

# City of Annandale

## 2021 Goal Setting Report

### Session Overview

On April 1, 2021, the City Council, City Administrator, and Department Heads gathered for a work session to discuss goals and priorities for the City in the coming years. The participants included Mayor Shelly Jonas, Council members Corey Czycalla, James "JT" Grundy, Tina Honsey, and Matthew Woullet, City Administrator Kelly Hinnenkamp, Police Chief Pete Standafer, and Public Works Director Joe Haller.

The primary objective of the session was to develop a 2021-22 Workplan, a document that provides agreed-upon priorities that will guide the organization's primary work for the coming years. The process involved three components - a discussion of key attributes and characteristics of the community, a present assessment of the City and organization, and development of 2021-22 Goals and Workplan. The participants utilized large group discussion and collaborative brainstorming to accomplish the objectives and develop the final product. It is recommended that staff and the City Council conduct a final review of the outcomes prior to adoption and implementation.

### Mission and Vision Statements

For any working team, it is essential for success to develop an understanding for the long-term direction and the elements necessary to reach that objective. Organizations in the public and non-profit sector are often referred to as mission-based organizations, meaning the ultimate measure of success is accomplishing the mission rather than profit or monetary-based measures. In the public sector, mission and vision statements provide definition to the what, why, and how all of the organization's team members perform their roles. This applies to elected, appointed, and hired members of the organization equally - all should act and perform with the mission and vision in mind.

To begin the process of developing these statements, the participants began with a discussion about the qualities, characteristics, and elements of the City that were most

cherished and appreciated. This discussion provided the group an opportunity to discuss both the organizational attributes and the community features that are both unique and are important to the fabric of the City. The group developed a lengthy list in response to the prompts and served as an excellent starting point for the full process.

Some of the key qualities, characteristics, and elements included the following:

- Collaboration within the community, people willing to pitch in and help
- Not a sleeper community, feels like home
- Atmosphere/feel within the community is special
- Active community groups that step up to get things done
- Many community events - pride in the events, high level of detail managed by volunteers, and excellently run
- Dedication of the people
- Something for everyone, people are welcomed when they want to get involved
- Strong school system, both academically and success of extracurriculars
- Advantages of geography, attractive landscape, lakes
- Excellent park system
- Strong commercial base
- Reinvestment, private investment in the Highway 55 corridor
- Community is clean and well-kept
- Safe neighborhoods and community
- Great working relationships and strong community leadership culture
- People wanting to be involved, running for office
- Positive, progressive leadership amongst Council and staff
- Youthful leadership, young people getting involved
- Council support for City staff and strong departmental performance

The group then transitioned to a visioning exercise and discussion ensued identifying the dreams and aspirations the leadership team had for the future of the City. This discussion helps provide the basis for a longer-term strategic direction of the City, developing some common themes and perspectives that participants want to see in the future. These visionary objectives included the following:

- Preserving the community's strengths through growth; not losing the sense of community through growth
- Maintaining volunteerism and community involvement
- Managing and cultivating community cohesion, involvement, and interaction

- Focusing on balancing growth - residential, commercial/retail, industrial, public spaces
- Supporting local business
- Cultivating a vibrant downtown, with shops and restaurants that draw economic activity to the community
- Increase local employment opportunities and maintaining balance amongst industries
- Strengthen business involvement, pride, and participation in the community
- Continuing to maintain strong parks and trails, emphasizing the lake
- Keeping the identity with the School District
- Sustainably providing the services people need
- Managing funding sources, practicing proactive financial management
- Continuing to provide strong public services, including police, public works, and fire, utilizing technology and meeting resource needs
- Being a technologically-advanced community

The results of these two discussions provide significant value into the long-term direction and values of the leadership team. Common themes were shared and reinforced by multiple participants - themes that are used below to develop draft mission and vision statements. Prior to adoption, the City Council and staff should review the drafts below and consider if they meet the characteristics targeted by these two guiding elements of the plan. Is the Mission Statement a short, concise, and memorable statement that identifies why the organization exists? Does the Mission Statement provide direction to top priorities City staff, Commissions, and other stakeholders within the organizational team? Do the Vision Statements support the Mission Statement and provide ongoing, long-term strategic advice to lead the City in the direction of the Mission Statement?

