

City of Sheboygan Strategic Plan

FY 2023-24 through FY 2027-28





Acknowledgments

Elected Officials

Amanda Salazar, Alderperson
Angela Ramey, Alderperson
Betty Ackley, Aldersperson
Barb Felde, Aldersperson
Dean Dekker, Alderperson
Grazia Perrella, Alderperson
Joe Heidemann, Alderperson
Roberta Filicky-Peneski, Alderperson
Ryan Sorenson, Mayor
Trey Mitchell, Alderperson
Zach Rust, Alderperson
Natasha Torry, Municipal Court Judge
Meredith DeBruin, City Clerk
Charles Adams, City Attorney

City Staff

Chad Pelishek, Director of Planning & Development
Christopher Domagalski, Police Chief
David Biebel, Director of Public Works
Derek Muench, Director of Parking and Transit
Emily Rendall-Araujo, Senior Services Director
Eric Bushman, Director of IT
Eric Montellano, Fire Chief
Garrett Erickson, Library Director
Joe Trueblood, Water Utility Superintendent
Kaitlyn Krueger, Director of Finance
Carrie Arenz, Management Analyst

Acknowledgment is also given to former Alderpersons
Leslie Laster and Markus Savaglio and former City
Administrator Todd Wolf



Executive Summary

Introduction

Located on the eastern shore of Wisconsin, the City of Sheboygan is the “Spirit on the Lake.” From the breathtaking views of Lake Michigan along the City’s two miles of sandy beaches to world-class sailing and premier charter fishing, this coastal community has a lot to offer. For time spent out of the water, the historic downtown district boasts unique shopping, dining, and entertainment that is welcomed by many residents and visitors.

To expand on the City's successes and strengths, and to expand the initiatives implemented in the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan, the City of Sheboygan, Wisconsin engaged Baker Tilly to work in collaboration with the Mayor, Common Council, and City leaders from across the organization and various community stakeholders to develop the City's next five-year strategic plan. The process to develop the next strategic plan was complex and required coordination of numerous elements. These elements included:

- Identify the City's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats through discussions with City officials, staff, and community members.
- Facilitation of various planning workshops focused to develop a plan for the City's future.
- Establish the City's vision and mission statement to guide the operations and service delivery activities. Develop a set of goals and objectives that are intended to inform the City's decision-making process.



Why a Strategic Plan?

Strategic planning is a product of strategic thinking, which should occur not only in periodic planning exercises such as the one just completed, but on a continuous basis. Strategic thinking and planning occur at the highest levels of the organization but should not stop there. It must cascade to lower levels of the organization and directly drive decision making at the operational level. The intentions of strategic planning should be to identify and prioritize the core purposes of the organization and the most important attributes of success.

The strategic planning process, therefore, was designed as an exercise in collective foresight, wherein the City's leaders collaborated to clarify what long-term strategic success looks like for Sheboygan in the light of the conditions the City faces today and expects to face in the future.

Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning process focused primarily on what the city needs to do to achieve its long-term vision and accomplish its operational mission. The organizational strategic plan is therefore less concerned with the day-to-day of municipal operations and service delivery. Good strategic planning addresses the issues and opportunities that challenge the organization today and, more importantly, those that will challenge it tomorrow. Accordingly, the organizational strategic planning process was an exercise in collective foresight, to work all together to clarify what strategic success looks like for the City of Sheboygan long-term.

The approach used for the City's strategic planning project was broken out into four separate phases using the D4 Framework, Define, Discover, Develop, and Deploy.



Strategic Planning Process



DEFINE

This phase involved project start-up activities, initial data collection, stakeholder identification and involvement planning, initial meetings with key project staff, confirming scope and refining and finalizing the project plan.



DISCOVER

This was the primary data collection phase of the methodology, including the development of the stakeholder engagement plan, the completion of internal interviews and focus groups, and conducting baseline assessment activities. The discovery phase establishes the factual foundation for the sub-sequent phases of the planning process.



DEVELOP

Encompassed in this phase were the tasks and steps needed to create, review, and adopt a written strategic plan to guide the overall priorities of the organization going forward. It included the completion of multiple intensive strategy workshop sessions to identify strategic goals, objectives, and initiatives.



