



City of Lincolnton

2015 Strategic Planning Summary Report

Draft

Submitted by
Centralina Council of Governments
July 7, 2015



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Summary of Goal Rankings	3
Top Goals	3
Feedback Connection	4
Next Steps	6
<i>Exhibit A – Detailed Results from June 2, 2015 Public Engagement</i>	
<i>Exhibit B – Balanced Decision Making Process</i>	

**City of Lincolnton
2015 Strategic Planning Summary Report**

Introduction

The City of Lincolnton has initiated a strategic planning process to respond to significant challenges and opportunities. The City specifically directed that their work be guided by strong public engagement. As a result, the City staff prepared materials to communicate the work of the City including chronology of significant achievements and changes, description of department responsibilities, achievement and future challenges facing the City.

On Tuesday June 2, 2015 a community public engagement was held at The Lentz Center. Detailed responses are provided in Exhibit A. A summary of the priorities identified at the Open House include:

On June 25, the City Council met to identify the 2015 strategic priorities. The results are shown below:

Goals	Total	Council	Staff
Improve Infrastructure	12	3	9
Employee Benefits	10	3	7
Downtown Development	9	4	5
Water Customers (increase)	3	1	2
Extension of Rail Trail/more trails/improve upkeep around trails/amenities/survey trails (determine who owns what)	3	2	1
Recreational Opportunities	3	1	2
More Sidewalks	2	1	1

Top Goals

Of the seven goals listed several were combined as noted:

1. Improve Infrastructure (including more sidewalks and trail maintenance)
 - ✓ Develop long term plan to maintain, improve and fund infrastructure.
 - ✓ Engage public to communicate plan, cost and funding options

2. Employee Benefits
 - ✓ Complete internal and external benefit surveys
 - ✓ Complete pay and classification study
 - ✓ Identify budget impacts and funding options

3. Downtown Development
 - ✓ Identify infrastructure needs including funding options
 - ✓ Assess potential development partners (business owners, property owners, banks)
 - ✓ Assess developer interest including barriers and opportunities
 - ✓ Identify potential development and redevelopment sites within downtown area
 - ✓ Identify potential high-demand uses

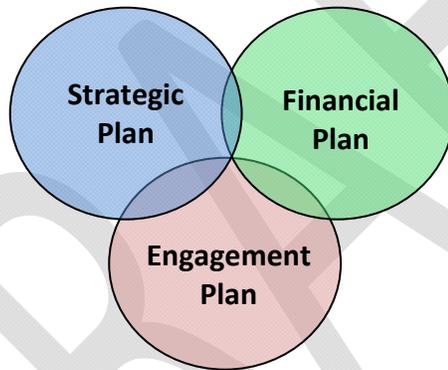
**City of Lincolnton
2015 Strategic Planning Summary Report**

4. Recreational Opportunities (including extension of Rail Trail, more trails, trail amenities)
- ✓ Assess current utilization
 - ✓ Conduct focus group discussion
 - ✓ Survey residents/users
 - ✓ Prepare options including costs, capital and operating cost options

Systems

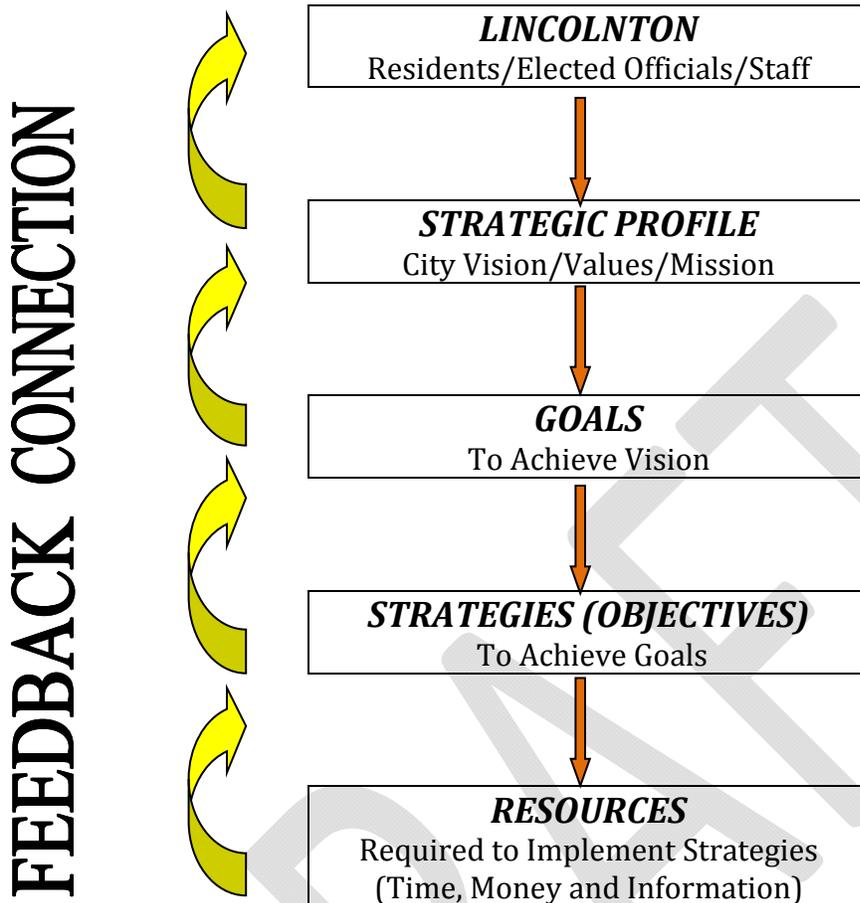
Having selected a manageable number of goals, it is appropriate that the City’s plan reflect development and maintenance of systems to accomplish those goals. Systems identified as imperative to success include a Strategic Plan, Financial Plan, and Engagement Plan.

Together, these systems will benefit the community by allowing for stakeholder involvement at the inception of any critical processes and allow for a common understanding of how critical decisions are being made.



Feedback Connection

The **engagement plan** (evidenced by the City’s effort to communicate and conduct the June 2 Open House) would establish feedback connection involving residents, elected officials, and City staff. The feedback connection would be used to generate the City’s Vision, Values, and Mission. These, in turn would be used to determine the goals for the City. The **strategic plan** then sets objectives to be accomplished to meet those goals. The **financial plan** would identify and map out the gathering and use of resources required to implement the strategies. All along, the engagement plan would be used to notify the public of progress being made on their behalf and to solicit feedback on the processes being put in place.



Strategic Planning Feedback Connection Checklist

The Strategic Planning Feedback Connection Checklist serves to tie the above elements together and to keep the various stakeholders involved focused on “**WHAT**” they are trying to accomplish and “**WHY**.”

Community

- Have we communicated a vision to the City?
- Do we have adequate methods to hear community needs and concerns?

Strategic Profile

- Is this the right vision/value for the City?
- What happens if we do not achieve this vision?

Goals

- How will these goals help achieve our Vision?
- Have we explored other goals that may better help achieve our Vision?
- Have we made an effort to communicate how our goals help achieve our Vision?
- Have we identified any alternate goals that will help achieve our Vision?
- Should we adjust our goals when there is a change in environment?

City of Lincolnton
2015 Strategic Planning Summary Report

Strategies (Objectives)

- Have we selected strategies that will best help achieve our goals?
- Have we considered alternative strategies?
- Are we progressing with the implementation of our strategies?
- Have we identified any alternate strategies that may help achieve our goals using less or more appropriate resources?
- How should we adjust our strategies when there is a lack of resources?

Resources

- Are we dedicating the required and appropriate resources to implement our strategy?
- Are there other resources required than first anticipated?
- Are there additional resources required than first anticipated?

Next Steps

The City Council provided clear direction regarding their intent for this strategic plan. The plan should be focused and action directed. This was not a plan that should sit on a shelf but rather one that will be used as a guide in allocating time and resources.

It is the stated intention of the Council to allocate time on regular Council agendas at least quarterly to receive updates and assess need for any adjustments in the plan. The referenced feedback loop is provided to be used as resource for those discussions.

While no specific direction was provided at the June 25 session, Centralina recommends the designation of Council “champions” to be assigned to specific goals. This will enable the City staff to conduct monthly “check-ins” with the Champions to help guide goal implementation.

In order to optimize the time of elected officials and staff it is recommended that the “Balanced Decision Process” guide the Council and staff on selection of issues and processing of information required for decision-making (see Exhibit B).

At the end of the planning session it was determined that Centralina would work with Lincolnton City staff to prepare a proposed plan for implementation of the aforementioned top priorities. Once drafted, the proposed implementation plan would be reviewed with City Council.

