



STRATEGIC PLAN

SUMMARY REPORT



May 2026

Dear Mayor Goczkowski and Members of the City Council,

I am pleased to present the City of Des Plaines' 2027-2030 Strategic Plan and Summary Report. The plan reflects the City's vision for the future and provides a clear framework for decision-making, performance measurement and service delivery over the next four years. It also highlights priority areas identified through the planning process, including economic development, infrastructure and sustainability, workforce of excellence, financial sustainability, and community image.

The development of this plan was shaped by the thoughtful participation of City leadership and staff, whose insight and commitment helped define the City's vision, mission, and strategic goals. Through discussion, analysis, and collaboration, Des Plaines has established a practical roadmap that builds on its strengths while preparing for future opportunities and challenges.

It has been an honor to support the City of Des Plaines in this important work. I extend my sincere appreciation to the Mayor, City Council, and staff for their leadership, engagement, and dedication throughout the process.

Yours truly,

Cory Poris Plasch
President/CEO
CP2 Consulting

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Executive Summary

Beginning in October 2025, the City of Des Plaines launched a strategic planning process to establish organizational priorities and performance targets for 2027-2030. The resulting Strategic Plan provides a framework for aligning resources, guiding decision-making, and measuring progress over the next four years.

The plan is organized around five strategic goals representing the issues of greatest importance to the City's long-term success: **Economic Development, Infrastructure and Sustainability, Workforce of Excellence, Financial Sustainability, and Community Image**. Each goal is supported by defined outcomes, key outcome indicators, and performance targets to help track progress and accountability.

The planning process included collaboration among City leadership and staff and incorporated information gathered through environmental analysis and stakeholder input. As part of this effort, the City also updated its vision and mission statements to better reflect current priorities and future direction.

A cross-functional staff team further developed the Strategic Plan by identifying initiatives to advance each strategic goal. This team will continue to support implementation by developing project plans, coordinating across departments, and strengthening internal communication so staff can connect day-to-day work to the City's broader strategic objectives.



Vision, Mission

VISION

A caring community with deep connections and a forward-thinking approach, Des Plaines is where people come together to build a future abundant with possibilities.

MISSION

A welcoming city with a strong sense of community, Des Plaines professionally delivers the cost-effective services essential to a safe, sustainable, and engaged community.



The Strategic Planning Process

The Strategic Planning Process seeks to answer five questions:

1. Where are we right now? (Plan Development)
2. Where do we want to be? (Plan Development)
3. How do we get there from here? (Plan Implementation)
4. How will we know when we get there? (Plan Implementation)
5. Are there changes in the future external environment that we need to consider?

DEVELOPMENT

Where are we now?

Scan the Environment
Conduct Internal and External Analysis
(SWOT)
Develop a Strategic Profile
Identify Strategic Challenges

Where are we going?

Define Our Mission
Articulate Core Values
Set a Vision
Identify Key Intended Outcomes

IMPLEMENTATION

How will we get there?

Develop Initiatives
Define Performance Measures
Set Targets and Thresholds
Spread Throughout Organization

How will we know?

Create Detailed Action Plans
Establish Accountability:
Who, What, When
Identify Success Indicators

Assessing the Current Environment

The Strategic Planning Process began with a meeting with the consultant and Des Plaines staff. The meeting included a review of strategic planning principles, a discussion of organizational value proposition, the status of vision and mission statements, and a tutorial on preparing an Environmental Scan. The session concluded with a timeline for the planning process, assignments for preparation of the Environmental Scan, and a process for conducting the stakeholder outreach.



Operating Environment

To answer the question “**Where are we now?**,” the Strategic Planning Process began with gaining an understanding of the operating environment. This is the first activity in developing a Strategic Plan as internal and external forces, dynamics, and constraints must be considered to arrive at the most effective strategy.

Assessing the environment included a landscape analysis survey of Council members and key staff.

As environmental factors change over time, they need to be evaluated and incorporated into the strategic thinking and planning process using current data.



Environmental Scan

Des Plaines enters its strategic planning process from a position of strength. The City has a stable financial foundation, ongoing economic reinvestment, and a growing diverse population. The City continues to attract new businesses and development while maintaining high-quality municipal services and strong infrastructure investments that enhance the community's livability. With its strategic location, vibrant neighborhoods, and forward-looking leadership, Des Plaines is poised for continued progress and long-term success.

Statistics to Consider

- Population 60,675 (2020); median age of 42.8 indicates an aging population.
- Des Plaines is becoming more diverse, with growth in Hispanic/Latino and Asian populations. Many residents were born outside the U.S. and nearly half speak a language other than English at home. The community includes large Spanish- and Slavic-speaking populations.
- Median household income: \$94,303; per capita income: \$44,032.
- Housing is 79.4% owner-occupied; approximately 59% single-family, with recent growth driven by multifamily development.
- 36,493 private-sector jobs and approximately 1,800 businesses across healthcare, logistics, manufacturing, retail, and hospitality sectors.
- Building permits: 2,890 (2025); construction valuation: \$187 million (2025), up from \$97 million in 2024.
- Annual revenue: \$163.4 million; primary sources include sales tax (18%), gaming tax (17%), and property tax (15%).
- Capital Improvement Program (2026–2030): approximately \$208.1 million, with emphasis on water systems and facilities.
- Lead service line replacement: ~10,266 lines over 20 years, estimated \$220.7 million total cost.
- Public safety activity: 38,000+ police calls and 11,000+ fire/EMS calls annually.

