STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**A MANUAL FOR
COMMUNITY LEADERS**

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Prepared for:

The State of North Dakota

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Community Strategic Planning

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

As the world evolves into a global economy that is increasingly driven by technology and information, the communities of North Dakota need to determine what their future will be and how they will achieve it. The former dependence on agriculture and natural resources is not likely to generate the necessary income and tax revenues to sustain rural North Dakota. Many communities are losing population and are faced with fewer taxpayers to pay for the maintenance of the existing infrastructure.

There are no easy answers to this dilemma. Building and sustaining an economically healthy community with a desirable quality of life will require innovative thinking and new attitudes. Solutions will need to be developed through collaborative approaches that involve an expanding leadership base and a more enlightened citizenry.

The achievement of effective collaboration can occur using a systematic planning process that seeks to answer three basic questions:

❒ Where are we now?

❒ Where do we want to be?

❒ How do we get there?

This process is known as strategic planning. It is a logical approach for addressing a community's problems that currently exist or that are likely to arise in the future.

The following document is a step-by-step approach to implementing this planning process. It is designed to assist local leadership in moving effectively toward a completed strategic plan. A complementary document is available that explains the nature of this process. The phases of the process are demonstrated in the following flow chart.

INITIATION & ORGANIZATION

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Conduct Community Assessment	→	Identify Local Issues		ANALYSIS

Define Goals & Objective	←	Envision

FORMULATION

Develop Strategic Actions	→	Finalize Strategic Plan

Formulate Organizational Strategic Action Plans	←	Assign Organization Responsibilities

IMPLEMENTATION

Develop Work Program	→	Allocate Resources

Review Performance and Progress		Monitor Activity

EVALUATION

Analyze Impact

STEP 1: BEGINNING THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Once a community or some of its leaders express an interest in moving through a strategic planning process, several approaches can be taken. One approach is to have the community do its strategic plan emphasizing the use of local resources. This manual is designed to assist in a "do-it-yourself" approach to strategic planning.

The second approach is to use a trained facilitator and a resource team of state/federal agencies, regional councils, and other agencies to assist in the strategic planning process and to provide important information as needed. The Facilitators have undergone intensive training in strategic planning for community development, and will work closely with the community throughout the planning process.

The strategic planning process is, by design, a locally driven process that stresses participation. It is particularly important to get the community's stakeholders involved in this process. Stake-holders are the key leadership of the community who have a strong interest in its development. Although the involvement of a number of community leaders may add complexity and time to the planning process, the ultimate effectiveness of the plan in making significant changes in the community depends on the buy-in, support, and understanding of this leadership.

Who are the leaders that are critical to this process? That really depends on the particular community. However, the following list of key categories should be considered:

- ❒ Financial
- ❒ Local businesses
- ❒ Government
- ❒ Manufacturing
- ❒ Agriculture
- ❒ Medical services
- ❒ Social services
- ❒ Youth
- ❒ Senior citizens
- ❒ Others

The specific roles of these leaders will be particularly important in the following steps of the strategic planning process:

- ❒ Identification and prioritization of key issues
- ❒ Visioning
- ❒ Task forces
- ❒ Fund raising
- ❒ Spokesperson

A key first task in the planning process is establishing a local Steering Committee. This Committee will provide oversight to the planning throughout the process. It is their role to ensure that local needs are met and that the process moves smoothly forward. The Steering

Committee also should raise any necessary funding for the planning process, establishing key policies, authorizing expenditures, and monitoring and evaluating progress.

The Steering Committee should be comprised of between five to twenty stakeholders who represent a broad spectrum of the community. These should also be individuals who believe in the strategic planning process, are personally interested in the future of the community, are knowledgeable about the community, are willing to communicate and cooperate, are willing to take risks and support desirable change, and are committed to action.

One of the first tasks of the Steering Committee will be to help identify local stakeholders and leaders as indicated earlier, and then enlist their support. This may involve one-on-one meetings, letters, group meetings, presentations to local organizations, and invitations to a leadership workshop.

It would be desirable to work with the local leaders individually or preferably in small groups to have them answer the following questions:

Why plan? (Questions to local leadership)

Have each individual leader take a moment to answer in writing the following questions, using the form provided. Then have them share their answers with each other and discuss.

1. What do you like or appreciate about your community?

2. What can you do to ensure that these attributes will be here ten years from now?

3. What are the most important problems that your community is facing?

4. Why do these problems continue to exist?

5. What can be done to resolve these problems?

6. What major social and economic trends are occurring in the U.S., and how will they affect our community?

7. How can the leadership of this community work together more productively to make this a better community?

8. How can we use our community's limited resources more effectively to achieve the results we want?

9. Will the leadership of the community support a process to address these issues?

If this discussion with local leaders makes it clear that they are unwilling to commit to this planning effort, the process should be terminated or postponed until such time that they are ready to move forward.

To help the leaders better understand what is involved in the strategic planning process, it can be explained by the preceding flow chart and the following questions:

Initiation and Organization − *How do we get the right start to this planning process and get people involved in an effective way?*

Conduct Community Assessment − *Who are we as a community? What is unique about us? Why would someone want to live here? Why would a company want to locate here?*

Identify Local Issues − *What is important to us in the growth and development of this community? What do we think our community's strengths and weaknesses are? What do we need to focus on?*

Envision − *Where does this community want to go? What would we like our community to be or to look like ten years or more from now?*

Define Goals − *Based on our priorities, what specific directions should we be headed?*

Develop Strategic Actions − *What do we need to do to accomplish our goals and to solve our problems?*

Finalize Strategic Action Plan − *How do we craft a plan that will take us where we want to go?*

Assign Organizational Responsibilities − *Who will implement these strategic actions?*

Formulate Organizational Strategic Action Plans − *What will the community's organizations and agencies do differently to move our community forward?*

Allocate Resources − *What will it cost to do what needs to be done and where will the resources come from?*

Monitor Activity − *Are the strategic actions getting done in a timely manner and within budget?*

Review Performance and Progress – *How well are we doing in the implementation of the plan? Are we achieving the results we want?*

Analyze Impact – *Are our actions leading to desired changes in the community? Are we moving closer to our goals and vision?*

Adjustment – *What do we need to change or to do differently to obtain the desired results?*

If it is decided to move the strategic planning process forward, the Steering Committee should appoint a local Coordinator to be responsible for its implementation, and to work with the Facilitator and Resource Teams.

STEP 2:   ASSESSING YOUR COMMUNITY'S SITUATION

Before a community can plan for where it wants to go, it must know where it is. It is often difficult to see the "forest for the trees," so it is important to assess the current situation as comprehensively as possible. This can involve a number of activities.

Local Surveys

It is helpful to begin this assessment by determining were the citizens and leaders currently are with their perceptions of the community's situation. The following leadership survey has been designed to quickly and easily obtain leadership's perception of local strengths and weaknesses as they have an impact on the community's development. This survey will be sent by mail as soon as the process begins, and should be completed and returned to the Coordinator within two weeks. The survey will be tabulated locally using volunteers.

LEADERSHIP SURVEY
PERCEPTION OF THE COMMUNITY'S DEVELOPMENT SITUATION

Place a checkmark (✓) in the column that <u>best</u> reflects your opinion. Is each item listed on this survey a strength of the community, a weakness, or is it an average or normal situation? Please answer <u>every</u> item, even if you are not very familiar with it, responding based on <u>your</u> perception of it. For example, what is your opinion of the quality of local elementary education: Strength ___, Normal (what you would expect), ___Weakness (a problem) ___, or No Opinion ___.

