

Village of Coal City 2018 Strategic Planning and Goal Development Executive Summary



Prepared by Session Facilitators

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategic planning is a preferred approach to guiding an organization's future rather than making decisions issue by issue. The Village of Coal City (the "Village") engaged the Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) at Northern Illinois University (NIU) to facilitate a series of strategic planning workshops with Board members and staff to update the Village's 2009 strategic plan. As an organization, the Village has followed a regular process of exploring the community's future and establishing goals for the Board and staff to follow to guide policy priorities and provide quality services for the community. As part of the 2018 process, the workshop retreat sessions provided a positive atmosphere for Board and senior staff to work together to collaboratively develop strategic goals and determine future visions and directions for the Village as a community and as an organization. As was discussed during the workshop, executive-level retreats and strategic planning sessions are a staple of good governance and leadership for progressive organizations.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND GOALS

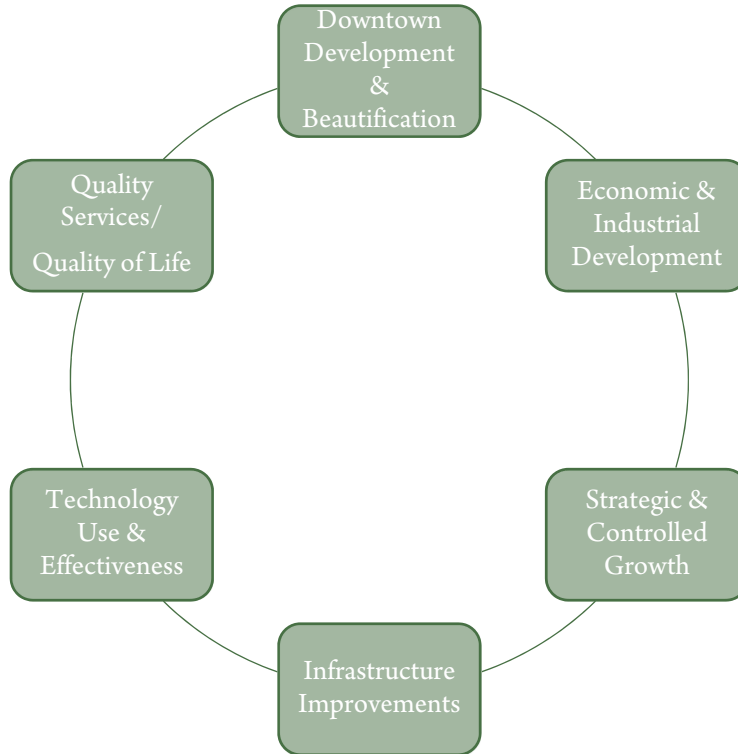
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Ultimately, six key strategic priority areas were identified as an outcome of the process highlighting activities and initiatives that the Village should focus on in both the short- and long-term. The strategic priority areas identified during the workshop [in no particular order] included:

- *downtown development and beautification,*
- *economic development,*
- *strategic and controlled growth,*
- *infrastructure improvements,*
- *quality of life/quality services, and*
- *technology use and effectiveness.*

Coal City's Strategic Priority Areas

2018 Strategic Plan Update



STRATEGIC GOALS

Participants were asked to identify short - and long-term goals for the Village. After the goals were developed, 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). Following the classification exercise, the Board was asked to delineate, via an online ranking exercise, which goals should be given the highest priority. In total, the group developed six short-term routine goals, seven short-term complex goals, four long-term routine goals and eleven long-term complex goals. The top three goals from each category are offered here as a process “snapshot” representing the most important strategic goals or priority areas for the Board and staff to address in the months and years ahead. For a full review and appreciation of all the strategic goals and priority areas presented, discussed and ranked, please refer to the full report.

