

City of Rochelle

2017-18 Strategic Planning and Goal Development



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategic planning is a preferred approach to guiding an organization’s future rather than making decisions issue by issue. The City of Rochelle (“the City”) engaged the Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) at Northern Illinois University (NIU) to facilitate a strategic planning process and workshop with Council and senior staff members. Prior to the workshop sessions, several focus groups were held with community stakeholders to gather input on their vision for Rochelle. With the focus groups as a starting point for discussions, the workshop provided a positive atmosphere for City Council and senior staff members to work together and collaboratively develop strategic goals and determine where it is the City wants to go as an organization and a community. As was discussed and reviewed during the workshop, executive-level strategic planning sessions are a staple of good governance and leadership for progressive organizations.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Ultimately, five key strategic priority areas were identified as an outcome of the process, highlighting activities and initiatives that the City should focus its resources on in both the short- and long-term. The strategic priority areas identified during the workshop sessions [in no particular order] were economic and business development, financial management and stability, community inclusivity and engagement, infrastructure effectiveness and improvement, and core service delivery.



STRATEGIC GOALS

Another outcome of the process was the creation of key organizational goals helping ensure that employees and other stakeholders are working toward common strategic priorities. After all goals were shared and discussed during the workshop, participants were asked to classify each goal according to a matrix model of time and complexity. The goals were classified as short- or long-term and as complex or routine. In total, the group developed 13 short-term routine goals, 5 short-term complex goals, 5 long-term routine goals, and 13 long-term complex goals. Following the classification exercise, the Council was asked to delineate, via an online ranking exercise, which goals should be given a higher priority than others. The top goals based on the Council’s average scores from each category are offered here as a process “snapshot” representing the most important strategic goals or priority areas for the Council and staff to address in the months and years ahead. For a full review of all the strategic goals presented, discussed and ranked, please refer to the full report.

City of Rochelle
2018 Top Goals within Each Quadrant of the Time and Complexity Matrix

**SHORT-TERM
ROUTINE**

- Maintain fiscal stability and a balanced budget
- Create a 20-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)
- Develop and implement plan to replace/repair infrastructure to work in concert with the CIP

**SHORT-TERM
COMPLEX**

- Create an inclusive community with an outreach program that encourages community involvement
- Address community blight in affected areas via multiple level strategies
- Improve/create intergovernmental partnerships for economies of scale/shared use of resources and capabilities
- Further develop the downtown

**LONG-TERM
ROUTINE**

- Promote, retain, and enhance small business development
- Explore, develop, and improve strategies for industrial growth
- Designate and secure funding to efficiently use resources based on the priorities established in the strategic planning efforts
- Incorporate dynamic planning and evaluation (review and revise) in City-wide planning efforts

**LONG-TERM
COMPLEX**

- Encourage diversified housing developments with friendly walkways
- Explore business and development incentives to increase job opportunities in the City that are sustainable while offering a living wage
- Implement the 20-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)
- Reduce the City's overall debt

INTRODUCTION

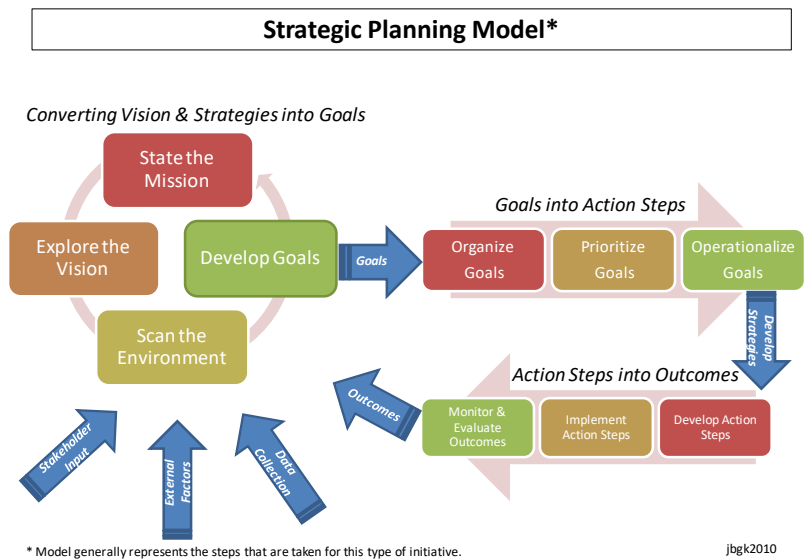
As a City, Rochelle has placed itself among the special group of communities that engage in formalized strategic planning and goal setting exercises (Figure 1). Strategic planning sessions are not a new phenomenon for progressive communities and the value of such processes continues to be recognized by policy-making boards and staff in both private and public organizations. This important work will serve the community well into the coming years.

The City Council and senior staff members gathered in early 2018 to discuss a future vision for the City and establish new goals. The 2018 workshop sessions provided a positive atmosphere to set aside time to methodically—strategically—determine where it is the City wants to go as an organization and a community. As was shared with Council and senior staff members at the conclusion of the workshop, the City should resist the temptation to re-arrange priorities as the fiscal year moves along. It is important to adhere to the results of the Council

and senior staff members’ efforts throughout the City’s strategic planning and budgeting processes; do not pull a seemingly easy goal from the bottom of the list of priorities just because it seems easy. This kind of shifting can create a confusing tone in the organization.

