

VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE
REPORT FOR THE VILLAGE COUNCIL MEETING
DECEMBER 14, 2010 AGENDA

SUBJECT:	TYPE:	SUBMITTED BY:
Professional Services Agreement with Sikich for Strategic Planning Services	Resolution Ordinance ✓ Motion Discussion Only	David Fieldman Village Manager

SYNOPSIS

A motion is requested to accept the Summary Report of Village Governance and Strategic Planning Process prepared by Sikich LLP of Aurora, IL. Approval of the motion will not approve changes to the Village's Strategic Plan. Approval of the motion will accept the Summary Report. Sikich completed the work as described in the agreement and has submitted the attached Summary Report. Staff will use the report to prepare a work plan identifying the high priority projects to be completed in 2011.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

The Five Year Plan and Goals for 2010-2014 identifies *Exceptional Municipal Organization*. A supporting objective of this goal states *Village organization aligned with Vision, Mission and Core Beliefs*.

FISCAL IMPACT

NA

RECOMMENDATION

Acceptance of the Summary Report on the December 14, 2010 consent agenda.

BACKGROUND

On May 4, 2010, the Village entered into an agreement with Sikich LLP to produce a Council Policy Guide and Strategic Plan. The Council Policy Guide would include policies that recognize the Village's values, address Council and staff roles and responsibilities and guide Council, staff and community interactions. Sikich would perform the following tasks to prepare the Council Policy Guide:

- Conduct Village Council interviews
- Convene a Project Team consisting of the Village Manager and Department Heads
- Facilitate a Council Retreat
- Prepare the Council Policy Guide

The Strategic Plan would include a mission, vision, and short and long-term goals. Sikich would perform the following tasks to prepare the Strategic Plan:

- Gather and review data from recent public input (TCD3, Long Range Financial Plan, FY10 Budget)
- Hold a Strategic Planning Workshop
- Perform Action Planning
- Report the results

The proposed 2011 work plan is tentatively scheduled for Village Council consideration in January, 2011.

ATTACHMENTS

Summary Report: Village Governance and Strategic Planning Process

Summary Report: Village Governance and Strategic Planning Process

Presented to:
Village of Downers Grove, Illinois



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October 20, 2010

Mr. Dave Fieldman
Village Manager
Village of Downers Grove
801 Burlington Avenue
Downers Grove, IL 60515

Dear Dave:

During the past several months, it has been our pleasure to work with the Village of Downers Grove Village Council and senior staff, as we assisted in the development of a governance model and a revised strategic plan framework. Though Downers Grove enjoys a reputation for excellence—as a place to live, visit, and do business—it continues to strive to improve and innovate. This drive, in combination with the devotion to stakeholder input and transparent processes, make this a unique community and organization in today's governmental landscape.

This engagement called for two separate, but inter-related projects: the development of a governance model and the creation of a new strategic plan framework—encompassing mission, vision, values, and action plans. Over the course of the summer, Sikich conducted a Council Retreat, two strategic planning workshops, and two staff meetings in order to craft the aforementioned statements, as well as a new Code of Conduct. There were revisions to core elements of the strategic plan, but focus was also dedicated to incorporating performance measurement and integrating the plan as an annual process.

The following report first summarizes the Village's objective and Sikich's response: the project approach. Next, we relate the key process elements and then reveal the project outcomes. We believe it is important to review the steps and information that served as the primary inputs to the mission, vision, values, and action plans.

Thank you for the opportunity to assist the Village of Downers Grove as it determines its vision and embarks on its future priorities. We would like to note that the willingness of both the Village Council and department directors to devote their time, knowledge, and expertise truly make this project possible and strengthened the outcomes presented in our report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Larry W. Maholland'.

Larry W. Maholland, CPA
Director, Local Government Management Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Megan E. Pierce'.

Megan E. Pierce
Senior Management Consultant



PROJECT SUMMARY

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Sikich LLP was hired by the Village of Downers Grove in May, 2010 to assist in developing a model for council governance and to craft new mission, vision, and values statements in addition to conducting a training session for senior staff on incorporating performance measurement into action plans. While Village leaders had sought community input for the planning process through the Total Community Development III (TCD III) initiative in 2009, the strategic plan elements were not wholly integrated and did not facilitate decision-making.

