

2024 City Council and Leadership Team Retreat (NOTES)

March 15 & 16, 2024

Timeline of process:

- Retreat → Staff Changes → Work Session → Staff Changes → Adoption at Regular Meeting

Public Comment:

- Mayor stated “focus on policy, not on policy implementation”
- Steve Arveschoug asked for the City strategic plan to be shared with BSED
- Steve Arveschoug: **ADD OBJECTIVE: beautify first impression corridors** (under infrastructure goal)
- Dan Brooks: **ADD OBJECTIVE: expand CPTED throughout city and not just downtown;** more money be allocated for CPTED training/implementation for businesses

CK – Vision

- CK asked for Council to dedicate time in 2024 to discuss creating a new vision statement for the City
- **Gulick and Shaw support this.**
- Councilman Kennedy would like to have the word SAFE in the new vision statement
- Councilman Neese would like a history of the vision statement to be presented/discussed at a work session
- Councilman Rupsis would like the vision statement to drive goals

City Council adopted Goals:

- Improve the health and safety of Billings for all citizens
- Sustain and upgrade critical infrastructure
- Foster economic vibrancy through quality designed neighborhoods and business districts
- Offer outstanding library, parks, recreation trails, and cultural amenities
- Cultivate a high-performance organization principled in our core values of integrity, service, stewardship, and collaboration

Strategic Goal: Sustain and upgrade critical infrastructure

- Councilwoman Shaw: “This goal should be aspirational.”
- Objective 1:
 - Add language that addresses removing/mitigating risk
 - What are the fees? Do they need to be adjusted?
 - What are the financial opportunities?
 - How are GIS maps being utilized?
 - Is there a list of recently updated infrastructure? If so, where can it be found?
- Objective 5 rewrite suggestion: Address major regulatory issues of the waste-water treatment plan.

- Objective 2 and 3 are considered “stretch goals”
 - Objective 2 needs a committee
- Councilman Neese: “Look at alternative and innovative ways to address storm water.”
- Councilman Rupsis: “Objectives are linked back to CA’s evaluation. Each of them should move [the city of Billings] beyond where we are today.”
- Councilman Rupsis: Objective 8 is not an infrastructure objective; MOVE to Goal #5
- Councilman Rupsis: “this goal is not very good”
- Councilman Rupsis: “need an ecosystem of small and large developers”
- Councilman Boyett: “need a committee to help create/explore incentives for builders”
- Councilman Aspenlieder: “have more measureable than aspirational objectives”
- Councilman Aspenlieder: “Council needs to see small, pre-approved plans”
- Mayor Cole: “Do we need to look at the in-fill policy?” Nicole Cromwell: “No. We need incentives.”
 - Fees reduced; green-fill prices for in-fill
 - Possibly revise in-fill policy
- Councilman Aspenlieder: “Tax abatements. Designate in-fill areas. Policy body needs to decide these areas.”
- Partner with MDT – public funding
- Councilman Gulick suggests a rewrite of Objective 6. (GJW emailed CG on 3/20/24)
- Councilman Aspenlieder: **ADD OBJECTIVE: solution/resolution for Heights Water District;**
Councilman Neese: merger plan
- Councilwoman Owen has asked that an economic development plan be part of Objective 7
 - City, County, and State need to partner
 - Concerns: private market/demand, need a plan for development of this land, resources need to be identified (staff, time, etc.), cash for utilities, more than land use and infrastructure; real estate analysis needed; SB382, City/County zoning differences
 - Mayor Cole: “Do we need to meet with the landowners? If so, how often?”
 - Councilwoman Owen: “Objective 7 needs to come back to Council.”
 - Mayor Cole: “Does the cost of public safety increase with this study?”
 - Andy: “The model does not address the type of development/housing.”
 - Mayor Cole: “Are there any other community examples that we should study?”
 - Councilman Neese: “What is the timeline to review plan?” (3 yr, 5 yr, etc.)

Strategic Goal: Foster economic vibrancy through quality-designed neighborhoods and business districts

- Council suggests: add “livability” or “quality of place” to language of goal.
- Councilwoman Owen: “The tone of the goal is too heavy-handed, too regulatory-sounding.”
- Councilman Tidswell: “Policy and vision [of this goal] need t be developed by Billings people.”
- Councilwoman Owen asks “What are the tradeoffs for first impression corridors?”

