2.0	5	Work to prioritize/formalize our major projects****
2.6	2	Renovate/upgrade the restrooms in City Park*
3.0	1	Construct a band shell in City Park***
3.6	8	Work to maximize the use of our improved athletic facilities; work with local groups to get more utilization
4.6	9	Reinvigorate civic group participation in R.O.W. upkeep, litter control, etc.
5.2	16	Create a business licensing program

CITY OF STREATOR 2011 STRATEGIC PLANNING SHORT-TERM COMPLEX GOALS		
GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
3.2	11	Increase revenues
3.6	6	Make sure bond rating stays solid and work to raise our bond rating
4.4	4	Increase # of paved streets done in the city each year by 20%****
4.6	10	Demolition and mitigation of unsightly businesses & homes*
5.6	14	Better articulate code compliance approach & standards/regulations (work to improve the appearance of property and buildings in the community)
5.8	12	Enhance code enforcement practices and abilities; improve property maintenance enforcement
6.2	3	Open Marilla Park NE entrance & bridge*
7.4	13	Need to finalize and articulate a consistent annexation policy
8.0	15	Finish an overall municipal facilities plan for the long-term as well as short-term needs
8.2	7	Update Comprehensive Plan to include a written downtown plan & economic development plan
9.0	17	Implementation of our greenway program

CITY OF STREATOR 2011 STRATEGIC PLANNING LONG-TERM ROUTINE GOALS		
GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
1.8	20	Strengthen relations w/other elected officials and economic development groups in our area****
2.6	24	Determine/approve our ultimate construction approach for street repairs (public and private)****
3.2	23	Explore the creation of a defined "economic development position / function"****
3.8	28	Assess use and acquisition of specialized equipment for in-house projects**
4.4	31	Undertake succession planning exercise
5.2	32	Improve urban forestry / explore Tree City USA designation/recognition

CITY OF STREATOR 2011 STRATEGIC PLANNING LONG-TERM COMPLEX GOALS		
GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
1.6	18	Fund cash reserves / improve bond rating****
2.6	19	Infrastructure completion and continuation of: wastewater treatment plant, James St., play ground equipment, greenway, streets, etc.*****
4.2	21	Continued vacant property program / abandoned building owners***
4.8	27	Undertake a more pro-active economic development approach: work to bring in a hotel, more retail stores, & fine dining*
5.4	29	Complete a "condition assessment program" by engineers of the entire storm & waste water system then begin an annual maintenance program*
5.8	25	Explore City Hall / Police facility improvements, etc.****
6.2	26	Explore and assess PW garage replacement
6.6	22	Carry out / execute adopted annexation policy*****
8.8	32	Explore city acquisition of property for a "Vermillion Venue"; develop concept for venue**
9.4	30	Initiate and carry out downtown beautification project (streetscape & lighting)
10.6	34	Assess and evaluate improvements at the pool (e.g. splash park or water park)**

An additional presentation of the identified goals with ranking comparisons can be found in the **Addendum** section of this report.

CONCLUSION

This report's value will be best realized as a working guide to both the City Council and staff as you pursue the issues that were explored during the strategic planning process. The report is designed to capture the content of your discussions and to assist the organization in developing action plans in a follow-up session for appropriate committees, departments, and elected officials. The next step is for staff to review the results and fine-tune these objectives in their action planning session—reporting back to the Council and appropriate committees on how and when they might be most efficiently and effectively address. Good luck with the ambitious year that lies ahead.