Keep in mind that the judicious use of the City’s resources (including financial resources and professional staff time) will be the key to good results. Ambitious goals and high standards can place a strain on the organization, as excellence requires adequate staff time, expertise, and resources. In the end, quality policies and quality implementation equate to tough choices in setting priorities and in allocating resources. Only a limited number of goals and objectives can be effectively managed and implemented at any given time. In a very realistic sense, clear and stable priorities must be maintained if the City desires to stretch its resources as far as they can go.

Figure 1. Strategic Planning Model



Pre-Workshop: Environmental Scanning - Stakeholder Focus Groups

This pre-workshop component of the process was an important element designed to bring in varying points of view and ground the environmental scanning portions of the process through community stakeholder participation. Listening is vital to planning and several focus groups were held with City staff and community members (i.e., civic groups, intergovernmental organizations, and residents). These steps are an important

part of “taking stock” and helping to understand current City policies and operational perspectives, perceptions, and preferences.

Three focus groups were held with City staff, civic and community leaders, and residents. The focus group sessions were designed to serve as a primer for the strategic planning process. The information that is presented in this summation was designed to add *exploratory and thematic information* for the Council and Senior Leadership Team to consider during the strategic planning workshop sessions (see [Appendix A](#) for a full summary of all focus group data).

Key themes and Data Analysis Highlights – Focus Group General Themes

- **The City of Rochelle *is ...***
 - A great place to raise a family
 - Strategically-located
 - A progressive community with a lot of potential
 - A caring, faith-based community
 - Safe, quiet, and friendly

- **The City of Rochelle *offers ...***
 - Great access to healthcare and social services
 - Strong City leadership
 - Active and caring community and civic organizations
 - A diverse mix of job opportunities
 - A small-town feel while being close to big city amenities

- **The City of Rochelle should *strive towards ...***
 - Having a variety of dining and entertainment options
 - Increasing intergovernmental collaborations
 - Creating a business-friendly attitude and policy environment
 - Redeveloping downtown Rochelle
 - Building affordable, quality housing options

- **The City of Rochelle’s *future expectations and priorities should include ...***
 - Being more inviting to new businesses and residents
 - Building a recreation center with a pool
 - Following-through and having a “move forward” mindset
 - Implementing a positive community narrative and brand development
 - Improving transparency and communication between City staff and residents

Outline of Leadership Exercises and Discussion Sessions

The format for all of the discussion sessions used in the planning effort employed approaches that were highly participative and interactive. The process utilized a group discussion approach called ‘*Nominal Group Technique*’ where participants are assured equal opportunities to speak and share opinions by the facilitators. During the sessions, individuals had the opportunity to generate and share their ideas, as well as participate in group activities allowing them to weigh alternatives and refine their thinking through dialogue. As ideas were shared and debated, the group worked steadily toward a consensus regarding organizational values, purpose, future directions, and priorities.

Workshop Session I. Introduction Exercise – Important Topic and Visioning

Each participant engaged in an opening exercise by selecting an item from the facilitator’s “garage sale” table. The items chosen were used to describe and illustrate an important topic to be discussed during the workshop. Participants were then asked the visioning question, “In 10-15 years, when I return to the City of Rochelle, I hope to see, or think I will see...” in regards to what services, programs, staffing levels, capital needs, and other opportunities that would or should be present in the City at these intervals. Participants were asked to think about their ideas ahead of time and be ready to share them with the group during the first workshop session. This was a brainstorming exercise—all ideas about the City’s future were encouraged and shared. No evaluative or judgmental debate was permitted during the session. Below are participant responses.

A. Opening Exercise: Important Topic to be Discussed

Garage Sale Item	Important Topic Identification
Map	Recognized for success, its own identity/own brand, known for uniqueness
Trash can	Landfill issues City-owned, recycling for multi-family rentals
Money	Receptiveness/ responsive to all in the community. Cost of services high for some residents
USB	Industry, driven by technology, need more high paying jobs
Paintbrush	Maintenance; the need for systematic maintenance of infrastructure
Drafter’s set	Housing and homes; new construction homes that people can afford. Create a plan for housing development and implement
Water valve	Maintenance and replacement of water mains, rising costs of water for residents, infrastructure
Flashlight	Local control of utilities – could be more of a revenue generator in the future
Sprinkler	Water conservation, resources, going “green” at the golf course
Ruler	How does the City measure up with residents/businesses? Systematic ways to gather feedback
Batteries	Everyone is doing more with less. Motivating employees to be committed and energized
Plastic slinky	Being creative and innovative in using resources at the City – continue to grow, improve, adapt, doing new things or doing things in a new way
Crazy glue	Represent the investments needed in our infrastructure
Brick	Facilities and buildings/ public and private, e.g., growth at the airport, need for investment and repairs, replacement of infrastructure. Expanded retail, inventory and investment in private properties and buildings. What would it take to get up to code, fill windows with art? Repurpose industrial buildings where possible

