



City of Rochelle

2022 Strategic Plan and Goal Development Update

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**Center for
Governmental Studies**

Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development



Table of Contents

<u>Executive Summary</u>	1
<u>Introduction</u>	3
<u>Pre-Workshop Stakeholder Input: Online Employee Survey</u>	4
<u>Pre-Workshop Stakeholder Input: Focus Groups</u>	5
<u>Outline of Leadership Workshop Exercises and Discussion Sessions</u>	5
<u>Introduction/Icebreaker Exercise — Describe the City and Future Visioning</u>	6
<u>Environmental Scanning Part I — Surrender or Lead</u>	8
<u>Environmental Scanning Part II — Large Group S.W.O.C. Analysis</u>	9
<u>Nominal Group Goal Identification</u>	10
<u>Post-Workshop: Goal Prioritization and Council Ranking Exercise</u>	11
<u>Conclusion</u>	14
<u>Appendix: Focus Group Feedback Summary</u>	15

Executive Summary

Strategic planning is a more effective approach to guiding an organization's future than making decisions issue by issue. As an organization, the City of Rochelle has followed a regular process of establishing goals for the City government and community it serves. In March 2022, the City engaged the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies (NIU-CGS) to facilitate a strategic planning update process and leadership workshop with Council and senior staff members.

After some delay due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the strategic planning workshop provided a positive atmosphere for the Council and senior staff members to collaboratively review and develop their vision for the City's future. Ultimately, workshop participants created strategic goals focusing on where the City wants to go as an organization in both the short and long term. As was discussed during the workshop, executive-level strategic planning sessions are a staple of good governance and leadership for progressive organizations and are recommended to be done routinely.

Strategic Goals/Initiatives

After a series of pre-workshop scanning discussions regarding the City's visions for the future, as well as current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges, leadership workshop participants were asked to identify short-and long-term goals. Upon completion of an updated list of goals, participants were then asked to classify each goal according to a matrix model of time and complexity. Agreed upon criteria were used to classify a goal as short or long term and as complex or routine (please see full report for defined criteria).

After the strategic planning workshop, the City Council was asked to delineate, via an online ranking exercise, which goals should be given the highest priority. In total, the group developed ten short-term routine goals, ten short-term complex goals, five long-term routine goals, and nine long-term complex goals. The top three goals from each category are offered as a process "snapshot" representing the most important strategic goals or priority areas for the Council and staff to address in the months and years ahead (see below). For a full description of all the strategic goals developed, discussed, and ranked, please refer to the full report.

Short-Term Routine Goals

- Ensure staffing is sufficient for City departments' current and future needs.
*City-wide comprehensive and inclusive succession plan for future staff needs.
- Comprehensive employee recruitment and retention program.
- Develop a customer service training program for employees.
- Reassess the current debt strategy.

Short-Term Complex Goals

- Coordinate and collaborate with educational institutions for workforce support, such as job opportunities, training, apprenticeships, STEM, internships, and certification programs.
- Finalize all intergovernmental agreements with IDOT, Lee/Ogle County, landfill, etc.
- Perform annual corridor improvements and install infrastructure to improve industrial development.

Long-term Routine Goals

- Continue to be a transparent government and build trust with the community.
- Maintain and update the 20-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).
- Foster diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging within the City government and across the community.

Long-Term Complex Goals

- Develop North/South 251 (Fairview to I-88) and perform corridor improvements.
- Continue to improve and maintain infrastructure, including improving flood prone areas.
- Further diversify commercial retail throughout the City.

