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Edmonds Strategic Plan Q & A

Following are answers to typical questions about the Edmonds Strategic Plan and process.

What is a strategic plan?

A strategic plan identifies short (3-5 years) and mid-term (5-10 years) community goals and objectives then outlines specific methods to achieve them. The plan identifies performance measures to make sure the plan's goals will be realized and identifies the parties who will be responsible for implementing the plan.

What issues will the strategic plan deal with?

Depending on the community's goals and concerns, the strategic plan may address fiscal and finance, economic development, public services, housing affordability, retail sales and tourism, and sustainability subjects.

How is the strategic plan different than other plans the city develops?

The strategic plan will coordinate the immediate accomplishment of other city plans to make sure they are consistent with and will implement the community's strategic short and mid-term objectives.

Why does Edmonds need a strategic plan?

Economic conditions and trends have impacted Edmonds ability to project the city's short and long range fiscal sustainability. Edmonds, like most other cities, needs to analyze its financial prospects and make strategic decisions about city services and capital projects - particularly as they affect community goals and objectives.

Who will develop the strategic plan?

Everyone - including the participation of property and business owners, community organizations and interest groups, school students, and the public-at-large.

The strategic planning process, and its ultimate implementation, will be overseen by City Council with the assistance of the Economic Development Commission (EDC), Planning Board (PB), city staff, and a consulting team.

It is critical that all parties be involved and reach a consensus of what to achieve if the strategic plan is to be successful.

How will Council, the Economic Development Commission (EDC), Planning Board (PB) oversee the strategic planning process?

City Council will conduct 6 retreats or workshops during the process to review existing conditions, public concerns, proposed strategies, public evaluation of the strategies, and the final plan's implementation measures.

How will the public be involved in strategic planning process?

A series of continuous public participation events will be conducted during the strategic planning process beginning with:

- Interviews and focus group sessions with key community stakeholders
- Mail-back and intercept surveys of business owners, employees, and customers
- Mail-back/internet surveys of middle and high school students
- Internet surveys of Edmonds residents
- A community charrette or workshop with all interested parties
- Open houses on strategic plan proposals and implementation measures
- Phone/internet survey of a statistical sample of Edmonds registered voter households to obtain final opinions, preferences, and priorities on the plan's contents
- Public hearings by the Planning Board and City Council on final plan adoption

How will the public be kept informed of the strategic planning process?

A strategic planning webpage and linkage will be established on the city's website that will include the original Economic Development Commission's recommendations concerning the development of the strategic plan along with the request for proposals (RFP) for consulting assistance and the scope of work submitted by the selected consulting team - the Beckwith Consulting Group.

The webpage linkage will also post the strategic planning calendar schedule, minutes and memorandums from the Council retreats, interviews, surveys, and other findings. The school and resident surveys will also be linked to the strategic planning webpage.

What is the overall schedule for completing the strategic plan?

The first Council retreat will be conducted beginning at 6:30 in Council Chambers on the 14th of September. The initial analysis of city trends, the stakeholder interviews, and student and resident surveys will begin shortly thereafter.

The public charrette or workshop is scheduled for the end of November, open houses and the phone/internet survey will be conducted on the draft plan in February, and the public hearings with the Planning Board and City Council are scheduled to begin in March and April of next year.

What is a Strategic Plan consensus?

Consensus is an overwhelming agreement that the vision for Edmonds is appropriate and reflects the aspirations of the total community including all

of the city's diverse populations. Ideally, the consensus will be unanimous. Realistically, consensus will reflect what a majority of all parties agree upon after all options have been developed and explored.

Consensus will reflect what all parties agree can and should be implemented that will advance the interests and benefits of the total community without causing conflict or resulting in unnecessary objections and delays.

How will consensus be achieved?

The strategic planning process includes multiple outreach events designed to engage the full community including all populations and interests. The interviews, focus group sessions, surveys, charrette and workshops, and open houses are all designed to elicit proposals, evaluate alternatives, and fine tune actions.

Ultimately, the statistically representative phone/internet survey of registered voter households towards the end of the process will vet the final strategic plan's proposals to determine which actions achieve the highest levels of community support. The Council, EDC, and PB will use the results of the survey to fine tune and include or discard the final contents of the strategic plan accordingly.

What are priorities and how will the Strategic Plan determine them?

Public input, as well as the Strategic Planning Committee's deliberations, will identify and determine the priority of all of the specific proposals and actions to be included in the Strategic Plan.

Some priorities will be defined from the results of the statistically representative phone/internet survey where a majority or more of the survey participants indicate a proposal should be achieved as soon as possible and merits the use of general fund revenues or a voted funding measure to achieve it.

Other priorities may be functional meaning the action is required in order to facilitate a high priority or desired project even though the facilitating action itself, such as an environmental impact statement or a study or design effort, is not considered particularly valuable in and of itself.

Most priorities will be opportunistic rather than rank ordered. The objective is to achieve all proposed actions as soon as each action is feasible and accomplishable. If a low priority action has a sponsor and funds, it should be accomplished by the sponsor with the support of the community so long as it does not interfere with the accomplishment of a higher priority action.

Each proposed action will likely have a different sponsor and funding source and schedule. The goal of the Strategic Plan is to organize and coordinate all actions and participants - not select winners and losers or determine which goes first and which goes last.

How will the Strategic Plan measure implementation progress?

The strategic planning process will identify benchmarks or specific measurements by which to determine if a proposed action is being accomplished in accordance with the Strategic Plan's objectives.

For example, if a Strategic Plan's objective is to increase tourism in Edmonds then one benchmark may be to determine the actions that would increase tourism, such as advertising or emailing past event attendees, then measuring whether or not the action increased tourism volumes or expenditures in the following year.

The Strategic Plan will develop a benchmark or measuring metric by which to assess the progress or success or failure of each proposed action in the plan. That way, Council, staff, and other participating parties can determine if the Strategic Plan is working and/or whether the proposed actions need to be adjusted to achieve the desired outcome.