One noted organizational observer summarized the challenges of progress this way:

*“The art of progress is to preserve order amid change,
and change amid order...” A. F. Whitehead*

ADDENDUM

MATRIX RANKING SHEET DETAIL

FOCUS GROUP INPUT NOTES

MATRIX RANKING SHEET COMPARATIVE DATA

SHORT-TERM ROUTINE						CITY OF STREATOR 2011 STRATEGIC PLANNING	
YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
A	B	C	D	E			
2	1	1	6	5	3.0	1	Construct a band shell in City Park***
3	2	2	2	4	2.6	2	Renovate/upgrade the restrooms in City
1	4	3	1	1	2.0	5	Work to prioritize/formalize our major projects****
4	3	5	4	2	3.6	8	Work to maximize the use of our improved athletic facilities; work with local groups to get more utilization
6	5	4	5	3	4.6	9	Reinvigorate civic group participation in R.O.W. upkeep, litter control, etc.
5	6	6	3	6	5.2	16	Create a business licensing program

SHORT-TERM COMPLEX						CITY OF STREATOR 2011 STRATEGIC PLANNING	
YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
A	B	C	D	E			
10	3	2	10	6	6.2	3	Open Marilla Park NE entrance & bridge*
9	1	6	2	4	4.4	4	Increase # of paved streets done in the city each year by 20%****
2	4	3	6	3	3.6	6	Make sure bond rating stays solid and work to raise our bond rating
6	8	10	9	8	8.2	7	Update Comprehensive Plan to include a written downtown plan & economic development plan
4	7	4	3	5	4.6	10	Demolition and mitigation of unsightly businesses & homes*
1	2	5	1	7	3.2	11	Increase revenues
3	9	11	4	2	5.8	12	Enhance code enforcement practices and abilities; improve property maintenance enforcement
8	5	8	7	9	7.4	13	Need to finalize and articulate a consistent annexation policy
5	10	7	5	1	5.6	14	Better articulate code compliance approach & standards/regulations (work to improve the appearance of property and buildings in the community)
7	6	9	8	10	8.0	15	Finish an overall municipal facilities plan for the long-term as well as short-term needs
11	11	1	11	11	9.0	17	Implementation of our greenway program

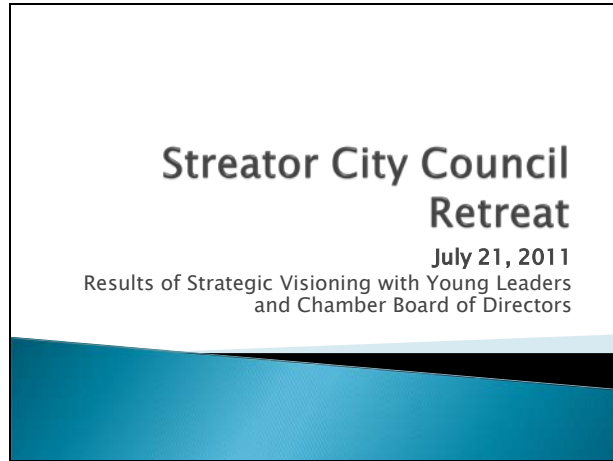
LONG-TERM ROUTINE						CITY OF STREATOR 2011 STRATEGIC PLANNING	
YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
A	B	C	D	E			
3	2	1	2	1	1.8	20	Strengthen relations w/other elected officials and economic development groups in our area****
1	5	2	3	5	3.2	23	Explore the creation of a defined "economic development position / function"****
4	1	5	1	2	2.6	24	Determine/approve our ultimate construction approach for street repairs (public and private)****
2	4	6	4	3	3.8	28	Assess use and acquisition of specialized equipment for in-house projects**
6	3	4	5	4	4.4	31	Undertake succession planning exercise
5	6	3	6	6	5.2	32	Improve urban forestry / explore Tree City USA designation/recognition

