

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, GOALS, AND ACTIONS

OVERVIEW

The City Commission met on January 8 and February 5, 2022, to explore and set strategic priorities and goals to guide the City’s actions and investments over the next two years. The notes below document the outcomes of the two sessions, as well as next steps.

HIGH-LEVEL THEMES

Commissioners discussed their motivations and intentions and established a “big picture” framework for the next two years. Their intentions included:

- Focusing on long-term impacts.
- Approaching challenges with optimism.
- Focusing on solutions.
- Considering future generations when making short-term decisions.
- Considering goals and actions through the lens of the climate crisis.
- Understanding constituents may want opposing things and keeping this in mind while making decisions.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The following high priority issues emerged during the strategy sessions:

1. Housing and Homelessness
2. Water Systems
3. Access and Mobility
4. Climate
5. Connecting People With Each Other and Nature
6. Economic Development

Commissioners acknowledged that these are long-term issues and that a variety of short-term and long-term actions will be required to address needs and opportunities.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Strategic Priority: We need a community with housing for all.

Goal Statement: Increase opportunities for more diverse housing through public and private options.

Actions:

- Staff will continue to work with developers to utilize payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) tool.
- Staff will share quarterly updates with the City Commission regarding the status of housing projects and the application of other tools and resources beyond PILT.
- The City Commission will create and empower an ad hoc committee to explore the potential of a Charter amendment for creating inclusive housing as well as a millage to support inclusive housing. The committee may also explore the development of incentives that reduce the tax burdens of those who voluntarily downsize, or other regulatory or non-regulatory tools or approaches.
- The City Commission will host Study Sessions to explore these same topics and may invite other stakeholders to present or discuss these items, including Housing North and Traverse Connect.
- The City will continue to invite housing development proposals for identified underutilized City properties.
- The City Manager will continue to assess staffing needs to address housing needs, programs, and projects and will inform the City Commission and partners of existing and desired capacity and resources.
- The City will address housing within the context of the climate crisis, with particular attention to housing density considerations and impacts.

Resources Required:

- Removing barriers to allow for incentivizing housing solutions.
- Continuing to identify and develop city-owned properties to create housing solutions.
- Building awareness of benefits of density in order to be an environmentally sustainable city.
- Building awareness of income sensitivity in order to understand the issue of diverse housing.

Metrics: None offered at sessions.

WATER SYSTEMS

Strategic Priority: We have an obligation by law to manage and maintain the drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems for the health and safety of the citizens and environment.

Goal Statement: Proactively and consistently maintain, conserve, and manage water and water systems to reduce harm to the systems themselves as well as public health and safety.

Actions:

- The City Commission will evaluate the consultant's (HRC) report for wastewater and water reliability by the end of March 2022. This will inform the development and execution of a detailed capital improvement plan, as well as funding strategies and leverage opportunities.
- The ad hoc committee regarding the formation of a stormwater utility will meet with The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay and other related staff and stakeholders and will report back to the City Commission by May 2022.
- The City will begin developing an Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) strategy. This strategy will explore both public and private solutions, including education and incentives for homeowners, partnerships, and changes to density and zoning.
- The City will explore the utilization of an advanced metering infrastructure as well as opportunities to restructure rates in order to improve conservation and provide drinking water to all.

Resources Required:

- Staff time.
- Stakeholder time.
- Grant writer.
- Private consultants.

Metrics and Indicators of Success:

- Meetings take place and there is a timeline for action for the City's water systems and infrastructure.

ACCESS AND MOBILITY

Strategic Priority: The City sees a need to continue to improve access and mobility for all users. The City's approach will include coordinating and integrating with existing systems and infrastructure, accommodating for year round needs including seasonal weather and darkness, reducing the need for private automobiles, and creating policies and making investments that consider climate change impacts.

Goal Statement: Invest in multi-modal mobility strategies and existing and future infrastructure so that individuals of all ages, abilities and income have a network of complete, barrier free, safe, year round access to our community's amenities and basic needs.

Actions:

- The City will align staff work plans and day-to-day processes and decisions with strategic goals.
- The City will invest in hardware and electronic improvements at traffic signals lights in order to improve access and safety for all users.

- The City will approach all new projects with a focus on safe, integrated mobility for all users.
- The City will identify gaps in existing sidewalks and non-motorized paths/trails and improve them.
- The City will work in partnership with others such as BATA, TART, and neighboring Townships to integrate with mobility systems outside our jurisdiction.
- The City will review and take action on the proposed Mobility and Bicycle Action Plan being solicited by City Planning. This plan will include provisions for continuing maintenance.
- The City will perform a holistic review of existing transportation systems as part of the City Master Plan update.
- The City will continue to encourage BATA to continue to improve services.
- The City will address equity by developing a pedestrian scale lighting plan.
- The City will develop a Complete Streets Policy that complements the City’s existing resolution.
- The City will develop a plan that addresses winter levels of service for all users.
- The City will have a “Winter Summit” in the spring.

