



City of Westlake, Florida Strategic Plan 2025

Prepared by the:
International Institute for Leadership
Development and Training
Dale S. Sugerman, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

There are several key reasons for a City Council to conduct a strategic planning effort. Generally, it is a way to directly impact their effectiveness, resilience, and ability to serve their community. A strategic plan for the City of Westlake is important for a number of reasons:

Anticipating and Managing Growth

- **Rapid population growth:** The City of Westlake is one of the fastest-growing cities in the State of Florida. Strategic planning helps cities manage infrastructure, housing, transportation, and services to accommodate growth responsibly.
- **Urban sprawl and land use:** A strategic planning effort will allow the City of Westlake to protect green space, manage zoning, and guide development in sustainable ways.

Enhancing Resilience to Natural Hazards

- **Hurricane and flood risk:** Florida is highly vulnerable to extreme weather events. Strategic planning enables municipalities such as Westlake to integrate climate adaptation, disaster preparedness, emergency management efforts, and long-term resilience into their policies.

Ensuring Fiscal Sustainability

- **Efficient use of resources:** Strategic planning aligns priorities with limited budgets, helping the City of Westlake to allocate resources more effectively. Continuing to use contract staff is a determination that the City Council has made and will continue to re-evaluate as time goes on, and as the City continues to grow.
- **Long-term financial forecasting:** Planning supports proactive financial management, reducing the likelihood of budget shortfalls and enabling capital investment. This is particularly important in a rapid-growth community such as the City of Westlake.

Improving Quality of Life

- **Community engagement:** Strategic plans routinely involve public input, which helps municipalities respond to residents' actual needs and values. The City of Westlake invited the public to participate in its current strategic planning process.
- **Service delivery:** Planning allows cities to identify gaps in services like public safety, transportation access, sanitation, parks, and libraries, and improve the delivery of those services.

Strengthening Governance and Accountability

- **Performance measurement:** Strategic planning sets clear goals and metrics, making it easier to track progress and ensure accountability.
- **Intergovernmental coordination:** With many local, regional, and state agencies being active throughout the State of Florida, strategic planning by the City of Westlake will help it to align its activities, projects and programs with many of these broader initiatives and put it in a position to secure grants or funding from regional, state, and federal sources.

Economic Development

- **Attracting investment:** A well-thought-out strategic plan signals to businesses and developers that the City of Westlake is stable, forward-thinking, and investment ready. Commercial development opportunities abound in Westlake due to the availability of undeveloped land, with unsurpassed infrastructure already in place to support appropriate development.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance

- **State requirements:** Florida law requires local governments to engage in comprehensive planning and to update those plans on a specific timetable. Strategic planning supports compliance with these mandates. The City Council has recently determined that it is appropriate to update the City's 2018 Comprehensive Plan and will have that work completed by February 27, 2026.

Introductory Summary

Strategic planning is not just a bureaucratic exercise—it's a critical tool for any Florida municipality to shape its future deliberately and responsibly. It enables a city such as the City of Westlake to be proactive rather than reactive, resilient in the face of risk, and responsive to the needs of a growing and diverse population.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Westlake City Council determined that there was a need to undertake a strategic planning process to outline its goals and desires for dealing with many of the most immediate needs of the community. The International Institute for Leadership Development and Training (IILDT) was engaged in January of 2025 to guide the elected officials through the strategic planning process. Prior to the start of the June Strategic Planning Workshop, IILDT conducted one-on-one interviews with all five elected officials covering topics such as identification of the strengths and opportunities of the organization, the challenges and weaknesses faced by the organization, and the goals and priorities envisioned by each of the individual elected officials. These one-on-one meetings were conducted during the month of April.

IILDT also conducted a one-half-day community engagement meeting, where residents and businesses were invited to speak about the issues they believed were most important for the City to consider as it not only serves its citizens, but continues to grow at the very rapid pace that it is currently experiencing. Westlake citizens and businesses were able to speak about any issue they had on their mind, without having to publicly identify themselves when speaking, or where they resided in the city (as they typically must do at a City Council meeting). To ensure honest and candid comments from the public, IILDT requested that members of the City Council not attend the Community Engagement meeting so that speakers at the meeting would not feel intimidated that they might be seen as being critical or complaining about any of the actions of the Westlake governing body. The Community Engagement meeting was held on May 24, 2025, at The Lodge at Westlake Adventure Park. Approximately 50 people attended part or all of the meeting.