On behalf of Centralina, thank you very much for allowing us to facilitate the City of Lincolnton 2015 Strategic Planning Process. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Emily Parker, Senior Planner, Centralina COG

Attachments: *Comments from June 2 Open House; Balanced Decision-Making Process*

City of Lincolnton Open House Feedback Form Responses

1. What questions, comments or concerns do you have about the information presented?

Quality of Information Presented

- Everything was presented clearly*****
- Very informative****
- Everyone was pleasant and well-informed**
- Lots of good information*, particularly the “informatics and stats for all depts.”
- Very well done*
- “I was very pleased with information that we received.”
- “The information is good. I think the city should work on a better way to advertise the information. Social media would be a great start.”
- “The challenges presented from each department were clear and numerous and as a proud citizen, I want to be a part of changes to address these challenges”
- Learned a lot of things I did not previously know.
- “Everyone was so enthused about their departments, and we got lots of insights on how things mesh together.”
- “All presenters were very knowledgeable and helpful with any/all questions we had.”
- “There’s not much of an opportunity for citizens to put forward new ideas – need a brainstorming session – not just a planned presentation.”
- Enlightening.
- Still trying to get a better idea of how city and county resources work together.
- Would like to see each dept’s goals for the year and things that might help their dept.

Public Outreach

- “No questions. Glad to see the City of Lincolnton reach out to the public. Too many people take city services for granted.”
- A start in increasing line of communication between community and government.
- “Nice to meet the people [who are] behind the scenes.”
- “It was good to meet people who are responsible for making decisions.”
- “I only have good for each of these departments. I truly appreciate each of you and am grateful for ...you’ve made my life and the life of my family better. Thank you.”

Downtown

- Will support property tax increase if downtown has better food and beverage choice, music venues, breweries*
- Would like to know more about downtown retail and other businesses and how to increase businesses
- Downtown group needs to disband or help more of Lincolnton
- Amount of grant money provided to improve downtown
- Keep downtown looking good and hopefully as the economy fully recovers the vacant stores will become busy stores

Questions

- Where is funding for parks and rec from? Any new parks in the future?
- “As a sole proprietor, why isn’t there more financial help from them city in the form of whole (vs. half) grants?”
- Why are grants for businesses only? Why not non-profits?
- What are we doing to attract business to downtown?
- “Why waste money on old ____ building when people in Lincolnnton have no place to work and more people already depending on the government for help?”
- “What is being done to promote business owners and life downtown?”

Other Comments

- Build more Rail Trail
- Not enough parking
- More soccer facilities for the increased youth participation
- Lack of funding for needs (tree trimming from power lines, etc).
- Police department main lobby needs people friendly update.

DRAFT

2. What do you think are the main CHALLENGES facing the City of Lincoln?

Downtown & Economic Development

- Making downtown more livable
- Development of downtown
- More retail and restaurants downtown to draw people in*
- Making town more attractive with shops, restaurants, homes*
- Zoning changes downtown to only allow entrepreneurs (retail or residential) to occupy these facilities – creates a larger tax base.
- More businesses downtown
- Vibrant downtown
- Bringing life back to downtown
- Downtown development
- Keeping downtown buildings occupied
- The new idea of further development of apartments and complexes will further entice development of the downtown area.
- Lack of parking downtown.
- “The downtown is drying up. It isn’t going to make it without a substantial public (city) investment. Other area towns and cities have had similar problems. Charlotte has spent multi-millions on its downtown. Gastonia built a Conference Center. Mount Holly passed a bond issue. We’re playing the game at a big disadvantage. We need a bond vote with money earmarked for infrastructure and other improvements. I would consider completion of a pottery center/history museum at the old mill.”
- Economic development* – no more fast food or dollar stores*
- Attracting businesses
- Attracting new industry to replace lost textile and furniture jobs
- Vacant property on Main Street (filling vacancies)*
- “I believe LEDA and the new leadership along with DDA will work together with all of you to bring great things for Lincoln County”
- Get more shops uptown and still keep small town appeal.
- Funding to get these facilities/spaces up to code so businesses can move in without restriction
- Maintaining a vibrant economy
- More businesses and restaurants
- Need manufacturing/industry*

Funds/Revenue/Jobs

- (Good) Jobs*** “10 places I worked for 62 years are no longer here. Plans for today, the Bible said, tomorrow will take care of itself.”
- Taxes**
- Replacing funds we sold water for to Mohican Mills***
- Loss of revenue
- Money****/lacking of funding***/debt*
- Need other ways to produce revenue, to help keep taxes as low as possible
- “As neighborhoods age, property values decline and so do tax revenues.”

- “City needs to build funding mechanisms to partner with the private sector willing to invest in development within the city to bring a livable, vibrant area(s) where people want to visit and live.”
- Need more reliable funding stream.
- Keeping money in Lincoln.
- Continuing to keep tax rate low

Infrastructure and Utilities

- Infrastructure (water, sewer, electrical, roads) – old*****
- Water* – need to find a way to keep the cost of water down
- Transit program for the city
- Do away with gas
- Utility bill too high**
- Roads
- Improvements to trail.
- Public transportation

Leadership

- Reluctance to change.
- “Stale ideas, fear of innovation, fear of offending the churches, stagnant, lame leadership with old white men!”

Youth Issues

- “How can we expect our young people to stay out of trouble when we provide NOTHING for them to do, no place they can be and no ability to feel ownership of their town? We harass them “loitering” pushing them into hiding. This promotes vandalism and drug use amongst youth.”
- More things for youth to do (e.g., bowling).
- Need more activities for youth.
- Youth preparation for leadership. Low expectations of students in schools.
- “All walks of life in Lincoln need to be pressing their youth forward.”
- “Lincoln needs to be more aware of the children in our community. Teach them safety, sexual abuse, and bullying in the city.”
- Need more educational programs for children after school.

Managing Growth & Housing

- Managing growth in a way to maintain small town charm.
- Livability yet with enough development to encourage young people remain in the City.
- Attracting new residents.
- Building Codes (need to be more relaxed).
- Zoning challenges.
- Growth in the population versus housing.
- Increase one bedroom housing options especially for people with disabilities

Other Comments

- Drugs* and gangs
- Crime

- Speed control
- Lack of Hospice House.
- Moral and spiritual health of citizens
- Lack of community- and family-based bonding
- Need “local” based hospital
- Planting trees
- Parking
- Transportation
- Retail
- Recreation
- Court house activity a failure, embarrassment!
- Collaboration with County on water system
- Poverty (is growing amid wealthy areas)
- Race relations should be addressed. Name a park after Hiram _____ - first black person in Congress.
- Make City well known for something (e.g., pottery, furniture); encourage development of these.
- Increasing the higher educated positions within the city and county
- Provide services with limited resources
- New Police Dept
- New/better social events
- Creating a good balance between the economy/jobs and quality of life.
- Lincoln needs to follow the lead of larger cities.
- Development of a more positive and energetic approach to promoting our city.

3. What do you think are the most significant ACHIEVEMENTS made by the City of Lincolnton? Which achievements are you most proud of?

Downtown & Downtown Events

Downtown revitalization**

Downtown growth and beautification.

"I have been here for 2 years and think there needs to be more done for me to answer the question. I really like Lincolnton better back in the 80s. Bring cruising back. It will help the economy."

New commercial development proposed for downtown Lincolnton in conjunction with Willie Heafner."

Harvest Moon Grille/new restaurants

Fausto's

Beautifying Main Street.

Park benches and 'Pots of Parade' are very attractive

Love all the downtown events**

Hog Happenin'*

Apple Festival

Alive After Five

City Services

Keeping services while losing revenue.

Staying viable in tough economic times.

Keeping your law enforcement and all departments educated and well trained.

It's very clean here. I like that yard waste is picked up and made into compost.

Trash and recycling improvements.

Electric bill mailing

Great services!

Perhaps some joint development of more parking spaces with city and county that will help both the county and city

Friendly people to work for the city. Prompt repairs to streets, etc.

Morale of employees

"The new 1st Federal Park would be #1. As for city employees, the continued seamless work in readying and cleaning up before and after events and the outstanding recovery by all departments after the 2013 flood."

Keeping our city safe.

Police and fire*** seem to have their act together – keeping costs down while furthering grants and technology

Police dept., fire dept., our city officials working together.

First responders – punctuality

Fire Department

Rail Trail***** – "without a doubt the most significant achievement"

City parks***

Converting city park over to soccer fields

Community Services

- Support for Child Advocacy Center

- Lincoln Cultural Center**
- Citizens Center*
- Funding for Child Advocacy Center.
- Improvements at YMCA for adults and children
- Being involved in the tight knit community*
- Support for Lincoln Wellness Center on McBee Street

Housing

- Public housing apartments are “extremely well maintained.” Kudos to Mike Owens.
- Support for low income housing
- Place for homeless people to live.

Other Comments

“Can we do nothing about the man who owns the _____ business and puts his terrible and hateful messages around town to harass citizens? I don’t want people thinking of his hatefulness, bigotry, and ignorance when they think of Lincolnton.”

The city’s small businesses.

