



Village of Decatur

Village Council Strategic Plan  
2024 - 2028



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# Public Officials & Village Staff

The success of the Village of Decatur's Strategic Plan is made possible through the leadership, dedication, and commitment of our public officials and Village staff. These individuals are entrusted with representing the community's interests, guiding decision-making, and ensuring that the Village's long-term vision is achieved.

## Village Council

Our Village Council is responsible for setting policies and making decisions that serve the best interests of our residents. Together, the council members work collaboratively to shape the future of Decatur by addressing the needs of our community and fostering sustainable growth.

Village President – Ali Elwaer  
Village President Pro Tem – Charlene Jackson  
Trustee – Jessica Pelfrey  
Trustee – Cindy Pachner  
Trustee – Harvey Beute  
Trustee – Robert Mead Jr.  
Trustee – Janice Benson

## Village Administration

The administrative team works diligently to ensure the implementation of the Village Council's policies, manage day-to-day operations, and provide vital services to our community.

Village Manager – Christopher Tapper  
Village Clerk/Treasurer – Megan Duncan, MiPMC, MiCPT  
Administrative Assistant – Shantel Pentland

## Advisory Committees

To ensure diverse perspectives and community engagement, our public officials are supported by various advisory committees and boards. These groups provide valuable insights and recommendations on key areas such as planning, zoning, economic development, and public safety.

We extend our appreciation to all public officials and volunteers who contribute their time, energy, and expertise to making Decatur a vibrant, welcoming, and thriving community.

# Village Vision & Mission

“The Village of Decatur envisions itself as a community where residents are proud to live, visitors enjoy coming, and businesses thrive. Key figures in the Village Council have expressed their desire to make Decatur an attractive place to live, work, and play, fostering a sense of community and teamwork among residents and employees. The Council aims to ensure that public services are delivered effectively, and that Decatur remains a welcoming, growing, and vibrant community.”

“The Village of Decatur's mission is to provide quality public services to its citizens at the lowest possible tax rate that will promote health, comfort, safety and convenience to its citizens and the community.”

# Strategic Planning Overview

Strategic planning is a critical tool for communities, providing a structured framework to guide actions and ensure long-term success. For the Village of Decatur, this Strategic Plan will serve as a roadmap, aligning resources, priorities, and efforts with the community’s overarching vision. Through the use of SWOT analysis (evaluating strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), objective identification, and setting Council priorities, this strategic planning will help our community navigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