The Strategic Planning Workshop was held over a two-day period (June 20-21) at The Lodge at Westlake Adventure Park as well. In attendance were all five members of the City Council, the City Manager, the City Clerk and Deputy City Clerk, the City Attorney and staff from the City's contract Planning Department. Dr. Dale S. Sugerman, Ph.D. from the International Institute for Leadership Development and Training was the workshop facilitator. The two-day workshop was an intensive interactive dialogue by members of the City Council, with input provided by the City Manager, the City Clerk, and other members of the contract staff. The public was invited to attend and observe both days of the workshop with an opportunity to provide comment at the end of the second day.

COMPONENT PARTS OF THE CITY OF WESTLAKE

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The two-day strategic planning process included the following component parts:

Strategic Planning Versus Strategic Thinking. A brief discussion took place about the difference between strategic planning and strategic thinking. In strategic planning, an executive leadership team gathers and decides the best path(s) the organization can take to achieve its goals. This is the function of the elected leadership. In strategic thinking, elected officials, city staff, consultants, and interested stakeholders continually interact to find new ways to contribute to the organization's overall success. The world is changing rapidly. Organizations need strategic thinkers to stay one step ahead of a dynamic environment.

The Environmental Scan. The City Council reviewed an environmental scan (historical data*) of the City, including:

- Median age of residents
- Race and ethnicity of residents
- Marital status of residents
- Number of households
- Types of residential units and occupancy
- Value of those households
- Income of residents
- Educational attainment of residents
- Transportation to work (in minutes of commute)

* Data was collected from: U.S. Census Bureau (2023). *American Community Survey 5-year estimates*. Retrieved from *Census Reporter Profile page for Westlake, FL* <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US1276417-westlake-fl/>

Because the City of Westlake is growing so rapidly, most of the statistics from the 2023 U.S. Census Bureau's *American Community Survey 5-year Estimates* did not provide the City Council with an up-to-date accurate picture of the community currently, compared to the statistics contained in the survey. However, this survey is the most recent available from the U.S. Census Bureau and is information that is commonly reviewed by individuals (particularly real estate professionals) who conduct on-line searches for information about community profiles. While the 2023 survey was not very insightful for the City Council, it did provide members of the governing body examples of what others might see when doing research on the City of Westlake, Florida.

A Discussion of City Finances and Budget Trends. A summary of key components of the City budgets from 2017 through 2025 were reviewed. Key categories included the approved annual budgets, the approved annual millage rates, and the establishment of reserves. This information was studied to pick up on the financial trends that the City has been experiencing since inception.

Building Permit Statistics from 2017 through May of 2025 were reviewed for single-family homes, multi-family homes, commercial buildings and industrial structures. It was noted that while the community continues to grow at a very rapid rate, the most recent trend is slightly away from single family homes, moving toward the growth of multi-family homes (townhouses). While there have not been any industrial building permits issued during the study period, it was suggested that there may be value in considering efforts to attract industrial tenants in the future.

A Comprehensive Review of PBSO Statistics from 2019 through May of 2025 was studied and discussed such that the topic of public safety rose to the top of the list of things that are most important to the City Council.

A Discussion on the City's 2018 Comprehensive Plan and the update to the Plan which is currently being undertaken by Chen Moore, the City's outside consultant planning firm.

A Summary of Engagement Themes offered in advance of the strategic planning workshop by the elected officials and members of the community were reviewed. While the workshop presentation covered just a summary of the various engagement themes, the City Council was

provided with a comprehensive listing of all comments received both from all five of the elected officials and from the public. The complete list of comments by both the elected officials and the residents/businesses who attended the community engagement meeting were found in Appendix A and Appendix B (respectively) included in the Strategic Planning Workshop guidebook.

The Crafting of a City Vision. The City Council worked on developing a City Vision. A Vision sets the focus toward the future. It is an aspirational description of a desired future state about where and what the City of Westlake wants to be.

The Crafting of a City Mission. The City Council worked on developing a City Mission. The Mission is the description of the purpose of the City of Westlake. It fundamentally defines what the organization stands for, and how, and what it will do to serve the residents, the businesses, and the public.

The Crafting of the City Council's Core Values. The City Council worked on developing a list of Core Values. The Core Values of an organization drive the process of implementation. Core Values provide the basis for how the organization and its members will work to achieve the Vision and the Mission. It is how we will behave as an organization.

RESULTS OF THE CITY COUNCIL'S WORK

The City's Vision

The City Council created the following City Vision:

OUR VISION

Westlake is a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable city-where innovation flourishes, safety is foundational, and a community where its residents are proud to call home, now and for generations to come.

