City of Alexandria Strategic Plan

2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Strategic Plan was created with input from the City Council, City Staff and community leaders. Following is a list of participants who participated in the 2016 Strategic Plan for the City of Alexandria:

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Purpose

A strategic plan is a means to organize all of priorities of the city into one document. A strategic plan is complementary to the Comprehensive Plan and the other planning tools used by city leaders. A strategic plan organizes the priorities, programs and services into common themes and then presents strategies and goals to ensure there is a clear road map for the future. Strategic planning is an effective tool to provide a means for the Council, staff and community to ensure that their resources are applied and used in an optimal manner. The methods used in strategic planning are a means to an end; the City's process was designed to identify the most important priorities and goals of the City and community. There are many benefits to strategic planning; the top five primary outcomes for the City of Alexandria are:

- o Coalesce city and community leaders around a common direction
- o Provide a *written road map* to record and document the direction of the City
- o Improve the Council and staff's ability to focus on the most important priorities and issues
- o Provide a means to ensure that resources are allocated optimally and wisely
- o Improve accountability and capacity to measure performance and outcomes

The intent of the planning process is to integrate and organize all relevant information from various sources of city documents into an overall strategic plan. The strategic plan supports the governance work of the City Council and the administration and operation of the City staff with four clear qualities: *decision-making, leadership, management and a communication tool.*

This document presents the Strategic Plan for Alexandria, Minnesota; reflective of the community planning process conducted in 2015.

Process

The process was authorized by the City Council in the fall of 2014 and organized and structured by City Administration.

Two planning sessions were held with the City Council and city staff: April 17 and May 27. The first session was held at the Douglas County Public Works Building and the second session was held in City Hall.[1]

The April 17 work session focused on the introduction of the process, the practices of strategic planning, and the identification of major concepts and ideas important to the future of the City. A total of 24 discussion topics were identified. Highlights from the April 17 work session include pointing out the distinctiveness and pride of the City; reviewing the value and purpose of strategic planning, including its purpose, strengths, and barriers; discussing the concepts within *Premier City Governments* and the macro trends impacting the work of city officials; and identifying major concepts and ideas for the present and future of the City.   A brief

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[1] Copies of agendas, supporting materials and notes from the meetings are available in the City Administrator's Office

demographic profile was presented and reviewed including background on population, demographic, racial, education, and income trends.

From the list of original concepts and ideas three primary themes emerged: 1) City Operations; 2) Community Vitality; and 3) Financial Sustainability. This information was provided to city officials as a starting point for the development of specific goals and activities which formed the agenda for the May 27th session. A roundtable forum was used to solicit a number of specific goals and activities within each of these three themes. During the second work session a list of key terms (Mission, Vision, Values, etc.) were introduced and reviewed. Highlights from the May 27th work session were captured in a summary document.

The two work sessions were characterized by inclusive and participatory discussions, an open invitation to introduce any idea or topic, and a sincerity of purpose and intent. To accomplish this process, the major process steps included:

- o Ongoing and active communication with the Assistant to the City Administrator/HR Director and City Administrator
- o Phone conversations with Council-members discussing the City's planning process, purpose and their individual goals and priories
- o A pre-planning questionnaire administered to Department Heads with the following six questions:
    1. List two or three significant issues your Department must address within the next two years.
    2. List two or three significant issues the City needs to address within the next two years.
    3. List two or three significant issues your Department must address within the next 5 to 10 years.
    4. List two or three significant issues the City must address within the next 5 to 10 years.
    5. What are two or three goals that you recommend in the Strategic Plan?
    6. If you had to pick only one issue, what is the most important issue facing the City Council, staff and community in the City of Alexandria?
- o The information from Department Heads was collected, organized and used as a resource by each staff member attending the first work session.

A third work session was held on July 13, 2015 at City Hall and included a review of roles and responsibilities and steps to implementation. Preparation of a draft strategic plan was completed on August 10, 2015 with formal approval occurring on December 14, 2015.

The City's mission, vision and guiding principles are based the City's *current* position and outlook for the future. The City of Alexandria is committed to achieving a shared plan for the organization and its community. The mission, vision and guiding principles (values) are designed to set the City and organization on a course that meets the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Mission
To be a progressive regional center defined by purposeful growth and community partnerships.

Vision
Alexandria is committed to efficient and effective delivery of quality services and strategic investments that improve the quality of life for all its citizens and visitors and the sustainable management of city resources.

