

City of Falcon Heights, Minnesota



2025 Goal Setting Process Report

April 28, 2025



Process

The City of Falcon Heights undertook a goal setting process in March of 2025. The process included the consultant having individual meetings with the Mayor, City Council, and City Administrator as well as a facilitated group session on Tuesday, March 4th. The session included:

- A fun interactive kick off activity.
- Presentations by the Mayor, Council, and City Administrator regarding their priorities and recent accomplishments.
- Discussion on and reaction to the priorities, goals, and strategies that came forward from the individual meetings with Consultant Bart Fischer, and presentations.
- Presentation of this summary report on the discussion and actionable steps to move the priorities, goals, and strategies forward.

Falcon Heights Officials

- Mayor Randy Gustafson
- Councilmember Melanie Leehy
- Councilmember Eric Meyer
- Councilmember Paula Mielke
- Councilmember Jim Wassenberg
- City Administrator Jack Linehan

Consultants

- Bart Fischer, DDA HR, Inc.
- Liza Donabauer, DDA HR, Inc.



Pictured left to right: Mayor Randy Gustafson, City Administrator Jack Linehan, Councilmember Paula Mielke, Councilmember Melanie Leehy, Councilmember Eric Meyer, Councilmember Jim Wassenberg

This report summarizes the discussions from the individual meetings and facilitated session. It is intended to be a working document that is fluid as it elicits continued discussion on the priorities, goals, strategies, projects, and action steps for Falcon Heights.

Priorities/Goals/Strategies/Action Steps

The following represents the priorities, goals, strategies, and action steps that came out of the group discussion during the goal setting session. This list is meant to be fluid and adaptable. It is recommended that the Falcon Heights Team regularly discuss target timelines and lead people/persons for each priority, goal, strategy, and action step. The following are listed in no particular order of importance.

Explore Opportunities to Provide Value Added Services for Residents

(Lead: City Administrator. Target Date: End of Quarter 3, 2025)

Purpose: To provide excellent service in the core service areas and in how those services are delivered.

Some service areas to consider are:

- Communications
- Plowing early and often
- Quality street sweeping
- A more accessible staff
- Outsource Falcon Heights' Public Works service



Continue to collaborate with St. Anthony Village (SAV) to ensure a smooth and transparent transition to policing services provided by the SAV Police Department (SAPD)

(Lead: Council and staff from both communities and the SAPD. Target Date: Ongoing)

Purpose: To provide excellent policing service and ensure the FH community are engaged in the successful transition of this vital public safety service.

- Engage the Community via Communication Channels
 - Use Facebook and other official City platforms to share information and invite open feedback from residents about policing services and the transition process.
- Receive Regular Updates from SAPD Leadership
 - Request the SAPD Chief or designated representative to attend City Council meetings regularly and present an annual report that includes measurable data and progress on the transition.
- Host Community Engagement Events
 - Organize "Coffee with a Cop" and similar informal gatherings to build relationships between residents and officers. Share outcomes and community feedback with the City Council.
- Hold Public Listening Sessions
 - Schedule listening sessions where community members can ask questions, share concerns, and provide input about policing services and public safety priorities.
- Ensure SAPD Presence at Community Functions
 - Invite an SAPD officer or representative (not limited to the Chief) to participate in community events, including the State Fair Task Force and various commission meetings.
- Support the Role of the Community Engagement Officer
 - Collaborate with SAPD to identify and promote opportunities for the Community Engagement Officer to interact with residents, once the position is in place.



Support the Enhancement and Development of City/Community Facilities

(Lead: City Administrator, City Engineer, Public Works Director. Target Date: End of 2025)

Purpose: To ensure continued momentum takes place on existing and planned projects.

- Complete Key Park Improvement Projects
 - Finalize the planned upgrades at Community Park.
 - Continue updates and improvements at Curtiss Field, Grove Park, and the Falcon Heights Elementary outdoor facilities, which are utilized as public park space.
- Develop a Comprehensive Parks and Facilities Master Plan
 - Hire a consultant to lead the creation of a citywide Master Plan that identifies priority projects, balances community wants vs. needs, and aligns funding sources with specific initiatives.
 - Incorporate community input to determine desired services and amenities.
 - Establish a framework to measure community need and demand.
- Expand Access and Amenities Across the City
 - Explore the addition of pocket park amenities in neighborhoods with limited access to current park space.
 - Improve and enhance walkability and pedestrian safety where feasible, especially in high-traffic or under-served areas.
- Improve Pedestrian Safety through Targeted Infrastructure
- Partner with Ramsey County to evaluate and implement traffic-calming measures, including reduced speed limits, pedestrian crossings, or bump-outs at the following intersections:
 - Hamline & Hoyt
 - Hoyt & Cleveland
 - Larpenteur & Fry
 - Larpenteur & Albert
 - Crawford & Arona
 - Falcon Crossing
- Evaluate and Plan for Future Facility Use
 - Conduct a space study of underused or non-essential City spaces to explore opportunities for reconfiguration or redevelopment.
 - Inventory all City-owned land and facilities to inform future investments and long-term planning.
 - Explore potential uses for the large lawn space in front of City Hall to serve evolving community needs.



