



## **City of Big Rapids**

# **Strategic Plan 2020**

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## **I. OVERVIEW**

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On January 28, 2019, the Mayor, City Commissioners, City Manager, City Clerk, and City Attorney met to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the City of Big Rapids. The team identified issues and ideas that deserve focus by the City. The team incorporated issues and ideas from staff, which was given to the City Manager in advance of the session. That evening they discussed their five-year vision for the city. This vision for 2024 was developed, and then the group identified the four major goal areas needed to support the shared vision.

The following morning the elected leaders were joined by the department heads. The elected team shared their vision for 2024 with the department heads and discussed the four major goal areas. The total team then identified key objectives for each goal area and one-year tasks to be accomplished in 2019-2020. Through this process, the Strategic Plan reflects the decisions of the Big Rapids Leadership Team.

### **City Commission**

Tom Hogenson, Mayor  
Lynn Anderson  
Jennifer Cochran  
Jon Eppley  
Lorraine James

### **City Staff**

Mark Gifford, City Manager  
Tamyra Gillis, City Clerk  
Eric Williams, City Attorney  
Aaron Kuhn, City Treasurer  
Heather Bowman, Director of Public Works  
Jim Eddinger, Director of Public Safety  
Tim Moslener, Director of Information Technology  
Paula Priebe, Director of Neighborhood Services  
Steve Schroeder, Deputy Director of Public Safety

### **Adopted**

18 February 2019

## II. VISION TOUR 2024

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*The Elected Leaders were asked to create a vision of what a visitor to the City of Big Rapids would see in 2024. Their vision for a Big Rapids includes the following elements, categorized into three groups: development, government, and people.*

- Development: new developments, redevelopment, economic development
  - Neighborhood revitalization
  - Housing Study, with a renewed vision for rental neighborhoods
  - Property Development:
    - 906 N State St, former site of Hanchett Manufacturing
    - 910 Maple St, the Railroad Depot
  - No more gravel streets
  - More, and more connected, sidewalks
  - Technology, including WIFI and Broadband access
  - Full storefronts in the downtown
  - Completed runway extension at Roben Hood Airport
- Government: strong local government and positive community relations
  - Strong community outreach and participation
    - Improved newsletter
    - Interactive community engagement
  - New zoning ordinance utilizing Form Based Code methodology
  - Coordinating Government Services
    - Joint meetings, shared vision, and a unified approach to strategic planning between City Commission, staff, and other boards
    - Planning Commission, Park and Recreation Board, Downtown Development Authority
  - Stability in city staff positions, including Code Enforcement Officer
- People: services and support that make Big Rapids a great place to live and work
  - Making Big Rapids attractive to:
    - FSU Student – jobs
    - FSU Faculty – housing
    - Families for work and child care
  - Education
    - Literacy
    - Financial
    - Making people aware of services
  - Jobs: housing, environment, and cultural opportunities available

### III. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND TASKS

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#### Goal One: Livable Community

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The City of Big Rapids is an attractive, livable community.

##### Objectives

- Community engagement
- Walkable and bikeable community
- Development of Depot and Hanchett sites
- Child care services
- General redevelopment
- Informed public
- Form-based codes
- Increased downtown retail and food options

##### One Year Tasks

- Expand child care as a principal land use in the City.
  - Continue to work with the Chamber’s child care committee. The Mayor, City Manager, Director of Neighborhood Services and Director of Public Works continue to meet monthly with the Committee that is dealing with the child care issue and will continue to do so. *Ongoing*
  - The Neighborhood Services Department will work with the Planning Commission in Spring 2019 to consider amending the Zoning Ordinance to broaden permission of child care, including Child Care Centers in the Industrial District or Group Child Care Homes in R-1 District. *April 2019*
- Increase public outreach through digital tools
  - Tim Moslener will create a way for the public to sign up for informational emails, newsletters, and press releases through the website. *June 2019*
- Inventory of bike/pedestrian facilities
  - FSU architectural students completed the City Bike and Pedestrian Plan that was adopted in December 2012. City staff will distribute that Plan to the City Commission for review. *March 2019*
  - Mark will inquire with Paul Long and/or Chris Cospers to see if they would take this project on during the Fall 2019 Semester. *April 2019*
- Make decisions about the future of the Depot
  - The City has contracted Kathleen Duffy and SmithGroup to assist in determining the future of the Depot. Create a “task force” to work with SmithGroup on this issue. *April 2019*
  - Mark will connect with Roger Storm (DNR) to confirm that conditions have not changed regarding the potential sale. *February 2019*
- Develop a plan to re-write zoning ordinance (FBC)
  - The City Commission and Planning Commission have been learning about form-based codes and discussing rewriting the Zoning Ordinance using this methodology. This would mean undertaking a long and involved process. The first step is for the Planning Commission to develop a plan and timeline for the process. *August 2019.*

- Make key decisions on Hanchett property
  - Following the successful design charrette from January 2019, the products of the charrette will be delivered to the City by March 2019. The City Commission will have a work session regarding the future of the Hanchett site. *April 2019*
  - The property will be listed through agreement with Lake and Lodge Realty. *June 2019*

## **Goal Two: Attractive to Residents**

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The City of Big Rapids is a top choice for area professionals and others to live, having a variety of housing types and strong neighborhoods.

