



BENTON HARBOR
Strategic Plan
FISCAL YEARS 2011, 2012, & 2013
March 2011

Benton Harbor City Hall
200 Wall Street, Benton Harbor, Michigan 49022

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OUR VISION, MISSION, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This Strategic Plan outlines our vision, mission and guiding principles while summarizing the community profile and strategic planning process.

Vision: Our organizational vision for the City is to achieve recognition as an efficient and innovative provider of high quality municipal services that makes our community an ideal place to live, work, and recreate.

Mission: Our mission is to provide a progressive, effective government for Benton Harbor; to offer unmatched customer service in an environment of sound fiscal management; to provide safe, healthy neighborhoods; to value all people who live, work, invest in, and visit our City and their ethnic and economic diversity. We welcome their involvement and commitment that produces a greater quality of life, with all citizens and city government working in partnership.

Guiding Principles: The way we conduct business is as important as the business we conduct. The following Values serve as our guiding principles as we work to fulfill Our Mission.

- **Responsiveness:** We exist to serve our community. We are committed to finding solutions in a timely manner; we listen, we are empathetic, and we take appropriate action.
- **Honesty and Integrity:** We align our values, words and actions. We are honorable, trustworthy and sincere. We consistently go beyond the legal minimum to do what is right.
- **Accountability:** We take responsibility for our decisions and actions. We are accountable to our community and to each other.
- **Excellence:** We deliver the best service possible and we are committed to quality outcomes. We strive to exceed expectations and to bring out the best in each other.

COMMUNITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Benton Harbor is a city in Berrien County in the southwest corner of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. It is governed by an elected nine-member commission, and operates under a manager form of government. The City of Benton Harbor has a city-owned utility and provides basic municipal services, including law enforcement and fire rescue.

Benton Harbor was mainly swampland bordered by the Paw Paw River, through which a canal was built, hence the "harbor" in the City's name. In 1865, the name of the settlement was changed to Benton Harbor in honor of Thomas Hart Benton, a Missouri senator who helped Michigan achieve statehood. In 1866, Benton Harbor was organized as a village, and in 1891 was incorporated as a city.

At the 2000 census, there were 11,182 people residing in the City, which has a total area of 4.5 square miles. The median household income was \$17,471. The per capita income for the City was \$8,965, the lowest in Michigan. About 39.6% of families and 42.6% of the population were below the poverty line.

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

The City of Benton Harbor provides its residents with basic municipal services including police and fire protection, comprehensive land use planning and zoning services, code enforcement, and neighborhood improvements. Construction and maintenance of the City's infrastructure are significant ongoing services. Cultural opportunities, parks and recreation improvements (including a championship golf course) provide the foundation for the City's rebirth, which has suffered a severe decline since its heyday several decades ago.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a series of meetings, the Strategic Planning Committee (Committee) identified goals and initiatives that reflect the needs of the community. Benton Harbor is currently experiencing declining revenues due to State revenue sharing and property tax revisions, and a general economic downturn in the state of Michigan. The current scenario of declining tax revenues, decreasing state-shared funding, high unemployment, and increasing healthcare costs and fuel costs highlight the importance of developing a strategic plan that serves as an organizational roadmap through this challenging fiscal environment. This plan also enables the City to provide high-quality, cost-effective services and still address strategic goals and initiatives as prioritized by the Committee. In order to successfully implement the strategic priorities outlined by the Committee, the City has drafted this document, which guides the implementation of a systematic strategy to accomplish the goals through the most cost-efficient allocation of resources.

The Committee identified a number of strategic goals that encompass a variety of City activities and services: government administration, public safety, public works, water and sewer utility, human capital, neighborhood development, partnerships, communications, and planning. Each stated goal is supported by a series of initiatives as described in this strategic plan.

Our strategic planning and budgeting processes are linked to assure that the City's budget reflects the City's strategic priorities. By tying our strategic planning process to the concept of building our budget from scratch, we will be able to, in a team setting, better identify which priorities require funding in 2011 and at what level.

Through sharing this document with our community, we seek to assure our citizens that their city government is responsive to them and their needs, and that our highest priority is to provide them with appropriate service levels through the implementation of this strategic plan.