The first study objective was to engage the Village Council in a retreat and to address governance. The governing board must set the priorities and lead the organization in the appropriate direction, but the importance of effective communications and conduct are often underestimated in their work. A dialogue about the environment, their aspirations, and values resulted in a new code of conduct.

Secondly, the Village had significant experience in strategic planning, as well as a wealth of data from community input, but it lacked a holistic process that integrated plan elements. Our objective, therefore, was to work with upper-level staff and the Village Council to craft new mission, vision, and values statements. To ensure monitoring of progress and a continual process, Sikich also conducted training in action planning and performance measurement.



APPROACH

With the above project objectives in mind, we executed a process for the Village of Downers Grove over approximately five months. To facilitate an understanding of the outcomes of this project, it is helpful to know the major steps, which are outlined below. In the subsequent section, the process elements are described in more detail, and the outcomes are presented as exhibits at the end of the report. Although the steps are shown in two distinct phases, the phase one elements created a foundation for work in phase two, which was virtually a seamless transition for staff and elected officials.

Phase One: Governance

Governance involves the systems, policies, and practices that the Village Council uses to make decisions to best meet the needs of residents, businesses, visitors, and any other person who has an interest in the outcome of their decisions. A clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, and a high degree of trust, are attributes of highly effective boards. The focus of the first phase was to engage the Council in a discussion about governance in the context of the action that will assist in effective planning and management.

Conduct Interviews

The best knowledge of relevant issues comes from leaders themselves. Therefore, we conducted one-on-one interviews with each of the six Commissioners and Mayor. The interviews afforded us the opportunity to share our planned process with the Council, but also greatly enhanced our understanding of their knowledge, experience, and values. Downers Grove benefits from a diverse Council—both in terms of their tenure and professional backgrounds—who have much to contribute. From the interviews, we documented common themes and incorporated ideas into planning the Retreat.

Facilitate Council Retreat

The Village Council Retreat was held on June 5, 2010. During this four-hour session, the Commissioners, Mayor, and Village Manager participated in activities aimed at developing shared understanding and common ground. We addressed relevant issues, as well as items from the past that continue to impact priorities. Participants spent much time in a dialogue about roles and the appropriate conduct that permits constructive and purposeful meetings.

Craft Village Council Code of Conduct

With the input received from the Retreat and mindful of the past guidance the Council had employed, Sikich developed a new Code of Conduct. The Code was reviewed and approved by the Council and is intended to be a reference point as they interact and work cooperatively in planning the future of Downers Grove.

Convene Project Team

At Downers Grove, the Project Team consisted of all the department directors, as well as the Village Manager and Deputy Village Manager. This group was first convened on July 15, 2010, to consider various community scenarios and determine the values most critical to guide actions and decision-making.



Phase Two: Strategic Plan

With a more in-depth understanding of the structures, challenges, and priorities driving the Village of Downers Grove, Sikich embarked on the second phase—primarily concerned with review and updating the current strategic plan.

Gather and Review Data

In preparing for the phase one activities, Sikich began to collect data on the Total Community Development III (TCD III) initiative and other relevant strategic plan documents. The outcomes of TCD III were reviewed in more detail—ensuring that community input would be incorporated into the strategic plan process, even though no open forum events would be held. TCD III was a major undertaking and resulted in themes that were heard frequently in subsequent steps.

Hold Strategic Planning Workshop

Two, two-hour sessions (held on August 3 and 10, 2010) made-up the Village's Strategic Planning Workshop. The Council and department directors worked jointly and brainstormed based on questions designed to elicit the purpose the Village exists to serve, as well as the community the Village aspires to become in the next seven to ten years. A mission statement and vision statement were developed from the themes that naturally emerged from the dialogue. Ultimately, the Village Council reviewed and revised these statements as foundational elements for the strategic plan.

Perform Action Planning

If a strategic plan is truly intended to guide an organization's future direction, it cannot reside on a shelf; it must become part of the environment, with continual monitoring and evaluation. As such, Sikich designs its planning process to include time for staff to develop action plans and objective measures of success. The goals that resulted from the Strategic Planning Workshop fed a three-hour planning session with the Project Team on September 15, 2010. Staff worked in teams to consider the objectives, performance measures, specific steps, responsibility, and deadlines associated with actions required to achieve the goals.



