

# City of Farmer City

## 2018 Strategic Planning and Goal Development



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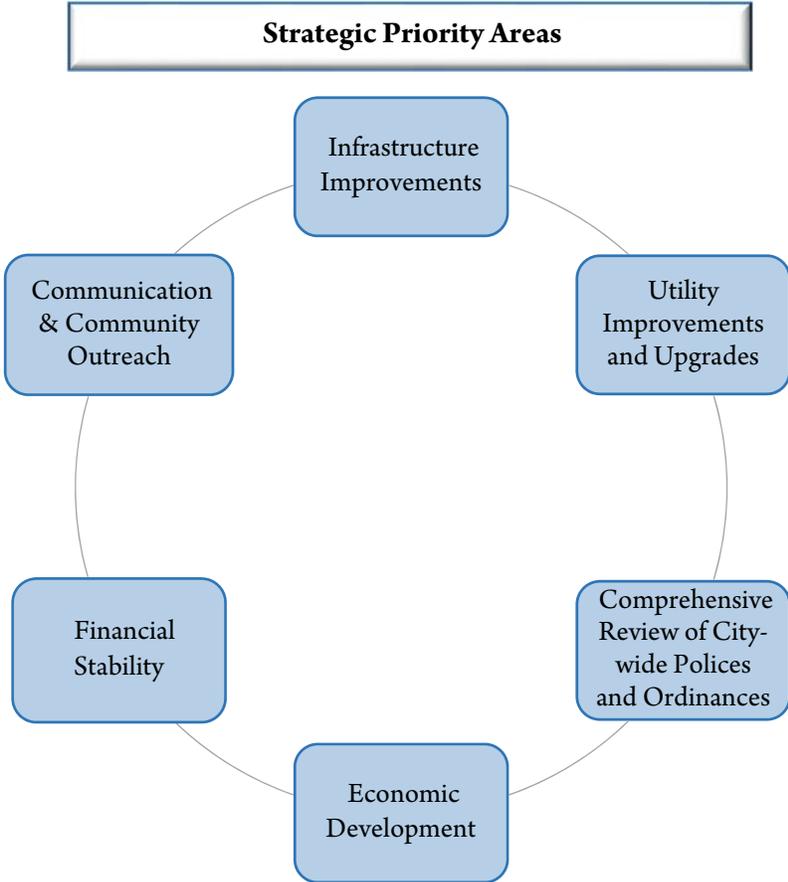
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategic planning is a preferred approach to guiding an organization’s future rather than making decisions issue by issue. The City of Farmer City (“the City”) engaged the Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) at Northern Illinois University (NIU) to facilitate a strategic planning workshop with Council members and senior staff. Prior to the 2018 workshop, several focus groups were held with community stakeholders to gather input on their vision regarding the City’s future. With the focus groups as a starting point for discussions, the workshop sessions provided a positive atmosphere for Council and senior staff members to work together to collaboratively develop strategic goals and determine where it is the City wants to go as an organization and as a community. As was discussed and reviewed during the workshop, executive-level workshops and strategic planning sessions are a staple of good governance and leadership for progressive organizations.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

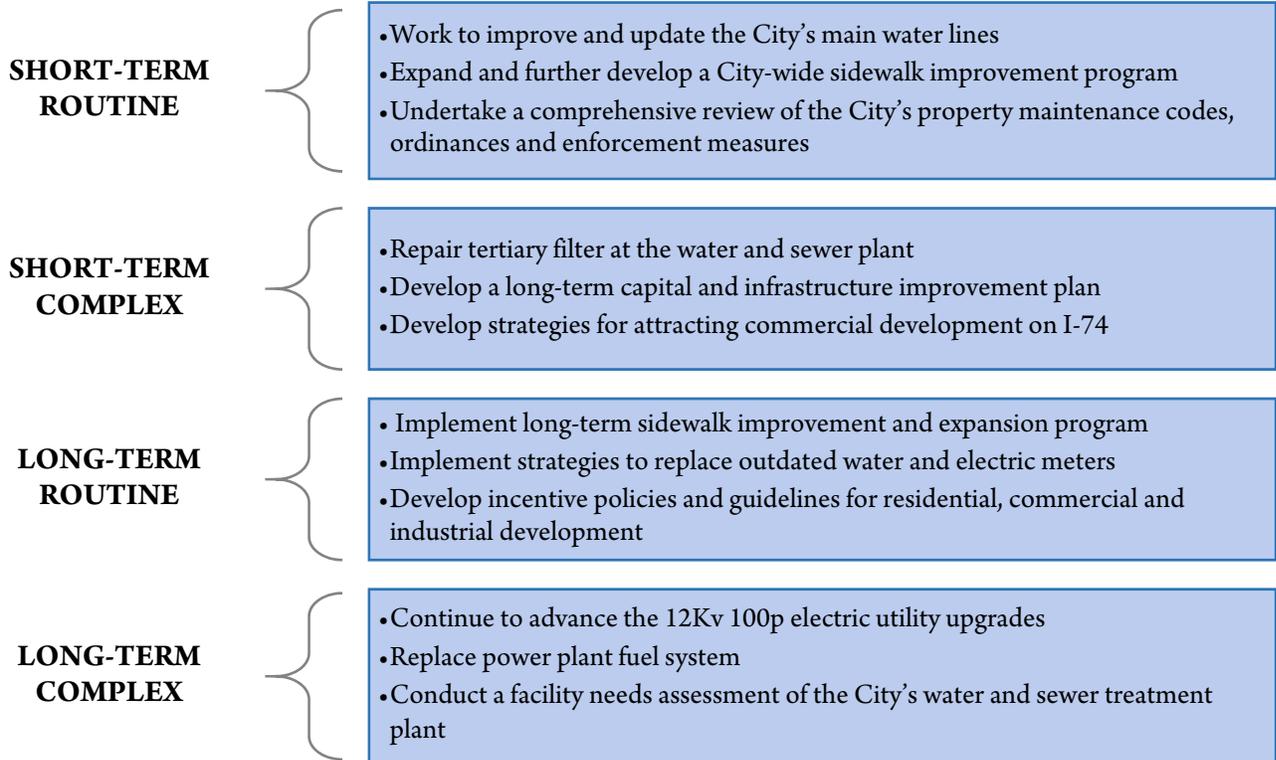
Ultimately, six key strategic priority areas were identified as an outcome of the process highlighting activities and initiatives the City should focus on in both the short- and long-term. The strategic priority areas identified during the workshop [in no particular order] are infrastructure improvements, utility improvements and upgrades, comprehensive review of City-wide policies and ordinances, economic development, financial stability and communication and community outreach.