Efforts towards growth in the city

New Ingles, Big Lots, and future Ross Industrial Park.

Well performing school system.

Development of Highland Drive Park and Recreation services

Support for Oaklawn revitalization*

Support of water agreement

Support for resource officer program

“Nothing recently : (“

Like the offerings that young families have for entertainment.

“Not much happening here. I go out of town instead of spending my \$ here. Not much good to say, sorry.”

“Not sure if there are any great achievements except we the people have been told ABC stores and the lottery are to answer all our problems. But where does the money?”

“The city is doing great for the small city it is. Sidewalks, pottery fixtures, clean streets.”

4. Think about Lincoln in 10 years. What would be the most important change that would make you proud of your community?

Youth and Families

More programs for at risk youth and geriatric.

Even greater family orientation

Increasing the activities available for young families

“Could all Lincoln churches become involved with the city in developing some types of recreational programs for after school hours, especially for youth up to the age of 16 or those unable to get a driver’s license.”

Downtown & Business

Bring life (shopping, good restaurants, music, art, breweries, bowling, skating rink, etc.)/development to downtown*****

“To see more homes, townhomes, apartments downtown which will bring more businesses downtown.”

Revitalize downtown

Hope to see downtown grow

Downtown business development and community involvement

“Bring events to downtown that cater to all lifestyles not just “bikers.” Hog Happenin’ is great but Lincoln needs much more”*

Paint the buildings downtown

Structuring downtown so citizens have an opportunity to interact.

Have something downtown for young people.

“I love this town. I want to see the downtown full of retail, with service businesses out from Main Street.”

Cleaning up downtown*

“A city where people enjoy visiting on a regular basis because of the shops and businesses that are interconnected and walkable.”

A better sense of community by having more Mom & Pop businesses

Business development – make incentives

Expansion*/bringing in more businesses/shopping centers

Retail staying open after dark

Keep working on Main Street aesthetics

Jobs

“I believe creating a small (village) atmosphere with jobs created by small businesses, arts, restaurants and cultural development is where Lincoln’s future is.”

Higher paying manufacturing jobs

More jobs to keep our people here and spending here*

Good paying meaningful jobs.

More job creation. We need to invest our growth in technology jobs.

Green Space & Recreation

Extend walking trails

Dog park

More public places for use
 Centrally located parks and green space
 Expand greenways, improve street lighting, industrial development
 Safe parks and play spaces for children
 Landscaping, greenscaping, street trees (evergreens), parks, trails

Infrastructure

Integrate more technology
 Bury cables on Main Street past old McDonald's.
 Utility infrastructure** (streets, sidewalks, etc.)
 Buy more utility lines
 A bus transit system for Lincoln County so you can get around town, down to Denver, over in the western part, etc to go to different events.
 More parking.
 Filling empty, older buildings*/eye sores
 Improve historical buildings

Housing

Hope that new condo project will jumpstart growth
 Infill housing – very popular in larger towns like Greenville, SC
 Increased options for housing and transportation resources that promote sense of community.
 Providing affordable housing to all and enhancing quality of life.

City Services

Resource officers in all schools
 Continued investment in city employees
 New Police Dept
 Library
 A new court house and police facility combined.
 Devote an entire unit and funding at the police dept to catching sex offenders.

Other Comments

Maintain historic properties and neighborhoods.
 Hotel or bed and breakfast.
 Efforts to have better communication between the races.
 Sexual assault team with county, hospital, CAC, _____ House, etc.
 Good economy.
 Continued diversity and events.
 Always keep God first.
 Continued growth.
 Local hospital, Walmart replacement/competition. Electric cars focus/incentives and recommendations.
 Bulldozing east Main from court house to General Blvd.
 "City needs to offer more incentives to retail and commercial entities to locate in the City limits."
 "Platt out a new industrial park to recruit new industry. Most of the industry located in Lincoln County is now located outside the City limits. New industry incentives would be needed to lure industry to inside the city limits."

Less crime.
Further growth.

5. What comments or questions do you have about this Open House, communications, or in general?

Quality of Information Presented (process)

- “Great preparation went into the Open House. Thanks for reaching out to the citizens of Lincoln.”
- Great ideas/info***** “Lot of information that we didn’t know.”
- Great job!**** conveying all facets of the city.
- “Over all very good, but more needs to be spent on what efforts, and plans are being spent on the future – what’s going to attract new and keep existing citizens.”
- “Great format. City staff were very helpful and knowledgeable about city functions, goals and vision.”
- Excellent!*
- Well done.
- “It was perfect. Thank you!”
- “I loved it! Please have some follow up.”*
- Very good of the city to do this.

Community-building (people)

- Enjoyed open house**, learned how the City works, and talking with people in our community.
- “I think this was a wonderful gathering. It is the start of this community coming together to provide feedback and support. Our City is wonderful, we have room to be a vibrant community.”
- “Wonderful idea to get the community together to talk. I would suggest better identification for the community leaders.”
- “I enjoyed talking with everyone.”
- “People were friendly and anxious to share their part of the city.”
- Great project, great people, great citizen turnout
- “Very nice to be able to communicate with each department and get explanations on how and why departments operate the way they do.”
- “This open house was great and we are grateful for the opportunity to have met with the city officials.”

Other Comments

- “If juice had been served, I could have gone longer. It’s a hungry time of day.”
- “I appreciate the phone call made to our church inviting us. How can our churches be more involved and help in what the city is doing and vice versa?”
- Communications between utilities and customers related to outages
- Perhaps costs of some of these programs could be jointly funded with church aid and city funds.
- Fining residents that have non-running vehicles in their yards.
- I really think that the city needs to focus on the kids. Kids are the future. There is nothing for them to do. Bring back cruising, it created jobs.
- Term limits for all political offices.

6. Please list any additional Priorities that are not already included on the Community Priorities list.

- 321 exits needs improvements, maybe City can maintain – they look bad. Maybe start an adopt a spot to improve with volunteers.
- Abandoned mills – tear them down and use land for new housing.
- Develop downtown.
- Upgrading police HQ.
- Bring in national bluegrass, Americana, country music acts to Lincolnton.
- How to attract more businesses to come to Lincolnton.
- Would like to have Chick-fil-a.
- All community members coming together to bring change for all people of Lincolnton.
- Need more activities for young people to do.
- The shopping center where Big Lots used to be.
- Bigger library.
- Making DDA focus on the entire city not just downtown.
- Mentor program for youth.
- Better support from community with churches.
- Stricter enforcement of overgrown lots, run down homes, and junk cars.
- More financing for our schools needs to be a top priority.
- Consideration of partnership opportunities for east and west for better properties.
- They should not have listed restaurants and small businesses in the same group.
- “Organize an honorary meeting for law enforcement personnel. Where would we be without them. While they are being thrown under the bus nationwide, we should do something to show our appreciation.”
- Making citizens better aware of events by having a central place to access information.
- Solid waste schedule online?

THE **Balanced Decision Process**

Effective and enduring public policy decisions are the result of a disciplined process that promotes vigorous and transparent debate of complex issues.

A BALANCED APPROACH TO DECISION-MAKING

Elected officials are responsible for a full spectrum of decisions – some routine and ministerial – but others that are complex and often controversial. The Balanced Decision Process model provides an outline that can be used for these complex decisions. This model requires rigorous application of process discipline that separates decision-making for complex issues into three distinct elements:

- 1. Process discussion** – where agreement is reached on the process and information that will be necessary to assure high quality and timely discussion of policy issues.
- 2. Policy discussion** – where information is reviewed, analyzed and discussed with the goal of clarifying questions and information prior to a final decision action. The policy discussion includes establishing and refining policy goals and a thorough discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the options and policy implications of each.
- 3. Decision discussion** – where, with all the information available, final agreement is reached on the policy after a thorough and vigorous debate based on policy information and data gathered as part of the process.



This model recognizes and enhances the need for vigorous debate of policy issues. Public confidence in decisions made by policymakers is strengthened when the public sees that an open discussion and debate has occurred. Building public support requires clear disclosure of advantages and disadvantages of issues under discussion.

By mapping out the process of decision-making into clear and definable steps, complex decisions can be tackled in doable, bite-sized decisions, retaining agreement among policymakers along the way. Separating elements of the decision-making process allows for substantive and focused discussions at each of the critical steps.

Finally, delaying taking positions on policy questions until all the facts are in permits a more open policy discussion and improves the quality of the final policy decision. The process also respects the need for various levels of public participation in different types of decisions. Some decision-making that involves difficult issues with important fiscal or other impacts on residents may benefit from public input at more than one stage in the process.