Top Three Goals within Each Quadrant of the Time and Complexity Matrix

**SHORT-TERM
ROUTINE**

- Establish standards for consistent delivery of Village services and infrastructure repair/maintenance
- Provide incentives to encourage and attract new businesses both large and small
- Work with neighboring communities to develop a coordinated I-55 Development Plan (i.e., Braidwood, Diamond, Coal City)

**SHORT-TERM
COMPLEX**

- Complete downtown streetscape reconstruction and improvements
- Create a detailed plan for expanding water and wastewater capacity
- Undertake initial steps for industrial business absorption

**LONG-TERM
ROUTINE**

- Facilitate the completion of current housing developments (i.e., meadow, Richards)
- Identify redevelopment opportunities and strategic locations
- Conduct a space-needs analysis to improve/expand the Public Works facility

**LONG-TERM
COMPLEX**

- Advance economic development; work to fill all vacancies on Broadway
- Have 5-8 industrial starts underway
- Achieve progress toward attainment of identified funding targets

Village of Coal City 2018 Strategic Planning and Goal Development Full Report



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INTRODUCTION

As a local government, the Village of Coal City has placed itself among the leading communities that engage in formalized goal setting and strategic planning processes. These future-driven processes involve a series of designed reviews and discussion sessions that create the environment for both future visioning and the establishment of strategic goals and priorities (Figure 1). Strategic planning sessions are not a new phenomenon for progressive communities and the value of such processes continues to be recognized as a best practice by policy-making Boards and staffs in both private and public organizations. This important work will serve the community well into the coming years.

The Village Board and senior staff gathered in 2018 to revisit, explore and update their future vision for the Village and establish new strategic goals. The 2018 workshop sessions provided a positive atmosphere to set aside time to methodically, *strategically* determine where it is the Village wants to go as an organization and a community. The Village Board and staff undertook a strategic planning process in 2009. As was shared

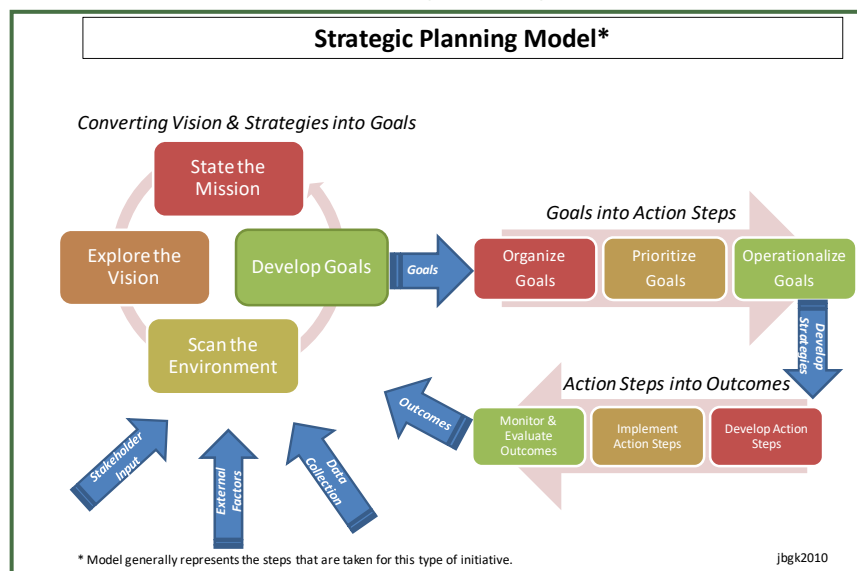
with the Board and staff at the conclusion of the workshop, the Village will be able to take the outcomes of the 2018 update to further refine and develop its strategic goals by establishing key action steps and strategies as the fiscal year moves along.

Keep in mind that the thoughtful pursuit of strategies and use of the Village’s resources (including financial resources and professional staff time) will be the key to good results. The Village’s commitment to high standards can place a strain on the organization, as excellence requires adequate staff time, expertise, and resources. In the end, quality policies and implementation equate to careful 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 will be the key to stretching the Village’s resources as far as they can go.

Outline of Leadership Exercises and Discussion Sessions

The format for all of the workshop’s discussion sessions were highly participative and interactive. The process utilized a group discussion approach called ‘*Nominal Group Technique*’ where participants are assured equal opportunities to speak and share opinions by the facilitator. During the sessions, individuals had the

Figure 1. Strategic Planning Model



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 organizational values, purpose, future directions, and priorities.

