



ST. CHARLES
SINCE 1834

AGENDA ITEM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Presentation of Strategic Plan - 2015

Presenter: Mark Koenen

Please check appropriate box:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Government Operations 06-15-15	<input type="checkbox"/>	Government Services
<input type="checkbox"/>	Planning & Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	City Council
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Hearing	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Estimated Cost:	\$NA	Budgeted:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
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If NO, please explain how item will be funded:

Executive Summary:

This presentation is a "listening session". Greg Kuhn and Cristi Musser, Sikich LLP, will present the information collected to date from stakeholder interviews and focus groups. This information is meant to provide you with a background for discussions at the workshops regarding what the community is saying about our City. There is a report summarizing information from the public feedback to date. This meeting will also be the first public vetting of the information and we are inviting the public to attend and participate. Participation will include parties who have been involved directly or members of the community who did not have the opportunity to be engaged and desire to share their feedback now.

Staff would recommend "listening" and asking question to best understand the information.

Please note the workshops will be held on June 23rd and June 27th.

Attachments: *(please list)*

Report

Recommendation / Suggested Action *(briefly explain):*

Presentation of Strategic Plan – 2015.

<i>For office use only:</i>	<i>Agenda Item Number: 4a</i>
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City of St. Charles

Strategic Plan 2015

Environmental Scan

Introductory Interviews and Focus Group Data Summary

June 15, 2015



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"[Strategic planning is] a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does and why it does it. To deliver the best results, strategic planning requires broad yet effective information gathering, development and exploration of strategic alternatives, and an emphasis on future implications of present decisions" (Bryson, 1995)¹.

INTRODUCTION

In October of 2014, the City of St. Charles engaged Sikich LLP to assist the City with an update to their 2008-2014 Strategic Plan. Developing and updating strategic plans is an important and at times challenging, endeavor because it requires forward thinking and dedication to produce a consensus road map for the future of an organization. The first step to developing a vision for the future is to assess the present environment through a process known as an environmental scan. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) defines environmental scanning as "a process that systematically surveys and interprets relevant data to identify external opportunities and threats."² Environmental scanning is highlighted in nearly all writings and guidebooks on strategic planning. The elements of undertaking a scan can take many forms. One form is through an analysis that identifies an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This analysis is more commonly known as a SWOT analysis and it is one of the fundamental pillars of strategic planning protocols.

SWOT analyses ask organization leaders to identify, comment on, and assess the environment and circumstances in which they operate. The gathering or acquisition and use of information can be derived from many sources, including those within and beyond the organization itself. For St. Charles' strategic planning process, City leaders embraced the idea of gathering information from community stakeholders to be considered when they were later asked to conduct their own SWOT analysis.

In gathering community input, the City leadership had three sources of information and data to draw upon. Those sources were: 1) data from a 2013 National Citizen's Survey for the City of St. Charles; 2) a set of exploratory one on one interviews conducted by Sikich team members with key community and City stakeholders; 3) a series of eight focus groups composed of a cross-section of community, business and City stakeholders. Each of these sources will be discussed separately below.

Since 1996, the City has participated in the National Citizen Survey conducted collaboratively by the National Research Center and the International City/County Management Association. The National Citizen Survey is a customized random sample survey that asks residents for their quantitative data and feedback about the City of St. Charles' services and the quality of life for residents. This is an important source of information for City leaders as they conduct their environmental scan. This survey is available on the City's Website.

¹ http://www.shrm.org/templatestools/hrqa/pages/cms_021670.aspx#sthash.jUi4710i.dpuf).

² Bryson, John M. (1995). Strategic Planning For Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide To Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers

In order to compliment the quantitative data provided by the National Citizen Survey, Sikich was asked to focus on developing qualitative data for the Council's consideration. Two sources were used to gather this qualitative data. The first was from one on one exploratory interviews and the second was from focus groups facilitated by Sikich. John Bryson defines a stakeholder as, "any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on an organization's (or other entity's) attention, resources, or output that is affected by that output."³ In this regard, it is important to determine each organization's unique stakeholders, their influence, and how to involve them in the process. This report provides a summarization of the data and input collected from both the exploratory interviews and focus groups.

³ John Bryson, Creating and Implementing Your Strategic Plan (New York: Jossey-Bass, 2004) 35.

EXPLORATORY INTERVIEWS

In December of 2014 Sikich held a total of eighteen short interviews (approximately 30 minutes each) with key City and community stakeholders. These interviews included current and former elected and appointed City officials, business community leaders, leaders of other community government institutions such as the Library, Park District, and School district, as well as members of various community commissions and committees.

Sikich staff conducted the interviews built around a set of identical “scanning” questions (see Exhibit A). Sikich staff took notes at each interview. These exploratory interviews were designed to provide the facilitators general information about the community and to assist in developing focus group questions and facilitating future Council and senior staff workshops that are part of the overall process. These interviews are a rich source of initial qualitative data about the City’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges, as well as each stakeholder’s vision for the future. The questions covered two framing topics: the City’s current environment and initiatives the City should undertake in the future.

Since these interviews are primarily designed as background and exploratory steps for the facilitators, participant’s perspectives will be provided only in very brief summary form with no attempt to provide all comments, perspectives, or thoughts. The summarization presented here is based on the facilitator’s review of all the comments and thoughts, and represents the facilitator’s assessment of the major themes from all respondents. As such, it is not representative of all the thoughts offered.

The first four questions asked participants to provide their views on the City’s response and handling of the financial fallout from the great recession as well as the resulting challenges the City faces going forward. These questions were designed to focus the participant’s thoughts and views around the past and current environment of the City. When asked how the City fared when compared to other communities, the overwhelming response was that the City of St. Charles handled the crisis very well especially when compared to other communities. Comments ranged from the City’s proactive response and thorough and careful decision making, to staff professionalism. Several stakeholders mentioned the fallout to the City from business closings and that the recession most likely hastened the demise of some businesses.

When asked where the City shone in handling the crisis, a common theme emerged from participants stating that the City’s financial reserves, early action, and the fact that services levels were maintained during a time of financial stress, was both a significant accomplishment and an organizational strength. The final question in this grouping asked participants to comment on the challenges the City now faces or the projects that were postponed as a result of the recession. Most of those interviewed mentioned completion of the First Street project(s) and the challenge of economic development. Several stakeholders mentioned postponed or delayed City capital expenditures as a concern to be addressed going forward.

The next several questions asked interviewees to turn their attention to the future of St. Charles by asking for comments on: 1) the initiatives the City must (in their view) address in the next two to five years; 2) paradigm shifts they envision in the next 5-10 years; and 3) participant’s vision for the future of the community in the next 10-15 years. In response to the question on initiatives

the City must address, participants generally cited economic development projects especially in relation to Downtown and the Charlestown Mall. Several also cited the need to turn the City's attention to the Riverfront in terms of maximizing the River as an asset.

When asked about paradigm shifts envisioned in the next 5-10 years, most cited more demographic diversity especially additional cultures and ethnic groups and serving the aging population. Others cited the need for rental housing and housing alternatives to traditional single family homes. Several other comments included differing views on social-economic and demographic changes, maintaining the City's architectural heritage, and growing demands for a pedestrian and bike friendly City.

The final question, about a long-term vision for the St. Charles community, elicited a full range of comments from maintaining the City's heritage and charm to embracing new urbanism, attracting stronger manufacturing and commercial sectors, and the need to maintain quality schools. Others cited improved City gateways, traffic on Main Street, and the hope that the City is thriving economically. Still others mentioned that the riverfront is and will be a wonderful asset in the future-full of activity and flanked by gathering spaces. A comment that seemed to sum up the general vision of those interviewed is that the St. Charles community will continue to be exceptional.

FOCUS GROUP STAKEHOLDER INPUT

In addition to the exploratory interviews, the City asked Sikich to facilitate a series of focus groups with citizens and other community stakeholders. Focus groups were selected as a tool to gather qualitative data because they generate perspectives and descriptive data and ideas from a cross-section of the community that are difficult to ascertain from survey instruments. Focus groups use a conversational, interactive format in a small group setting with experienced facilitators. As a means of data collection, they provide an ideal mechanism for encouraging participants to consider and express their current and future visions for an organization and the community.

The focus group sessions were designed by Sikich and asked all participants a single set of pre-selected questions. While the results—the collected data—do not rise to the level of statistically valid random sample information, the data is rich in depth and includes not only contextual perspectives, but also a vigorous mix of themes along with nuanced ideas.

FOCUS GROUPS METHODOLOGY

In January of this year, Sikich facilitated eight (8) focus group sessions with a variety of community stakeholders. These stakeholders included a sampling of representatives from economic development organizations, business leaders, civic groups, high school students, City staff, and other community institutions as well as citizens at large. In total, the City sent personal invitations to roughly 112 community members to attend sessions held on March 3 and 4, 2015. The following list of sessions shows the number of sessions held by stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Focus Group Construct:

- Employees (1)
- Business (1)
- Institutions⁴ (1)
- High School Students (1)
- Downtown (1)
- North West/North East Residents (1)
- Southeast and Southwest Residents (1)
- Civic Organizations (1)

During the focus group sessions, stakeholders shared ideas about the preferred future state of the City along with their perceptions about the City's strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities. Again, all sessions used the same questions that were pre-selected by the City (see Exhibit B for the list of questions). Sikich facilitators used a highly participative interactive methodology known as *Nominal Group Technique*. This technique is designed to assure participants equal opportunities to speak and share their opinions.

All sessions were characterized by a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere that fostered participant's thoughts and ideas. With the exception of the employee focus group, no City staff

⁴ Institutions included: School District 303, Kane County, Park District, St. Charles Township, Kane County Forest Preserve, St. Charles Library, and Tri-com.

or elected officials participated in these sessions. City staff or elected officials attended only to welcome and thank participants and to introduce Sikich. Sikich staff recorded all participants' ideas, in rough note form, using large flip chart pads. Session notes were later transcribed and analyzed by Sikich's project team and the data was input into NVivo qualitative data analysis software.

The data from the transcribed notes were then scanned and coded to reveal key themes. The approach used to analyze the data and develop key themes took three basic forms:

1. Key theme identification and frequency
2. Sub-theme identification and frequency
3. Key word or phrase coding
4. Interpretive impressions

One of the first analyses undertaken was to glean and identify key themes from the collected data inductively— i.e., “from the ground up”. The initial analytical iteration employed a computer assisted coding system of key phrases, words, or terms. Using the qualitative data analysis software, NVivo 10, all participant responses were coded (categorized) by question, group, category of the comment, and theme and sub-theme to determine how often they occurred across all groups and all questions. Comments covering more than one theme were included in each applicable theme area. In addition to inductive coding, NVivo 10 allowed the project team to return to the focus group notes and study the context in which an emergent theme was discussed. The results were revealing and highlighted key topics or issues that should be weighed and considered when proceeding with strategic planning discussions. The results of this analysis are presented below.