# STRATEGIC GOALS

Another outcome of the strategic planning process was the creation of organizational goals intended to help the City achieve its desired future. After all of the goals were discussed and developed, the participants were then 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 fourteen short-term routine goals, nine short-term complex goals, six long-term routine goals and ten 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 three 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. Please refer to the full report for a comprehensive review of all the strategic goals presented, discussed and ranked.

## Top Three Goals within Each Quadrant of the Time and Complexity Matrix



# STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS SUMMARY REPORT

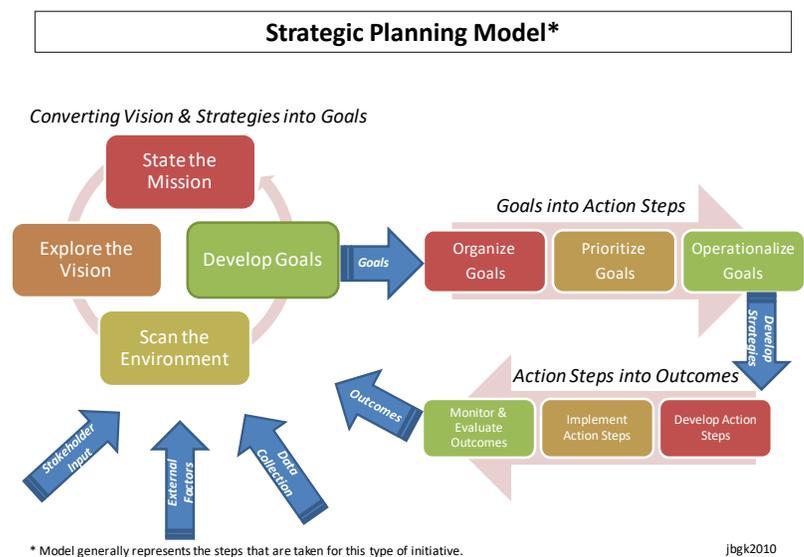
## INTRODUCTION

As an organization, the City of Farmer City (“the City”) has placed itself among the special class of local governments 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 gathered in 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. As was shared with the Council and senior staff at the conclusion of the workshop, the organization 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 staff members’ efforts throughout this process and the City’s budgeting process. City officials should resist the temptation to 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 limited resources (including financial resources and professional staff time) will be the key to good results. These high standards can place a strain on the organization, as excellence requires adequate staff time, expertise and resources. In the end, quality policies and 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-Session: Taking Stock, Stakeholder Focus Groups

This pre-session component is an important piece designed to help ground the environmental scanning portion of the process. Listening is vital to planning, and these steps are an important part of “taking stock”

and helping to understand current City policies and operational perspectives, perceptions and preferences. In total, three (3) focus groups were held with community members. These sessions included:

- Community Stakeholders
- Business and Organizational Leaders
- Citizens

The focus group sessions were designed to serve as a primer for the strategic planning process. The information presented next in 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 questions).