QUALITY OF LIFE	Strength	Normal	Weakness	No Opinion
1. Availability of executive-level housing	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Availability of moderate cost housing	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Availability of housing for low-income families	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Availability of rental apartments	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Cost of housing overall	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Level of crime	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Level of cultural activity and facilities	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Availability of recreational opportunities	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. Presence of major sporting events	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. Level of air quality	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. Quality of the climate	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. Attractiveness of the physical environment	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. General appearance of the community	_____	_____	_____	_____
14. Availability of adequate hospital facilities	_____	_____	_____	_____
15. Adequate local clinics and health care professionals for basic health care	_____	_____	_____	_____
16. Cost of health care relative to other areas	_____	_____	_____	_____
17. Adequate social services (day care, counseling, poverty assistance)	_____	_____	_____	_____
18. Services and programs for senior citizens	_____	_____	_____	_____
19. The rate of population growth in the community	_____	_____	_____	_____
20. Quality of relationship between the races and ethnic groups	_____	_____	_____	_____
21. Availability of elderly housing	_____	_____	_____	_____
22. Availability of accessible housing	_____	_____	_____	_____
23. Quality of housing	_____	_____	_____	_____

LOCAL EDUCATION SITUATION	**Strength**	**Normal**	**Weakness**	**No Opinion**
1. Quality of local elementary education	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Quality of local secondary education	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Quality and availability of post-secondary education in the community	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Involvement in the community by the higher education institutions	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Involvement of local residents and parents in the school districts	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Availability of vocational programs at the secondary level (job skills, computer classes, etc.)	_____	_____	_____	_____

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SITUATION

	Strength	**Normal**	**Weakness**	**No Opinion**
1. Adequacy of local police protection and public safety	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Adequacy of local fire protection	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Adequacy of trash pickup and waste disposal	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Adequacy of local planning and zoning	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. State and local permitting and regulation process for business	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Annexation policy of the town/city	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Adequacy of local building codes	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Level of local property taxes	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. Level of local sales taxes	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. Adequacy of local tax base to cover cost of local government	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. Cooperation of local government with business	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. Cooperation of local government entities with each other	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. Long-range planning for municipal improvements and capital budgeting	_____	_____	_____	_____

LOCAL LEADERSHIP SITUATION   _____   _____   _____   _____

	Strength	**Normal**	**Weakness**	**No Opinion**
1. Adequate level of professional staff in government offices and development organizations	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Involvement of both public and private sectors in development programs of community	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Level of leadership support of economic development programs	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Level of communication and cooperation between various organizations involved in the development programs of the community	_____	_____	_____	_____

LOCAL LEADERSHIP SITUATION (CONT.)	Strength	Normal	Weakness	No Opinion
5. Level of awareness of community regarding the local development programs	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Level of leadership commitment to advancing the growth and development of the community	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Level of funding for local development programs	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Level of cooperation with other development organizations serving this area of the State	_____	_____	_____	_____

LABOR SITUATION

	Strength	Normal	Weakness	No Opinion
1. Availability of unskilled and semi-skilled workers	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Availability of skilled industrial workers	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Availability of clerical (retail and office) workers	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Availability of technicians and professionals	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Availability of managerial personnel	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Availability of quality jobs for the workforce residing in the community	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Level of wages and salaries paid locally	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Quality of labor-management relations	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. Availability of post-secondary vocational training	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. Availability of on-the-job training assistance	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. Availability of adult/continuing education at a post-secondary level	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. Availability of upgrade training for existing employees	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. Availability of apprenticeship programs	_____	_____	_____	_____

TRANSPORTATION SITUATION

	Strength	Normal	Weakness	No Opinion
1. Adequate local major highways	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Movement of traffic in the community	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Condition and maintenance of local streets and roads	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Level of traffic-carrying capacity of local streets	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Availability of public parking in the local commercial areas	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Availability of public transportation	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Availability of intermodal (truck to train) shipping	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Adequacy of commercial air passenger service	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. Adequacy of the Airport for air freight shipping needs	_____	_____	_____	_____

UTILITY SITUATION	**Strength**	**Normal**	**Weakness**	**No Opinion**
1. Local telephone company's quality of service	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Connection of local telephone company to national long distance network	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Cost of electricity	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Availability of high quality electric service	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Availability of natural gas	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Cost of natural gas	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Availability of potable (drinking quality) water	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Availability of adequate wastewater treatment capacity	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. Availability of adequate water and sewer lines to industrial/commercial sites	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. Cost of water and sewer services	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. Availability of cable TV	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. Internet access	_____	_____	_____	_____

REAL ESTATE SITUATION

	Strength	Normal	Weakness	No Opinion
1. Availability of fully served and attractive industrial sites	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Availability of fully served and attractive office sites	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Availability of attractive and well located commercial/ retail sites	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Cost of sites to new users	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Availability of suitable industrial building space	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Availability of suitable office space	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Availability of suitable commercial/retail space	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Availability of subdivided sites for new homes	_____	_____	_____	_____

CAPITAL SITUATION

	Strength	Normal	Weakness	No Opinion
1. Availability of low interest or tax-exempt financing for new industrial facilities	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Availability of low interest loans for small business	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Availability of venture capital from local sources for business startups	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Availability of home mortgage financing	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Investment in the community by local financial institutions	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Availability of equity	_____	_____	_____	_____

MARKET SITUATION	Strength	Normal	Weakness	No Opinion
1. Location of the community for serving the national market	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Location of the community for serving foreign markets	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Proximity to other major markets in the State	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Appearance of the downtown for attracting business activity	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Appearance of the highway-oriented retail/ commercial areas for attracting business activity	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Availability of a range of retail stores and goods in the community	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Availability of a range of quality restaurants in the community	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Availability of a range of personal services (legal, professional, dry cleaning, repairs, etc.)	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. Availability of business services and professional services that support business and industry	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. Availability of adequate hotels and motels	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. Availability of adequate conference and meeting facilities	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. Adequacy of local newspaper for promotion of local business activity	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. Adequacy of local industrial marketing programs	_____	_____	_____	_____
14. Adequacy of local programs to attract new retail and commercial business to the community	_____	_____	_____	_____
15. Adequacy of the marketing program to attract tourists	_____	_____	_____	_____
16. Impact of the tourism industry on the community	_____	_____	_____	_____
17. The range of attractions for expanded tourism	_____	_____	_____	_____
18. Availability of funding to support tourism development	_____	_____	_____	_____

What do you consider to be the five most important problems that your community is facing now and into the future?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Is your residence? (Please complete <u>one</u> only)

      TOWN/CITY – name _____
      RURAL NON-FARM – county name _____
      RURAL FARM – county name _____

Another survey has been provided to obtain the perceptions of the public with respect to the development of the community. This survey could be mailed to households, placed in the local newspaper, or made available at a number of locations around the community. In addition, this survey could be administered to high school students to get their input. The completed questionnaires should be returned to the Coordinator within two weeks for tabulation.

(Cover Letter for Citizen Survey)

Dear :

People often take an active voice in government only every two or four years, when they cast a vote for a candidate or an issue. We are at an important time in our community's future, however, and we need to hear from you now. We want to hear your opinion about the needs and problems of the community. What do you thin should be done to improve our quality of life and job opportunities?

You have probably heard about the strategic planning process that the community is going through at this time. Local officials and a Steering Committee of key leaders are working hard to involve all of our residents in determining who we want to be as a community, what is really important to us, and how we are going to improve our situation. We know that it is critical that we all work together to find solutions to our common problems so that we can have a brighter future as a community.

That is why we are asking you to take a few minutes to share your opinion with us by completing this survey and mailing it back to us.   Your response is just as important as any vote you have ever cast. The more we know about what is on your mind, the better we can plan for the future. Isn't this what good government is all about.

ON BEHALF OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE:

(Signatures)

COMMUNITY SURVEY
WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE COMMUNITY?

1. Listed below are five factors that many people think are important in choosing a place to live. How do they rank in importance to you? Place a "5" by the most important, a "4" by the second most important, a "3" by the third most important, a "2" by the fourth most important, and a "1" by the least important.