DEPLOY

This phase of the methodology involves the development of an implementation milestones, accountabilities, and various other steps necessary to link the strategic plan to other on-going City plans and programs.

Stakeholder Engagement

Introduction

One of the first steps to developing a successful strategic planning project requires engaging internal and external stakeholders. In this step, the Baker Tilly team worked closely with the City's project team to design a plan that considered a variety of stakeholder interests and groups within and outside of the organization. After establishing an engagement plan, the Baker Tilly team conducted discovery interviews that primarily focused on data collection, and facilitating internal one-on-one and focus group discussions. The next step of the stakeholder engagement process involved engaging external stakeholders. The involvement of community members is a cornerstone of a successful strategic plan and based on the stakeholder engagement plan, the Baker Tilly team facilitated numerous community focus group sessions, as well as distributing a resident questionnaire.

This section of the strategic plan document provides a summary of the major themes identified from the internal discovery interviews, the community focus group sessions, and the results of the resident questionnaire.



Stakeholder Engagement Participants

Elected Officials

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Community Focus Groups

Small Employers
Large Employers
Neighborhoods
Social Services
Tourism
Housing
Families and Schools
Community, Arts, and Culture
Elevating Diverse Voices



Internal Stakeholder Engagement

During the interview discussions, the Baker Tilly team asked targeted questions to identify and understand key organizational, operational, financial, service delivery, and other issues or concerns relevant to the current state and future strategic direction of the City of Sheboygan.

Following the conversations with the City's elected officials and staff members, the project team synthesized the results to identify common themes that surfaced during the discussions.

The common themes identified are as follows:



Municipal infrastructure, primarily roads and facilities, is a significant concern.



Improvement of the effectiveness of the city's communication and engagement with the public is a concern, including criticism of the city's website and the resultant proliferation of city websites for specific departments/programs. (Library, Police, Public Works, Uptown Social Senior Center, Shoreline Metro, Wastewater)



Housing choices – concerns about the availability of affordable workforce housing, senior housing, and potential opposition to increasing densities.