## Key themes and Data Analysis Highlights – Focus Group General Themes

- **The City of Farmer City is ...**
  - The one and only
  - A small rural town
  - Friendly and welcoming
  - A great place to raise a family
  - Perfectly situated between four major cities with access to quality health care
- **The City of Farmer City offers ...**
  - Indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities
  - A caring and safe community to live in
  - Fun and exciting community events (i.e., Heritage Days, Haunted Forest, Christmas Parade)
  - Youth activities and programs
  - Great schools
- **The City of Farmer City should strive towards ...**
  - Developing a long-term Capital Improvement Plan
  - Providing incentives to increase economic growth and business development
  - Attracting an affordable grocery store
  - Improving communication channels with residents to share information and receive feedback
  - Coordinated planning efforts and implementation
  - Reviewing and enforcing codes and ordinances to enhance the cleanliness of the community
- **The City of Farmer City future expectations and priorities should include ...**
  - Promoting economic development
  - Expanding development across the interstate
  - Completing phase II of housing development on the West side of town
  - Improving communication platforms and information sharing
  - Developing community branding strategy to promote a positive image of the City
  - Beautify the community

# Outline of Leadership Exercises and Discussion Sessions

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The format for all of the discussion sessions used during the workshop employed approaches that were highly participative and interactive. The process utilized a group discussion approach called ‘*Nominal Group Technique*’ where participants were assured equal opportunities to speak and share opinions by the facilitator. 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.

## Session I. Introduction Exercise – Icebreaker and Visioning

Each participant engaged in an icebreaker and visioning exercise by selecting two items from the “garage sale” table. The first item was used to provide an important topic that should be discussed during the workshop sessions. The second item was used to describe Farmer City to a stranger or someone who has never lived, worked or visited the City. Participants were then asked to use their imagination to answer the visioning question, “in 10-15 years when I return to Farmer City, what do I hope to see, or think I will see...” in regards to the services, programs, staffing levels, capital needs, and general opportunities that would or should be present at the City at these intervals. Participants were asked to think about their ideas ahead of time and then be ready to share them with the group during the first session. This was a brainstorming exercise—any and all ideas about the City’s future were encouraged and shared. No evaluative or judgmental debate was permitted during this session. *\*Note: (^) indicates a statement that was repeated more than once.*

Below is a summary of those answers.

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## A. Important Topics to Discuss During the Strategic Planning Process

Garage Sale Item	Important Topic
Super glue	Community is stuck in the past
Cord	“Information highway” – attract people to the community, use of technology
Pipe	Infrastructure (^), long-term solution to address water main issues (^)
Pipe	Landlocked community provides challenges for housing developments and economic development
Lifesaver	Capitalize on recreational assets
Bouncy ball	Take advantage of recreational amenities and grow to market Farmer City and draw people in
Home cord	Modernize services and service delivery while maintaining “small” town feel
Hand sanitizer	Keeping the community clean
Construction hat	Hard working, intelligent employees, works well as a team, helping and supportive
Fire hydrant	Outdated fire hydrants, water and sewer plant, distribution and collection system
Garbage can	New garbage ordinance competes with local business

## B. Describe Farmer City to a Stranger

Garage Sale Item	Descriptions
Light switch	Municipally-owned power company (^)
Hard hat	Hard-working community, willing to help each other, all in it together
Road map	Centrally-located (^) (can be anywhere within 25 minutes) – great place to live/work – easily accessible, HUB
Light socket	Power plant – reliable, great recreation (lake, hunting), good school system
Flashlight	Power plant, quality service, quick response time
Mardi Gras beads	Diamond in the rough, jewel in central Illinois, a lot of amenities, good schools, small and powerful
Jacks	Great place to raise kids, activities, centrally-located, university is close
#1 card	Only one, unique – power plant, location, tight-knit community, safe, excellent schools, pool and parks
Watch	Farmer City is timeless, historic, need time to accomplish important projects – communication between City and community on realistic timelines
Green light	Hard-working and cooperative staff, collaborative, high level of commitment to public service, courteous, good schools
Wind-up toy	It’s fun! Lacks direction, unique people, stand-alone community

## C. Visions of the Future

- ◆ More subdivisions, better roads, sidewalks (^)
- ◆ Connectivity – leverage Clark Foundation (^)
- ◆ Business growth (^), not a lot of land for growth/expansion. More options for food and family-oriented activities. Capitalize on ballfields – well-lit could host more tournaments
- ◆ Community pool, improved/kept up with maintenance, high school student jobs, community engagement/fundraising for pool
- ◆ School system still here, thriving with growth
- ◆ Good, reliable City Council in place – houses kept up, pride in community. If not, could see deterioration in the community
- ◆ Thriving business district, clean industry/businesses in town
- ◆ Less housing, less businesses (internet sales). More community growth will help infrastructure needs. More housing/improved housing, more jobs, development along the Interstate
- ◆ Interstate development – bring people to town – need utilities there – cleaner community – new/refurbished community (housing, businesses). Go to recreation HUB (attract younger residents)
- ◆ Main Street dying, stagnant, younger generation involved in City leadership
- ◆ Clean Main Street, full business occupation on Main, brick sidewalks, caring community – great place to live, more housing
- ◆ Many infrastructure improvements, new fire hydrants, new sewer collection system – separate stormwater, new sewer plant
- ◆ Light plant still around
- ◆ Business growth, hope the City is in a better financial position. Need to set priorities (^) and implement actions to accomplish completion of subdivision
- ◆ Less rundown properties, cleaner throughout, less empty houses, double population
- ◆ New streets, sidewalks, pool still open, parks up-to-date, Main Street return to brick – destination downtown (^) – tourist destination, niche stores
- ◆ Distribution center to take advantage of online sales – City gets a cut of taxes
- ◆ New City Hall complex (^), modernized, integrated, community events/meeting center
- ◆ Nice restaurant downtown
- ◆ Affordable newer housing
- ◆ Proactive police department, involved community, modernized highly qualified staff – attracting great employees. Understand trade-offs of having/retaining local police department. Different model – perhaps provide police services to other communities – generate revenue
- ◆ Explore revenue generating activities such as light industry, distribution – increase jobs, increase population, increase housing
- ◆ Modernize infrastructure – convert to 12kV system
- ◆ Better relationship with the Fire District – cohesion with all taxing bodies. More vibrant Chamber, reliable utilities. Dedicated funding for capital improvements. Trust from the community with the City