   (   )   Employment opportunities
   (   )   Desire to be near family
   (   )   Near good schools and other community services
   (   )   Climate and recreation activities
   (   )   Housing availability

2. Please circle how satisfied you are with the following in your community:

ISSUE	Very Pleased	Satisfied	Not Sure	Not Satisfied	Very Unhappy
a. Elementary and secondary education	5	4	3	2	1
b. Community college	5	4	3	2	1
c. Availability of adult continuing education	5	4	3	2	1
d. Job skills training	5	4	3	2	1
e. Programs for senior citizens	5	4	3	2	1
f. Health care	5	4	3	2	1
g. Child care services	5	4	3	2	1
h. Race relations	5	4	3	2	1
i. Recreation programs	5	4	3	2	1
j. Recreation facilities	5	4	3	2	1
k. Cultural activities (art, music, festivals)	5	4	3	2	1
l. Housing availability and cost	5	4	3	2	1
m. City planning	5	4	3	2	1
n. Local streets and county roads	5	4	3	2	1
o. Major highways serving the community	5	4	3	2	1
p. Public transportation	5	4	3	2	1
q. Traffic movement	5	4	3	2	1
r. Commercial air service	5	4	3	2	1
s. Water and sewer service	5	4	3	2	1
t. Water quality	5	4	3	2	1
u. Storm drainage	5	4	3	2	1
v. Environmental protection	5	4	3	2	1
w. Law enforcement	5	4	3	2	1
x. Telephone service	5	4	3	2	1
y. Level of local taxes	5	4	3	2	1
z. Availability of quality jobs	5	4	3	2	1
aa . Availability of local business financing/loans	5	4	3	2	1
bb. Retail shopping	5	4	3	2	1
cc. Downtown	5	4	3	2	1
dd. Image of the community	5	4	3	2	1
ee. Public access to the recreation areas	5	4	3	2	1
ff. Cleanliness of the community	5	4	3	2	1

3. What would you say is the biggest problem facing our community today that you would

like local government to do something about? Place an "**X**" in front of the answer of your choice (*only one choice permitted*).

( )   The quality of local education
( )   The availability of quality jobs
( )   The availability of job training or retraining
( )   The loss of young people moving out of the community
( )   Programs for senior citizens
( )   Health care quality and availability
( )   Availability of a range of recreational and cultural activity
( )   Availability of public transportation
( )   Local traffic congestion
( )   The quality of drinking water
( )   The attractiveness and cleanliness of the community
( )   The level of crime and drug activity
( )   Race relationships
( )   The availability of quality housing
( )   The cost of housing
( )   The level of local taxes
( )   The lack of developable vacant land in the city
( )   Lack of enforcement of zoning and building code regulations
( )   Inadequate shopping opportunities in the community
( )   The condition of the downtown
( )   Other (describe)_____

4. How old are you?

( )   15 years or younger
( )   16 to 21 years
( )   22 to 35 years
( )   36 to 55 years
( )   55 to 65 years
( )   over 65 years

5. What is your sex?

( )   Male
( )   Female

1. 6. What is your level of formal education?

( )   8th grade or below
( )   9th grade thru 11th grade

( )   High school grade
( )   Some college/technical school
( )   Associate degree from 2-year college
( )   College graduate (4 years)
( )   Post-graduate college

7. How long have you lived in the community?

( )   Less than one year
( )   One to five years
( )   Six to ten years
( )   Eleven to twenty years
( )   More than twenty years
( )   All my life

2. 8. What is your occupation?

9. Is your residence? (Please complete one only)

TOWN/CITY – name _____
RURAL NON-FARM – county name _____
RURAL FARM – county name _____

Other Comments:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

A third survey has been designed for the business community. Its focus is on the strengths and weaknesses of the community as they relate to operating a business there. If the community has already undertaken a business retention survey, this new survey may not be necessary.

If this survey is undertaken, the questionnaire should be mailed to business owners and mana-gers, with the focus on "primary" operations that are not strictly serving the local market. Retail stores and local services are concerned more with local sales than with the competitiveness of the community as a location for manufacturing, distribution, call centers, agribusiness, or business services.

BUSINESS INVESTOR ASSESSMENT

From a business investment viewpoint, how would you rate the following locational attributes of this community. Place a checkmark (✓) in the column that best reflects your opinion. Is each item listed on this survey a strength of the community, a weakness, or is it an average or normal situation? Please answer every item, even if you are not very familiar with it, responding based on your perception of it. For example, what is your opinion of the quality of local elementary education: Strength ___, Normal (what you would expect), ___ Weakness (a problem) ___, or No Opinion ___.

Locational Attribute	Strength	Average	Weakness	No Opinion
1. Labor availability				
2. Labor skills and education				
3. Quality and productivity of the workforce				
4. Wage levels				
5. Labor-management relations				
6. Diversity of the local economy				
7. Geographic location in relation to major U.S. markets				
8. Highways and Interstates				
9. Local traffic flow				
10. Trucking availability				
11. Railroad service				
12. Passenger air service				
13. Electric service and cost				
14. Gas availability and cost				
15. Water and sewer availability				
16. Industrial and commercial sites				
17. Available buildings for manufacturing and call centers				
18. Real estate costs				
19. Business support services				
20. Local property taxes				
21. Local sales taxes				
22. Availability of local business financing				
23. Availability of local business incentives				
24. Quality of local primary & secondary education				
25. Quality of local community college				
26. Quality of local 4-year educational institutions				
27. Local training capacity and quality				
28. Housing availability and cost				
29. Medical services				
30. Lodging				
31. Restaurants				
32. Cultural & recreational facilities/activities				
33. Public safety (crime)				
34. Level of local retail				
35. Climate				
36. Government attitude toward business				
37. Quality of local economic development professional assistance				
38. Condition of the downtown				

What are the five most important steps the community should take to improve the local business situation?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

The questionnaires should be completed and returned by mail to the Coordinator within two weeks for tabulation.

Objective Assessments

These surveys are useful for determining local perceptions, but they do not provide an objective assessment of the community. It is important that an effort is made to analyze the community in comparison to other communities or in comparison to "norms" or "averages" so that it can be viewed in a broader context. For example, local residents may be of the opinion that the school system is excellent. However, when it is compared to other school systems in the state or region it may become clear that local schools are not where they should be.

Economic Base Analysis

One basis of analysis is the economic base study. The health of the local economy is critical to the health of all other sectors of the community. The local economic base is the "engine" that drives the community's overall development. A faltering economy will lead to higher unemploy-ment, lower wages, lower housing values, reduced tax revenues, inability to maintain the local infrastructure, out-migration, etc. Therefore, it is important to determine the state of the local economy.

Generally, an economic base analysis uses data available from state and federal sources to answer the following questions:

❏ What demographic trends are occurring in our community?

- Population size
- Age structure
- Households - size and number
- Income – level and distribution
- Education level

❑ What impact are the demographic trends having on the labor force?

   •   Size and availability
   •   Age
   •   Unemployment rate and potential underemployment
   •   Commuting patterns
   •   Skills and education

❑ What are the economic trends?

   •   Employment by industry
   •   Income by industry
   •   Wage and salary income vs. transfer payments
   •   Changes in the employment base
   •   Occupational profile

❑ What is happening to retail activity?

❑ What trends are occurring in the local agricultural situation?

❑ What overall conclusions can be drawn?

S.W.O.T. Analysis

Another type of objective assessment is the S.W.O.T. analysis. This involves an analysis of local <u>Strengths</u> vs. <u>Weaknesses</u>, which is an internal assessment done by community leaders or an external assessment conducted by an objective outside agency. It also includes an investigation of <u>Opportunities</u> & <u>Threats</u>, which is an external assessment of the impact of regional, national, and international trends on the community.