Financially, the City concluded 2010 in a very tenuous fiscal position, with no cash reserve, having lost an additional \$1.1 million during the year. The City began this fiscal year with an unrestricted governmental activities deficit of \$6.1 million, accrued liabilities of \$8.8 million, and approximately \$8 million of additional liabilities owed to the City's employee pension funds. The coming year's budget provides for major reductions in the City's deficit and its liabilities.

We will launch the 2011-2012 budgeting process, tying our goals directly to available funding, and continuing to look at efficiencies in regard to processes, purchasing, and policies. The City will pursue projects specifically designed to enhance economic vitality. These include promotion of Benton Harbor as a great place in which to live, work, invest, and recreate.

Our Strategic Plan will help focus on our resources, engage the public, and create successful partnerships to work for the good of the community.

We have outlined a plan of action that sets attainable goals; and we are committed to thinking creatively to find new solutions to ongoing challenges.

INTRODUCTION

In 2010 the City launched an ongoing strategic planning process with input and support from City departments, the Benton Harbor school district, and members of the community. This strategic plan is designed to capture our most significant goals and objectives and the strategies we will implement to address the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

This plan is a living document used to prioritize the needs of the community and outline City objectives. The value of this plan lies with the ability of City staff to set realistic goals and implement innovative strategies against which progress can be measured. It also allows the community to gauge the ongoing product of its local government. This strategic effort will provide greater accountability and represents an organization-wide approach to the preservation and enhancement of the quality of life our very special community enjoys.

The government of Benton Harbor has an obligation to enable its residents, businesses, and visitors to have a safe and clean city. Accordingly, it is imperative that government officials use the City's limited resources to provide the basic city services required to achieve these fundamental goals. This plan focuses nine initiatives to achieve these objectives: (1) Government Administration; (2) Public Safety; (3) Public Works; (4) Water and Sewer Utility; (5) Human Capital; (6) Neighborhood Development; (7) Partnerships; (8) Communications; and (9) Strategic Planning.

WHY HAVE A STRATEGIC PLAN?

This plan helps translate our community's aspirations to our government, thereby enabling the government to better serve the community. The plan strives to provide concentration and clarity by outlining the goals and initiatives our government will focus on over the next two years. With limited staffing and financial resources, it is even more important to focus on achievable goals. Trying to do everything is simply unrealistic.

SCOPE OF THE PLAN

This Plan outlines our organizational vision, mission, and values while summarizing the community profile, the organizational profile, and our strategic planning process. To ensure each factor is achieved, a set of goals, initiatives and high-level performance measures are identified.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES IDENTIFIED TO ACCOMPLISH OUR MISSION

Initiative 1. Government Administration

Increase the effectiveness and efficiency of local government and maintain a strong fiscal condition.

Initiative 2. Public Safety

Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the City's public safety services

Initiative 3. Public Works

Maintain the City's infrastructure, parks, playgrounds, facilities, and equipment at a high level

Initiative 4. Water & Sewer Utility System

Provide City Water & Sewer Utility customers with superior service

Initiative 5. Human Capital

Improve the capabilities of City personnel to perform their duties effectively and efficiently.

Initiative 6. Neighborhood Development

Improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods for the benefit of all residents.

Initiative 7. Partnerships

Champion effective and institutionalized relationships with other governmental entities and community partners.

Initiative 8. Communications

Issue newsletters; conduct regular town hall meetings; and enhance the City's website

Initiative 9. Strategic Planning

Adhere to and update the strategic plan annually

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE # 1

GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

The City cannot retrench on important public priorities, nor can it raise taxes, which repel development. The only path left is to reduce the costs of government. This initiative outlines our plan to achieve those objectives.

INITIATIVE 1.1: Improve the City's Accounting and Reporting Processes.

Background: Until March 2011, the City's accounting records were unorganized and incomplete, and there was no internal capability of producing financial reports.

Strategy: The City will train Finance Department staff to maintain the accounting records and to produce routine financial reports.

Desired Outcome: Monthly, quarterly, and year-to-date financial reports reflecting actual and budgeted revenues and expenditures, and variances to budget

INITIATIVE 1.2: Overhaul the City's Administrative Processes.