Session I. Introduction Exercise – Opening Exercise/Icebreaker and Visioning

Each participant engaged in an opening exercise by selecting an item from the facilitator’s “garage sale” table-top. The items chosen were used by participants to describe and illustrate an important topic to be discussed during the workshop and to complete an opening visioning exercise. The visioning and issue identification exercise asked participants to answer two simple but thought-provoking questions. For the visioning component, participants were asked the following visioning and imagination question: “If you left the Village, and didn’t return until 10, 12 or 15 years into the future, what would you *hope to see*, or what would you *think you will see...when you returned*”? Participants were asked to think about their ideas ahead of time and then share them with the group during the workshop. This was a brainstorming exercise and all ideas about the Village’s future were encouraged and shared.

Below is a summary of the responses to the opening exercises. **Note: (^) indicates a statement that was repeated more than once.*

A. Opening Exercise/Icebreaker: What Important Topics Should be Discussed?

Garage Sale Item	Important Topic Identification
Brass screw	Attract high-skilled manufacturing industries
Valve tape	Keep up with technology and infrastructure
Capitol	Village Hall and Police are located in a multi-use facility
Brick	Growth – commercial development and downtown improvements
Hard hat	Construction in the downtown area including both public and private as well as additional housing
Computer chip	Plan ahead for technology changes
Brick	Building infrastructure, increase the tax based, continued partnership between the Village and Fire Department
Fire hydrant	Consider building an additional water tower
Watch	Time to start discussing difficult/sensitive topics (i.e., changing demographics, mental health needs, senior services)
Play-Doh	Quality of life, fun activities, memories, enjoy childhood
Plumbing valve	Infrastructure improvements and planning
Gasket	Infrastructure improvements (underneath and above ground)
Garbage can	Land use planning for new municipal and police facilities
Jacks	Recreation center and activities

Sprinkler spigot	Water/sewer treatment plant expansion to meet future growth and development
Illinois road map	Identifying future priorities and communication with the community. The Village should lead in Illinois rather than just survive
Lightbulb holder	Consider utilities to meet future growth and development. Make the downtown a destination
USB	Village grows and prospers while keeping up-to-date with technology to attract industry
Hard hat	Controlled growth – maintain small town feel and identity
Slinky	Entertainment options for all ages
Computer cord	Technology and telecommunication improvements (i.e., dead spots, fiber optic connection)
Flower	Downtown beautification/landscaping, entertainment options, businesses, attract people downtown
Drafting kit	Attract more small businesses to the Village and more community events to increase foot traffic
Golf ball	More recreation opportunities and indoor and outdoor bike paths and trails

Reflections and Themes – Important Topics

- ◆ Quality of Life
- ◆ Infrastructure
- ◆ Technology (Use and Access)
- ◆ Downtown Revitalization
- ◆ Village Services
- ◆ Economic Development and Growth
- ◆ Recreation
- ◆ Plan Ahead for Changing Demographics

B. Exploration of the Village of Coal City’s Desired Future Condition: Visions of the

Future (*If I were to leave Coal City today and didn’t return for 10-15 years, when I return, I think or hope I will see....*)

- ◆ *Downtown, I think/hope I’ll see...*
 - An improved and thriving downtown with more local businesses (^)
 - New water tower
 - A variety of mixed-used buildings (residential and businesses)
 - El Fresco dining options
 - No vacancies
 - Green space on both sides
 - Public art
 - Biker- and walker-friendly streetscape and pathways
 - Widened sidewalks
 - Background music
 - Quiet trains – quiet zone
 - Hidden parking
 - Seasonal landscaping
 - West side of Broadway developed

- The downtown area will stretch from North Avenue to Walnut
- We'll be able to maintain the character of downtown
- Community events and gatherings will be held to draw people to the downtown area and the rest of town

◆ Community-wide, I think/hope we'll see...