KEY THEMES ANALYSIS

As previously stated, the first step in the analysis was to review the focus group participant's comments and categorize those comments into four major categories:

- Economic, Business, and Housing
- Community
- City Government, City Services, Leadership
- City Character

NVivo 10 software was then used to further categorize responses by sub-themes occurring in each category. After all comments were organized and categorized, NVivo was used to generate numerical tallies of the frequency of each theme or sub-theme by question and across all questions. The presentation and charts in the following sections report the data highlights organized in several different views:

- A. Overall theme category
- B. Key sub-themes across all categories and questions
- C. Data highlights for key sub-themes
- D. Sub-themes by overall theme category
- E. Top three Sub-themes by question

A. PRESENTATION BY OVERALL THEME CATEGORY

The table below presents the focus group data by overall *theme category* and represents the analyst's first pass of the data in a search for the frequency of overarching topical themes and/or categories.

Overall Category or Topical Theme	Numerical Frequency
Economic – Business – Housing	439
Community	308
City Government – City Services – Leadership	210
City Character	189

B. KEY SUB-THEMES ACROSS ALL CATEGORIES AND QUESTIONS

The chart below shows a numerical count of the frequency of key sub-themes identified by the analyst across *all* categories for all focus groups and all questions. These themes represent the participant's concerns and ideas that were most frequently mentioned as answers when scanning for commonalities across the breadth of the questions and a cross section view of all of the groups.

Sub-Theme	Numerical Frequency
Downtown - Main Street - First Street	129
Business Attraction - Business Diversity	124
Quality of Life	102
City Services - City Staff - Leadership	86
River - Riverfront	70
Community Activities - Events	62
Schools-Students - Youth	59
Charlestown Mall - The Quad	48
Demographics – Population - Diversity	42
Community Organizations and Services	36
Vacant Land and Buildings	35
Green Space and Parks	33
Traffic	31
Entertainment – Theater - Culture	30
Marketing and Branding	28

C. DATA HIGHLIGHTS FOR KEY SUB-THEMES

In order to provide the reader with a better sense of stakeholder ideas, comments, and perspectives, additional narrative was included to provide a “flavor” or sample of the sub themes presented in each topical area highlighted below. For each sub-theme a brief summary of frequent topics or ideas is presented, followed by samples of actual comments taken from session flip chart notes. The items preceded by an arrow are samples of the actual comments offered by participants for each subtheme. The reader will also notice a reminder that the representative phrases chosen for each sub-theme are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance.

Sub-Theme 1: Downtown - Main Street - First Street (129)

This theme combined comments about the Downtown area, Main Street, and First Street. At times the comments overlapped, but participant’s vision for the greater downtown area was a thriving, vibrant, diverse, and livable area. Participants cited their desire for a mix of uses including retail stores, businesses, and accommodations for pedestrian traffic, restaurants, housing, festivals, and activities. Participants also mentioned their support for the First Street development projects and the need to complete those projects. Several participants suggested improvements to Downtown that included a unified lighting scheme, restrooms, and water fountains.

The following are representative phrases, phrasing or statements from responses. They are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance. Examples of statements made around this general theme include:

- More vibrant Downtown, no empty retail spaces; Downtown is 100% occupied, family friendly
- Address/establish a plan to promote a balance in Downtown establishments and businesses (between restaurants, bars, retail, office, and residential)
- (Hope to see) a good Downtown and a bit less emphasis on bars and more family friendly; More options
- First Street construction is finished, and Downtown is thriving and filled with stores and businesses.
- Walkable Downtown
- Develop cohesive strategy to use Downtown assets
- Vibrant and diverse Downtown would have a catalyst effect
- Downtown needs to focus more on arts and festivals
- 1st Street fully built, condos, people walking; gathering, enjoying Downtown
- Vibrant commercial area on First Street
- Support First Street development. Let’s complete projects currently on the table
- Finish/see completed the First Street development project and expanded Downtown parking

Sub-Theme 2: Business Attraction - Business Diversity (124)

The number of comments about business attraction and diversity were only slightly fewer than the comments about the Downtown area. Most of these comments centered on the need for economic health and vibrancy and the ongoing need to attract new business, and, for the City to take a proactive approach to economic development. Some participants cited specific ideas for the type of economic development they prefer, while other comments were more broadly stated.

The following are representative phrases, phrasing or statements from responses. They are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance. Examples of statements made around this general theme include:

General Comments:

- Initiate a business location, outreach, and recruitment plan for Main Street and Downtown
- Commercial development could change our City; This is pivotal
- (We have) not been proactive enough in soliciting new business
- Attract more diversified businesses
- We should be different than competitors and known for something different
- Provide incentives for new businesses
- More development off Main Street and things to positively attract visitors
- The quality of projects is more important than quantity
- We need an entrepreneurial approach to growing the economy
- Our industrial park is great and an important part of our economy
- We say we want the benefits of economic development, but we may not be willing to change or do what it takes to attract development
- Work to attract industry and large corporations

Specific Suggestions

- Create large outdoor mall with a variety of activities (shoe store); Use Boulder Colorado Pearl Street Mall as an example
- Consider focusing on mid-sized business (100-500 employees)
- Attract corporate headquarters

Sub-Theme 3: Quality of Life (102)

Participants overwhelmingly view St. Charles as a wonderful community in which to live and raise a family. Most comments generated on the City's quality of life were in response to the question "how you would describe St. Charles to a visitor or stranger"?

The following are representative phrases, phrasing or statements from responses. They are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance. Examples of statements made around this general theme include:

- Beautiful, small City on the Fox River; friendly, involved, giving neighbors, great churches, and service organizations
- Healthy, active community with the River, bike trails, healthy lifestyle, sports opportunities, and organized sports
- Unique – maintain charm
- Friendly
- Great place to raise a family
- Classic small town – family friendly
- Safe
- Quaint, welcoming, thriving, and beautiful
- People are just wonderful
- Open-minded, collaborative community
- Amazing people—nicest people you are going to meet - very generous

Although the vast majority of comments were positive there were a few comments offered about St. Charles' location including:

- Our location is difficult with respect to commuting
- Geographic distance to the toll ways – no train and equal-distant to I-90 and I-88 is problematic; could be a competitive disadvantage

Sub-Theme 4: City Services - City Staff - Leadership (86)

Participants were generally pleased or very pleased with the services provided by the City and commented that the City's leadership was very professional. Because the comments in this sub-theme area covered several topics, the comments below are organized by topic area.

The following are representative phrases, phrasing or statements from responses. They are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance. Examples of statements made around this general theme include:

Services:

- Outstanding City services; Police, Fire, and Public Works
- Police – public safety is good (feel safe)
- City staff, especially community development staff, are easy to work with
- All accredited public safety departments – Police, Fire, and EMS
- Great services; Responsive staff

Leadership:

- Well managed City
- Good Mayors; Let's keep this tradition
- Responsive government
- Continued good management of the City, our good services; good stewardship and health, fiscally responsible use of our tax dollars
- Leadership should take an "open view" of needed changes, new ideas, not just listen to NIMBY, but listen to the whole community
- More open-mindedness on City Council; Evolution of ideas and receptivity to new ideas; We should have a full-airing of ideas

Specific Suggestions:

- Engage people and encourage them to register online for agenda item notifications; City needs to be more proactive in this area
- Continue to upgrade infrastructure, streets, water, sewer, etc.
- Sidewalk connections for walkers and bikers
- Move Police Department off the River
- Revisit Building Code limitations (four stories)
- Convert abandoned railroad to walking path
- City needs a director of communication management
- Plan for consolidation of services and continue to explore efficiencies
- Stay the course on the new Comprehensive Plan and implement it
- More modern communications and information platforms for communicating to residents both emergency information and regular information
- Enforce southwest area snow removal in front of homes (we need an ordinance)
- City needs to be more considerate of where plowed snow gets deposited; Currently it blocks sidewalks
- Touchscreen Kiosk

Sub-Theme 5: River - Riverfront (70)

Participants made numerous comments about the Fox River being an asset to the community with most comments centered on their desire to see the River more fully developed as an asset. There were also a few suggestions about removing the dams along the River.

The following are representative phrases, phrasing or statements from responses. They are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance. Examples of statements made around this general theme include:

- Natural beauty of Fox River – capitalize on it – use it
- (Hope to see) developed Riverfront; This is our future
- Currently the River is underutilized
- Fox River is an asset; River walk like San Antonio
- Use riverfront as more public area
- River walk (like Naperville and San Antonio) that incorporated our history, shops, and restaurants
- River corridor – see improvements both economic and recreational take place
- Connect Great Western Trail to Fox River - Safely
- Improve Riverfront access points and connectivity to roads, recreation activities, and Downtown
- (Hope) Riverfront has been beautified, is clean, maintained and is used by many people
- River and recreation activities along river (outdoor environment, kayaking, on/near the water; many alternatives)
- Implement the River Corridor Plan
- Maximize and expand outdoor activities and options on the River – keep it nice – expand, connect (bike trails, amphitheater)
- Complete all phases of River project

Typical of comments about the dams were the following suggestions:

- Are dams needed? Obstructs connectivity; We could link Fox River Cities by removing dams; This could allow for north and south expansion of recreation on the river
- Get rid of dams and use River for more things
- Remove the Dam

Sub-Theme 6: Community Activities - Events (62)

Overall stakeholders placed a high importance on St. Charles community activities and events with many indicating an interest in expanding the event offerings in the community. In fact there were many suggestions about the type of activities and events participants desired.

The following are representative phrases, phrasing or statements from responses. They are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance. Examples of statements made around this general theme include:

- Keep community events and add activities
- More community events: Pheasant Run, Fireworks, Scarecrow Festival
- More things for young families
- Thursday night concerts in the park
- Sand volleyball leagues
- More bands at the Arcada that would appeal to teens and young adults
- Use Cougars Stadium as a concert venue; Expand multi-purpose uses with big names; Use the turf field; We currently have to travel some distance for these types of events.
- More entertainment Downtown and bring in music of interest to teenagers at 'Concerts in the Park' and at the Arcada Theater; All the bands currently brought to both of these venues are fun for parents, but not teens
- Something fun and affordable for high school students to do Downtown
- Movie on the lawn by the River and sell food at this event
- Activities for people such as a marathon
- More regular organized events in public areas with City financial support
- Downtown needs to focus more on arts and festivals

Sub-Theme 7: Schools – Students - Youth (59)

Overwhelmingly participants commented that the St. Charles schools are an asset and that the schools are top quality. The strengths of the community's schools were seen as an important asset especially for economic development. However, there were a few comments and concerns about youth and drugs. In addition a few participants expressed the concern that the schools must continue to be strong in order for the community to thrive.