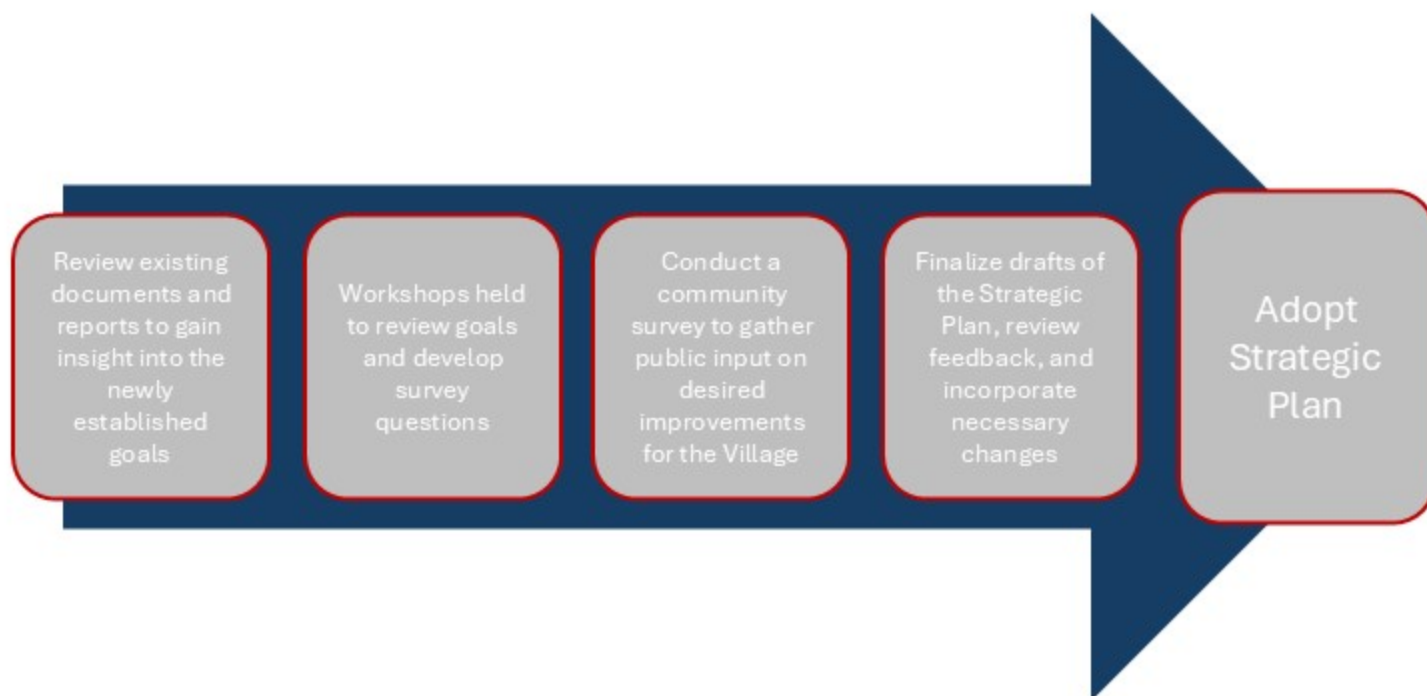
This process will give Village staff clear direction, enabling them to develop a budget and action plan that allocates resources efficiently and outlines strategies to achieve our community’s goals. By setting measurable objectives and aligning initiatives with public needs, strategic planning fosters transparency, accountability, and collaboration, ensuring that the Village’s efforts are focused on creating tangible improvements for residents. Moreover, it strengthens the Village’s ability to adapt to changing circumstances, anticipate future challenges, and ensure long-term sustainability and growth.

## Process & Implementation

The process of producing a strategic plan for a community involves several key steps to ensure alignment with both established goals and community needs. The Village began with a thorough review of existing documents and reports to gain insight into previously set objectives and any newly established goals. This foundational review helped frame the strategic planning process within the community’s current context.

Next, workshops were held to engage stakeholders in reviewing these goals and developing targeted survey questions. These workshops provided an opportunity for collaboration and input from various perspectives, ensuring that the plan reflects diverse interests within the community. Following the workshops, a community survey was conducted to gather public input on desired improvements, allowing residents to voice their opinions and priorities for the future of the Village.

Once feedback was collected, the drafting phase began. Drafts of the strategic plan were finalized, incorporating the survey results and feedback from stakeholders. This iterative process ensured that the plan is responsive to both leadership directives and community input. After necessary revisions were made, the final version of the strategic plan was prepared for adoption. Once adopted, the plan will serve as a living document to guide decision-making, resource allocation, and future development efforts for the community.



# Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

This SWOT analysis identifies key areas of strength and opportunities for the Village of Decatur while also highlighting important challenges that need to be addressed through strategic planning and effective governance.



## STRENGTHS

- **Strong Leadership:** Leadership and staff have a "can do" attitude, showing commitment to achieving the Village's goals.
- **Peaceful, Small-Town Atmosphere:** The Village offers a peaceful community with a strong small-town feel and favorable geographic location.
- **Great Services:** Decatur has good doctor's offices, restaurants, stores, and unique parks that contribute to the quality of life.
- **Potential for Growth:** Despite current challenges, Decatur has room for economic and community expansion with its existing assets.



## WEAKNESSES

- **Aging or Inadequate Infrastructure:** Issues with water filtration, drainage, water quality, sidewalks, curbs, and gutters.
- **High Poverty Rate & Lack of Job Opportunities:** The community faces significant socio-economic challenges due to poverty and limited employment opportunities.
- **Fiscal Waste:** Inefficient spending and resource management may reduce the Village's ability to fund necessary projects effectively.
- **Blight & Visual Appearance:** The presence of blight negatively affects the Village's visual appeal.