- Industrial park with Coal City proper –
- South of town developed, including warehousing/ manufacturing
- Streets with curbs – urban cross-section design
- Community center that will be a recreational hub for the community across from the middle school (^)
 - Similar to the YMCA – the Center will have youth/adult programming
- Senior housing options and choices– assisted and independent living as well as senior activities (^)
- Increased housing stock (^)
 - Starter, middle, high-end housing options for all ages and stages
- Robust park district
- Infrastructure maintained and improved
- Technology advancements and access (fiber to the home)
- More commercial development West of Route 113
- Reed Road expanded to six lanes
- Hotel on the corner of Berta and Reed Rd.
- Widening of Route 113 to help with the traffic flow
- Grade separation of Route 113 at the railroad tracks
- Multi-use sports dome to attract athletic tournaments and tourism
- Municipal complex that can handle all departments for efficiency (Village Hall, Police Department, Public Works) and other intergovernmental offices (^)
- Healthy-successful small business community/vibrant Town Center
- Opera House restored
- Move train station near track redevelopment as a museum
- Consolidated municipalities along Route 113 to leverage resources
- Village operated wind turbines
- Updated Public Works facility
- Expanded water/wastewater plant (^)
- Consolidated Fire Department and Emergency Management Services
- Expanded Building/Community Development Department (i.e., staffing levels to meet future demand)
- A golf course

Session II. Environmental Scanning: Surrender or Lead

Participants were introduced to a leadership exercise entitled “Surrender or Lead.” The premise is that sub-groups of the participants work to develop responses to simple but extremely effective and thought-

provoking questions. Participants were divided into four working groups and asked to respond to a series of structured questions designed to initiate discussion and reveal perspectives, challenges, and frustrations of the participants as a whole. The participants' responses were recorded and discussed. The responses provided by each group are shared below. Underlined sections represent key phrases that groups provided in response to the open questions. Groups were asked to name their group to offer a spirit of camaraderie among group members.

Team 1-

[Team name: Rock Stars]

1. We want to grow, but controlled.
2. The two most important things to focus on are downtown events because it would help bring visitors in.
3. If it weren't for small businesses failing, we would have a thriving Village.
4. We need to finally determine our own future.
5. Reverse angle parking will have the biggest impact on our future.

Team 2 –

[Team name: Team Water tower]

1. We want to develop strategically.
2. The two most important things to focus on are water and sewer capacity because without them there is not growth.
3. If it weren't for lack of revenue, we would further incentivize the downtown to promote building and renovating.
4. We need to finally execute on revitalizing the downtown.
5. Industrial development will have the biggest impact on our future.

Team 3 –

[Team name: Vision Quest]

1. We want to grow but not lose our small town support system.
2. The two most important things to focus on are infrastructure and seizing opportunities because we want to accomplish our vision.
3. If it weren't for funding challenges, we would be able to accomplish our future goals.
4. We need to finally stand up for our future plans (i.e., park district/community center).
5. Revenue/taxing base will have the biggest impact on our future.

Team 4 –

[Team name: Visionaries]

1. We want to develop downtown but no funding.
2. The two most important things to focus on are revenue and taxpayer buy-in because the community needs to invest in and support businesses and patronage.

3. If it weren't for natural disasters, we would be able to provide more revenue to support several community growth options.
4. We need to finally broaden our tax base.
5. Established infrastructure will have the biggest impact on our future.

Session III. Environmental Scanning: Internal and External S.W.O.T. Analysis

The next step of the strategic planning process involved reviewing and accounting for the internal and external factors present in the environment that can potentially influence the success of the Village, 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 difficult to achieve the desired future state. These elements included both internal and external factors, such as conditions, trends, regulations, agencies, resources, etc. Furthermore, participants were asked to identify the organization's **strengths (S)** and **weaknesses (W)**. In what areas does the Village 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 Village's advantage? Conversely, what trends or **threats (T)** lie ahead that would be obstacles or hindrances?