### **Objectives**

- Eclectic housing
- Housing standards
- Form-based code
- Renewed vision for rental neighborhoods
- Attract businesses
- Improved literacy

### **One Year Tasks**

- Complete housing study
  - Hold a work session at the City Commission to determine the expected outcomes of the Study. Mark and Paula will work to identify companies capable of completing such study and approximate cost. *March 2019*
  - Incorporated this project into the 2019/2020 Budget. *June 2019*
  - Write and distribute and RFQ for the Housing Study, with the goal of having the study complete by December 2019. *August 2019*
- Staff exchange
  - Have staff engage in one staff exchange in the summer of 2019. Deference will be given to communities of similar size and characteristics, preferably a university community. *August 2019*
- Business engagement activities
  - Have each City Commissioner, Mayor and City Manager individually meet with 3 businesses in 2019. Tammy will coordinate scheduling. *Ongoing*
  - The Mayor will host a “Breakfast with the Mayor” event quarterly, starting in April 2019. *Ongoing*

## Goal Three: Infrastructure

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The City of Big Rapids maintains and expands vital infrastructure with detailed plans and sustainable funding sources.

### Objectives

- No gravel streets
- Complete sidewalks
- Runway extension
- Ongoing water and sewer system improvements
- Financial sustainability
- Maintain capital investments

### One Year Tasks

- Pave remaining gravel streets in the City.
  - Finish paving Olaf St. *July 2019*
  - Pave Jefferson St (pending inclusion in 2019/2020 budget). *August 2019*
- Sidewalk Expansion
  - Utilize \$100,000 toward new sidewalk projects around Riverview Crossroads (pending inclusion in 2019/2020 budget). *September 2019*
  - Staff is considering the State's Safe Routes to School program as a funding source. If that route is selected the project would be in summer 2020. *August*
- Complete runway extension (two-year time frame)
  - The runway extension is expected to be completed by 2022. The Commission will hear a report from Mead and Hunt regarding the status of the feasibility study. *April 2019*
- WIFI in parks
  - WIFI will be installed in River Street Park (Fitness Park, Dog Park, and Soccer Fields). *August 2019*
  - Coordination with Casair is underway to deliver WIFI to Northend Park as well. *December 2019*
- Cameras in City Parks
  - The City currently maintains 110 cameras throughout the City. New locations are continuously evaluated and will always accompany new WIFI hotspots. *Ongoing*
- SCADA upgrades
  - Staff will meet with new SCADA technicians to discuss immediate needs to address. *February 2019*
  - Larger scale upgrades will be included in 2019/2020 Budget. Staff is prioritizing this issue. *June 2019*
- Water and sewer improvement
  - Implementation of SAW (Stormwater, Asset Management and Wastewater) Grant work. *October 2019*
  - Feasibility Study regarding Perry Street Sewer complete. *July 2019*
  - Winter Avenue (Cypress to Chestnut) watermain replacement (pending inclusion in 2019/2020 Budget). *September 2019*
  - North End Lift Station replacement. *May 2019*
  - Screw Pump Wet Well modifications. *August 2019*

- ICE grant for South/Ives Street. This three-stage project will begin in May and be completed in late summer. *September 2019*

## **Goal Four: Government Services**

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The City of Big Rapids continues to improve local government services through coordination with other governments and organizations and through professional development.

### **Objectives**

- Coordination with other local governments (townships, county, etc.)
- Coordinate with other local organizations (like FSU, BRPOA, others)
- More coordination of plans City Commission, Planning Commission, DDA, etc.
- Continued professional development
- Sustainable elected leadership

### **One Year Tasks**

- Increase communication
  - Continue to improve communication with the public through an updated Manager's Newsletter. *February 2019*
  - Improve the City's presence on Facebook. *Ongoing*
  - Utilize the newly adopted Public Participation Plan. *Ongoing*
  - Tim and staff are working to improve the City's website by providing more pictures, posting agendas, packets, & minutes, and keeping forms updated. The City's website will be completely reevaluated in 2020. *Ongoing*
- Improve interaction between City Commission and other boards such as the Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Board, and the Downtown Development Authority.
  - City Commission to determine if they want to have a formal presence at Planning Commission meetings. *March 2019*
  - Hold a Joint City Commission and Parks and Recreation Board meeting. *March 2019*
  - City Commission will meet twice annually with Planning Commission, Spring and Fall 2019, and once annually with Park and Rec Board, Spring 2019, DDA, Fall 2019. *Ongoing*
  - Staff will provide a minimum of one joint annual training opportunity for Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals members. Risk Management training is already scheduled for 2019. *April 2019*

#### **IV. NEXT STEPS**

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- Upon final adoption, the Commission should be updated each month regarding some element of the strategic plan.
- Seven months after adoption the Commission and leadership team should dedicate a work session to reviewing the Strategic Plan and adjust action as required.
- Thirteen months after adoption the Commission and leadership team should dedicate a work session to reviewing progress toward the Goals and Objectives and to determining the next year's one-year tasks.