PROCESS ELEMENTS

VILLAGE COUNCIL RETREAT

The Village Council Retreat began with an in-depth discussion of the fiscal year 2010 budgeting process and the impact that process had had on working relationships and the Council generally. Then, in order to help Commissioners and the Mayor develop a shared picture of the current reality, Sikich conducted a “Prouds and Sorries” activity. Reflecting on major events from the past five years, participants stated the things they were personally proud the Village had accomplished, as well as the items they were personally sorry the Village had done or not done. Not only did people discuss a shared picture of the community today, but were able to be mindful of the challenges that may still face them going forward.

In concluding the activity, Commissioners noted they want to carry forward with financial planning, pursue infrastructure improvements, and slowly start to implement more green policies and projects. The specific “Prouds and Sorries” can be found in the **Exhibits** section of this report.

Before a group discussion listed the roles and actions that were eventually developed into the Code of Conduct, the Village Council was engaged to more specifically define the role of a Commissioner—first listing the greatest commonalities among Commissioners and then enhanced their perspective and understanding of one another by stating their most significant differences. The full list of these items appears in the **Exhibits** section. Though the list of differences was long, a number of commonalities was also apparent. Commissioners have varied and unique viewpoints, but all expressed the passion they have for serving the community of Downers Grove.

The Code of Conduct that follows outlines the behaviors and practices the Village Council believes will help them become a more effective governing board that is engaged in the present, but also maintaining a vision for the future. In translating the Council’s dialogue into the Code, Sikich reflected on the characteristics of an effective Council, as described below.

Characteristics of an Effective Council

Three characteristics come to mind when considering the effectiveness of any governing body—a high degree of trust, understanding roles, and exercising restraint. These characteristics provide the infrastructure for productive dialogue among Commissioners.

Trust—The strength of trust within a group will greatly influence its effectiveness. It is the foundational element upon which constructive working relationships are built. Lack of trust prolongs decision making while information and motives are verified. Based on an interview question, where each Commissioner was asked to indicate a number between 1 and 10 (with 10 as the highest level), the overall level of trust on the Council was estimated between 6 and 7. Dave Fieldman suggested that Commissioners consider making trust a choice where it is immediately granted to a person until there is a reason to withdraw it—allowing a team to immediately engage in productive activities.

Roles—Dr. James Banovetz, former Director of Northern Illinois University’s Master of Public Administration program, stated that if a council’s role is to improve the quality of life for members of a community, then any time spent on a decision with a time horizon of less than three years is wasted. While this ideal runs contrary to certain state and



federal laws that require council action on many short-term matters, it does, however, provide a benchmark for the Council to evaluate itself. Other than statutory “business,” the majority of meeting time should be focused on the long-term vision—crafting both the strategies and policies the Council believes are appropriate to achieve its goals. After many years under the Council/Manager form of government, it appears the Downers Grove Council has a good understanding and sensitivity for its role relative to that of the organizational structure.

In some communities, it is not uncommon for council members to expect that the manager will mediate disputes with a council colleague. This is not the managers’ role because it places him or her in the awkward (and risky) position of trying to resolve interpersonal issues that more appropriately should be resolved directly between the two council members. If that is not possible, then the elected head of the council is the most appropriate person to facilitate productive council relationships.

Restraint—Commissioners must exercise restraint in several ways. Staying future oriented and leaving operational issues to professionals is one way. The Council is most effective when it uses staff to provide background information and develop the process, while they concentrate on policy making. Most importantly, Council members need to be cognizant of statements and behaviors that may unnecessarily inflame already highly combustible issues. Doing otherwise may undermine the point he or she is making, as well as limit ongoing dialogue. At the same time, members need to exercise restraint in their reaction to perceived inflammatory comments. It is critical that all demonstrate respect through their words and actions as part of the public meeting process. Finally, Commissioners should try to understand why some members have negative feelings about the dialogue and discussion process; however, those negative feelings belong to that person and should not be questioned.