S.W.O.T. EXERCISE

(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

INTERNAL

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ School District (auditorium, gym) ◆ Workforce ◆ Fire Department/District ◆ Location - close to the Interstate ◆ Citizens – supportive especially in a crisis ◆ Rail line ◆ Technology ◆ Downtown ◆ Leadership commitment ◆ Police Department ◆ Recreational parks (some private) ◆ Low tax rate (competitive) ◆ Comprehensive plan ◆ Willingness to plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involvement of community players ◆ Good employers nearby 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Current revenue stream ◆ Citizens – not supportive, referendums ◆ Rail – noise, quality of life ◆ Parent group (travel sports, dance, etc.) ◆ Infrastructure (needs and growth) ◆ Recreation (fragmented) ◆ Housing stock ◆ Resistance to change ◆ Scale, size of town ◆ Split municipalities (lack of collaboration) ◆ Relation to I-55 (Diamond is closer) ◆ Technology ◆ Split representation (State legislature) ◆ Higher education prospects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leave to go to college, export

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Higher education ◆ Giving community (caring) ◆ Community spirit/resilience and optimism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ People don't shop local, money goes elsewhere ◆ In-town entertainment options ◆ Wastewater treatment capacity/high-level water capacity ◆ Lack of dining variety
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EXTERNAL

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Close to I-55 Interstate ◆ Citizens ◆ Quality employment options ◆ Rail line ◆ Access to higher education ◆ Industrial development ◆ Downtown ◆ Improve tax base ◆ Location ◆ Recreation ◆ Auditorium and competitive gym in the School District ◆ Technology ◆ Infrastructure ◆ Private parks – draw in outsiders ◆ Low tax rate ◆ Split representation in the General Assembly ◆ Housing stock ◆ Developable land for housing ◆ Senior housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Dresden power plant closing ◆ Technology ◆ Citizens ◆ Over industrialization ◆ Recreation ◆ Infrastructure ◆ Senior housing ◆ Lack of willingness for intergovernmental collaboration ◆ Access to higher education ◆ Exporting talent ◆ Residents don't shop local ◆ Split representation in the General Assembly ◆ Wastewater capacity ◆ State of Illinois ◆ Water storage ◆ Lack of broaden tax base

Session IV. Group Goal Identification Process

This extensive discussion session provided the forum for the collaborative establishment of strategic goals and objectives necessary to achieve the future vision of the Village. With the preceding sessions serving as a sound foundation for goal setting, the final session was a healthy group discussion of goals or action items needed to achieve the future visions as expressed by the group. To begin the process, each member was allotted time to highlight the three or four most important policy and program goals that he or she thinks the Village should accomplish in the next one to five years.

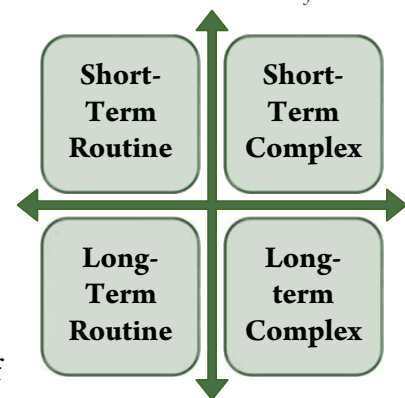
Goals could be highly specific or general. Again, only questions of clarification were permitted to be asked during this session. Evaluative or judgmental assertions or debates were deferred to a follow-up session where all participants engaged in open discussions of the goals or action items, their impact on the region, the organization, and their relative importance to the Village’s current or future circumstances.

Classification. At the end of the open discussion, participants were asked to classify each goal according to a matrix model of complexity and time. Agreed criteria were used to classify a goal as short- or long-term and as complex or routine (Figure 2). The purpose of the exercise is to group goals of roughly the same “type” together so when prioritization occurs, the participants can avoid the problem of comparing “apples to oranges.”

All statements were recorded on flipchart paper. The goals and their classifications as short - or long-term, complex or routine are indicated below. Agreed criteria were used for classifying goals as either routine or complex. **Short-term goals** were those goals that could or should be completed or substantially underway in the next one to three fiscal years. **Long-term goals** were those goals that could or should be completed or substantially underway within a three- to eight-year timeframe. **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 Board and within present budget streams or with minor revenue enhancements or reallocations.

Figure 2. Goal Time & Complexity Matrix

– Professor G. Gabris



Open Group Discussion and Consolidation of Goals

This final phase of the discussion served as the forum for the Village Board members and management staff to discuss, evaluate, and debate the ideas and goals offered by each participant in the previous sessions. Participants were asked to give their opinions, evaluations, and judgments of the worthiness and value of different policy objectives.