Process Discussion Phase

STEP	DESCRIPTION	KEY QUESTIONS	ASSIGNMENT
ONE Identify decision components and information requirements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify “bite-sized” decision points. 2. Identify questions to be answered as part of each decision point and what information and data is needed to respond to questions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are appropriate decision points? 2. What questions need to be answered to make a decision? 3. What information and data is needed to respond to questions? 	Elected Officials
TWO Develop timeline/draft process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify timeline required to make final decision considering factors like project/issue demands, time required to prepare data and to conduct quality policy debates. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have we permitted sufficient time to gather and process information? 2. Do we have external requirements for decision timing (i.e. statutory deadlines, developer timelines, etc.)? 3. Will timing of public input be impacted by need to get data and information prior to scheduling public involvement? 	Staff
THREE Identify resource estimates and draft process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop estimates of time and cost to provide data and information requested by decision-makers. 2. Draft process. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can existing staff provide information? If so, what time will be required given existing workload? 2. If outside assistance is needed, are budgeted funds available? 	Staff
FOUR Review and approve process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An initial process identifying component decisions, decision questions, data/information to be provided, resources (cost and time) required to provide data/information and a timeline is prepared for review, refinement and final approval as refined by policymakers. 2. Establish agreement on policy and decision discussion. 3. Process may be amended by policymakers from time to time as needed to reflect current issues. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can policymakers agree on process as outlined? 2. What rules will apply to policy discussions (time of discussion, participation¹, will consensus rules apply or simple majority)? 	Elected Officials

Policy Discussion Phase

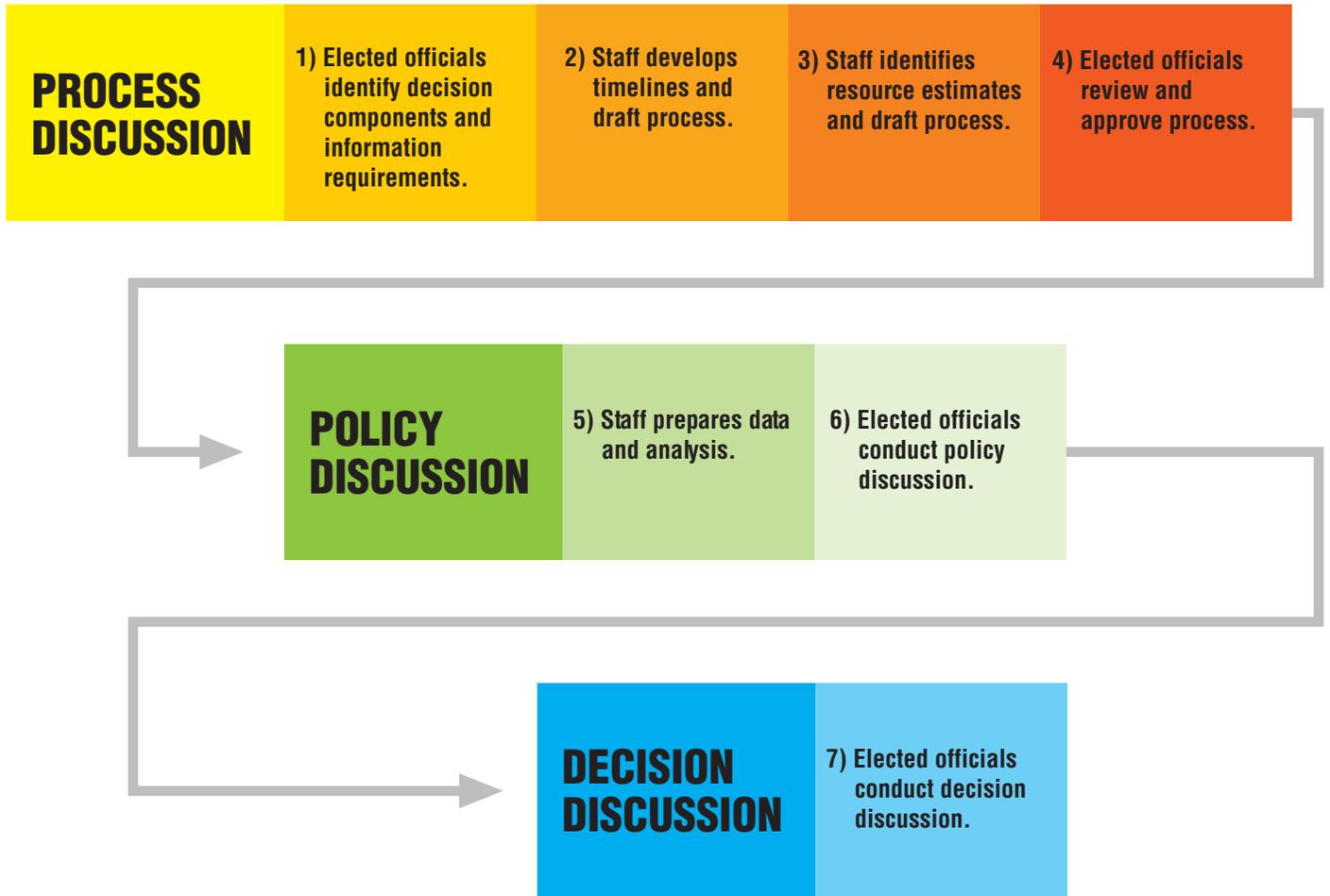
STEP	DESCRIPTION	KEY QUESTIONS	ASSIGNMENT
FIVE Prepare data and analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct studies, gather data and prepare information requested. 2. Prepare “unvarnished” analysis of advantages and disadvantages of various decision options. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do studies, data, and information respond to decision questions? 2. If not, what additional information should be provided? 3. Is analysis balanced and does it fully disclose advantages and disadvantages? 	Staff
SIX Conduct policy discussions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Policy discussions occur as scheduled and in accord with agreed upon rules. 2. Policy discussions focus on vigorous debate of advantages and disadvantages of various options and not on support of particular positions. Policy goals are established and refined. 3. Any need for additional information/data as appropriate is identified. 4. No policy decisions made at meeting. (Note this meeting may need to be repeated if additional information or data is determined to be needed). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are we following rules as agreed upon? 2. After discussion have we determined that additional data or information is needed? 3. Are we ready to conduct a decision discussion at subsequent meeting? 4. Have we clearly identified the advantages and disadvantages of decision issues? 	Elected Officials

Decision Discussion Phase

STEP	DESCRIPTION	KEY QUESTIONS	ASSIGNMENT
SEVEN Conduct decision discussion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decision discussion occurs as scheduled and in accord with agreed upon rules. 2. Positions and basis of positions are debated with focus on developing consensus. 3. Advantages and disadvantages of various positions clearly disclosed and discussed. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have we clearly and openly discussed the critical elements to this decision? 2. Have we clearly discussed and disclosed the advantages and disadvantages of issues? 	Elected Officials

¹ For example will public be invited to speak at each policy and decision discussion? Will policy and decision discussion be unregulated, time limits, etc.?

Balanced Decision Process



*Consistent application
of a disciplined decision-making process
promotes not only good public policy
but public trust as well.*

Process Rules and Recommendations

- 1.** The key to success of this model is applying discipline to each step of the process. This means that policymakers need to agree to the process and agree to “self-enforce” the rules as agreed upon at each step. Proceeding from one step to the next without agreement on accomplishment of that step will lead to failure.
- 2.** Process, policy, and decision discussion should be clearly separated. This separation should be noted on agendas and is most effective if separated by date. This means if a discussion is scheduled for process development or review, discussion on the substantive policy should be ruled out of order.
- 3.** Regularly scheduling time to review, update and adjust the process and the timeline is recommended.
- 4.** It is often useful to provide regular informational updates on projects (including community feedback) as part of the agenda for regular elected board meetings. However, policy or decision discussions should not occur at the same time that the updates are provided. This will avoid confusion or mixing of those different elements.
- 5.** Most major policy decisions can and should be broken into “bite-sized” chunks, and separate policy decision discussions should be scheduled accordingly. As an example, a decision regarding redevelopment can include separate (but clearly related) decisions on goals, target redevelopment area, type of new development desired, developer selection, how to communicate and involve the public in the process, developer concept review, terms of development agreement, project timing, etc.
- 6.** Reaching agreement on how to most effectively debate issues is critical. Some communities adopt guidelines ahead of meetings in order to assure that all of the questions, concerns, reasoning, and eventually, positions of the policymakers are heard in a respectful fashion. Establishing these guidelines ahead of the actual discussion is most effective.
- 7.** The traditional model of public involvement in decision-making is to communicate to the public after a decision is made. Typically the traditional model includes a focus on how the decision reflects the best interest of the community. The experience of a growing number of communities indicates that while communicating to the public after a decision is made is necessary, it is no longer sufficient to gain public support. Timely, high quality public feedback during the decision process is almost always required to assure a high quality decision. Preparing a communications plan to assure the public has adequate information prior to a decision is important, and periodic and timely public involvement is a key to success.