VILLAGE COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT

- *Ensure a positive working environment* to reduce the stress and conflicts inherent in the governing process by:
 - Showing mutual respect and understanding
 - Fully supporting Council decisions
 - Representing the broad community while understanding the implications on special interests
 - Making time to build, as well as to maintain, productive relationships with each other

- *Choose trust* to create a solid foundation for decision-making by:
 - Taking responsibility
 - Accepting others' opinions and perceptions without condition
 - Communicating openly and directly
 - Being honest and ethical in all conduct

- *Concentrate on the future* to ensure opportunities and challenges are evaluated by:
 - Learning from the past
 - Acknowledging present challenges
 - Focusing on policy development instead of operations
 - Creating a shared vision and strategic goals
 - Continually supporting agreed-to organizational structure

- *Engage fully at meetings* to convey the importance of the process and respect for others by:
 - Maintaining visual focus on the speaker
 - Showing body language that indicates interest
 - Asking clarifying questions
 - Keeping an open mind
 - Coming prepared
 - Speaking with an appropriate tone and attitude



VILLAGE VALUES WORKSHOP

At the outset of this project, the Village had a standing set of values, which were called “Core Beliefs.” These formed the acronym “P.R.I.D.E.” and stood for:

- Produce results
- Responsibility
- Integrity
- Dedicated
- Excellence

Staff felt that while these values were informally understood, there had not been organization-wide buy-in to the Core Beliefs. Working in small groups, the department directors, Village Manager, and Deputy Village Manager determined sets of values that they felt responded to real-life scenarios presented by Sikich. An example of a scenario used was: “The Village is performing a street rehabilitation project in a residential neighborhood. A property owner calls and wants to know why all but one square of sidewalk is being replaced. The inspector recites the policy for replacing sidewalks and states that the one square does not meet the criteria and will not be replaced unless they are willing to pay for its replacement. Is that an appropriate response? What values influence the response you would advise?”

Below is a list of all the values that staff identified through the activities.

Professionalism	Honesty	Customer focused
Compassion	Patience	Cooperation
Empathetic	Decisiveness	Flexibility
Ethical practice	Integrity	Resourcefulness
Collaboration	Stewardship	Fiscally responsible
Accountability	Fairness	Trustworthiness
Responsibility	Transparency	Respect
Justice		

The like values were then grouped and reviewed. Ultimately, the values that captured the essence of the organizational culture and priorities were incorporated into the Values Statement that follows.



VILLAGE VALUES STATEMENT

The strength of our values will determine the quality of our future:

- **Professionalism** creates confidence in our organization by demonstrating:
 - Expertise
 - Specialized training and education
 - Continuous learning

- **Resourcefulness** is a critical attribute of resilient organizations and is accomplished by being:
 - Adaptive
 - Engaging
 - Collaborative
 - Innovative

- **Customer focused** organizations build strong and positive relationships through:
 - Respect
 - Compassion
 - Patience
 - Efficient processes

- **Responsibility** reflects each individual's commitment to the organization and will result in:
 - Accountability
 - Measurable results
 - Stewardship
 - Financial strength

- **Ethical practice** subordinates self-interest to communal interest by showing:
 - Honesty
 - Integrity



STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP

The objective for the two Strategic Planning Workshops was to utilize the collective wisdom of the Village Council and department directors to express the main ideas that should be incorporated into the mission and vision statements. To facilitate this process, Sikich made a brief presentation that described the common parts of a strategic plan. While a mission statement defines why an organization exists, a vision statement is an expression of the foreseeable future. An organization's mission will change little—even over 100 years—but a community vision will evolve over time. Therefore, the Downers Grove vision was crafted in terms of feasible goals that will be accomplished over the next seven to ten years.

Participants were instructed that a mission statement is memorable, in addition to being easily understood and communicated. Commissioners and staff worked in mixed small groups to brainstorm and respond to three questions that resulted in ideas for the statement. The questions posed included:

- What are the basic social and political needs the Village exists to fulfill?
- As stewards of the Downers Grove community, what are the unique traditions and physical attributes you most seek to preserve or enhance?
- What do you want people to experience in their interactions with Village elected officials and staff?

Groups filled flip charts with colorful markers and scores of ideas about the basic purpose of a municipal government. All of the small group ideas were reviewed by the group as a whole—who confirmed the most common ideas and segregation of those into more general categories. From the consensus ideas, themes emerged, which Sikich used to craft the statement. Though there are no strict rules for constructing a mission, we believe a strong statement of purpose should be: inspirational, memorable, concise, long-term in nature, and understandable.

Major Themes

Sikich extracted three major themes and several sub themes from the workshop—the overriding themes being a connectedness among people, events, structures, and venues that make Downers a distinguishable place with a strong sense of community. The most basic purpose of any community was well stated by one of the groups that cited “maintaining order.” Next is a brief discussion of the major themes:

Pride in place—This is the primary theme and captures most of the sub-themes. Many of the responses to the question that were posed dealt with specific traits that defined Downers Grove as a unique place: neighborhoods, downtown, brick streets, landmarks, and trees.

