



AGENDA
DES MOINES CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
City Council Chambers
21630 11th Avenue S, Suite C
Des Moines, Washington
Thursday, September 10, 2026 - 6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

STRATEGIC PLAN WORKSHOP

Item 1. **Discussion on the Implementation of the Strategic Plan**

NEXT MEETING DATE

September 12, 2026 City Council Budget Retreat

ADJOURNMENT

Members of the public who wish to provide comment during the meeting via Zoom must register in advance. To register, please email cityclerk@desmoineswa.gov by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on the Wednesday before the meeting.

City Council meeting can be viewed live on the City's website, Comcast Channel 21/321, on the City's [YouTube](#) channel or via [Zoom](#).

[Projected Future Agenda Item](#)

MEMO

To: Members of the Des Moines City Council
Katherine Caffrey, City Manager
From: Nancy Hetrick, Vice President, Raftelis
Date: September 4, 2026
Re: City Council Implementation Work Session Preparation

I look forward to being with you on September 10, 2026, to discuss implementation of the City's new strategic plan, *Charting Our Course*. This memorandum serves several purposes:

- Clarify the goals and purpose of the session
- Identify what needs to be done to prepare for the session
- Share the agenda

Logistics

When: Thursday, September 10, 2026
6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Location: Des Moines City Hall
21630 11th Avenue S.
Des Moines, WA 98198

Purpose

During our time together, we will review the City's work plan for year one of strategic plan implementation. We will also discuss how the Council would like to be kept informed of progress and how the City plans to share updates and communicate with the community as the plan moves forward. Finally, we will discuss governance norms and the Council's role in supporting successful execution of the strategic plan.

Preparation

A few agenda items will benefit from advance preparation. Please spend some time reviewing the information contained in this memo.

Des Moines' Strategic Plan Framework

As a reference, the City's high-level strategic plan framework is provided below.

Vision	<i>The premier waterfront community on Puget Sound.</i>
Mission	<i>Des Moines is committed to maintaining a safe, sustainable environment while ensuring a high quality of life for all to live, work, and play.</i>
Values	<i>Teamwork Customer Service Safety Responsibility Integrity</i>
Strategic Focus Areas	• <i>Economic Vitality</i> • <i>Financial Stability</i> • <i>Public Safety</i> • <i>Engaged and Thriving Community</i> • <i>Natural and Build Environment</i> • <i>Organizational Excellence</i>

Communicating Progress

Progress on a strategic plan does not communicate itself. A structured approach to sharing results, both internally and externally, is essential to maintaining alignment, building trust, and sustaining the engagement of everyone who has a stake in the City's success. The table below outlines sample reporting cadences drawn from best practices in strategic plan implementation. During the workshop, we will discuss what approach makes the most sense for Des Moines. In advance, we invite you to review the options below and come prepared to share your perspective.

Reporting Element	Best Practices
Level of Detail	• Council Updates – Focus on high-level progress, milestone achievement, and strategic outcomes rather than operational details. • Staff Reports – Summarize what is working, what needs attention, and any recommended adjustments to keep the plan on track.
Council Updates	• Annual Updates – Tied to budget or priority-setting cycles to connect plan progress with resource decisions. • Semi-annual Updates – At a Council retreat or work session. • Quarterly Updates – Focused on overall plan progress and major milestones. • Bi-monthly Updates – Each update is focused on one of the Strategic Priority areas.
Community Updates	• Diversified Channels – Use the website, City Manager Reports, social media, and newsletters to reach a broad audience. • Simplified Messaging – Create accessible, jargon-free materials, including summary documents, infographics, and FAQs, to ensure the plan resonates with a diverse community.
Progress Tracking	• Transparent Metrics – Use dashboards and scorecards to visualize progress, to be shared internally and externally. • Celebration of Milestones – Acknowledge and celebrate key achievements with both internal teams and the broader community to maintain momentum and morale.

In advance, we invite you to consider the following questions:

- What frequency of updates works best for Des Moines?
- What would those updates look like? (e.g., written report, presentation)
- How would you like the community to be informed of the City's progress?

Governing Together

Attached is an article from the Institute for Local Government on the attributes of exceptional City Councils. We will use this article to discuss what it looks like to govern as a united Council and identify shared norms that will guide your work. Establishing shared norms for how the Council will work, communicate, and make decisions during implementation is an important foundation for moving forward together. Please review this article in advance and come prepared to share what resonates for you.

Below are some examples of City Council Norms.

Examples of City Council Norms	
• Assume good intent: Everyone has the best interest of the community in mind. • Avoid surprises: Keep everyone equally informed and in the loop so all parties are operating from the same information. • Seek clarity and listen with the intent to understand: Be curious and ask questions to increase your understanding of others' perspectives. • Have each other's backs: Support one another individually as people, and collectively as a governing body. • Promote civility: Promote civility during meetings and interactions and do not accept incivility by audience members.	• Focus on the issue, not the person: Debate ideas constructively. Avoid personal attacks, contempt, and defensiveness. • Bring your authentic self: Share your unique perspective while respecting and valuing the diverse strengths of your colleagues. • Share your reasoning: Reciprocate best practices by helping your colleagues understand where your questions and thought processes are coming from. • Commit to the final decision. Accept majority outcomes gracefully. You may explain your "no" vote to constituents, but do not undermine the Council's final action.