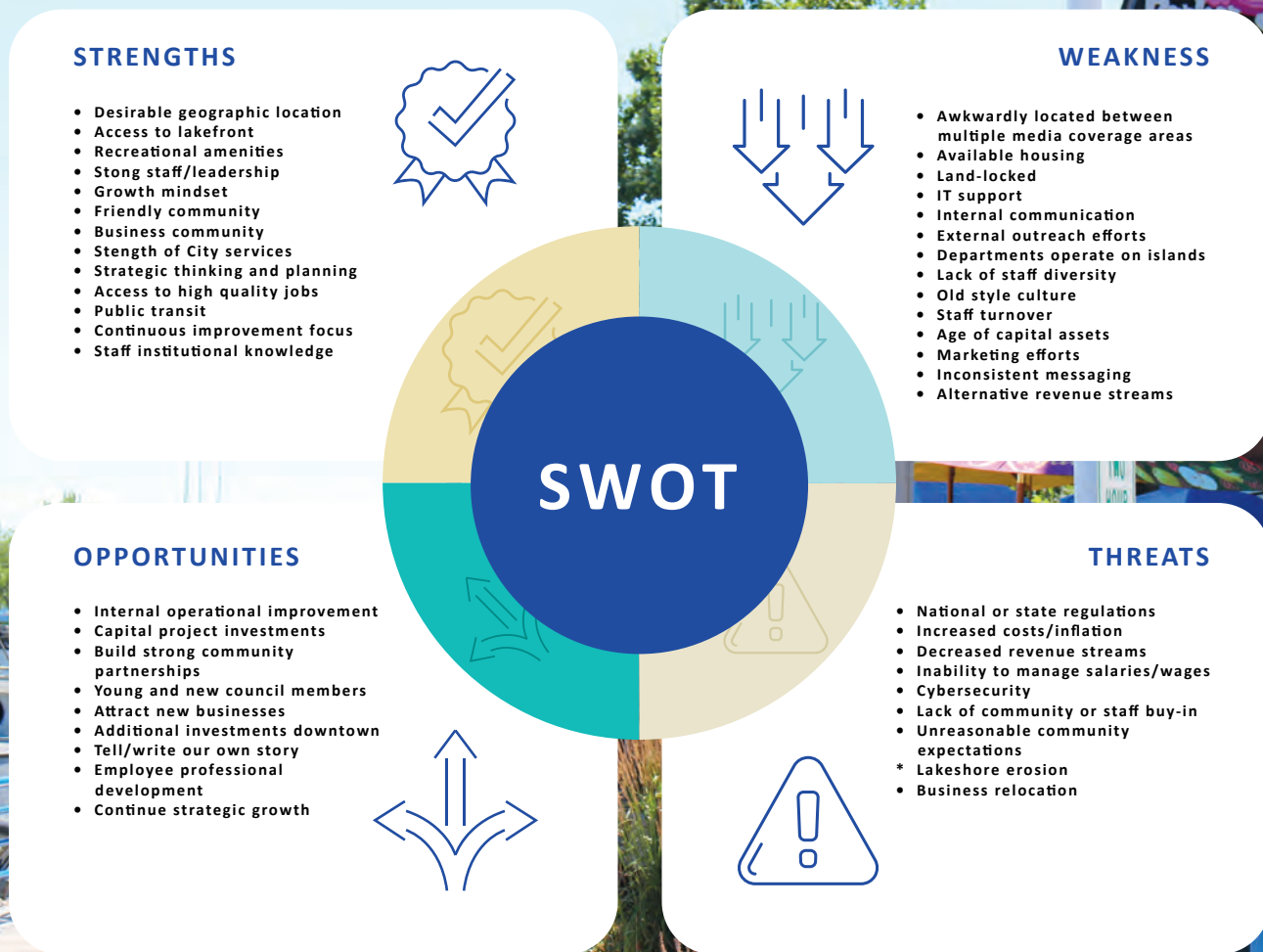
Economic development and tourism



Operational Excellence – people/process/technology issues to address, including diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.



Quality of life – parks/recreation/library/arts and culture, etc.



After evaluating the attributes of the current and future operational environment, staff members critically and constructively considered the current state of the organization itself.

- Strengths are those assets and capabilities presently available within the organization that can be leveraged to achieve desired results.
- Conversely, weaknesses are those current aspects of the organization that stand in the way of strategic success and that must be overcome to achieve optimal results.
- Opportunities are strategic advantage that are intended to capitalize on strengths, overcoming weaknesses, and mitigating threats.
- Threats are future external events that, if unmitigated, have the potential to impair the organization's ability to realize strategic success. These may be political, economic, societal, natural, or man-made in nature.

External Stakeholder Engagement

During the external stakeholder engagement phase, the Baker Tilly team met with various community focus groups and because of those conversations a variety of common themes about the city were revealed.

Here is a summary of the common themes from the community focus group sessions:



Shopping, Restaurants, and Downtown

- There is a large variety of and high-quality small businesses.
- There are many good restaurant options.
- There is a lack of shopping opportunities for certain necessities, such as clothing and specialty grocery, which leads to people leaving Sheboygan to fulfill their needs.
- Downtown is walkable and has potential, but parking needs to be evaluated and addressed to better support businesses; vacant storefronts should be addressed.
- Downtown and other successful restaurant/entertainment areas could be connected more strongly, through the street, pedestrian, and transit network. Examples were the Sheboygan River, South Pier, 8th Street, and 3 Sheeps. The City could consider additional wayfinding signage.



Community

- Many participants mentioned a positive view of the city as a safe community with a small town/Midwest vibe.
- The location is a strength and could be used as an advantage in marketing efforts.
- There is not a consensus on community inclusion. Some people mentioned a strong sense of community and that people are very friendly. Other people said that it can be difficult for new residents (especially young professionals, but also others) to get involved and meet people after moving there.
- Regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion, the City is making efforts to evaluate internal and external policies to update its practices and studying other communities for best practices. However, focus group participants that weighed in on the diversity, equity, and inclusion topic, indicated that there is a long way to go to change embedded culture and policy practices, both within the culture of the community, as well as within City government.
- There was not a consensus in how affordable the city is, even among people who have lived in bigger cities prior to moving (back) to Sheboygan. Generally, participants stated that the City is not easily affordable for people in working class or factory jobs, single parents, and those without a college degree, while it is very affordable for those in higher paying jobs. Please also see the discussion of affordable housing below.
- Challenges were identified regarding policies and practices for diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts (including outdated policies as well as criticisms of this planning process).