Background: Benton Harbor has a "government operating system that was built for another era," which has led it on an unsustainable trajectory. Unless drastic measures are taken to address the City's structural financial imbalance, the City will be unable to provide basic city services, or to fund employee pensions.

Strategy: The Committee considered a menu of cost-saving reforms: process reengineering, ending ineffective contracts, and reevaluating policy decisions with large price tags associated with them. To do this, Benton Harbor will have to shed the shackles of outdated government structures: siloed departments, budgets that ignore results, and property taxes that discourage home ownership and business investments. These century-old systems will be replaced with new models that better address our needs for the 21st century.

This transformation will require new ways of doing business for every aspect of City government, from organizational structures and operating practices to technological improvements, personnel systems, and service delivery models.

Desired Outcome: A government that provides essential services to the community effectively and efficiently within its financial constraints

INITIATIVE 1.3: Improve the City’s Financial Condition and Fiscal Controls.

Background: During the last fiscal year, the City General Fund lost \$1.1 million, increasing the General Fund deficit to over \$4 million. The City must put a circuit breaker on the rising cost of public safety, pension contributions, and health care premiums, its major cost elements.

Strategy: The City will fine-tune its new approach to the budget and will take an organization-wide look at potential efficiencies and cost-saving processes. We will:

- Meet with department heads regularly to identify organization-wide efficiencies, additional revenues, and cost savings.
- Identify cost savings potential from sharing services with neighboring communities.

Desired Outcome: Cost containment by tracking City financial performance relative to the annual budget, and by taking immediate corrective action, as required, to contain costs

INITIATIVE 1.4: Reduce the overall cost of providing City services.

Background: The City’s costs have exceeded revenues over the past decade.

Strategy: Link the strategic planning and budgeting processes by using a “zero-based budgeting” approach to identify priorities and associated costs:

- Combined Police and Fire Protection Services
- Less Costly Employee Pension Plans
- Revised Health Care Plans with Increased Employee Co-pays and Deductibles
- Consolidated Services Internally and Externally
- Outsourcing of Services where Less Costly
- Strategic Procurement Policies

Desired Outcome: Elimination of the City’s structural deficit

INITIATIVE 1.5: Update and maintain a Capital Improvement Plan.

Background: No plan exists to address City facilities in need of major repairs, critical equipment in need of replacement, or technology upgrades.

Strategy: Reprioritize appropriations to address needs; and seek funding sources to replace and repair outmoded equipment and to improve the general condition of City facilities.

Desired Outcome: Improved working conditions for City employees, greater efficiencies in customer service delivery, and more aesthetically appealing facilities for the public

INITIATIVE 1.6: Align millage rates with those of neighboring communities.

Background: Millage rates are significantly higher than those of the City’s neighbors.

Strategy: Reduce costs of essential City services by initiating efficiencies, thereby allowing the City to maintain a balanced budget while reducing the City’s millage rates.

Desired Outcome: City millage rates aligned with millage rates in neighboring communities.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE # 2

PUBLIC SAFETY

Public safety staff will foster an increasingly safe, stable and secure community through education and enforcement of laws and ordinances, staff training, and more effective technology. Due to the City's financial condition, it is imperative that the City initiates more efficient ways of providing public safety services to the community.

INITIATIVE 2.1: Increase the efficiency of Public Safety Personnel while ensuring appropriate alignment and staffing levels to enhance service standards for public safety.

Background: Benton Harbor can no longer afford to follow the traditional public safety model, which requires a separation of duties between police officers and firefighters. The tradition of housing firefighters in fire stations to await the occurrence of a fire is passé.

Strategy: After considering different organizational structure options, the director recommends a full Public Safety Integration Model, which requires the cross training of police officers as firefighters, and the cross training of firefighters as police officers to create a new classification of public safety officers (PSOs), that provide both crime protection as well as fire protection.

Desired Outcome: Public safety personnel that respond to both crime and fire related events to provide increased services at less costs by increasing the number of available "patrolmen" and improving public safety response times, while eliminating meal allowances, and reducing costs related to overtime

INITIATIVE 2.2: Enhance Public Safety Fire Protection and Suppression Capability.

Background: Compressed air foam has proven to be significantly superior to water in many circumstances.