In advance, we invite you to consider the following question:

- What norms or agreements feel most important to you for this Council?

Workshop Norms

- Listen to understand
- Engage in conversations, stay focused, and share ideas
- Be open to new or different perspectives
- Seek consensus and look for opportunities to agree
- Have fun and enjoy the experience!

Agenda

Thursday, September 10 – 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Introductions

- Welcome and introductions
- Agenda review
- Norms and expectations for the session

Strategic Plan Overview

The facilitator will provide a brief, high-level overview of the City's strategic plan, *Charting Our Course*.

Year One Work Planning

The City Manager will provide an overview of the City's work plan for the first year of strategic plan implementation.

Communicating Progress

City Council and staff will discuss expectations for communicating progress on achieving the goals of the strategic plan.

Governing Together

The facilitator will lead a brief discussion of City Council norms and what it means to govern well together.

Next Steps

We will review next steps in the City's strategic plan implementation process.

Attributes of Exceptional Councils

Leading public organizations and governing with colleagues on a council is a challenging art of community service. The Institute recognizes that many aspects of leadership and governance are not intuitive. This piece is intended to provide councilmembers and city managers insight into the attributes of exceptional councils as well as provide practical tips to help them become exceptional.

1. Exceptional councils develop a sense of team – a partnership with the city manager to govern and manage the city

The mayor, councilmembers and city manager see themselves and work as a team as they undertake a series of tasks to further their common purpose. The individual team members work in a coordinated and collaborative manner with a high degree of respect, trust and openness. The team values diversity in style and perspective. The team thinks and acts strategically as it examines issues/situations and decides on a course of action serving their city's mission and goals.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Successfully transition from candidate to a member of the council.
- Become a champion of the city. Make decisions based on the needs and interests of the community at-large / the greater good.
- Develop, communicate and support policy goals and council decisions.
- Demonstrate a willingness to work collaboratively (as a team) and have a citywide perspective.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Build capacity to create a more effective team. The governance team (mayor, councilmembers and city manager) should get to know each other; how each person approaches issues, decision making style and so on. This can be accomplished at annual meetings or workshops through-out the year. In the event that councilmembers disagree, clear ground rules (norms of behavior and practice) can help quell acrimony before it becomes a problem. It's important to remember that trust is built around understanding and respect, not necessarily agreement.

2. Exceptional councils have clear roles and responsibilities that are understood and adhered.

Exceptional councils understand their role is to serve as policy maker - to represent the values, beliefs and priorities of their community while serving in the community's best interest. They carry out a variety of responsibilities including: developing and adopting a vision for the city; focusing and aligning plans, policies, agreements and budgets in furtherance of this vision; and holding themselves and the city manager accountable for results.

Exceptional councils understand that the city manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the city. The city manager is responsible for undertaking and accomplishing the policy objectives of the council. Exceptional councils recognize the subject matter expertise of staff and utilize their knowledge and experience to guide and inform decision making.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Understand the role of local government and their responsibilities.
- Know their role- to set vision and policy, avoid micromanagement.
- Councilmembers should strive to be informed about the issues facing the city and be prepared to ask questions of staff and each other.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Create a shared understanding of the city manager's role and the council's expectations to optimize the working relationships. This shared understanding is informed by local charter and ordinance provisions that provide the overall framework for the relationship. The council should make time to have conversations during retreats and or study sessions to define and/or reveal and refine their role and responsibilities. Since role clarity between the city council and city management is critical to mutual success, having clear protocols helps avoid misunderstandings.

3. Exceptional councils honor the relationship with staff and each other

Exceptional councils understand that a good working relationship with staff is vital for the city to be run successfully. Exceptional councils treat each other and staff with dignity and respect. They act with civility and a high level of professional decorum. Councilmembers build trust by not playing the “gotcha game” and strive to have a no secrets, no surprises approach as an operating norm. Finally, they respect the diversity of styles and perspectives among their colleagues and staff and are open to new ideas.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Councilmembers have the ability to respectfully disagree (to disagree without being disagreeable). They are able to leave it at the dais; debates are about policy, not personality.
- Exceptional councilmembers reflect positive decorum/model of leadership by providing respectful tone with colleagues.
- Establish a set of behaviors ahead of time, potentially documented in a code of conduct, to help promote civility and respect.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Set council priorities and strategic goals at an annual meeting; these goals and priorities are a tool to guide the city manager and staff on where to focus their efforts. This annual meeting provides time for the council to reflect on community priorities as well as offer an opportunity to discuss their decorum and their relationship among each other and the relationship between the city manager/staff and the council.

4. Exceptional councils routinely conduct effective meetings

Open and public meetings are central to democratic decision-making. Exceptional councils master the art of effective meetings. They develop and adhere to meeting protocols and processes. They spend time planning and organizing the agenda with the aim of having a more focused meeting. They allocate the council's time and energy appropriately (focused on the council's role and responsibilities) and meeting short- and long-term priorities. They honor the public's participation and engagement and they generally start on time and are held during reasonable hours.

