

City of Oelwein
Fayette County, Iowa
Five Year Strategic Plan
2023-2028



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Executive Summary

Communities today are faced with the difficult task of allocating limited resources among a seemingly unlimited number of demands and needs for public services. In many instances, local officials must determine the merits of one project over another without the benefit of comparison, which may result in misjudgment and further limit the community's ability to act precisely on major budget allocation decisions. One method available to local units of government to help manage and systematize the prioritization process is through a Strategic Plan.

The City of Oelwein has taken the next steps in defining itself as an economically stable, viable and sustainable community. By undergoing the strategic planning process, Oelwein's leaders are becoming proactive, rather than reactive, providing opportunities to act with forethought instead of retroactively addressing issues as they arise. The strategic planning process assisted the City in creating a vision, developing a mission statement and defining its long and short term goals. Next, the goals were organized and prioritized through which action steps were created. The intention of this process is to make implementation of the vision and goals easier and more effective for the City.

To begin, a link to an online community survey and crowdsource map were distributed via the City's website and the project website. These effective, low cost tools were an easy way to reach the entire community. Additionally, information was collected from a Comprehensive Plan workshop that was open to the community. The information gathered from the survey and public workshop was then developed into the Comprehensive Plan. Items that were rated as high priorities for implementation in the Comprehensive Plan were isolated as urgent action items which are included in this Strategic Plan.

This Strategic Plan summarizes key information gathered in the community outreach process and the resulting priority goals, strategies, and action items that the City of Oelwein will utilize to address the needs of the community.

Purpose and Process

Purpose

The City of Oelwein embarked upon creating a strategic plan in April of 2022. Having a current strategic plan for the City was determined to be a critical step in setting the course of the City's future and for taking a proactive approach to guiding the community's identity. The effort was intended to answer key questions about the City's future including:

Where are we going?

What will we accomplish?

How will we get there?

Process

A Strategic Plan is an internal action plan. It is a tool that communities use to define their strategy and direction, and make important decisions about their financial and human resources. It follows a process that establishes a vision, considers the future, identifies actions to make it happen, and provides continual monitoring to ensure that goals are being met. Strategic planning allows communities to control their future and align their resources with their top priorities.

The Strategic Plan will help the City of Oelwein:

- Provide clear guidance for accomplishing established City goals.
- Focus efforts over a five year period with an annual review/reporting.
- Establish priorities for City services, operations, departments, and projects.
- Guide decisions related to City resources and finances and integrate budgeting decisions with established goals.

The Strategic Plan is expected to result in:

- Infrastructure Studies
- Creation of a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and/or Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
- Long-range planning efforts and focused planning projects
- Economic development efforts and new partnerships/strategies

The Strategic Plan focuses on four priorities:

- Priority 1 - Quality of Life
- Priority 2 - Community Development
- Priority 3 - Downtown
- Priority 4 - Mobility & Conservation

Assets and Liabilities

The public outreach process defined the opportunities and liabilities important to them through the community survey, SWOT analysis and stakeholder interviews. The community survey results are summarized in the appendix of this strategic plan. The SWOT analysis is broken down into three categories: Development, Mobility, and Beautification. The following section summarizes the feedback received during this process. .

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT Analysis examines the strengths, weaknesses, opprotunities, and threats that impact a community. The SWOT process for this plan was conducted in-person with the steering committee and at a community open house. It was also available through an online community survey.



SWOT Analysis: Development

Strengths

- Updated school buildings look great
- Battery factory
- City officials and residents are generally excited/motivated to make change
- City has been doing great job of bringing in new businesses for job opportunities

Weaknesses

- "Slum lords" ruling rental stock
- Lack of restaurants
- Infrastructure is failing and inadequate
- Lack of affordable housing options for people working in Oelwein
- Too many secondhand stores

Opportunities

- Ample room for new residential, commercial, and industrial development
- Bring in more large employers
- Improve variety of housing options (housing types and price points)
- More large retail stores
- Higher variety of businesses to attract people downtown

Threats

- Rising store leases/rents downtown
- Competition from surrounding communities

SWOT Analysis: Mobility

Strengths

- Great sidewalks downtown
- Great path/trail network
- Very easy to access downtown and amenities throughout community
- City's location at junction of two highways - lots of pass-through traffic
- Traffic moves smoothly through downtown

Weaknesses

- Roads and sidewalks could use major improvements
- Lack of public transportation
- Lack of sidewalk connections to school buildings

Opportunities

- Expand trail system

Threats

- Roads and sidewalks could use major improvements

SWOT Analysis: Beautification

Strengths

- Nice existing parks
- New mural at the quilt shop
- Community library
- Historic buildings
- Holding people accountable for maintaining their properties has been effective
- Downtown streetscape is wonderful, very walkable

Weaknesses

- High number of blighted properties
- Rentals are run down
- Lots of litter throughout community
- Loitering, vandalism, and crime
- Walking paths are too dark
- Empty buildings downtown
- Too many dead trees in right-of-way
- Animals roaming at-large