## OPPORTUNITIES

- **Strategic Planning for Community Improvements:** Developing a clear plan to address infrastructure issues and ensure responsible spending can drive positive changes.
- **Intergovernmental Partnerships:** Collaborating with other governments can enhance utilities infrastructure and reduce costs, improving services.
- **Business Attraction & Support:** Offering tax incentives and focusing on attracting family businesses can stimulate economic growth and diversify the local economy.
- **Improved Communication & Transparency:** Enhancing transparency and educating taxpayers can build trust and encourage greater community involvement.

# Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis



## THREATS

- **Deteriorating Infrastructure:** Ongoing issues with water filtration, drainage, and basic infrastructure (sidewalks, curbs, gutters) threaten daily life quality and impede economic growth, making Decatur less attractive to both residents and potential investors.
- **Persistent Poverty & Limited Job Opportunities:** The high poverty rate, combined with a lack of employment prospects, could lead to further economic stagnation, reducing the Village's ability to grow and improve living conditions.
- **Loss of Community Trust Due to Fiscal Waste:** Inefficient spending and perceived fiscal mismanagement can erode public confidence in local government, undermining efforts to drive future projects and improvements.
- **Negative Impact of Blight & Poor Visual Appeal:** The Village's blight and poor visual appearance can diminish community pride and deter new businesses, investors, and residents, slowing down economic revitalization efforts.

# Village Council Priorities & Goals

Using the four goals of the Strategic Plan, outlined below, Village Council has selected priorities for the 2024-2028 fiscal years. The priorities will not only inform the budget, but also what we want to accomplish through the goals, what we will do to get there, and as a result, the outcomes.

## 1 Physical Development Projects

Improve the quality of life in the community by continuing and completing critical infrastructure projects, ensuring that all residents benefit from improved facilities, services, and accessibility.

## 2 Attract & Retain Businesses

Foster a vibrant local economy by attracting and retaining a diverse range of businesses that enhance leisure and entertainment options, boost tax revenue, and create job opportunities for residents.

## 3 Improve Communication & Transparency

Strengthen trust and accountability within the community by improving communication and transparency related to the Village's fiscal spending.

## 4 Continually Address Blight

Enhance the overall aesthetic, safety, and economic vitality of the community by proactively addressing blight.



# Goal #1: Undertake Physical Development Projects That Foster Community Sustainability & Quality of Life

**OBJECTIVE:** Improve the quality of life in the community by continuing and completing critical infrastructure projects, ensuring that all residents benefit from improved facilities, services, and accessibility.

**KEY INITIATIVES:** The Village of Decatur will continue / complete infrastructure improvements throughout the community, including:

- Complete reconstruction of Beers Street
- Complete reconstruction of St. Mary's Street
- Complete reconstruction of N. Phelps Street
- Complete renovations to Red Woolfe Park and Fireman's Park
- Complete renovations to Bergen Building
- Install stormwater management systems when undertaking road projects to improve stormwater management within the community
- Regularly apply to external competitive grant program opportunities to address community infrastructure needs
- Develop an asset management plan to prioritize the long-term community infrastructure needs

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES:** This goal will guide our efforts to build a more connected, resilient, and sustainable community resulting in:

- Completion of key infrastructure projects within the designated timelines.
- Improved accessibility, safety, and quality of public services.
- Enhanced environmental sustainability and resilience in community infrastructure.
- Leverage local funds with external grant resources to increase the number of projects available in the community.

# Goal #2: Attract & Retain Businesses

**OBJECTIVE:** Foster a vibrant local economy by attracting and retaining a diverse range of businesses that enhance leisure and entertainment options, boost tax revenue, and create job opportunities for residents.