Exceptional councils use public meetings not only for their intended purpose, information sharing and decision-making,

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Councilmembers are respectful of each other, the public and everyone's time.
- Councilmembers use engaging body language as a way to demonstrate respect.
- Issues are not personalized, thoughtful dialogue is the objective.
- Agenda packets are read, councilmembers come prepared and have an open mind
- Respect is demonstrated for varied opinions.
- Everyone strives to be civil and act with decorum.

but they also use the meeting to demonstrate respect and civility for each other, staff and the public. Exceptional councilmembers prepare in advance of the meeting, remain focused on the city goals and objectives and mindful of their role and responsibilities.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Develop and adopt (with regular reviews and updates), guidelines for conducting meetings and making decisions. These governance protocols typically address meeting procedures (agenda preparation, how to put issues on the agenda, debate and voting procedures (parliamentary rules) and standards of decorum (civility)). As part of a regular self-assessment, councils should evaluate their meetings and their effectiveness and adjust behavior and practices for better results.

5. Exceptional councils hold themselves and the city accountable

Exceptional councils operate openly, ethically and work to engage the community in a myriad of decisions impacting the prosperity and well-being of their community. Toward that end, exceptional councils consistently provide short- and long-term strategic direction and goals, as well as provide budget, program and policy oversight.

Exceptional councils hold themselves accountable for the conduct, behavior and effectiveness of the council. They establish clear priorities and goals and hold the city manager accountable for results. And finally, they embrace accountability as a process and tool to calibrate ongoing efforts to address and meet policy and program objectives.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Councilmembers operate ethically and with integrity.
- Councils conduct team building / goal setting exercise to track progress towards mutually agreed upon goals
- Councils taking responsibility for the results (good and bad).
- Councils celebrate success.
- Councilmembers hold themselves responsible for adhering to operating protocols and codes of conduct.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Annually evaluate council and city manager performance toward achieving the city's priorities and goals (consider having this be part of an annual goal setting meeting). Council should consider assessing its own behavior and effectiveness as part of its annual self-assessment.

6. Exceptional councils have members who practice continuous personal learning and development

Governance is not intuitive. In addition, the policy and economic environment impacting cities are ever changing. Exceptional councils continually provide the opportunity to build their knowledge and skills, to enhance their understanding of key issues, increase their awareness of best practices and sharpen their leadership and governance skills.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Stay informed on key issues
- Gain key insights and knowledge on all aspects of governing, from budgets to plans and everything in between.
- Learning to listen is sometimes more important than learning to give a speech.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Seek out national, state and local professional growth and educational opportunities. These opportunities can focus on the nuts and bolts of governing to helping you gain valuable information and/or insights on key policy issues facing your city. In addition, city run orientations for newly elected officials provide a good way to acclimate new members to the council's norms and protocols as well as the budget and key policy issues.

City of Des Moines

Implementation Session

September 10, 2026





Agenda

- 1. Charting Our Course**
- 2. Year One Work Planning**
- 3. Communications and Plan Updates**
- 4. Governing Together**
- 5. Next Steps**



Opening Activity

Charting Our Course





Vision, Mission, and Values

VISION

The premier waterfront community on Puget Sound.

MISSION

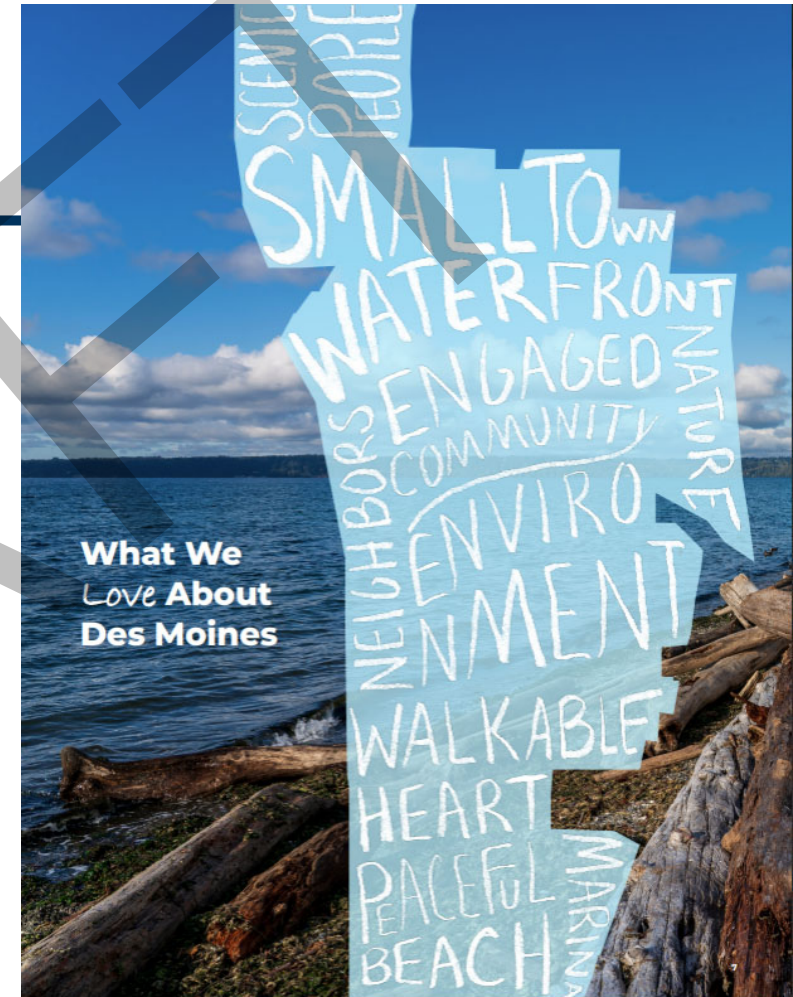
Des Moines is committed to maintaining a safe, sustainable environment while ensuring a high quality of life for all to live, work, and play.

