



## Legislation Text

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**TO:** Members of the Economic Development Authority

**FROM:** Chris Heineman, Community Planning & Development Director  
Ben Martig, City Administrator

Strategic Planning Process Update

### **Summary Report:**

Staff will provide an update on the forthcoming City Council strategic planning process. The multi-step strategic planning process will be facilitated by consultant Craig Rapp and incorporate the following key steps for community outreach and engagement.

### Environmental Scanning

The first step in the strategic planning process is a review of the operating environment. This will be accomplished in two ways - (1) through an "environmental scan" - a systematic review of major environmental factors that affect the City's operating environment - including, but not limited to: financial & economic conditions (internal and external), community demographics, workforce capacity and capabilities, infrastructure condition, intergovernmental relations, citizen/stakeholder issues, and the regulatory environment; (2) A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis - accomplished via a questionnaire sent out to the strategic planning participants. Both the environmental scan and the SWOT analysis will be reviewed at the first strategy session.

#### Activity #1 - Conduct Environmental Scan

Staff will develop a summary of issues, conditions and trends that affect the organization and the community. This will be presented to the Council at the first strategy session. The consultant will provide a format and examples to staff and provide review and editorial assistance if desired.

- a. Develop and distribute Environmental scan documents
- b. Provide staff support as required

#### Activity #2 - Administer SWOT questionnaire

A SWOT questionnaire will be administered to all strategic planning participants, including question(s) regarding community priorities. This will provide information regarding the current operating environment. The results will be aggregated to ensure anonymity and maximize candor. The data generated will be reviewed and processed at the strategic planning retreat.

- a. Prepare and distribute questionnaire
- b. Provide staff support as required

### Conduct Outreach and Engagement

Depending upon the decision of the City, concurrent with the environmental scanning effort, the consultant will conduct an engagement process with community leaders and the public. This will ensure that the City Council and leadership team receives input on critical issues and priorities from

members of key boards and commissions along with the community. The specific format for this effort will be determined by the City, but may include facilitated sessions or online interactions as listed below:

- Focus groups - with the EDA and Planning Commission - These are facilitated discussions with each group to elicit their opinions on challenges and issues facing the community- including their views on priorities and key projects. Sessions will run between 1 ½ - 2 hours.
- Community Forum - This is a facilitated large group discussion regarding community issues and strategic priorities. This is a meeting with members of Northfield Boards and Commissions. If interested, the session could be facilitated using audience participation technology - a format that allows for real-time “voting” on issues-presented. This process can be deployed for an additional fee.
- Online Survey - This is a community survey, open to the public at large. Deployment to be determined by the City - but could be Facebook site, City webpage, or similar. Administration will be coordinated between City staff and the consultant. This offers citizens an opportunity to contribute their opinions and ideas.
  - a. Discuss options with City
  - b. Prepare questions
  - c. Coordinate/conduct process(es)
  - d. Summarize results

This process will help to inform the City Council with their strategic planning process, which will involve four strategic planning sessions with the City Council and staff. A summary report will be prepared at the conclusion of this process which will include a draft action plan for City Council adoption.

The consultant has also been asked to provide a proposal to work with the EDA and staff to develop an economic development strategic plan for the City of Northfield following the City Council strategic planning process. This process would help to establish strategic EDA priorities for the next three years. A copy of the proposal is attached for your review.

EDA Board members will also be receiving EDA Handbook at the meeting. Several of the documents are instrumental in providing guidance for strategic planning efforts.