LONG-TERM COMPLEX						CITY OF STREATOR 2011 STRATEGIC PLANNING	
YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	YOUR RANKING	GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
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3	3	1	4	2	2.6	19	Infrastructure completion and continuation of: wastewater treatment plant, James St., play ground equipment, greenway, streets, etc.*****
2	8	5	5	1	4.2	21	Continued vacant property program / abandoned building owners***
5	7	6	9	6	6.6	22	Carry out / execute adopted annexation policy*****
6	4	9	2	8	5.8	25	Explore City Hall / Police facility improvements, etc.****
8	5	8	3	7	6.2	26	Explore and assess PW garage replacement
4	6	3	6	5	4.8	27	Undertake a more pro-active economic development approach: work to bring in a hotel, more retail stores, & fine dining*
7	2	7	7	4	5.4	29	Complete a "condition assessment program" by engineers of the entire storm & waste water system then begin an annual maintenance program*
9	9	11	8	10	9.4	30	Initiate and carry out downtown beautification project (streetscape & lighting)
11	10	4	10	9	8.8	32	Explore city acquisition of property for a "Vermillion Venue"; develop concept for venue**
10	11	10	11	11	10.6	34	Assess and evaluate improvements at the pool (e.g. splash park or water park)**

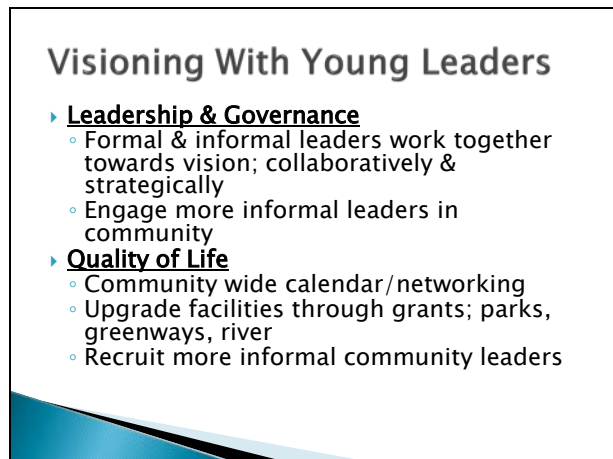
ADDENDUM- FOCUS GROUP INPUT SUMMARY 2011

*Prepared by IVCC Office of Continuing Education and Business Services

Slide 1



Slide 2



Slide 3

Young Leaders, continued...

- ▶ **Business & Industry**
 - Targeted economic development – thriving downtown, new technology businesses
 - Annexation, incentives, zoning, leverage funding/grants
- ▶ **Infrastructure**
 - Maximize new initiatives; broadband & renewable energy
 - Transportation – walking/biking paths, 4-lane roads, traffic patterns, etc.

Slide 4

Young Leaders continued...

- ▶ **Workforce**
 - Strong partnerships between education & business
 - Diverse, skilled & professional workforce
 - Graduates are returning to the area
- ▶ **Education**
 - Collaboration between business & education
 - IVCC has a greater presence in the community

Slide 5

Young Leaders continued...

- ▶ **Other**
 - Continue & expand along a regional leadership path
 - Establish park district with across the board support of sports
 - Emphasize technology based workforce
 - Collaboration between faith-based organizations, community services, etc.

Slide 6

Visioning with Chamber Board

- ▶ **Business & Industry**
 - City leaders are collaborative & responsible for regional economic development plan
 - Locally; thriving downtown, diverse healthcare network, niche manufacturing, retail expansion, etc.
 - Technology has contributed to innovation & entrepreneurship

Slide 7

Chamber Board continued...

- ▶ **Infrastructure**
 - Commercial & retail growth to the north, residential northwest, commercial along perimeter
 - Annexation, unified school district, expanded safety protection services
 - Well maintained community, QOL
 - Expanded infrastructure; roadways, sewer, rail, broadband, riverfront

Slide 8

Chamber Board continued...

- ▶ **Workforce**
 - Attraction of young, vibrant and educated workforce
 - Retooled education system serves as a showcase
 - Infrastructure to work from home
 - Entrepreneurial

Chamber Board continued...

▶ Education

- Schools are unified and aligned for 16-K
- State of the art educational facilities with specialized training labs
- IVCC offers industry specific certifications & standards
- Broadband expands educational capacity
- Strong partnership with business; mentoring network