Understanding the Environment

An integral part of the Strategic Planning Process is a SWOT Analysis, which stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It provides a situational overview of the environment in which strategic planning takes place and allows a systematic examination of factors impacting the community. **Strengths and Weaknesses** examine the internal operating environment, while **Opportunities and Threats** evaluate the external operating environment.

To provide ample opportunity for reflection, a SWOT survey was distributed to the City Council Members and staff prior to the Strategic Planning session. During the Strategic Planning Retreat, the SWOT data was reviewed to determine key themes and strategic issues.



SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
• Highly engaged and collaborative elected officials • Experienced professional staff • Strong financial stewardship • Location • Affordability • Modern/effective core service delivery • Community diversity and inclusion	• Outdated City Code • Lead service line replacement • Pension obligation • Staff capacity constraints • High number of at grade rail crossings • Aging infrastructure	• Economic development • General growth potential • Downtown development • Oakton corridor development • Leveraging strong financial position • Debt reduction • Increased casino revenues • Infrastructure planning & investments • Strategic location • Strong sense of community • Improvement and modernization of systems and services	• Economy • Staff retention • New regulations/unfunded mandates • Infrastructure management • Cyber security threats • Unexpected emergencies • Potential revenue disruptions

The Strengths and Opportunities groups combined to discuss how internal strength coupled with external opportunities could be enablers of success.

The Weaknesses and Threats groups combined to discuss how internal weaknesses coupled with external threats could be challenges to success.

Then, the groups combined, and all participants reviewed the key themes. A list of strategic issues was determined, and included infrastructure and facilities, financial responsibility and grants, branding, staff retention and development, technology updates, and community engagement.

SWOT Analysis (cont.)

Finally, the most important organizational priorities were finalized taking into account information gathered throughout the process, including the Environmental Scan.

Through this analysis, five Strategic Goals were identified: Economic Development, Infrastructure and Sustainability, Workforce of Excellence, Financial Sustainability, and Community Image.



Targets by Strategic Goal

STRATEGIC GOAL Economic Development

OUTCOME	KEY OUTCOME INDICATOR	TARGET	INITIATIVE
Updated and streamlined City Codes	# codes updated	• Update multiple codes by 1/2030 - Business regulations (4) by 12/27 - Building/zoning/public ways and subdivision 10/12/8/13 by 12/28 - Business rentals liquor alarm by 12/30	• Code Update Strategy
Continued redevelopment throughout the City	# projects complete; # project milestones complete	• re: DDP implementation (wayfinding and parking) • Oakton/Lee Plan adoption and code • Special area plans approved (office areas and Cumberland) • Comp Plan by 2030	• Update Comprehensive Plan • Special Area Plans • Redevelop City Owned Properties
Public private partnerships attract investment	# parcels with strategy determined; # business grants awarded	• Marketing conventions strategy determined for at least 7 vacant and key available parcels by 1/2028 • 3 business assistance grants awarded per year	• Development of Financial Strategies for Public Private Partnerships

Targets by Strategic Goal (cont.)

STRATEGIC GOAL Infrastructure & Sustainability			
OUTCOME	KEY OUTCOME INDICATOR	TARGET	INITIATIVE
Reliable infrastructure	# miles water main replaced # cubic feet stormwater capacity # service lines replaced	• 3.5 mile water main/year replacement • Increase stormwater capacity annually • Replace 500 lead service lines annually	• Continued watermain replacement • Continued stormwater management • Refine reliable water supply strategy • Update capital improvement plan
Facilities modernized	# project milestones complete	• Internal: - Needs determined and prioritized by 6/30/2027 - Replace/rehab per plan annually - Update four-year IT replacement plan by 6/30/2027 • External: - Needs determined and prioritized by 9/1/2026	• Create a facility use and needs plan • Update equipment replacement plan and IT replacement plan
Sustainability	# project milestones complete	• Create sustainability plan by Q2 2027	• Create sustainability plan strategy by Q1 2028

Targets by Strategic Goal (cont.)

STRATEGIC GOAL Workforce of Excellence			
OUTCOME	KEY OUTCOME INDICATOR	TARGET	INITIATIVE
Staff Capacity	# departments evaluated # core processes evaluated	- Evaluate staffing of 3 departments by 2029 - Audit one core process per year for efficiencies	- Create a staffing needs assessment and develop consistent comparability factors - Implement an annual internal process audit program to identify inefficiencies and improve service delivery
Organizational Readiness	# project milestones complete % key roles with needs identified	- Complete a baseline review of succession readiness and critical skill gaps for key roles by September 2027 - Identify the key roles and define development needs for those positions by December 2027	- Conduct organization-wide succession planning and skills assessment - Develop a structured employee training program
Recruitment & Retention	# project milestones complete	- Create a compensation analysis by December 2026 - Create an employee satisfaction baseline by December 2026. Re-evaluate annually.	- Perform a compensation analysis - Develop a workforce satisfaction survey

Targets by Strategic Goal (cont.)