Explore Additional and Creative Funding Options and Opportunities for Projects and Initiatives

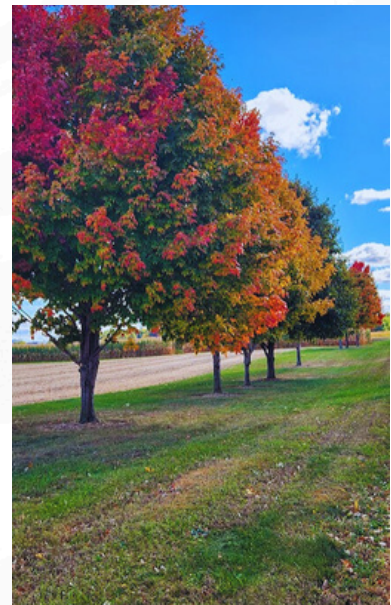
Purpose: To encourage City staff and Council to proactively identify funding mechanisms that reduce reliance on the tax levy and special assessments, thereby lessening the financial burden on community members.

- Explore funding opportunities related to City incurred costs due to the State Fair.
(Lead: City Administrator, State Fair Task Force (SFTF), Council Liaison to the SFTF. Target Date: Start of 2025 State Fair)
- Explore funding sources and opportunities for street improvement and maintenance projects in an effort to decrease the amount of street assessments or amount of property taxes spent on infrastructure.
(Lead: City Administrator, Finance Director, Assistant Finance Director, Public Works Director, City Engineer. Target Date: End of 2025)
- Prioritize the recommendations coming from the Environment Commission's Energy Action Plan and Climate Action Plan and seek funding sources to complete these actions.
(Lead: Community Development Coordinator, GreenCorp Member and EC Council Liaison. Target Date: End of 2025)

Develop a Multi-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

(Lead: City Administrator, City Engineer, Finance Director, Public Works Director.
Target Date: End of 2025 Quarter 3)

- Develop and enhance the multi-year Capital Improvement Plan.
- Develop a multi-year road and long-term pavement management program.





Continue to Explore Development and Re-Development Opportunities

(Lead: City Planner, City Administrator. Target Date: Ongoing)

Purpose: Determine how the City can assist with development and re-development.

- Economic development opportunities
 - Former dry-cleaning business on Larpenteur - “Get Pressed”
 - Currently zoned B-1. Explore and identify new zoning
 - Explore potential to purchase the property
 - Clean up the property utilizing MPCA grants
 - Evaluate future re-development for the site
 - U of M Les Bolstad Golf Course
 - Review existing plan as well as plan from U of M students/class
 - Re-engage with U of M liaison and assign a City liaison
 - Re-develop other areas and sites along the Larpenteur and Snelling corridors as opportunities present themselves.
- Business engagement and retention
 - Work with the local business community to encourage them to acknowledge they are in Falcon Heights and not St. Paul, Roseville, or other surrounding community.
- Update ordinance language to reflect both the needs of the City and business community





Falcon Heights Leadership to Continue to Improve on External Communications to Engage Residents and Community Partners

(Lead: Communications Coordinator, City Administrator, Other Staff. Target Date: Ongoing)

Purpose: To strengthen trust, transparency, and collaboration by enhancing the clarity, consistency, and accessibility of information shared with residents and community partners.

- Conduct a community survey on all City services. Benchmarking services such as policing, plowing, use of public spaces, preferred communications, other? Enhancements to the City's website.

(Lead: Administrative & Communications Coordinator, City Administrator. RFP underway. Target Date for new website: Quarter 1, 2026)

- Send push notifications and texts to city residents and business members. (e.g. public hearings, city events, street improvement project updates/notifications, street sweeping, plowing.
- Include an Economic Development column in the newsletter along with other City communications. Also advertise open commercial spaces through these channels.
- Communicate the Falcon Heights Story – why do residents choose to live here. This messaging can help to instill community pride and market the Community.
- Utilize a coordinated communications effort to continually tap into, engage, and involve the talent and energy within the community.
 - Embrace and acknowledge differences as part of the community culture. Weave this acknowledgement into the fabric of the community and as part of what the City of Falcon Heights as an organization does and is.
- Publish the multi-year CIP and Master Space Study information on the City's website and via other communication tools.
- Explore electronic signage at City Hall.





