

City of Naperville – Priorities Plan 2021

Critical Evaluation and Analysis of the Strategic Planning Process

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Introduction

Our team is conducting a critical evaluation and analysis of the strategic planning processes utilized by the City of Naperville in developing its strategic plan titled “Priorities Plan 2021.” We will provide a comprehensive overview of the Naperville Strategic Plan including an evaluation of the vision, mission, and values; a review of SWOT and PESTLE analysis that was utilized; how the City utilized distinctive competencies, distinctive assets, and livelihood schemes; and the identified strategic issues and strategy summary. We will then utilize the strategy evaluation process to address the following questions:

- What planning process did the organization use for developing its strategic plan?
- How much progress has the organization made towards its vision?
- Are the strategic focus areas still relevant?
- Which objectives were completed?
- Which objectives are no longer needed?
- Does the organization have sufficient resources (time, talent, money) to deliver incomplete objectives?
- Are the KPIs still effective for measuring progress towards objectives?
- Where did the organization fall short of targets, why did this happen?
 - What did the organization do well?
 - How can the organization improve upon what was done well?
 - What did the organization learn about itself and the environment along the way?

Overview of Plan

The City of Naperville Strategic Plan referred to as the Priorities Plan is an attempt by city management to align city operations with community priorities. Community feedback gathered over five months through web-based services and in person was utilized in addition to other public engagements to identify critical priorities. The Strategic Plan provides a prioritization of goals in financial stability and economy, housing choice, infrastructure and utilities, public safety, and sustainability (Naperville Strategic Plan).

Mission Statement

The mission statement for Naperville is “To provide services that ensure a high quality of life, sound fiscal management, and a dynamic business environment, while creating an inclusive community that values diversity” (Naperville Strategic Plan). As a local government with a sizeable population, the City’s mission statement emphasizes the operational services that are provided to the residents of the community. The statement further emphasizes the importance of being fiscally prudent and responsible in providing said services. The third area of emphasis is providing a strong business environment. The mission statement states that the city should provide quality services, be fiscally sound, and maintain a good business environment while being inclusive and diverse. This statement is specifically directed toward the citizens of the community and provides an overview of what city government should provide to the residents and it points out that all residents are important.

In reading Bryson, he notes that a strategic plan should contain the following information: 1) who we are; 2) the basic social and political needs; 3) what the organization will do regarding needs or problems; 4) how to respond to stakeholders; 5) philosophy, values, and culture; and 6)

distinctive characteristics (134-38). The mission of the organization should cover these major areas of focus.

While the mission statement is very concise, there is no information on what services the city will or should focus on. For example, public safety, fire, public works, economic development, and others are not highlighted but relies on summarizing that it will be those services that ensure a high quality of life. This phrase is likely to be open ended and all encompassing, but this part could be an area of further definition. Secondly, the phrase to provide “a dynamic business environment” is also very general. It raises the question of how the city provides a good environment for business and what tools they should use. While it is not defined how the city will do so, it is important that they include the business environment as one of the three main priorities of city government.

Vision Statement

The Vision statement for Naperville is as follows: Naperville’s past provides a strong bridge to the future. Naperville’s residents and elected officials envision a community that is:

- **First Class**
Naperville is an award-winning community with unmatched quality of life, amenities, and economic vibrancy
- **Welcoming and Inclusive**
Naperville is open and inclusive, balancing its identity as a premier community with a sense of welcome and belonging for all.
- **Connected**
Naperville is a place where people connect with each other and have easy access to amenities that offer a high quality of life.
- **Resilient**
Naperville adapts and remains strong through adversity – whether adversity is climate change, national disasters, economic downturns, or social unrest.
- **Full of opportunity**
Businesses large and small thrive in Naperville. The robust local economy ensures that daily needs are fully met. All residents have access to the opportunities and amenities the community offers

Core Values

The core values of the City of Naperville are as follows: The work of employees of the City of Naperville is guided and driven by core values, the foundation upon which the organization’s culture is built.