Opportunities

- Upgrade downtown and parks
- Clean up dilapidated buildings/properties
- Increase tourist/destination interest
- Enhance landscaping
- Continue enhancing downtown storefronts

Threats

- Potential cost of change
- Negative attitudes about community

Action Matrix

The Action Matrix is designed as a guide to help City officials and community leaders prioritize opportunities and address issues within the City of Oelwein and surrounding area. The desired vision for Oelwein cannot be created overnight. However, by incrementally implementing the recommendations within this matrix, Oelwein can achieve the desired outcomes set forth in this Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan focuses on the following four priorities which have been used to group the current issues and opportunities that have been uncovered during the strategic plan process. These are broken into:

- 1) Quality of Life
- 2) Community Development
- 3) Downtown
- 4) Mobility & Conservation

This priority matrix should be updated annually to maintain connectivity between the overall goals and the action items that have been outlined to accomplish said goals and to perpetuate productivity in completing action items.

Implementation

The Responsibility for implementing this Action Matrix lies primarily with the City Council and City Staff. Implementation of this Strategic Plan is dependent on a few imperative actions from the City including:

- 1) Establish a dedicated task force or committee responsible for overseeing the implementation of the strategic plan.
- 2) Develop an annual action plan with specific objectives, timelines, and responsible parties for each goal.
- 3) Allocate sufficient resources, including funding and staff, to support the plan's implementation.
- 4) Regularly monitor progress, evaluate outcomes, and make adjustments as needed.
- 5) Seek feedback and input from the community through surveys, town hall meetings, and other forms of engagement.

By diligently implementing this strategic plan, Oelwein can make significant progress toward achieving its vision of becoming a vibrant and sustainable community that provides a high quality of life for its residents, attracts new businesses, and preserves its unique heritage.

Priority Actions: Quality of Life

Strategy	Action Item
Enhance safety throughout the City of Oelwein.	Assess areas of interest for improved lighting, infrastructure, and connectivity to improve the safety of residents in public spaces.
Improve access to healthcare services and promote a healthy lifestyle.	Conduct mobility and walkability studies to analyze areas to focus efforts for improved access to services.
Increase community-wide communication opportunities.	Encourage accessibility of communication practices between residents and City staff and elected officials.
	Establish a community information or “bulletin board” on the City website to provide pertinent information to residents in an accessible platform.
Produce and maintain community facilities, utilities, and infrastructure that are attractive to developers, current residents, and future residents.	Adopt development standards that cohere the community and enhance the built environment.
	Engage residents in community development plans to align new development with the needs of residents.
Continue to improve the housing stock of Oelwein through local housing program.	Continue to implement the Rental Inspections program.
	Identify ways to expand the impact of the Rental Inspections program both internally and through funding opportunities.
Support community gardens, farmers markets and other similar community based food projects.	Conduct community needs assessment for local food systems.

Priority Actions: Community Development

Strategy	Action Item
Explore development incentives that prioritize infill development/ redevelopment and utilize existing public infrastructure.	Identify areas where infill or redevelopment are feasible.
Adopt a maintenance and replacement schedule into City Code.	Identify regular maintenance and replacement needs.
	Develop maintenance and replacement schedule of facilities, services, and infrastructure.
Establish regular community outreach processes regarding public facilities and services.	Identify facilities and services that warrant regular feedback.
	Develop community communication strategy to gather feedback.
Provide guidance for future economic growth.	Engage with the Oelwein community to understand economic needs of businesses and residents.
	Create a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) plan to help guide future economic growth.

Priority Actions: Downtown

Strategy	Action Item
Promote, encourage, and support housing opportunities and growth throughout the downtown.	Support the maintenance and expansion of housing downtown.
	Support medium and higher density housing infill.
Support retail, office, and service uses downtown.	Focus ground floor commercial development along N Frederick Avenue, Charles Street, and 1st Avenue.
	Diversify entertainment and retail opportunities downtown.
	Require quality redevelopment and regular maintenance of commercial properties in downtown area.
Promote and develop efforts toward strengthening and enhancing the character of the downtown.	Consider setting design standards for signage and new/existing building facades.
	Improve and manage parking lots in the downtown.
	Improve and manage parking lots in the downtown.

Priority Actions: Mobility & Conservation

Strategy	Action Item
<p>Encourage non-vehicular transportation options and overall connectivity.</p>	<p>Identify priority nodes for corridor restoration to improve walkability throughout Oelwein.</p>
	<p>Develop a trails and greenways plan to incorporate pedestrian transportation options between parks, essential services, and points of interest throughout Oelwein.</p>
<p>Prioritize maintenance and improvement of transportation infrastructure.</p>	<p>Identify solutions to the deterioration of the St. Charles Street Bridge and Viaduct.</p>
	<p>Identify funding opportunities to implement solutions identified for the St. Charles Street Bridge and Viaduct.</p>
<p>Prioritize distribution of adequate green space in future development.</p>	<p>Identify areas deficient in recreational space.</p>
	<p>Create development standards to include adequate green space in future land use plans.</p>

Appendices

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