This S.W.O.T. analysis can be conducted by a local group who is familiar with the types of information resources required, or it can be done by an outside consultant or Research Group from various state agencies. The emphasis of the S.W.O.T. analysis is on how the community would appear to a business or visitor looking at it from the outside and comparing it to other locations. Typically, the topics covered would include:

   •   Labor
        __ Availability by skill levels
        __ Wage levels
        __ Labor-management relations

   •   Access
        __ Geographic proximity to major consumer and industrial markets
        __ Highways and trucking availability

    __ Rail service
    __ Commercial air service
    __ Telecommunications capabilities
    __ Mail and small package service

- • Industrial Resources
    __ Energy cost and dependability
    __ Water cost and availability
    __ Wastewater treatment cost and availability
    __ Raw materials and/or intermediate manufactured goods availability
    __ Support services and supplies

- • Industrial/Office Real Estate Market
    __ Land: cost, availability, and suitability
    __ Buildings: cost, availability, and suitability

- • State and Local Business Climate
    __ Taxes (business and personal)
    __ Financial resources and business incentives
    __ Vocational training and educational resources
    __ State and local regulations and permitting
    __ Technology resources of the University of Georgia and other appropriate institutions

- •
- • Quality of Life
    __ Housing availability and cost
    __ Level of medical services available
    __ Hotels/motels and restaurants
    __ Education
    __ Recreational and cultural amenities
    __ Public safety

STEP 3: LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

Soon after initiating the strategic planning process, the Steering Committee and Coordinator should begin planning a full-day workshop for local leaders/stakeholders. A date should be set that provides enough time for the surveys to be completed and any assessments to be finished.

The next task is to decide on a location that can accommodate this workshop. It must have a large meeting room for the entire group to assemble, and also enough space in that room for breakout sessions or nearby small rooms should be available. A catered lunch should be provided to all participants, and coffee and soft drinks should be available for a break in the morning and a break in the afternoon. An overhead projector and screen will be required, as will a flip chart and easel for each small group. The small groups should be no larger than eight participants. Masking tape and marker pens should also be provided for each small group.

Invitations should be sent to all of the leaders/stakeholders identified by the Steering Committee. An effort should be made to ensure that all significant interests within the community are repre-sented. The workshop should also be publicized in the local media to promote attendance. Al-though this workshop is not designed to be a meeting for the general public, no interested citizens should be discouraged from attending. This is particularly important in smaller communities.

The invitation letter to the leaders should explain the purpose and value of the workshop, and why it is important to attend for the full day. This letter should be mailed to each invitee approximately four weeks before the workshop. Follow-up phone calls should be made by the Steering Committee approximately one week before the workshop. Efforts should be made to get publicity about the workshop in the local media. However, this publicity should make it clear that this is not a meeting for the general public.

The Steering Committee should also identify local individuals who could serve as facilitators of the small groups. These could be school teachers, government staff, retired professionals, etc.; they should not be key local leaders/stakeholders since their input will be important to the process. These small group facilitators will be trained by the Coordinator the day before the workshop in a two-hour training session.

At the workshop, the following agenda should be followed:

8:00   Registration and coffee

8:30   Introduction by the chairperson of the Steering Committee or other appropriate leader

8:45   Presentation by the Coordinator or other designated person on key trends and "core" community development elements

9:30   Presentation of results of community assessment and surveys

10:00 Coffee break

10:15 Visioning exercise

12:00 Catered lunch

1:00   Prioritizing key development issues

2:30   Coffee break

2:45   Vote by all participants on final issues

3:00   Discussion of "path forward"

3:30   Report on priority issues and the establishing of the Strategic Action Teams

4:00   Wrap-up and dismissal

Prior to the workshop, participants should be assigned to their small groups by the Steering Committee so that these groups are balanced and diverse. Their group number should be on their name badge when they register. Those registering on the day of the workshop should

be assigned to existing groups as appropriate.

It is important to begin the workshop with a review of its purpose and value. Following that, a presentation on key social and economic trends affecting communities in North Dakota would be helpful to provide background to the participants. The "core elements" of community development need to be discussed. These include:

❑ **Housing** – rehabilitation and new construction of housing units to meet the local needs, including single-family, multi-family, and senior citizens.

❑ **Public Infrastructure** – water, sewer, streets and roads, transportation facilities, solid waste, telecommunications, etc.

❑ **Economic Development** – agriculture, workforce development, retail, manufacturing, distribution, back offices and call centers, tourism, etc.

❑ **Public Services** – education, recreation, government services, health care, public safety, community facilities, youth activities, senior citizen programs, etc.

The results of the surveys and their implications should also be presented. If an economic base analysis or S.W.O.T. analysis was conducted, the results of these studies and their relationship to the surveys should also be shared.

The Visioning Exercise

The visioning exercise is the first participation activity of the workshop. The crafting of a vision statement is very important to the strategic planning process. The following quotations underline the vision's significance:

"When there is no vision, the people perish."
- Proverbs 29:18

"Vision is seeing beyond the immediacy of the day. It is understanding the temper of the times, the outlines of the future, and how to move from one to the other. Vision is seeing where life is headed, and how to make that transition from here to there most effectively. Vision is seeing what life could be like while dealing with life as it is. Vision is having some sense of the inner impulse of the public soul and then giving it voice. Vision is seeing the potential purpose that's hidden in the chaos of the moment, yet which could bring to birth new possibilities for a people."

-William Van Dusen Wishare – *A World in Search of Meaning*
"If you don't think about the future, you cannot have one."
-John Galsworthy, 1928

"If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else."
-Laurence J. Peter

"The republic is a dream
Nothing happens unless first a dream."
-Carl Sandburg

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and lie out the true meaning of its
creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal.' ...I have
a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be
judged by the color of their skin but the content of their character. I have a dream."
-Martin Luther King, Jr.

<u>Envisioning</u> involves a belief that we can influence our destiny by what we do **now**. What is a vision? It is an ideal and unique view of the future. It gives a sense of purpose to the actions of the community and its organizations.

Where do a community's visions come from? Generally, they flow from the knowledge and experience of the leadership. To be a leader is, by definition, to have a vision of the future. Effective leaders are also committed to the pursuit of their vision and taking the risks necessary to ensure that it is more than a dream.

At the heart of a vision are the key *values* of the person holding it. The values of the community should therefore be a part of its vision. A value is:

- ❏ That which is worthwhile and important to us
- ❏ Abstract ideas that influence thinking and action
- ❏ Deep-seated standards that influence almost every aspect of our lives
- ❏ Our personal "bottom line"

An effective vision for a community is:

- ❏ Widely shared
- ❏ Clearly articulated
- ❏ Strongly committed to
- ❏ Challenging but attainable
- ❏ Highly desirable; a substantial improvement on the present
- ❏ Concise and memorable

An example of a well-crafted vision statement for a community can be found in the strategic plan for Centralia, Illinois:

It is the year 2005. The Centralia area has gained recognition nationally as a unique
community that combines a central location in the Midwest with an attractive and
inexpensive quality of life. The cooperation and coordination of local government and
development organizations is a model that is envied by other communities in the region.
Leadership throughout the community works together to continually improve the local

working and living environment.

The Centralia community continues to attract a diversity of businesses and industries, resulting in a low unemployment rate. The skilled and educated workforce is able to find a wide range of quality job opportunities. Attractive industrial sites are continually developed in anticipation of new occupants, particularly along U.S. Highway 51 south of the city. The downtown is economically sound and attractive, and is a growing center of retail, social, and recreational activity.

The ongoing development of U.S. Highway 51 as a four-land divided highway has further expanded access to and from the community, improving Centralia's central location. Local traffic flows smoothly due to the construction of an overpass over the Norfolk Southern rail line and other road improvements. The local water supply was expanded to meet the future needs of both residents and industry.

Centralia continues to be a great place to live, learn and play. Its friendly, attractive, clean, drug-free, and safe environment is appreciated by residents and visitors alike. Educational resources are excellent from Kindergarten through the post-secondary institutions, meeting the diverse career and workplace needs. The regional medical center in the community provides quality health care. New apartments, middle-income subdivisions, and executive-level neighborhoods provide affordable housing for all existing and prospective residents.