Communication, Collaboration, and Clarification of Rules and Responsibilities

- The City was commended for the approachability of the staff and how easy the City is for businesses to work with.
- Many groups wanted more and proactive communication from the city and wanted the city to take the lead (or at least designate a leader) in beginning collaboration with different actors in the same sector.
- The City could continue to raise awareness through communication on what they (and partner entities) are doing to address issues and make progress, including celebrating positive events and community “wins” in a timely manner.
- There seems to be a lack of understanding and/or miscommunication surrounding different actors’ and entities’ roles and responsibilities within the city. For example, within the tourism/regional marketing space, the City could lead discussion of goals and outcomes, and then offer more transparency about and coordination of different entities’ roles within the city.



Businesses and Workforce

- All businesses are having difficulties finding workers. Larger businesses in Sheboygan hire many kinds of workers, from factory workers to scientists with PhDs.
- It was generally agreed upon that workers in manufacturing are the most difficult to find, which can make it difficult to retain and grow a Sheboygan-based business location. The large employers recognized that they sometimes compete for the same talent. Additionally, they have seen people leave the area if they can work remotely.
- It is particularly difficult to recruit young professionals to the area from other parts of the country, especially if they are single. However, many employers have had generally good results in employee retention. Some employers are actively providing events and activities to integrate employees into the community. However, there may be opportunities to make this a community-wide effort through a young professional’s group or other community-based activities.
- A lack of available housing and difficulty finding childcare were frequently cited as inhibiting additional workers (especially manufacturing/blue collar workers) from relocating to Sheboygan.
- Large employers recruit nationwide, with many new employees taking jobs without visiting the city beforehand. They praised the social media efforts of the City, because it has been effective in enticing and attracting new employees to the area; businesses would like the City to keep this up; additional recruitment assistance from the community would be welcome.
- For some small businesses in the tourism sector, locals can be unsupportive of price points or food and entertainment offerings for regular outings, particularly in the non-tourism season. This can cause businesses to struggle in the off-season to reach consumers and support revenues.

Businesses and Workforce *continued*

- Small employers, especially, noted that the business community is very collaborative and will always step up to help each other out. Some indicated a strong relationship with the City; others did not have that relationship. Small businesses noted that they would appreciate assistance with formalizing their network to strengthen it further. Large employers didn't mention this issue; however their focus group was centered more on employee recruitment and retention.



Community Amenities

- People seem to love both the lakefront and the other natural amenities surrounding the city.
- People enjoy the entertainment that is available but would also appreciate more “active” entertainment; that is, something more than watching a show or walking through an art gallery.
- Many people brought up a lack of activities for teenagers and the young adult (18–20-year-old) cohorts, as well as a lack of places for young professionals.
- People seemed to agree that there were a lot of activities available for younger kids. The Community Recreation programs were good and appreciated.
- A third space (public social space) option would be appreciated, especially if it had something for all ages.
- Childcare is expensive and difficult to find.
- Public transportation is good in the city but doesn't serve the west part of the county well. It should also be reviewed for K-12 students.
- There was not a consensus on the quality of public schools, especially compared to “suburban” schools. It may be a difference in perception between people with and without kids in the schools; for example, the online ratings that people see when searching for a house compared to satisfaction once they interact with the schools.



Housing

- There is a reported housing shortage in the city. It can be difficult to find an affordable home for first time home buyers in a desirable price range.
- It was reported that new homes are typically being built in the \$300,000+ range, which is appropriate and affordable for some people but not for others.
- There are not many small new homes being built within city limits because it is difficult to make a profit on smaller homes in the current market. The City could look at potential incentives for this type of housing if that was a priority.
- There were concerns stated about a comparatively high property tax rate.
- There seems to be two types of rentals: high-end apartments and standalone older houses/units in neighborhoods. There are some reported difficulties with regulation/enforcement on standalone homes, both in terms of enforcing standards on landlords and on enforcement on tenant actions that filters up to landlords. This issue could be further studied for a policy review.
- Housing is very difficult to find, especially for those with yearly wages in the \$40,000 range and is impacting the workforce.