### **Draft Mission and Vision Statements**

Potential Mission Statement: The City of Annandale will maintain and enhance its high quality of life through a strong community culture, diverse amenities, and excellent services.

Potential Vision Statements: The City of Annandale will work to accomplish this mission through the following organizational strategies:

- Supporting and encouraging volunteerism, community involvement, and active community organizations.
- Practicing fiscal responsibility and prioritizing the delivery of high-quality public services.

- Fostering local support for business and encouraging economic development activities that lead to a vibrant downtown and a well-balanced business community.
- Developing and managing a strong parks and trails system, capitalizing the community's natural amenities.
- Proactive leadership that maintains strong relationships, a collaborative-style, and seeks improvement through technology.
- Ensure a safe and well-kept community for residents and businesses to call home.

## 2021 Environmental Assessment

Following its initial discussion, the group conducted an environmental scan of the City and organization. This activity is designed to consider the present state of the community from a variety of perspectives. In a large group setting, participants were asked to consider its strengths, weaknesses, and explore trends, opportunities, and challenges. The scan provided the basis for the group's efforts later in the worksession to develop the goals program that will guide the organization in the coming years.

In its first assessment activity, the group was asked to consider all of the things that identify as strengths of Annandale, both as a City and the organization itself. Participants were encouraged to think of projects, services, actions, and policies. The responses included the following:

- Recreation Park with the School District
- Components of the downtown project, including the relationship with MnDOT, project management, planned improvements, and \$4.1M in State bonding
- Community broadband, both quality of service and pricing
- Public Works operations, including maintenance of infrastructure and parks
- Willingness within the staff/organization to take on new duties
- Police services, including the SRO and Reserves programs, and resources to meet the needs
- Proactive planning of infrastructure; quality infrastructure and parks
- Working bigger than just the City limits, example of broadband to township areas
- Parks and Planning Commissions setting and expecting high standards
- Being creative and innovative, both as an organization and a community
- Well-run Fire Department - managing, financial planning, and communication
- Managing the tax rate and the budgeting process
- Water Treatment Plant and water quality

- Investments in facilities and infrastructure

After discussing the strengths, participants turned their attention towards reviewing City and organizational areas that need improvement. These items are areas that presently challenge the organization and City. Specifically, the group identified the following:

- Communication about what's happening - dealing with misinformation or lack of information and counteracting bad information
- Staffing levels to support economic and community development
- Promotion of the community
- Working with organizations to help keep them strong
- Supporting and collaborating with the Chamber of Commerce
- Supporting local businesses and getting participation from all business
- Community indoor recreational facilities/activities
- Utilizing lakes, outdoor spaces, parks and trails more
- Vacant buildings downtown, getting them occupied and active
- Gaining compliance from building/property owners with zoning issues
- Aging/inadequate structures on Main Street
- Zoning/housing maintenance; blight and code enforcement
- Economic disparities in the community, encouraging awareness and making resources available

Following the assessment of its strengths and weaknesses, the group moved on to brainstorming anticipated opportunities, challenges, and trends that may impact the City. Forecasting potential external changes or impacts is a key step in the process to help leadership anticipate pressures and opportunities that may arise. To guide this process, the participants followed a STEP model of analysis, thinking about trends and external impacts in the areas of socio-cultural, technical, economical, and political. Thinking about the ongoing opportunities and challenges in each of these areas provides a variety of important perspectives for the City in the coming years.

