

FINDLAY *Forward*

share your voice

impact our future

City of Findlay
Strategic Plan Framework
Adopted in August 2023





TO THE COMMUNITY

Dear Citizens of Findlay and Stakeholders,

It is our pleasure to present the Findlay Forward Strategic Plan. This plan is the culmination of an effort involving input from the community, city council, mayor, auditor and city employees. The process taken to arrive here will be laid out later in this document. The plan is constructed around seven key goals, and within each goal are a set number of action items, all grounded from the insights and expertise of those representing all sectors within our government and community. Thank you for sharing your ideas, and dreams, for our city.

The resulting strategic plan is detailed, comprehensive, ambitious, and well-developed. It lays out a bold but achievable vision for what Findlay will prioritize as a City in the coming years, building on the strong foundation that has been established over the past 211 years.

This is a living document, one that we anticipate all of us will revisit frequently to prioritize projects and resources and assess and report on the progress we are making. Over 350 City of Findlay employees provide services every day that make Findlay a great place to live, work, and play. While the City's mission will remain, this document will serve as a guiding star for the City Council and Administration during their decision-making processes. It will also take community-wide buy-in, ongoing engagement, and commitment to a vibrant community where everyone has opportunity for a prosperous life and belonging.

We encourage you to review the information in our strategic plan, envision the City we are striving to become, and reflect on your role in helping us achieve these goals as a community. We look forward to seeing this plan come to life through the commitment of the City of Findlay government in partnership with our citizens.

Sincerely,

Christina Muryn
Mayor of Findlay, Ohio

Jeff Wobser
City Councilman, At-Large
Chair, Strategic Planning Committee

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Special Thanks To

The Findlay-Hancock County Alliance

The University of Findlay

50 North

Alexandria's

Marathon Center for Performing Arts

Findlay Restaurant Association

Downtown Restaurants, Coffee Shops and Retailers

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Consultants

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NO SMOKING
IN THIS
AREA

INTRODUCTION



Findlay Forward was an ambitious City-wide strategic planning process to develop a Council driven Strategic Plan Framework, using input from the entire Findlay community. The process yielded important elements such as:

- » Extensive, diverse, and effective engagement process to gather input from the public and other stakeholders within the community
- » Analysis of existing conditions and trends
- » Development of a community vision and core community values
- » A plan framework containing goals and objectives for the City government to then work on specific actions to support and implement
- » An implementation strategy that focuses on defining methods to revisit and update the strategic plan framework to ensure ongoing success

WHAT IS A STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK?

A Strategic Plan is a long-term framework that outlines a roadmap for the future of the City. While this plan framework focuses on the City as an organization, the ultimate success of a City is often dependent upon its collaboration with community partners. Thus, the Strategic Plan Framework involves opportunities for conversation and visioning beyond the City elected officials and staff to include community organizations, business and industry representatives, service clubs, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and the Findlay City School District. This Strategic Plan Framework looks beyond the essential day-to-day operations offered by the City and provides City leaders a high level framework with which to cultivate a dynamic city and to become a best-in-class place.

WHY DOES FINDLAY NEED A STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK?

Findlay has been on a successful path and is positioned to continue to be a best-in-class community for generations to come. To ensure continued success as the City grows, while staying true to its small city charm, it is important to establish a clear strategy to harness Findlay's current assets, develop wisely, and position the community to retain and attract citizens, businesses, and investment alike.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Public
INPUT AND FEEDBACK

The community members of the City who provided input during the two rounds of public engagement opportunities. Community input informed the Vision, Goals, and Action Agenda.

Strategic Planning Committee
DECISION MAKING

Decision makers and leaders who guided the process and provided decision making throughout the process.

Community Outreach Team
OUTREACH

A Volunteer group of residents who focused on outreach and promotion for the process. The Team also helped interpret community input and acted as a sounding board on topics and ideas of the plan.

Stakeholders
TARGETED INPUT

Individuals or groups who were engaged to provide specific perspective or expertise.

City Staff
LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND INPUT

Findlay Staff who provided support and coordinated the work. Additionally, Staff provided local knowledge and expertise to each element of the plan.

Elected Officials
ADOPTION

The final plan will be formally adopted by the City Council and implemented in coordination with the Administration.