## Session II. Environmental Scanning

### Part 1: Surrender or Lead

Participants were introduced to a leadership exercise entitled “Surrender or Lead.” The premise is that sub-groups of the participants work to develop responses to some simple, but extremely effective and thought-provoking questions. Participants were broken up into three 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 flipchart paper and discussed. The responses provided by each group are illustrated below. Underlined sections are key phrases that groups provided in response to the open questions.

#### Team 1- Awesome

1. We want to grow, but we are landlocked.
2. The two most important things to focus on are infrastructure and communication because [there is] lack of trust and age of everything.
3. If it weren’t for lack of money, we would fix everything.
4. We need to finally get together as a community.
5. City Council/City leaders will have the biggest impact on the City in the coming 2-3 years.

#### Team 2 – Misfits

1. We want to progress, but with sound vision.
2. The two most important things to focus on are growth and stability because we want to succeed.
3. If it weren’t for past inconsistencies, we would be more prosperous and successful today.
4. We need to finally unite our efforts and follow-through.
5. Financial stability and leadership will have the biggest impact on the City in the coming 2-3 years.

#### Team 3 – Ready Freddie

1. We want to grow, but need to be progressive and [offer] affordable housing.
2. The two most important things to focus on are City promotion and citizen involvement because people are the City.
3. If it weren’t for community assets (affordable housing, schools, recreation), we would not be able to compete with Mahomet, Leroy, etc.
4. We need to finally start, plan, finance, act, and see it to the end.
5. Our employees, infrastructure improvements and getting positive market exposure will have the biggest impact on the City in the coming 2-3 years

#### SURRENDER OR LEAD COMMON THEMES

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| ◆ Growth                                      | ◆ Infrastructure Improvements                 |
| ◆ Succession Planning                         | ◆ Resources                                   |
| ◆ Financial Stability                         | ◆ Leadership                                  |
| ◆ Follow-through with planning and priorities | ◆ Communications – promoting/change narrative |

## Session II. ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING

### Part 2: S.W.O.T. EXERCISE

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 (S)** and **weaknesses (W)**. 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 (O)** are on the horizon that can be used to the City's advantage? Conversely, what trends or **threats (T)** lie ahead that would be obstacles or hindrances?

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## INTERNAL

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ I-74</li><li>◆ Recreational assets (i.e., lake, racetrack, BMX, campground)</li><li>◆ School District</li><li>◆ Municipally-owned power plant</li><li>◆ Railroad</li><li>◆ State highways</li><li>◆ Rails to trails</li><li>◆ Water</li><li>◆ Lift station</li><li>◆ Police department</li><li>◆ Seniority of police officers</li><li>◆ City employees</li><li>◆ Downtown</li><li>◆ City equipment</li><li>◆ Power plant facilities condition</li><li>◆ Employment opportunities</li><li>◆ Diverse local businesses</li><li>◆ City/Council form of government</li><li>◆ Community's character</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ I-74</li><li>◆ Lack of utilities across I-74</li><li>◆ Racetrack because of divide and noise</li><li>◆ School District – high taxes and utilities</li><li>◆ Infrastructure</li><li>◆ Non-home rule status</li><li>◆ State of Illinois</li><li>◆ Water</li><li>◆ Sewage plant</li><li>◆ Code enforcement</li><li>◆ Police department costs</li><li>◆ Seniority of police</li><li>◆ Seniority of City workforce</li><li>◆ Lack of grocery store</li><li>◆ Housing options/conditions</li><li>◆ Zoning ordinance</li><li>◆ Building codes</li><li>◆ Lack of senior housing options</li><li>◆ Downtown</li><li>◆ Single-provider (i.e., media communication)</li><li>◆ Technology</li><li>◆ Lack of traditional newspaper/news outlet</li><li>◆ Lack of systemized/centralized communication process/channels</li><li>◆ City Hall and Police department are unsecure</li><li>◆ Chamber of Commerce</li><li>◆ Executives live outside the community</li><li>◆ Truck routes through the community</li><li>◆ Community's character</li><li>◆ Run-down rental properties and too many</li></ul>