Within this context, the group identified the following trends and potential impacts:

- Cyber-bullying, technological impact on social well-being, particularly in youth
- People, in general, with a growing lack of listening to each other
- Social trends towards not trusting government and police
- People, in general, not seeking out information and answers
- Divisiveness at the state and national level - what happens locally?
- Opportunity exists to control messaging and sharing of information
- Opportunity that there is a lack of political affiliation at the local government level

- How we pay competitively and maintain quality employees/people
- Seasonal lake homes turning into year-round living
- Technology is advancing city operations, opportunity for app development and using technology to improve communication and engagement
- Helping businesses/building owners be more successful and helping new businesses get established
- Opportunity with broadband improvements and people's ability to work from home
- Funding coming locally for improvements/projects
- School referendum this spring and the potential for redeveloping the neighboring property
- COVID impacts - businesses reopening, regulations related to organizations and events, discretion and consistency of enforcement, and changes in people's behaviors and patterns

## Development of 2021-2022 Short-term Goals

The third part of the goal setting process leaned on the outcomes of the previous two parts in order to develop a goals platform for the coming years. Participants were given time to revisit the group's visioning activities and the environmental assessment results in order to individually brainstorm goals. After sharing individual ideas, the group refined the proposed goals into goal statements. The goals were then consolidated by like topics and each participant was asked to rank the goals each individually hoped the City could accomplish. After sharing the priorities with the group, the outcome resulted in groupings of potential goals.

There were six goals that received support from a majority of the Council and at least one staff member. Additionally, there were four goals that were supported by all or majority of the staff and two members of the Council. Lastly, there were nine goals that had support, but not a majority from either group of the leadership team. After reviewing these goals, the Council prioritized these into four categories, Continued Priorities, 2021-22 Prioritized Goals, 2021-22 Other Goals, and Other Brainstormed Goals.

### **Continued Priorities**

1. Take actions to address and maintain strong organizational morale.
2. Maintain financial stability and develop financial plans to meet project/goal needs.
3. Continue operating public services efficiently and effectively to meet community needs.

### **2021-22 Prioritized Goals**

1. Examine staffing levels and add staff to support community groups, improve communication, and spur economic development. [New staff and/or organizational teams should focus on celebrating successes, implementing technology, improving accessibility of information for residents, and supporting local groups and community organizations.]
2. Develop protocol and policies to be more active with code enforcement and eliminating blight.
3. Identify anchor properties in downtown and facilitate increase in occupancy within the next 3 years.
4. Develop strategies to provide emphasis on public safety and positive influences in the community.

### **2021-22 Other Goals**

- Develop planning and standards for the provision of parks and community recreation opportunities, including trail connections, indoor recreation, and lake amenities [merged two goals on draft list]
- Develop a long-range transportation plan and future land use/growth areas.
- Focus communication presence on positively supporting community institutions (schools, for example)
- Managing incoming aid to meet priorities, identifying needs and maximizing use

### **Other Brainstormed Goals**

- More activities/programming at the Lake, making the lake a recreational amenity
- Work with the School to identify a redevelopment plan for the old middle school site and indoor community facilities
- Keep the Zoning Commission strong, making sure the City has good candidates and seeks talent
- Promote Annandale externally to residents/businesses focusing on schools and quality of life
- Identifying incomplete trail segments and prioritize connections
- Adding signage for wayfinding, highlighting history and offerings, in downtown
- Develop a splash pad amenity to bring people into town

As the City considers adoption of the goals program, a few suggestions may help reach consensus and adopt a goals program that is manageable, measurable, and achievable. Here are few recommendations:

- If the City Council considers adoption of the mission and vision statements, continued priority #3 might make a better vision statement than short-term goal.
- The second of three potential goals includes two draft goals - both with 2 Council members and 2-3 staff - merged into one goal as they both dealt with parks, recreation, and trails.
- The next step with each of the goals is to develop a subset of actions that will contribute to the success of the goal. It's a common staff activity to develop this plan of smaller action steps that are manageable and can incrementally lead to success.
- Generally, it's recommended that a short-term goals platform contain 5-9 goals.

In conclusion, it was my pleasure to work with your team on this important project. This goals program will provide organizational clarity for both the Council's decision-making process and the day-to-day service delivery by City staff. The commitment of the leadership team to devote time and critical-thought throughout this process has resulted in a comprehensive assessment of the organization and City, along with a plan for the coming years.

Prepared and submitted by Phil Kern on behalf of the City of Annandale.