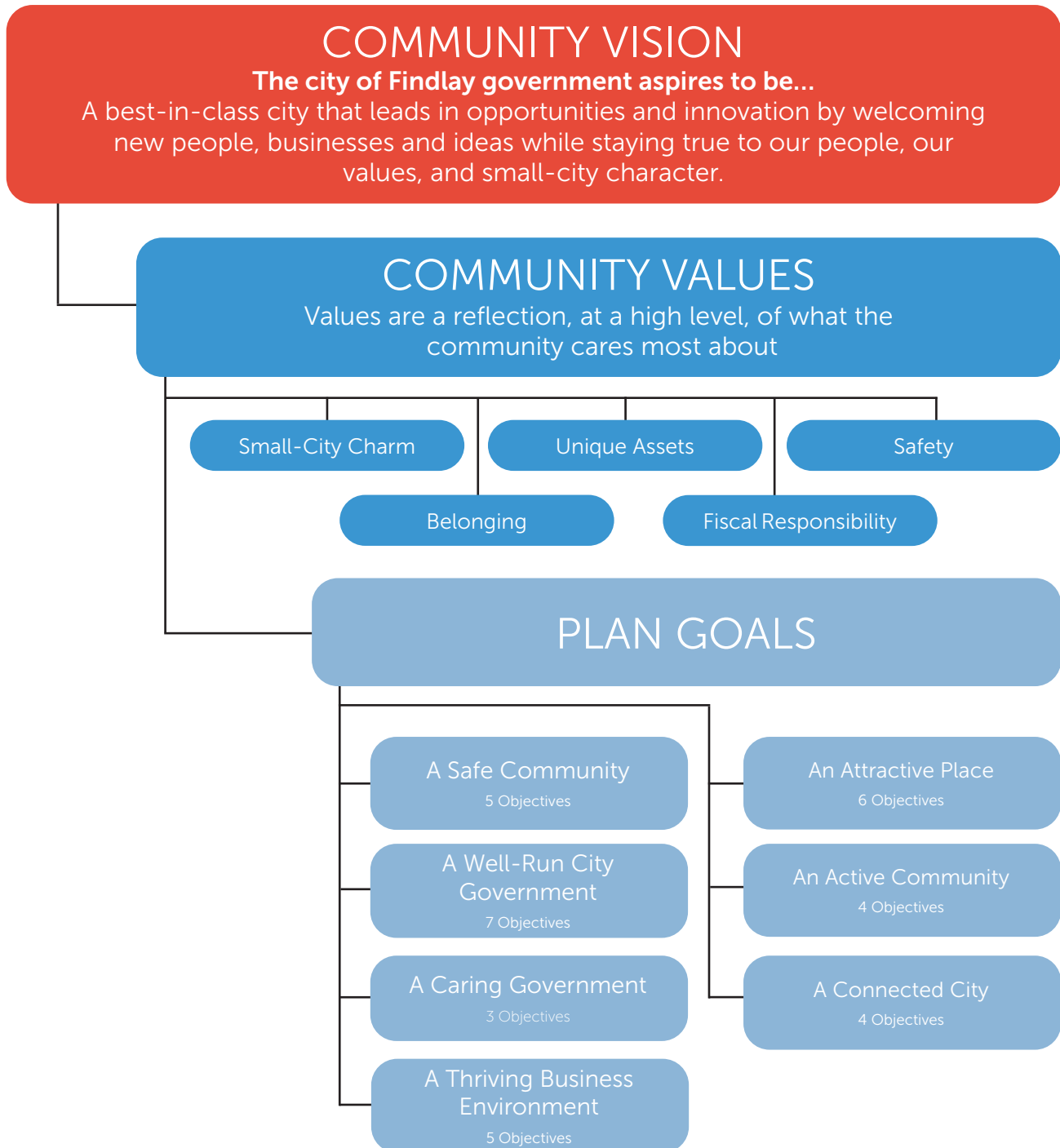
Consultants
PROCESS LEADERSHIP AND EXPERTISE

The planning team who facilitated the planning process closely with the Strategic Planning Committee and Staff. They provided experience and expertise from other successful communities nationwide.