VALUES

Teamwork
Customer Service
Safety
Responsibility
Integrity

Strategic Focus Areas

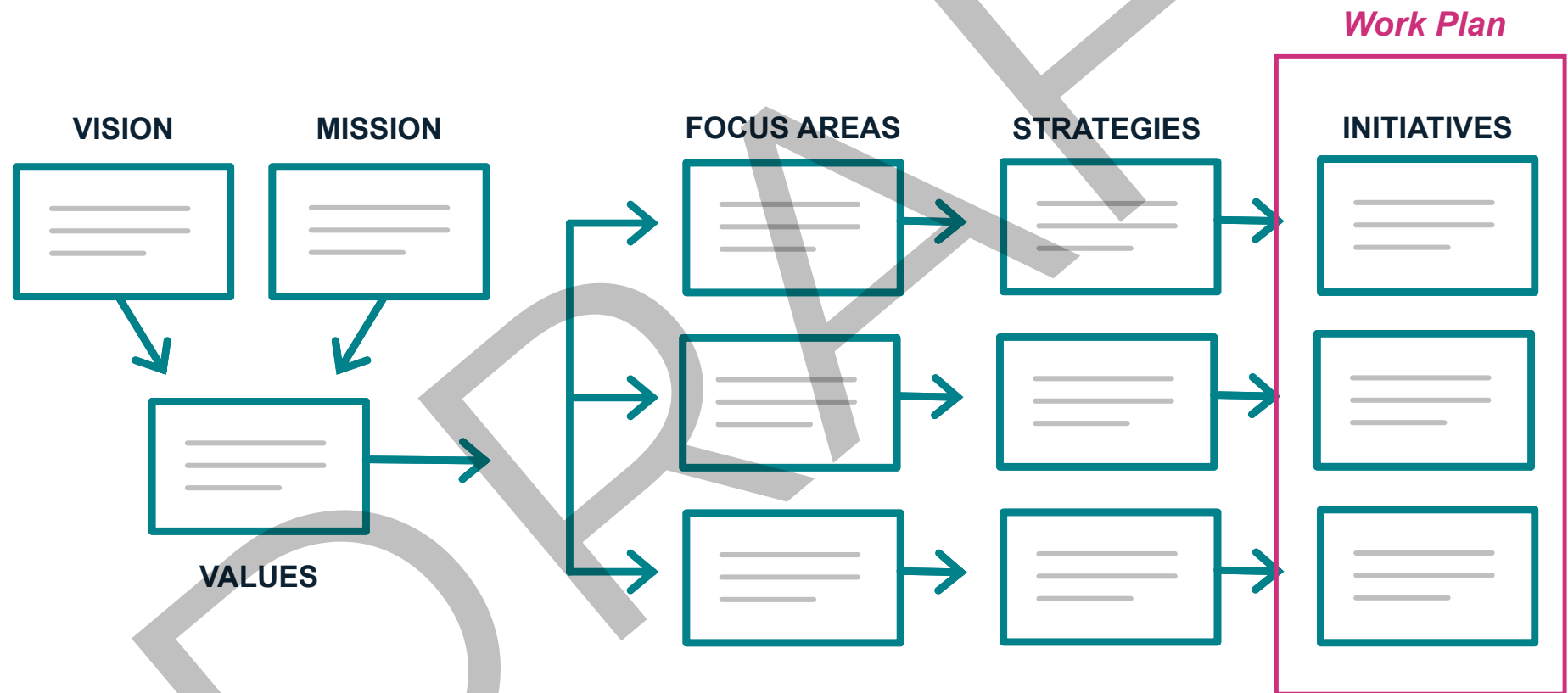
- Economic Vitality
- Financial Stability
- Public Safety
- Engaged and Thriving Community
- Natural and Built Environment
- Organizational Excellence