Resources Required:

- Political will.
- Staff time.
- Consultants.
- Partners’ time.
- County Wide Transportation Millage.

Metrics and Indicators of Success:

- Miles of sidewalk and trails, including trends and progress.
- Amenities such as sidewalks included in new developments.
- Community partners sharing data.
- Community partners participating in joint action.
- Action steps are included in the Master Plan and take a “10,000 foot” view.
- People are able to get to and from places without a private automobile.

CLIMATE

Strategic Priority: To view all of our goals and actions through the lens of climate impacts.

Goal Statement: Address climate within all of our City priorities, goals, policies, and actions.

Actions:

- The City Commission will empower the City’s Green Team to make bolder recommendations to the City, including more specific action steps for the City to consider.

- The City will pursue pilot projects that solve issues related to climate change. Take action, experiment, and learn from actions.
- Clarify the City’s purchasing policy and revise it to include triple bottom line thinking.
- The City Commission will create a policy to move all City-owned buildings to use all electric and renewable power sources.
- The City will encourage participation in Traverse City Light and Power programming and share stories about impacts.
- The City Commission will host a study session to engage partners and the community in the City’s climate action steps.
- The City will plant 10,000 trees, in addition to those planted at Hickory Hills and at Brown Bridge Natural Area.

Resources Required:

- Commission meeting time.
- Staff time.
- Partners.
- Funding.
- Political will.

Metrics and Indicators of Success:

- Implementation of Green Team recommendations.
- Tree planting.
- Purchasing policy development and monitoring.

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH EACH OTHER AND NATURE

Strategic Priority: Provide safe and accessible public spaces where people may recreate, socialize, or enjoy being alone in nature.

Goal Statement: Invest in facilities and amenities in order to create vibrant City spaces that connect all people to nature and to each other.

Actions:

- The City will increase the visibility and community awareness of all 32 City parks.
- The City will enhance communication about the potential for personal uses of public spaces, and encourage more park use.
- The City will increase accessibility to parks by fostering connections to trails and public transportation options.
- City staff will conduct public surveys on a more routine basis, in order to gain feedback and broader insights to inform and guide the City’s actions and investments in public spaces.
- The City will update its Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

- The City will continue to maintain and invest in its facilities.
- A joint City/County ad hoc committee will discuss and address the vision and uses of the Senior Center in coordination with Grand Traverse County. The City’s hopes for specific uses will be explored at a City Commission Study Session.
- City staff will monitor park uses and continue to manage the event permitting process.

Resources Required:

- City General Fund allocations.
- Brown Bridge Trust Fund.
- State grants.
- Private foundation and individual donations.
- City staff.
- Community partners.
- Programming offered by private sector and nonprofit entities in public spaces.
- Public support for visions and projects.
- Park users.

Metrics and Indicators of Success:

- The ADA Accessibility Plan is implemented.
- The Lower Boardman/Ottaway River Plan is implemented.
- The direction of the Fish Pass/Union Street Dam project is resolved.
- The vision for the future of the Senior Center is resolved.
- The vision for a “15-minute community” is a reality.
- The City understands how people are using its parks and public spaces, and those uses align with stated visions and goals.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strategic Priority: In a global economy where people can work from anywhere, people are choosing to live here because of the natural characteristics of this place. We will focus on creating a healthy community and strong sense of place, and will integrate our economic development efforts with our climate goals and action steps.

Goal Statement: The City will foster economic development by adopting a growth mentality and by conserving and maintaining natural resources. It will work with partners to invest in and maintain amenities that support a wide variety of industries, build the workforce, and attract well-paying jobs with the region’s future in mind.

Actions:

- The City will implement the Lower Boardman/Ottaway River Plan.

- The City will work with the Traverse City Downtown Development Authority to build the parking deck on the west end of the downtown area.
- The City will develop policies and adopt practices that encourage infill development in the downtown area in order to increase housing options and support access to public transportation.
- The City will work with partners such as the Downtown Development Authority and the Economic Development Organization to achieve its goals.
- The City will use a variety of funding sources, including dedicated sources like tax Increment Financing, to achieve its goals.
- The City will increase staff capacity, as the budget allows, to achieve its goals.
- The City will conduct a city-wide market assessment study to complement the market assessment study being completed by the Downtown Development Authority.
- The City will provide focused support and assistance to the Industrial Park.

Resources Required:

- City staff.
- Funding.
- Political will.
- Professional consultants.
- Cost sharing approach with regional partners.
- Collaboration with the Economic Development Organization and Downtown Development Authority.

Metrics and Indicators of Success:

- City plans are implemented.
- A market study is completed.
- Housing is available for people of all income levels.
- Parking deck is built.
- Infill lots are developed.

NEXT STEPS

The City Commission will continue to review and refine the goals and actions identified in this document. Commissioners will continue to evaluate resources required and will reflect on these goals and actions during the City’s annual budgeting process.