FRAMEWORK

The Strategic Plan Framework is organized by hierarchical elements: Vision, Values, Goals, and Objectives.

These elements were derived from public input and were refined with input from the Strategic Planning Committee. The order of the Goals is intentional but all Goals are of equal importance. Goals focused on government operations are listed first followed by community-focused Goals. Specific actions (programs, policies, or projects) will be developed in the next phase of this work and in an ongoing manner through Council Committees.



ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION

As part of this process, the following Mission for the City was articulated.

MISSION

A mission statement guides the internal organization of the City. It describes the City's purpose for being and serves to energize Staff in their role of implementing the overall vision for the community and moving the community forward through the Action Agenda.

We serve all our residents, businesses, and institutions so that they can thrive. In collaboration with our partners, we are dedicated to providing exceptional municipal services which...

1. Provide the highest quality community with amenities and opportunities available to all ages and abilities
2. Respond to the needs and desires of our current as well as future residents
3. Protect sense of place in downtown and neighborhoods as the heartbeat of a complete community where we live, work, play, and shop
4. Are thoughtful and transparent in our deliberations, communications, and utilization of all resources

COLLABORATION

Collaboration, facilitation, and convening partners are key components of the City of Findlay's operations. Many community priorities are not within the direct purview of the City, but the City can be a leader in determining their own path through collaboration with community partners (County, schools, non-profits, private entities, etc.)

HOW WILL THIS PLAN BE USED?

This Plan identifies a framework for the City to annually develop specific actions (programs, policies, and projects) that the City will pursue to achieve the goals and objectives. This will also assist in prioritizing expenditures, and facilitate collaboration with its partner organizations.

While the City will use this Plan as a guide, it should not limit new opportunities or creative ideas. New opportunities that might come before City Council or Staff will be evaluated based on whether they align with the community's vision. The Plan will be continually monitored, and an annual review of the Plan will be conducted to evaluate progress and new opportunities.

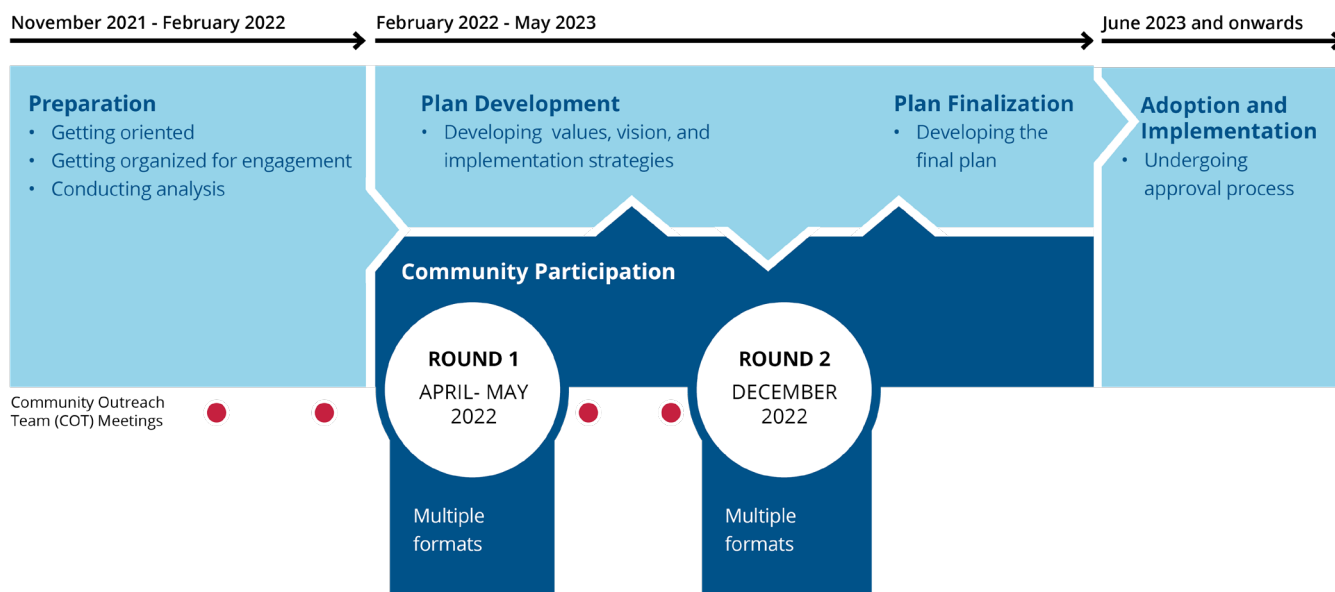


PROCESS

What services would you like to see the City provide or improve on?
What physical improvements would you like to see happen in the City?
What issues would you like to see the City address?
Any other big ideas? Anything else to share?



