

A. Summary

1. Overview

The Community Facilities and Services Element brings together the goals, objectives and strategies for this area of responsibility into a single statement of the City's intentions over the planning period. Community facilities and services include the general provision of public services, City facilities, City police, fire and emergency medical services, Sandusky City Schools, local health care, urban forests and utility services.

In general the Element calls for improving the delivery of City services, the provision of new facilities where warranted and financially feasible, and improvement of living conditions in neighborhoods. The vision stresses safety, recreation, health care, cultural events, education, intergovernmental sharing of services and utilities.

2. Financial Considerations

The Element recognizes that financial considerations -- in terms of capital investments and operating costs -- are a significant factor in determining whether services can be enhanced and facilities constructed and operated. Several current initiatives, such as the Fire Master Plan, are evidence of the complex issues that must be addressed if the City is to enhance its ability to meet local needs.

The City Commission should revisit these issues when it considers the capital and operating budgets each year. The capital improvement process should be integrated with the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that the Plan is appropriately impacting the scheduling and implementation of capital investments. The City Manager with input from the Department Heads should provide the City Commission with appropriate recommendations that continue to implement the strategies recommended in this and other elements.

3. Partnerships

At the same time, the City must continue to work with local and regional partners to ensure mutual issues are effectively resolved and joint services are provided in a cost-effective manner. These partners include the Sandusky City Schools, Erie County Commissioners and related county agencies, adjacent township trustees, non-profits and the business community. Building bridges where none exist is crucial to ensuring Sandusky can continue to be a regional player and can jointly resolve issues of mutual interest.

4. Capital Improvement Planning

Capital improvement planning is one of the keys to implementing the Comprehensive Plan. Projects approved should respond to the strategies and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

5. Major Recommendations

The Community Facilities and Services Element recommends the following major actions:

- A. Increasing communication and cooperation among City, adjacent townships and Erie County.
- B. Resolving water and sewer issues with Erie County.
- C. Continuing to improve relations between City departments and the public.
- D. Focusing service delivery at the neighborhood level.
- E. Relocating the public service complex.
- F. Expanding the capital improvement process.

- G. Improving the fire stations.
- H. Encouraging health care facilities to remain in the City.
- I. Maintaining the City's urban forest.
- J. Continuing to improve the City's water and sanitary sewer systems and resolve stormwater issues.
- K. Improving the City's three underpasses.
- L. Implementing the west side grade separation.

B. Goal

Maintain and expand the current level of community facilities and services emphasizing safety, reliability, and affordability.

C. Objectives and Strategies

Strategies with an asterisk () have been completed since the creation of the 1999 Comprehensive Plan.*

1. Explore the Consolidation of Local Government Services

Consolidating local government services, whether provided by the City of Sandusky, Erie County or a neighboring jurisdiction, should be a continued priority within the region. The cost savings to taxpayers are an obvious benefit. At the same time, coordination and communication among local elected and appointed leaders should strengthen the region as it addresses mutual issues.

Strategies

A. Increasing communication and cooperation among the City, adjacent townships and Erie County.

The various units of local government in Erie County share common concerns and priorities, and at the same time are affected by regional issues or actions. Sandusky and Erie County are linked in various ways, including the provision of sanitary sewer and water services. As the region grows and develops, communication and cooperation will be increasingly important to solving joint problems and concerns.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: City Manager, Department Heads
Timeframe: Ongoing

B. Resolving water and sewer issues with Erie County.

See Objective 7.

C. Expanding partnerships with public and private service organizations.

The public identified a need to expand partnerships between the City and both public and private sector service organizations, including other units of government and non-profits. The City will maintain working relationships with public organizations, such as the Erie County Health Board and the Erie County Visitors and Convention Bureau. The City will continue to work with private organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce and GEM.

Implementation: City Manager, Department Heads
Timeframe: Ongoing

2. Enhance City Service Delivery

The City completed a strategic planning process in 1997 which is partially intended to improve delivery of City services. The public further identified this as a priority through the Community Forums held as part of the Comprehensive Plan process. Improving relations between the City and the public, and focusing service delivery at the neighborhood level are priority strategies in this area.

Strategies

A. Improving relations between City departments and public.

Public information outreach efforts should be increased to strengthen communication and provide positive information to residents. This could include expanding newsletter efforts to residents and issuing news releases, and public service announcements for local radio and cable television. Another action that should be considered is instituting customer-relations training for employees. City employees are Sandusky's first point of contact with the public and that experience should always be positive. Training should sensitize employees to the demanding issues of dealing with customers (the public) and resolving issues, as well as provide conflict management skills and stress management techniques.

Implementation: City Manager, Human Resources Director, Department Heads and Public Information Officer

Timeframe: Ongoing

B. Maintaining service delivery at the neighborhood level.

Current City services will be maintained and enhanced at the neighborhood level, including community-based policing, recreational services and nurse visitation at police stations. This should occur as part of the annual budget cycle.