Strategic Goals/Initiatives

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Introduction

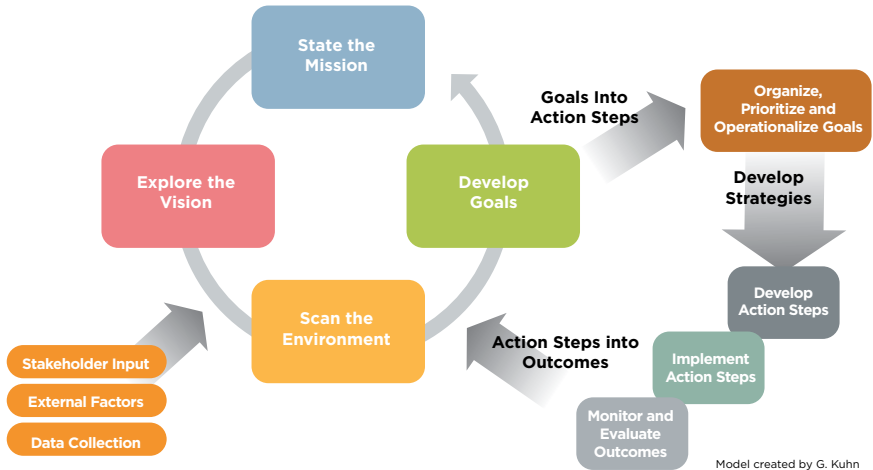
As an organization, the City of Rochelle has followed a regular process of establishing goals for the City government and the community it serves. The Council and senior staff gathered again in 2021 and 2022 to review the progress made and continue to move forward towards the future vision expressed for the City of Rochelle. As part of this update process, the Council and senior staff worked together to review the previous strategic plan's

outcomes and results and to evaluate the current operating environment to revise and establish strategic goals to guide the City over the next 3-5 years. As was discussed and reviewed during the workshop, executive-level retreats and strategic planning sessions are a staple of good governance and leadership for progressive organizations. The value of such processes continues to be recognized by policy-making boards and executive staffs in both private and public organizations. You have now placed yourselves among the special class of organizations that engage in formalized strategic planning and goal setting (Figure 1).

The 2022 workshop provided another positive setting to methodically, strategically, determine where the City wants to go as a community and as a government. This important undertaking will again work to serve the City's residents, businesses, community partners, stakeholders, and organization well into the coming years. As was shared with the Council and senior staff members at the conclusion of the workshop, the City should resist the temptation to rearrange priorities as the fiscal year moves along. It is important to adhere to the results of the Council's and senior staff members' efforts throughout this process and the City's budgeting process.

The judicious use of the City's limited resources (including financial resources and professional staff time) will be key to good results. In the end, quality policies and quality implementation equate to tough choices in setting priorities and allocating resources. Only a limited number of goals and objectives can be effectively managed and implemented at any given time. In a very realistic sense, clear and stable priorities must be maintained if the City desires to stretch its resources as far as they can go.

Figure 1. Strategic Planning Model*



**Model generally represents the steps that are taken for this type of initiative.*

Model created by G. Kuhn

Pre-Workshop Stakeholder Input:

Online Employee Survey

As part of the strategic planning process, City leadership surveyed City staff to further understand their vision for the future and priority areas that should be addressed as part of the strategic plan. The online survey was distributed in July 2021 and the NIU-CGS team received 42 responses.

The focus of this type of employee survey was to gain an initial perspective, from employees' vantage point and often in their own words, of important activities, programs, services, and organizational dynamics. This perspective helps to build a balanced, informed, and open view of the City's strategies, opportunities, challenges, desires, and goals. Several major themes and ideas emerged from the survey and were shared at the workshop with Council and senior staff. Below is a snapshot of those themes.

City of Rochelle Staff Survey Response Themes

Organizational Development and Communication

- Growing the City causes strain on other areas of the City if every department doesn't grow together.
- Improve communication with all departments and have a full understanding of how each operates.
- More team building across the departments, continue to boost employee morale.
- Departments continue working together for a common goal to make the City the best it can be.
- Increase staffing levels and improve employee morale to help avoid burnout.
- Opportunity for upward mobility, succession planning.
- Fair, performance-based salaries.
- Cross-training and professional development opportunities.
- Update outdated equipment and facilities (e.g., 1963 toolsheds, computer programs, etc.).

Business Attraction, Development, and Growth

- Capitalize on Rochelle's location – very accessible and lots of opportunity for jobs in the future.
- Less factories and chain stores – more small business.
- Motivate people to shop locally and continue local incentive programs.
- Downtown utilized to its full potential with vacant building occupied by a variety of businesses (e.g., retail, mid-level, dining, entertainment, etc.) and cohesiveness of facades/overhangs.
- Listen to the public about things they would like to see come to Rochelle. More shopping (specifically grocery) options. Some chain and dine in restaurant options.
- High speed fiber/Internet to all businesses and homes.