Strategy: Expand the ability of the Public Safety Department to provide fire protection by incorporating the latest methodologies and technologies of fire suppression along with the traditional methods, and by including quick response vehicles in the City's fleet.

Desired Outcome: Optimal fire suppression capability for the City, and for adjoining communities for which the City provides mutual aid.

INITIATIVE 2.3: Perform scheduled inspections of the City's emergency equipment.

Background: A recent inspection of the City's emergency equipment revealed outdated equipment.

Strategy: Inventory existing emergency equipment within City departments.

Desired Outcome: Adequate levels of fire suppression equipment within City facilities

INITIATIVE 2.4: Utilize security cameras in crime-prone areas of the City.

Background: Security cameras allow public safety professionals to monitor several areas simultaneously from various remote locations.

Strategy: Install cameras in areas of high crime or areas with high exposure to crime.

Desired Outcome: An enhanced level of public safety by providing real-time monitoring as well as evidence for criminal prosecution

INITIATIVE 2.5: Update and enforce City ordinances.

Background: Failure to enforce the City Code has resulted in unsafe and unsightly structures and lots.

Strategy: Notify and remind citizens of Code related ordinances; and focus on enforcing the City Code.

Desired Outcome: Enhanced quality of life and safety in neighborhoods through effective and enforceable Code ordinances, and public awareness of those Codes

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE # 3 PUBLIC WORKS

Although citizens are concerned about mounting debt and wasteful spending, they still expect government to provide essential services. This initiative addresses the public works component of our plan.

INITIATIVE 3.1: Ensure that streets, sidewalks, bridges, alleys, and safe-routes-to-schools are maintained at a high level.

Background: The City has failed to maintain its infrastructure due to managerial negligence.

Strategy: Develop plans and hold individuals accountable for performance.

Desired Outcome: Enhanced safety and convenience for vehicular and pedestrian traffic

INITIATIVE 3.2: Enforce the City's snow removal policy.

Background: The City has received numerous complaints, for years, from residents and businesses about the City's inadequate snow removal practices.

Strategy: Exceed compliance with the City Snow Removal Plan; Enforce City Snow Removal Code.

Desired Outcome: Swift snow removal from streets and heavy pedestrian areas (sidewalks, bridges, safe-routes to school)

INITIATIVE 3.3: Upgrade the City's maintenance equipment.

Background: Equipment is old, and unreliable; maintenance is unduly costly.

Strategy: Budget and pursue systematic replacements and upgrades.

Desired Outcome: Reliable, efficient, and safe equipment

INITIATIVE 3.4: Improve the maintenance of City streets.

Background: The City has appropriated minimal resources for maintenance equipment and supplies; and has been slow to respond to road hazards.

Strategy: Develop, adopt, and implement a street maintenance component of an asset maintenance program that utilizes a variety of methods to improve road conditions including higher quality road surface materials, and earlier attention to road defects.

Desired Outcome: Decreased road hazards

INITIATIVE 3.5: Improve the maintenance of City alleys.

Background: Inadequate attention by City maintenance crews and dumping has caused some alleys to be unhealthy, hazardous and unsightly.

Strategy: Develop, adopt and implement an alley maintenance component of an asset maintenance program that gives appropriate attention to alleys.

Desired Outcome: Well maintained City alleys

INITIATIVE 3.6: Provide routine maintenance of City vehicles in a timely manner.

Background: No maintenance plan has been established to ensure the proper maintenance of the City's fleet.

Strategy: Implement a schedule for routine vehicle maintenance.

Desired Outcome: Improved vehicle reliability and longevity, and reduced overall costs

INITIATIVE 3.7: Provide timely maintenance of the City's sprinkler system.

Background: Sprinklers continue to operate in late fall, thereby becoming at risk to damage from freezing.

Strategy: Establish and adhere to a routine operating and maintenance plan for the City's sprinkler systems.

Desired Outcome: Reduced repairs, and longer useful lives of sprinkler heads

INITIATIVE 3.8: Beautify and maintain City buildings and grounds.

Background: The City is beset with roof leaks, inefficient heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, deteriorated ceilings, walls, and carpets and, generally, undesirable working conditions, high energy costs, and ongoing costly repairs.

Strategy: Utilize Federal and State grants and General Fund sources to address needed repairs to City roofs, furnaces, and air conditioning.