Implementation: City Manager, Police Chief, and Recreation Director

Timeframe: Ongoing

3. Enhance City Facilities

Several initiatives were underway in 1997 and are expected to continue over the coming years to upgrade certain City facilities. The City is committed to constructing a new central fire station and improvements to the City's wastewater treatment plant are underway. As a result of an agreement with the County and the Sandusky City Schools, a new public service complex will be developed to replace facilities that have been acquired for a new Juvenile Justice Center. Additional priorities are recommended in this section, which reflect public comments received during the Plan's forums.

Strategies

A. Expanding the five-year capital improvement planning process.

The five-year capital improvement planning process will be expanded to better reflect the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. A formal process should be coordinated through the City Manager as part of implementation responsibilities of the Comprehensive Plan.

Implementation: City Manager, Department Heads

Timeframe: Mid Term

B. Expanding the water and sewer plants in line with current plans and studies.

See Objective 7

C. Improving fire station facilities.

The fire station facilities will be improved through modernization of the east and west stations.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: City Manager and Fire Chief
Timeframe: Mid Term

D. Improving the municipal office complex on Meigs Street.

The municipal office complex on Meigs Street will be improved. Appropriate actions included undertaking a space utilization study. Updating the facility is presently ongoing.

Implementation: City Manager and Community Development Director
Timeframe: Long Term

E. Improving park and recreational facilities.

See Parks and Recreation Element.

4. Enhance City Police, Fire and EMS Services

One of the basic sets of services provided to Sandusky residents, businesses and property owners is law enforcement, fire protection and emergency medical services. The City should continually strive to provide an outstanding service level within reasonable costs. The Fire Master Plan is an obviously important component in this effort, as well as community-oriented policing, enforcement of boating laws and continued partnership with Sandusky City Schools, such as expansion of DARE.

Strategies

A. Improving fire station facilities.

See Objective 3, Strategy D.

B. Maintaining and expanding the community-oriented policing program.

The Police Department will study the community-oriented policing program to determine whether it can be expanded into new neighborhoods.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: Police Chief
Timeframe: Ongoing

C. Maintaining anti-gang and anti-drug efforts.

Anti-gang and anti-drug efforts, such as Midnight Basketball and DARE, will be maintained.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: Police Chief
Timeframe: Ongoing

D. Continuing to enforce boating laws through the marine patrol.

Boating laws should continue to be enforced through marine patrol.

Implementation: Police Chief
Timeframe: Ongoing

E. Continuing mutual aid agreements with neighboring fire and police departments.

Mutual aid agreements with neighboring fire and police departments should be continued.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: Fire Chief and Police Chief
Timeframe: Ongoing

5. Support the Sandusky City Schools

The Sandusky City Schools are an outstanding regional resource that provide a sound education for Sandusky students. Ongoing efforts to improve the system are encouraged to ensure the District remains a local asset. The District is encouraged to continue its excellent track record of maintaining and improving its collection of historic school structures. These schools serve as focal points for the City's neighborhoods. Business partnerships should continue – especially with a focus on work force development. *See Economic Development Element for work force strategies.*

Strategies

A. Continuing to jointly work on related projects and programs, and ensuring a diverse and strong tax base.

The City should continue to support Sandusky City Schools by working jointly on related projects and programs. The City and District should continue to partner on providing park and recreational programs and facilities to both residents and school children. The City should consider working in a partnership capacity to facilitate such expansions. Neighborhood revitalization plans should address these needs as part of a larger planning effort.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: City Manager, Department Heads
Timeframe: Ongoing

B. Continuing to jointly work on economic development policy.

The City should continue to work with Sandusky City Schools Administration and School Board on economic development policy, especially relative to the enterprise zone program and tax abatements. The Tax Incentive Review Council and Enterprise Zone Negotiating Committee should continue their functions to actively encourage business expansion in the City.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: City Manager, Community Development Director, Downtown Development Manager, Assistant City Manager, and Sandusky School District
Timeframe: Ongoing

6. Enhance the Urban Forest

The City has long invested in its urban forest – particularly its outstanding street tree inventory and well landscaped downtown parks. This investment is highly valued by the community and should continue to be a priority in future capital and operating budgets.

Strategies

A. Maintaining and taking full advantage of the City's Tree City USA designation.

The City should maintain its Tree City USA designation by continuing to meet the national organization's standards. The City should also continue to maintain and plant street trees and landscaping in public parks and grounds, such as the City's outstanding public squares in the downtown.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: City Manager and Horticultural Services Superintendent
Timeframe: Ongoing

B. Requiring landscaping of commercial, office and industrial properties.

Landscaping on private property plays an important role in defining the City's urban forest. At the individual site level, landscaping is used for screening such things as parking lots, loading docks, trash receptacles and ground-mounted mechanical units. Most importantly, landscaping should be used as a screen between incompatible uses, particularly to protect residences from the visual and noise impacts that result from commercial and industrial operations.