STRATEGIC GOAL Financial Sustainability			
OUTCOME	KEY OUTCOME INDICATOR	TARGET	INITIATIVE
Future focused finances	• % fund balance • # project milestones complete	• Maintain a 25% fund balance policy annually • Update fee/fine Ordinance by 12/2029 • Establish Police and Fire pension funding plan by 3/2027	• Develop a fee Ordinance as part of City Code re-write • Develop long-term Police and Fire pension funding strategy
Citywide grant strategy established	• # project milestones complete • # grant ready projects	• Complete a Grant Matrix by 9/2028 • Develop 3-10 grant-ready project summaries annually	• Develop a comprehensive Grant Matrix to identify and track funding opportunities • Establish a shovel-ready grant project pipeline to support timely funding applications
Revenue diversification	• # project milestones complete	• Complete an annual revenue fluctuation analysis by Q1 each year to identify opportunities for new revenue streams	• Develop and maintain an annual revenue analysis and fluctuation report

Targets by Strategic Goal (cont.)

STRATEGIC GOAL Community Image			
OUTCOME	KEY OUTCOME INDICATOR	TARGET	INITIATIVE
Consistent external messaging	# messaging guides produced	Start quarterly messaging guides for senior staff and elected officials by May 2026	Quarterly messaging plan
Marketing	# project milestones complete	Updated marketing position plan determined by December 2027	Marketing strategy
Community engagement	# departments at events % of departments with surveys	- At least 2 departments at City events and community events by June 2026 - Customer satisfaction surveys are available in all public-facing departments by March 2027	- Community event strategy - Develop a Community Satisfaction Survey
Public safety	# project milestones complete	Community risk reduction strategy updated by May 2027	Community risk reduction program

Strategic Plan Implementation

Implementation is the final step in the Strategic Planning Process and consists of staff developing Initiatives to support the Strategic Goals determined during the Strategic Planning Process.

The following Initiatives will be reported on, showing the measurable progress the City of Des Plaines is making towards their Strategic Goals and associated Performance Targets.

Economic Development

- Code update strategy
- Update Comprehensive Plan
- Special Area Plans
- Redevelop City owned properties
- Development of financial strategies for Public Private Partnerships

Infrastructure and Sustainability

- Continued watermain replacement
- Continued stormwater management
- Refine reliable water supply strategy
- Update Capital Improvement Plan
- Create a facility use and needs plan
- Update equipment replacement plan and IT replacement plan
- Create Sustainability Plan strategy by Q1 2028

Workforce of Excellence

- Create a staffing needs assessment and develop consistent comparability factors
- Implement review processes to identify service delivery improvements
- Conduct organization-wide succession planning and skills assessment
- Develop a structured employee training program
- Perform a compensation analysis
- Develop a workforce satisfaction survey

Strategic Plan Implementation (cont.)

Financial Sustainability

- Develop a fee Ordinance as part of City Code re-write
- Develop long-term Police and Fire pension funding strategy
- Develop a comprehensive Grant Matrix to identify and track funding opportunities
- Establish a shovel-ready grant project pipeline to support timely funding applications
- Develop and maintain an annual revenue analysis and fluctuation report

Community Image

- Quarterly messaging plan
- Marketing strategy
- Community event strategy
- Develop a Community Satisfaction Survey
- Community risk reduction program



Strategic Plan Participants

The strategic plan was developed with the hard work and dedication of many individuals. The City Council and Staff led the way, taking time out of their schedules to commit to long-term thinking. They defined a direction and a set of outcomes that are important to the community stakeholders with whom they partner and serve.

Elected Officials



Andrew Goczkowski
Mayor



Margaret Chlebek
Alderman, Ward 1



Colt Moylan
Alderman, Ward 2



Sean Oskerka
Alderman, Ward 3



Dick Sayad
Alderman, Ward 4



Dominik Bronakowski
Clerk



Thomas Merlin
Alderman, Ward 5



Mark Walsten
Alderman, Ward 6



Patsy Smith
Alderman, Ward 7



Mike Charewicz
Alderman, Ward 8

Des Plaines Staff

City Manager

Dorothy Wisniewski

Police Chief

Dave Anderson

Fire Chief

Matt Matzl

Director of Public Works and Engineering

Tim Watkins

Director of Community and Economic Development

Jeff Rogers

Director of Finance

Agnes Podbial

Director of Communications

Brad Goodman

Director of Human Resources

Becky Suhajda

Director of Information Technology

Jarek Wojtaniec

City Attorney

Peter Friedman



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