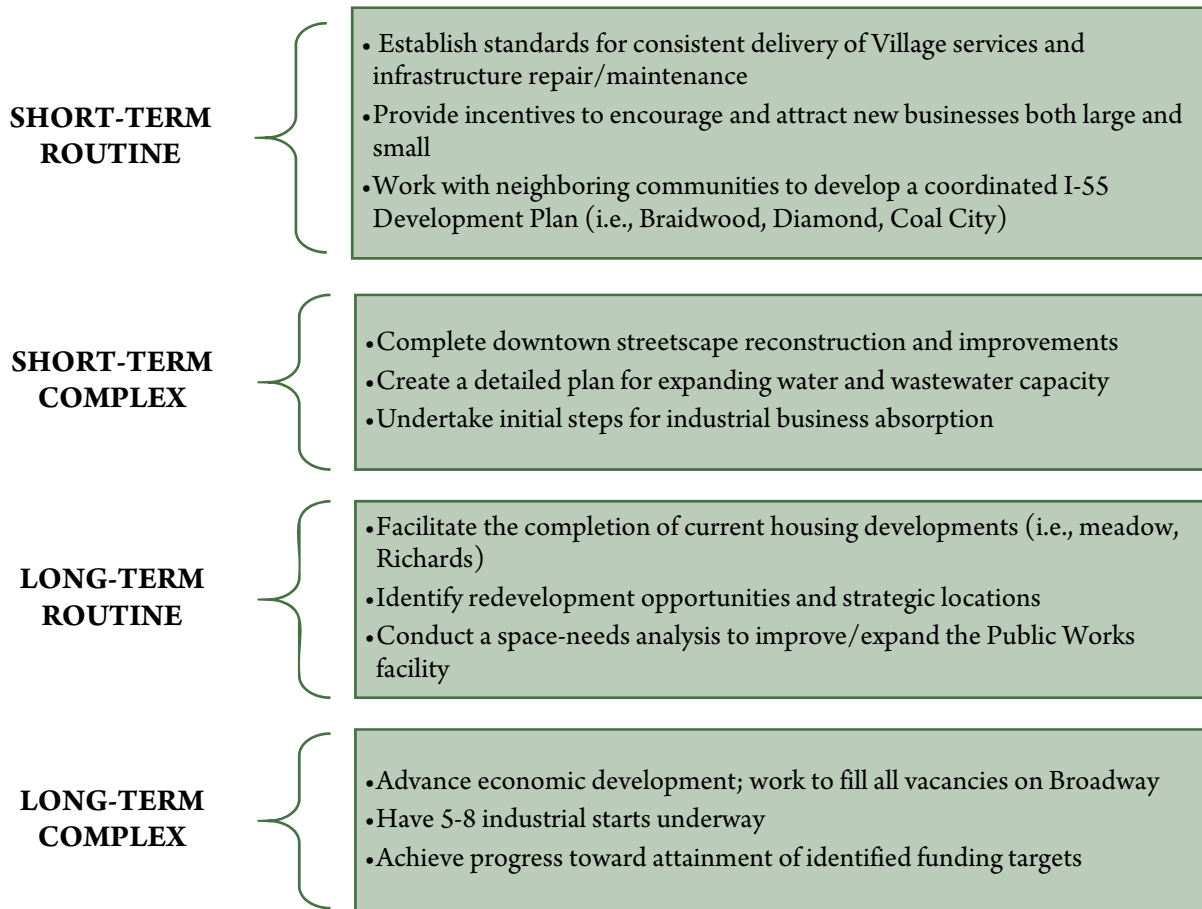
Prioritization of Goals

Following the classification exercise, the Board was asked to delineate, via an online ranking exercise, which goals should be given the highest priority. Board members were provided an online ranking tool where point values were assigned to each goal in each quadrant of the matrix by individuals. The calculation of goal ranking consisted of “forced ranking” where the ranking of each identified goal is averaged by the rankings given by all Board members. For example, if a goal were 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 total score was calculate from/ based on the ratings provided.

The following presents the group’s top three goals, within each quadrant, as they emerged from the consensus ranking exercise (Figure 3). The top three goals are offered here as a process “snap shot” of the most important strategic goals or issues areas for the Board and staff to address in the months and years ahead. In total, the group developed six short-term routine goals, seven short-term complex goals, four long-term routine goals, and eleven long-term complex goals.