Community Engagement and Inclusivity

- Become an inclusive community that meets the needs of all generations.
- Better community communications, one on one and informational gatherings throughout the community. Translation to those groups not speaking English.
- People being able to work from home will cause a migration westward from the Chicago areas – need to have the housing in place.
- Expansion of the City as far as housing, expanding towards the West along bike bath.
- There is a real shortage in housing. Need to find a developer to develop more affordable residential housing / neighborhoods (townhomes, mixed use, etc.).
- A plaza area with outdoor kiosks, market days, and family fun.
- Large community venue/concert hall, downtown gathering spot (closed street/plaza).
- Diverse opportunities to be entertained/inspired, including more family activities.
- Address the need for community services such as additional public transportation and daycare options.

Pre-Workshop Stakeholder Input: Focus Groups

In addition to the City staff survey, five (5) focus groups were conducted virtually/in-person in August 2021 to gain additional stakeholder input. Each focus group had approximately 8-12 participants in the following groups:

- Residents (2 focus groups – one in person and one virtually)
- Business Community
- Intergovernmental Partners
- Front-line Staff

The focus group sessions were designed as a primer for the strategic planning process. The information presented was shared in summation at the workshop and added exploratory and thematic information for the Council and senior leadership team to consider. As a result of the focus group sessions' responses and feedback, the facilitators identified four overarching themes presented (in no particular order) in Figure 2. The themes represent important topic areas that the City leadership and Council were asked to think about as they went through the workshop exercises and developed short- and long-term goals. Therefore, it is not unusual to see alignment between the focus group themes and the priority areas identified as part of the entirety of the process. Please see the [Appendix](#) for a full summary of all focus group questions and aggregated responses for each theme.

Figure 2. Aggregated Focus Group Identified Themes



Outline of Workshop

Leadership Exercises and Discussion Sessions

All of the discussion sessions in the planning effort employed approaches that were highly participative and interactive. The workshop facilitators utilized a group discussion approach called 'Nominal Group Technique' where the facilitator assured participants equal opportunities to speak and share opinions. During the workshop discussion/exercise sessions, individuals had the opportunity to generate and share their ideas, as well as participate in group activities allowing them to weigh alternatives and refine their thinking through dialogue. As ideas were shared and debated, the group worked steadily toward a consensus regarding the City's purpose, future directions, goals, and priorities.

Introduction/Icebreaker Exercise

Describe the City and Future Visioning

Participants engaged in an introductory/ice breaker exercise designed to stimulate conversation by describing the City in 10 words or less. This was a brainstorming exercise—all ideas about the City's future were encouraged and shared. No evaluative or judgmental debate was permitted during this session. Below is a word cloud summary of those answers.



The Council and senior staff also participated in a visioning exercise to describe the desired future direction of the City by answering the following question: “In 10-15 years when I return to the City of Rochelle, what do I hope to see, or think I will see with regard to the City and its activities?” Participants were asked to think about their ideas ahead of time and then be ready to share them with the group during the first session of the workshop. Below are their responses.

City of Rochelle Visions for the Future

Visions for the Future

Infrastructure growth

Public/private partnerships for residential housing

More neighborhood schools

More attractive town entrances

Shopping centers are revitalized, especially the downtown area

More grocery store options

Increased community engagement

Well-trained workforce

Develop an intentional business retention program

Job retention is high

There is a resurgence of Rochelle's industrial base, specifically manufacturing, and commercial/residential growth

Intermingling happens within the community so Rochelle can become more welcoming and access to information is present

High school training and Explorer Programs are available for police officers/trades, such as internships and job shadowing

Fiber services expand and include private partnerships

Route 251 is urbanized and improved

Rochelle becomes a multi-modal community

More collaboration with the Park District is happening

Core businesses are retained

Continuity of City leadership

Infrastructure maintenance is kept a priority

Manage population/job growth

Dual language program remains

Environmental Scanning Part I

Surrender or Lead

Next, participants were introduced to a leadership exercise entitled “Surrender or Lead.” Participants were asked, in small groups, to respond to a series of structured questions designed to initiate discussion and reveal hopes, perspectives, challenges, opportunities, and possible barriers based on the collective view of each group. The groups’ responses were recorded and are reported below. The **bolded** and underlined sections are key phrases that the group provided in response to the exercise’s open-ended questions and prompts.