- **PEOPLE**
We value each other as professionals working together to provide quality services. We strive for a rewarding work environment through teamwork, professional development, and employee recognition.
- **RESPECT**

We treat each other with dignity, courtesy, and compassion.

- **TRUST**
We build trust and credibility through professional interactions, honest communications, and a caring attitude.
- **PRIDE**
We are driven to provide exceptional service and believe our achievements and successes reflect our work ethic.

Stakeholder Engagement

The Naperville City Strategic Plan utilized a survey that produced 2705 responses, discussion forums, and individual and group meetings. Surveys originated geographically from evenly dispersed locations within the city's boundaries. The survey included participant information (e.g., race, age, sex, etc.) and questions to ascertain strengths, weaknesses, goals, challenges, and city department performance to name a few. City staff helped to produce the report and their goal is to revisit the plan annually (Strategic Plan, p. 4). According to Bryson, it is important to 1) consider stakeholder input regardless of location; 2) use stakeholder assessments to judge the effectiveness of the organization; and 3) realizing stakeholder satisfaction is key to the organization's success. In this case, Naperville realizes that the residents are the most important stakeholders, and the city staff made the survey results the key driver of the strategic plan. They highlight this importance in the following statement: "The Priorities Plan is a tool to focus their collective energy on what is most important" (Strategic Plan, p. 7). The strategic plan itself is a basic document with high level overviews, and it does not contain much depth. Nonetheless, it is easily explainable and shareable in the public, and it is visually appealing and easy to understand.

The City of Naperville provides public value throughout the entire planning process. Public input was used throughout the planning process to develop the priorities and critical action sections. The organization also strives to keep the public informed throughout the planning process and provide a better understanding of residents' concerns throughout the City of Naperville.

SWOT and PESTLE Analysis

The purpose of performing a SWOT and PESTLE analysis is to learn and identify the internal and external factors that are currently impacting an organization or may impact it at some point in the future (Bryson 2018).

A SWOT analysis attempts to identify internal strengths and weaknesses of an organization and connect this information to the organization's external opportunities and threats (Bryson 2018).

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

A PESTLE analysis is typically more externally focused and used to grasp the possible impact of the external environment. PESTLE is an acronym that stands for:

- P stands for Political – What is the political situation and how might this impact the strategic plan?

- E for Economic – What are the key economic factors? (Growth indicators, inflation rate, interest rates, etc.)
- S for Social - How much importance do social factors and culture have? (Demographics, population trends)
- T for Technological - What technological innovations may have a favorable or unfavorable impact on the community?
- L for Legal – What current or proposed legislation is there that could have a significant impact on the organization?
- E for Environmental - Are there any environmental concerns that need to be planned for? (Climate change, flood concerns, extreme weather disasters)

In reviewing the Strategic plan for Naperville, the document and strategic planning process incorporated elements of SWOT and PESTLE analysis. However, the plan did not provide a comprehensive summary of either of these analyses. This paper provides a high-level summary of the SWOT and PESTLE components for the City of Naperville's strategic plan.

SWOT Analysis

On pages 38-50 of the Naperville Strategic Plan, the city conducted a community survey incorporating questions centered around identifying SWOT. In reviewing this data and performing independent research on the City of Naperville the following is a summary of its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Strengths</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceptional schools • Vibrant downtown • Safe community • Parks and recreation amenities • Public library system • Neighborhoods • Health care • Diversity and inclusion • Festivals and events • Sense of community • Nonprofit organizations and volunteers • Skilled work force • Art, culture, and history • Higher education • Attracting / Keeping young adults • Metra station • Financial stability and good economy 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Weaknesses</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic / Congestion • Diversity and inclusion • Affordable housing • Addiction / Mental health • Crime • Aging infrastructure • Attracting and keeping young adults • Business growth • Aging population • Sense of community
<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Opportunities</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location • Promote civic engagement • Improve Traffic / Congestion 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Threats</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic / Congestion • Inflation / economic stagnation • Mental health, depressed youth

