

City of Columbia Heights

2020 Goal Setting Final Report

PROCESS

On June 25, the Columbia Heights City Council and Department Heads convened a special session to review its vision, core strategies, and establish a new set of goals to guide the organization in the coming years. The process involved revisiting work completed on these key city priorities from 2017 and a present day assessment to determine the needs of the community and organization moving forward. The session included Mayor Donna Schmitt, Councilmembers John Murzyn, Bobby Williams, Connie Buesgens and Nick Novitsky. City Manager Kelli Bourgeois and Police Chief Lenny Austin, Community Development Director Aaron Chirpich, Library Director Renee Dougherty, Public Works Director Kevin Hansen, Finance Director Joe Kloiber, Communications Coordinator Ben Sandell, Fire Chief Charlie Thompson, City Clerk Nicole Tingley, and Recreation Director Keith Windschitl also actively participated in the session.

VISION

In 2017, the organization established a vision statement as the overall organization objective. The statement is a short, concise description of the future the participants see for the community. The purpose of the vision is to establish the long-term direction that can be communicated both within the community and the organization, providing all stakeholders with an understanding of the leadership's direction. The vision statement is supported by more descriptive and detailed organizational strategy statements, labeled core strategies. These are the top priorities that support the vision statement. Accomplishing progress on the core strategies will bring the organization closer to achieving its vision and provide the areas in which more manageable, short-term goals can be derived.

In 2020, the participants reviewed both the vision statement and the core strategies that have guided its actions in recent years. While the group consensus supported leaving the vision statement unchanged, a number of modifications and clarifying changes were made to the core strategies. These changes reflected both changes in organizational perspectives and also changes within the local community and greater metropolitan area.

The following page contains the recommended 2020 Vision Statement and Core Strategies.

Vision Statement

Columbia Heights is a thriving, historic, diverse, and eclectic community. The City offers housing and business opportunities for all, while providing small-town charm combined with all the advantages of big-city living. Columbia Heights is a destination that maintains a balance of urban style and suburban pace. We welcome everyone to rediscover the Heights, an All-American City.

Core Strategies

To continue the organization on its path to accomplish its vision statement, the City of Columbia Heights commits its long-term direction to the following principles:

Safe Community

Community-based Policing
Safe, multi-modal streets
Highly-skilled public safety staff

Diverse, Welcoming “Small-Town” Feel

Family-Friendliness
Forward-thinking organization
Progressive, positive, connected energy
Integrated community

Economic Strength

Positive marketing for the City
Self-Sustaining business – jobs, services
Central Avenue – vibrant destination
Maximize land use opportunities

Excellent Housing/Neighborhoods

Strong, connected neighborhoods
Stable/rising property values
Remodel/Redevelop aging housing stock
Balanced approach to housing

Equity and Affordability

Maintain equitable access to services
Sustainable in many aspects
Strong City financial position
neighbors
Stay Resourceful

Strong Infrastructure/Public Services

Maintain talented, skilled public servants
Well-planned and maintained infrastructure
Partnerships with School, County,
City Hall/Public Facilities updated
Eliminate duplicative geographical services
Embrace technology

Opportunities for Play and Learning

Well-rounded recreation services
Library – community focal point, learning
Quality park network
Pet-friendly community
Vibrant community events

Engaged, Multi-Generational, Multi-Cultural Population

Positive community, working together
Workforce, committees reflect community
Community cohesion – organizations
Complete, open access to information
Engage younger generations

MISSION

In 2017, the City revisited and revised its mission statement. While the vision statement explains “the why” the organization is committing to this process, the mission statement establishes the team’s commitment to the community on “how” it will conduct its work. Reaffirmation of this mission statement provides the organization’s decision-makers, staff, and community stakeholders a promise in terms of how the City will perform. The participants largely felt that as a team, the commitment to delivering high quality services, while maintaining a commitment to fair, respectful and professional service delivery.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide the highest quality public services. Service will be provided in a fair, respectful and professional manner that effectively address changing citizen and community needs in a fiscally-responsible and customer-friendly manner.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

With an affirmation of the vision, core strategies, and mission in place, the major focus of the session was to develop a short-term goals list that would address the current priorities of the City within the context of the long-term direction. The development of short-term goals involved a review of the progress of the 2017 Short-Term Goals, a present-day assessment of the City, and brainstorming new potential goals.

