



The City of Galesburg

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND GOAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Executive Summary

PREPARED OCTOBER

2024



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Center for
Governmental Studies

Outreach Engagement and Regional Development



Introduction

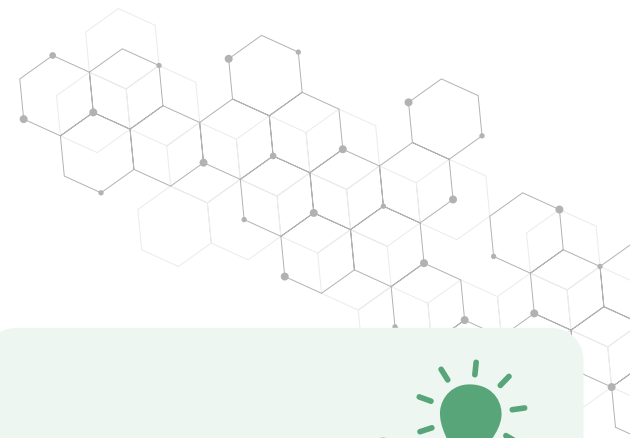
In January 2024, the City of Galesburg (the "City") engaged the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies ("NIU-CGS") to facilitate the process of developing the City's strategic plan. The strategic planning process included collecting internal and external feedback, consisting of focus groups with community stakeholders and staff and interviews with the City Council and administrative leadership.

Themes emerging from this feedback were shared at the City's strategic planning leadership workshop held in August 2024. The findings were used to assist workshop participants in making informed decisions related to crafting a strategic vision and future direction for the City as an organization and the community it serves. Ultimately, workshop participants created strategic goals focusing on where the City wants to go as an organization in both the short and long term.

Executive-level strategic planning sessions are a staple for progressive organizations and are recommended to be done regularly. The full report provides a summary of the process and presents the consensus on strategic directions and goals for the City.

Visioning for the Future

During the strategic planning workshop, participants engaged in a visioning exercise to describe the desired future direction of the City by answering the question: "If you left the City and the community for 10–15 years, what do you think or hope to see when you return?" The word cloud summarizes their responses.



DID YOU KNOW?



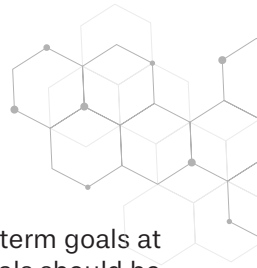
Galesburg is home to one of the largest rail yards in the country and was designated by the U.S. Congress to host the National Railroad Hall of Fame in 2004? It's also where the historic 1858 Lincoln–Douglas debate took place at Knox College.

<https://www.ci.galesburg.il.us/>



Strategic Goals and Priority Areas

At the strategic planning leadership workshop, stakeholder input from the focus groups and interviews was shared in thematic form to help inform a series of discussions on leadership's visions for the future and the City's current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (S.W.O.C.). Participants ultimately used the workshop discussions and exercises to develop short- and long-term goals for the City.



High-Priority Strategic Goals

The City Council and administrative leadership developed seventeen short-term goals and fifteen long-term goals at the workshop. They were asked to delineate, via an online ranking exercise after the workshop, which goals should be given the highest priority. **The following highest priority goals are offered as a process "snapshot", representing the most important strategic goals for the Council and staff to address in the months and years ahead.** To view the full list of goals developed and ranking methodology, please refer to the [full report](#).

SHORT-TERM 1- to 3-YEAR TIME FRAME

Develop a multi-year plan to invest in infrastructure improvements.

Improve the City's marketing and external communication strategies to ensure cohesive and accurate messaging to the variety of stakeholders, residents, and businesses across the community.

Use the 2024 Galesburg housing study to develop policies, programs, and approaches for short- and long-term housing needs while working to improve the mix of housing and housing stock.

Explore funding source options for long-term road and infrastructure maintenance needs across the community.

Analyze and resolve the City's water sourcing options and solutions for the next 60-100 years.

LONG-TERM 4- to 8-YEAR TIME FRAME

Continue to increase the City's investments and activities to foster and support broad economic development opportunities and actions in the community.