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity and inclusion • Technology • Business attraction / retention • Reputation • Increased walkability • Sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political polarization • News Media • Diversity and inclusion • Natural disasters • Climate change • State of Illinois
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In reviewing the SWOT analysis above some key takeaways are:

1. Naperville has strong local government institutions. The quality of the education system, parks and rec amenities and the public library all scored as a top 5 strength in the public survey.
2. It is interesting to see items show up as both a strength and weakness. The public survey identified Naperville being a “safe community” as a top-3 strength yet “crime” scored high as a challenge for the city. Similarly, diversity and inclusion were noted as the second significant challenge for the community, yet it was considered a strength by a sizable number of survey participants.
3. Traffic was identified as the most significant challenge by Naperville survey participants and yet the words “Metra” and “public transportation” are not found in the strategic plan.

PESTLE Analysis

The Naperville strategic plan has a great deal of community and demographic data on pages 14 – 37 that was useful in performing a PESTLE Analysis. Our PESTLE analysis is detailed below:

Political – The political environment in Naperville leans liberal with 57.7% voting Democrat in the last presidential election. On a local level, Naperville is quite famous in Illinois for its local politics and deliberative, sometimes contentious board meetings that often run past midnight. One debate within the last year focused on participation and term limits when a former council member was narrowly approved to sit on a city commission (Naperville Community Television 2021).

Economic – Overall the economic environment in Naperville is outstanding. Naperville is home to 8 major employers that each employ over 1,000 people, and the unemployment rate is low at 3.4%. Additionally, Naperville is a wealthy town with a median home value of \$423,000 and a median family income of \$147,937. One factor that was not considered in the Naperville Strategic Plan is the impact of inflation which is currently running 8.5% annually (Cox 2022).

Social – The total population of Naperville increased by 5% in the latest census period, but the rate of growth has slowed compared to previous census years. Naperville is a white community (72.1%) with a significant Asian population (19.1%). The study found 72% of residents are religious with a significant majority identifying as Christian with an Islamic population (6%), and Naperville is home to the Islamic Center of Naperville.

Technological – We are still at the relative beginning of the internet age and the disruption from technology continues to have a significant impact, and Naperville has specifically cited the critical need to improve technology in the areas of public safety.

Legal – Recent legislative mandates for lead service line replacements and policing (ex. body cameras) will need to be addressed over the next several years. The State of Illinois is known to pass mandates without any funding which must be considered in any long-range plans.

Environmental – From an environmental perspective, Naperville will need to be aware of the impacts from continued climate change. Per the strategic plan, the number of days per year over 90 degrees is projected to increase 1-3 times by the end of the century. Naperville is already prone to flooding and was the location of a major flooding event in 2013 (Jenco 2013).

Distinctive Competencies, Distinctive Assets and Livelihood Schemes

Our team analyzed the City of Naperville's strategic plan and reviewed the city's distinctive competencies, distinctive assets, and livelihood schemes. Our analysis primarily centered around answering the following key questions:

- How clearly and effectively has the City of Naperville's plan identified or determined a linkage between distinctive competencies and assets to support achieving the aspirations of a public organization?
- Is the Livelihood Scheme (business model) logical? Does it demonstrate how public value is produced?

The remainder of this section walks through these key components of a strategic plan as it relates to the City of Naperville's plan.

Distinctive Competencies / Distinctive Assets

Per class lecture notes, distinctive competencies are “those that are very difficult for others to replicate, a source of enduring advantage. They may arise through linked competencies (within organizations).” Distinctive competencies are built upon an organization's distinctive assets. It is not clear that the city has effectively identified its strategic assets / competencies.