City of Lincolnton

2015 Strategic Planning Summary Report

Draft

Submitted by
Centralina Council of Governments
July 7, 2015



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Summary of Goal Rankings	3
Top Goals	3
Feedback Connection	4
Next Steps	6
<i>Exhibit A – Detailed Results from June 2, 2015 Public Engagement</i>	
<i>Exhibit B – Balanced Decision Making Process</i>	

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**City of Lincolnton
2015 Strategic Planning Summary Report**

Introduction

The City of Lincolnton has initiated a strategic planning process to respond to significant challenges and opportunities. The City specifically directed that their work be guided by strong public engagement. As a result, the City staff prepared materials to communicate the work of the City including chronology of significant achievements and changes, description of department responsibilities, achievement and future challenges facing the City.

On Tuesday June 2, 2015 a community public engagement was held at The Lentz Center. Detailed responses are provided in Exhibit A. A summary of the priorities identified at the Open House include:

On June 25, the City Council met to identify the 2015 strategic priorities. The results are shown below:

Goals	Total	Council	Staff
Improve Infrastructure	12	3	9
Employee Benefits	10	3	7
Downtown Development	9	4	5
Water Customers (increase)	3	1	2
Extension of Rail Trail/more trails/improve upkeep around trails/amenities/survey trails (determine who owns what)	3	2	1
Recreational Opportunities	3	1	2
More Sidewalks	2	1	1

Top Goals

Of the seven goals listed several were combined as noted:

1. Improve Infrastructure (including more sidewalks and trail maintenance)
 - ✓ Develop long term plan to maintain, improve and fund infrastructure.
 - ✓ Engage public to communicate plan, cost and funding options

2. Employee Benefits
 - ✓ Complete internal and external benefit surveys
 - ✓ Complete pay and classification study
 - ✓ Identify budget impacts and funding options

3. Downtown Development
 - ✓ Identify infrastructure needs including funding options
 - ✓ Assess potential development partners (business owners, property owners, banks)
 - ✓ Assess developer interest including barriers and opportunities
 - ✓ Identify potential development and redevelopment sites within downtown area
 - ✓ Identify potential high-demand uses

**City of Lincolnton
2015 Strategic Planning Summary Report**

4. Recreational Opportunities (including extension of Rail Trail, more trails, trail amenities)
- ✓ Assess current utilization
 - ✓ Conduct focus group discussion
 - ✓ Survey residents/users
 - ✓ Prepare options including costs, capital and operating cost options

Systems

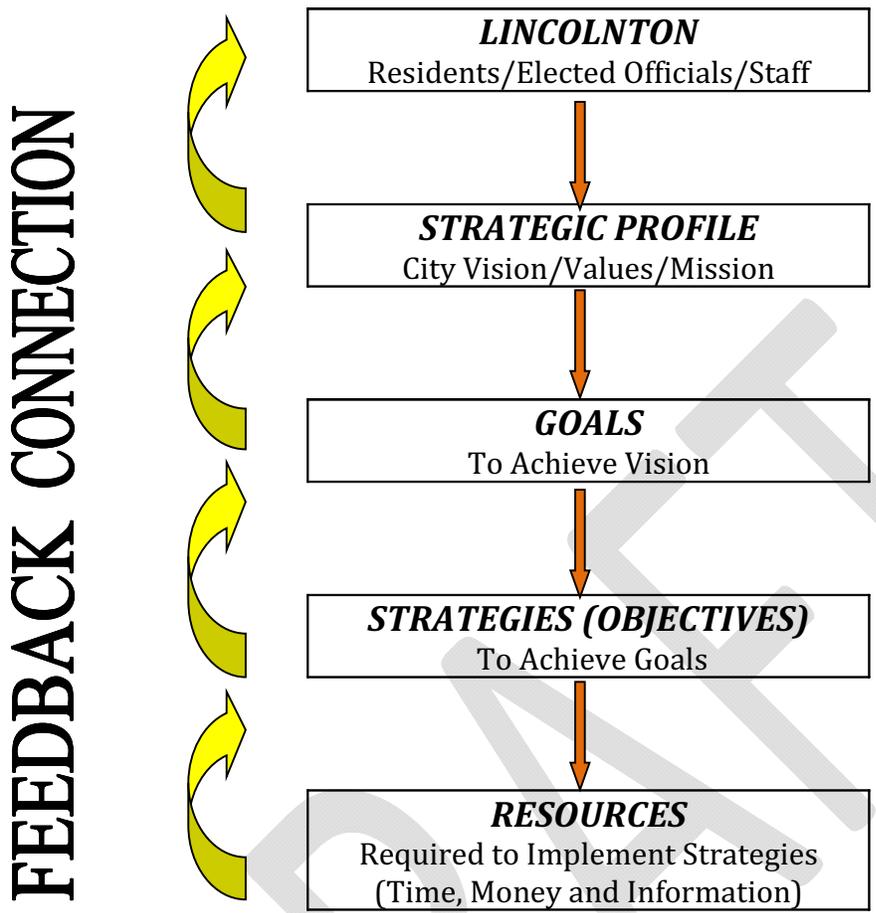
Having selected a manageable number of goals, it is appropriate that the City’s plan reflect development and maintenance of systems to accomplish those goals. Systems identified as imperative to success include a Strategic Plan, Financial Plan, and Engagement Plan.

Together, these systems will benefit the community by allowing for stakeholder involvement at the inception of any critical processes and allow for a common understanding of how critical decisions are being made.



Feedback Connection

The **engagement plan** (evidenced by the City’s effort to communicate and conduct the June 2 Open House) would establish feedback connection involving residents, elected officials, and City staff. The feedback connection would be used to generate the City’s Vision, Values, and Mission. These, in turn would be used to determine the goals for the City. The **strategic plan** then sets objectives to be accomplished to meet those goals. The **financial plan** would identify and map out the gathering and use of resources required to implement the strategies. All along, the engagement plan would be used to notify the public of progress being made on their behalf and to solicit feedback on the processes being put in place.



Strategic Planning Feedback Connection Checklist

The Strategic Planning Feedback Connection Checklist serves to tie the above elements together and to keep the various stakeholders involved focused on “**WHAT**” they are trying to accomplish and “**WHY**.”

Community

- Have we communicated a vision to the City?
- Do we have adequate methods to hear community needs and concerns?

Strategic Profile

- Is this the right vision/value for the City?
- What happens if we do not achieve this vision?

Goals

- How will these goals help achieve our Vision?
- Have we explored other goals that may better help achieve our Vision?
- Have we made an effort to communicate how our goals help achieve our Vision?
- Have we identified any alternate goals that will help achieve our Vision?
- Should we adjust our goals when there is a change in environment?

City of Lincolnton
2015 Strategic Planning Summary Report

Strategies (Objectives)

- Have we selected strategies that will best help achieve our goals?
- Have we considered alternative strategies?
- Are we progressing with the implementation of our strategies?
- Have we identified any alternate strategies that may help achieve our goals using less or more appropriate resources?
- How should we adjust our strategies when there is a lack of resources?

Resources

- Are we dedicating the required and appropriate resources to implement our strategy?
- Are there other resources required than first anticipated?
- Are there additional resources required than first anticipated?

Next Steps

The City Council provided clear direction regarding their intent for this strategic plan. The plan should be focused and action directed. This was not a plan that should sit on a shelf but rather one that will be used as a guide in allocating time and resources.

It is the stated intention of the Council to allocate time on regular Council agendas at least quarterly to receive updates and assess need for any adjustments in the plan. The referenced feedback loop is provided to be used as resource for those discussions.

While no specific direction was provided at the June 25 session, Centralina recommends the designation of Council “champions” to be assigned to specific goals. This will enable the City staff to conduct monthly “check-ins” with the Champions to help guide goal implementation.

In order to optimize the time of elected officials and staff it is recommended that the “Balanced Decision Process” guide the Council and staff on selection of issues and processing of information required for decision-making (see Exhibit B).

At the end of the planning session it was determined that Centralina would work with Lincolnton City staff to prepare a proposed plan for implementation of the aforementioned top priorities. Once drafted, the proposed implementation plan would be reviewed with City Council.

On behalf of Centralina, thank you very much for allowing us to facilitate the City of Lincolnton 2015 Strategic Planning Process. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Emily Parker, Senior Planner, Centralina COG

Attachments: *Comments from June 2 Open House; Balanced Decision-Making Process*

City of Lincolnton Open House Feedback Form Responses

1. What questions, comments or concerns do you have about the information presented?

Quality of Information Presented

- Everything was presented clearly*****
- Very informative****
- Everyone was pleasant and well-informed**
- Lots of good information*, particularly the “informatics and stats for all depts.”
- Very well done*
- “I was very pleased with information that we received.”
- “The information is good. I think the city should work on a better way to advertise the information. Social media would be a great start.”
- “The challenges presented from each department were clear and numerous and as a proud citizen, I want to be a part of changes to address these challenges”
- Learned a lot of things I did not previously know.
- “Everyone was so enthused about their departments, and we got lots of insights on how things mesh together.”
- “All presenters were very knowledgeable and helpful with any/all questions we had.”
- “There’s not much of an opportunity for citizens to put forward new ideas – need a brainstorming session – not just a planned presentation.”
- Enlightening.
- Still trying to get a better idea of how city and county resources work together.
- Would like to see each dept’s goals for the year and things that might help their dept.