## EXTERNAL

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ I-74</li><li>◆ Developing/bring utilities to I-74</li><li>◆ Recreational opportunities</li><li>◆ Infrastructure – have the chance to do it right</li><li>◆ Possibility of home rule</li><li>◆ Railroad – local/agriculture use</li><li>◆ State highways – a lot of traffic</li><li>◆ Rails to trails</li><li>◆ Sewer capacity</li><li>◆ Water capacity</li><li>◆ Code enforcement</li><li>◆ Police department explore being a service provider</li><li>◆ Shooting range</li><li>◆ Succession planning – fresh ideas</li><li>◆ Affordable, quality, housing (i.e., senior housing, starter homes, etc.)</li><li>◆ Downtown, square development</li><li>◆ Technology – fiber optic</li><li>◆ Newspaper</li><li>◆ Engage/educate the public on ways to communicate with the City</li><li>◆ Improve public awareness</li><li>◆ Customer service, interface, centralized community – protocols</li><li>◆ New equipment/improved equipment</li><li>◆ New City Hall complex</li><li>◆ Support local, grow your own, take care of business</li><li>◆ Chamber growth/support</li><li>◆ Community events</li><li>◆ Engage businesses in community development – funding service underutilized</li><li>◆ Establish truck routes</li><li>◆ Zoning moving forward</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Not extending utilities to I-74</li><li>◆ Recreational activities take a lot of resources</li><li>◆ Noise of stock car track divide</li><li>◆ Not keeping up with maintenance of infrastructure</li><li>◆ Finances not being home rule</li><li>◆ State of Illinois – loss of revenue, unfunded mandates</li><li>◆ Regulations on water/sewer</li><li>◆ Succession planning – aging city workforce</li><li>◆ Condition of current grocery store threat to new one</li><li>◆ Limited senior housing options</li><li>◆ Downtown, square – financial strain on City</li><li>◆ Residential zoning in lower level of Main Street</li><li>◆ Amazon/online shopping</li><li>◆ Facebook social media</li><li>◆ Age of equipment</li><li>◆ City Hall unsecure, space, infrastructure</li><li>◆ Police station facility</li><li>◆ Chamber of Commerce</li><li>◆ Executives of companies/businesses live outside of the community</li><li>◆ Too many rental properties</li><li>◆ Zoning</li><li>◆ Not ready for large-scale development</li><li>◆ Building codes, zoning, etc.</li></ul>

## Session III. Nominal Group Goal Identification

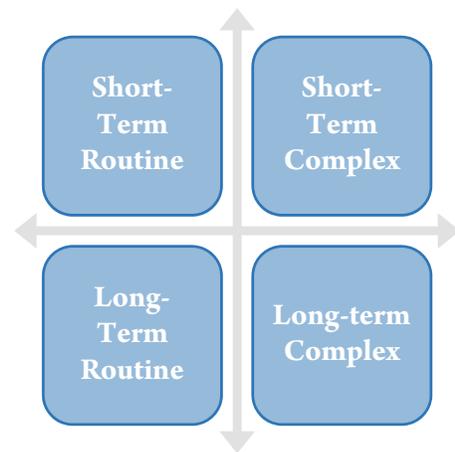
This extensive discussion session provided the forum for the collaborative establishment of strategic goals and objectives necessary to achieve the future vision of the City. With the preceding sessions serving as a sound foundation for goal setting, the final session was a healthy group discussion of goals and/or strategies needed to achieve the future visions as expressed by the group. To begin the process, each member was allotted time to highlight the three or four most important policy and program goals that he or she thinks the City should accomplish in the next one to eight years.

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 within the next one to three years. **Long-term goals** were those goals that could or should be completed or substantially underway within a three- to eight-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