Additionally, linkage to the aspirations of the city is not presented. For example, a critical asset of the City of Naperville is the beautiful riverwalk. According to Naperville's own website the riverwalk is described as:

“Considered the "Crown Jewel" of Naperville, the Riverwalk is a place of beauty and tranquility along the West Branch of the DuPage River. Created in 1981 to honor Naperville's 150th anniversary, the Riverwalk features 1.75 miles of brick paths, fountains, bridges, meeting and event places, outdoor sculpture and artwork, recreational facilities, and celebratory memorials. The Riverwalk is a preferred destination and an ideal place to stroll, unwind and reflect. Come relax and enjoy the scene!”

The logo for the Naperville's strategic plan (shown below) references the flowing river as well as the covered bridge that crosses the river.



Clearly the river walk is a strategic competency unique to Naperville. Amazingly enough the riverwalk is not mentioned once in the entire strategic plan. A simple word search for the word “river” returned zero results. The riverwalk is not tied into any of the five focus areas. It seems like the riverwalk would be especially key to Naperville’s goal of promoting “development of the local economy and be a good steward of city tax revenues.” We imagine that the riverwalk is a key driver to the generation of a substantial portion of Naperville’s tax revenues. Linking this key asset / competency to strategic initiatives should be an important part of the plan but it is simply not present.

Livelihood Scheme

When considering the livelihood scheme, or the business model, of Naperville’s plan it must first be understood what is meant by these terms. Bryson states the livelihood scheme is the core logic of a strategic plan (Bryson 2018). This involves clearly stating the mission, goals, key success factors or performance indicators, and necessary competencies to do well against each (Bryson 2018). In Naperville’s strategic plan this is done partially well but needs some work.

The plan does articulate a vision, mission, core values, and focus areas. These include things like being a first-class city that is welcoming and inclusive, that is resilient and full of opportunity. It goes on via the focus areas to speak about how the city plans to advance these measures. However, these items tend to be vague and lack clarity and specifics of how they will achieve this and measure success. The plan does take steps forward with the Critical Actions section, but it does not seem to get to the best practice of being more specific on the steps needed to get the job done and what core competencies that are needed to achieve these goals and focused efforts. The failure to articulate these details more clearly could result in the city having many aspirational items that sound positive but may not be reachable without further thought on how this work can be accomplished.

On the positive, Naperville does list several of the awards and recognitions that the city has achieved recently that demonstrate success in the areas of quality of life and best public schools. These do support the vision of being “first-class” but there is some irony in that the city government does not directly control the schools, so the city’s strategic plan has indirect connection to this success. In addition, although Naperville’s plan is full of data points on diverse topics, it is presented in a way that does not totally link the material together in a useful narrative. The reader could take away that there are successes around housing, the economy, public safety, schools, and other areas, but without some linkage and conclusions on why certain data points are meaningful the reader is left to make some of these conclusions for themselves. A better way to do this may have been to offer some simple context wrapped around all these various informational points.

Public Value

According to Bryson, governments can create public value by providing a framework of laws and supporting laws, creating transparency, assuring a smooth democratic process, protecting civil and human rights, taking a long-term view, inspiring key entities to take collective action for common good, maintaining a stable economy with strong private markets, providing cost effective public goods and services, informing the public with quality information, and involving civic-minded professionals (2018).

In Naperville's strategic plan, there is a focus on public value particularly in financial stability and a strong economy. For example, the plan cites the continual goal of having a balanced budget, delivering cost effective services, and increasing the city reserve to 25% while reducing debt by 2022 (Naperville Strategic Plan).

Secondly, the city is informing the public and involving civic-minded individuals throughout the compilation of the plan by collecting information from a community survey, educating the public about the process, and engaging the public in discussion forums (Naperville Strategic Plan). This involvement builds community engagement and support for the strategic plan and provides information that will make the plan better. Moreover, the strategic planning process had a calendar for public involvement for when the survey, engagement, and additional public comment would be available.