Group #1

1. We want to **grow**, but **proportional to infrastructure**.
2. The two most important things to focus on are **budgeting** and **funding** because **growth can’t happen without fiscal responsibility**.
3. If it weren’t for **a strong community**, we would **have no need for growth**.
4. We need to finally **accept change**.
5. **Government regulations** will have the biggest impact on the City in the coming 2-3 years.

Group #2

1. We want to **grow our community** but **maintain our core**.
2. The two most important things to focus on are **citizens** and **services** because **this is our purpose**.
3. If it weren’t for **limited resources (money, people, etc.)**, we would **be more proactive**.
4. **Planning and projecting** will have the biggest impact on the City in the coming 2-3 years.
5. **Inflation, economy, stagflation, recession, State of Illinois, Covid-19, failing infrastructure, outmigration, and not being nice** will have the biggest impact on the City in the coming 2-3 years.

Group #3

1. We want to **accommodate everyone** but **can’t**.
2. The two most important things to focus on are **infrastructure development** and **maintenance**.
3. If it weren’t for **citizens not shopping as much local**, we would **have all the retail/commercial businesses we want**.
4. We need to finally **bridge the gap with our minority population**.
5. **Current events: police, Covid, gas prices** will have the biggest impact on the City in the coming 2-3 years.

Group #4

1. We want to **get ahead of staffing needs**, but **recruiting is tough in the current environment**.
2. The two most important things to focus on are **continuity** and **infrastructure** because **you can’t survive with confusion**.
3. If it weren’t for **money**, we would **not have any problems**.
4. We need to finally **have robust recruitment and retention plans**.
5. **The economy** will have the biggest impact on the City in the coming 2-3 years.

Group #5

1. We want **to recruit**, but **also retain**.
2. The two most important things to focus on are **infrastructure** and **sustainability** because **without a strong foundation and thorough continued reinvestment, we cannot continue to meet our goals.**
3. If it weren't for **strong leadership and collaboration**, we would **lack progress**.
4. We need to finally **find a way to bridge the gap between the north and south corridors.**
5. **The Pandemic rebound** will have the biggest impact on the City in the coming 2-3 years.

Environmental Scanning Part II

Large Group S.W.O.C. Analysis

The next step of the strategic planning workshop involved reviewing and accounting for the internal and external factors present in the environment that can potentially influence the success of the City, both negatively and positively. Given the exploratory statements and challenges raised in the Surrender or Lead exercise, participants were then asked to identify what constraints and practical difficulties are likely to be encountered that will make it challenging to achieve the desired future state. These elements included both internal and external factors, conditions, trends, regulations, agencies, resources, etc. Furthermore, participants were asked to identify the City's **strengths (S)** and **weaknesses (W)**. In what areas does the City regularly excel, and in what areas are there difficulties or shortcomings in terms of expertise, resources, training, etc.? What **opportunities (O)** are on the horizon that can be used to the City's advantage? Conversely, what trends or **challenges (C)** lie ahead that would be obstacles or hindrances? Those answers are captured next.

S.W.O.C. EXERCISE (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges)**Internal**

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Citizens/Residents • Political stability • Ability to pivot • Location • Good team — Council, department heads, and administration • City-owned utilities • Fiscal stability • Partnerships with other entities • Dedication to volunteerism by City officials and staff • Schools — own K-12 • Intergovernmental agreements — Ogle-Lee Fire Protection District • Room to grow (not landlocked) • Rochelle Hospital	• Siloed facilities • Communication — internal and external • Outmigration of population in Illinois • Inability to keep up with growth • Aging infrastructure (I) — specifically electric • Sometimes a “Good ole boys” club at the City • Lack of shovel-ready sites • Lack of trust within the City • Lack of housing • Lack of public transportation