Vision, Mission, and Values

Our Vision

An organization's vision is aspirational in nature. It defines what the organization wants to be or to achieve. It is an idealized description of the desired future state of the City.

Based on a visioning exercises a consensus statement of vision for the city organization and its staff was developed, as follows:

"Sheboygan embraces a diverse and inclusive community culture, continuously practicing innovative and visionary governance."

VISION

Sheboygan embraces a diverse and inclusive community culture, continuously practicing innovative and visionary governance.

Promote sustainable growth

Advance organizational culture

Elevate community alliances and quality of life

Embrace continuous improvement



Our Mission

A mission statement describes the organization's purpose. It defines the "business" of the organization and its relationship to its customers.

A newly updated and more focused mission statement for the organization is shown below:

"The City of Sheboygan is committed to creating and maintaining a place of welcoming and belonging for all that live, work, and play in our great community."

Our Values

Values are the fundamental principles that guide how members of the organization conduct themselves in pursuit of the mission and vision of the organization. Together, values provide an ethical framework for decision making and action.

The City coined their values by an acronym “STAIRS”; Service, Teamwork, Accountability, Innovation, Respect, and Stewardship.

Here are the core values of the Sheboygan city organization:



SERVICE

Our duty is to the people we serve. We are accessible, consistent, and responsive in providing service and solutions beyond expectations.

TEAMWORK

Our team emphasizes trust, full cooperation, and commitment to thorough, effective communication without our City organization.

ACCOUNTABILITY

One of our most important values. We maintain an organizational reputation for openness, accountability, and integrity.

INNOVATION

Identify, develop, and deploy leading edge technology, employee development programs, and process improvement tools.

RESPECT

Treating people with dignity and an attitude of caring, understanding, and genuine consideration. Valuing everyone as an individual.

STEWARDSHIP

Proper use of public resources; striving continually for the greatest possible efficiency, effectiveness, and quality outcome.



ASPIRATIONAL

VISION

What we aspire to be

MISSION

What we do

CORE VALUES

What we believe in

STRATEGIC GOALS

What we must achieve over time

OBJECTIVES

How we will get there

INITIATIVES

Specific steps we will take

ACHIEVABLE

Strategic Goals and Objectives

After systematically scanning the external environment, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, identifying opportunities and threats, and confirming the organizations vision, mission, and values. The focus of the strategic planning effort turned to the identification of specific strategic goals likely to have the greatest positive impact on the performance of the organization and the results it delivers.

Using brainstorming techniques, the city leadership and staff were challenged to imagine a future filled with great success. They visualized an organization that is advancing steadily towards its vision and accomplishing its mission in accordance with its principles and values. Participants listed the action steps that, if taken today, would lead the organization to the future they visualized. They considered how to leverage strengths to overcome weaknesses and how to mitigate threats to create opportunities.

Many ideas were generated and captured on “sticky notes,” with participants describing their own aspirations and priorities for the organization. Working collaboratively, they grouped these ideas together to reveal common key strategic areas of long-term focus, along with a set of immediate steps to initiate and propel the implementation of the strategic plan.

Goals and Objectives

We have ambitious goals as we respond to community interests and organizational needs. Our Strategic Plan contains four multi-year goals covering a range of important initiatives intended to position the City well over five years.

Each of these goals has an associated set of strategies.

Advance Organizational Culture

- Invest in Employee Development
- Continue to Recruit, Hire and Retain Employees
- Develop and Implement a robust Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Program
- Empower Employees and Improve Collaboration



Embrace Continuous Improvement

- Develop On-Going Operational Evaluation Program
- Improve Internal and External Communications
- Enhance Facilities Improvement Planning



Elevate Community Alliances and Quality of Life

- Enhance Community Relationships and Engagement Practices
- Embrace Community Recreational, Social and Leisure Offerings
- Embrace Intergovernmental and Business Collaboration



Promote Sustainable Growth

- Embrace Economic Development
- Embrace Future Expansion
- Encourage Housing Opportunities

Advance Organizational Culture

An organization's culture defines the way to behave within the organization. This culture consists of shared beliefs and values established by leaders and then communicated and reinforced through various methods, ultimately shaping employee ideals, behaviors and understanding. The City of Sheboygan is dedicated to embracing an organizational culture that is based on welcoming and belonging.