Guiding Principles
Alexandria is: Growing, Sustainable, Complete, Inclusive, Healthy & Engaged
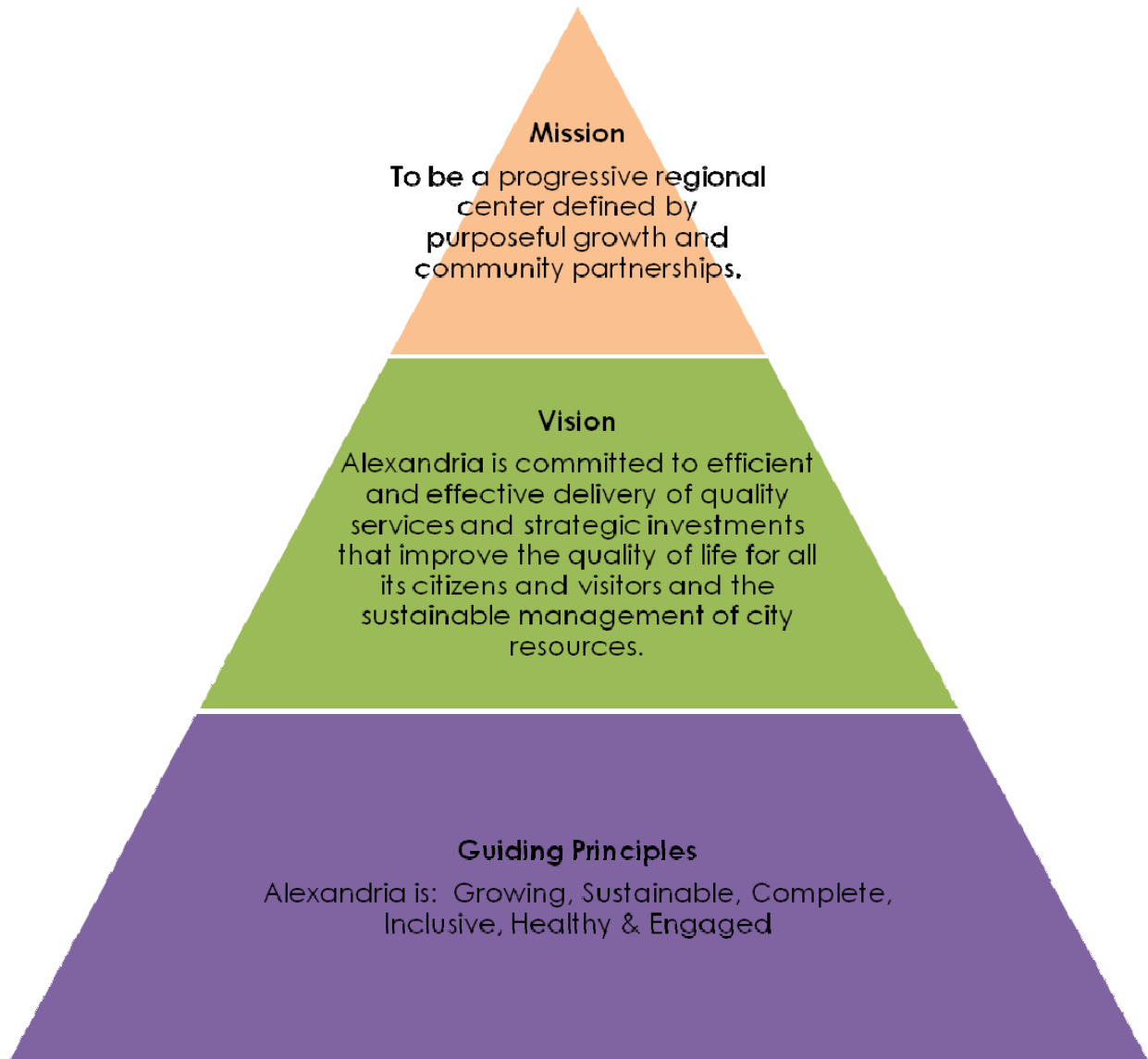
Figure 2: Organizational Foundation

Mission

The City's mission is a statement of the organization's purpose. It defines what the organization stands for and what it will do.

Mission:

To be a progressive regional center defined by purposeful growth and community partnerships.