External

OPPORTUNITIES	CHALLENGES
• Potentially provide police to Creston/Hillcrest • Not landlocked — have room for growth • Housing options — evaluating recruiting developers – public/private partnerships • Size of organization — cross-training opportunity • Expanded public transport — fixed routes, additional times for 3rd shift, etc. • Citizen engagement committee • Location/hub for many things • Succession planning and applicant talent • Solar for expansion • Opportunity for all renewables • Education on becoming home rule • Engaging citizens and more volunteers • Employees of City can volunteer more • Opportunities for community to collaborate and partner to provide services • Growth	• Need to grow water supply • Growth – keeping up smart, intentional infrastructure • Age of infrastructure • Kids in multiple schools — challenge for parents • Public view of City employees • Citizens and expectations • Loudest voices sometimes get the most play • Social media platforms • Recruitment — workforce challenges • Pool of applicants — cost to hire, competition • Succession planning for small businesses — retirement • Succession planning — City/community leadership transition (age, etc.) • Housing limited/need options • State of Illinois • Location — close to larger areas — easy to leave • City-owned utilities — need to promote/increase users • Internal communication between departments • Focusing equally on all corridors • Unknowns — economic, inflation, pandemic • Climate and Equitable Jobs Act regulation • Solar • Demographic changes • Retail — sales tax • Regulation — environmental • Transient population — hard to build community

Nominal Group Goal Identification

With the preceding discussion sessions and exercises acting as a sound foundation for goal setting, the final workshop session was designed for small group work and the development of new or updated goals. The goals were developed in groups, and then presented by the working groups for large group discussion. All of the goals and/or action items were seen as important to achieving the future visions of the City as expressed by participants at the opening of the workshop.

To begin the process, participants returned to the small groups they had worked with during the previous Surrender or Lead exercise. The agreed upon criteria used for classifying goals as either short or long term involved the following: **Short-term goals** were those goals that could or should be completed or substantially underway in the next one to three years. **Long-term goals** were those goals that could or should be completed or substantially underway within a three- to eight-year timeframe

Each of the small groups then shared their goals with the aggregate group of participants. Goals that the groups developed could be extensions or refinements of prior goals or could be new goals. Furthermore, the goals that were developed could be very specific or broader, but all goals pointed to important outcomes that leaders hope to see in the years ahead.

Open Group Discussion and Consolidation of Goals

This final phase of the discussion served as the forum for City Council members and staff to discuss, refine, and compare the ideas and goals offered by each work group in the previous sessions. Participants gave their opinions and further explained the fit, ideas, and policy outcomes expressed in the goals. Participants were also asked to classify each goal as complex or routine. **Complex goals** were goals that required extraordinary resources, specialists, funding, or the agreement of outside organizations or agencies. **Routine goals**, although not necessarily simple, were goals that could be accomplished upon unilateral decision of the Council and within present budget streams or with minor revenue enhancements or reallocations.

Following the workshop, NIU-CGS staff worked with the City's administrative leadership to refine and consolidate the goals, where appropriate.

Post-Workshop:

Goal Prioritization and Council Ranking Exercise

After the workshop, each Council member was asked to delineate, via an online ranking exercise, which goals should be given the highest priority. The Council was provided an online ranking tool where point values were assigned to each goal in each quadrant of the time and complexity matrix by individuals. The calculation of goal prioritization consisted of "forced ranking" where the ranking of each identified goal is calculated as the average of the rankings given by all participants. For example, if a goal was given the scores of 2, 5, 6, 6, 1, 2 and 3, the average total would be 3.57. **The lower the score, the higher the priority.** Again, the average totals were based on the individual ratings provided by the Council.

The following illustration presents the dashboard of *high*, *medium*, and *lower* priority levels for the short- and long-term strategic goals based on the consensus ranking exercise conducted by the Council (Figure 3). The goal priority dashboard demonstrates the most important strategic goals, tasks, and objectives for the Council and staff to address in the months and years ahead.