Thirdly, the plan encourages key entities to act for the common good by focusing on housing, infrastructure, and public safety. All three of these areas affect the common good by helping to make housing affordable at all stages of life for residents, improving infrastructure particularly around roadways and public utilities, and in public safety through better training, building greater trust, improving technology, and addressing community risk reduction (Naperville Strategic Plan). The community benefits from greater housing options and affordability, improved infrastructure, and safer neighborhoods.

Finally, the city is taking a long-term view in several areas, but particularly in sustainability by seeking to highlighting a goal to create metrics, collect and publish information on sustainability, increase renewable energy use by the city, and engage with community partners (Naperville Strategic Plan). This part of the strategic plan is evidence that the city is interested in planning for the long-term future of the community.

Identified Strategic Issues and Strategy Summary

In this section we are analyzing the identified strategic issues and strategy summary for the City of Naperville. Based on our review we have noted below the process utilized by Naperville identifying strategic issues as well as an analysis of their implementation strategy.

Issues Identification

The City of Naperville identified five strategic issue areas: 1) financial stability and economy; 2) housing choice; 3) public safety; 4) infrastructure and utilities; and 5) sustainability.

Based on the Naperville strategic plan, the timeline notes that city staff started the process in February of 2021 with a "project kick-off" meeting composed of city leadership during which

they discussed the city mission, mandates, values, services, and strategic issues facing the city (Naperville Strategic Plan). The team used an indirect approach to brainstorm about issues but held off on final identification of strategic issues to receive input from city leaders and residents through a community survey (Bryson 2018).

According to the timeline, the crafting of strategies did not start until July, after information was received from workshops and the community survey. It was not until September that strategies were scheduled to be refined. Moreover, the plan's purpose states: "The Priorities Plan will be shaped by citizen input and will support the priorities expressed by the community" (Naperville strategic plan). This statement shows the willingness of the planning group to create general strategic issues but allow for brainstorming and input from others.

In addition to the indirect approach to determining strategic issues, Naperville also used the vision of success approach and based strategic issues on furthering the community's goals to reach the outlined visions. These visions include being: 1) a first-class community; 2) welcoming and inclusive; 3) connected; 4) resilient; and 5) full of opportunity (Naperville Strategic Plan). It is likely that these visions helped guide the strategic plan group, especially since the vision of being welcoming, inclusive, and connected, directly correlates with the strategic issue of having housing more accessible to all residents. Additionally, the vision of being full of opportunity ties into financial stability and a good economy that allows for residents to have quality career, school, and lifestyle opportunities. Finally, being a first-class community ties into all five strategic issues in that a great community will need to be financially sound, provide good housing options, have great public safety and infrastructure, and have greater sustainability.

The Naperville strategic planning team attempted to include many of Bryson's suggestions for good implementation procedures including: 1) indicating a willingness to maintain a coalition of implementors and advocates through regular resident surveys; 2) by facilitating legislative, executive, and administrative involvement through scheduled sessions; and 3) by utilizing communication technology both in a readable presentation and in ongoing learning by helping to educate the community about the city's attributes (Bryson 2018), but as the next section highlights, they fell short in some key areas.

Strategies

As referenced in Section A, the City of Naperville's strategic plan does an excellent job in identifying the issues. The plan notes five distinct strategic issue areas of focus. In terms of strategy of implementation, the Naperville strategic plan falls short.

According to Bryson, "strategy can be defined as a pattern of purposes, policies, programs, actions, decisions, or resource allocations that define what an organization is, what it does and why it does it. Strategies vary by level, function, and period. Organizations develop strategies to deal with the issues they have identified" (p 46). Bryson identified two different approaches to developing strategy. The first being the five-part process based on the Institute of Cultural Affairs and the second approach utilizing a mapping approach. The City of Naperville appears to have not implemented either of these approaches to strategy. The closest approximation to a strategy implementation within the Naperville Strategic Plan is within the "Recommendations" section on page 7.