Garage Sale Item	Important Topic Identification
Key ring	Funding – transparent, efficient, proactive fiscal management, budget for priorities
AT&T sign	Technological opportunities (fiber, etc.), adapt because expectations of next generation and businesses are changing – responsive to the needs
Fire engine	Transportation and system investments – creative on financing needed repairs, replacements for infrastructure, capital equipment
Fidget spinner	Attracting young people – amenities, events, more involved in local government and the community
Hard hat	Build on the assets (rail, technology park, RMU, etc.) already here – increase revenues to reduce tax burden
Capitol building	Open communications and partnerships with State representatives on the needs and direction for Rochelle
Memory chips	Maintain and improve technology offerings to stay ahead of other communities – anticipate business/resident needs
Velcro	The struggle of resources vs. services, needs and goals
The game of jacks	Reconnecting the community with the police department; trips, career mentors, interaction, positive relationship/role models
Lifesaver	Integrate EMS with local health providers – be proactive, not reactive
Hard hat	Fire department resources and needs
Ruler	Diversity in demographics and talent/leadership recruiting and inclusion
Technology objects	Local control of utility assets
Map of Illinois	Biggest roadblock to goal attainment and commitment to the future is the State of Illinois – engage in conversations about home rule

B. Exploration of the Visions of the Future for the City of Rochelle

(In 10-15 years, when I return to the City of Rochelle, I hope to see, or think I will see...)

- Strong industrial and commercial balance and also retail and residential balance
 - Retail, community, industry, vibrant, growth
 - Large variety of retail at the North, South, and East corridors
 - Thriving industrial base with good paying jobs; more disposable income available
- Housing
 - Good variety of housing: affordable, upscale
 - Affordable to live in Rochelle
 - Code enforcement to improve housing, beautification
 - Replace neglected housing with new homes
- Fire, EMS, and Police
 - Full service, progressive, and highly trained Fire department including all hazards
 - Full service EMS - integrated health
 - New Police Department/Public Safety building
 - Dedicated drug unit in the Police Department
 - Police Department – advancing technologies are addressed, staffing levels restored, technologically equipped

- Home rule community
 - Home rule exploration
- Downtown
 - Active downtown, bustling community, pedestrian-friendly, specialty shops, gathering space, entertainment/restaurants for all income levels
 - Specialty shops, successful TIF District, vibrant downtown, specialty restaurants, attractive real estate tax rate, more rooftops, more shopping, plaza, shops, family entertainment
- Human Resources
 - Increase staff to take care of risk management, health insurance, employee engagement – well-documented office
 - Human Resources employees' self-service portal (HRIS)
 - Applicant tracking system (HR)
- City Services
 - City still owns utilities, more residents educated about the utilities
 - Golf course is still here. Implement master plan to help with needed improvements
 - New look for City government-leaner
- Technology
 - Utilities fully smart grid – may need more skilled workers to implement
 - Using technology to make City services better (autonomous mower example, other equipment)
 - Build infrastructure for autonomous vehicles and drones-look to the future/innovation
 - Staff can use technology to work remotely to save resources
 - Paperless at the City, everything electronic
- Infrastructure
 - Start on replacing underground infrastructure (one-third of the way through)
 - Radium in water resolved
 - Infrastructure up-to-date with a maintenance program;
 - Modern City services; upgraded infrastructure
 - Safely closed, capped landfill restored with solar field
 - Seventy-five percent market share of fiber customers in industry and commercial
 - Affordable quality residential program for fiber
 - Fully developed rail system – increase use by industries that have good paying jobs
- Diversity and Inclusion
 - More connected community, sense of community pride – every citizen in tune with the local government, embracing
 - Diversity of employment opportunities, technology, healthcare, high-end manufacturing
 - City staff will have more females and minorities
 - Inclusive, community engagement for all, including government participants (no language barriers)
 - Inclusive community
- Good paying, diversified jobs – focused on quality and rate of pay, not just quantity
 - Good paying jobs
 - Helping young entrepreneurs – incubator

Exploration of the Visions of the Future for the City of Rochelle Cont'd

(In 10-15 years, when I return to the City of Rochelle, I hope to see, or think I will see...

- Pursue research and development as a City
 - Technology park one asset to use
- Airport - aviation related industry market service drones
 - Extend airport runway 6,000 feet - heavier, larger planes/cargo
- Differentiate the community with amenities that are unique such as multi-sport complex in old warehouse/building
 - Clean up vacancies - improve business climate
- Better communication between staff and elected officials
- Well-connected pedestrian paths throughout
- Public has access to all information that is not confidential
- Healthcare as an industry to pursue
- Involve kids/youth in the community and economic development planning

Workshop Session II. Surrender or Lead

Participants were introduced to a leadership exercise called “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. Participants were broken up into five working groups and asked to respond to a series of structured questions designed to initiate discussion and reveal perspectives, challenges, and frustrations of the participants as a whole. The participants’ responses were recorded on flip chart paper and discussed. The responses provided by each group are recorded below. Underlined sections are key phrases that groups provided in response to the open questions.