Figure 3. Strategic Goals — Priority Dashboard

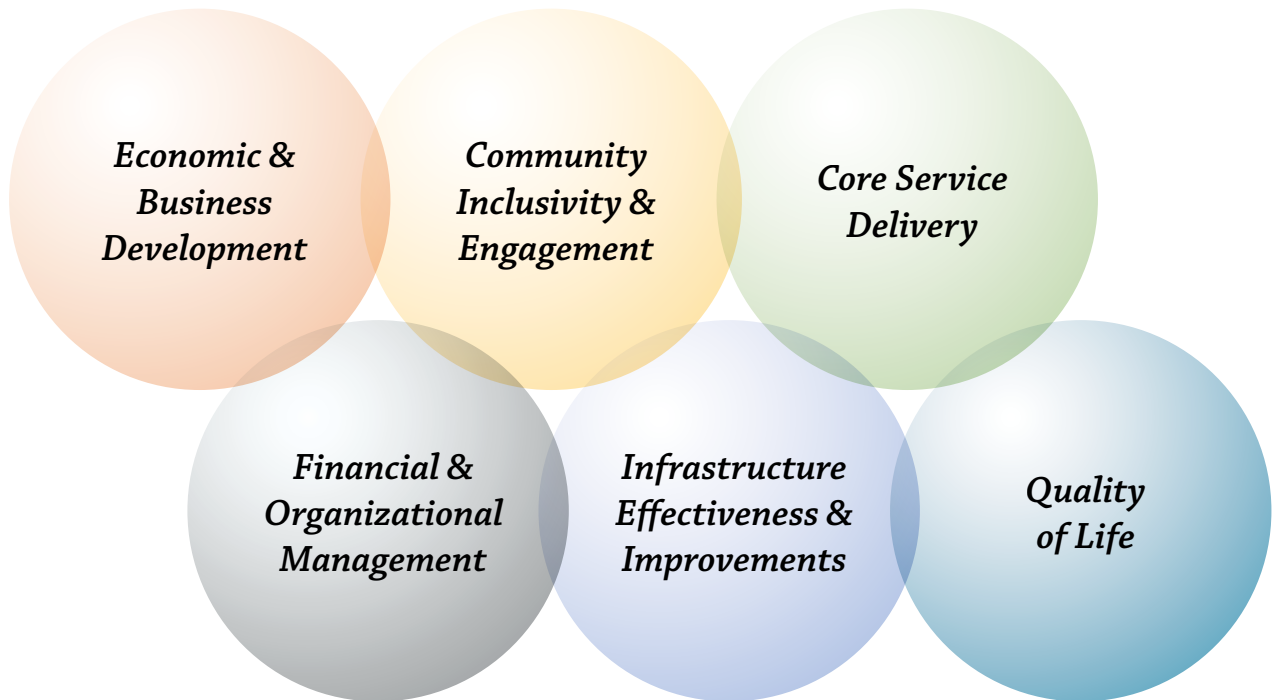
Short-term Routine	Priority Level
Ensure staffing is sufficient for City departments' current and future needs. *City-wide comprehensive and inclusive succession plan for future staff needs. *Comprehensive employee recruitment and retention program.	High
Develop a customer service training program for employees.	High
Reassess the current debt strategy.	High
Foster more community engagement.	High
Develop a more aggressive blighted property program — utility, police, ticketing program.	Medium
Increase City visibility through a variety of platforms and tools to promote community programs, events, and news.	Medium
Expand and develop GIS program.	Medium
Create a promotion video for the City.	Medium
Expand the Citizens Academy to include various age groups.	Lower
Establish a message board at each corridor.	Lower

Short-term Complex	Priority Level
Coordinate and collaborate with educational institutions for workforce support, such as job opportunities, training, apprenticeships, STEM, internships, and certification programs.	High
Finalize all intergovernmental agreements with IDOT, Lee/Ogle County, landfill, etc.	High
Perform annual corridor improvements and install infrastructure to improve industrial development.	High
Complete City of Rochelle Campus along Route 251.	Medium
Develop additional public/private partnerships.	Medium
Redevelop the former Hickory Grove site.	Medium
Finalize Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP).	Lower
Establish a social services liaison (in house or on call) for City departments to address mental health needs.	Lower
Expand fiber to homes throughout the City.	Lower
Become a DREAMER Employer.	Lower
Long-term Routine	Priority Level
Continue to be a transparent government and build trust with the community.	High
Maintain and update the 20-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).	High
Foster diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging within the City government and across the community.	Medium
Develop a utility sustainability program.	Medium
Work with the departments and Citizens Academy to implement smart recruitment techniques.	Lower
Long-term Complex	Priority Level
Develop North/South 251 (Fairview to I-88) and perform corridor improvements.	High
Continue to improve and maintain infrastructure, including improving flood prone areas.	High
Further diversify commercial retail throughout the City.	High
Redevelop downtown to include outdoor venues and additional parking.	Medium
Expand fiber and other applicable utilities east of I-39.	Medium
Expand the variety of housing options.	Medium
Explore strategies for what the community will do if/when the landfill reaches capacity.	Lower
Explore Rochelle's annexation options.	Lower
Become a "One Rochelle Campus" where all departments are housed in one area.	Lower

Strategic Priority Areas and Goals Summary

After discussions with City leadership, it was agreed that the key strategic priority areas from the 2019 planning process were not only still relevant, but the stakeholder input from the 2022 update process reinforced them. Therefore, the 2019 priority areas were carried over to the 2022 strategic plan with slight modifications. These priority areas were identified as an outcome of the strategic planning process, and they highlight activities and initiatives that the City should focus on in both the short and long term. The strategic priority areas identified during the process (in no particular order) are illustrated below.