Public Outreach

- “No questions. Glad to see the City of Lincolnton reach out to the public. Too many people take city services for granted.”
- A start in increasing line of communication between community and government.
- “Nice to meet the people [who are] behind the scenes.”
- “It was good to meet people who are responsible for making decisions.”
- “I only have good for each of these departments. I truly appreciate each of you and am grateful for ...you’ve made my life and the life of my family better. Thank you.”

Downtown

- Will support property tax increase if downtown has better food and beverage choice, music venues, breweries*
- Would like to know more about downtown retail and other businesses and how to increase businesses
- Downtown group needs to disband or help more of Lincolnton
- Amount of grant money provided to improve downtown
- Keep downtown looking good and hopefully as the economy fully recovers the vacant stores will become busy stores

Questions

- Where is funding for parks and rec from? Any new parks in the future?
- “As a sole proprietor, why isn’t there more financial help from them city in the form of whole (vs. half) grants?”
- Why are grants for businesses only? Why not non-profits?
- What are we doing to attract business to downtown?
- “Why waste money on old ____ building when people in Lincolnnton have no place to work and more people already depending on the government for help?”
- “What is being done to promote business owners and life downtown?”

Other Comments

- Build more Rail Trail
- Not enough parking
- More soccer facilities for the increased youth participation
- Lack of funding for needs (tree trimming from power lines, etc).
- Police department main lobby needs people friendly update.

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2. What do you think are the main CHALLENGES facing the City of Lincoln?

Downtown & Economic Development

- Making downtown more livable
- Development of downtown
- More retail and restaurants downtown to draw people in*
- Making town more attractive with shops, restaurants, homes*
- Zoning changes downtown to only allow entrepreneurs (retail or residential) to occupy these facilities – creates a larger tax base.
- More businesses downtown
- Vibrant downtown
- Bringing life back to downtown
- Downtown development
- Keeping downtown buildings occupied
- The new idea of further development of apartments and complexes will further entice development of the downtown area.
- Lack of parking downtown.
- “The downtown is drying up. It isn’t going to make it without a substantial public (city) investment. Other area towns and cities have had similar problems. Charlotte has spent multi-millions on its downtown. Gastonia built a Conference Center. Mount Holly passed a bond issue. We’re playing the game at a big disadvantage. We need a bond vote with money earmarked for infrastructure and other improvements. I would consider completion of a pottery center/history museum at the old mill.”
- Economic development* – no more fast food or dollar stores*
- Attracting businesses
- Attracting new industry to replace lost textile and furniture jobs
- Vacant property on Main Street (filling vacancies)*
- “I believe LEDA and the new leadership along with DDA will work together with all of you to bring great things for Lincoln County”
- Get more shops uptown and still keep small town appeal.
- Funding to get these facilities/spaces up to code so businesses can move in without restriction
- Maintaining a vibrant economy
- More businesses and restaurants
- Need manufacturing/industry*

Funds/Revenue/Jobs

- (Good) Jobs*** “10 places I worked for 62 years are no longer here. Plans for today, the Bible said, tomorrow will take care of itself.”
- Taxes**
- Replacing funds we sold water for to Mohican Mills***
- Loss of revenue
- Money****/lacking of funding***/debt*
- Need other ways to produce revenue, to help keep taxes as low as possible
- “As neighborhoods age, property values decline and so do tax revenues.”

- “City needs to build funding mechanisms to partner with the private sector willing to invest in development within the city to bring a livable, vibrant area(s) where people want to visit and live.”
- Need more reliable funding stream.
- Keeping money in Lincoln.
- Continuing to keep tax rate low

Infrastructure and Utilities

- Infrastructure (water, sewer, electrical, roads) – old*****
- Water* – need to find a way to keep the cost of water down
- Transit program for the city
- Do away with gas
- Utility bill too high**
- Roads
- Improvements to trail.
- Public transportation

Leadership

- Reluctance to change.
- “Stale ideas, fear of innovation, fear of offending the churches, stagnant, lame leadership with old white men!”

Youth Issues

- “How can we expect our young people to stay out of trouble when we provide NOTHING for them to do, no place they can be and no ability to feel ownership of their town? We harass them “loitering” pushing them into hiding. This promotes vandalism and drug use amongst youth.”
- More things for youth to do (e.g., bowling).
- Need more activities for youth.
- Youth preparation for leadership. Low expectations of students in schools.
- “All walks of life in Lincoln need to be pressing their youth forward.”
- “Lincoln needs to be more aware of the children in our community. Teach them safety, sexual abuse, and bullying in the city.”
- Need more educational programs for children after school.

Managing Growth & Housing

- Managing growth in a way to maintain small town charm.
- Livability yet with enough development to encourage young people remain in the City.
- Attracting new residents.
- Building Codes (need to be more relaxed).
- Zoning challenges.
- Growth in the population versus housing.
- Increase one bedroom housing options especially for people with disabilities

Other Comments

- Drugs* and gangs
- Crime

- Speed control
- Lack of Hospice House.
- Moral and spiritual health of citizens
- Lack of community- and family-based bonding
- Need “local” based hospital
- Planting trees
- Parking
- Transportation
- Retail
- Recreation
- Court house activity a failure, embarrassment!
- Collaboration with County on water system
- Poverty (is growing amid wealthy areas)
- Race relations should be addressed. Name a park after Hiram _____ - first black person in Congress.
- Make City well known for something (e.g., pottery, furniture); encourage development of these.
- Increasing the higher educated positions within the city and county
- Provide services with limited resources
- New Police Dept
- New/better social events
- Creating a good balance between the economy/jobs and quality of life.
- Lincoln needs to follow the lead of larger cities.
- Development of a more positive and energetic approach to promoting our city.

3. What do you think are the most significant ACHIEVEMENTS made by the City of Lincoln? Which achievements are you most proud of?

Downtown & Downtown Events

Downtown revitalization**

Downtown growth and beautification.

"I have been here for 2 years and think there needs to be more done for me to answer the question. I really like Lincoln better back in the 80s. Bring cruising back. It will help the economy."

New commercial development proposed for downtown Lincoln in conjunction with Willie Heafner."

Harvest Moon Grille/new restaurants

Fausto's

Beautifying Main Street.

Park benches and 'Pots of Parade' are very attractive

Love all the downtown events**

Hog Happenin'*

Apple Festival

Alive After Five

City Services

Keeping services while losing revenue.

Staying viable in tough economic times.

Keeping your law enforcement and all departments educated and well trained.

It's very clean here. I like that yard waste is picked up and made into compost.

Trash and recycling improvements.

Electric bill mailing

Great services!

Perhaps some joint development of more parking spaces with city and county that will help both the county and city

Friendly people to work for the city. Prompt repairs to streets, etc.

Morale of employees

"The new 1st Federal Park would be #1. As for city employees, the continued seamless work in readying and cleaning up before and after events and the outstanding recovery by all departments after the 2013 flood."

Keeping our city safe.

Police and fire*** seem to have their act together – keeping costs down while furthering grants and technology

Police dept., fire dept., our city officials working together.

First responders – punctuality

Fire Department

Rail Trail***** – "without a doubt the most significant achievement"

City parks***

Converting city park over to soccer fields

Community Services

- Support for Child Advocacy Center

- Lincoln Cultural Center**
- Citizens Center*
- Funding for Child Advocacy Center.
- Improvements at YMCA for adults and children
- Being involved in the tight knit community*
- Support for Lincoln Wellness Center on McBee Street

Housing

- Public housing apartments are “extremely well maintained.” Kudos to Mike Owens.
- Support for low income housing
- Place for homeless people to live.

Other Comments

“Can we do nothing about the man who owns the _____ business and puts his terrible and hateful messages around town to harass citizens? I don’t want people thinking of his hatefulness, bigotry, and ignorance when they think of Lincolnton.”

The city’s small businesses.

Efforts towards growth in the city

New Ingles, Big Lots, and future Ross Industrial Park.

Well performing school system.

Development of Highland Drive Park and Recreation services

Support for Oaklawn revitalization*

Support of water agreement

Support for resource officer program

“Nothing recently : (“

Like the offerings that young families have for entertainment.

“Not much happening here. I go out of town instead of spending my \$ here. Not much good to say, sorry.”

“Not sure if there are any great achievements except we the people have been told ABC stores and the lottery are to answer all our problems. But where does the money?”

“The city is doing great for the small city it is. Sidewalks, pottery fixtures, clean streets.”

4. Think about Lincoln in 10 years. What would be the most important change that would make you proud of your community?

Youth and Families

More programs for at risk youth and geriatric.