Team #1

1. We want to grow and be fiscally responsible.
2. The two most important things to focus on are community and services to provide quality of life.
3. If it weren't for fiscal responsibility, we would not be able to provide quality services.
4. We need to finally provide better communication and transparency to the public.
5. The State of Illinois will have the biggest impact on the City in the next 2-3 years.

Team #2

1. We want to provide high-paying jobs, but government influence is limited and we need a trained workforce.
2. The two most important things to focus on are diversity and changing perceptions.
3. If it weren't for financial constraints, we would be the investor in our own community.
4. We need to finally overcome operational inefficiencies and staff appropriately.
5. Aging infrastructure or strengthening utilities will have the biggest impact on the City in the coming 2-3 years.

Team #3

1. We want to grow a lot but we can't because of lack of funding and prioritization.
2. The two most important things to focus on are prioritizing and funding because without it, no plan and no direction.
3. If it weren't for planning, we would not make progress.
4. We need to finally make decisions based on priorities and implement solutions.
5. The State of Illinois will have the biggest impact on the City in the next 2-3 years.

Team #4

1. We want to grow but methodically.
2. The two most important things to focus on are public safety and diversified jobs as both of these would make Rochelle an attractive place to live, work and visit.
3. If it weren't for limited funds and aging infrastructure, we would have already met our goals.
4. We need to finally develop a plan and implement it with unity.
5. The State budget will have the biggest impact on the City in the next 2-3 years.

Team #5

1. We want to grow and prosper but will we have the will/vision to do so?
2. The two most important things to focus on are community image and financial resources to address it because we want to create wealth for everyone.
3. If it weren't for lack of amenities, we would have more people living here.
4. We need to finally have the commitment and courage to implement the plan.
5. The State of Illinois will have the biggest impact on the City in the next 2-3 years.

Workshop Session III. Environmental Scanning: Internal and External S.W.O.T

The next step of the strategic planning process involved reviewing and accounting for the internal and external factors present in the environment that can potentially influence the success of the City both negatively and positively.

Given the exploratory statements and challenges raised in the Surrender or Lead exercise, participants were then asked to identify what constraints and practical difficulties are likely to be encountered that will make it difficult to achieve the desired future state. These elements included both internal and external factors, conditions, trends, regulations, agencies, resources, etc. Furthermore, participants were asked to identify the organization's strengths and weaknesses. In what areas does the City regularly excel, and in what areas are there difficulties or shortcomings in terms of expertise, resources, training, etc.? What opportunities are on the horizon that can be used to the City's advantage? Conversely, what trends lie ahead that would be obstacles or hindrances? Many responses spanned all four categories.

S.W.O.T. EXERCISE

(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

INTERNAL

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Technology ◆ Increasing EAV ◆ Our people ◆ Location – strategically located ◆ Transportation capabilities ◆ Utility load growth ◆ Strong relationships with elected officials ◆ City Enterprises – railroad, airport, technology center, businesses ◆ City Airport ◆ Diverse population ◆ Downtown – our existing businesses ◆ City services ◆ Politically stable ◆ Employees and staff – knowledge/dedication ◆ Proximity to higher education-Kishwaukee/NIU ◆ Active young professionals group ◆ Local hospital – access to quality healthcare ◆ Community coming together ◆ City government ◆ Public safety ◆ Good financial condition – City and utilities ◆ Lower median age than the County ◆ Lots of transportation ◆ School District ◆ Agriculture ◆ Sauk Valley -SBDC ◆ Expanding industries/businesses ◆ Investment in downtown ◆ Major retail investment in the North corridor ◆ Technology park ◆ Community events ◆ Team Rochelle – one-stop-shop – industries/businesses ◆ Community who gets things done – industrial development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Technology constantly needs updating ◆ Transportation – easy to leave or just pass through Rochelle ◆ Age of and failing condition of key infrastructure ◆ Housing market ◆ Poor public perception ◆ Lack of restaurants, entertainment ◆ Diverse population ◆ Skeptical ◆ Lack of critical mass/population for some retailers ◆ Downtown ◆ Lack of gathering places ◆ Need better relationships with the school and the Park District ◆ City finances vs. all our needs ◆ City services, if not kept up ◆ County support ◆ Non-home rule ◆ City government if we don't work together ◆ Sit and spin – have plans but need priorities and follow-through ◆ School District – test scores and perception ◆ Proximity to Rockford