Findlay Forward included an analysis of existing conditions and trends, extensive community outreach and community engagement, collaboration with stakeholders and government officials, and iterative development and review of the Plan’s recommendations from the public, the Community Outreach Team, City Staff, and the Strategic Planning Committee.



COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

The planning team created a Community Snapshot Report to understand key conditions and trends affecting the City and inform the recommendations of the Strategic Plan. The planning team shared the findings with the Strategic Planning Committee, Community Outreach Team, Staff, and the general public.

The Community Snapshot was organized into two sections, one focused on the larger community and one focused on the internal city operations. The Community section was organized into three topical categories: people, place, and prosperity.

Highlights of the Community Snapshot are included on the following pages. The full report can be found in the appendix.





COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

PEOPLE



Total population declined slightly after a period of steady increase.

Findlay's population rose from roughly 28,000 in 1950 to over 41,000 in 2010. Population declined slightly to 40,313 in 2020.

Findlay's population is growing more diverse.

The population of nearly all races increased, except for White, American Indian, and Alaska Native populations

Seniors are the fastest growing population.

Adults over the age of 65 make up 17% of the population and has grown the fastest with a 16% increase since 2010.

PLACE



There is a mix of housing types available in Findlay.

The majority of housing is single-family detached homes. There is also a variety of small and large multi-family homes. The fastest growing unit types since 2010 are 2-unit and mobile homes.

Housing stock is older.

Only 2% of housing stock was built after 2014. The majority of housing was built in 1939 or earlier.

Median home values and rent are lower than the State of Ohio and Hancock County.

Median home value increased 11% and rent increased 16% between 2010 and 2019. However, housing value is lower in Findlay compared to Hancock County and the State of Ohio.

There is limited undeveloped land left for residential housing within City limits.

Most land within City limits that is undeveloped is farmland and currently zoned light industrial or general commercial.



PROSPERITY



Findlay’s median household income is below Hancock County and the State of Ohio.

Median household income in Findlay in 2019 was \$51,002. Median household income was \$58,450 in Hancock County and \$56,601 in the State of Ohio.

Poverty levels in Findlay have decreased over the last 7 years.

The population below poverty level decreased 30% and families below poverty decreased 36%. Poverty in Findlay is on par with Hancock County and the State of Ohio.

Top employers continue to be in manufacturing, petroleum, health, and education sectors.

Whirlpool, Blanchard Valley Regional Health Center, Marathon, and Findlay City School employees have grown since 2013. Other top employers have lost employees.

CITY OPERATIONS



Many services are provided in partnership with Hancock County, Wood County, The Alliance, non-profit organizations, and private organizations.

The City provides safety services, water and sewer services, public works, airport services, development services, recreation, and general services. Community partners assist in providing recreation, planning, economic development, ambulatory emergency services, and other important services.

City Staff is not as diverse as the City of Findlay.

80% of City Staff are male, and 98% of City Staff are white. 48% of Findlay residents are male and 86% are white.

The primary source of revenue for the City is the 1% income tax.

Income tax accounts for 73% of the City revenue. Other significant sources are fees, licenses, and the real estate tax.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Findlay Forward process was inclusive and driven by the community's aspirations and ideas. Throughout the year-long process, there were many opportunities for the public to get involved through workshops, online activities, stakeholder interviews, a business survey, and an open house. The planning team and Community Outreach Team worked hard to help ensure that all members of the Findlay community had the opportunity to participate in the process.