Support the Rental Community Within Falcon Heights

(Lead: City Administrator, City Planner, Administrative Services Director, Fire Marshal.
Target Date: End of Quarter 3, 2025)

Purpose: To ensure safe, and well-maintained rental housing by establishing ordinances that support tenants, promote responsible property management, and reflect the needs of both renters and landlords in the community.

- Strengthen City Rental Ordinances.
- Create/Enhance Rental Inspection & Licensing Program.

Continue and Enhance Strong Partnerships With Key Stakeholders

(Lead: All Staff and Council. Target Date: Ongoing)

- **Minnesota State Fair**
 - Collaborate with the State Fair to explore opportunities for keeping fairgrounds gates open more regularly to improve neighborhood walkability and connectivity.
- **University of Minnesota**
 - Officially thank the University for its support and contributions to Community Park.
 - Collaborate with the University to coordinate and market a list of U of M attractions located in Falcon Heights, such as the Bell Museum, The Raptor Center, and the Dairy Store.
 - Engage through interaction on the Climate Action Plan.
 - Re-establish regular communication with the University's designated liaison and appoint a corresponding City liaison to ensure consistent and proactive collaboration.
 - Identify and engage residents who work at the University to serve as informal ambassadors and strengthen community ties.
 - Create meaningful engagement opportunities for U of M students, such as volunteer initiatives, community events, or internship programs.
 - Maintain regular communication and strategic alignment with the University's Intergovernmental Relations team to advance mutual goals.
- **City of Lauderdale**
 - Continue to partner on cost-effective shared services—such as street sweeping, snow plowing, and other operational efficiencies—to maximize resources and benefit both communities.
- **City of St. Anthony Village**
 - Continue to partner with SAV on the smooth transition of its policing services.
 - Actively work to strengthen and enhance the overall relationship with St. Anthony Village through regular communication, shared goals, and mutual support.
- **City of Roseville**
 - Continue expanding the relationship for engineering services.
 - Explore new partnership opportunities, such as parks & recreation, to enhance community services.
- **City of St. Paul**
 - Continue to develop and promote the partnership for fire and emergency medical services.
 - Explore approval of a new, longer-term contract for fire and emergency medical services.
- **Schools – Falcon Heights Elementary and Brimhall Elementary**
 - Rebuild and maintain strong connections with area schools, especially as changes in leadership and points of contact may have affected past interactions.
 - Attend District meetings.
 - Continue the partnership on communication and marketing of both City and School events.
- **County**
 - Continue working with the County on projects and funding for those projects.



Enhance Internal Operations and Staff Professional Development

(Lead: City Administrator and City Council. Target Date: End of 2025)

Purpose: To improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness of City operations by investing in staff professional development, fostering a culture of continuous learning, and streamlining internal processes to better serve the community.

- Ensure that staff understands they are valued
 - Conduct a Comp & Class study and have a policy discussion around where Council is willing to target salaries: top, mid, low range of comparables. Also have job descriptions updated as part of this process.
 - Enhance onboarding and retention activities.
 - Increase and improve internal communications.
 - Upgrade timeclock and payroll systems and streamline other technology for better efficiency.
 - Update how records management and retention are accomplished.
 - Simplify the open enrollment process and develop a one-sheet Benefits Summary.
 - Review and improve HR and finance policies and processes to ensure efficiency and clarity.
- Council & Commissions enhancements
 - Continue providing resources for Council members and Commissioners to attend relevant training sessions.
 - Consider implementing a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) option to facilitate paperless packets.
 - Clarify and formalize position descriptions for Council members and Commissioners, outlining their roles and responsibilities.
 - Formalize and expand the onboarding process for new Council members to ensure smooth integration.
 - Offer per diems for Council members and Commissioners to support their involvement in City-related activities.
 - Bring Commission Chairs together regularly to provide updates, discuss Council goals, and determine ownership of projects and community events.
 - Celebrate and formally recognize the work and contributions of Commissioners and their respective commissions.
- Focus on cyber security/protection.
- Foster a team environment across the organization including between Council and staff.
 - Hold formal and informal meetings and gatherings of staff and Council on a regular basis. Create space for both Council and staff to share updates, thoughts, and feedback, encouraging open dialogue and active listening.

Explore Organized Trash Collection

(Lead: City Administrator and City Council. Target Date: End of 2027)

Purpose: A long-term proposition to reduce emissions from haulers and reduce wear and tear on the streets.

- Check-List of items to be done:
 - Review State Statutes.
 - Talk to other communities that have successfully implemented organized trash collection.
 - Talk to existing haulers.
 - Inventory haulers and the percentage of the community they service.
 - Begin conversations with the public around how recycling pick-up, which is a single hauler, has gone.
 - Work this through staff.
 - Schedule a future workshop to determine first/next steps.