The following are representative phrases, phrasing or statements from responses. They are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance. Examples of statements made around this general theme include:

- Our school district is still great
- School system is the absolute best; Our children get what they need and we build a generation of leaders; Parents are pleased
- District #303 is strong and has lots of opportunities and activities for young
- School system maintains a very high quality of student achievement. Schools are also part of our social glue and family oriented community
- Our quality education and schools are an attraction for new families
- Education and schools are the key
- Maintain quality school system and healthy sense of competition
- Have representatives of students be involved with the City Council
- The schools and enrollments at lower grade levels are changing; Demographics; “the age bubble”
- Schools and declining enrollment
- Kids are an asset; Let’s make sure they return; We need reasons to have them aspire to return
- Elgin Community College and access to higher education at Northern Illinois University
- Drug-free City (address drug culture with youth)

Sub-Theme 8: Charlestown Mall - The Quad (48)

With respect to the Charlestown Mall, participants overwhelmingly desired to see the mall re-purposed or revitalized, and reopened. This response was echoed across a number of different questions, but especially with respect to goals and participant’s vision for the future of the community.

The following are representative phrases, phrasing or statements from responses. They are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance. Examples of statements made around this general theme include:

- (Hope to see) Charlestown Mall redevelopment completed and (it is) viable, vibrant, and functioning
- Let’s do everything we can to reutilize the “Quad” – redefine Charlestown Mall. This will be very important and it helps all parts of City economically
- Our biggest problems are solved (i.e. Charlestown Mall)
- High-end stores at the Quad - an Apple store would be great
- Get going with the Quad Project
- The Quad is reopened and occupied
- Charlestown Mall is back on its feet and thriving
- Complete projects currently on the table
- The Quad; Continue development efforts; This is very important
- (Hope to See) the #1 Mall in Illinois will be “The Quad” - the old Charlestown Mall – fully developed, full of people, and with no parking due to demand

Sub-Theme 9: Demographics – Population - Diversity (42)

Comments in this area largely dealt with population shifts in the future not only with respect to an aging demographic, but also the desire to incorporate demographic diversity.

The following are representative phrases, phrasing or statements from responses. They are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance. Examples of statements made around this general theme include:

- Change in demographics and aging population
- How do we encourage younger people to come to St. Charles
- Plan for our changing demographic
- St. Charles increases its population and is considered the next viable spot
- I think we will have forged an identity
- Diversity of generations and activities for young and old
- Continue generational draw of St. Charles
- Welcome and assimilate new residents and Hispanic Community
- Community more populous, more diverse, but will likely look and feel (scale) how it looks now. Maintain our quaint feel
- Embrace cultural diversity, create and expand programs to accomplish welcoming feel to all

Sub-Theme 10: Community Organizations - Services (36)

Stakeholder comments in this area generally focused on the widely held belief that the community's many service organizations are an important asset and strength. In addition to naming specific organizations, several participants had suggestions and ideas for strengthening or adding to this asset.

The following are representative phrases, phrasing or statements from responses. They are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance. Examples of statements made around this general theme include:

- There are programs available throughout community that aren't fully utilized or known (not for-profit human services, churches, Salvation Army and other groups are an asset)
- Community services and service providers that people may not be aware of
- Our Helping Hand/District #303 website for youth and youth with physical and mental needs
- Strong volunteer community
- Respectful of community and the way our community works together
- Support for community organizations and the sheer number of those organizations
- Community's safety net – Lazarus House, Salvation Army, Churches
- The "Q" center
- Create a single contact point or portal for human services and activities (marketing and messaging)

- Create and establish a Human Services Center on a redeveloped mall site – create consolidated central access points for users
- Start a community organization: local construction companies could donate time and talents; maintain a list of names of volunteers (including school volunteers) that are available; National Honor Society and other groups who are required to volunteer hours could be contacted
- Develop a community volunteer services directory

Sub-Theme 11: Vacant Businesses - Land-Buildings - (35)

This sub-theme covered a variety of different comments on vacant land, buildings or businesses *excluding* the Charlestown Mall (the Quad). The vast majority of the comments in this sub-theme focused on vacant businesses or vacant or partially vacant business areas such as the old St. Charles Mall.

The following are representative phrases, phrasing or statements from responses. They are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance. Examples of statements made around this general theme include

- The mall on the west side of town was torn down many years ago and the property is still vacant; concerned that in 10-15 years not much may have changed.
- Developers are interested in new buildings and development, but are not interested in making improvements to existing commercial and business (Jewel)
- Vacant development; We need updates and improvements to the strip malls throughout the City (Rookies Sports Bar and Jewel)
- (Think) that what's currently vacant on First Street will continue to be vacant
- Unused buildings; This hurts our tax base
- Incentives to encourage businesses to fill vacancies such as: Tincup Pass
- Vacancies on the Westside of town; There is a huge opportunity to reinvigorate this property through a combination of tax dollars and real estate tax dollars
- Much less vacant space
- City assistance in filling business vacancies and keep stores filled; But don't try to legislate uses. Allow the market to drive priorities
- Redevelop Old St. Charles Mall
- Route 64 and Kirk Road shopping area (south east corner) has many vacant spaces; Have all key commercial areas full revitalized and maximize use (Old Charlestown Mall)
- Old St. Charles Mall is a redevelopment opportunity
- Work to market, encourage, and redevelop vacant parcels in St. Charles

Sub-Theme 12: Green Space and Parks (33)

St. Charles Parks and open space is seen as an asset by stakeholders with many comments focused on leveraging these assets. In addition, several participants had ideas and suggestions for more parks or improved park and open space amenities.

The following are representative phrases, phrasing or statements from responses. They are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance. Examples of statements made around this general theme include:

Comments:

- Rich in parks, trails, and natural areas
- Park District, facilities and programs – many may not be fully aware of these assets
- Many parks and neighborhood parks (need to leverage Park we can walk to)
- Amount of wildlife and green space
- Very good parks and recreation facilities
- More utilization of parks
- Leroy Oakes Forest Preserve – beautiful property
- Park District is underutilized
- Dog Parks (including off-leash)

Suggestions:

- Abandon rail line – take down embankments at Charleston Mall and add Park District amenities
- Permanent culture to restore prairies
- Expand Park District throughout community farther west

Sub-Theme 13: Traffic (31)

Most of the comments related to this sub-theme centered on State Route 64 and the resulting truck traffic and congestion. Several participants commented that the Red Gate Bridge helped, but that it was not well known. Many stakeholders had ideas and suggestions on ways to address the traffic issue.

The following are representative phrases, phrasing or statements from responses. They are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance. Examples of statements made around this general theme include:

Comments:

- The traffic on Route 64 makes Downtown unusable
- Downtown traffic is a detriment; It is not pleasant to walk Downtown with so much truck traffic going through
- Less truck traffic on Route 64
- Traffic congestion Downtown at 5:00 p.m.
- Semi-truck traffic is a challenge
- Downtown is not supported by Route 64 and the amount and type of traffic (trucks)
- Red Gate Bridge – may not be well known – great for locals
- New bridge (Red Gate) has helped

Suggestions:

- Widen Route 64 by 30 feet
- Limit trucks
- Downtown: sync traffic lights on Illinois State Route 64
- Traffic plan for Route 64 to address truck traffic issue; Let's work with State
- Get trucks off Route 64; We need a bypass
- Work to improve traffic circulation in St. Charles (left lanes, parking)
- Pedestrian overpass on Route 64 from north to south. Replace overpass with pedestrian walk and more parking

Sub-Theme 14: Entertainment - Theaters - Culture (30)

St. Charles' theaters and entertainment venues were seen as an integral part of the community and its history. Many stakeholders specifically mentioned the Arcada Theater and the desire that it continue to be developed and maintained.

The following are representative phrases, phrasing or statements from responses. They are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance. Examples of statements made around this general theme include:

- Arcada Theater, Steel beam theater, Norris theater, other theaters, Art-in-The-Park
- Keep "little" theater Downtown
- Arcada and performing arts are an important asset and make St. Charles different
- Revive amphitheater and Pottawatomie Park
- Amphitheater has dressing rooms below the stage that are historic and could be part of a history tour
- Museums – family driven other attractions – entertainment (not just eating and drinking)
- Arcada Theater continues to thrive
- Arcada is like the Paramount (in Aurora), but with more restaurants. This would be/should continue to be a draw
- Arcada Development
- Pheasant Run and Kane County Fairgrounds
- Arcada theatre expansion is accomplished
- Use Cougars Stadium as a concert venue. Expand multi-purpose uses with big names; Use the turf field; We currently have to travel some distance for these types of events

Sub-Theme 15: Marketing and Branding (28)

Participant's comments in this sub-theme area highlighted the importance and value they place on marketing and branding the City and the community.

The following are representative phrases, phrasing or statements from responses. They are illustrative only and are not presented in any particular order of frequency or importance. Examples of statements made around this general theme include:

- Finalize and implement our “marketing plan” for the community – have consistency in message and selling ourselves
- Drive Downtown with a corporate identity (branding)
- Initiate a business location outreach and recruitment plan for Main Street and Downtown
- We should be different than competitors and known for something different
- Need to toot our own horn
- Branding our City
- We need to actively market our airport; It is the fourth busiest airport in Illinois
- Advertise the City in both print and internet media
- Identify our target audience (people find information different ways)
- St. Charles App
- Yelp App for City directory
- Turn town into Google advertising
- Promote “farm to table” idea
- Smart phone, application for tourism and tourists

D. Sub-Theme by Overall Theme Category

In addition to presenting the data by sub-theme and presenting highlights of the focus group participants comments, the next set of tables details the numerical frequency of all sub-themes in each of the four overall categories: Economic - Business-Housing; Community; City Government - City Services, City Character.

Overall Theme: Economic – Business – Housing Sub-Theme Frequencies

Sub-Themes	Numerical Frequency
Downtown – Main Street – First Street	128
Business Attraction – Business Diversity	124
Charlestown Mall – The Quad	48
Vacant Land & Buildings	35
Marketing and Branding	28
Restaurants & Bars	27
Housing	22
Retail	17
Randall Road	8
Business Retention	2
Total	439*

*Comments may apply to, and be coded under more than one sub-theme.

**Overall Theme: Community
Sub-Theme Frequencies**

Sub-Themes	Numerical Frequency
River – Riverfront	70
Events and Activities	62
Schools – Students – Youth	59
Community Organizations and Services	36
Green Space and Parks – General	33
Entertainment – Theaters – Culture	30
Library	10
Medical Care – Health Services – Aging	8
Total	307*

*Comments may apply to, and be coded under more than one sub-theme.