EXTERNAL

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Technology for improving services ◆ Increasing EAV ◆ Our location and regional geography (access to Chicago, Rockford, Quad Cities, Madison) ◆ Transportation network in/through the City ◆ Utility load growth ◆ Strong government relations ◆ Municipal enterprises ◆ City airport ◆ Public/private partnerships ◆ Changing public perceptions ◆ Changeover of department heads ◆ Fiber expansion/community expansion ◆ Parks ◆ Diverse population ◆ Downtown, large investment in downtown ◆ Relationships with schools ◆ City services (if we keep up) ◆ Move to a performance-based budget ◆ Raising the standard of living of others ◆ Improved housing stock ◆ Shift to home rule ◆ Young professionals group ◆ Community coming together as one ◆ Proximity to NIU and a community college ◆ Public safety employees and services ◆ Younger median age than Ogle County ◆ Lots of public transportation ◆ Schools and size ◆ Better interpretation of school scores ◆ Opportunity of agricultural economy ◆ Sauk Valley - SBDC ◆ Growing businesses ◆ Large retail truck stop in the South corridor ◆ Technology park ◆ Community events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Technology cost ◆ Transportation network ◆ Utility load growth ◆ Changing government relations ◆ Age of and condition of failing infrastructure ◆ Surrounding communities ◆ Poor public perception ◆ Loss of institutional knowledge and turnover ◆ Aging population ◆ City finances long-term ◆ Talent/demographic loss to others communities ◆ Linger issues with the landfill ◆ Location and proximity to Chicago ◆ Radium issue in water ◆ Pension obligations ◆ Not following through on plans and priorities ◆ Perception of schools ◆ Safety and preparedness ◆ Proximity to bigger cities ◆ Agriculture economy and cost of farming ◆ Growing business impact on services and infrastructure

Workshop Session IV. Nominal Group Goal Identification

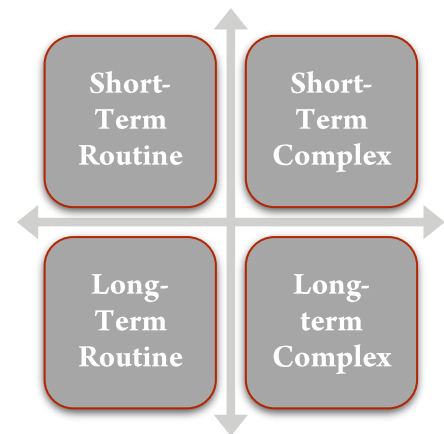
This dynamic discussion session provided the forum for the collaborative establishment of strategic goals and objectives necessary to achieve the future vision of the City. With the preceding sessions serving as a sound foundation for goal setting, the final session was a healthy group discussion of goals and/or strategies needed to achieve the future visions as expressed by the group. To begin the process, groups were allotted time to highlight the three or four most important policy and program goals that they think the City should accomplish in the next 1-3 years (short-term) and 4-8 years (long-term).

Goals could be highly specific or general. Again, only questions of clarification were permitted to be asked during this session. Evaluative or judgmental assertions or debates were deferred to a follow-up session where all participants engaged in open discussions of the goals or action items, their impact on the region, the organization and their relative importance to the City's current or future circumstances.

Classification

At the end of the open discussion, participants were asked to classify each goal according to a matrix model of time and complexity. Agreed criteria were used to classify a goal as short- or long-term and as complex or routine (Figure 2). **Short-term goals** were those goals that could or should be completed or substantially underway in the next 1-3 years. **Long-term goals** were those goals that could or should be completed or substantially underway within 4-8 year timeframe. **Complex goals** were goals 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.

Figure 2. Time and Complexity Matrix
by Professor G. Gabris



The purpose of the exercise is to group goals of roughly the same type together so when prioritization occurs, the participants can avoid the problem of comparing “apples to oranges.” All statements were recorded on flipchart paper.