Continue to Explore Options to Enhance Community Within Falcon Heights

(Lead: All Staff and Council. Target Date: Ongoing)

Purpose: To reduce polarization locally by cultivating a caring community through the strengthening of community connections.

- Identify who takes ownership of the various community events/activities:
 - Annual Ice Cream Social
 - Spring Together
 - Multi-Cultural Food Festival
 - Fall Festival
 - Explore co-hosting with various community partners Falcon Heights Nights at locations throughout the City
- Provide opportunities for teens and pre-teens to feel as though they are a valuable member of the Community (i.e. youth camps)
- Coordinate the Parks & Community Engagement Commissions to work together
 - How to connect the 11 Falcon Heights neighborhoods.
 - Promote Falcon Heights' multi-culturalism and diversity.
 - Seek to find common themes that draw people together such as knitting groups and musicians.
 - Look to complete and enhance walking paths to connect.
- Park & Rec programming for youth
 - There are quality competing programs through community ed, senior programming, and surrounding cities.
 - Have the policy conversation around if Falcon Heights facilitates existing partner and surrounding programs or create in-house programming with limited staff.

Priorities/Goals/Strategies/Action Steps

The following chart represents the priorities, goals, strategies, and action steps that came out of the group discussion during the session. This list is in no order of importance and is meant to be fluid and adaptable. It is recommended that the Falcon Heights Team regularly discuss target timelines and lead people/persons for each priority, goal, strategy, and action step

PRIORITIES / GOALS / STRATEGIES / ACTION STEPS	TARGET DATE	LEAD
Explore opportunities to provide value added services for residents	End of Quarter 3, 2025	City Administrator
Continue to partner with St. Anthony Village (SAV) and the SAV Police Department (SAPD) on the smooth transition of policing services to SAPD	Ongoing	Council and staff from both communities, SAPD
Continue to enhance, maintain, and develop city/community facilities and develop a multi-year Capital Improvement Plan	End of 2025	City Administrator, City Engineer, Public Works Director
Explore additional and creative funding options and opportunities for projects and initiatives	End of 2025	City staff
• Explore funding opportunities related to City incurred costs due to State Fair	Start of 2025 State Fair	City Administrator, State Fair Task Force (SFTF), Council Liaison to the SFTF
• Explore funding sources and opportunities for street improvement and maintenance projects in an effort to decrease the amount of street assessments or amount of property taxes spent on infrastructure	End of 2025	City Administrator, Finance Director, Assistant Finance Director, Public Works Director, City Engineer
• Prioritize the recommendations coming from the Environment Commission's Energy Action Plan and Climate Action Plan and seek funding sources to complete these actions	End of 2025	Community Development Coordinator, GreenCorp Member, EC Council Liaison
• Develop and enhance the multi-year Capital Improvement Plan	End of Quarter 3, 2025	City Administrator, City Engineer, Finance Director, Public Works Director
Development and re-development (the general discussion related to this topic was around how the City can help or assist with development and re-development)	Ongoing	City Planner, City Administrator
Continue to improve on external communications to engage residents and partners	Ongoing	Communications Coordinator, City Administrator, other staff
Support the rental community within Falcon Heights through new ordinances	End of Quarter 3, 2025	City Administrator, City Planner, Administrative Services Director, Fire Marshal
Continue and enhance strong partnerships with key stakeholders	Ongoing	All staff, City Council
Enhance internal operations and staff professional development	End of 2025	City Administrator, City Council
Explore organized trash collection	End of 2027	City Administrator, City Council
Continue to explore options to enhance community within Falcon Heights	Ongoing	All staff, City Council





Summary/Conclusion

The following are the key takeaways of the discussion from the session participants:

- All worked together well.
- We have more in common than we have different.
- A better understanding of operations.
- Encouraged by everyone's commitment to the City. We are forward thinking in how to improve operations within the Community
- All are onboard with how we can provide the best services to our residents while keeping funding and expenses reasonable.
- Excited! We have low hanging fruit we can tackle right away, which will make a big difference.
- It was good to spend a chunk of time discussing these initiatives.
- We are aligned on values and approach.
- It was good to spend informal time together.

The 2025 Falcon Heights Goal Setting Process allowed the City Council and City Administrator to discuss priorities, goals, strategies, and action steps for Falcon Heights. The process allowed for listening and better understanding of individual goals in an effort to collaborate and move forward with a list of group strategies, priorities, goals, and action steps.

It is recommended that opportunities are created throughout the year for updates and continued discussion by the Falcon Heights Team on the priorities, goals, strategies, and action steps as laid out in this document. This will be vital in keeping the lines of communication open for collaboration, understanding, the building of trusting relationships, and the continued momentum in maintaining and creating a successful future for the community.