Objectives

- Invest in Employee Development
- Continue to Recruit, Hire and Retain Employees
- Develop and implement a robust Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Program
- Empower Employees and Improve Collaboration

Initiatives

- Invest in Employee Development
 - Incorporate professional training within employee performance goals
 - Develop a comprehensive employee training program
 - Explore education reimbursement program
- Continue to Recruit, Hire and Retain Employees
 - Revamp and modernize hiring process
 - Develop an annual employee survey
 - Establish a recruitment program
- Develop and implement a robust Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Program
 - Collaborate with local groups and community members to develop a DEIB program
 - Explore the hiring of a DEIB Coordinator
 - Review existing personnel policies
 - Develop comprehensive on-boarding guidelines for staff, alders, and committee members
- Empower Employees and Improve Collaboration
 - Establish an employee engagement committee
 - Develop cross-functional employee training program
 - Re-establish employee relations committee

Embrace Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement is the ongoing improvement of practices, services, or processes through incremental and breakthrough improvements. These efforts can seek "incremental" improvement over time or "breakthrough" improvement all at once. It is important to the city to actively integrate innovative measures to bring better value and services to the community.



Objectives

- Develop On-Going Operational Evaluation Program
- Improve Internal and External Communications
- Enhance Facilities Improvement Planning

Initiatives

- Develop On-Going Operational Evaluation Program
 - Establish continuous improvement committee
 - Create an annual Department process improvement report
 - Expand the LEAN program
- Improve Internal and External Communications
 - Establish an agenda item during team meetings to discuss best practices or process improvements – report to department heads monthly
 - Establish a monthly lunch and learn meeting
 - Develop partnership with local and regional media
 - Develop communication and social media plan
 - Improve internal employee newsletter with more engagement
- Enhance Facilities Improvement Planning
 - Explore feasibility of using renewable energy for City facilities
 - Leverage the enterprise asset management system to develop a facilities maintenance plan

Elevate Community Alliances and Quality of Life

Engaging and building alliances within the community is essential to providing effective public service and fostering a high quality of life. This effort aims to elevate community engagement by working closely with community groups to ensure the city's decision-making process emphasizing equity as a critical input and outcome.



Objectives

- Enhance Community Relationships and Engagement Practices
- Embrace Community Recreational, Social and Leisure Offerings
- Embrace Intergovernmental and Business Collaboration

Initiatives

- Enhance Community Relationships and Engagement Practices
 - Reevaluate Neighborhood Association structure and make necessary changes and updates
 - Align community/ neighborhood investments with 3.1.1
 - Expand on the Police and Fire Academies with a General City Academy/ "Open Doors" program
 - Maximize use of public facilities to improve public engagement
- Embrace Community Recreational, Social and Leisure Offerings
 - Focus on activities for families, children, tweens, and teens/ young adults
 - Intentionally recruit businesses catering to 3.2.1 group
 - Improve nightlife offerings
- Embrace Intergovernmental and Business Collaboration
 - Develop a Community Engagement framework
 - Maximize City relationships with community organizations
 - Track City engagement with the community and "be our own champion"
 - Form partnerships with businesses to accomplish 3.2

Promote Sustainable Growth

The desire to grow and expand as a city must come with a balance. This strategy seeks to promote sustainable expansion and growth to meet the needs of today without compromising the quality of life for future generations. By making sustainable investments the future of the city will improve and bring further opportunities.