Figure 3: Mission Statement

Vision

The City's vision sets the focus for the future. The vision is a statement that describes the ideal future of an organization, or what the organization would ideally like to be. Alexandria's vision follows:

Vision:

Alexandria is committed to efficient and effective delivery of quality services and strategic investments that improve the quality of life for all its citizens and visitors and the sustainable management of city resources.

Figure 4: Vision Statement

Guiding Principles

In order to ensure that the policies and recommendations outlined throughout the Plan provide for a sustainable future, the following six guiding principles serve as the primary core values of the Strategic Plan and the measure of its success. Each of the individual principles is critically important, yet these six principles are interrelated, and a balanced approach following all principles will help to ensure a solid and sustainable city foundation for future generations.

- **Growing Community -** Alexandria will grow to accommodate new residents, visitors and employees while maintaining the community's quality of life.
- **Sustainable Community -** Alexandria is a sustainable community that limits its impact on natural resources and on the local, regional and global environment.
- **Complete Community -** Alexandria is a well integrated city with a transportation system that encourages connectivity and multimodal options, public facilities and neighborhoods.
- **Inclusive Community -** Alexandria is a welcoming, vibrant, diverse and culturally rich community with opportunities for positive social interaction and inclusive of all citizens.
- **Healthy Community -** Alexandria encourages and provides for healthy, active living through public policies and community design.
- **Engaged Community -** Alexandria encourages and facilitates meaningful community participation, collaboration, leadership and is efficient, open and responsive to community needs and concerns.
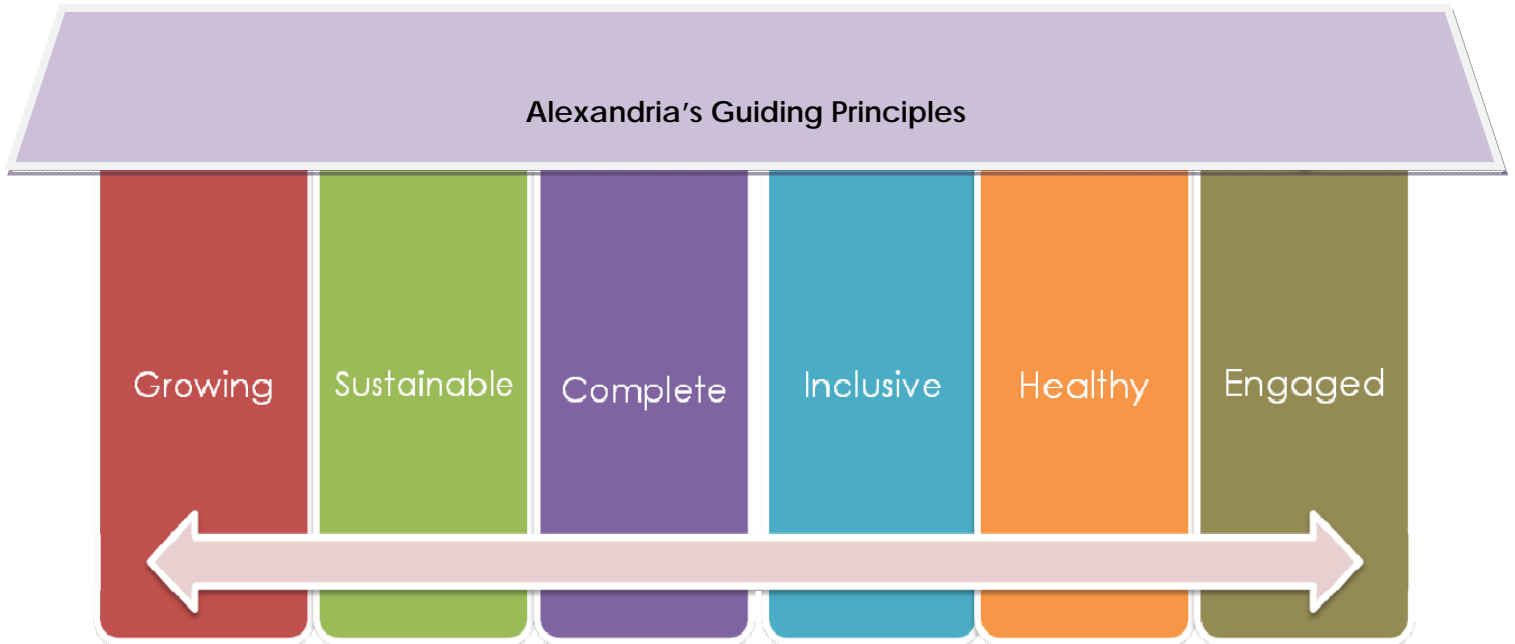