Strategic Priority Areas



Conclusion

The value of the strategic planning process will only be realized if this report is used as an active working guide to both the City Council and staff leadership as they pursue the issues explored during the strategic planning process. The report is designed to capture the content of the discussions and to assist the City in developing implementation plans for their strategic goals and initiatives.

In the City's ever-evolving operating environment, adapting to shifts in demographics, community trends, technology advancements, best practices, and development opportunities, among other changes, will be paramount. The strategic plan is meant to be a road map for the City, with the flexibility to adapt to those changes. Therefore, it is recommended that the City continue to undertake a regular review (monthly, quarterly, or semi-annually) of the strategic plan, its goals, and implementation schedule to identify the need for updates or modifications to ensure the City consistently recognizes and meets community needs and expectations.

What is apparent from the exchange of ideas and dialogue during the environmental scanning and strategic planning workshop is that the City is fortunate to have progressive leadership and a management team that is looking ahead and committed to strategic thinking and planning.

We wish you well with the ambitious years that lie ahead.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is for Melissa Henriksen, and the signature on the right is for Alli Hoebing. Both signatures are fluid and cursive.

Melissa Henriksen and Alli Hoebing, NIU-CGS Project Coordinators and Session Facilitators

Appendix:

Focus Group Feedback Summary

One of the key analytical techniques used for focus group notes is an analyst's search for key phrases, words, or terms that emerged during the focus group sessions. Coding is done by analysts' individual readings of the data, followed by key term searches with the aid of document software. The words and phrases listed below are the results of the study team's analysis of the collected focus group notes. At a glance, the reader can discover what terms were used or referred to most frequently in the feedback notes. Using individual analysts' coding, the researcher identifies terms that recur across groups and across questions. The results are revealing in that they highlight key topics or issues that should be considered when proceeding with strategic planning discussions.

The information that follows is a summary of key themes and topics that emerged during the exploratory focus group/outreach sessions. The focus group sessions served as a primer for the strategic planning process. The information that is presented in this summation was designed to add exploratory and thematic information for the Council and Senior Leadership Teams to consider during the strategic planning workshop sessions.

The same exploratory discussion questions were asked to each focus group and are listed below:

1. How would you describe the City of Rochelle to a stranger or someone who doesn't live or work here?
2. If you left Rochelle tomorrow and didn't return for 10-15 years, what do you think you'd see, or what do you hope you'd see, when you return?
3. What do you like best about Rochelle? Related to that, what are the strengths/greatest assets of the City? Opportunities?
4. Can you identify areas or topics in need of attention or improvement? Related to that, what are the weaknesses/greatest needs in Rochelle? Challenges?
5. What are/should be the top priorities for the City over the next 3-5 years?
6. If you could change or initiate one key item or thing about the City, what would it be?

Overall Themes Based on All Focus Group Feedback



Focus Group Themes

** denotes additional focus group participants that agreed with the idea*

Sense of Community

- Small-town feel with a welcoming, generous, neighborly, and inviting atmosphere [maintain this while continuing to grow] [It's familiar – know enough people for the City to feel like a comfort zone but don't know everyone so there's a chance to still meet new people]
- Safe community to raise a family, walk the streets, play outside, etc.
- Great community organizations that work well together
- High-tech Mayberry – nice quiet town with fiber optics throughout
- Maintain/have more boutique and mom/pop – community based, family-oriented shops
- A more active community – enhanced community involvement in activities
- More activities for people to participate in – could attract more people to live in town rather than commute in
- More variety of youth activities – art, music, etc., (outside of sports) in town
- Expand community events and gathering spaces
 - Community spaces to host different events, classes, etc., at the Lincoln Center – have a centralized entity run the building – become a community hub
 - A permanent attraction site at empty lot near train tracks and pool to host events (e.g., rides/festivals)
- Integrate more culture into the community – [educate/embrace the different heritages, continue to see more community diversity and be open and welcoming to different cultures]
- Need to identify how to get volunteers involved that are representative of all community members rather than the same people