NOV 21

PUBLIC PROCESS TIMELINE

DEC

JAN 22

Stakeholder Interviews

FEB

Workshops

5 events | 200+ participants

MAR

Online Activities

400+ participants

APR

MAY

Meeting in a Box

9 meetings | 270+ participants

JUN

JUL

AUG

Business Survey

63 businesses | 350+ ideas

SEP

OCT

Open House

1 event | 65 participants

NOV

Online Activities

74 participants

DEC

JAN 23

Extended Viewing

15 days | 19 participants

Round 1:

Move
Findlay
Forward

Round 2:

Review
the Draft
Strategic
Plan

1,100+ people → 4,400+ pieces of input → 108 actions



STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The planning team conducted interviews with Stakeholders to learn about current issues and opportunities in the community.

The interviews included City Staff, the Strategic Planning Committee, and members of The Findlay-Hancock Alliance (a public-private partnership between the Findlay-Hancock County Chamber of Commerce, Findlay-Hancock County Economic Development, and the Findlay-Hancock County Convention and Visitors Bureau).

The interviews revealed what is working well, and what could be done to improve operations and collaboration, and how to better meet the needs of the Findlay community. Many stakeholders expressed a positive outlook for Findlay and viewed the Strategic Plan as an essential roadmap to capitalize on the existing assets and strengths.

Major Themes:

- » Desire for improved communication and collaboration with community members and partners.
- » Low tax rate is a draw for businesses and residents but also is a challenge for meeting expectations for providing necessary or expanded services and amenities.
- » Available amenities, housing, and the general affordability and physical character of City were major concerns for attracting new employers, residents, and employees.

MOVE FINDLAY FORWARD WORKSHOPS

The *Move Findlay Forward Workshops* officially kicked off the planning process and served to not only gather input from the general public but also educate about the planning process and why strategic planning is important.

Participants were asked to provide their vision for the future of the City and to identify key issues and opportunities for the City to address. Nearly 1,000 community members participated in the following ways:

- » **In-person workshops:** Three in-person workshops were hosted at different locations and times across the City to provide convenient opportunities to attend.
- » **Virtual workshop:** The workshop was identical in content and activities as the in-person events. It allowed people who were unable to attend the in-person workshops another way to participate.
- » **Online activities:** Online versions of the workshop activities provided flexible options for participants. Through a partnership, local restaurants and coffee shops distributed post cards that promoted the online input opportunity to their patrons and encouraged them to fill out the survey while waiting for their food.
- » **Student engagement:** Students were asked to provide their input at pop up events held at two different locations on the University of Findlay campus.
- » **Meeting-in-a-box:** The Community Outreach Team hosted small group meetings at churches, neighborhood associations, community groups, and schools. The team engaged nearly 300 people.





BUSINESS SURVEY

A survey was circulated to the business community to help create and refine recommendations related to economic development.

Business owners, executives, and managers were asked about the assets of Findlay for businesses, what would help attract and retain employees, what support they need, and what areas the City should focus on for economic development. More than 60 businesses of various sizes and industries responded.

Major Themes:

- » Employers chose to locate in Findlay because of the community, quality of life, and location.
- » Housing, improved amenities, infrastructure, and business incentives were identified as key areas for economic development and attracting and retaining employees.

REVIEWING THE DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

Round 2 gave the public the opportunity to review the draft Strategic Plan, share which objectives the City should focus on first, and provide general comments on the draft actions. Nearly 200 community members provided their feedback through the following engagement opportunities:

- » **Open house:** An open house was hosted at the Marathon Center for Performing Arts. The Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Actions were displayed on boards for the public to view and provide their comments.
- » **Extended viewing:** Following the open house, the display boards were available at the Municipal Building for an additional week and a half for the community to continue to view and provide their feedback.
- » **Online activities:** The draft plan was available on the Findlay Forward website for the community to view and provide their priorities for implementation as well as their general comments on the draft plan.

Major Themes:

- » Objectives related to quality of life and quality of place were popular
- » Participants were supportive of the objective related to housing, but some were skeptical of actions that would increase regulations related to housing





PLAN FRAMEWORK





1

A Safe Community

Safety and security are foundational to creating a best-in-class city. A focus on safety will ensure that the Findlay community feels safe to participate in all the amenities and activities the city has to offer. The City of Findlay will strive to create a community that continues to offer high-quality emergency services, addresses criminal activity, and works to reduce risks from the natural environment.