Figure 3. Top Three Strategic Goals within Each Quadrant of the Time and Complexity Matrix

(for a presentation of all the Village’s prioritized goals, please see [Appendix A](#).)



The results of the short- and long-term objectives and actions required to attain goals and achieve the future vision were an important outcome of this phase of the process. The top key strategic priority areas are discussed next. For a full review and appreciation of all the strategic goals and priority areas presented, discussed, and ranked, please see [Appendix A](#).

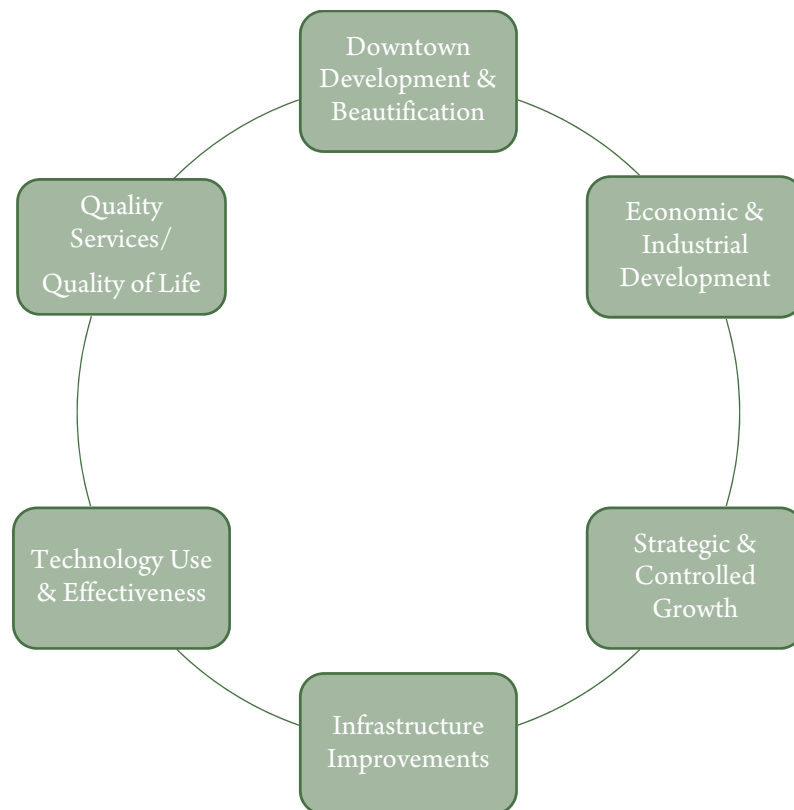
STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS

Several key strategic priority areas surfaced during the sessions and were observable in many of the goal areas. The six thematic strategic priority areas [in no particular order] are: downtown development and beautification, economic development, strategic and controlled growth, infrastructure improvements, and technology use and effectiveness

- *downtown development and beautification,*
- *economic development,*
- *strategic and controlled growth,*
- *infrastructure improvements,*
- *quality of life services/quality services, and*
- *technology use and effectiveness.*

Figure 4. Strategic Issue Areas

2018 Strategic Plan Update



Conclusion

The 2018 Strategic Plan update of the 2009 process' goals and vision will serve the Village well. The 2018 Workshops' value will be realized when you put the update to work as a new and refreshed working guide to actively steer both the Village's leadership team and staff through the issues and goals we explored during the strategic planning process. . This report is designed to capture the key elements and content of the Board's and senior staff's discussions that you devoted to the Village's future over the past few months. The goals and ideas captured here will assist the organization in developing the action plans and next steps required to follow-up on the course you've set.

The next step is for the Village's senior staff to review the results, fine-tune these goals and objectives in their action-planning activities and then report back to the Village Board on how and when the goals and priorities you've identified can be most efficiently and effectively addressed. The exchange of ideas and dialogue during the discussion sessions and workshop demonstrated that the community and organization continue to have the good fortune to have progressive leadership and a management team that not only looks ahead but also aims high.