Housing Development and Options

- More single-family residential development to attract more people to live in Rochelle
- City possibly have a housing rehab program for older houses – bank partnerships
- More affordable and quality housing (ownership and rental options)
- Less industry and more people
- Attract young families to the area
- Retain the young generation within the community after graduation (e.g., employment, other incentives)

Growth and Development

- Has the potential to attract visitors/residents
 - Has attraction/destination amenities (e.g., opera theater, outdoor pool, rec center, golf center, hospital, Kishwaukee college)
 - There are employment opportunities
 - Strategic location
- Has a lot of opportunity for growth – available green space [A lot of things going on from development to infrastructure]
- Maximize on the community's assets to continue to grow (e.g., location, rail park, etc.)
- Attract more industry
- Develop/revitalize the south side of Rochelle (e.g., business and residential attraction/retention) [Overcome the South/North side division and connect the community]
- Fiber optic available in all housing units and across the whole community to meet current/future trends (e.g., remote work)
- Expanded, thriving, and modernized downtown – more local shops and restaurants with a mix of cuisine to help attract people to the area
- Be able to shop local and receive services/needs without having to travel to a surrounding community
- Take advantage of work pattern changes, e.g., remote work [Expanded Metra/rail line – passenger access directly to Chicago]
- Improve community appearance – open for business, landscaping, more appealing

Collaboration and Communication

- The City can help facilitate/be the leader in collaborative efforts with other community groups, government partners, etc.
- Public/private partnership to provide incentives, assistance, etc. for day care options. Day care options available beyond the standard 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- Improve information sharing – communicate it more clearly, offer it in both English and Spanish * – More inclusive, multi-modal, enhance accessibility
- Improve community outreach and recognition for the diverse groups in the community
 - Be representative of all cultures – showcase/highlight the different cultures and be more integrated
- Communication from the City – would like an electronic community board – partner with the recreation center, or at the library – multiple locations
- Need more coordination/communication between the different service groups/organizations

Top Priorities

Housing

- Need to address housing –more options and volume – across different price points and life phases
- Increasing population – attracting residents, families, etc.
- Housing initiatives for single-family and multi-family growth

Soft Services

- Affordable childcare options (child & parenting program, flexible hours)
- Increase/expand services and activities for the senior population
- Community connectivity
 - Multi-modal transportation (e.g., bike/walking paths)
 - Public transportation – uber, lime bikes
- Community beautification - Improve community appeal and establish gathering places

Collaboration

- Collaboration across the community – government, industry, community partners, members, etc.
- Enhance/improve communication and coordination across the different departments (tools are in place, but aren't being adequately used) ***
- Share resources between departments (e.g., extend a helping hand)

Strategic Growth and Development

- Become known as a City that has the mentality of being forward-thinking and encouraging development* – put the vibe out there that Rochelle is open for business
- Growth for the good for the community [health care, industry, housing, etc.]
- Long-term strategic and sustainable growth
- North corridor/gateway improvements (finish road from AutoZone to Walgreens) – improve City appeal/beautification
- Provide unique incentives for development/revitalization of areas of town (e.g., south side)
- Retail growth – options on the south side, affordable grocery store
- Overcome the southside/north side division – grow throughout the town rather than just one specific area
- Redevelopment/revitalization of tired real estate areas of the community (e.g., south side, downtown, may market) *
- Store front/façade improvements
- Attraction and cultivation of a local skilled labor force (e.g., pipeline programs, grow your own – workforce and businesses stay in Rochelle)

Community Marketing and Promotion

- Improve/increase marketing – promote the community (e.g., some people from surrounding communities don't know there is a hospital in Rochelle)
- Celebrate Rochelle's attractions, accomplishments, events, etc.
- Community branding – zero downtime area – promote Rochelle as the best place for businesses to be (make more money here than anywhere else)
- Partnership between the City and business for marketing/advertising and promotion to attract people to Rochelle