**Overall Theme: City Government – City Services:
Sub-Theme Frequencies**

Sub-Themes	Numerical Frequency
Services – Staff – Leadership	86
Traffic	31
Taxes	22
Transportation – Public Transit	21
Parking	20
Sustainability – Green Initiatives	13
Communications – Public Input	11
Property Upkeep	6
Total	210*

*Comments may apply to, and be coded under more than one sub-theme.

**Overall Theme: City Character:
Sub-Theme Frequencies**

Sub-Themes	Numerical Frequency
Quality of Life	102
Demographics – Population – Diversity	42
History Heritage	18
Biking	17
Walkability	10
Total	189*

*Comments may apply to, and be coded under more than one sub-theme.

E. Top Three Sub-Themes by Focus Group Question

The final data presentation, or cut of the data, allows the reader to see the top three sub-themes by focus group question. This presentation by question is helpful to understand if the theme referred mainly to the present environment or was in response to a future vision question.

For example, the quality of life theme was very prevalent in answer to the question asking participants to describe St. Charles today, but was mentioned very infrequently in response to the other questions. The top three sub themes (and ties), by question, are presented below:

Question 1. Imagine that you left the City of St. Charles tomorrow and didn't return until 2025 or 2030. What do you think you would see, or hope to see, in the community when you return?

Sub-Theme	Frequency
Economic – Business – Housing: Downtown – Main Street	56
Economic – Business – Housing: Business Attraction - Diversity	37
Community: River – Riverfront	23

Question 2. If you were meeting with a new neighbor, friend or colleague considering St. Charles for the location of their residence, business or a place to work, how would you describe the community?

Sub-Theme	Frequency
City Character: Quality of Life	73
Community: Schools – Students – Youth	18
Community: Green Space and Parks – Park District	13

Question 3. Are there any “hidden” assets or strengths of the City that others may overlook or not be aware of?

Sub-Theme	Frequency
Economic – Business – Housing: Business Attraction - Diversity	19
Community: Events and Activities	18
Community: Community Organizations and Services	16

Question 4. As you look into the future, are there any unidentified or important opportunities for the City to capitalize on?

Sub-Theme	Frequency
Economic – Business – Housing: Marketing and Branding	12
Economic – Business – Housing: Business Attraction	10
Community: Events and Activities	7

Question 5. As you look into the future, are there any challenges or shortcomings that should be addressed or examined?

Sub-Theme	Frequency
Economic – Business – Housing: Business Attraction - Diversity	20
City Gov't – Services: Services – Staff – Leadership	14
Economic – Business – Housing: Downtown – Main Street	12

Question 6. Can you list 1 or 2 short-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore - (By short-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 1-2 years?)

Sub-Theme	Frequency
City Gov't – Services: Services –Staff – Leadership	15
Economic – Business – Housing: Charlestown Mall – The Quad	10
Economic – Business – Housing: Business Attraction - Diversity	10

Question 7. Can you list 1 or 2 long-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore - (By long-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next five to seven years?)

Sub-Theme	Frequency
Economic – Business – Housing: Downtown – Main Street – First - Street	19
City Gov't – Services: Services –Staff – Leadership	16
Economic – Business – Housing: Business Attraction - Diversity	12

Question 8. If you could improve, create or change one important feature or goal of the City, (e.g., if you had a magic wand to help you with this) what would that one item or goal be?

Sub-Theme	Frequency
Economic – Business – Housing: Downtown – Main Street – First Street	16
Economic – Business – Housing: Business Attraction - Diversity	12
Community: River – Riverfront	11

OBSERVATIONS AND SUMMARY

As mentioned in the opening sections of this summary report, the information presented here reflects condensed data or highlights from areas where Sikich identified findings that may be beneficial to leadership's environmental scan. As such, the cumulative ideas from the focus group summary should be viewed as an entre' or exploratory window to the thoughts, reflections feedback and insights from the community to leaders about both the present and the future of St. Charles.

**City of St. Charles
Strategic Plan**

Stakeholder Exploratory Interviews
December 2014

1. Welcome

2. How long have you been part of the community and in what areas are or have you been involved?

3. When you look back over the challenges that have faced communities and local governments since the fall of 2008, how do you think St. Charles has fared?

4. Where did the City really shine?

5. What were some of the most significant challenges that were postponed or not able to be addressed during this time period?

6. From your viewpoint, are there a significant initiatives, program or mandate can you identify that the City must confront in the next 2-5 years?

7. Do you foresee or hope to see any significant changes or paradigm shifts in the next 5-10 years that will impact the City or the community?

8. As you look out into the future, what do think St. Charles will look or feel like as a community when you return in 10-15 years?

Exhibit B
City of St. Charles Strategic Plan
Focus Group Questions

1. Imagine that you left the City of St. Charles tomorrow and didn't return until 2025 or 2030. What do you *think you would see, or hope to see*, in the community when you return? _____?

2. If you were meeting with a new neighbor, friend or colleague considering St. Charles for the location of their residence, business or a place to work, how would you describe the community _____?

3. Are there any "hidden" assets or strengths of the City that others may overlook or not be aware of _____?

4. As you look into the future, are there any unidentified or important opportunities for the City to capitalize on _____?

5. As you look into the future, are there any challenges or shortcomings that should be addressed or examined _____?

6. Can you list 1 or 2 short-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By short-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored/addressed within the next two years).
_____?

7. Can you list 1 or 2 longer term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By long-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 3-6 years). _____?

8. If you could improve, create or change one important feature or goal of the City, (e.g., if you had a magic wand to help you with this) what would that one item or goal be _____?

Exhibit C: Focus Group Notes*

*Notes with a number in parenthesis indicates additional focus group member cited or mentioned that comment

City of St. Charles Focus Group A*

Q1. Imagine that you left the City of St. Charles tomorrow and didn't return until 2025 or 2030. What do you think you would see, or hope to see, in the community when you return?

- Thriving Downtown (1)
- Like Glen Ellyn
- Route 64 corridor more vibrant
- More shopping
- Potential for growth
- Not another Naperville
- Progress without being like another community
- Unique – maintain charm
- Watch taxes and user fees
- Business friendly
- On-line shopping makes it hard on northwest stores
- Exit of Gieiche Shoe store
- Risk of too many restaurants and bars
- Parking in St. Charles is an issue
- City will continue to grow i.e. 50,000 plus population
- Types of businesses will change-more professionally oriented services
- Education and schools are the key
- Too many bars
- Transportation through area is difficult
- Charlestown Mall went under as activities moved west
- Fiscal responsibility
- Look at economy, tax base
- Leaders should answer to citizenry
- The Q center
- Focus on access
- Be careful with congestion
- First Street corridor is developed
- Mom and pop shops
- More homes near main areas (like LaGrange)
- Controlled growth
- Vibrant commercial area on First Street
- Walkable Downtown (1)
- Our biggest problems are solved (i.e. Charlestown Mall) (1)
- Think Charlestown Mall will still be struggling in fifteen years
- City moves slowly
- We will have measured growth

*Number after comment indicates additional participants agreed with the comment.

- More business along Randall Road and Route 64 to share tax burden
- Fox Valley trolley to shuttle people from all three communities
- St. Charles will still be an area we are all proud of
- Good schools
- Old Charlestown Mall area (west side) will be developed
- Bring business back to Downtown
- Traffic on Route 64 makes Downtown unusable
- Dream- We need a commercial traffic detour
- Build retail off Main Street
- St. Charles lacking in retail due to Randall Road
- Great historical legacy
- Facade improvements will be made
- Support to small businesses
- Must balance things economically
- Quiet Downtown like Geneva
- Coordinated cultural effort
- The mall on the west side of town was torn down many years ago and the property is still vacant. Concerned that in 10-15 years not much may have changed.
- School district is still great (3)
- Friendly neighborhoods (2)
- People and accessibility to train, Chicago, shopping etc. (1)
- Great place to raise family (1)
- Mix of services
- Jenny McCarthy got married here
- Fun Downtown
- Community has great economic potential
- Several areas are ripe for development
- Developers are interested in new buildings and development, but not on making improvements to existing commercial and business areas (Jewel)

Q2. If you were meeting with a new neighbor, friend or colleague considering St. Charles for the location of their residence, business or a place to work, how would you describe the community?

- Great Medical care close to home
- Great parks
- Police – public safety services are good (feels safe)
- Ability to live a balanced life
- Accessibility
- More use of park system
- Family Circle magazine ratings says a lot
- Watch schools – test scores slipping

*Number after comment indicates additional participants agreed with the comment.

Q3. Are there any “hidden” assets or strengths of the City that others may overlook or not be aware of City services-not well known?

- Fox River is an asset- River walk like San Antonio (2)
- Blue Goose grocery store
- Careful growth – lots of opportunity
- Are dams needed? Obstructs connectivity. We could link Fox River Cities by removing dams. This could allow for north and south growth
- Heritage tours
- Affluent – arts. More Cultural activities to meet needs of our community
- Tap resources (1)
- More things for young families
- No convenient parking
- Shuttle bus on vacant land
- Parking major limiting factor

Q4. As you look into the future, are there any unidentified or important opportunities for the City to capitalize on?

- Don't lose sight of land for schools
- Maintain the Library (1)
- Development on Route 38 and Randall Road
- Be more aggressive with retail space
- Coordinate development efforts
- Park District (1)
- Advertising – how to communicate and get the word out
- Blue Goose (grocery store)
- Pottawatomie Park- Concerts
- Make things accessible from a transportation standpoint with shuttles from east to west
- More bike friendly
- Provide support to businesses to offer shuttles

Q5. As you look into the future, are there any challenges or shortcomings that should be addressed or examined?

Q6. Can you list 1 or 2 short-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By short-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 1-2 years).

Short-Term

- First Street development
- Capitalize on things we do well
- More community events Pheasant Run, Fireworks, Scarecrow Festival
- More information should be accessible to average citizen. We used to have a public access channel
- Too much information
- Filtering information
- Create banners of upcoming City events to be attached to light poles. This could be a form of communications with residents.
- Base our communications strategy and information on users needs
- Advertise the City in both print and internet media
- Identify our target audience (people find information different ways)
- Connect Great Western Trail to Fox River. Safely

Q7. Can you list 1 or 2 long-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By long-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 3-6 years).

Long-Term

- Downtown traffic is a detriment. Not pleasant to walk Downtown with so much truck traffic going through
- Maintain infrastructure especially if development stays slow
- Develop non retail business development (auto dealerships help)
- Safer accessibility to Downtown
- Consult with similar communities (learn from successes and opportunities of other towns)
- St Charles should establish its own identity
- Use good ideas

Q8. If you could improve, create or change one important feature or goal of the City, (e.g., if you had a magic wand to help you with this) what would that one item or goal be?