Even greater family orientation

Increasing the activities available for young families

“Could all Lincoln churches become involved with the city in developing some types of recreational programs for after school hours, especially for youth up to the age of 16 or those unable to get a driver’s license.”

Downtown & Business

Bring life (shopping, good restaurants, music, art, breweries, bowling, skating rink, etc.)/development to downtown*****

“To see more homes, townhomes, apartments downtown which will bring more businesses downtown.”

Revitalize downtown

Hope to see downtown grow

Downtown business development and community involvement

“Bring events to downtown that cater to all lifestyles not just “bikers.” Hog Happenin’ is great but Lincoln needs much more”*

Paint the buildings downtown

Structuring downtown so citizens have an opportunity to interact.

Have something downtown for young people.

“I love this town. I want to see the downtown full of retail, with service businesses out from Main Street.”

Cleaning up downtown*

“A city where people enjoy visiting on a regular basis because of the shops and businesses that are interconnected and walkable.”

A better sense of community by having more Mom & Pop businesses

Business development – make incentives

Expansion*/bringing in more businesses/shopping centers

Retail staying open after dark

Keep working on Main Street aesthetics

Jobs

“I believe creating a small (village) atmosphere with jobs created by small businesses, arts, restaurants and cultural development is where Lincoln’s future is.”

Higher paying manufacturing jobs

More jobs to keep our people here and spending here*

Good paying meaningful jobs.

More job creation. We need to invest our growth in technology jobs.

Green Space & Recreation

Extend walking trails

Dog park

More public places for use
 Centrally located parks and green space
 Expand greenways, improve street lighting, industrial development
 Safe parks and play spaces for children
 Landscaping, greenscaping, street trees (evergreens), parks, trails

Infrastructure

Integrate more technology
 Bury cables on Main Street past old McDonald's.
 Utility infrastructure** (streets, sidewalks, etc.)
 Buy more utility lines
 A bus transit system for Lincoln County so you can get around town, down to Denver, over in the western part, etc to go to different events.
 More parking.
 Filling empty, older buildings*/eye sores
 Improve historical buildings

Housing

Hope that new condo project will jumpstart growth
 Infill housing – very popular in larger towns like Greenville, SC
 Increased options for housing and transportation resources that promote sense of community.
 Providing affordable housing to all and enhancing quality of life.

City Services

Resource officers in all schools
 Continued investment in city employees
 New Police Dept
 Library
 A new court house and police facility combined.
 Devote an entire unit and funding at the police dept to catching sex offenders.

Other Comments

Maintain historic properties and neighborhoods.
 Hotel or bed and breakfast.
 Efforts to have better communication between the races.
 Sexual assault team with county, hospital, CAC, _____ House, etc.
 Good economy.
 Continued diversity and events.
 Always keep God first.
 Continued growth.
 Local hospital, Walmart replacement/competition. Electric cars focus/incentives and recommendations.
 Bulldozing east Main from court house to General Blvd.
 "City needs to offer more incentives to retail and commercial entities to locate in the City limits."
 "Platt out a new industrial park to recruit new industry. Most of the industry located in Lincoln County is now located outside the City limits. New industry incentives would be needed to lure industry to inside the city limits."

Less crime.
Further growth.

5. What comments or questions do you have about this Open House, communications, or in general?

Quality of Information Presented (process)

- “Great preparation went into the Open House. Thanks for reaching out to the citizens of Lincoln.”
- Great ideas/info***** “Lot of information that we didn’t know.”
- Great job!**** conveying all facets of the city.
- “Over all very good, but more needs to be spent on what efforts, and plans are being spent on the future – what’s going to attract new and keep existing citizens.”
- “Great format. City staff were very helpful and knowledgeable about city functions, goals and vision.”
- Excellent!*
- Well done.
- “It was perfect. Thank you!”
- “I loved it! Please have some follow up.”*
- Very good of the city to do this.

Community-building (people)

- Enjoyed open house**, learned how the City works, and talking with people in our community.
- “I think this was a wonderful gathering. It is the start of this community coming together to provide feedback and support. Our City is wonderful, we have room to be a vibrant community.”
- “Wonderful idea to get the community together to talk. I would suggest better identification for the community leaders.”
- “I enjoyed talking with everyone.”
- “People were friendly and anxious to share their part of the city.”
- Great project, great people, great citizen turnout
- “Very nice to be able to communicate with each department and get explanations on how and why departments operate the way they do.”
- “This open house was great and we are grateful for the opportunity to have met with the city officials.”

Other Comments

- “If juice had been served, I could have gone longer. It’s a hungry time of day.”
- “I appreciate the phone call made to our church inviting us. How can our churches be more involved and help in what the city is doing and vice versa?”
- Communications between utilities and customers related to outages
- Perhaps costs of some of these programs could be jointly funded with church aid and city funds.
- Fining residents that have non-running vehicles in their yards.
- I really think that the city needs to focus on the kids. Kids are the future. There is nothing for them to do. Bring back cruising, it created jobs.
- Term limits for all political offices.

6. Please list any additional Priorities that are not already included on the Community Priorities list.

- 321 exits needs improvements, maybe City can maintain – they look bad. Maybe start an adopt a spot to improve with volunteers.
- Abandoned mills – tear them down and use land for new housing.
- Develop downtown.
- Upgrading police HQ.
- Bring in national bluegrass, Americana, country music acts to Lincolnton.
- How to attract more businesses to come to Lincolnton.
- Would like to have Chick-fil-a.
- All community members coming together to bring change for all people of Lincolnton.
- Need more activities for young people to do.
- The shopping center where Big Lots used to be.
- Bigger library.
- Making DDA focus on the entire city not just downtown.
- Mentor program for youth.
- Better support from community with churches.
- Stricter enforcement of overgrown lots, run down homes, and junk cars.
- More financing for our schools needs to be a top priority.
- Consideration of partnership opportunities for east and west for better properties.
- They should not have listed restaurants and small businesses in the same group.
- “Organize an honorary meeting for law enforcement personnel. Where would we be without them. While they are being thrown under the bus nationwide, we should do something to show our appreciation.”
- Making citizens better aware of events by having a central place to access information.
- Solid waste schedule online?

THE **Balanced Decision Process**

Effective and enduring public policy decisions are the result of a disciplined process that promotes vigorous and transparent debate of complex issues.

A BALANCED APPROACH TO DECISION-MAKING

Elected officials are responsible for a full spectrum of decisions – some routine and ministerial – but others that are complex and often controversial. The Balanced Decision Process model provides an outline that can be used for these complex decisions. This model requires rigorous application of process discipline that separates decision-making for complex issues into three distinct elements:

- 1. Process discussion** – where agreement is reached on the process and information that will be necessary to assure high quality and timely discussion of policy issues.
- 2. Policy discussion** – where information is reviewed, analyzed and discussed with the goal of clarifying questions and information prior to a final decision action. The policy discussion includes establishing and refining policy goals and a thorough discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the options and policy implications of each.
- 3. Decision discussion** – where, with all the information available, final agreement is reached on the policy after a thorough and vigorous debate based on policy information and data gathered as part of the process.



This model recognizes and enhances the need for vigorous debate of policy issues. Public confidence in decisions made by policymakers is strengthened when the public sees that an open discussion and debate has occurred. Building public support requires clear disclosure of advantages and disadvantages of issues under discussion.

By mapping out the process of decision-making into clear and definable steps, complex decisions can be tackled in doable, bite-sized decisions, retaining agreement among policymakers along the way. Separating elements of the decision-making process allows for substantive and focused discussions at each of the critical steps.

Finally, delaying taking positions on policy questions until all the facts are in permits a more open policy discussion and improves the quality of the final policy decision. The process also respects the need for various levels of public participation in different types of decisions. Some decision-making that involves difficult issues with important fiscal or other impacts on residents may benefit from public input at more than one stage in the process.