Open Group Discussion and Consolidation of Goals

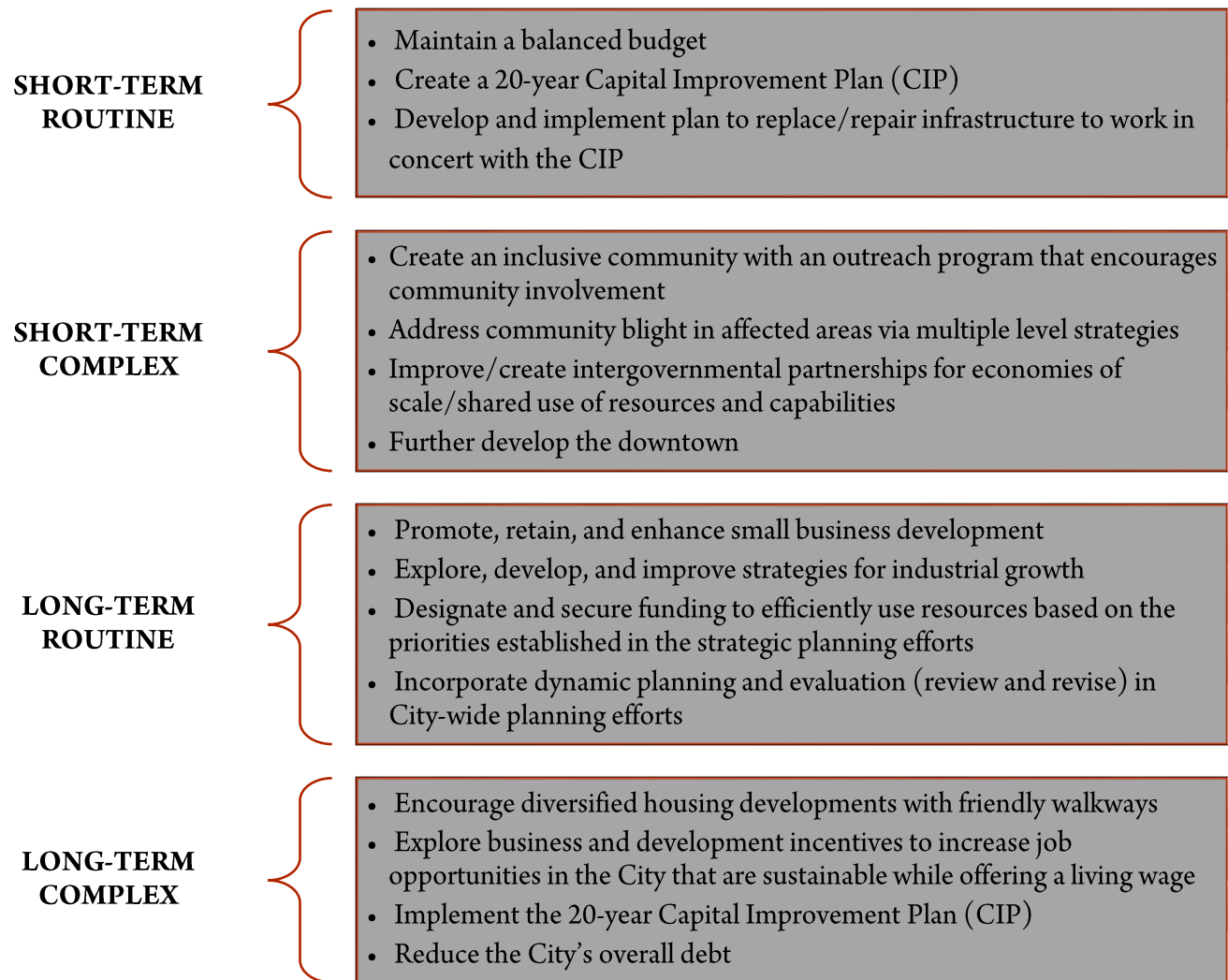
This final phase of the discussion served as the forum for the City Council and senior staff members to discuss, evaluate, and debate the ideas and goals offered by each participant in the previous sessions. Participants were asked to give their opinions, evaluations, and judgments of the worthiness and value of different policy objectives. In total, the group developed 13 short-term routine goals, 5 short-term complex goals, 5 long-term routine goals and 13 long-term complex goals.

Prioritization of Goals

Following the classification exercise, the City Council was asked to delineate, via an online ranking exercise after the workshop, which goals should be given the highest priority. Council members were provided an online ranking tool where a ranking value was assigned to each goal in each quadrant of the matrix. The calculation of goal ranking consisted of ‘forced ranking’ where the ranking of each identified goal is averaged by the rankings given by all Council members. For example, if a goal is given the scores of 2, 5, 6, 6, 1, 2 and 3, the average total would be 3.57. **The lower the score, the higher the priority.** Again, the average totals were based on the ratings provided.

The following presents the Council’s top prioritized goals, within each quadrant, as they emerged from the consensus ranking exercise (Figure 3). The top goals based on the Council’s average scores are offered here as a process “snapshot” of the most important strategic goals or issue areas for the Council and senior staff members to address in the months and years ahead. For a full review and appreciation of all the strategic goals discussed and ranked, please see [Appendix B](#).

Figure 3. City of Rochelle 2018 Top Goals within Each Time and Complexity Quadrant



STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS

Several key strategic priority areas surfaced during the sessions and were observable in many of the goal areas (Figure 4). The five thematic strategic priority areas [in no particular order] are economic and business development, financial management and stability, community inclusivity and engagement, and infrastructure effectiveness and improvement, and core service delivery.

Figure 4. Strategic Priority Areas



Conclusion

The value of the group's workshop discussions and this summary report will be fully realized when used as an active working guide to both the City's leadership team and staff. This report captures the content of the discussions and is designed to assist the organization in developing action plans through a follow-up session for appropriate committees, departments, and elected officials. The report should also be used as the issues explored during the strategic planning process are discussed, pursued, operationalized, and put into action.

The next step is for the City's senior staff to review the results, fine-tune these goals and create objectives and key tasks via their action-planning sessions. Staff should be prepared to report back to the City Council (and/or appropriate committees) on how and when your top priorities and goals might be most efficiently and effectively addressed.

What became apparent to the NIU team was a commitment by the Council and senior staff members to advance Rochelle. It was clear during the exchange of ideas and dialogue throughout the discussion sessions and workshops that the organization is fortunate to have progressive leadership and a management team that is looking ahead. One noted observer summarized the challenges of progress this way:

***"The art of progress is to preserve order amid change,
and change amid order..." -A.N. Whitehead***

We wish you well with the ambitious year that lies ahead.

Greg Kuhn and Mel Henriksen, Session Facilitators

APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP DATA

APPENDIX A: Summary of Focus Group Data

One of the key analytical techniques used for focus group notes is an analyst's search for key phrases, words, or terms that cut across all groups. Coding is done by analysts' individual readings of the data, followed by key term searches with the aid of document software. The words and phrases listed below present the results of the study team's analysis of the collected focus group notes. At a glance, the reader can discover what terms were used or referred to most frequently in the feedback notes. Using individual analysts' coding, the researcher identifies terms that recur across groups and across questions. The results are revealing because they highlight key topics or issues that should be weighed and considered when proceeding with strategic planning discussions.