- Widen Route 64 by 30 feet (1)
- Promote more home ownership rather than renting
- Develop a more family friendly Downtown with fewer adult establishments
- Enhance entrances into City and Downtown area
- Transportation improvements that move people more effectively. Get people where they need to and want to go (1)
- Get rid of dams and use the River for more things
- Limit trucks
- Develop cohesive strategy to use Downtown assets
- Logical plan for growth and how things can fit together
- First Street and Quad – can they both survive?

**City of St. Charles
Focus Group B***

Q1. Imagine that you left the City of St. Charles tomorrow and didn't return until 2025 or 2030. What do you think you would see, or hope to see, in the community when you return?

- See parking lot on 1st Street
- More development
- Expand Park District use and its programs to reach high school students
- Develop around Pottawatomie Park and St. Mary's
- Vacant development. We need updates and improvements to the strip malls throughout the City.(Rookies and Jewel)
- More commercial apartments
- A recreation center
- Charlestown Mall more like Geneva Commons
- More community events
- Giant fundraisers – like Park District
- Make penthouse buildings in City (Downtown)
- More restaurants on river
- Apple Store
- More shops Downtown like Geneva shopping destination
- Riverfront – more attractions
- Expand Park District throughout community farther west
- Riverfront – more activities
- More restaurants
- Community friendly sit down restaurant – fewer bars
- Unique shops and fewer chains
- Update schools
- Better connection with two high schools especially for events
- More connection among City, schools, and companies
- Get people to Downtown

*Number after comment indicates that additional participants agreed with the comment.

Q2. If you were meeting with a new neighbor, friend or colleague considering St. Charles for the location of their residence, business or a place to work, how would you describe the community?

- Expensive, but manageable
- Family oriented
- Classic small town – family friendly
- Nature and community friendly
- Lovely day and night
- Diverse activities
- Unique, upbeat, positive image
- Schools come together as a community
- Safe
- Opportunities for young people
- Parks
- Great Library
- Home town feel
- Great City to a raise family
- Good schools
- Quiet neighborhoods
- Easy going
- Few factories
- Easy to find opportunities to get involved
- Fun festivals
- Large focus on younger kids

Q3. Are there any “hidden” assets or strengths of the City that others may overlook or not be aware of City services-not well known?

- Affluent, but accessible
- Ability to start and try new things (start clubs) this is a leadership opportunity
- Riverboat – advertise more paddle boats and canoe launches off Boy Scout Island
- Small shops – advertise more
- Library
- Pheasant Run
- Festivals (i.e. Scarecrow)
- Offer activities for older people, not just small children
- More music events
- Thursday night concerts in the park

*Number after comment indicates that additional participants agreed with the comment.

- Sand volleyball leagues
- More emphasis on high school sports, fine arts, and 3-D art classes
- Empty Bowls Fundraiser. Serve soup and this could be for both North and East schools
- Last 3 days of Summer event – like Naperville (community-wide youth and bar scene)
- More bands at Arcada that would appeal to teens and young adults

Q4. As you look into the future, are there any unidentified or important opportunities for the City to capitalize on?

- Expand restaurant scene east and west
- Utilize Riverfront
- Expand small businesses on empty lots
- Make St. Charles unique
- More things to do. Get young adults' recreation perspectives
- Better mini golf course
- ATV rentals
- Jet ski rentals
- DuPage Airport – helicopter rides
- Better advertisement by City through schools, twitter, social media
- Restaurant targeted to young adults – not as expensive, but still a fun atmosphere.
- Use Cougars Stadium as a concert venue. Expand multi-purpose uses with big names. Use the turf field. We currently have to travel some distance for these types of events.
- Start a community organization: local construction companies could donate time/talents; maintain list of names of volunteers(including school volunteers) that are available; National Honor Society and other groups who are required volunteer hours could be used
- Small Business Fairs
- Show demonstrations at Pottawatomie Park
- Booths to collect ideas as well
- Randall Road billboards not super tall
- Technology – directory
- Touchscreen Kiosk
- St. Charles App
- Yelp App for City directory

Q5. As you look into the future, are there any challenges or shortcomings that should be addressed or examined?

Q6. Can you list 1 or 2 short-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By short-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 1-2 years).

Short-Term

- St. Charles App
- Develop a community volunteer directory and service
- Utilize technology and other resources such as the School District to advertise events going on throughout the City that would be of interest to high school students.
- Encourage businesses to work together
- Riverfront improvements
- Clean River – filter
- Turn town into Google advertising
- Schools more involved
- More events that include both high schools
- Events at Cougars Stadium
- Get going with the Quad Project.
- High-end stores at the Quad- an Apple store would be great.
- More events at Pottawatomie Park this summer
- Movie night
- Drive-in
- Movie night on the River

Q7. Can you list 1 or 2 long-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By long-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 3-6 years).

Long-Term

- More entertainment Downtown and bring in music of interest to teenagers at Concerts in the Park and at the Arcada theater. All the bands currently brought in by both of these venues are fun for parents, but not teens.
- Make Downtown more lively
- Turf field – soccer etc.
- More diversity
- More seating areas (i.e. fountains)
- Use checkerboard package as a seating area – fountain etc.
- Restaurants

Long-Term

- Recreational activities for all ages
- Something fun and affordable for high school students to do Downtown
- Add more summer events
- More movies and concerts
- Downtown more urban – taller buildings more lights
- More utilization of Quad-Center
- One Senior event for both schools
- Expand commercial development out west

Q8. If you could improve, create or change one important feature or goal of the City, (e.g., if you had a magic wand to help you with this) what would that one item or goal be?

- More involvement with Government
- More input from students
- Student involvement with City Council
- Have representatives of students be involved with the City Council.
- More development to the north and east
- Keep schools up to date
- Movie on the lawn by the River and sell food at this event

City of St. Charles Focus Group C*

Q1. Imagine that you left the City of St. Charles tomorrow and didn't return until 2025 or 2030. What do you think you would see, or hope to see, in the community when you return?

- Every building occupied no new buildings
- Still see all the history and that our buildings are cared for and well maintained
- Vibrant mixed of both retail and residential uses Downtown
- More integration of western areas between Downtown and west
- The Quad is reopened and occupied
- Still feels like our town. We are different than just an average bedroom community
- Attract more diversified businesses
- Maintain quality school system and healthy sense of competition
- Downtown parking problems
- Transit systems to tie together
- Walking town
- Change in demographics and aging population
- Level of real estate taxes is a problem and a detriment
- Downtown not supported by Route 64 and amount and type of traffic (trucks)
- Downtown needs more foot traffic
- We have learned how to best to engage people in Downtown
- Currently river is underutilized
- Think that what's currently vacant on First Street will continue to be vacant
- Keep community events and add activities
- More Downtown residential use and more urban feel
- More walking friendly
- Small footprint buildings and more vertical
- More utilization of parks
- More residences for elderly, but active residents
- Traffic jams at River
- Not proactive enough in soliciting new business

*Number after the comment indicates that additional participants agreed with the comment.

Q2. If you were meeting with a new neighbor, friend or colleague considering St. Charles for the location of their residence, business or a place to work, how would you describe the community?

- Quaint, welcoming, thriving, and beautiful
- Diverse housing stock
- Very family friendly community
- Business friendly
- Can shop, live, work here
- Small town feel, large town amenities
- Thriving church community
- Walkable
- Well managed City
- Good Mayors. Let's keep this tradition
- Vibrant nightlife
- Arcada theater, Steel beam Theater, Norris Theater, Other Theater, Art-in-the Park
- Transit from Pheasant Run to Downtown
- Not proactive enough in finding businesses. Our current businesses indicates that this is the case
- Lots of convention business – Pheasant Run and Quad Center
- Family oriented
- Friendly
- Great schools and Park District
- Lots of places to eat
- Good activities
- Thriving intellectual life
- Awesome Library
- Embrace History and Tradition
- Largely white – how do we change this?

Q3. Are there any “hidden” assets or strengths of the City that others may overlook or not be aware of City services-not well known?

- Airport (we extracted ourselves from it)
- Underutilization of the River (what about boat taxes?)
- Leroy Oakes Forest Preserve – beautiful property
- Industry to the east by the airport helps tax base without impacting City
- Good intergovernmental cooperation
- Outstanding City services Police, Fire, and Public Works

*Number after the comment indicates that additional participants agreed with the comment.

- Elgin Community College is an asset. We could promote it
- Quad Center and promoting a greater presence for Downtown
- Quad Center has a shuttle
- Through traffic Downtown is a strength and a weakness. Could be a strength (what about a 'lower Wacker Drive'?)
- Park District is underutilized
- Our festivals – fine arts, Riverfest, Concerts in the Park, riverboats
- All three cities have complimentary events
- Hotels are a strength
- Auto dealers
- First Street is fully built out with condos, people walking, gathering, and enjoying Downtown (3)
- Pottawatomie Center
- Airport
- Medical community
- Otter Cove
- Soccer fields for traveling soccer teams
- Dog Parks (including off-leash)
- Red Gate Bridge – may not be well known – great for locals
- Low crime rate
- Scouts-Three Fires Council
- Religious Community is diverse

Q4. As you look into the future, are there any unidentified or important opportunities for the City to capitalize on?

- Active use of the River by various groups. Diverse uses for the River
- Activities (white water rafting)
- Bike trails and recreation
- Activities for people such as a marathon
- First Street development
- Commercial development could change our City. This is pivotal
- St. Charles Mall. The Quad
- Blank Slate for a Mall for First Street – St. Charles Mall
- Airport commercial development. It should be more citizen friendly with lessons and activities.
- We need to actively market our airport. It is the fourth busiest airport in Illinois
- Marketing arts community, sculptures, art around the corner, Adirondack chair decorating, etc.
- Arcada and performing arts

Q5. As you look into the future, are there any challenges or shortcomings that should be addressed or examined?

- Problem of drugs in high school – continuous problems with middle school
- Engage youth
- Somewhere for high school students to go and hang out
- Continued under planning for parking
- Consistently trying to make Downtown Route 64 something it is not
- No public restrooms Downtown
- No public drinking fountains Downtown
- Breakfast establishment Downtown (We need this, but people need to support it)
- Our challenge is money
- Schools and declining enrollment
- Unused buildings. This hurts our tax base
- How to encourage younger people to come to St. Charles
- Hospital situation is a challenge. Private practices are being squeezed out of healthcare

Q6. Can you list 1 or 2 short-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By short-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 1-2 years).