Figure 5: Guiding Principals

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES | three

The 2015 City of Alexandria Strategic Plan is composed of three strategic priorities:

1. Efficient & Effective Governance: Delivering services in an optimal manner

Alexandria is addressing a multitude of complex simultaneous challenges including ensuring the city services are efficient and effective, meeting citizen expectations, and sustaining and maintaining traditional programs. Conventional wisdom implies that business as usual will not get the job done. The City will continually evaluate its business models and systems to ensure peak performance throughout the City. There are several clear areas of need including marketing, information technology and human resources. The City will be willing to take prudent risks and make changes when needed to ensure they are performing best practices through effective and efficient service. Themes and ideas discussed include:

- o City Charter
- o Staffing needs
- o Succession planning
- o Emergency management
- o Marketing and branding
- o Information technology
- o Customer service
- o Efficiency
- o Performance management
- o Relations with business community
- o Human resources
- o City structure
- o Communication
- o Level of city services

2. Progressive, Regional Community Development: Timely investments in our community and strategic, collaborative partnerships

The City's primary obligation is to ensure the core services are well-funded thus reliable. Financial pressures, many competing interests, levy constraints and the rising cost of infrastructure repair and replacement are placing a greater burden and pressure on the City. Providing core services and infrastructure often becomes a matter of funding; how to pay for it? City leaders recognize the connection between preserving and expanding essential services and the importance of the City's regional influence in northwestern Minnesota. In Alexandria, the policy options are many; the choices are what make this community distinctive. The following themes were discusses as a part of the strategic planning process:

- o Positive community momentum
- o Define growth

- o Annexation
- o Regional Center
- o Strategic location of City
- o Economic development
- o Building partnerships
- o Tourism
- o Housing
- o Demographics
- o Diversity and inclusivity
- o Housing and Redevelopment Authority
- o Purposeful positive growth

3. Prudent Financial Management: Managing city resources wisely

A fundamental responsibility of city leaders is to ensure the financial stability of the city government. Yet this role and fiduciary responsibility is often understated. In the complex world of managing a municipal government, the city's financial obligations require expert talent, strong systems, and recognition of the value and importance of its linkage to the entire city. Through effective planning, transparent budgeting, up-to-date policies and strong financial systems, the City will maintain and enhance its current strong balance sheet for the long term future.   The following themes and ideas emerged during the strategic planning process:

- o Capital improvement planning
- o New revenue sources
- o Sales tax
- o Enterprise funds
- o Infrastructure funding
- o City facilities
- o Street repair
- o Street Improvement District
- o Equipment
- o City facilities
- o Community Center

IMPLEMENTATION | four

The following outline identifies the essential roles of the city leaders in the implementation of the strategic plan.

Mayor and City Council

The role of the City Council in implementation of the strategic plan includes the following key principles:

- Champion and take ownership in the plan
- Formally take action to adopt the Plan
- Communicate the plan to public and stakeholders
- Advocate for a culture change
- Include plan in new Council orientation processes
- Ensure resources are allocated for action steps
- Identify accountability measures
- Periodically review the Plan

City Administration

The role of Administration in the implementation of the strategic plan includes the following key principles:

- Assign and delegate responsibility for goals
- Develop a second tier plan with greater department detail
- Develop a progress update template or reporting tool
- Communicate the plan with the staff
- Lead a culture change
- Incorporate goals into future budgets
- Provide regular informal updates
- Conduct a formal review of the Plan

City Staff

The role of the staff in the implementation of the strategic plan includes the following key principles:

- Understand the value of strategic planning
- Support the City Council
- Accept responsibilities derived from the plan
- Integrate goals into the department operations
- Immerse the plan and process in the culture
- Provide regular updates to the administrator and Council

Definitions

The strategic plan includes the following key definitions:

Strategy: An essential public policy priority which further defines the mission and serves to coordinate and organizes the goals. This is typically a long-term timeframe; strategies will not change that often, if at all.

Goal: A measurable and desired activity, project or purpose that requires resources. The time commitment in pursuit of goals will vary – they can be succinct and short – but also longer term (five to ten years).