**KEY INITIATIVES:** With numerous desired goods and services available in the community, the Village acknowledges the need to attract and retain businesses that serve the needs of the community. We are dedicated to supporting our current businesses and attracting new enterprises that will positively contribute to our community. Our efforts will include:

- Development and promotion of incentive packages, including tax breaks and streamlined permitting processes
- Assemble property to be marketed to targeted businesses address unmet community needs
- Launch a comprehensive marketing plan to promote the community as a prime location for business investment
- Host two annual meetings with community businesses, Market One and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, to inform businesses of available programs and provide a vehicle to inform economic development professionals of local market conditions and needs.



**EXPECTED OUTCOMES:** This goal is designed to stimulate economic growth while enriching the social and cultural life of the community, resulting in:

- Increased number of new businesses and services in the community.
- Growth in local tax revenue, supporting public services and infrastructure.
- Expanded job opportunities for residents, reducing unemployment rates.
- Enhanced variety of leisure, dining, and entertainment options available to the community.
- A stronger, more resilient local economy with businesses that are deeply integrated into the community fabric.

## Goal #3: Improve Communication & Transparency

**OBJECTIVE:** Strengthen trust and accountability within the community by improving communication and transparency related to the Village's fiscal spending priorities and policy initiatives. Ensure that residents and businesses are well-informed and engaged in the decision-making processes that affect the allocation of public funds.

**KEY INITIATIVES:** The Village of Decatur is committed to ensuring that all financial decisions are communicated clearly to the community, providing residents with easy access to detailed information about how public funds are allocated and spent. The Village plans to:

- Publish detailed, user-friendly reports on the Village's budget, expenditures, and financial status on a regular basis
- Hold an annual public meeting to explain the budgeting process, answer questions, and gather community input
- Engage the community in discussions about the prioritization and funding of community projects to ensure alignment with public needs
- Publish a monthly newsletter to be posted online and made available via the Village's social media sites.

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES:** This goal aims to build a foundation of transparency and engagement, ensuring that fiscal spending decisions reflect the community's needs and values, resulting in:

- Increased public awareness and understanding of the Village's fiscal management.
- Greater community trust in how public funds are allocated and spent.
- Create awareness of the Village's financial priorities and challenges.
- Strengthened accountability and reduced risks of financial mismanagement or inefficiencies.

## Goal #4: Continually Address Blight

**OBJECTIVE:** Enhance the overall aesthetic, safety, and economic vitality of the community by proactively addressing blight. Implement strategies to rehabilitate or remove deteriorating properties, prevent future blight, and restore pride in all neighborhoods.

**KEY INITIATIVES:** With the Bergen Building renovation project already in progress, the Village is committed to maintaining momentum in addressing blight throughout the community. These efforts include:

- Complete renovations to Bergen Building
- Re-write Blight Ordinance and institute a targeted blight enforcement program
- Strengthen the enforcement of property maintenance codes to ensure that property owners maintain their buildings and land to acceptable standards

- Implement a clear and fair process for issuing citations and taking corrective actions against violators
- Collaborate with private developers, non-profits, and government agencies to redevelop blighted areas into vibrant spaces that add value to the community.

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES:** This goal is designed to stimulate economic growth while enriching the social and cultural life of the community, resulting in:

- Reduction in the number of blighted properties within the community.
- Improved property values and neighborhood aesthetics.
- Enhanced public safety and a reduction in crime associated with neglected properties.
- Increased community pride and resident involvement in neighborhood improvement efforts.
- Successful redevelopment of formerly blighted areas, leading to economic growth and increased tax revenue.

## Conclusion

As we conclude this strategic plan, we reaffirm our commitment to building a stronger, more resilient community. This plan is not just a roadmap for the future; it is a call to action for every resident, organization, and partner to come together in pursuit of our shared vision.

By working collaboratively, embracing innovation, and fostering inclusivity, we can turn these goals into reality. We understand that challenges lie ahead, but with the strength of our community and the dedication of its people, we are confident that the future holds great promise.

Let this plan serve as a living document—one that will adapt, grow, and evolve as we do. Together, we will shape a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, today and for generations to come.