Prior to the leadership workshop, it may be useful for the Steering Committee to conduct a "visioning audit," and share their conclusions at the workshop prior to the visioning exercise. The following questions should be addressed:

❑ Does the community or organization have a clearly stated vision? If so, what is it?

❑ If the community or organization continues on its current path, where will it be

heading over the next decade?

❑ How good would such a direction be?

❑ Do key stakeholders know where the community or organization is headed, and do they agree on the directions?

❑ Do the community's structures, processes, plans, organizations, and information systems support the desired direction?

LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP VISIONING PROCESS

The Coordinator or Facilitator can begin the visioning process by telling the story about three stone masons in the Middle Ages.

Three stone masons in the middle ages were hard at work when a visitor came along and asked them what they were doing. The first stone mason was hard at work, sweat beading his brow. "I am cutting this stone," he grumbled. The second stone mason, though less distraught, responded with a deep sigh, "I'm building a parapet." The third stone mason, replied with a radiant face, "I am building a beautiful cathedral that will glorify God for centuries to come."

The third stone mason understood the grand vision for the cathedral, and the vision provided meaning to his life. Like the first two stone masons, many community leaders get caught up in the toil and drudgery of cutting one stone after another. Their creative energy gets sapped by the realization that there will **always be more problems than they can solve**. They may have a vision, but it is a vision of frustration without much hope. In contrast, "enlightened" leaders are like the third stone mason – inspired by a vision that is compelling and worthwhile.

The following materials are to be used for the visioning exercise. Using overhead slides, review the nature of a "vision" with the leadership. Each participant should have a copy of the following material.

CREATING A VISION FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE COMMUNITY

A VISION:

❑ Is an ideal and unique view of the future

❑ Flows from the knowledge and experience of the leaders

❑ Is an attractive and desirable target

❑ Must be clear and perceived as attainable

❑ Gives a sense of purpose to the actions of the community and its organizations.

Envisioning involves a belief that we can influence our economic destiny by what we do **now**.

The vision statement establishes the general direction that the strategic planning process should take. It defines the future of the community or region as envisioned by local leadership. It is the "grand design" for local development.

Vision is seeing beyond the immediacy of the day. It is understanding the temper of the times, the outlines of the future, and how to move from one to the other. Vision is seeing where life is headed, and how to make the transition from here to there most effectively. Vision is seeing what life could be like while dealing with life as it is. Vision is having some sense of the inner impulse of the public soul and then giving it voice. Vision is seeing the potential purpose that's hidden in the chaos of the moment, yet which could bring to birth new possibilities for a people.

William Van Dusen Wishare – A World in Search of Meaning

"If you don't think about the future, you cannot have one."

"If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else."

What is your vision for the development of your community?

❑ What types of economic, governmental, and social activity would you like to see happen in the community in the future?

❑ What community values should be retained or developed as part of this vision?

❑ What type of jobs should be developed to meet the needs of the community and the workforce?

❑ What new infrastructure is needed to more effectively develop the community?

❑ What social and quality of life issues need to be resolved?

❑ What new attractions and facilities should be built?

❑ And so on!

VISIONING EXERCISE

We will begin this visioning process by looking at "values." At the heart of a vision are the key *values* of the organization or community.

A value is:

❑ That which is worthwhile and important to us
❑ Abstract ideas that influence thinking and action
❑ Deep-seated standards that influence almost every aspect of our lives
❑ Our personal "bottom line"

1. List your personal values:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

2. List the values held by the community in general:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

3. Compare the two lists.

4. How important are these values to the future of the community?

5. In small groups, determine which significant trends are occurring in the national and/or international environment that are likely to have an impact on your community? Make a list.

6. Determine which of these is likely to have the greatest impact on your community.

Now, imagine that this is the year 2010. Your hopes and expectations for the community have been realized. Significant changes have occurred, but the best of the past has been retained. The quality of life of the city and its economy meet the needs and desires of the residents.

Please describe in writing the five most important characteristics of that community.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE VISIONING SESSION
OF THE LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

Each participant in the workshop will be asked to write down on the sheet provided the five major components of their vision for the community. This will be explained to them in the "full group" session. The participants will then be dismissed to their small groups or will begin working with their facilitator.

1. Ask each member of the group to share, in turn, one of his/her characteristics of the community in the year 2010. Write this on the flip chart. Go around the group getting one characteristic from each member. If the component or characteristic is *similar* to one already stated, try to combine them. If it is *identical* to something already stated, ask for another component from the individual.

2. Repeat the process, asking for a second characteristic.

3. Repeat the process asking for a third characteristic

4. Ask if any additional characteristics need to be listed.

5. Go through the list with the group and consolidate those characteristics that are similar.

6. Start with the first characteristic and determine if there is group consensus on the inclusion of it within a vision statement for the community. If not, move on to the second, the third, and so forth.

7. After you have determined those characteristics for which there is consensus, go back through the remaining to determine if consensus could be developed on any of those if minor changes or modifications could be made concerning the characteristic. Add those character-istics for which there is consensus to the list and eliminate those without consensus.

8. Working with the group, try to determine the priorities of the vision components. Give each component either an "H" for high priority or very important, "M" for moderate priority, or "L" for low priority or not very important. If complete consensus does not exist in rating a particular component, give the appropriate rating that the majority of the group believes is correct.

9. Rewrite the high priority components on a flip sheet to bring it back to the group as a whole for discussion.

The writing of the vision statement will be done by the Coordinator and Steering Committee incorporating the high priority components from the workshop.

EXERCISE TO PRIORITIZE KEY DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

The next task of the workshop is the identifying and prioritizing of key development issues confronting the community. No community or region can simultaneously and effectively tackle all of its problems and pursue all of its opportunities. Strategic planning is about "focus"; which of the many concerns of the community can be successfully addressed by a more concerted effort. Strategic planning is not comprehensive planning. This "targeted" process hones in on key development issues. Issues are local development problems and constraints; local philosophies and attitudes toward growth and development; unrealized opportunities and potential; organizational considerations.

Until a development issue becomes a key priority for local leadership, it is unlikely that much will be done to address it. Establishing priorities facilitates the strategic allocation of resources that are limited so that they can be most effectively used.

The value of moving leadership through the identification and prioritization process:

- Education about community development.

- Appreciation for other viewpoints.

- Consensus-building.

- Gaining commitment and support.

One of the more efficient and effective means for determining the issues is the use of the Nominal Group Technique. This small group process has the following benefits:

- Avoidance of undue focus on a particular idea.

- Sharing of ideas and equalization of participation increases group creativity. High profile members less likely to dominate discussion.

- Group becomes systematically educated about the relative importance of various issues. Stronger potential for future agreement on implementation strategies.

The afternoon exercise in the workshop will be the identifying and prioritizing of key develop-ment issues. This will take the participants from a "grand vision" of what they want their com-munity to become to coping with what needs to be done to get there.

The following forms are to be used by the participants in their determination of priority issues. The participants will first identify individually his/her key community issues. The small group process using the Nominal Group Technique will capture their issues and their priorities. The top 5 or 6 issues from each small group will be combined into one master list to be voted on by the whole session. This will result in a list of the key priorities for the development of the community.

KEY ISSUES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR COMMUNITY

Issues are to be thought of as problems to be solved, concerns or needs to be addressed, or opportunities to be pursued. Issues should be stated clearly as problems, concerns, needs, or

opportunities. For example, "education" of itself is not a problem or concern; "a high percentage of high school graduates are illiterate and lack basic skills" is a problem.

You are asked to write down in no particular order what you consider to be the five most important issues currently facing your community relative to its economy or its quality of life.

Ranking   Key Issues

_____   _____

          _____

_____   _____

          _____

_____   _____

          _____

_____   _____

          _____

After you have written down your five most important issues, go back and rank them in order of importance to you. Give the most important a "5", the next most important a "4", then a "3", then a "2", and give the least important a "1".