Goal

A Safe Community because of proactive emergency planning, high quality response and recovery, and well-maintained physical appearance.

Objectives

1. Maintain and enhance a safe community through the continued support of emergency services.
2. Maintain support for accountable community policing.
3. Collaborate to ensure a continuum of services and facilities, for individuals involved in the criminal justice system for effective detention, support, and reentry.
4. Continually improve through training, technology, and good policy.
5. Decrease flood risk.



Findlay Salutes

VETERANS

2

A Well-Run City Government

Responsible, transparent, communicative, and effective governance are top priorities for the City of Findlay, Findlay’s elected officials, and City Staff. The City of Findlay will continue, in collaboration with community partners, to provide excellent services, keep residents safe, and be fiscally sustainable. Objectives related to this goal support financial health of the City, collaboration with community partners, effective communication, and quality emergency services.

Goal

A well-run City Government that is transparent, easy to engage with, and prioritizes its employees and citizens.

Objectives

1. Continue to lead in collaboration and operational efficiency with partners.
2. Improve upon communications to ensure information is clear, accessible, and transparent.
3. Modernize technology, software, systems, and processes.
4. Ensure that the City of Findlay government is an employer of choice in the region.
5. Continue to ensure the City’s long-term financial strength and stability while protecting the 1% income tax rate.
6. Model values of being open and friendly to all through city operations.
7. Maintain, plan, and invest in capital assets to ensure they are safe, affordable, and high quality.



K. SHENSE
INSPECTOR

FIRE
DEPT.
PINDLAY

3

A Caring Government

The Findlay Forward process revealed the desire from the community to improve social support and community bonds. The City of Findlay can support community members in their own city operations and with supportive social services. Objectives in this goal focus on ways the City of Findlay can strengthen community bonds in collaboration with community partners and within City operations.

Goal

A Caring Government that supports all community members and looks for opportunities to strengthen community spirit and belonging.

Objectives

1. Support the coalitions in their work to address social service needs of the community.
2. Support a culture of community belonging.
3. Support organizations in their efforts to build, and sustain, community spirit.

Dietsch Brothers
Est. 1937



4

A Thriving Business Environment

A healthy and flourishing business environment and economy is at the core of Findlay's prosperity. Findlay's ability to attract and grow industries and desirable jobs will be critical to Findlay's continued success. The objectives support economic development, education, and workforce development and lay the groundwork for a thriving and prosperous future for Findlay.

Goal

A Thriving Business Environment that takes care of existing businesses, attracts new businesses, supports local entrepreneurs, and is economically sustainable.

Objectives

1. Continue to strengthen economic development through ongoing partnerships.
2. Support businesses and entrepreneurs through various initiatives.
3. Support education, skilled trades, and workforce development
4. Build a Findlay, Ohio brand and partner with other stakeholders to promote it.
5. Promote and preserve the Findlay Airport as a vital community resource.



5

An Attractive Place

Findlay is rich in assets that attract and retain residents and employers including an inviting downtown, diverse housing stock, and a wide variety of local businesses. Findlay residents recognized that these assets make their community unique. At the same time, Findlay residents recognized a need for more amenities in the community and a greater focus on “quality of place.” Objectives in this section focus on maintaining and enhancing Findlay’s character, caring for existing assets, and improving Findlay’s built environment.

Goal

An Attractive Place to live, learn, work, play, invest, and raise a family.

Objectives

1. Maintain Findlay’s small city character as the community evolves.
2. Protect and enhance Findlay’s downtown as the heartbeat of the community.
3. Reimagine the Riverfront throughout the community.
4. Care for the natural environment
5. Care for the physical environment in the City’s residential neighborhoods, commercial, and industrial districts consistent with the character of the community.
6. Support safe and diverse housing options for all.



Flag City

Findlay, OH

www.visitfindlay.com

RE/MAX

6

An Active Community

The quality of a community's public services, parks, and recreation opportunities greatly impacts quality of life for residents. Findlay has many existing parks and recreation opportunities as well as community partners that help to provide and maintain parks and recreation offerings. Continuous planning, collaboration with partners, and communicating with residents about existing amenities will help to support and improve active lifestyles and recreation opportunities.