In the one-page “Recommendations” section, the Naperville Strategic Plan identifies four items for moving forward with the strategic plan. Those items are:

- Refer to the priorities plan often.
- Revisit the priorities plan every year prior to the budget cycle.
- Use the public input gathered through the planning process as a factor in management decision making.
- Conduct a statistically valid citizen survey every two or three years to provide decision makers with an assessment of citizen satisfaction.

The positive aspect of the above list is that they make plans to revisit the strategic plan on a regular basis and to utilize it to formulate their budget. Additionally, it is nice to see that Naperville prioritizes citizen engagement; however, it does not appear that either approach identified by Bryson was utilized and as a result Naperville is potentially missing a significant opportunity to outline strategies.

Naperville could be better served by going through a more formalized process for developing strategy. Utilizing the five-part process identified in the Bryson text, Naperville could have incorporated an “Action Plan” as part of their strategic plan. We have included a summary action plan for one of their strategic initiatives below:

Strategic Issue: Financial Stability and Economy

Financial Principle: The City will pass a structurally balanced operating budget annually.

Identified Barriers: Barriers to a balanced budget are the current inflationary environment, rising costs, union contracts and limited willingness of the community to raise taxes to pay for services.

Proposal: As part of the annual budget process staff will take these required steps:

- Implement a budget timeline that maps the entire budget process from start to finish.
- Identify strategic initiatives.
- Document all the critical budgetary issues for the upcoming fiscal year.
- Clearly define the term balanced budget.
- Identify recurring revenues / operating expenses versus one-time revenue sources and capital expenses.
- Apply and win the GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award.

In the above example we transform the principle of passing a structurally balanced budget into a more detailed plan of action to assure that goal is achieved. We have outlined the potential barriers and provided all the key elements of an effective strategy including (Bryson p. 48): 1) Technically workable / feasibility; 2) Politically acceptable; 3) Results oriented; 4) Within the organization’s philosophy and core values; 5) The plan is ethical, moral, and legal; 6) Addresses the strategic issue; 7) Creates value.

Overall, the City of Naperville’s strategic plan does an adequate job of identifying the strategic issues for the community. They do an excellent job of seeking citizen input through surveys and

other opportunities for involvement. It is positive that the city has a plan to revisit the strategic plan on a regular basis, at least annually as part of the budget process. Nonetheless, the City has significant room for improvement in terms of transforming the identified strategic issues into workable strategies.

We suggest incorporating a detailed action plan that outlines the key strategies for implementation. The action plan should identify the individual responsible for each action item and include key milestones for completion. By including an action plan, Naperville will be able to measure progress on their strategic initiatives which will provide more accountability and greater progress towards meeting their vision.