Actions: Individual steps and activities necessary to implement a goal, accomplish a strategy, operationalize the mission and fulfill the vision. Specific action steps are continuously evolving and changing as they are identified and complete.

Strategic Initiative One

Efficient & Effective Governance: Delivering services in an optimal manner

Goal - What Are We Doing?		Action - How Are We Doing It?
1A	Deliver great customer experiences to residents, businesses, and visitors through innovative service delivery models	1A1. Create and implement a technology plan
		1A2. Create, explore and implement new technology improvements to assist with: • Billing systems (credit/debit & online payment) • Building permit software • Financial and reporting systems • HR systems
		1A3. Complete and implement Financial Process Study
		1A4. Continue implementation of record retention strategy and data practices training and implementation
1B	Use innovative and best practices in HR and organizational activities	1B1. Update the personnel policies to encourage a more progressive, flexible and accountable employment environment
		1B2. Empower and train supervisors to manage performance within their functional areas
		1B3. Create and implement an employee wellness program
		1B4. Review Emergency Management Strategy for City using Police, Fire, and Administrative Services staff and resources
		1B5. Conduct review of staffing levels in each department
		1B6. Review the function, responsibility and structure of all boards and commissions to maximize effectiveness
		1B7. Provide standardized and comprehensive training/orientation for staff, elected and appointed officials
1C	Enhance communications and create a strong,	1C1. Create a marketing and communications plan

	inclusive and engaged community	1C2. Brand the city by promoting its vision and mission
		1C3. Improve City of Alexandria webpage
		1C4. Continue to build strong working relationships between City Council, City Staff, boards and commissions, and community partners: • Continue City Night Out Event • Support and attend AFD Open House • Explore additional community exposure opportunities (Community Expo, Citizens Academy, etc.)

Strategic Initiative Two

Progressive Community Development: Timely investments in our community and strategic, collaborative partnerships

	Goal - What Are We Doing?	Action - How Are We Doing It?
2A	Facilitate economic and employment growth	2A1. Partner with the HRA on implementation of the 2014 Housing Study with a focus on workforce housing
		2A2. Maximizing impact of tax increment financing districts
		2A3. Work with AAEDC and local partners to determine feasibility of countywide economic development opportunities
		2A4. Promote recreation and culture as a key part of economic growth and quality of life
2B	Enhance intergovernmental cooperation and opportunties for shared services	2B1. Facilitate an annual meeting with the local units of government within the region
		2B2. Explore where possible and practical the shared use of facilities, equipment and services
		2B3. Improve coordination and communication on capital expenses with ALP
		2B4. Develop and implement an Information Technology strategy that considers partnerships with other local agencies
		2B5. Working with local partners to define the City's role in tourism and recreation

2C	Create and implement a comprehensive development strategy	2C1. Update the City's Comprehensive Plan
		2C2. Establish open communication withal La Grand, Lake Mary and Hudson Townships about growth and annexation issues affecting the area
		2C3. Complete Fairgrounds Master Plan
		2C4. Adopt a vision for the future of Broadway between the Central Lakes Trail and 3rd Avenue
		2C5. Adopt a Complete Street Policy which considers bike/pedertrian opportunities with each street improvement

Strategic Initiative Three

Prudent Financial Management: Managing City Resources Wisely

Goal - What Are We Doing?		Action - How Are We Doing It?
3A	Ensure a fiscally healthy and responsible city government	3A1. Complete review of opportunities to diversify revenues beyond property tax levy
		3A2. Perform a detailed cash flow analysis
		3A3. Review feasibilityof cloud-based financial tools that could provide citizens and staff with easier access to information
3B	Create and maintain appropriate, sustainable, accessible and high quality infrastructure and facilities	3B1. Complete a long range and comprehensive facility maintenance plan
		3B2. Complete a Parks & Recreation strategic master plan that includes short and long range projects, policies, partnerships and procedures
		3B3. Complete build-out of Big Ole Central Park Master Plan
		3B4. Consider and make decision on RCC expansion and/or rehabilitation
		3B5. Review and implement strategic measures to extend the life of streets
		3B6. Formally adopt an annual street improvement plan and consider a multi-faceted program for financing improvements
		3B7. Reviewing alternate forms of purchase for large pieces of equipment
		3B8. Consider funding for a long-term sidewalk improvement program