Sense of community—This is similar to pride in place, but it has less specificity. It involves a general feeling of unity around neighbors and families sharing common experiences, (including public space for reflection and interaction), community heritage, treating people with respect, acting professionally, and providing and ensuring the opportunity for individuals to voice concerns before the Village Council.

Ensuring order—While this was specifically mentioned as the most basic function of the Village, it encompasses other services mentioned, like public safety. Since it is so basic



to government, some might feel it is unnecessary to mention it in a mission statement, However, it might be helpful for officials to be continually reminded of the local government's most definite role in the mind of citizens.

The themes, sub themes, and thoughtful word-smithing eventually resulted in a new mission for the Village of Downers Grove:

Honor our heritage, build pride in the community, provide exceptional service.

A mission statement merely establishes the parameters within which an organization operates. The words used to describe a mission only attain meaning over time—as discussions occur and decisions are made in the context of actual situations. At first, those discussions may be the source of significant internal and external conflict, as commissioners struggle to balance possible actions against the adopted mission. The mission statement rarely provides answers; it merely provides the foundation for the debate. As new challenges arise and projects are presented, the Village Council will face the task of transforming the words of the mission statement into actions, as well as balancing the decisions in the context of the long-range vision.

At the second Workshop, participants picked-up where they left off the prior week. The focus, however, had shifted: from what the organization does and who it serves, to what it most aspires to do in the coming years. After participating in the “Then and Now” activity (see **Exhibits**), Commissioners were asked to list key action items they foresaw as critical to the strategic plan and upcoming budget. The actions presented by each official are also listed in the **Exhibits** section.

With many projects and possibilities fresh in their minds, participants immediately began to consider two scenarios. The first scenario was aimed at understand the most desirable attributes they saw in the Village of Downers Grove today:

Imagine you receive a phone call from a friend who is considering relocating their family to Downers Grove. He/She, however, knows very little about the community. As a long-time resident, how would you describe the Village and what experiences from your residency might you highlight?

The second scenario aimed to build upon the first—with an understanding about what makes Downers Grove a unique place to live, work, and do business—and asked people to envision the Village seven years in the future:

In 2010, as a reporter for the Chicago Tribune, you covered TCD3 and the Village's strategic planning process. Now imagine it is 2017 and again, you are assigned to cover Downers Grove—this time, because it has been identified as one of the Top 10 Communities to Live in the U.S.A. Your investigation reveals their vision and planning effort was successfully implemented. What will your story describe as the most significant changes in the last 7 years that make Downers Grove deserving of the Top 10 designation?

Responses to both scenarios were reviewed, discussed, and grouped to display common themes. The most plentiful ideas and most clear groupings were noted and became the basis for the statement. Sikich instructed the group with a definition of a vision statement: “an expression of the foreseeable future that inspires, integrates the past with the future, appeals to all stakeholders, and is feasible.” It is



a word picture of the Village’s desired state in seven to ten years—mean to provide a roadmap for achieving the highest priority goals in the most productive manner. For the Village organization, it also represents the beginning of a process where accountability is assigned and the resources necessary to meet the vision are determined.

The “Village of Downers Grove Vision 2018” is shown here:

The Village of Downers Grove has preserved its unique character, sense of community and charm, while supporting a diverse and successful blend of businesses. It has developed innovative ways to improve the lives of constituents and build on its strengths to create a model for others to emulate. This vision will be realized by our commitment to improving services and progressing toward the goals: steward of financial and environmental sustainability; exceptional municipal services; top quality infrastructure; strong, diverse local economy; and continual innovation.

The last sentence of the vision contains five major goals that more clearly define it. Four of the goals resulted from the August 10 strategic planning workshop, but were refined with Sikich’s knowledge of the results from TCD III. The fifth goal, however, draws on comments from the Council—expressing frustration that recent engagement efforts for visioning have not uncovered anything significantly new or different. In fact, projects that have already been deployed or are being planned often seem to meet the needs and desires pointed out by stakeholders. We believe the initiative to focus on innovation will not only move the Village forward, but also prioritize the continued engagement of the community and staff to seek ways to improve and expand on the vision.