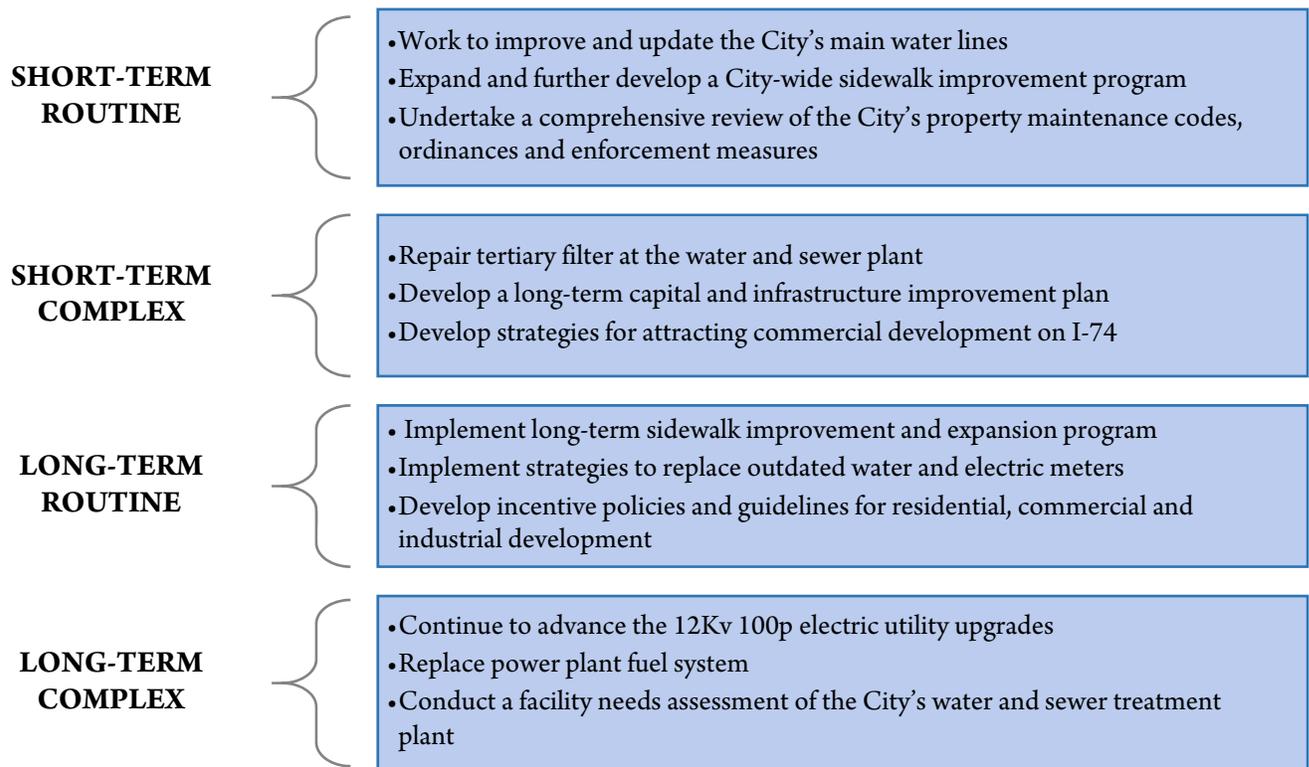
This final phase of the discussion served as the forum for the City Council members and staff to discuss, evaluate and debate the ideas and goals offered by each participant in the previous sessions. Participants were asked to give their opinions, evaluations and judgments of the worthiness and value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

## PRIORITIZATION OF GOALS

Following the classification exercise, the Council was asked to delineate, via a ranking exercise, which goals should be given the highest priority. Council members were provided an online ranking tool where point values were assigned to each goal in each quadrant of the matrix by individuals. 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 prioritized goals, within each quadrant, as they emerged from the consensus ranking exercise (Figure 3). The top three goals based on the Council’s average scores are offered here as a process “snap shot” of the most important strategic goals or issues areas for the Council and staff to address in the months and years ahead.

Figure 3. Top three Goals within Each Quadrant of the Time and Complexity Matrix

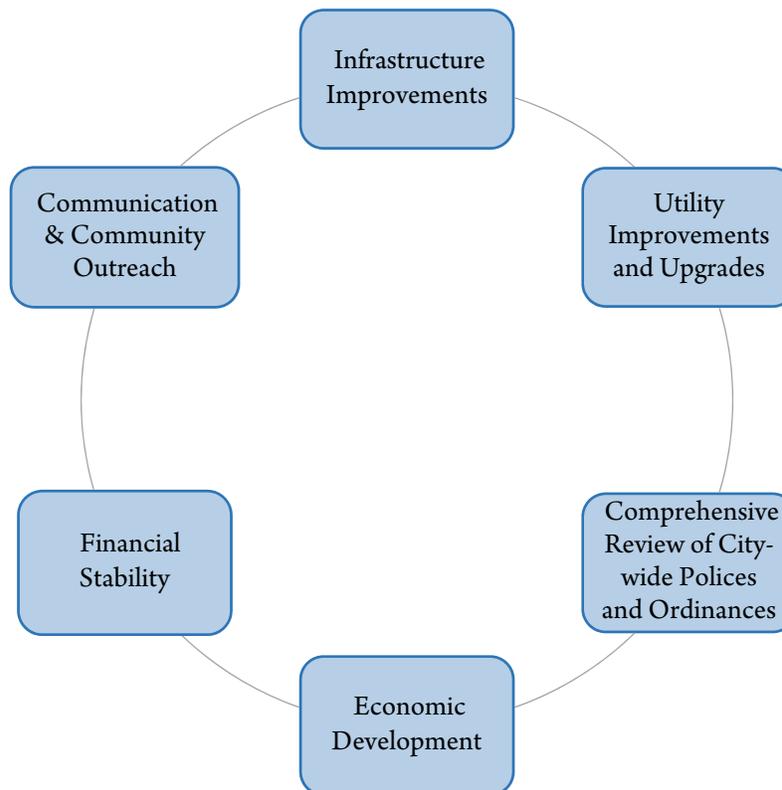


For a full review and appreciation of all the strategic goals discussed and ranked, please see [Appendix B](#). The top key strategic priority areas are discussed next.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS

Several key strategic priority areas surfaced during the sessions and were observable in many of the goal areas (Figure 4). The six thematic strategic priority areas [in no particular order] are infrastructure improvements, utility improvements and upgrades, a comprehensive review of City-wide policies and ordinances, economic development, financial stability and communication and community outreach.