The City's Mission

The City Council created the following City Mission:

OUR MISSION

The City of Westlake is committed to building a safe, inclusive, and sustainable community by thoughtfully guiding growth, prioritizing public safety, and enhancing the quality of life by demonstrating responsive leadership.

The City Council's Core Values

The City Council set the following Core Values:

OUR CORE VALUES

We will act with integrity and honesty.

We will be ethical in all our efforts.

We will demonstrate responsible stewardship.

We will always place safety first.

We will be transparent and accountable.

We will lead and treat everyone with respect.

Once the City’s Vision, Mission, and Core Values were established, the City Council and staff began to work on identifying its organizational goals, objectives, and priorities for the next 1-3 years. The priorities were set using a method known as S.M.A.R.T. Goals. S.M.A.R.T. Goals are built around being:

Specific: they are well defined, clear, and unambiguous.

Measurable: with specific criteria that measures progress toward accomplishment of the goal.

Achievable: the goal can be attained and is not impossible to achieve.

Realistic: the goal is within reach, realistic, and relevant to the City’s purpose.

Timely: the goal has a clearly defined timeline, including a start date and a target end date.

The Goals, Objectives, and Priorities Set During the Strategic Planning Workshop:

● Collaborating with Minto Communities

Activity	Timeframe
Once the City’s Strategic Plan is completed, sharing a copy of it with Minto Communities.	August 2025
Sending an invitation to the developer to hold discussions with the City Council about potential future plans of both parties.	September 2025
Holding an open dialogue meeting for updates on activities planned by the City as well as Minto Communities.	TBD

● Developing a Westlake app

Activity	Timeframe
Collect a list of potential vendors at the FLC annual conference.	August 2025
Complete the evaluation of potential vendors and invite proposals (RFP) from those vendors.	November 2025
Award a contract for delivery and installation of a City of Westlake app.	January 30, 2026
Redesign and update the City’s website.	TBD
Considering the hiring of a Public Information Officer.	TBD

- Establishing a City Hall

Activity	Timeframe
Develop and publish a Request for Proposal to acquire temporary lease space for a City Hall presence.	December 2025

- Installing Public Safety Technology

Activity	Timeframe
Develop a Public Private Partnership (PPP) ordinance to provide PBSO with access to Westlake businesses' CCTV videos.	September 2025
Invite vendors to study the use of speed zone cameras in school zones.	March 2026
Allow vendor presentations for installation of the speed zone cameras at a City Council meeting.	May 2026
Determine if the City wants to expand the use of License Plate Readers.	Mid-2026

- Completing Road Interconnectivity

Activity	Timeframe
Adopt a Resolution of Support to send to the Palm Beach County Commission for the construction of 60 th Street N from Seminole Pratt Whitney Road to State Route 7.	September 2025
Adopt a Resolution of Support to send to the Palm Beach County Commission for the provision of multimodal access between Seminole Ridge High and Grove Market Place.	September 2025

- Determining the Future of a City Park

Activity	Timeframe
Conduct the next bi-annual meeting between the City and the Seminole Improvement District.	August 2025
Investigate future funding sources for park development.	September 2025
Conduct a community survey to determine the interest of the residents in moving forward with the proposed City Park.	October 2025

Graphic Summary of Workshop Results

Included with this report is a one-page graphic summary of the collaborative efforts and results of the strategic planning work done by the Westlake City Council and the contract staff. The City is encouraged to not only make this report available to the entire community, but to actively share with the residents and businesses of the community the one-page graphic summary of the workshop results so that everyone can easily see the work done by the City Council and to see the outcome of the strategic planning process.

Report Conclusion

In conclusion, the strategic planning workshop provided Westlake's elected officials and contract staff with a valuable opportunity to collaboratively assess current challenges, define clear priorities, and chart a focused course for future governance of the City. Through open dialogue, scenario planning, and goal-setting exercises, participants strengthened their shared understanding of critical issues facing the City of Westlake, including infrastructure, sustainability, civic engagement, and fiscal responsibility. The insights and strategies developed during the workshop will serve as a practical foundation for informed decision-making and long-term success. Continued collaboration and commitment to these strategic goals will ensure that the City of Westlake remains resilient, responsive, and well-positioned to meet the evolving needs of its residents, businesses, and the general public.

Dale S. Sugerman, Ph.D.
Workshop Facilitator
International Institute for Leadership
Development and Training
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