Desired Outcome: Clean, safe, energy efficient, and appealing facilities

INITIATIVE 3.9: Improve the maintenance and the aesthetics of the City's parks and playgrounds.

Background: Facilities upgrades and maintenance of City parks and playgrounds have been given a low priority.

Strategy: Develop an Asset Management Program for playgrounds and parks throughout the city, including the riverfront.

Desired Outcome: Attractive, safe, and clean playgrounds and parks for children and families to recreate

INITIATIVE 3.10: Maintain adequate levels of inventories.

Background: Inadequate security and inconsistent monitoring and replenishment of supplies have often resulted in delays in performing routine maintenance.

Strategy: Designate an inventory control point person, and require weekly monitoring of usages to preclude shortages from failure to reorder on a timely basis, and from theft.

Desired Outcome: Adequate levels of key inventory items, and increased security against theft

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE # 4 WATER AND SEWER UTILITY

The City's Water Utility customer service has been the source of complaints for several years, with no plans put forth to address the causes of customer concerns. Also, the City has failed to account (bill) for forty percent of water distributed.

INITIATIVE 4.1: Correct longstanding administrative issues.

Background: Longstanding problems have gone unresolved due to the City's continued failure to address customer complaints.

Strategy: Contract with a firm to manage the City's Water Utility.

Desired Outcome: A high level of customer satisfaction

INITIATIVE 4.2: Adjust water rates.

Background: Customer revenues will drop dramatically due to the loss of Benton Township customers, who will be serviced by their own water utility beginning in the fall of 2011. Also, the City is required to begin payment of debt service in September for bonds issued in 2008.

Strategy: Increase the water rates sufficiently to cover expenses.

Desired Outcome: Revenue neutral operations

INITIATIVE 4.3: Improve customer service.

Background: Customers routinely complain about the manner in which staff deals with customer inquiries and concerns.

Strategy: The City will introduce a comprehensive and continuous customer-service training program to educate staff on the manner in which customers should be treated, monitor customer service, and simplify the appeals process to resolve customer complaints and concerns.

Desired Outcome: A responsive, knowledgeable, courteous, and friendly staff; increased levels of customer satisfaction

INITIATIVE 4.4: Eliminate estimated billings.

Background: Customers' billings have been estimated due to the failure of the City to read and report meter readings on a timely basis.

Strategy: The City will provide the resources and management oversight to ensure that customer meters are read and billed timely and accurately.

Desired Outcome: Timely and accurate billings

INITIATIVE 4.5: Rectify the two-month billing delays.

Background: Customer have been billed two months in arrears for the past several years.

Strategy: The two-month billing delay will be remedied by catching up one month every three months, such that after six months, the billings will be current.

Desired Outcome: Up-to-date billings

INITIATIVE 4.6: Eliminate the Water Utility "leakage."

Background: Forty percent of distributed water is not billed.

Strategy: Investigate all variances between addresses listed in the Assessor records and the addresses billed by the Water Utility. In addition, determine the amount of the "leakage" from water used by the City's facilities.

Desired Outcome: All water usage accounted for

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE # 5

HUMAN CAPITAL

The City will hire and retain highly qualified, skilled, empowered and productive employees by offering competitive wages, by screening and testing for desired attributes, and by providing training, development and enrichment opportunities. By so doing, we will nurture an organizational culture that encourages competence, friendliness, teamwork, creative input and the sharing of ideas.

INITIATIVE 5.1: Recruit and Develop a Skilled, Professional and Dedicated Staff.

Background: The City has failed to recruit and train competent staff for key positions for Finance, Inspections, Water, and Human Resources and, therefore, has provided inadequate levels of service in those areas.

Strategy: Formalize the hiring processes to include testing for certain skill sets; prepare quarterly evaluations of professional staff; and schedule training for personnel where appropriate.

Desired Outcome: Staff knowledge, skills, and attributes aligned with job duties to improve operational and administrative performance, resulting in a more effective and efficient government.

INITIATIVE 5.2: Invest in professional development, and implement initiatives that maximize staff talents and contributions; and encourage creative thinking and collaboration.

Background: The City has failed to provide or require continuing education for its professional staff.