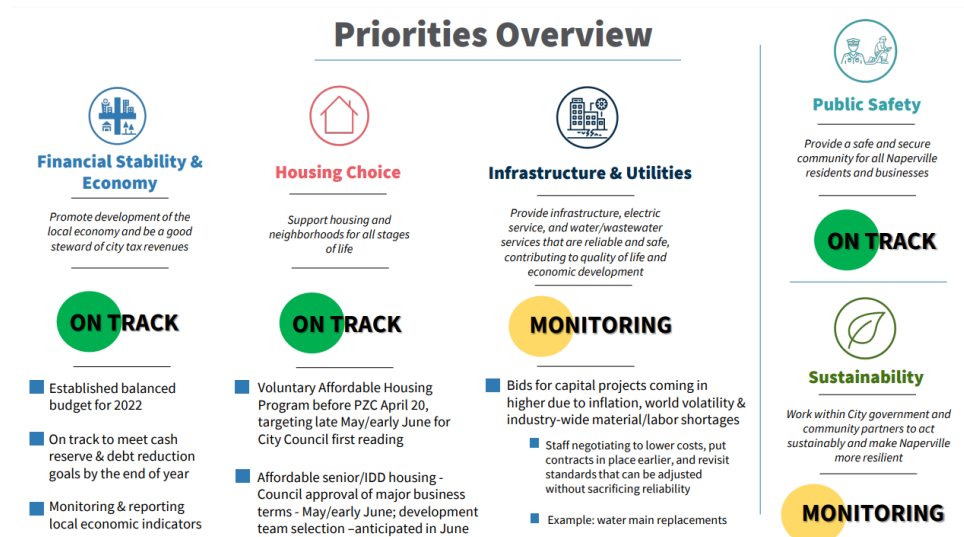
Strategy Evaluation

In this concluding section of our paper, we are performing a strategy evaluation and will attempt to answer the following key questions:

- What planning process did the organization use for developing its strategic plan?
- How much progress has the organization made towards its Vision?
- Are the Strategic Focus Areas still relevant?
- Which Objectives were completed?
- Which Objectives are no longer needed?
- Does the organization have sufficient resources (time, talent, money) to deliver incomplete Objectives?
- Are the KPIs still effective for measuring progress towards Objectives?
- Where did the organization fall short of targets, why did this happen?
 - What did the organization do well?
 - How can the organization improve upon what was done well?
 - What did the organization learn about itself and the environment along the way?

How much progress has the organization made towards its Vision?

Naperville gave an update on the progress of its strategic plan at the April 19, 2022, City Council meeting. At that meeting they provided an update on the five focus areas. The graphic below shows the progress they have made.



The chart above shows that the city is on track for three of its five focus areas. These include Financial Stability, Housing Choice, and Public Safety.

- **Financial Stability**
The City established a balanced budget and is on track to meet cash reserve and debt reduction targets by the end of the year. Additionally, the city has been actively monitoring and reporting on local economic indicators.
- **Housing Choice**
The city has developed a Voluntary Affordable Housing Program that will soon be introduced to the City Council in June for a first reading. Naperville has taken steps for affordable senior housing as well.
- **Public Safety**
The city has developed a detailed list of public safety goals for the police and fire departments which are tracking on target.

The city has listed the following focus areas in the “Monitoring” category.

- **Infrastructure and Utilities**
The City notes the current challenging environment for completing construction contracts and identifies higher inflation, world volatility and industry-wide material/labor shortages as barriers.
- **Sustainability**
While the Sustainability function is listed as Monitoring the City has made substantial progress in this goal. They implemented a sustainability workplan in August 2021 that identified 76 goals to be completed by the end of 2028.

Are the Strategic Focus Areas still relevant?

All five of the strategic focus areas are still relevant for the City of Naperville. Financial Stability is more relevant than ever in the current period of high inflation. Additionally, public safety is a current issue that is impacting as a top concern of all communities nationwide.

Which Objectives were completed? Which Objectives are no longer needed?

None of the objectives have been fully completed but a good amount of progress has been made on the plan. All the objectives are still needed.

Resources available to deliver on Objectives

Without further detailed research it is hard to determine if the City of Naperville has sufficient resources to deliver the incomplete objectives. One area of Naperville's plan that does focus on staff resources is around sustainability. At the April 2022 Council presentation, staff provided specifics on the number of hours spent in 2021 and 2022 regarding reviews of requests and responses for proposals prior to the strategic plan being approved. These hours led staff to request future anticipated resources to achieve the goals in this category. Action is already being taken in FY 2022 with an additional staff position budgeted for the second half of the year. With defensible staffing needs to achieve the goals of the strategic plan, and agreed upon strategies, represent positive progress towards completion of the objectives that the Council had approved.

In the other areas of the overall strategic plan, there was limited clarity on what additional resources would be necessary. However, the plan efforts call for integration of work plans within the FY 2023 budget, so this would be an excellent opportunity for the staff and elected officials to work together to identify the specific needs necessary to complete the objectives laid out in the strategic plan.