Short-Term

- Complete Remington Glen community
- Public restrooms
- Keep infrastructure strong
- Enforce southwest snow removal in front of homes (We need an ordinance)
- City needs to be more considerate of where plowed snow gets deposited. Currently it blocks sidewalks
- Eliminate first floor retail requirements on Route 64
- Enforce timed parking in front of retail
- Sidewalk connections for walkers and bikers
- More foot traffic and get rid of vacancies Downtown
- Address drug issues among high school students
- Sidewalk on north side of State Street (7th Street to 9th Street)
- Better property maintenance enforcement (weeds)
- Incentives to encourage businesses to fill vacancies such as: Tincup Pass
- Downtown: sync traffic lights on Illinois State Route 64

Q7. Can you list 1 or 2 long-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By long-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 3-6 years).

Long-Term

- Less truck traffic on Route 64
- Traffic plan for Route 64 to address truck traffic issue. Let's work with State
- Plan for changing in our demographics
- Plan for more residential development Downtown
- More walkable
- Corporate Development and redevelopment Plan
- Complete development and redevelopment of Lexington business area
- Move our retail center off Route 64
- Reduce Real Estate taxes
- Continue efforts to be "green"
- Create large outdoor mall with variety of activities (shoe store)
- Use Boulder Colorado Pearl Street Mall as an example

Q8. If you could improve, create or change one important feature or goal of the City, (e.g., if you had a magic wand to help you with this) what would that one item or goal be?

- Walking City
- Move Police Department off the River.
- Use riverfront as more public area
- Stop crowding the River with buildings
- Extend and widen bike path north of Route 64 along the River (2)
- Riverwalk (like Naperville and San Antonio) that incorporates our history, shops, and restaurants
- Vibrant and diverse Downtown would have a catalyst effect
- Transit around town. Find a way to move folks around (trolley)?
- More regular organized events in public areas with City financial support
- More density Downtown- both people and businesses

City of St. Charles Focus Group D*

Q1. Imagine that you left the City of St. Charles tomorrow and didn't return until 2025 or 2030. What do you think you would see, or hope to see, in the community when you return?

- Use the River much more
- More vibrant Downtown
- More retail
- More activity
- Downtown needs to focus more on arts and festivals
- Bring back Downtown vibrancy from Randall Road
- Keep "little" theater Downtown
- Riverwalk (great use)
- Restaurants and outdoor dining
- Riverwalk draws residents and tourists
- Tie-in access to Downtown, so we don't need to drive (trolleys?)
- Entertainment options by River and Downtown are available every weekend
- Revive amphitheater and Pottawatomie Park
- Draw in small vendors and artists
- St. Charles increases population and is considered the next viable spot (2)
- Recognize that we have competition along River. Develop different assets and attractions
- "Lively" City
- It is critical that we differentiate ourselves from other towns along the River.
- Diversify our business base
- Tie in mall and east side with Downtown
- Need better access to keep East and West connected with Downtown
- We should be different than our competitors and known for something different (2)
- Don't need more restaurants. What we have is adequate for current population
- Developed Riverfront -this is our future (2)
- Bike paths in better shape, easier to navigate. Give people places to stop and eat
- Need reasons for folks to come and stay Downtown
- Need more green space
- All storefronts dressed-up and restored as they originally looked "back to its glory"
- Keep sight of architectural heritage
- Still be able to update and develop Downtown
- Mixed uses will help us to accomplish goals for Downtown

*Number after comments indicates that additional participants agreed with the comment.

- Special place. St Charles is enchanting and retains charm of era gone by
- Don't lose sight of architectural heritage
- We need policies to restore our historic buildings – don't tear them down
- More residential development

Q2. If you were meeting with a new neighbor, friend or colleague considering St. Charles for the location of their residence, business or a place to work, how would you describe the community?

- Hometown feeling
- Old town charm with fun forward feeling
- Great place to raise family
- Good schools
- Strong volunteer community
- Stars have visited the Arcada
- River is our biggest asset
- Amphitheater and dressing rooms below
- Park is like “a little Ravinia”
- Can escape the Big City for a relaxing time and country feel
- People are just wonderful
- Great community along Fox River
- Great School District
- Nice to raise family and close enough to enjoy the benefits of Chicago
- Family-oriented, close knit, and lively City

Q3. Are there any “hidden” assets or strengths of the City that others may overlook or not be aware of City services-not well known?

- Promote “farm to table” idea
- Abandon rail line – take down embankments at Charlestown Mall
- Park District amenities
- Airport
- Developable flatland
- Pottawatomie Park use.
- The abandoned rail line has potential
- Potential for outdoor dining

Q4. As you look into the future, are there any unidentified or important opportunities for the City to capitalize on?

- History of St. Charles-Barb Wire story. We need to talk about our history. It is awe inspiring
- Need to toot our own horn
- River
- Amphitheater
- Focus on mid-size businesses

Q5. As you look into the future, are there any challenges or shortcomings that should be addressed or examined?

- Challenge is getting through Downtown
- Not being located on rail infrastructure to support greater population
- Attracting talent to St. Charles
- Challenge to create meaningful jobs (Corporation headquarters)
- Financing for our ideas and vision
- East/West bottleneck
- Costs of underutilized schools
- Costs to meet code requirements (City has program to change use)
- Less corporate executives living here
- Live here and work elsewhere
- Don't want to traverse Downtown bottleneck (east to west)
- Focus on size of business and organizations. Attract midsize versus large size
- Can our infrastructure handle growth?
- Building code limitations (four stories)
- Identify crisis
- Charming small town versus growth
- Don't want to be "anywhere USA"
- Traffic congestion Downtown at 5:00 p.m.
- How do we create an advantage from disadvantage
- Can we attract talent to live and work in St. Charles
- Charlestown Mall has no nearby draw
- Meaningful job creation
- Attract corporate headquarters
- Promote farm to table idea
- Abandon rail line. Take down embankments Charleston Mall Park District amenities
- Potential for outdoor dining

Q6. Can you list 1 or 2 short-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By short-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 1-2 years).

Short-Term

- Charlestown Mall
- Entertainment and Bands in Downtown on weekends
- Movie in the Park
- Amphitheater
- Support First Street development
- Develop Riverfront
- Keep River – view
- Open – access as possible
- Tie amenities together – throughout town
- Convert abandoned railroad into bike path
- Consider focusing on mid-sized business (100-500 employees)
- Next phase of the riverfront project
- Develop arteries into Downtown sidewalks, biking, walking
- Convert abandoned railroad to walking
- Trolley
- Consider riverboat gambling or gambling machines
- Allowing multiple business uses Downtown – hurts overall retail
- Why doesn't Prairie Street Bridge go through? It could "T" into Route 25
- Become member of Sister Cities International

Q7. Can you list 1 or 2 long-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By long-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 3-6 years).

Long-Term

- Housing, business development
- Incorporate sustainability 'lease' or contract for new development. Explore this. Incentivize it. This could be a differentiator
- Complete short-term goals
- Fill Downtown
- Business development
- Restorative development
- Increase entertainment value of Downtown – more opportunity east attractions etc. history

*Number after comments indicates that additional participants agreed with the comment.

Long-Term

- Museums – family driven other attractions – entertainments (not just eating and drinking)
- Restorative sustainability
- Vacant space – create green space that is beneficial to environment
- Promote permanent culture to restore the prairies – gardens
- Renovation with eye toward LEED Development

Q8. If you could improve, create or change one important feature or goal of the City, (e.g., if you had a magic wand to help you with this) what would that one item or goal be?

- Drug – free City (address drug culture with youth)
- Move bar closings in liquor licenses back to 1:00 a.m.
- Complete all phases of the River projects
- Double jobs
- City can assist in filling business vacancies; keep stores and businesses other filled; don't try to legislate uses, but allow the market to drive. Make this a priority!
- Provide incentives for new businesses
- Riverfront spaces for festivals, markets, etc.
- Transportation between trains – supply avenue to get Downtown

City of St. Charles Focus Group E*

Q1. Imagine that you left the City of St. Charles tomorrow and didn't return until 2025 or 2030. What do you think you would see, or hope to see, in the community when you return?

- Much less vacant space
- More development off Main Street and things to positively attract visitors
- Arcada Theater continues to thrive
- Baker Hotel continues to thrive
- Riverfront feels good
- Completion of Downtown projects east to west that increase density and the vitality of Downtown
- Housing and retail and a vibrant Downtown
- Businesses that foster energy Downtown
- Charlestown Mall back on its feet and thriving
- Foxville Theater
- Main Street buildings have a new purpose
- Downtown has kinetic energy even without events
- "Naperville like"-higher density, more vertical residences
- Capitalize on River amenity
- Hope we have a culture of inclusion
- More open-minded, collaborative community
- More progressive and positive thoughts
- More engagement and less "no"
- Embrace change
- More connectivity
- Think the City will be spinning its wheels
- I think we will have forged an identity
- Vibrant Downtown
- We have gotten away from Main Street to create a Downtown
- There is more emphasis on the River
- Hope to see vibrant businesses other than bars
- More mixed uses and fewer vacant building

*Number after the comment indicates additional participants agreed with the comment.

Q2. If you were meeting with a new neighbor, friend or colleague considering St. Charles for the location of their residence, business or a place to work, how would you describe the community?

- Wonderful town for festivals
- Fine schools, Library, and Park District
- We have some lower income housing
- Great place to raise family
- Great community full of really fine folks. Need hand holding
- Very loyal
- Suburban with urban core
- Good schools
- Responsive government
- Good, cute, older neighborhoods
- Pricier new neighborhoods
- Multiple business options can be accommodated
- Educated and wealthier population
- Warm, friendly, small town feeling. Feels like home

Q3. Are there any “hidden” assets or strengths of the City that others may overlook or not be aware of City services-not well known?

- Very good Fire Department and Police Department
- Great industrial base
- Traditional neighborhoods to live and work
- Lots of medical personnel and medical care
- Power utility and their quick response
- (Lazarus House) Not too many homeless
- Many parks and neighborhood parks (need to leverage park that people can walk to)
- “Blue Goose” store Downtown
- Downtown walkable and livable
- Amazing people—nicest people you are going to meet- very generous
- Amount of wildlife and green space
- Big emphasis on the arts
- District #303- super communication network
- Many churches
- River is underutilized

Q4. As you look into the future, are there any unidentified or important opportunities for the City to capitalize on?

- Mall lands (Quad is showing sign of life)
- Westside of town vacancies, but there is huge opportunity to reinvigorate this property through a combination of tax dollars and real estate tax dollars
- St. Charles Mall. How do you maximize?
- Bike path – rails to trails. We can leverage this.
- We can be proactive because we don't have real problems
- Branding our City
- Opportunity to lead our population proactively
- Smart phone application for tourism and tourists
- Increase tourism dollars using our historical and educational assets
- Hydro power at dam (we should sell it). This is an opportunity

Q5. As you look into the future, are there any challenges or shortcomings that should be addressed or examined?