Strategy: Incentivize employees to engage in a program of continuous development.

Desired Outcome: Increased levels of expertise and proficiency throughout the organization

INITIATIVE 5.3: Establish a customer friendly culture that provides exceptional service.

Background: The City has not proactively promoted customer-friendly behavior by City staff.

Strategy: Encourage City staff to provide superior service to citizens.

Desired Outcome: Increased levels of satisfaction by customers, residents, businesses, and visitors, as well as a more pleasant atmosphere for staff

INITIATIVE 5.4: Employ a multi-departmental, team approach.

Background: The City's siloed processes have resulted in minimal sharing of issues, solutions, ideas, and resources.

Strategy: Host monthly meetings of department heads to share ideas and to entertain opportunities for the sharing of resources.

Desired Outcome: Synergies among departments, which promote streamlined approaches to problem solving, shared knowledge and skills, and increased efficiencies.

INITIATIVE 5.5: Establish a culture of accountability that encourages initiative and investment in performance outcomes.

Background: Superior performance has generally not been recognized or rewarded.

Strategy: Recognize and reward employees for superior performance.

Desired Outcome: A City staff that continuously seeks to increase knowledge and skills to improve quality of performance, with pride of ownership in outcomes

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE # 6 NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods by maintaining City-owned lots, enforcing City code, upgrading playgrounds and parks, and by increasing attractive, safe, and affordable housing.

INITIATIVE 6.1: Develop Viable Urban Neighborhoods.

Background: The City has been awarded a grant for construction and renovation of houses for low-to-moderate income individuals and families.

Strategy: Construct and renovate housing for home ownership by low-to-moderate income individuals and families.

Desired Outcome: Increased owner-occupied housing, thereby increasing neighborhood stability

INITIATIVE 6.2: Upgrade parks and playgrounds.

Background: City parks and playgrounds have been poorly maintained in recent years.

Strategy: The City will utilize Community Development Block Grant funds, General Fund appropriations, and contributions to improve the conditions of City parks and playgrounds.

Desired Outcome: Safe, structurally sound, and attractive parks and playgrounds that will provide a desirable environment for citizens

INITIATIVE 6.3: Improve and support the overall housing stock through the correction of code violations and housing quality standard deficiencies.

Background: The City has hired a building official to manage the Inspections Department, which has been without supervision in recent years, thus, allowing many blighted structures within the City to linger.

Strategy: City code enforcement officers will inspect rehabilitated and other properties to enforce compliance with applicable Codes.

Desired Outcome: Enhancement of the quality of life in neighborhoods by ensuring safe, decent, and sanitary housing, particularly for low and moderate-income residents

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE # 7 PARTNERSHIPS

To promote an open, approachable and responsive government, ongoing communications, and cooperation in addressing issues of mutual concern, the City will partner with other organizations, groups and individuals in the community to forge mutually productive relationships that maximize innovation, resources, talents, and dollars. This initiative outlines those plans.

INITIATIVE 7.1: Identify successful approaches of working together with other communities by sharing services and other resources.

Background: Redundancy within and among governments, such as procurement services, public safety services, printing and copying services; sporadically used equipment; and information technology related services, represent significant potential cost saving opportunities for combining and sharing resources.

Strategy: Attend regular meetings with representatives of neighboring communities to explore ways to increase efficiencies by reducing redundancies and sharing resources.

Desired Outcome: Strengthened collaboration, improved service delivery, and reduced costs of providing services resulting from the sharing of ideas, talents, and resources

INITIATIVE 7.2: Provide recreational opportunities in Benton Harbor Area Schools.

Background: Benton Harbor Area Schools does not provide recreation for kindergarten through eighth grade students due to a lack of funds.

Strategy: The City will provide financial support for summer youth programs, civic and fine arts activities, and personnel engaged in an aquatics swim program in collaboration with Benton Harbor Area Schools.

Desired Outcome: Recreation and leisure services that enhance the quality of life of youth, adults, senior citizens, and special populations, with an emphasis on youth development and leadership

INITIATIVE 7.3: Provide financial assistance to the Police Athletic League (PAL).

Background: The City has discontinued funding for recreation for the City's youth.

Strategy: Include funding for recreational activities for the City's youth annually.