Process Discussion Phase

STEP	DESCRIPTION	KEY QUESTIONS	ASSIGNMENT
ONE Identify decision components and information requirements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify “bite-sized” decision points. 2. Identify questions to be answered as part of each decision point and what information and data is needed to respond to questions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are appropriate decision points? 2. What questions need to be answered to make a decision? 3. What information and data is needed to respond to questions? 	Elected Officials
TWO Develop timeline/draft process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify timeline required to make final decision considering factors like project/issue demands, time required to prepare data and to conduct quality policy debates. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have we permitted sufficient time to gather and process information? 2. Do we have external requirements for decision timing (i.e. statutory deadlines, developer timelines, etc.)? 3. Will timing of public input be impacted by need to get data and information prior to scheduling public involvement? 	Staff
THREE Identify resource estimates and draft process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop estimates of time and cost to provide data and information requested by decision-makers. 2. Draft process. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can existing staff provide information? If so, what time will be required given existing workload? 2. If outside assistance is needed, are budgeted funds available? 	Staff
FOUR Review and approve process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An initial process identifying component decisions, decision questions, data/information to be provided, resources (cost and time) required to provide data/information and a timeline is prepared for review, refinement and final approval as refined by policymakers. 2. Establish agreement on policy and decision discussion. 3. Process may be amended by policymakers from time to time as needed to reflect current issues. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can policymakers agree on process as outlined? 2. What rules will apply to policy discussions (time of discussion, participation¹, will consensus rules apply or simple majority)? 	Elected Officials

Policy Discussion Phase

STEP	DESCRIPTION	KEY QUESTIONS	ASSIGNMENT
FIVE Prepare data and analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct studies, gather data and prepare information requested. 2. Prepare “unvarnished” analysis of advantages and disadvantages of various decision options. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do studies, data, and information respond to decision questions? 2. If not, what additional information should be provided? 3. Is analysis balanced and does it fully disclose advantages and disadvantages? 	Staff
SIX Conduct policy discussions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Policy discussions occur as scheduled and in accord with agreed upon rules. 2. Policy discussions focus on vigorous debate of advantages and disadvantages of various options and not on support of particular positions. Policy goals are established and refined. 3. Any need for additional information/data as appropriate is identified. 4. No policy decisions made at meeting. (Note this meeting may need to be repeated if additional information or data is determined to be needed). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are we following rules as agreed upon? 2. After discussion have we determined that additional data or information is needed? 3. Are we ready to conduct a decision discussion at subsequent meeting? 4. Have we clearly identified the advantages and disadvantages of decision issues? 	Elected Officials

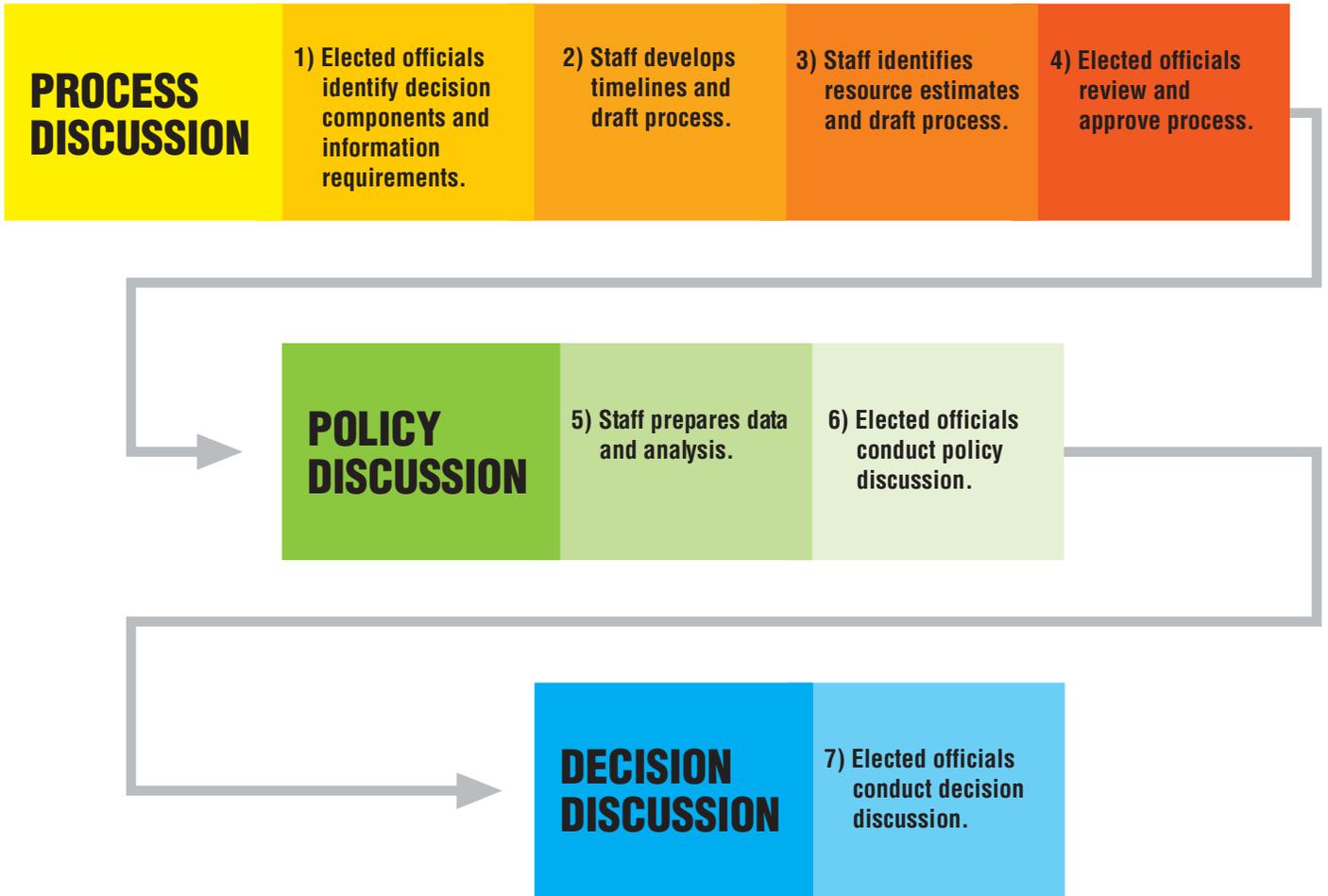
Decision Discussion Phase

STEP	DESCRIPTION	KEY QUESTIONS	ASSIGNMENT
SEVEN Conduct decision discussion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decision discussion occurs as scheduled and in accord with agreed upon rules. 2. Positions and basis of positions are debated with focus on developing consensus. 3. Advantages and disadvantages of various positions clearly disclosed and discussed. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have we clearly and openly discussed the critical elements to this decision? 2. Have we clearly discussed and disclosed the advantages and disadvantages of issues? 	Elected Officials

¹ For example will public be invited to speak at each policy and decision discussion? Will policy and decision discussion be unregulated, time limits, etc.?

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Balanced Decision Process



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*Consistent application
of a disciplined decision-making process
promotes not only good public policy
but public trust as well.*

Process Rules and Recommendations

- 1.** The key to success of this model is applying discipline to each step of the process. This means that policymakers need to agree to the process and agree to “self-enforce” the rules as agreed upon at each step. Proceeding from one step to the next without agreement on accomplishment of that step will lead to failure.
- 2.** Process, policy, and decision discussion should be clearly separated. This separation should be noted on agendas and is most effective if separated by date. This means if a discussion is scheduled for process development or review, discussion on the substantive policy should be ruled out of order.
- 3.** Regularly scheduling time to review, update and adjust the process and the timeline is recommended.
- 4.** It is often useful to provide regular informational updates on projects (including community feedback) as part of the agenda for regular elected board meetings. However, policy or decision discussions should not occur at the same time that the updates are provided. This will avoid confusion or mixing of those different elements.
- 5.** Most major policy decisions can and should be broken into “bite-sized” chunks, and separate policy decision discussions should be scheduled accordingly. As an example, a decision regarding redevelopment can include separate (but clearly related) decisions on goals, target redevelopment area, type of new development desired, developer selection, how to communicate and involve the public in the process, developer concept review, terms of development agreement, project timing, etc.
- 6.** Reaching agreement on how to most effectively debate issues is critical. Some communities adopt guidelines ahead of meetings in order to assure that all of the questions, concerns, reasoning, and eventually, positions of the policymakers are heard in a respectful fashion. Establishing these guidelines ahead of the actual discussion is most effective.
- 7.** The traditional model of public involvement in decision-making is to communicate to the public after a decision is made. Typically the traditional model includes a focus on how the decision reflects the best interest of the community. The experience of a growing number of communities indicates that while communicating to the public after a decision is made is necessary, it is no longer sufficient to gain public support. Timely, high quality public feedback during the decision process is almost always required to assure a high quality decision. Preparing a communications plan to assure the public has adequate information prior to a decision is important, and periodic and timely public involvement is a key to success.



2015 Lincoln Strategic Plan

Tasks	Assignment	Resources	Timeline
Goal 1 – Improve Infrastructure			
Tasks 1.1			
1.2			
1.3			
1.4 Incorporate findings into financial plan			
Goal 2 – Employee Benefits			
2.1 Conduct employee benefit survey			
2.2 Conduct employee survey regarding benefit options and preferences			
2.3 Develop and quantify options			
Goal 3 – Downtown Development			
3.1 Form a downtown development citizens committee			
3.2 Prepare background information/downtown marketing materials.			
3.3 Invite developers to downtown to assess opportunities and barriers to development			
3.4 Establish goals for downtown development			
3.5 Review cost to upgrade utilities to support development			
Goal 4 – Improve Recreation Opportunities			
4.1 Conduct			
4.2			
4.3			
4.4			
4.2.2			