Participants were asked to focus on goals that were measurable, manageable, and achievable. To that end, effective goals need to be within the organization's capability to control. The Council and staff developed ideas for short-term goals that would guide the City's actions over the next 1-3 years. This timeframe is used to establish a workplan that can reasonably be accomplished over the next two years, but also challenges the team to think of goals that may stretch the organization.

At the end of the exercise, participants were asked to prioritize the goals with the most importance and a group rating process determined the top outcomes. [Two councilmembers were not able to complete the exercise in session, but each was able to provide priorities that have been included in the development of the following list.]

The 2020 Primary and Secondary Goals appear on the following page.

2020 Primary Goals

1. Expand and promote events, activities, and organizational behaviors that encourage engagements and interaction of multicultural populations
 - a. Develop a Citizen Academy
 - b. Encourage involvement from all
 - c. Incorporate changes in hiring to be reflective of community
 - d. Conduct a structural bias review in areas of City business
2. Enhance and strengthen community/police relations
3. Strengthen housing options throughout the City
 - a. Improve rental property options through code enforcement, promotion of programs to assist renters, training and education opportunities for landlords, and review investor-based purchasing practices
 - b. Improve owner-occupied housing through revitalization programs, increased code enforcement, and consideration of a point-of-sale inspection program
4. Complete construction of new City Hall at corner of 40th and Central
5. Develop funding mechanisms and take action on key capital projects, specifically alley improvements and park projects
6. Develop a Master Plan for Murzyn Hall and the Public Works Building.
7. Drive redevelopment of key sites in town, including the Hyvee site, Public Safety facility, and City Hall site.
8. Implement and complete projects identified in Parks Master Plan
9. Schedule regular reviews of goals, including department updates and status sharing with the Council
10. Implement technological innovations into organizational processes
 - a. Expanding e-government offerings
 - b. Online recruitment
 - c. Improved/expanded IT services
 - d. Website redesign
 - e. Council/Commission alternatives for broadcast
 - f. Supporting hybrid/distance learning through library programs for students

2020 Secondary Goals

11. Expand training and development for staff
12. Develop a Central Avenue Right-of-Way and Streetscape Plan
13. Explore and promote emotional community infrastructure, including art interactions
14. Expand collaborations with other public entities, specifically the school district
15. Develop a phased plan for municipal code updates
16. Review and amend policies and procedures for Commissions, including terms and types of Commissions
17. Implement the 40th Avenue Parkway Plan
18. Develop Sister City Exchange

NEXT STEPS and SUMMARY

The group development process has been completed and the updated vision, mission, and short-term goals are ready for review and adoption by the City Council. Once adopted, the organization will be able to proceed with implementation, which likely will be lead by a combined approach of Council policy discussion and staff work planning. In 2017, the report contained recommendations for implementation, which once again are ideas for moving forward. Based on the City's success with progress on the 2017 goals, I would recommend continuing the action plans and look for additional incremental improvement opportunities with this new series of goals. Ongoing review and measurement against the adopted goals will be an important action step for staff and the City Council.

In conclusion, it was a great pleasure to return to Columbia Heights to work through the process of goal setting once again. In 2017 I stated that the City had an excellent leadership team that deeply cares about the community and the organization as a whole. Once again, I was impressed by your continuation of this excellence in leadership. The City has done an excellent job of maintaining its organizational culture and leadership through a number of staff transitions and new professionals joining its team. It was an honor to assist your team in the process of establishing its work plan for the coming years and would look forward to working with the City again in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Phil Kern
Facilitator