Desired Outcome: Additional recreational opportunities for the City's youth

INITIATIVE 7.4: Encourage public-private relationships.

Background: In the past, public-private partnerships have been spurned to the detriment of the City.

Strategy: The City will collaborate with not-for-profits, such as Cornerstone Alliance and Consortium for Community Development for the betterment of the community.

Desired Outcome: Correction of deficiencies hampering the education of the City's youth, revitalization of the local economy by attracting new businesses, assisting existing businesses, attracting new talent, and improving the physical appearance of the community at large

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE # 8 COMMUNICATIONS

The steady drumbeat of criticism by some factions within our community erodes public trust. Not only can greater transparency mitigate the effects of such criticism, it can broaden the general understanding of the challenges facing City officials. Best of all, transparency isn't expensive. This initiative outlines our plans to increase transparency.

INITIATIVE 8.1: Issue periodic newsletters.

Background: Newsletters are an excellent medium for disseminating information to the public.

Strategy: Summarize recent events, plans, policies and issues, and distribute electronically, including to the City's website, community organizations, City commissions, and City committees.

Desired Outcome: Periodic updates to the public on matters concerning City government

INITIATIVE 8.2: Hold regular town hall meetings and other forums.

Background: Town hall meetings provide an informal venue for disseminating information to the public.

Strategy: Schedule town hall meetings monthly to discuss pertinent issues in depth, and to allow for dialogue with the public.

Desired Outcome: An opportunity to update the public and for the public to engage in dialogue with decision makers, City officials, City staff, and City consultants about various aspects of their government

INITIATIVE 8.3: Issue quarterly financial reports.

Background: The City has been unable to prepare interim financial reports due to poor accounting records.

Strategy: Prepare reports reflecting the City's actual financial performance compared to budget; present the results at town hall meetings and on the City's website; and summarize the results in periodic newsletters.

Desired Outcome: Continuous public awareness throughout the year concerning the City's financial condition

INITIATIVE 8.4: Keep the public informed about the financial condition of the City.

Background: Prior to 2011, City financial reports had not been presented to the public for over thirty years.

Strategy: Present the City's annual audited financial report at a public meeting; post the City's financial reports on the City's website; present interim financial updates at town hall meetings; and provide summaries in the periodic newsletters.

Desired Outcome: An informed citizenry regarding the City's financial condition

INITIATIVE 8.5: Prepare and distribute an Annual Financial Plan.

Background: In the past, City officials have not prepared financial plans.

Strategy: Provide the public with a narrative description of the City's financial issue and plans annually. The plans may accompany the annual budget or may be issued separately.

Desired Outcome: A narrative that provides guidelines for addressing the City's deficit and debt, and that provides information to the public about the City's progress and plans for addressing those issues

INITIATIVE 8.6: Promote an open, approachable, and responsive government through information technology and other communication tools, with an emphasis on the City website.

Background: The City's website has been poorly maintained and underutilized.

Strategy: Improve the public perception, dependability, user-friendliness, and aesthetic design, and utility of the website.

Desired Outcome: Enhanced outreach efforts to community stakeholders, and increased public awareness of City issues

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE # 9

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Traditional public planning consists of merely projecting past trends into the future. This practice demonstrates a reactive approach to change. Such an approach may suffice in an environment where resources are abundant, but it is simply not feasible to employ such an approach in an environment where resources are limited. The consistent downtrend of revenues along with the consistent upward trend of costs require that, at a minimum, strategic planning be considered as the primary method to manage change.

INITIATIVE 9.1: Update the strategic plan annually.

Background: Unless the City plans for decreasing revenues and rising costs, it will remain subject to increased deficits, increased debt and, correspondingly, reduced City services.

Strategy: Modify the strategic plan as changes in revenues, costs, and other events dictate changes in strategies.

Desired Outcome: A strategic plan that continues to remain relevant to the needs and desires of the community

INITIATIVE 9.2: Link the annual budget and all long-term planning to the strategic plan.

Background: Failure to link the annual budget and long-term planning to the strategic plan will render the strategic plan ineffective.

Strategy: Use the strategic plan as a blueprint for developing the annual budget and for long-term planning.

Desired Outcome: An ongoing adherence to the strategic plan, administratively, operationally, and fiscally