As part of a major update of the Zoning Code, the City should consider increasing landscaping requirements for commercial and industrial properties. New standards should apply to all new development and major expansion of existing development. The standards should address the following items:

- 1) Continuous landscape plantings between off-street parking lots and public rights-of-way to screen vehicles.
- 2) A minimum amount of landscaped space within off-street parking lots (five to ten percent of the total area).
- 3) A 10-foot landscaped front yard setback for businesses along public rights-of-way, to include trees or new buildings placed at the building line without a front yard setback -- depending on the physical characteristics of the immediate area.
- 4) The screening of ground-mounted mechanical units with evergreen shrubs to a height of six feet and the screening or fencing of dumpsters.
- 5) A buffer and setback sliding scale intended as a transition between nonresidential and residential uses.
- 6) Perimeter screening along property lines, typically a medium-sized tree every 40 feet.
- 7) Landscaped entry features for industrial parks.

Policy Direction: Planning Commission
Implementation: Community Development Director and Chief Planner
Timeframe: Ongoing

7. Utilities

The utilities goal is to ensure that the provision of water, treatment of wastewater and management of stormwater will meet the demands of the community in a cost effective and environmentally sensitive manner.

Strategies

A. Expanding revenue stream for utilities.

State grants and loans will be evaluated by the City's Finance Director to determine their net impact on the City and should be aggressively pursued when favorable to the community. The City should consider expanding developer contributions, encouraging cooperative ventures and maximizing state grant and loan programs. Also, tap-in fees will be evaluated every two years by the Finance Director and should be tied to the Consumer Price Index.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: Finance Director, City Engineer, and City Manager
Time Frame: Ongoing

B. Continued implementation of the Big Island Water Works master plan.

The City anticipates the need to produce quantities of potable water greater than the current water plant's production capacity if Erie County remains a water customer. Currently Erie County is investigating to option of producing their own water to supply the areas that the City currently supplies outside the City limits. To date, the High Service Pump Project is complete as well as the Filter and Clearwell Improvement Project. The Electrical Improvement Project will be complete in 2006. Phase II of the Water Master Plan is on hold until the City and the County come to an agreement as to how much water, if any, the County plans to purchase in the future.

Policy Direction: City Commission

Implementation: City Engineer, City Manager, Utility Director and Finance Director

Time Frame: Mid Term

C. Identifying and addressing inadequacies in sewer systems, including separation of storm and sanitary sewers and improving waste water treatment plant to insure compliance with State and Federal regulations.

The City has identified the following findings and recommendations relative to wastewater management. Some issues include participation with Erie County.

- 1) The existing plant is capable of treating peak wet weather flows of 24 million gallons per day (mgd) through both primary and secondary treatment under current loading conditions. At this peak flow, the existing primary clarifiers are hydraulically limited and the secondary system is treatment limited.
- 2) Recommended improvements to the existing plant are required due to the age of equipment and to simplify operation. The total capital costs for these items is approximately 3.8 million.
- 3) Odor control facilities may be necessary in the near future to encourage business development in the plant's vicinity. Budgetary costs for controlling odors are estimated to be \$1.4 million.
- 4) Improvements to the primary systems are complete. Phase I improvements to the secondary system will commence, if applicable, upon the completion to the City/County agreement.
- 5) For 2010 conditions, plant expansion consists of one additional primary clarifier, aeration tank and secondary clarifier. Total costs for plant expansion is approximately \$7 million.
- 6) For 2040 conditions, no additional facilities are required, above those provided under 2010 conditions.
- 7) The possibility exists for increasing primary treatment capacity above 36 mgd after modifications to the existing clarifiers.
- 8) A disinfection general plan was prepared to satisfy the requirements of the current NPDES permit. Total capital costs for this alternative are approximately \$1.3 million.

The City and County are currently negotiating terms for future wastewater treatment. Three different scenarios have been developed to plan for possible alternative relationships between the two entities.

The three alternatives developed are as follows:

- 1) County withdrawal from the system over the next 12 years.

- 2) Continuation of county growth in the system until 2010, at which time all contributions would be removed.
- 3) Continue present arrangement with the County.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: City Engineer and City Manager
Time Frame: Ongoing

D. Coordinating stormwater management on a drainage area basis with surrounding communities.

The prevailing drainage pattern is from south to north and into Lake Erie. City areas receive stormwater runoff from areas to the south. Although rushing water is not a problem, the generally flat topography promotes standing water in City areas, some of which have marginal stormwater flow characteristics already.

Available corrective measures are somewhat limited because of the difficulty in constructing storm drains in an area with relatively high bedrock. Moreover, the City experiences wind-enhanced flooding episodes from the Lake and Bay, which are independent of precipitation amounts. In addition, a stormwater management policy will be developed for parking lots and new developments. The City will work with the County Engineer from Erie County to implement the permit requirements.

Policy Direction: City Commission
Implementation: City Engineer and County Engineer
Time Frame: Long Term