Goal

An Active Community with a wide variety of amenities, parks, and recreation opportunities for people of all abilities.

Objectives

1. Strengthen partnerships for the long-term planning and provision of amenities.
2. Communicate available recreational programs and other activities more efficiently and effectively
3. Continually improve accommodations and accessibility of existing parks and recreational facilities
4. Provide programming and events that support active lifestyles, health, and wellness.



7

A Connected City

Well-maintained and safe streets and a range of mobility options help connect communities. The City of Findlay provides an essential service through the maintenance and improvement of city streets. Residents and businesses emphasized this important role and indicated their desire for continued street improvements as well as more mobility options and infrastructure. Objectives in this section focus on ways the City of Findlay and its partners can improve mobility options and connection throughout the community.

Goal

A Connected City where people are linked to destinations and each other in a variety of ways.

Objectives

1. Continue to improve street maintenance, traffic flow, and safety
2. Identify, evaluate, and execute opportunities to improve bike and pedestrian infrastructure
3. Support organizations in an effort to identify, evaluate, and implement diverse mobility options.
4. Support the expansion of communication networks to encourage competition and accessibility.



GEORGE W. LUCE

THROUGH THE COURTESY OF
S.S. DASH
THE MONUMENT HAS BEEN LOCATED
IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
SERVICES OF THE 2ND ILL.
1861 - 1865
DONATED BY THE
TO FRANK R. WOLFE, DISTRICT

IMPLEMENTATION



IMPLEMENTATION

The Strategic Plan Framework will not only be used as a guide for the City organization and elected officials, but it will also identify critical partners and coordination necessary to realize the recommended objectives. Management of the Strategic Plan's implementation will be led by the City Council with support from all City departments. Execution of the plan will be shared between City Staff and key partners such as Hancock County Regional Planning Commission and the Alliance.

How to Use the Plan Framework

The plan should be used on a daily basis as public and private decisions are made concerning the community's future. The following is a summary of how decisions and processes should be institutionalized to align with the vision and actions.

Annual Work Programs and Budgets

City Staff should be cognizant of the recommendations of the plan when preparing annual work programs and budgets. This also includes considering the plan when making important policy and financial decisions that impact the community.

Community Planning

Community planning efforts, including those of the City, community organizations, and the school district should be aligned with the vision, values, goals, and recommendations of the plan.

Capital Improvement Plan

The City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) should be consistent with the plan's recommendations.

Private Investment Decisions

Property owners, developers, and other private entities should consider the plan's recommendations in their planning and investment decisions. Public decision-makers will be using the plan as a guide in their deliberations about proposals, projects, and funding requests. Property owners and developers should be cognizant of and complement the plan's recommendations.

Civic and Social Engagement

All civic and community groups should create opportunities to explore solutions to issues of concern to the community. They should seek alignment with the recommendations of the plan and collaborate across interests, missions, and constituencies.

CREATING ACTIONS

Specific actions (programs, policies, or projects) will be developed in the next phase of this work and in an ongoing manner through Council Committees. Actions will be designed to support the vision, goals, and objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan Framework.

Community Engagement

Community members are encouraged to bring specific action ideas that support the objectives and goals to the appropriate Council Committee for consideration. This should be done in an ongoing basis to encourage continued community input and continue to align actions with the needs of the larger community.

If you have questions or comments relative to the Strategic Plan Framework or ideas for specific actions, contact the Council Clerk at *ClerkOfCouncil@FindlayOhio.gov*.

MANAGING

Staff should create departmental work plans to ensure the successful and ongoing implementation of the Strategic Plan Framework. These work plans should be consistent across the organization, but still allow for departmental customization. The work plans should outline the departmental mission, essential core services, and specific strategic plan objectives being worked on for the upcoming fiscal year, along with budget requests to accomplish both the essential core services and the strategic plan goals. It is recommended that each department reconcile their core services with future needs as outlined in the Strategic Plan Framework. In addition, the plan should be an opportunity to help organize staff reports (i.e. report out on actions that are ongoing, complete, or future actions) and department head goals (i.e. tie department goals back to the strategic plan goals).

The Strategic Plan Framework should be actively managed on a regular basis and monitored for implementation effectiveness and relevancy. This review should happen on a formal basis no less than once per year.