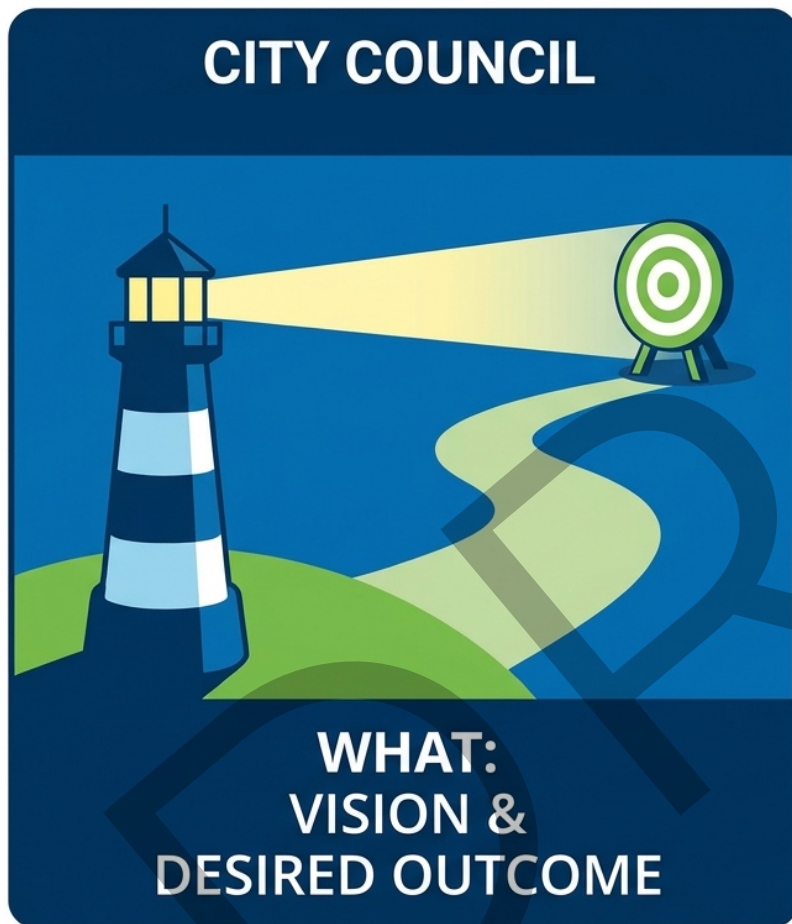
Year One Work Plan



Strategic Framework



Implementing the Plan – *What's Council's role?*



Our Work Plan

Natural and Built Environment

Des Moines preserves its natural resources, including waterfronts, parks, and trails, while promoting safe, convenient mobility across the city and prioritizing investment in maintaining critical infrastructure.

Focus Area Lead: Mike

Strategies	Initiatives	Responsible Lead	Current Status	Action Items (Work Underway)
Maintain and invest in critical infrastructure and public assets to support reliability, sustainability, and future growth.	Deliver capital projects with a focus on quality, transparency, and long-term community benefit.	Mike	Ongoing	Marina Steps and 240th currently underway, with more to come. PW Dir is working with staff to develop and train strong proj mgmt skills in engineering staff.
	Advance priority capital improvements, including: Marina: South seawall, pedestrian esplanade, and associated utilities. Parks: Midway Park, Beach Park estuary, Redondo seawall and esplanade. Transportation: Marine View Drive, 24th Avenue, 16th Ave Improvements, Cliff Ave design	Mike	In Progress	Funding for design and proj mgmt of south seawall included in 27/28 budget; Parks projects are advancing; transportation projects at various stages of design, eng, construc.
	Re-organize the City's CIP to be presented in a way to reflect priority: high, medium, low	Jeff	Not Yet Started	Will be done for 2027 update of CIP in 2028 budget
	Maintain City facilities through a regular, planned approach to caring for buildings, fields and equipment.	Mike	Not Yet Started	Funding in proposed budget for facilities and asset maintenance plans
Preserve, restore, and enhance Des Moines' unique environment, natural resources, and open spaces.	Develop the Comprehensive Plan Climate Element, including resilience and greenhouse gas reduction components.	Rebecca	Not Yet Started	Climate Element due in 2029, will submit for grant funding in 2027
	Pursue grant funding to acquire and preserve critical habitat areas.	Mike	Ongoing	Continuously evaluate KC Futures opportunities
	Maintain passive open space and critical habitat areas through ongoing care and stewardship.	Mike	In Progress	Preliminary presentation going to Council in fall 2026
	Update tree regulations to support preservation and expansion of the urban tree canopy.	Rebecca	In Progress	Tree regulation for private property are under development
	Keep shoreline and critical areas regulations current with best available science.	Rebecca	In Progress	Critical Area Ordinance Update Started (Planned Completion by 5.2027) - Shoreline Master Program due 2029



Communicating Progress

Best Practices

- Council updates should focus on high-level progress rather than operational detail
- Spacing updates quarterly, semi-annually, and annually allows meaningful progress to accumulate
- Bi-monthly updates tied to each Strategic Priority area keeps the plan visible throughout the year
- Milestones worth celebrating should be recognized publicly to sustain momentum and community confidence