The information that follows is a summary of key themes and topics that emerged during the exploratory focus group/outreach sessions. The sessions were designed to serve as a primer for the strategic planning process. The information that is presented in this summation was designed to add *exploratory and thematic information* for the Council and Senior Leadership Teams to consider during the strategic planning workshop sessions.

The same six exploratory focus group discussion questions were asked to each focus group and are listed below:

1. How would you describe the City of Rochelle to a stranger or someone who doesn't live or work here?
2. If you left Rochelle tomorrow, and did not return for 10-15 years, what do you think you'll see, or what do you hope you'll see, when you return?
3. What do you like best about the City of Rochelle? Related to that, what are the strengths/greatest assets of the City?
4. Can you identify areas or topics in need of attention or improvement? Related to that, what are the weaknesses/greatest needs in the City of Rochelle? Challenges?
5. What are/should be the top priorities for the City over the next 3-5 years?
6. If you could change or initiate one key item or thing about the City, what would it be?

Overall Themes

The data below were derived from the analysis of the bundled focus group data. Using qualitative analysis techniques such as reviews of phrases, developing sorting categories, and conducting word counts, the following comment themes, topics, and phrases surfaced. *Note: Some categories, topics, and phrases that were seen as closely related by the analysts were combined for the theme/phrase/word counts presented below.*

1. How would you describe City of Rochelle to a stranger or someone who doesn't live or work here?

- Frequent Themes or Phrases

- Small/hometown/friendly/good schools/great place to raise a family (32)
- Location/crossroads (12)
- Safe/quiet (9)
- Need for economic development and growth/limited housing options (9)

- Diverse/progressive/potential (8)
 - Industrial/agricultural/transportation community (6)
- 2. If you left Rochelle tomorrow, and did not return for 10-15 years, what do you think you'll see, or what do you hope you'll see, when you return?**
- Frequent Themes or Phrases
 - Youth and family activities/community events/community pride (8)
 - Residential growth/affordable housing/inclusive of new residents (8)
 - Leadership representative of community/develop community brand (5)
 - Maintain status quo (2)
- 3. What do you like best about the City of Rochelle? Related to that, what are the strengths/greatest assets of the City?**
- Frequent Themes or Phrases
 - Railroad Park/downtown growth/amenities/public library (5)
 - Well-maintained Infrastructure/city-owned utilities (3)
 - Green space/golf course/youth sport and recreation activities (3)
 - Public safety/safe (3)
 - Faith-based community (2)
- 4. Can you identify areas or topics in need of attention or improvement? Related to that, what are the weaknesses/greatest needs in City of Rochelle? Challenges?**
- Frequent Themes or Phrases
 - Intergovernmental collaboration/transparency/communication and messaging/innovation and visioning/staff shortages (13)
 - Non-business friendly/industrial development over emphasized/Wal-Mart/Hickory Grove (10)
 - Challenging demographics/underutilize diversity/high level of poverty (6)
 - Quality of life/outdated/need to identify niche (4)
 - Location/outbound commuters (4)
 - Underutilized parks and green space/lack of recreation center (4)
 - Affordable housing/lack of diversified housing options (4)
 - Volunteer burnout/community involvement/small town (3)
 - Ability to recruit employees (2)
 - Education/test scores (2)
- 5. What are/should be the top priorities for the City over the next 3-5 years?**
- Frequent Themes or Phrases
 - Downtown redevelopment and revitalization/diverse dining options/retail growth/beautification (10)
 - Economic development/business recruitment/business friendly attitude (7)
 - Undertake a city-wide organizational review/address staffing levels/review ordinances (6)
 - Affordable housing/housing mix (5)

- Recreation Center and opportunities/update parks/address quality of life issues (4)
- Attract and retain residents/engage all community members/community involvement (4)
- Branding and marketing initiative/improved communication (3)
- Maintain what we have/maintain historic charm (2)

6. If you could change or initiate one key item or thing about the City, what would it be?

- Frequent Themes or Phrases

- Downtown redevelopment/inviting to business/variety of entertainment and dining options/beautification (18)
- Undertake a city-wide organizational review (staffing levels, ordinances, etc.) (8)
- Marketing and branding initiative/communication improvements/transparency (7)
- Rec center/community center with pool/YMCA (7)
- Move-forward mindset/follow-through (5)
- Unify community/positive narrative/community group to identify solutions and priorities (4)
- Affordable housing (3)