Updating the Plan Framework

A formal review of the Strategic Plan Framework should be considered every five years to incorporate new decennial Census data and other relevant changes and planning work going on in the community.

Reporting and Monitoring

Several methods can be undertaken to report and monitor the plan's progress to the community. This includes:

- » Presenting an annual or bi-annual report card to the City Council
- » Reporting City actions that support the strategic plan
- » Illustrating completed or ongoing actions through the use of infographics on the City website

Plan Management Cycle

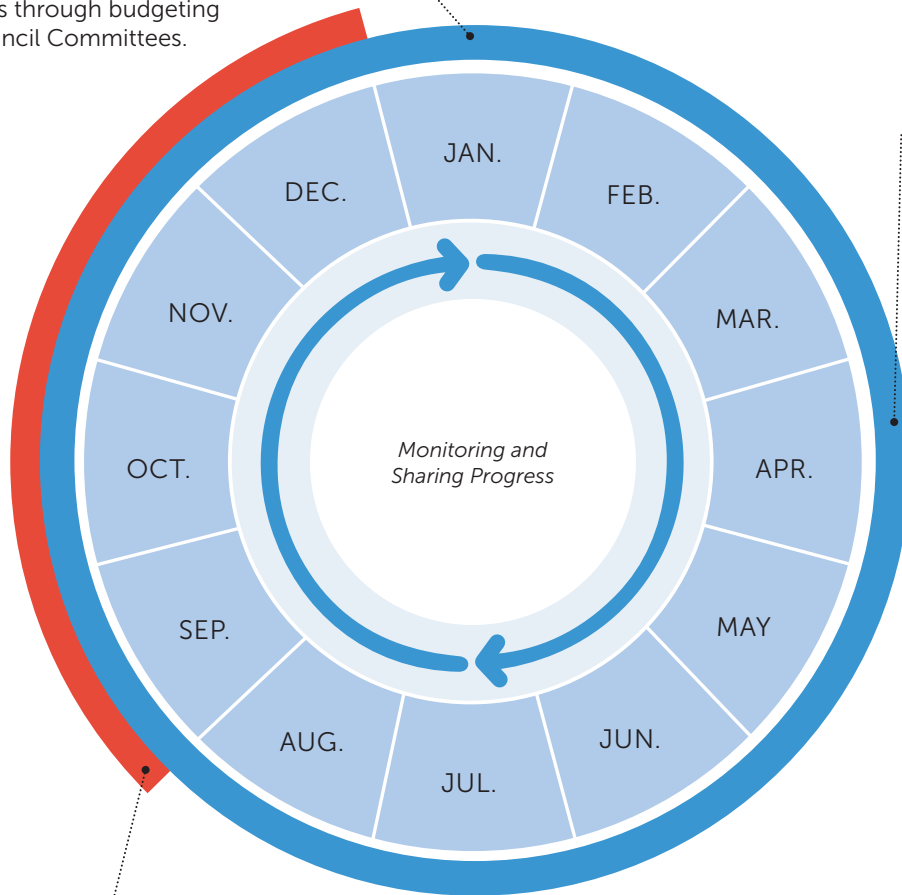
This plan framework is intended as a living document and will be used throughout the year to establish and evaluate specific actions that help achieve the Vision and Goals.

This plan framework should be integrated into annual City processes including budgeting and capital improvements planning. It should also be regularly tracked for progress and assessed for effectiveness. Council Committees will take on the responsibility of developing actions annually that support the objectives, goals, and ultimately the vision.

The graphic below illustrates how the plan framework will be integrated into the work of Council Committees and into the budgeting process.

IMPLEMENT PLAN

Develop and implement actions (projects, policies, and programs) that achieve Strategic Plan Framework Goals through budgeting process and Council Committees.



ANNUAL REPORT

Evaluate goal progress and report on progress to community.

EVALUATE PROGRESS

Engage the community, stakeholders, and leadership to evaluate success, assess indicators, and identify upcoming fiscal year goals. Opportunities to incorporate the Goals into the annual operating budget and the five year capital budget should be considered. Regular reporting on implementation progress should occur after review.

- Action Development and Implementation
- Goal Setting and Evaluation