- Part of Downtown changes are subject to historical District requirement
- Getting people to join historic district – people are hesitant to buy in District due to its land use limitations
- Summertime odor from River and spiders
- Our culture of never forget or forgive
- Geese that nest on bridge
- Primrose Farm – stone cottage
- Parking on Main Street. We could narrow the sidewalks and create more On - street parking and a friendlier environment
- More parking on Route 64 could be a buffer for businesses
- Semi-truck traffic is a challenge
- State's designation of Route 64
- Difficult to market to St. Charles residents because we don't have a newspaper
- No unified lighting scheme for Downtown. LED lighting (warm white) could be used. We have a mix now in Downtown

Q6. Can you list 1 or 2 short-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By short-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 1-2 years).

Short-Term

- Improve business incentives
- City needs a director of Communication Management
- Engage people and encourage them to register online for agenda item notifications. City needs to be more proactive in this area
- More open-mindedness on City Council. Evolution of ideas and receptivity to new ideas. We should have a full-airing of ideas
- Get First Street projects up and going.

Q7. Can you list 1 or 2 long-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By long-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 3-6 years).

Long-Term

- Stop doing stupid
- See assets, rather than problems
- Recognize potential
- Take risks to build bridges
- Address parking issues
- The quality of projects is more important than quantity
- Define clear direction and then lead
- Complete projects currently on the table
- Address the fact that other commercial corridors, such as Randall Road, draw businesses away from Downtown.
- Encourage and work with current business owners
- Focus on Downtown
- Drive Downtown with a corporate identity (branding)
- Don't throw money after the Charlestown mall
- Get trucks off Route #64. We need a bypass
- Improve incentives to businesses
- Entrepreneurial approach to growing economy

Q8. If you could improve, create or change one important feature or goal of the City, (e.g., if you had a magic wand to help you with this) what would that one item or goal be?

- Divert truck traffic from Route 64
- Add low income housing
- Add two more anchor businesses to Downtown
- Funding to finish Riverfront projects
- Make full use of River as an asset
- Improve incentives for business
- Use an entrepreneurial approach to growing our economy

City of St. Charles
Focus Group F*

Q1. Imagine that you left the City of St. Charles tomorrow and didn't return until 2025 or 2030. What do you think you would see, or hope to see, in the community when you return?

- Downtown, First Street construction. Downtown is finished, thriving, and filled with stores and businesses (2)
- Eastside will thrive as well
- Hope for economic development Downtown
- Strong schools, beautiful parks, riverfront is great
- Continue great public safety services
- Balance current open space
- Increase open space to add to bike and trails
- Continue to make River important amenity
- Downtown is thriving
- Schools continue to be great and strong
- See young families
- New businesses have been started
- Diversity of generations and activities for young and old
- St. Charles is a destination where people move to
- Population will grow in Kane County
- Hope that there will be more mixed use development
- Hope that we have communities that attract young people
- Hope people can move around without a car
- Preserve agricultural base
- It is important that people don't see major changes, but that community is still strong
- Different generations of people live here
- Maintain our attraction to different generations
- Biking and walking opportunities are plentiful
- Riverfront would be one important component
- See recovery of Charleston mall
- See recovery of Pheasant Run
- The Southwest area has been brought back
- Our quality education and schools are an attraction for new families
- Hope we have a balance of taxes and that we are a financially affordable community
- The Arcada Theater is like the Paramount (in Aurora), but with more restaurants. This would be a draw
- More recreational development on Riverfront (water sports, rowing clubs)
- Remove the Dam

*Number after comment indicates that additional participants agreed with the comment.

- District #303 is strong and has lots of opportunities and activities for young people
- Continue generational draw of St. Charles
- Eleventh Street is well maintained. Houses are kept up despite the impact of aging demographic
- Property upkeep is important (2)
- People that live in the future have adopted habits and desires that we moved here for. We need to pass these values on to new residents
- Downtown development is crucial to strong schools, parks, and library
- We have a commitment to education beyond schools
- Maintain historic sense of St. Charles

Q2. If you were meeting with a new neighbor, friend or colleague considering St. Charles for the location of their residence, business or a place to work, how would you describe the community?

- Family oriented
- Historic
- Civic engagement
- Commitment to the arts
- Good schools, parks, library
- Most beautiful place on the Fox River
- Pretty, quiet, interesting
- Competent administration of both public and non-profit organizations
- Upscale – we aspire to these qualities
- Sense of community, tradition, and history is important in our community
- Great community with lots of assets River, Parks, people, schools
- Good access to Chicago
- Beautiful, family friendly
- Parks, bike trail, River
- Variety of activities
- Small town feel – great place to raise kids and live life. St. Charles is welcoming
- Families all want best for our children
- Innovative
- Friendly and we have a variety of people who live here
- Rich in parks, trails, and natural areas
- Riverfront – sports
- Good schools
- Quaint, but train ride away from Chicago
- Great location.
- Strong schools
- Community of caring people who want to better our community
- We have opportunities for children
- St. Charles took the good things from Naperville

Q3. Are there any “hidden” assets or strengths of the City that others may overlook or not be aware of City services-not well known?

- Elgin Community College and access to higher education at Northern Illinois University
- Opportunities for shopping
- Randall Road
- Tri-City area is an asset
- Respectful community and the way our community works together
- City staff especially community development staff are easy to work
- Responsiveness of City staff
- City responsiveness ties into Public Safety
- All accredited Public Safety departments– Police, Fire EMS
- Relationship between schools and public safety is strong
- Relationship between Library and community is an asset
- Intergovernmental cooperation strong
- Support for community organizations and sheer number of those organizations
- Community’s safety net – Lazarus House, Salvation Army, churches
- Randall Road is an asset for the future
- Transit and hospitals – mixed use
- Randall Road- all communities have piece of this asset
- All communities have a piece of the River as an asset
- Kids are an asset. Let’s make sure they return. We need reasons to have them aspire to return
- Access to great medical care choices

Q4. As you look into the future, are there any unidentified or important opportunities for the City to capitalize on?

- DuPage Airport
- East end economic development
- The Quad
- Industry on east end
- Involve students to a greater extent. They have great ideas and creativity
- Tap into our well educated residents and population
- Civic mindedness
- St. Charles could be model for incorporating Hispanic people into the community. We are on the cusp of this. We should reach out and incorporate more Hispanic people
- More green initiatives and products
- Need more emphasis on green initiatives especially in construction
- Attract remote workers to live in a great community. This type of work force is an untapped resource
- Our workforce is educated

*Number after comment indicates that additional participants agreed with the comment.

Q5. As you look into the future, are there any challenges or shortcomings that should be addressed or examined?

- Traffic
- New bridge (Red Gate) has helped
- Lack of public transportation. It is difficult to get around. Pace doesn't go through St. Charles. It only serves Randall Road
- St. Charles is not close to the interstate. It is hard to get out of area
- Our location is difficult with respect to commuting
- Taxes and the price of public service. Our affordability is a challenge
- Maintain our tax base
- (The fact that) St. Charles is in the State of Illinois
- Lack of density in our housing stock impacts affordability

Q6. Can you list 1 or 2 short-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By short-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 1-2 years).

Short-Term

- Consider 'aging in place' opportunities
- Follow through with "Homes for Changing Region Plan"
- Arcada Development
- The Quad- continue development efforts. This is very important
- Plan for consolidation of services continue to explore efficiencies
- Consider 911 consolidation and other areas as well
- Sharing resources
- Fill Downtown vacancies
- Develop First Street
- Redevelop Old St. Charles Mall
- Stay course on new Comprehensive Plan and implement it
- Welcome and assimilate new residents and Hispanic Community
- Revisit plan based to "mature" community status

Q7. Can you list 1 or 2 long-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By long-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 3-6 years).

Long-Term

- Better downsizing opportunities, so that single family homes are available for new families
- Consider 'aging in place' opportunities
- Quality of life and planning with respect to aging
- Follow through with "Homes for Changing Region Plan"
- Redevelop Old St. Charles Mall
- Traffic - address how to change the long-term affects of traffic
- Be aware of the importance of public transportation in all decisions both to the east and the west
- Downtown development

Q8. If you could improve, create or change one important feature or goal of the City, (e.g., if you had a magic wand to help you with this) what would that one item or goal be?

- Improve Riverfront access points and connectivity to roads, recreation activities, and Downtown
- The Arcada theater – support physical improvement to help spur this area and add vibrancy to Downtown
- Redevelop the Quad – (look at Oakbrook)
- Physical improvements to buildings in Downtown (outside and inside). Upgrade buildings which are currently a deterrent to businesses who desire to locate there
- School system is the absolutely the best. Our children get what they need and we build a generation of leaders. Parents are pleased
- Community supported scholarships for extra circular fees for people who can't afford these fees. Support greater access to Elgin Community College for these kids
- Fix Illinois (5)

City of St. Charles Focus Group G*

Q1. Imagine that you left the City of St. Charles tomorrow and didn't return until 2025 or 2030. What do you think you would see, or hope to see, in the community when you return?

- The #1 Mall in Illinois will be "The Quad"- the old Charlestown Mall – fully developed, full of businesses and no parking due to demand (2)
- Established retail on First Street and First Street is completed (2)
- More retail all through the community
- Downtown will a vibrant and an established place to shop
- Excellent bike trails; parks are well maintained; bike path network is used and these great places are connected together (3)
- Riverfront has been beautified, is clean, maintained and is used by many people (1)
- Completed bike paths across the community (1)
- Community more populated, more diverse, but will likely look and feel (scale) how it looks now. Maintain the "quaint" feel
- Expansion of tax base through annexation and redevelopment. Achieved balance in these changes
- A safe vibrant, family oriented, and safe Downtown (1)
- A good Downtown and a bit less emphasis on bars and more family friendly and more options (3)
- City is still home to great festivals, events etc. It is a place for families to be together, have fun and feel safe
- See the Downtown is less "noisy" and traffic is managed better
- More diversity of City Staff and those of us that serve the Public
- Programs and an activity center with more options for non-sports oriented kids (tween years)
- Continued building and rehabbing older homes and businesses
- Maintain character of our community

Q2. If you were meeting with a new neighbor, friend or colleague considering St. Charles for the location of their residence, business or a place to work, how would you describe the community?

- Quaint community with longtime residents and families (2)
- Great services, responsive (4)
- Beautiful community, trees, River etc.
- Great schools

*Number after the comments indicates that additional participants agreed with this comment.

- Great family community with hometown feel (4)
- Great opportunities for kids, parks, programs, and activities
- “Nice town” overall
- Clean community
- Good restaurants
- Vibrant community
- Great core and a great central Downtown
- Stable community
- A hometown community – where they feel they belong
- High quality of life
- Self contained, full featured community – everything is here
- Connected hometown feel
- Upper social economic population – not much diversity here today
- Safe community – kids can go places
- Wide spectrum of population and economic variations in places

Q3. Are there any “hidden” assets or strengths of the City that others may overlook or not be aware of City services-not well known?