Even though past TCD processes resulted in projects that truly changed the vision of the Village, it is logical that recent input only reflects incremental improvements to existing services, rather than wholly new initiatives. Downers Grove is a well-established, mature community. While occasionally opportunities such as redevelopment may arise and change the Village’s direction, these changes will be small compared to the task of sustaining existing services. Operations and maintenance of assets will be the primary focus. Financial resiliency will be tested as the community struggles to live within its means, rather than with the benefit of new growth.

The value of a strong vision is that it sets the initial course for alignment—outlining the specific activities that will lead to achievement. The statement set the stage for action planning, where goals, matched with performance targets, helped to justify that planned activities align with the vision’s intent.



ACTION PLANNING GROUP

Five main goals emerged from the vision statement and guided staff in outlining the specific steps that would be required to achieve the vision. These included:

- steward of financial and environmental sustainability
- exceptional municipal services
- quality infrastructure and facilities
- diverse and strong local economy
- continual innovation

But, to assure progress can be continually assessed and reported, the Project Team also indicated who would be responsible for the actions, as well as the timeline on which the project will be completed. Action planning was not an entirely new concept for the team. Sikich, however, added to existing reports by working with staff to develop performance measures. Goals without measures often remain merely hopes, because there is no mechanism for evaluating progress or determining success. Since goals are long-term in nature (seven to ten years), a number of the measures presented will be tracked over several years.

After initially working in small groups and reporting ideas out for consideration, staff met again and then individually completed assigned action plans. The resulting plans that will be followed, as well as used in consideration for the budget, will be presented to the Village Council in January 2011.



APPENDIX

COUNCIL RETREAT—“PROUDS AND SORRIES” ACTIVITY

COUNCIL RETREAT—COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP—“THEN AND NOW” ACTIVITY

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP—COUNCIL ACTIONS



COUNCIL RETREAT—“PROUDS AND SORRIES” ACTIVITY

“Prouds” noted by the Village Council included (individual items are summarized by a group heading):

1. Services
 - a. Social/human services
 - b. Technology improvements in communication
 - c. New buses
 - d. Fire Department Station #2
 - e. Narrowed service scope

2. Infrastructure
 - a. Stormwater watershed infrastructure improvement plan (WIIP)
 - b. Infrastructure
 - c. Belmont Underpass
 - d. Belmont Underpass and its process
 - e. Stormwater infrastructure emphasis
 - f. Focus on infrastructure improvements

3. Staff
 - a. Adjustment to top management personnel
 - b. New Village Manager

4. Development
 - a. Downtown redevelopment
 - b. Economic Development Corporation (EDC) creation and performance

5. Financial
 - a. Long range financial planning (LRFP)
 - b. Fiscal responsibility
 - c. Began to embrace “Lean”
 - d. Campaign finance and ethics ordinance

6. Relationships with other governments and organizations

7. Celebration of community

In terms of “Sorries,” items stated were:

1. Infrastructure
 - a. Delay in infrastructure emphasis
 - b. Speed of road improvement
 - c. No new plan for Village Hall
 - d. Ogden Avenue sidewalks not done

2. Staff
 - a. Former Village Manager begin to end
 - b. Village Manager selection process in 2005



-
3. Environment
 - a. No improvement in downtown recycling
 - b. Lack strong "green" policy

 4. Budget
 - a. Deficit
 - b. Delay in adjusting scope
 - c. Property tax increases
 - d. Loss of events
 - e. D.A.R.E. elimination
 - f. Cut social services
 - g. Too many service cuts—not enough operational efficiencies
 - h. Staff layoffs in 2010

 5. Under value opportunity to maximize potential of Boards and Commissions

 6. There is not 100% staff buy-in

 7. Have not maximized investment in bus capital

 8. Business license process



COUNCIL RETREAT—COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Working in pairs and then reporting their ideas to the whole group, the Village Council stated their greatest commonalities:

- Values
- Sincerity
- Vision
- Frugal and fiscally responsible
- Paid for own college
- Background working in schools
- Desire to give back to community
- Long-term residents

Again working in pairs, the Council next discussed the ways in which they differ. The most significant differences they presented were:

- Views of government were shaped by time
- “Saving” mentality
- Retired vs. working
- Personal life experiences
- Vietnam-era experiences
- Blue collar vs. sales work (career)
- Technology savy
- Self-reliance vs. work for others
- Ability to multi-task
- Family types
- Military backgrounds



STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP—“THEN AND NOW” ACTIVITY

In strategic planning, it is useful to think of the past as a prelude to the future. Where an organization has been has a major influence on its current environment, priorities, and challenges. Sikich employs an activity called “Then and Now” to help participants think strategically—about where the village has been, where it is going, and what trends may have an influence. Village management developed the “Then and Now” list shown here, and it was presented at the first Strategic Planning Workshop.

