



CITY OF DURHAM | NORTH CAROLINA

Date: April 7, 2011

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager

Through: Wanda S. Page, Deputy City Manager
Bertha T. Johnson, Budget and Management Services Director
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Subject: Strategic Plan Adoption

Executive Summary

In November 2008, the Administration proposed developing a city-wide Strategic Plan to set direction for the future of the city and guide decision-making and resource allocation. After the decision was made to move forward, several months were spent benchmarking other cities that had successfully implemented a Strategic Plan. A comprehensive analysis was also conducted of all existing City plans. It was important to gain a better understanding of what commitments already existed and the status of those commitments.

The City was extremely fortunate to have the internal capacity to support a citywide strategic planning process, however, Zelos, a consultant with expertise in initiating strategic planning and a proven methodology was engaged to ensure success for the City of Durham. The consultant provided guidance for the project initiation, design phase, organizational analysis, development of the Strategic Plan, and assistance with the implementation plan. The consultant also provided the necessary tools to enable staff to develop future departmental plans that align with the citywide Strategic Plan. It is crucial that departments have the necessary tools to develop departmental plans that align with the citywide plan.

In creating the Strategic Plan, the City Council and staff took an in-depth look at the mission, vision, and core values of the organization. Consequently, the City Council approved a new mission and vision statement for the City. The new mission is “To provide quality services to make Durham a great place to live, work, and play”. The new vision is “Durham is the leading city in providing an excellent and sustainable quality of life”.

The City’s Strategic Plan outlines the goals, objectives, outcome measures and includes a list of specific initiatives and tasks the organization will focus on to accomplish the objectives. The initiatives were developed with input from the City Council, the key stakeholders, and the community. Since the community, the economy, and the organization are continually changing, this plan should be considered as a beginning, rather than an end.

Recommendation

The Administration recommends that City Council adopt the three-year strategic plan.

Background

In November 2008, the Administration proposed developing a city-wide Strategic Plan to set direction for the future of the city and guide decision-making and resource allocation. A comprehensive analysis was also conducted of all existing City plans. It was important to gain a better understanding of what commitments already existed and the status of those commitments. The Strategic Plan outlines the goals, objectives, outcome measures, and initiatives the organization will focus on over the next three years.

To position the project for success, meetings were scheduled in September 2009 with Zelos, the project manager and key staff to clarify expected project outcomes, establish roles and responsibilities and determine key stakeholder groups to be involved with the process. Five teams were then established: a Direction Setting team/Executive Team responsible for creating high-level direction; a Plan Development team responsible for drafting the strategic plan document; Department Directors responsible for reviewing the draft plan; the Core team responsible for supporting the entire process; and the Strategic Plan Liaisons responsible for communicating information about the process to employees.

In October 2009, the Strategic Planning process was officially launched at the annual Department Directors retreat. From October through December 2009, staff conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC) analysis to answer three critical questions. Where are we now? Where are we going? How are you we going to get there?

In February 2010, the City Council discussed the results of their SWOC survey at their annual retreat and identified the City's priorities, from their perspective. Staff also shared the revised Vision and Mission statements along with the consolidated goals based on input from City Council.

Between March and May 2010, the Plan Development team, with support and guidance from the Direction Setting team, spent over 60 hours drafting the strategic plan document.

A key component of the Strategic Planning process is the implementation phase which began in October 2010 and will continue for the foreseeable future. The City is implementing strategic planning to assist in guiding the organization towards a common mission and a set of goals. It is important to institutionalize planning as a process that is used to guide the organization in making key decisions and tracking progress towards achieving its goals. The Strategic Plan will be updated on an annual basis, during the budget process, with input provided by City Council, City management, and the community.

The Implementation team will be the driving force behind keeping the plan on the organization's front burner and used to guide critical decision-making and resource allocation beginning with the FY12 budget.

In March 2011, City Council unanimously supported the adoption of the Strategic Plan at their annual retreat and will be officially adopted at the April 18, 2011 City Council meeting.

Issues/Analysis

Based on extensive research, a Strategic Plan will:

- Enable City Council to set direction for the organization and establish priorities;
- Set the stage for budgeting, resource allocation, delivery of services, performance measurement, and evaluation;
- Provide standards of accountability for people, programs, and allocated resources;
- Develop better and more effective communication throughout the organization.

Alternatives

City Council can choose not to adopt the Strategic Plan and/or direct staff to continue refining the plan for consideration by City Council at a later date.

Financial Impact

N/A

SDBE Summary

N/A

Attachments

1. Strategic Plan