- The “Q” center (1)
- Diverse housing stock, including housing from different eras
- Programs available throughout the community that aren’t fully utilized or known (not for-profit human services, churches, Salvation Army, and other groups) (2)
- Park District, facilities and programs – many may not be fully aware of these offerings
- Library – underutilized and only known by some
- “Goodwill” and spirit to serve and involvement of City staff
- City website
- Downtown is not utilized as much as it could be
- River and recreation activities along river (outdoor environment, kayaking, on or near the water; many alternatives (3)
- Pheasant Run and Kane County Fairgrounds (1)
- Special events (scare crow festival). Last year we had had 44 special events
- Vacant land parcels (e.g. Route 38/Randall, Main Street and Randall Road)
- Our industrial park is great and an important of our economy (1)

Q4. As you look into the future, are there any unidentified or important opportunities for the City to capitalize on?

Q5. As you look into the future, are there any challenges or shortcomings that should be addressed or examined?

- Too many bars
- Traffic – everywhere/major corridors
- Aging infrastructure (water mains etc.)
- Downtown parking
- Community feel in some areas it might be fading or may feel disconnected from traditional patterns
- Business retention (retail, small mom/pop shops, some restaurants)
- Geographic distance to the toll ways – no train and equal-distant to I-90 and I-88. This could be a competitive disadvantage
- Keeping charm and quaint feel, while adapting, changing infrastructure. Grow and change while maintaining balance
- Want benefits of economic development, but may be willing to do what it takes to attract or change
- Taxes are high
- Route 64 and Kirk Road shopping area (south east corner) many vacant spaces there

Q6. Can you list 1 or 2 short-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By short-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 1-2 years).

Short-Term

- Be as environmentally conscious as we can be as a municipality or in specific departments – including waste water/water
- Continue to upgrade infrastructure, streets, water, sewer, etc. (1)
- Work to improve traffic circulation in St. Charles. Left lanes and parking (1)
- Address parking deficiency problems in Downtown
- Do everything we can to reutilize the “Quad” – redefine Charlestown Mall this will be very important because it helps all parts of City economically(5)
- Work to market and encourage redevelopment of vacant parcels in St. Charles
- Revitalize and promote redevelopment of old St. Charles Mall near Route #38 and Randall Road

*Number after the comments indicates that additional participants agreed with this comment.

Short-Term

- Find situation everyone can accept
- Work to attract industry and large corporations (1)
- Finalize and implement our “marketing plan” for the community – have consistency in message and selling ourselves
- Like to see bike paths completed
- Kick start or restart First Street development
- Locate a Whole Foods or Mariano’s in St. Charles (2)

Q7. Can you list 1 or 2 long-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By long-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 3-6 years).

Long-Term

- Finish/see completed the First Street development project and expanded Downtown parking (2)
- See more diversity in businesses mix in Downtown (1)
- Mitigate noise, traffic, and congestion in Downtown. Make it more pleasant and pedestrian friendly (it’s hard to talk outside Downtown because of the noise)
- Embrace cultural diversity and create and expand programs to accomplish the welcome feel to all (1)
- Explore more green initiatives, solar, recycling items (1)
- Implement the River Corridor Plan (2)
- Have all key commercial areas full revitalized/maximized (old St. Charles Mall, Charlestown Mall) (4)
- More modern communications and information platforms for communicating to residents – emergency information and regular information (2)
- Continue to look at annexation opportunities/expand boundaries

Q8. If you could improve, create or change one important feature or goal of the City, (e.g., if you had a magic wand to help you with this) what would that one item or goal be?

- Build a happy, friendly, caring community
- See all main commercial areas revitalized: Old Charlestown Mall, Quad Center, and Downtown (4)
- Buffer and manage the bar culture that has expanded in our Downtown
- Address and establish a plan to promote a balance in Downtown establishments and businesses (between restaurants, bars, retail, office, and residential)
- Pedestrian overpass on Route 64 from north to south. Replace over pass with pedestrian walk/over pass and more parking
- Maximize and expand outdoor activities and options on the River – keep it nice – expand, connect (bike trails, amphitheater)
- A more pedestrian friendly Downtown; manage the traffic and noise

City of St. Charles
Focus Group H*

Q1. Imagine that you left the City of St. Charles tomorrow and didn't return until 2025 or 2030. What do you think you would see, or hope to see, in the community when you return?

- More development – more housing development and more condo type housing (1)
- More vibrant Downtown, no empty retail spaces. Downtown is 100% occupied, family friendly; First Street is fully built out with condos, people walking, gathering, and enjoying Downtown (3)
- We capitalize on the River (3)
- The Manor restaurant is back and open again
- The Arcada Theater is expanded and successful
- Downtown is a great gathering place
- Think/hope we see greater racial and ethnic diversity
- Top notch assisted living facility and senior housing facilities – places to stay here and be able to “age in place”
- More business mix and family friendly restaurants (1)
- The Arcada Theater broadens their mix of shows (1)
- Development and/or redevelopment of major parcels of land particularly for businesses and commercial use in St. Charles (2)
- A rejuvenated, healthy, expanded tax base both commercial and industrial
- More parking options and parking spaces Downtown (2)
- School system maintains very high quality of student achievement. Schools are also part of our social glue and family community
- Continued good management of the City, our good services; good stewardship and fiscal health, fiscally responsible use of our tax dollars (1)
- A community of all income levels and giving people the ability to stay/be in community
- More affordable housing and housing choices to come. People grow up here and stay (1)

Q2. If you were meeting with a new neighbor, friend or colleague considering St. Charles for the location of their residence, business or a place to work, how would you describe the community?

- Stable, neighborhood oriented that celebrates community (2)
- Great schools. Excellent for families (2)
- Well maintained and great pride. Kids leave, go to school, and come back! (2)
- Very good parks and recreation facilities (2)
- Very, Very friendly community – welcoming (3)
- Very attractive Downtown (1)

*Number after the comment indicates that additional participants agreed with the comment.

- Beautiful small City on the Fox River. Friendly, involved, and giving neighbors, great churches, and service organizations (1)
- Well run community (1)
- Great community services; police, fire, and snow removal (1)
- Healthy, active community with the River, bike trails, healthy lifestyle, sport opportunities and organized sports
- Family friendly and safe (4)
- Hospitable (2)
- Natural beauty of Fox River – capitalize on it – use it (1)
- Multiple community events and sense of community
- Location – access to Chicago and transportation (2)
- A giving community (1)
- So many opportunities to go outside and enjoy the community – meet, mingle, be a retreat from the hustle and bustle of modern living (1)

Q3. Are there any “hidden” assets or strengths of the City that others may overlook or not be aware of City services-not well known?

- Number of families that have been engaged and helped build and anchor the community
- Awesome local history and heritage
- Community services and service providers that many people are not aware of
- Pheasant Run Resort – under appreciated
- The “Q” Center
- Jenny McCarthy presence and recognition (maybe a Mark Wahlberg “here in the future”)
- Hotel Baker
- Old St. Charles Mall – redevelopment opportunity
- Charlestown Mall – new owners
- Faith communities here
- Location, highways, train line etc.
- DuPage County Airport/Aurora Airport
- Fox River (1)
- Kane County Fair Grounds including the Flea Market

Q4. As you look into the future, are there any unidentified or important opportunities for the City to capitalize on?

- Expansion of the Arcada Theatre
- St. Charles Mall redevelopment and rejuvenation
- Fox River. Actual river projects
- Measured expansion of the public library system
- Our Helping Hand/District #303 website for youth and youth with physical and mental needs
- The schools and enrollments at lower grade levels and changing demographics “the age bubble”
- Management of assets, reallocation of public assets to adopt to changes and maintain high quality community services
- Returning college age kids – there are jobs here, opportunities-let’s draw them back
- Work with Chicago realtors to inform them and educate them about St. Charles

Q5. As you look into the future, are there any challenges or shortcomings that should be addressed or examined?

- Property taxes
- Drug threats around us
- Perception/misperception that St. Charles is an affluent, expensive community this had hindered access. This is a barrier
- City leadership of the community and getting the mix right of organization balance in the future
- Traffic
- Parking Downtown is a deterrent (2)
- Too many tavern’s and catering to a narrow clientele. We need to broaden audiences and customers in Downtown
- Lack of retailers in several spots Downtown. Rental prices and ability of businesses to compete (1)
- Limited public transportation resources

Q6. Can you list 1 or 2 short-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By short-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 1-2 years).

Short-Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess and study Downtown parking needs with goal of increased parking spaces (2) • Initiate a business location outreach and recruitment plan for Main Street and Downtown (2) • 5% reduction of property taxes on City side-efficiency and good use of tax dollars and prioritize (1) • Have thoughtful conversation of where Mental Health Board money goes – and the need for more resources(1) • Create a single point contact/portal for human services and activities both marketing and messaging (1) • Help to encourage and thoughtful location or site to create more affordable housing in St. Charles (1) • Assess the need and possibilities to site/locate assisted and independent living in multi-level Senior housing facility (1) • Leadership taking an “open view” of needed changes, new ideas, Don’t just listen to NIMBY citizens, but listen to the whole community(1) • Capitalize on Fox River as an asset (1) • First Street property development program. This needs to be restarted (1)

Q7. Can you list 1 or 2 long-term issues or goals you feel the City should explore? (By long-term, the facilitators mean any goals, objectives, services or issues that the participant would like to see explored or addressed by City government within the next 3-6 years).

Long-Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlestown Mall redevelopment completed and viable, vibrant, and functioning • St. Charles Mall property redevelopment accomplished • Arcada Theatre expansion is accomplished • Fox River improved, dam taken out – swift water kayaking, fishing, gathering, and recreational use (Active River Project) • Create more community events, regional events, national events • Create a full bike path along the Fox River and bike path connections to and in the City • Complete expanded parking in Downtown • First Street Development is substantially done

*Number after the comment indicates that additional participants agreed with the comment.

Q8. If you could improve, create or change one important feature or goal of the City, (e.g., if you had a magic wand to help you with this) what would that one item or goal be?

- Mall redevelopment accomplished both St. Charles and Charlestown both gateways (4)
- Create and establish a Human Services Center on a redeveloped mall site. Create consolidated central access points for users (2)
- River corridor – see improvements both economic and recreational take place (2)
- Promote, support, and foster community pride (1)
- Arcada Theatre renovation and expansion is completed (1)
- Improve and address Downtown parking shortfall and inadequacy. Lack of parking is a deterrent to success and a deterrent to growth and economic development