Discussion

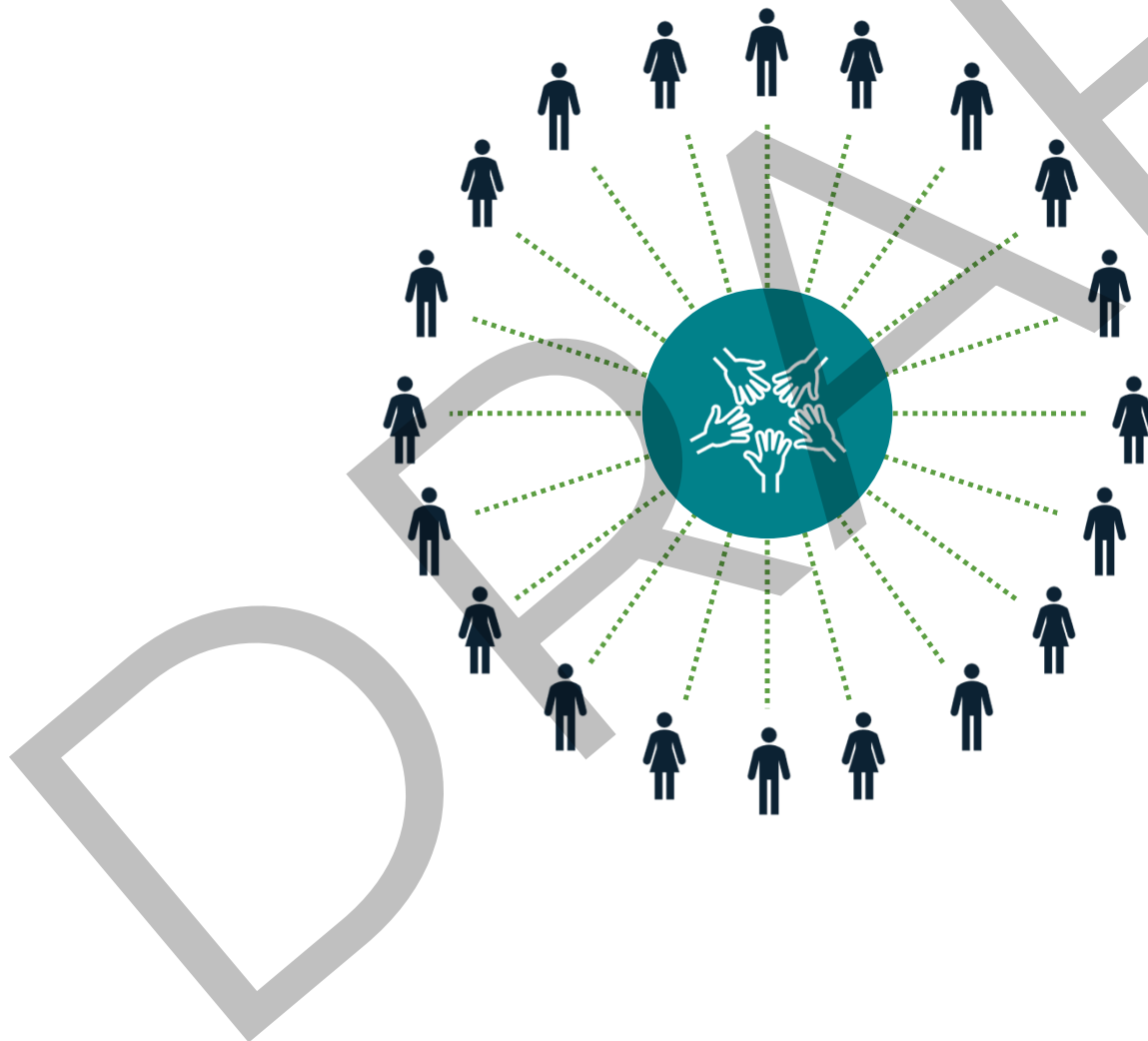
- What frequency of updates works best for Des Moines?
- What would those updates look like?
- In what ways can we keep the community informed?