- Councilman Rupsis: “First impression corridors need to be prioritized.” Mayor Cole seconded sentiment.
 - Shiloh and Laurel Corridors; Airport Road
- Council suggests: add “that increase housing units” to the language of objective 5.
- Councilman Gulick suggest a rewrite of Objective 7. (GJW emailed CG on 3/20/24)
- Councilman Rupsis: “Complete sidewalks. Where is the funding? We need to think of ways to accomplish these goals.” (Objective 2)
- Mayor Cole: “What is the role of the private sector in funding pedal v. motor?” (Objective 2)

Strategic Goal: Offer Outstanding Library, Parks, Recreation, Trails, and Cultural Amenities for all citizens (underlined: proposed new language)

- CW Shaw: **ADD OBJECTIVE: Funding objective**
- Focus: make current parks better – according to what? Master Plan? Priority of maintenance versus new build
- Objectives 2, 3, 4: Mayor Cole and CM Rupsis would like to reword the objectives
- Objective 2: \$2M+ short to maintain current parks; parks are failing, not maximizing useful life; not deferred maintenance—regular maintenance; space being used not as designed (rugby, lacrosse, soccer, etc.)
- Objective 4: focus on Rec 2 You
- Numerous Councilmembers requested P&R funding options be discussed at a TBD work session
- CM Aspenlieder: “need for an alternate for the bathhouse” regarding both funding and construction
- CM Rupsis asks: “how are we investing in this goal?” “Focus on finishing projects rather than new projects.”
- Council asks: “what does activate mean?”
- CM Neese asks: “Can we explore increasing park fees/rates?” (proposed: 25%)
- CM Neese: “Make Parks an enterprise fund.”
- CM Neese: “Move Parks out of the General Fund.”
- CM Neese: “Does this goal pertain to all parks?” if not, “what parks?”
- CM Neese states: “Sell parkland to create funding source.”
- CM Kennedy: “Go back to the public/voters for funding.”
- CM Aspenlieder: “Give desired dollar amount to builder for South Park pool. What can we afford? What needs to be cut from the budget to make this work?”

Strategic Goal: Improve the health and safety of Billings for all citizens

- CW Owen: “both [health and safety] need to be included in the goal.”
- CM Neese requests for Objective 4: more electronic speed signs
 - Council Legislation subcommittee needs to take this on as a topic of interest
- DBA: “The city needs more proactive crime prevention.”
- Councilman Neese: “What is the timeframe for this goal?”
- Councilman Kennedy: “Is 10% [reduction] realistic for objectives 1 and 2?”
- Councilwoman Owen: “Objective 1 requires a partnership.”

- Councilwoman Owen: “Objective 1’s goal is bad...”
 - Dahl: Goal based on available resources
- CM Gulick, Shaw, and Aspenlieder: want to see updated CPSM report
- Councilwoman Owen: “Need to create an objective addressing criminal justice partners.”
- Councilwoman Owen: “Need to create an objective addressing public health partners.”
- Councilman Rupsis: “A dashboard needs to be created showing data.”
 - Watterson: “Define scope and outcomes.”
 - Mayor Cole: “Council needs to create a wish list of information they want showcased.”
- Councilwoman Owen: “Metrics for evaluation should be based on previous year and not a percentage.”
- Councilman Gulick: “Need to also focus on preventive measures [when addressing public safety].”
- Councilwoman Shaw: “What other traffic technology is available?”
- Council: “Bring EMS issue to a work session.”
- Family Justice Center:
 - Ask City and County to fund at \$250K/yr -OR-
 - Dedicate 2 mills/yr
- **ADD OBJECTIVE: increase domestic violence court filed cases by 25%**
- Council: Does staffing need to be an objective?
- Council: Traffic unit needs to utilize new strategies.
- **ADD OBJECTIVE: public safety communication plan**
- Nuisance property presentation at Council quarterly or twice yearly
- Legislative concerns THC levels and marijuana
- Mayor Cole: “What have been the negative impacts of the marijuana legislation?”

NEXT STEPS:

- **Incorporate these notes into plan**
 - **City Admin**
 - **Department Heads**
- **Present plan to Council at the Sept. 9 work session**