Category	Then (About 10 years ago)	Now
<i>Sales taxes</i>	\$12.5M, 25.0% increase, compared with 5-years prior	\$10.5M, 18.6% decrease, compared with 5-years prior
<i>Prevalent trends among neighboring municipalities</i>	Retail competition	Service consolidation
<i>Interest rate (30 year fixed rate mortgage)</i>	8.15%	4.56%
<i>Focus on infrastructure improvements</i>	Primarily downtown	Village-wide
<i>Village staff size</i>	Increasing	Decreasing
<i>Development</i>	Strong, especially for retail & office sector	Slowly recovering, primarily small scale projects
<i>Major corporate headquarters</i>	Con-Agra	Sara Lee
<i>Trends in auto sales</i>	Expansion, especially in used luxury market	Consolidation of brands and dealerships
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	4.0%	9.5%
<i>Village services</i>	Included events and counseling services	Events and counseling services are privately-supported
<i>Economic development</i>	Economic development was a Village department	EDC is a not-for-profit corporation
<i>Change in home values</i>	Double-digit increases	Double-digit decreases
<i>Recent economic phenomenon</i>	“Dot-Com Bubble”	“Great Recession” and sub-prime mortgage crisis
<i>New Apple device</i>	iPod	iPad
<i>Stanley Cup champion</i>	New Jersey Devils	Chicago Blackhawks

Following the presentation of the list, participants discussed the items and events they thought continued to most impact the Village of Downers Grove today. Commissioners noted that many of the events are inter-related. For example, the decline in sales tax was seen as having affected staff size as well as operations and many of the plans the Village wished to pursue. In addition, a new category was added: utility tax trends. It was stated that utility taxes are a prime example of a revenue source that is growing at a slower rate than the cost of the resources needed to provide the related services.



STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP—COUNCIL ACTIONS

To kick-off the second strategic planning workshop session, each member of the Village Council reflected on their personal vision for the community—and the realistic, short-term actions which would help bring those about. Each Commissioners' items are shown below:

- Exceptional municipal services for people of all ages
- Green community that has sustainable energy sources and is walkable
- Completion of sidewalk matrix and 10-year road plan
- Construct new civic center (for Police and Fire)
- Have well-maintained and constructed infrastructure
- Increase businesses on Finley and main corridors (Butterfield, 63, and 75)
- Well-maintained streets
- Vibrant commercial corridors
- Big box retail store
- Active virtual and geographic neighborhoods to direct priorities
- More senior friendly services
- Develop alternate revenue sources for earmarked items
- Provide EDC with tools to reduce long-standing underutilized parcels
- More holistic approach to services for all segments of the Village
- Stormwater utility and regulations that protect the benefit of the Village's investment
- Revenue policy that provides alternate to property tax
- Lean to become a way of life in the Village
- Expand benchmark comparisons beyond neighbors to align with goals
- Long-term financial sustainability for all services that are needed and expected
- Maintain diverse economic engine that is flexible based on economic conditions
- Determine our purpose and be true to that mission
- Look at whether what has been cut due to economy should be reinstated
- Vision of capital improvements, particularly for stormwater
- Improve tax base with the business community
- Employ renewable energy for reduced Village expenses
- Adequate property tax to provide exceptional services
- Long-tenured staff delivering services
- Well-maintained parkway trees
- Consolidation of government services
- Residents treated as owners, not customers
- Improved communications that are not reliant on web-based systems
- Strong green policy
- Encourage redevelopment of new Belmont corridor
- Downtown development
- Renew commitment to sidewalks
- Policy for regional traffic calming
- Avoid deficit budget for operations in the future
- Determine what the Village does exceptionally well
- Parkways and trees should have maintenance standards reviewed and improved
- Sustain infrastructure, with a disciplined commitment to "CORE"
- To not be all things to everyone, because the result is to be mediocre