PRIORITY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ISSUES (A)

The following letters refer to the list of community and economic development issues that are listed alphabetically on the flip chart sheets. From that list, choose the five that you believe are the <u>most</u> important for the future of the Community. Place a "5" by the most important, a "4" by the second most important, a "3" by the third, a "2" by the fourth, and a "1" by the least important.

A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
D. _____
E. _____
F. _____
G. _____
H. _____
I. _____
J. _____
K. _____
L. _____
M. _____
N. _____
O. _____
P. _____
Q. _____
R. _____
S. _____
T. _____
U. _____
V. _____
W. _____
X. _____
Y. _____
Z. _____

PRIORITY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ISSUES (B)

The following letters refer to the list of community and economic development issues that are listed alphabetically on the composite list that combines the results from the small group process. From that list, choose the five that you believe are the <u>most</u> important for the future of the Community. Place a "5" by the most important, a "4" by the second most important, a "3" by the third, a "2" by the fourth, and a "1" by the least important.

A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
D. _____
E. _____
F. _____
G. _____
H. _____
I. _____
J. _____
K. _____
L. _____
M. _____
N. _____
O. _____
P. _____
Q. _____
R. _____
S. _____
T. _____
U. _____
V. _____
W. _____
X. _____
Y. _____
Z. _____

**FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS FOR DETERMINING PRIORITY ISSUES
USING THE NOMINAL GROUP TECHNIQUE**

1. Break into smaller groups of no more than 8 people.

2. Each group member writes on the worksheet that has been provided what he or she considers one of the most important issues for economic development in the area. Each individual should complete a total of five issues.

   Issues are to be thought of as problems to be solved, concerns or needs to be addressed, or opportunities to be pursued. Issues should be stated clearly as problems, concerns, needs, or opportunities. For example, "education" of itself is not a problem or concern; "a high percentage of high school graduates are illiterate and lack basic skills" is a problem.

3. Each member ranks his/her issues on the worksheet, giving the most important a "5" down to "1" for the least important.

4. Each member states his or her first priority issue in turn, going around the entire group once, and each issue is written on the flip chart.

5. The process is repeated a second, third, and possibly fourth time. If an issue is already stated, the group member should state the next one on his/her list. Continue process until all issues have been stated and recorded.

6. The facilitator should work with the group to attempt to consolidate similar or related issues into one issue as appropriate.

7. If necessary, some or all of the issues should be rewritten on the flip chart to ensure clarity. A letter of the alphabet in sequence should be placed in front of each issue.

8. Each member of the group chooses only five of the listed issues by circling the appropriate letters on the list provided. He or she should then rate these five issues on a 1 to 5 scale; 5 being most important, 1 least important. These ratings should be placed at the appropriate blank on the sheet.

9. Tabulate the results and display them on the flip chart.

10. Dismiss the group back to the main group and take the flip chart sheet with you. Report your group's list in order of priority to the larger group.

11. Assist in consolidating the lists of issues, the rating of the issues, and the tabulation of the results. The issue with the highest total number of points will be considered the highest priority issue.

After each of the small groups has shared their five or six top priority issues, the small group facilitators will consolidate these into one master list. This list will be posted and the

participants will use the rating sheet "B" to vote on the issues. These sheets will be collected and tabulated immediately while the Coordinator/Facilitator of the workshop discusses the "path forward."

After the results of the voting for the priority issues has been announced, Strategic Action Teams should be formed to develop an action agenda for each of the top six to eight issues identified in the workshop. Concern for the "core elements" should also be given as appropriate. The participants in the workshop should be asked to volunteer to serve on a Team of their choice. It should be pointed out that this will involve another half-day workshop in several weeks and then a series of meetings over the next two to three months to complete an action plan for their issue.

STEP 4:   STRATEGIC ACTION PLANNING

Immediately following the leadership workshop, the Steering Committee should decide on who should serve as Chair of each Team, and recruit that individual. That Chair with the help of the Steering Committee should identify other individuals in the community who would be a valuable addition to that Team and then enlist their involvement.

Within four weeks after the leadership workshop, a half-day workshop should be held for the members of the Strategic Action Teams. Invitations to the Strategic Action Team (SAT) workshop should be phoned or mailed or faxed (with phone follow-up) approximately 1 ½ to 2 weeks before the workshop. Local media should be informed about this workshop and its purpose.

The Strategic Planning Coordinator should meet with the SAT Chairs the day before (or the morning of) the workshop for a three-hour training session. This training is extremely important to the success of the action-planning effort, and every Chair or a designated substitute should attend. Every SAT must be represented at this training. Each Chair will be provided with a package of materials that will be used by the Team over the course of their meetings. The Facilitator will take the Chairs through these materials and forms to ensure their understanding of what needs to be accomplished.

There are a number of approaches that can be taken to elicit strategic actions to address the issues that have been identified. The simplest approach is to have the Teams brainstorm on what could be done to deal effectively with the issue in question. This approach could probably be successfully completed over the course of several two-hour meetings. The problem with this approach, however, is that few new ideas are likely to develop, and the community will wind up doing much of the same things they have been doing.

A more effective approach to developing effective actions is to approach each issue as a problem to be solved, and try to determine the causes. The actions should then address the causes rather than the problem itself. The following problem can be used as an example:

Problem: The community is losing its young families.

Causes: Lack of local jobs paying a reasonable wage
               Lack of available quality housing
               Fewer farm families in the area
               Lack of recreational and cultural facilities and activities
               Decline of educational opportunities

The problem-solving steps are:

        Clearly identify the problem.
        Brainstorm and/or research the causes of the problem.
        Determine the barriers or impediments to addressing these causes.
        For each barrier or cause, identify specific actions that could be taken to remove
        or reduce the impact of the barrier or cause.
        Evaluate these strategic actions to determine which courses to take.

It is difficult to develop effective strategies for accomplishing goals. We tend to think in traditional ways and allow our perceptions and preconceived notions to limit our view of the situation. It is therefore often helpful to restructure goal statements or key issues into problem statements. A problem solving approach to developing strategies typically leads to innovative ideas and more effective ways of improving the situation and meeting the goals.

Problem solving is not an approach we tend to use in developing strategic actions. We, instead, have a tendency to rely on a limited basket of possibilities, based on our previous experience as individuals. Problem solving forces us to broaden our thinking, particularly when it is done within the context of a team. Research has clearly demonstrated that a team, working cooperatively and with clear purpose, is more productive and innovative than a group of individuals working separately. Unfortunately, most people have to be "retrained" to think as problem solvers working in a collaborative environment.

The Problem-Solving Approach to Developing Strategic Actions

At the Strategic Action Team workshop, the Coordinator/Facilitator will review the entire action-planning process and the templates to be completed. Each Team will be equipped with a flip chart and easel, marker pens, and masking tape. The Team will begin by identifying and clarifying their problem or set of problems (**first task**). Once that has been completed, they should move to the **second task**, which is the determination of the causes of the problem. If time permits, the Team can also begin identifying actions to remediate these causes. It is expected that the work-shop will serve as the initiation of this process, which will ultimately take 6 to 8 weeks or more to complete.

At the end of the workshop, the Teams should make sure they have all of the sheets from the flip chart and any relevant notes. The Chair should then ask the members which day and time during the week would be best for them to meet bi-weekly for the next two months or so. These meetings will serve as the continuation of the action-planning process begun at the workshop. The members of the Team should be encouraged to recruit other interested and knowledgeable individuals from the community to serve on the Team.

The dates and times of these meetings should be given to the Coordinator at the end of the workshop, along with a list of the members of the Team. At the next meeting, the Chair should continue the process begun in the workshop, filling out the templates as each task is completed.