Figure 4. Strategic Priority Areas



## Session IV. Conclusion

This report's value will be realized when its employed as an *active working guide* for the City Council and staff as they pursue the issues explored during the strategic planning process. This report is designed to capture the content of the discussions and to assist the organization in developing action plans in a follow-up session for appropriate committees and elected officers. The next step is for senior staff to review the results and fine-tune these objectives in their action-planning session and report back to the Council on the strategies and tactics they're developing to most effectively address the future you've identified and the goals you're seeking to accomplish.

What is apparent from the exchange of ideas and dialogue during the discussion sessions and the strategic planning workshop is that the organization is fortunate to have progressive leadership and a management team that is looking ahead. One noted organizational observer summarized the challenges of progress this way:

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

We wish you well with the ambitious years that lie ahead.

Three handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is 'G Kuhn', the second is 'Jeanna Ballard', and the third is 'Melissa M. J.'.

Greg Kuhn, Jeanna Ballard, Mel Henriksen, Session Facilitators, NIU Center for Governmental Studies

# APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

## APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

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 analyst's coding, the researcher identifies terms that recur across groups and across questions. The results are revealing in that, 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 exploratory focus group discussion questions were asked to each focus group and are listed below:

1. How would you describe Farmer City to a stranger or someone who doesn't live or work here?
2. If you left Farmer City tomorrow, and didn't 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 Farmer City? Related to that, what are the strengths/greatest assets of Farmer City? Opportunities?
4. Can you identify areas or topics in need of attention or improvement? Related to that, what are the weaknesses/greatest needs in Farmer City? Threats?
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.* The number in parenthesis represents the number of times the idea or statement was repeated.

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

##### - Frequent Themes or Phrases

- Small town/rural/friendly/community-focused/family-oriented/the one and only (22)
- Indoor and outdoor recreation activities/race track/access to a variety of amenities (20)
- Great location/perfectly situated between four major cities/proximity to larger town amenities (9)
- Access to healthcare/fire department with ambulance service (4)

**2. If you left Farmer City tomorrow, and didn't 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

- Long-term Capital Improvement Plan/sidewalk repair and connectivity (13)
- Economic development/additional grocery store/hotel/land by interstate developed (13)
- Bike path connectivity/foot bridge to South Park/youth activities/recreation center/explore creation of Park District (12)
- Community involvement opportunities/Citizen Advisory Committee/community engagement and support/improved communication/update City website (12)
- Community-wide beautification/renovate Farmer City sign/code enforcement for housing and businesses (8)
- Coordinated planning/implementation/vision for community/overcome image issue (4)
- Housing development/Housing phase II developed on West side (3)

**3. What do you like best about Farmer City? Related to that, what are the strengths/greatest assets of Farmer City? Opportunities?**

- Frequent Themes or Phrases

- Recreation activities/outdoor amenities/youth sports/non-sport youth activities (21)
- Business recruitment/economic development/variety of dining options (15)
- Community involvement/community events/civic organizations (13)
- Social media/improved communication channels/transparency/information sharing (8)
- Caring community/safe/friendly (6)
- Quality local businesses and restaurants/good customer service (5)
- Access to healthcare/emergency services (4)
- Code enforcement/improve community and neighborhood cleanliness (4)
- Municipality-owned power plant/offer competitive rates (4)
- Schools/library (4)
- Affordable housing/assisted living/housing development west side of town (3)
- Intergovernmental coordination (2)

**4. Can you identify areas or topics in need of attention or improvement? Related to that, what are the weaknesses/greatest needs in Farmer City? Threats?**

- Frequent Themes or Phrases

- Communication channels/social media/transparency/information sharing (16)
- Infrastructure condition/water quality/infrastructure planning (7)
- Loss of businesses on Main St./restaurant options/lack of grocery store/general merchandise selection (6)
- Municipality-owned power plant/high utility rates/non-competitive utility rates (5)
- Run-down buildings/vacancies/community cleanliness (5)
- Disengaged leadership/lack of forward thinking/need vision and goals (4)
- State of Illinois/DeWitt County (4)
- Housing options/run-down housing/housing cots (4)

- Safety/speed enforcement (3)
- Location (3)
- Lack of non-athletic youth activities/Stensil Pond gated (3)

**5. What are/should be the top priorities for the City over the next 3-5 years?**

- Frequent Themes or Phrases
  - Economic development/business growth/business promotion and incentives/affordable grocery store (19)
  - Comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan/infrastructure improvements/improved water quality (14)
  - Coordinated planning efforts/communicate and follow-through with planning/continuity of city government (9)
  - Communication platforms and channels/community engagement and support/shared community calendar/marketing (8)
  - Non-athletic youth programming/promote Arts in the community/bike path connecting South park (7)
  - Beautification/streetscaping/façade improvements/review codes and ordinances/code enforcement (4)
  - Identify non-working fire hydrants/ensure all fire hydrants work (2)