APPENDIX B: PRIORITIZED STRATEGIC GOALS

APPENDIX B: Prioritized Strategic Short- and Long-term Goals

CITY OF ROCHELLE STRATEGIC GOAL RANKINGS 2018		
SHORT-TERM ROUTINE		
GOAL ID	GOAL	GROUP AVERAGE SCORE
STR-13	Maintain a balanced budget - Follow practices to promote fiscal soundness and conscientious spending and investment	2.9
STR-8	Create a 20-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) - Identify and secure a funding stream - Include infrastructure needs across the City - Include flood control and stormwater management in the plan	4.1
STR-9	Develop and implement plan to replace/repair infrastructure to work in concert with the CIP - Evaluate and prioritize infrastructure maintenance needs for streets, sidewalks, water, wastewater and stormwater - Plan for present assets (infrastructure)	4.7
STR-5	Undertake a business process review within City departments - Examine processes and procedures - Compare to operational efficiency standards - Implement refinements or redesigns	5.1
STR-6	Complete the creation of our strategic plan (step-by-step) with action planning based on Council priorities and follow-through by staff	5.3
STR-7	Conduct a City-wide succession planning assessment - Undertake workforce planning and employee succession planning - Include all departments in succession planning and staffing strategies	7.0
STR-3	Explore and evaluate employee wellness, safety, and retention program(s)	7.3
STR-10	Create a cooperative taskforce of all community partners (schools, park district, hospital, etc.).	8.3

SHORT-TERM ROUTINE CONT'D		
GOAL ID	GOAL	GROUP AVERAGE SCORE
STR-11	Examine utility rate differentials/explore varying rates for different customer types - Create a low-income utility assistance program and/or prepaid program - Examine utility rates for businesses, non-profits, and homeowners	8.4
STR-1	Continue to advance conversion of 5kV and fiber by the City's utility department	8.9
STR-4	Encourage social gathering events and opportunities to promote downtown energy	9.0
STR-2	Continue to enhance use of technology in the City (including internal and external I.T. user and interface)	9.3
STR-12	Develop ordinances, codes and guidelines for solar power and windmills	10.7
SHORT-TERM COMPLEX		
GOAL ID	GOAL	GROUP AVERAGE SCORE
STC-2	Create an inclusive community with an outreach program that encourages community involvement	2.3
STC-1	Address community blight in affected areas via multiple level strategies	2.6
STC-3	Improve/create intergovernmental partnerships for economies of scale/shared use of resources and capabilities	3.0
STC-4	Further develop the downtown - Implement downtown revitalization plan - Improve downtown infrastructure - Create additional incentive programs - Secure private investment	3.6
STC-5	Create/improve housing expansion program - Work to facilitate a broad range of housing types for a cross-section of ages	3.6

LONG-TERM ROUTINE		
GOAL ID	GOAL	GROUP AVERAGE SCORE
LTR-1	Promote, retain and enhance small business development - Explore incentives and promotional strategies	2.0
LTR-2	Explore, develop and improve strategies for industrial growth - Include incentive policies and guidelines in the strategy	2.9
LTR-3	Designate and secure funding to efficiently use resources based on the priorities established in the strategic planning efforts	3.0
LTR-4	Incorporate dynamic planning and evaluation (review and revise) in City-wide planning efforts	3.1
LTR-5	Explore the future utilization of the generation plant - Evaluate the maintenance and upkeep vs. service trade-offs, etc.	4.0
LONG-TERM COMPLEX		
GOAL ID	GOAL	GROUP AVERAGE SCORE
LTC-3	Encourage diversified housing developments with friendly walkways - Stimulate a range of housing types - Maintain and encourage a quality housing stock	4.9
LTC-6	Explore business and development incentives to increase job opportunities in the City that are sustainable while offering a living wage	4.9
LTC-4	Implement the 20-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) - Include a flood control plan - Include maintenance of infrastructure as well as improvements - Invest in infrastructure including wastewater and water main upgrades - Secure funding for the CIP	5.1
LTC-2	Reduce the City's overall debt	5.3

LONG-TERM COMPLEX CONT'D		
GOAL ID	GOAL	GROUP AVERAGE SCORE
LTC-5	Develop strategies to improve the inclusivity of the community - Work to be an inclusive community by embracing diversity and utilizing broad communications - Broaden our bilingual approaches and avenue - Broaden inclusion – work to engage underrepresented populations and add to those involved	6.1
LTC-12	Obtain/maintain an attractive competitive real estate tax rate for the City while providing excellent government services including use of TIF funds	6.1
LTC-11	Develop strategies and work to diversify the City’s retail base across all sections - Develop a retail and commercial corridor along Route 38 including the North and South corridors	6.4
LTC-9	Explore options for addressing the City’s pension obligations and liabilities	6.6
LTC-8	Prepare for the eventual landfill closure, capping and its afterlife - Develop a strategy and timeline - Develop and explore post-closure alternative	7.6
LTC-7	Explore projects that focus on improving the quality of life in Rochelle	7.7
LTC-10	Explore the option of Home Rule and enhanced local decision-making/control	8.9
LTC-1	Work to achieve/establish Rochelle as a “Wired City” - Enhance technology and access to technology/ high-speed fiber to improve the competitive climate for industry, businesses and residents	10.4
LTC-13	Develop strategies to identify, construct or enhance truck routes in the community - Examine prepared plans for the extension of Dement Road to Wiscold Drive to encourage the use of a designated truck route - Examine prepared plans for the extension of Jack Dame Road overpass to encourage the use of a designated truck route	11.0