GUIDELINES FOR THE STRATEGIC ACTION TEAMS

The devising of appropriate and effective strategies is facilitated if the goals/issues are thought of as problems to be solved or opportunities to be pursued. The problem-solving steps are:

1. Clearly identify the problem.

2. Brainstorm and/or research the causes of the problem.

3. Determine the barriers or impediments to addressing these causes.

4. For each barrier or cause, identify specific actions that could be taken to remove or reduce the impact of the barrier or cause.

5. Evaluate these strategic actions to determine which courses to take.

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The **first task** of the SAT will be to clarify the problem or problems in the community that is/are related to the issue or set of issues that the Team is addressing. All too often, teams start searching for solutions before they have a clear, shared understanding of the problem. For example, if the issue is the lack of housing for new residents, how can this issue be stated more clearly as a problem to be solved.

1. What is/are the problem(s) surrounding or involved in the issue? Make an initial list on a flip chart through brain-storming.

2. Clarify each problem so that it is clear to all members of the Team. Ask these questions:

   ❑ General statement of the problem:

   ❑ Who is involved in the problem?

   ❑ What change do we want to see occur?

   ❑ If that change occurs, what would different in the community?

3. After the members of the Team are comfortable with the clarification of the problem statements, work with them to fill out the problem-solving templates. One form should be filled out for each problem.

Problem-Solving: Template #1

Key Development Issue _____

Problem #_____

❑ General statement of the problem:

_____

_____

❑ Who is involved with the problem?

_____

_____

❑ What change do we want to see occur?

_____

_____

❑ If that change occurs, what would be different in the community?

_____

_____

The **second task** of the Team is to determine the <u>causes </u>of the problem. A *root cause* is a controllable, solvable force that explains why the problem exists. It's the pivotal reason that started the problem in the first place and must be dealt with in order to find a long-term workable solution. *Effects* are often confused with causes; they are merely the by-products or symptoms of the causes. Treating the effects of the problem will not solve it. For example, if the community is not getting inquiries from manufacturing prospects, the cause of the problem may not simply be the lack of marketing. It could be that the community has no suitable industrial sites or an available building. That is eliminating them from most site searches. Frequently, it is necessary to conduct additional research to further define the nature of the problem and its causes.

After the problems have been identified and clarified, and the problem-solving templates have been completed, the Team should then determine the causes of each problem and fill out the appropriate template.

Next, the Team will <u>prioritize</u> the problems. Each member of the team will assign a "high", "medium", or "low" priority to each identified problem. The Team Chair will record these rankings. Those problems that the majority of the Team considers to be high priority will be given further attention in the action-planning process. The others will be noted but not included in the final strategic plan. The purpose of the strategic planning process is to focus resources on the most important problems rather than attempting to address <u>all</u> problems (comprehensive planning).

Root Causes: Template #2

Key Development Issue _____

For each problem statement, determine its root causes:

Problem #_____

❑ Problem statement:

_____

_____

❑ What is causing the problem?

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

❑ Why haven't they been solved or removed?

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

❑ Ranking of Causes

Causes	High	Medium	Low
A.	❑	❑	❑
B.	❑	❑	❑
C.	❑	❑	❑
D.	❑	❑	❑
E.	❑	❑	❑

The **third task** of the Team will be to determine what actions could be taken to remove the causes of the problem. Only those causes that can be addressed locally and are within local

control should be considered in the action-planning process.

Each cause for each problem should be separately considered. The Team should then brainstorm to create a list of possible actions that would remove that cause. "Out of the box" thinking and innovative ideas should be encouraged. No ideas should be eliminated or should be dismissed. This should all be recorded on a flip chart initially and then transferred onto the Action-Planning Template.

A strategy is a pattern of action through which the leadership proposes to address key issues, modify current circumstances, and/or realize latent opportunities. A strategy is a course of action (strategic action) laid out to reach a specific goal or objective. Tactics are strings of planned tasks that make up a strategy. Many tasks may be involved.

> *"What is the use of running when we are not on the right road."*
> *-German Proverb*

Action-Planning: Template #3

Key Development Issue _____

Problem #_____

❑ Problem statement:

_____

_____

❑ Cause:

_____

Action 1: _____

_____

Action 2: _____

_____

Action 3: _____

_____

Action 4: _____

_____

Action 5: _____

_____

When the Team has exhausted ideas about what could be done about the causes of the problem, introduce some of the ideas provided by the Strategic Planning Facilitator. These ideas have been gleaned from other plans, studies, research, and the experience of other communities. The Team should discuss and adopt/adapt any of these additional actions as appropriate and include them on the list.

Once this process is completed for all of the priority problems and their causes, go back over the actions as a group and remove those that are totally impractical or inappropriate based on the Team's judgement.

It may be necessary or helpful to have the Facilitator meet with each of the SATs early in their work to ensure their understanding of the process.

After the Team has completed a list of actions for each priority problem that they have agreed upon, each action should be discussed in greater depth to determine the following:

❑ Which organization(s) or agency(ies) should be responsible for carrying out the action?

❑ How much will it cost to do?

❑ What would be the source(s) of funding?

❑ What would be the timing of it?

❑ What benefits will the community receive from the successful implementation of this action?

Upon completion of the analysis of each of the strategic actions, the Team should prioritize these actions to determine which would be most cost-effective and critical for addressing the problem. The "high" priority actions will be incorporated into the strategic plan; the rest will be noted.

All of the completed templates will be turned in to the Coordinator and Steering Committee for review and comment.

<u>Strategic Action: Template #4</u>

Key Development Issue _____

Problem #_____

❑ Problem statement:

_____

❑ Cause:

_____

Strategic Action#_____

❑ Action statement:

_____

_____

_____

❑ Responsible organization(s):

_____

❑ Cost: $_____

❑ Source(s) of funding:

_____

❑ Timetable:

_____

❑ Benefits to the community:

_____

_____

❑ Priority ranking: High_____; Medium_____; Low_____.

STEP 5: STRATEGIC PLAN DRAFT

The Strategic Planning Coordinator will work with the Steering Committee to convert each of the problems, or sets of problems, into goal statements. These goals will be incorporated into the strategic plan, along with the priority strategic actions that address each goal. It should be noted that the goal is the bridge between the vision statement and the strategic actions. It is not measurable or action-oriented; instead, it is a statement describing a desired future condition. For example, a goal could be as follows: "the local educational system, from kindergarten through secondary school, is rated as one of the best in the State and the Midwest."

Why set goals?

1. They keep the internal activities of an organization on track by:

    • Providing a context for decision-making
    • Improving planning by making it results-oriented
    • Providing a standard for measuring performance

2. They serve as a focus for collaboration and shared responsibility among community leadership by:

    • Eliciting higher commitment among leadership
    • Leading to improved communication through greater clarity in responsibilities

3. They serve as motivators for excellence and high performance by:

    • Uniting people
    • Focusing people's energy on outcome
    • Providing a challenge

4. They legitimize the role of the organization within the community by:

    • Clarifying the purpose and direction of the organization
    • Having public relations value

    "You must have long-range goals to keep you from being frustrated by short term failures."

It is often easier and more relevant to devise specific objectives at the organizational level that translate issues and strategies into programs of action.

Writing goals that are easily understood is not easy. The following is a guideline for writing

them:

❑ Goals should be a **specific** statement of what the community would like to <u>be</u> (more specific than the *vision*).

❑ Goals should be a **broad** statement of what the community would like to accomplish within a specific area; the point of reference from which *objectives* are set.

❑ Goals should be stated as a <u>future condition</u> or <u>outcome</u> to be achieved by the organizations of the community.

❑ Goals should be based on <u>economic reality</u>.

❑ Goals must be stated <u>clearly</u>, <u>concisely</u>, and <u>explicitly</u>.

❑ Goals should not involve <u>quantitative measurements or performance criteria</u>.