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

- Frequent Themes or Phrases
  - Comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan/infrastructure improvements (8)
  - Marketing/community branding strategy/communication/update city website/community engagement (5)
  - Economic development/business growth/attract grocery store (4)
  - Non-athletic youth programs and activities (2)
  - Beautification/streetscaping (2)

# APPENDIX B: PRIORITIZED STRATEGIC GOALS

## APPENDIX B: PRIORITIZED STRATEGIC SHORT- AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIC GOALS

SHORT-TERM ROUTINE		
GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
2.3	STR - 2	Work to improve and update the City's main water lines
3.5	STR - 1	Expand and further develop a City-wide sidewalk improvement program - Identify strategies to enhance sidewalk connectivity
5.8	STR - 3	Undertake a comprehensive review of the City's property maintenance codes, ordinances and enforcement measures - Work to build upon and maintain the City's leading role in maintaining public property
6.5	STR - 10	Undertake the necessary improvements and repairs at the City's power plant location - Address tank and erosion issues at the sewer treatment plant
6.5	STR - 11	Develop strategies to replace outdated water and electric meters
6.5	STR - 14	Conduct a City-wide succession planning study - Include a comprehensive compensation analysis of the City's employees
7.3	STR - 7	Initiate State certification for the police department through the Illinois Chief of Police Association
8.3	STR - 13	Explore installing reverse 911
8.5	STR - 4	Develop a marketing strategy that promotes Farmer City's assets helping it become a destination locale
9.0	STR - 5	Explore business and development incentives to increase job opportunities in the City - Work to improve the business climate in the City and throughout the community
9.5	STR - 8	Develop a volunteer program for the community - Establish a volunteer group to help enhance the cleanliness of the community
10.0	STR - 6	Undertake beautification efforts and routine maintenance to improve parks City-wide
10.0	STR - 12	Explore providing administrative adjudication services in-house - Explore partnering with surrounding communities to share administrative adjudication costs and services
11.5	STR - 9	Explore paving South Park Drive

## SHORT-TERM COMPLEX

GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
2.8	STC - 7	Repair tertiary filter at the water and sewer plant
3.3	STC - 5	Develop a long-term capital and infrastructure improvement plan - Extend City utilities across I-74 - Explore partnership and areas for collaboration with the County to improve sidewalk and safety at South Park crossing - Convert streetlights to use LED lightbulbs - Include a strategy to bury electric and utility poles where and when practical
3.5	STC - 1	Develop strategies for attracting commercial development on I-74
4.3	STC - 3	Undertake a facility needs assessment of the City's community swimming pool - Assessment should also include financing options
4.5	STC - 9	Develop a fire hydrant replacement program outlining highest priority and non-functioning locations
6.3	STC - 2	Improve intergovernmental relationships to enhance athletic and community activities
6.8	STC - 4	Encourage additional housing developments in the Prairie Ridge subdivision
6.8	STC - 8	Undertake an engineering study to identify other potential feeder and grid lines
7.0	STC - 6	Explore the creation of a Farmer City Park District

## LONG-TERM ROUTINE

GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
<b>1.5</b>	<b>LTR - 2</b>	Implement long-term sidewalk improvement and expansion program
<b>2.5</b>	<b>LTR - 3</b>	Implement strategies to replace outdated water and electric meters
<b>3.3</b>	<b>LTR - 4</b>	Develop incentive policies and guidelines for residential, commercial and industrial development
<b>3.3</b>	<b>LTR - 6</b>	Provide cross-training opportunities for power plant responsibilities and functions
<b>4.5</b>	<b>LTR - 1</b>	Develop strategies to improve the City's gateways and high visibility areas
<b>6.0</b>	<b>LTR - 5</b>	Build a recreational shooting range complex that is open to the public

## LONG-TERM COMPLEX

GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
<b>2.3</b>	<b>LTC - 9</b>	Continue to advance the 12Kv 100p electric utility upgrades
<b>2.8</b>	<b>LTC - 7</b>	Replace power plant fuel system
<b>3.0</b>	<b>LTC - 8</b>	Conduct a facility needs assessment of the City's water and sewer treatment plant - Install SCADA system for #5 generator - Develop redundant water storage
<b>4.3</b>	<b>LTC - 1</b>	Implement our long-term capital and infrastructure improvement plan - Complete expansion of utilities across I -74
<b>5.5</b>	<b>LTC - 4</b>	Identify strategies and approaches to improve the mix of Farmer City's housing availability and options
<b>6.5</b>	<b>LTC - 3</b>	Develop strategies to collaborate with adjoining property owners to encourage future development and economic growth
<b>7.5</b>	<b>LTC - 6</b>	Develop strategies to improve relations with developers to attract and support current and future development
<b>7.8</b>	<b>LTC - 2</b>	Develop long-term development and annexation plan for the area North of I-74
<b>7.8</b>	<b>LTC - 5</b>	Conduct a feasibility study for a new municipal government complex for all City facilities - Convert to LED lightbulbs in all municipal facilities
<b>7.8</b>	<b>LTC - 10</b>	Implement a downtown revitalization plan - Include streetscape improvements and replacements