As one noted observer commented when summarizing the challenges of leadership and progress:

*"The art of progress is to preserve order amid change,
and change amid order..." -A.N. Whitehead*

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



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APPENDIX A: PRIORITIZED STRATEGIC GOALS

SHORT-TERM ROUTINE

TOTAL SCORE	GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
7	1.2	STR - 1	Establish standards for consistent delivery of Village services and infrastructure repair/maintenance
15	2.5	STR - 2	Provide incentives to encourage and attract new businesses both large and small
22	3.7	STR - 6	Work with neighboring communities to develop a coordinated I-55 Development Plan (i.e., Braidwood, Diamond, Coal City)
27	4.5	STR - 3	Develop a Village-wide communication plan -Explore establishing a full-time communications position to operate and maintain the community communication network
27	4.5	STR - 5	Enhance Village-wide community events -Increase events downtown to attract tourism -Establish a 'party in the park vibe' for the 2019 Coal Fest
28	4.7	STR - 4	Extend and enhance bike path connectivity throughout the community

SHORT-TERM COMPLEX

TOTAL SCORE	GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
11	1.8	STC - 4	<p>Complete downtown streetscape reconstruction and improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Finish the design -Complete streets with streetscape, music and new alleys -Continue downtown facade program
17	2.8	STC - 1	<p>Create a detailed plan for expanding water and wastewater capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Prepare for needed treatment and storage upgrades -Complete sanitary expansion in progress -Solve/address CPV
21	3.5	STC - 5	<p>Undertake initial steps for industrial business absorption</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Complete/work towards 2-5 starts
28	4.7	STC - 3	<p>Identify approaches and strategies to attract a variety of dining options/expanded offerings as part of the communities expanded business climate</p>
30	5.0	STC - 6	<p>Explore a specific alternative revenue referendum for street maintenance and improvement</p>
30	5.0	STC - 7	<p>Develop a plan to address financing needs for unfunded mandates (such as lead services)</p>
31	5.2	STC - 2	<p>Undertake a needs assessment/ identify options and plans for developing an updated municipal and public safety center</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identify possible private-public partnership opportunities

LONG-TERM ROUTINE

TOTAL SCORE	GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
10	1.7	LTR - 2	Facilitate the completion of current housing developments (i.e., meadow, Richards) -Establish pedestrian crossings
12	2.0	LTR - 3	Identify redevelopment opportunities and strategic locations: -Include Opera House, Paper Mill, Wren Industrial, Coal City Redi – Mix, Etc. -Monitor available opportunities for possible assemblage
15	2.5	LTR - 1	Conduct a space-needs analysis to improve/expand the Public Works facility
23	3.8	LTR - 4	Complete Village- designated bike path expansion and connectivity

LONG-TERM COMPLEX

TOTAL SCORE	GROUP AVG	GOAL ID #	GOAL
21	3.5	LTC - 9	Advance economic development; work to fill all vacancies on Broadway
22	3.7	LTC - 5	Have 5-8 industrial starts underway -Include variety of building sizes
24	4.0	LTC - 10	Achieve progress toward attainment of identified funding targets -Realize growth of TIF EAV -Reach Debt target -Have an agreed to percentage of road improvements funded and completed
27	4.5	LTC - 2	Implement plan for expanding water and wastewater treatment facilities and water-system storage -Double utility capacity for water and sewer
35	5.8	LTC - 3	Work with the state and County to expand Route 113 and Reed Road -Explore attracting a hotel development on Route 113 and Reed Road -Establish a quiet zone and/or grade separation on Route 113
36	6.0	LTC - 7	Explore and facilitate the creation of a senior housing development and options
38	6.3	LTC - 1	Identify approaches and strategies to resolve train traffic noise and traffic congestion
41	6.8	LTC - 8	Implement the plan for a new municipal center -Have the site, concepts, architects, engineers, utilities and partnerships all identified
49	8.2	LTC - 4	Establish a Coal City Park district -Work with Board to gain support -Explore including a recreation center and sport fields
49	8.2	LTC - 6	Complete construction of a multi-use community center
54	9.0	LTC -11	Facilitate the reduction of housing/housing development on east side of Broadway in the downtown