> *"Make no little plans, they have no magic to stir men's blood."*
> *- Daniel Burnham*

> *"Goals are aspirations, objectives are targets."*

The strategic plan draft should contain the following:

❑ An explanation of the local strategic planning process

❑ A summary of the community assessment

❑ The vision statement

❑ The goals and strategic actions

❑ The implementation procedure for the plan

Example of a goal, objective, and strategy:

*Goal***:**　　　　Our community will become an important center for corporate office operations.

Objective:　　　Within the next two years, promote the advantages of our community for office operations to all of the Fortune 500 corporations.

*Strategic Action***:** Send direct mailings to CEO's in the Fortune 500 companies.

The format for the goals and actions should be as follows:

Goal 1:_____

       Strategic action 1:_____
       Responsible organization:_____
       Cost: $_____
       Source of funding:_____
       Timetable:_____
       Benefit to the community:_____

       Strategic action 2:_____
       Responsible organization:_____
       Cost: $_____
       Source of funding:_____
       Timetable:_____
       Benefit to the community:_____

The Coordinator will work with the Steering Committee to convert these templates into the first draft of the strategic plan. The draft of the strategic plan will be distributed to the SATs for review and comment.

The Coordinator and Steering Committee will then meet collectively with all of the SATs to discuss the strategic plan. Discussion will also be held in this meeting on how to present the plan to the general public for their review and comment before the plan is "finalized." (No strategic plan should ever be final)

An executive summary of the plan's highlights should be prepared by the Coordinator/Facilitator that can be distributed to the interested public and/or published by local media.

Several public meetings should be held after distribution of the plan to provide open discussion of the plan.

STEP 6:   IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

An implementation process should be developed by the Steering Committee to ensure that the plan is carried out. This could include:

❑ Members of the Steering Committee meeting with representatives of the organizations designated as responsible for specific strategic actions. The purpose of this discussion is to obtain buy-in from the organization or agency regarding their role in the action and to assist in determining how the action can be implemented effectively. This should lead to a Memorandum of Agreement from each responsible entity. Ultimately, each organization that is responsible for a strategic action or series of actions should incorporate them into a work plan for the organization.

❑ Task forces should be established based on the SATs as an ongoing entity to monitor and coordinate the implementation of their sector of the plan. These Task Forces should pro-vide quarterly or bi-annual reports to the Steering Committee on the progress achieved.

❑ The Steering Committee should prepare an annual report on the status and progress of the strategic plan to be presented to the public and local officials through the media and possible public meetings. It is important that "benchmarks" or "milestones" or "performance measures" are defined for each of the goals so that progress toward their achievement can be determined.

"Work is hard. Distractions are plentiful. And time is short."
-Adam Hochschild

THE STRATEGIC PLAN	THE WORK PLAN
Long-term (3-5 years)	One year
Goal-oriented	Objective-oriented
General strategies	Specific strategic actions and tasks
Improvement of competitive position	Improvement of existing situation

Economic and community development organizations are likely to have a work-plan for the year. The strategic plan for the community should dictate the priorities of the work plan. Some actions are maintenance-related; others will lead to desired significant changes.

The work plan is the means by which the strategic plan is implemented, and results are achieved and evaluated. **Most strategic planning fails at this level.** The organizations fail to set up the mechanisms for getting the job done.

Work plans should be task oriented. Tasks need to be spelled out specifically and sequentially.

"Never let the difficulty of a task stand as an adequate reason for not acting; force yourself to identify precisely what is to be gained in the long run by delay. In most cases you'll find you can't (delay)."
-Edwin Bliss

It would be the Steering Committee's responsibility to conduct the <u>evaluation</u> of the progress of the strategic plan. Evaluation is a systematic process to determine the worth, value, or meaning of something. Without explicit goals, and a set procedure in place for reviewing and evaluating progress, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of the community development effort.
Goals and *objectives* define what you want to accomplish; *evaluation* tells you what you <u>have</u> accomplished. And it should be noted that activity does not necessarily equal progress.

The evaluation of the strategic planning effort has the following three dimensions:

- **Monitoring** day to day and week to week activity for use of time, staff, budget, and resources.

- **Assessing performance** to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of the tasks being undertaken in terms of the results expected.

- **Impact analysis** to document the positive changes occurring in the community or organization as a result of the program being implemented.

MONITORING

Monitoring Progress:

- ❏ Are the time deadlines being met?
- ❏ Is the budget on target?
- ❏ Is the staff allocating their time appropriately?
- ❏ If some major unexpected event occurs, how do you reallocate resources?
- ❏ Are we being realistic in the amount of work we are assuming?
- ❏ Are the priority tasks getting the attention they are supposed to?

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Performance Criteria – specific values that can be measured or certain levels of performance regarded as satisfactory.

Examples:

- Number of firms contacted
- Number of qualified responses generated
- Number of initial contacts made
- Number of follow-up contacts made
- Effectiveness of handling prospects
- Amount of favorable feedback on promotional materials

Sources of "Performance" Information:

- Project managers
- Staff
- Outside agencies
- Utilities
- State agencies
- Existing employers
- Local leaders

IMPACT

<u>Objectives</u> and <u>performance criteria</u> are activities that the organizations of the community controls; <u>impacts</u> are the results beyond the direct control of these organizations.

Impact = Change

- Number of new businesses attracted
- Number of new business formations
- Net gain in jobs
- Improvement in the local unemployment rate
- Increase in real estate occupancy rates
- Improvement of local wage and income levels
- Improvement in the local quality of life

Impact involves more than quantitative change. What qualitative improvements have occurred in the community as a result of the program (labor attitudes, quality of educational programs, quality-of-life, etc.)? Use interviews or case studies to document positive changes.

Measures of Impact:

- ❑ Statistical comparisons with other areas
- ❑ Changes in statistical measures locally over time
- ❑ Achievement of the plan's objectives

An example of some measurements of impact follow from a recent strategic plan:

CLEANLINESS, BEAUTIFICATION AND CODES

- ❑ A survey of local residents demonstrates that the appearance of the City has significantly improved.

CITY EXPANSION, DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT AND URBAN REVITALIZATION

- ❑ An increase in the number of new or renovated housing units in the City.
- ❑ An increase in the assessed value of housing in the City.

- ❏ A reduction in vacant properties, both residential and commercial.
- ❏ New retail opportunities in the downtown.
- ❏ An annexation of additional developable land into the City.
- ❏ Increased business activity in the downtown.
- ❏ Adequate public parking in the downtown area.
- ❏ The renovated Old High School is fully occupied.

RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

- ❏ A new hotel and meeting facility is constructed.
- ❏ The new Performing Arts Center is providing a range of cultural activities.

EDUCATION

- ❏ The local school district has achieved a Level 5 rating in the State.
- ❏ The business and industry community is actively involved in local schools.

CRIME

- ❏ An ability to demonstrate a higher level of citizen involvement in crime prevention and a heightened awareness of what needs to be done.

WATERFRONT/PORT DEVELOPMENT

- ❏ Public access to the waterfront has been significantly improved.
- ❏ Increased recreational activity in the waterfront area.

SMALL BUSINESS AND RETAIL SHOPPING EXPANSION

- ❏ A significant expansion of the variety and quantity of retail activity in the City.
- ❏ An expansion of small business activity, with a particular focus on the Small Business Center.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PRIDE

- ❏ An ability to demonstrate that internal communication between individuals and groups has significantly improved.
- ❏ An increase in the number of visitors to the City.
- ❏ The Web site usage increases annually.

> *"It is a bad plan that admits of no modification."*
> *-Publilus Syrus, 1st Century B.C.*

Evaluation is a worthless exercise unless it leads directly to specific adjustments in the implementation of the work plan.

ADJUSTING THE PLAN

- ❑ Reassessing priorities
- ❑ Reallocating resources
- ❑ Changing procedures
- ❑ Modifying the basic program or plan

Don't be afraid to change the plan! It is not written in stone.

*"It is the successful transformation of the community that is ultimately important;
not the successful implementation of the plan."*