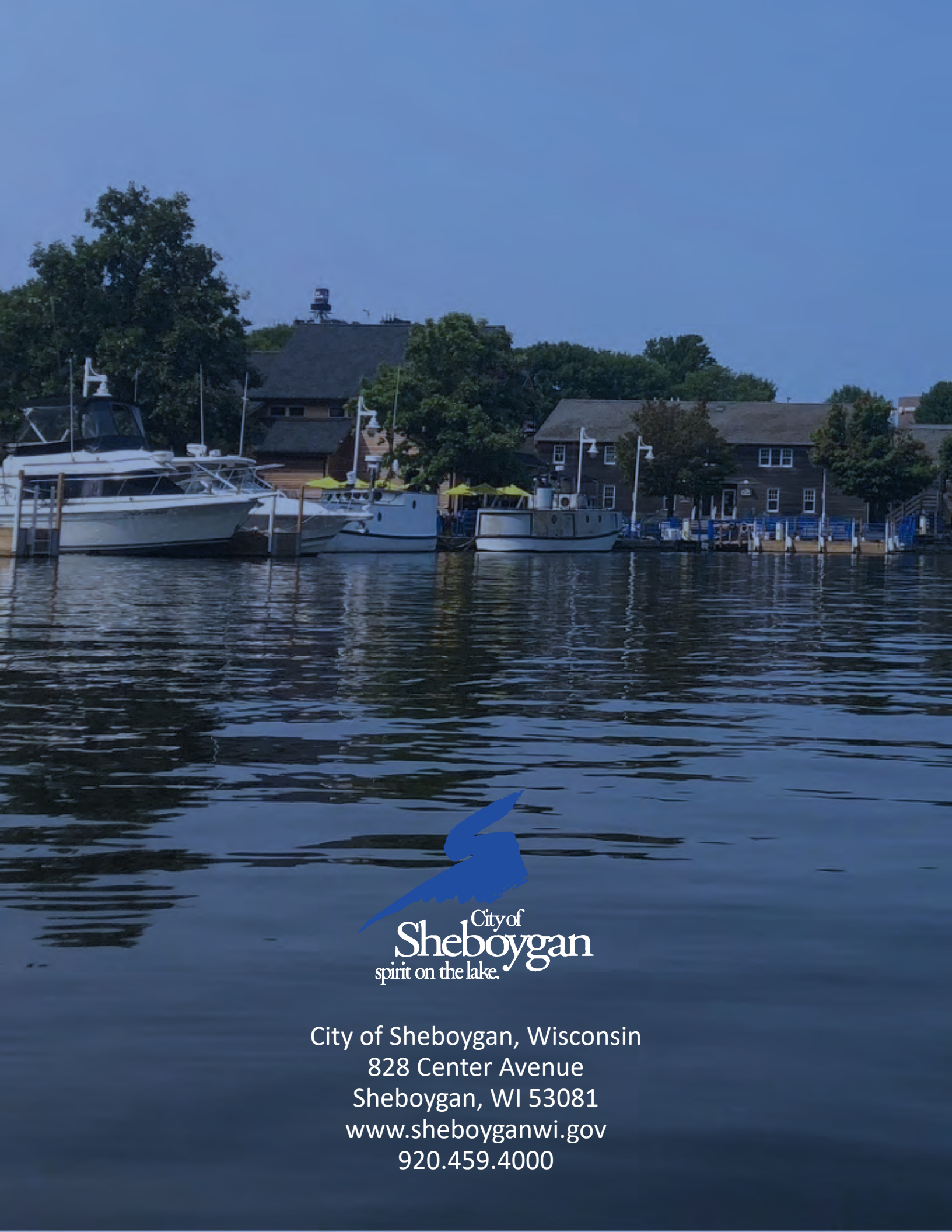


Objectives

- Embrace Economic Development
- Embrace Future Expansion
- Encourage Housing Opportunities

Initiatives

- Embrace Economic Development
 - New marketing and outreach strategies for the city regarding development
 - Focus on recruiting varying types of workforce and jobs to our local economy (Adding Tech/Data jobs to our area)
 - Create a program to help “Develop the Developer” with partners (Chamber/SCEDC) to provide resources for smaller local developers
- Embrace Future Expansion
 - Reimagine roads/ infrastructure needs (Road Diets, Complete Streets)
 - Develop long term expansion and redevelopment master plan
 - Integrate tactical urbanism techniques to try to optimism space
- Encourage Housing Opportunities
 - Effectively communicate the need for new housing in Sheboygan and existing constraints leading to a gap, leverage business leaders when helpful for economic development/ workforce aspect
 - Develop new zoning ordinance that incorporates urbanism
 - Develop a master plan for the Gartman property



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