Measuring progress with KPIs

Bryson defines key performance indicators (KPIs) as measures of how well the organization is doing against its critical success factors (CSFs) and he notes that they function as important performance requirements that the organization's strategies must meet (Bryson 2018). The choices made in the earlier steps of the strategic planning efforts lead an organization from SWOC/T analysis to setting strategies to an implementation of these focused work items. To stay accountable and measure whether the organization is succeeding, and creating value for the public, KPIs are a crucial tool to track progress.

The City of Naperville articulates some performance goals in the Priorities Plan 2021, but the specifics are lacking. This may be an issue of not communicating all the details to the public and instead providing summarized narratives of the work. However, there seems to be a lack of many specific KPIs in the actual strategic plan. The items that were specifically stated are in financial principles. The city lists several "principles" that they hope to achieve, and these include passing a structurally balanced operating budget annually, committing to continuous improvement in the delivery of services and increasing the City's cash reserves to 25% and reduce debt by 25%. These last two items are the only areas where the Naperville plan states specific numbers that can be tracked. The other areas are presented in more aspirational terms which makes it harder to measure progress.

Separate from the actual strategic plan, Naperville staff presented specific data to support progress towards key objectives at the April 2022 presentation to the City Council. In the sections on public safety, hard numbers regarding the number of community presentations and forums that were completed to date in support of the goal of increasing public support and trust. Additionally, data on the number of sworn officers who had completed CIT training was listed,

along with the number of officers who had participated in the lateral transfer program as part of the training, education and succession planning program which supports continuity of the organization.

Under the main goal of sustainability, Naperville staff did present a target of seventy-six goals to be completed by the end of August 2028. At the April 2022 Council meeting, staff reported that eighteen items were complete, twenty-two in progress, and thirty-six not started as of April 2022. These types of data sets are useful in measuring KPIs and help the elected officials track the level or progress towards the overall goals of the organization set out in the strategic plan.

Conclusion

The Naperville Priorities Plan is a good strategic plan that accomplishes many successes including: 1) quality stakeholder involvement; 2) defined priorities with actionable goals; 3) attempts to align city operations with community priorities; and 4) high-level overview of goals and strategic issues surrounding financial stability and economy, housing choice, infrastructure and utilities, public safety, and sustainability.

The Naperville Plan falls short in the following areas: 1) there is a lack of detailed or general actions that should be taken to address the priorities, 2) missing Key Performance Indicators that can be used to track success; 3) no mention of a key asset such as the riverwalk; and 4) a shortfall in how the results and actionable items will be communicated to the public and stakeholders.

Despite the shortfalls of the plan, there are many strengths, and we would recommend the following:

- 1) The city should capitalize on the significant information gathered from the community survey and have a planned follow-up on the plan calendar where the city outlines action items in the strategic areas. Moreover, the city should have survey respondents included in evaluating the final plan and even a review of the plan a year or two after adoption. This would increase stakeholder involvement and provide good additional input for city decision makers.
- 2) The priorities, as defined, are important, but there must be additional information provided as part of the plan. For example, with the strategic area of affordable housing, the city's plan should outline some possible strategic partners, potential pathways to explore, and specific Key Performance Indicators in the actual strategic plan on how success will be determined. Without this additional information, the Priorities Plan lacks a significant amount of substance on how city operations will align with stakeholder priorities.
- 3) Additional ways of sharing information after the strategic plan is adopted should be outlined. This sharing may be intended, but it is not discussed in the strategic plan document. A couple of opportunities to share information could include additional

stakeholder meetings, opportunities to share thoughts and concerns on the final document, and ways to disseminate the final plan both so as many residents and stakeholders are aware of the plans.

We believe that these recommendations will make a good plan even better and one in which the community will have more buy in, involvement, and the ability to hold city leaders accountable if certain benchmarks are not met.

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