Capitalize on the City's airport as an asset with regular maintenance, improvements, and enhanced marketing for tourism.

Work with downtown businesses to make downtown a vibrant and active hub, including attracting outdoor dining and residential housing developers for mixed-use development.

Work to address power infrastructure needs and deficits and improve the power grid in and around the City with electric utilities/providers.

Partner to help reduce and/or alleviate elements of poverty in the City.

Foster and facilitate a redevelopment plan for the Sandburg mall and the area surrounding the mall.

Strategic Priority Areas



Based on an evaluation of the entire process, including interviews, focus groups, discussions at the workshop, and the goals developed, four high-level strategic priority areas were identified. Strategic priority areas can change slightly from one strategic planning process to the next. These priority areas represent larger themes or priorities that encompass all the strategic goals. Full definitions, rationale, and goal alignment can be found in the full report.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND BEAUTIFICATION

The City of Galesburg has a rich history worth celebrating. The City's proactive and passionate leadership, commitment to high quality of life, and strong support for the arts and culture are just a few of its strengths. Prioritizing beautification efforts and dedicating funds to accomplish beautification goals will not only help to enhance the City's aesthetic appeal, but also build a sense of community pride. By improving the gateways, streets, and sidewalks through public/private partnerships, residents and businesses can be inspired to invest more deeply in their community, fostering a stronger, more trusting relationship between the City government and its citizens.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION

The City of Galesburg's central location and large size lend themselves to a bustling business district. Continued focus on revitalization and rehabilitation of downtown historic buildings will be important to achieving Galesburg's economic and community development goals, including creating jobs, increasing tourism dollars, and recruiting new businesses that will complement and diversify the City's business mix. The City can focus on areas of growth and expansion by employing tools such as façade grant programs, rehabilitation assistance, talent pipeline partnerships and other incentives to recruit and retain businesses.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Community engagement and effective governance is vitally important for communities of all sizes. Whether it is listening to the needs of residents and businesses, delivering a cohesive message, or promoting the City's events and activities, clear communication and active engagement are high priorities for City staff and elected officials. Highlighting what makes Galesburg unique to current and potential residents, businesses, and tourists is essential for successful marketing and branding of the community. Moreover, community engagement enhances transparency, which is fundamental to effective governance.



INFRASTRUCTURE AND HOUSING IMPROVEMENTS

Proactively planning and rehabilitating the City's existing facilities along with strategic investments in the City's water and power infrastructure are essential to ensuring City facilities are sustainable and can accommodate potential growth. Additionally, diversifying the housing stock is crucial to meeting the needs of both current and potential residents across various life stages. Exploring housing need, availability, and future developments will enable the City to adapt to, and plan for, changes in population, demographics, and tourism, positioning the community for long-term success.

Strategic Plan Process Acknowledgements

CITY OF GALESBURG ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mayor, Peter Schwartzman

First Ward City Council Member, Bradley Hix

Second Ward City Council Member, Wayne Dennis

Third Ward City Council Member, Evan Miller

Fourth Ward City Council Member, Dwight White

Fifth Ward City Council Member, Heather Acerra

Sixth Ward City Council Member, Sarah Davis

Seventh Ward City Council Member, Steve Cheesman

City Clerk, Kelli R. Bennewitz

CITY OF GALESBURG ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

City Manager, Eric Hanson

Executive Assistant to the City Manager, Kristin Robinson

Director of Public Works, Michael Doi

Director of Finance, Jennifer O'Hern

Director of Community Development, Steve Gugliotta

Director of Parks and Recreations, Don Miles

Chief of Police, Russ Idle

Fire Chief, Randy Hovind

Administrative Services Manager, Cathy St. George

Human Resources Manager, Jessica Pease

IT Manager, Orlee Lucero

CITY OF GALESBURG COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDERS

The City of Galesburg would also like to thank all the community members who participated in the stakeholder feedback phase of the process. An effective strategic plan includes feedback from stakeholders to ensure that needs and expectations are shared and understood by leaders of the organization.

Process facilitated by Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**Center for
Governmental Studies**

Outreach Engagement and Regional Development

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