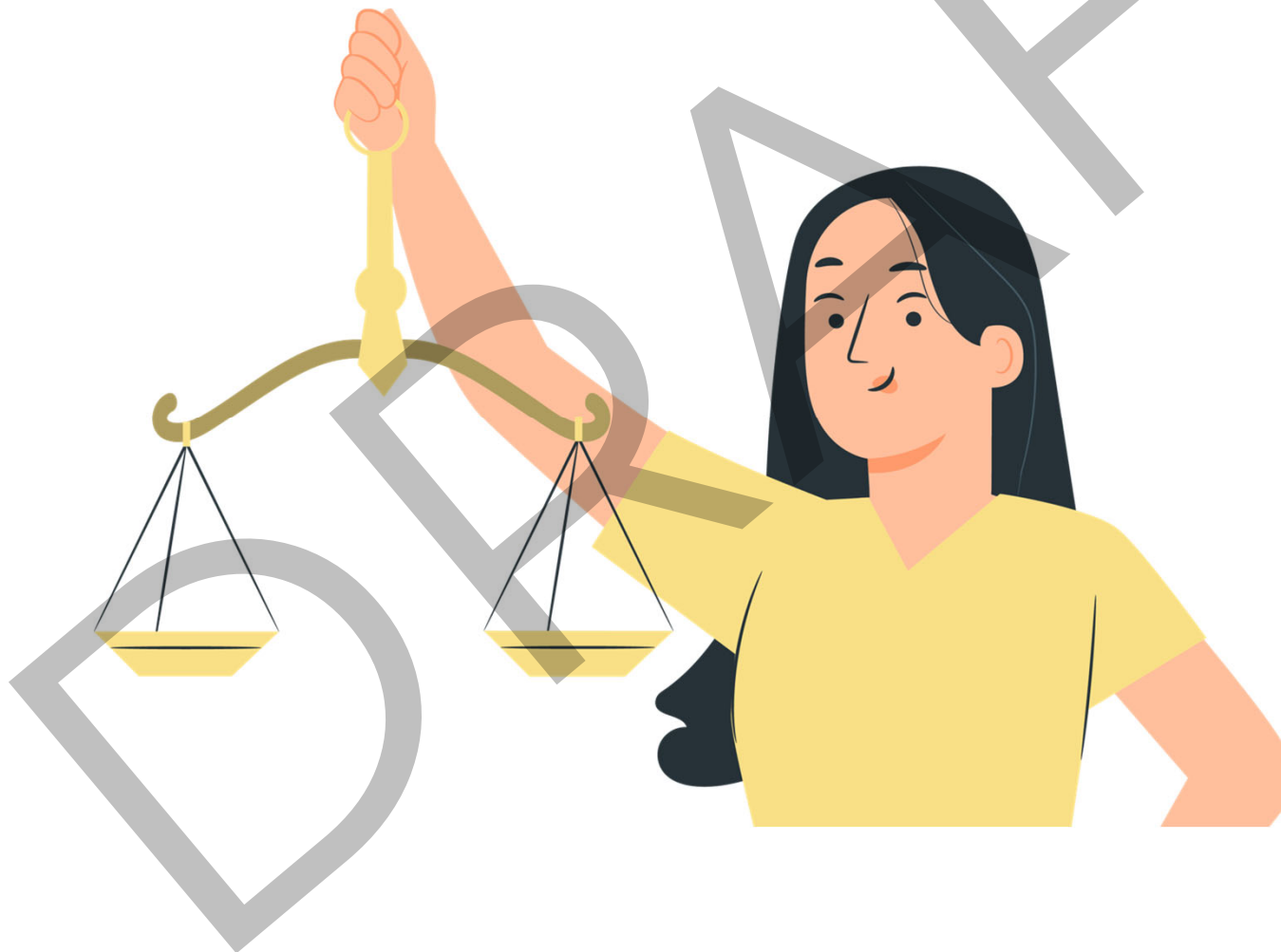
Governing Together

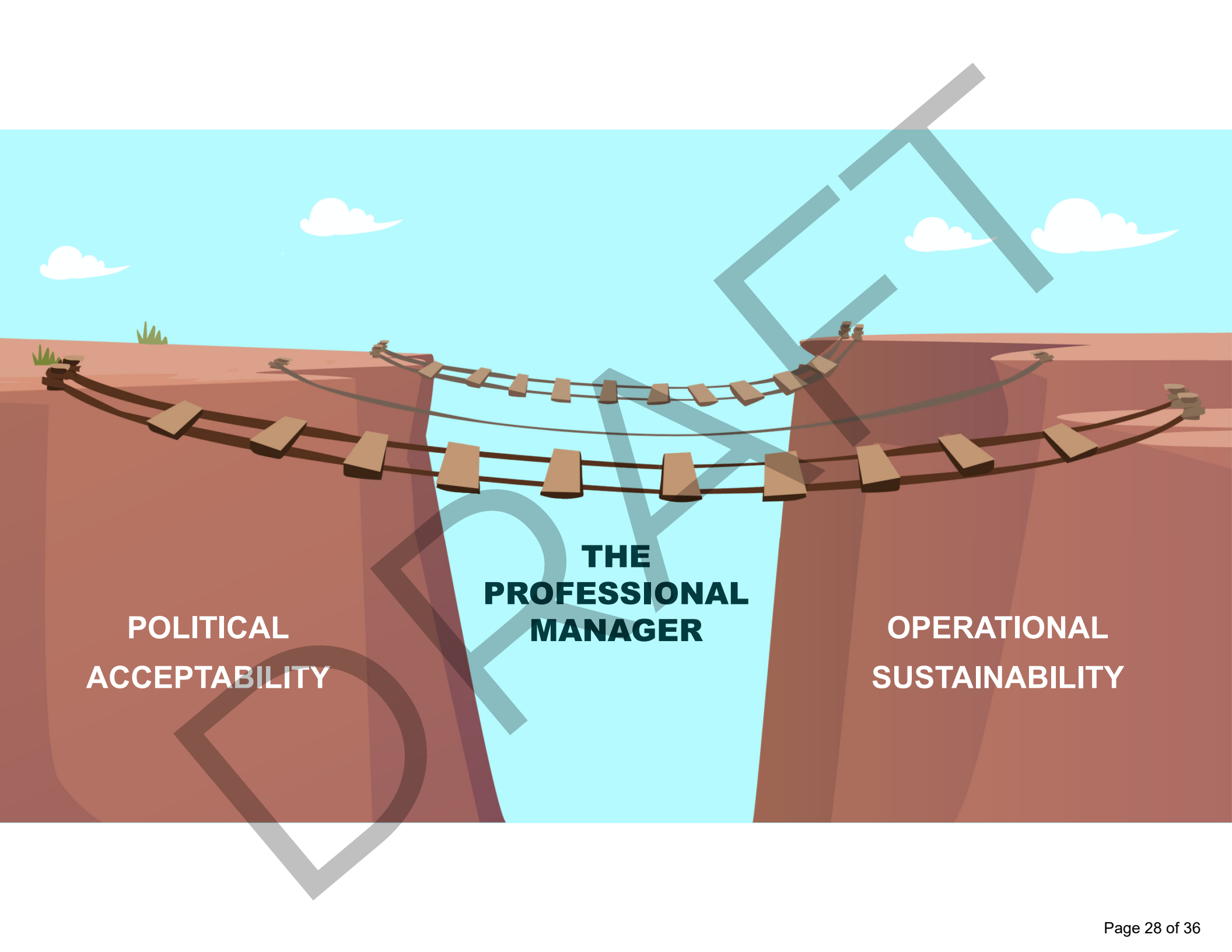


You Govern as a Body



That buffer is the City Manager





POLITICAL
ACCEPTABILITY

**THE
PROFESSIONAL
MANAGER**

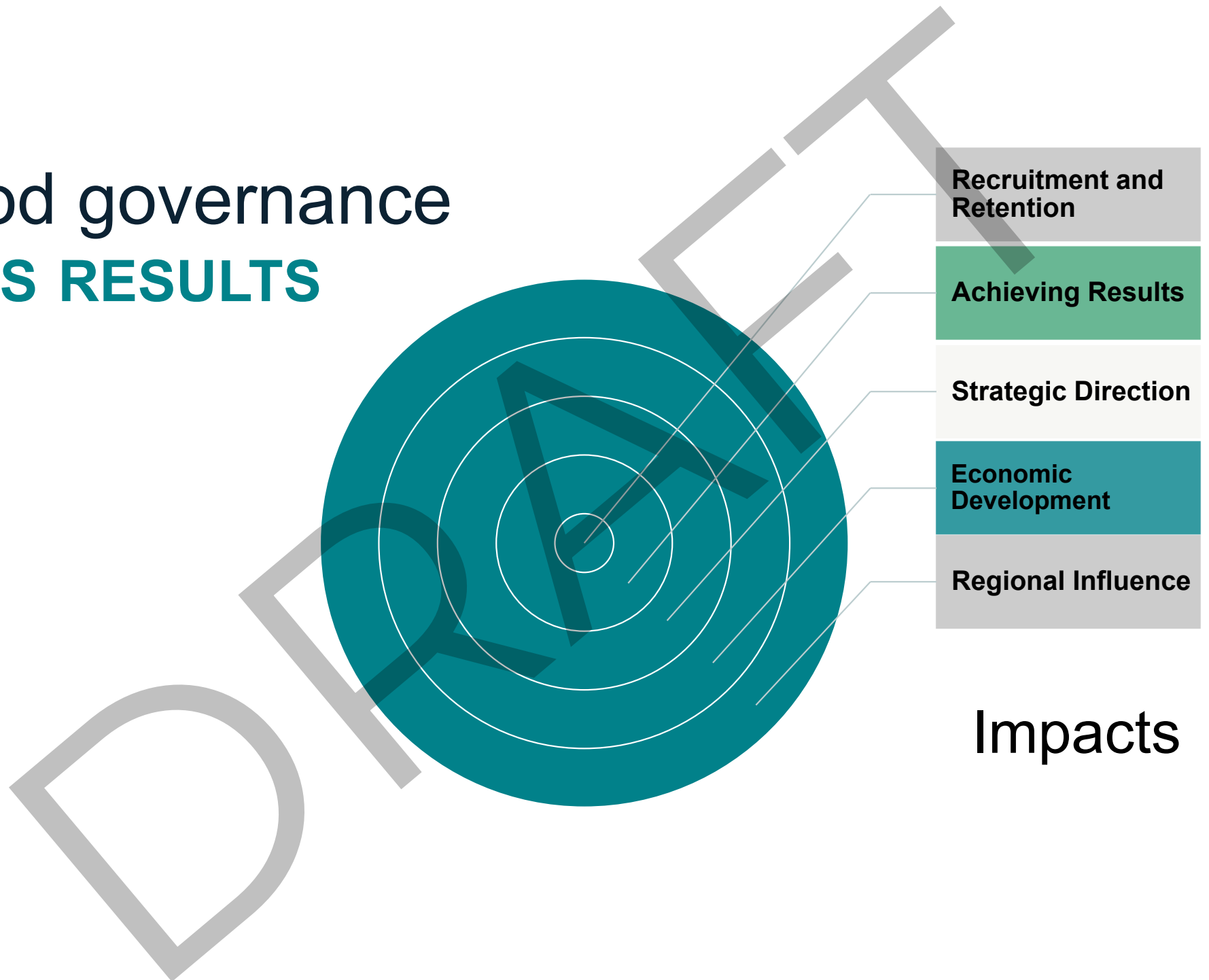
OPERATIONAL
SUSTAINABILITY

Serving the
Community
Requires Both

**The "What":
Goals and
Priorities
Strategic
Plan**

**The "How":
Agreed
Upon
Norms,
Roles and
Protocols**

Good governance **GETS RESULTS**





What makes a council work effectively?

- 1 Unity of Purpose
- 2 Clear Roles and Responsibilities
- 3 Positive Governance Culture
- 4 Norms, Protocols, and Policies

Exceptional City Councils

- Have a **sense of team** – a partnership with the city manager to govern and manage the city
- Have **clear roles** and responsibilities that are understood and adhered to
- Honor **the relationship** with staff and each other
- Routinely conduct **effective meetings**
- Hold themselves and the city **accountable**
- Have members who practice **continuous improvement**

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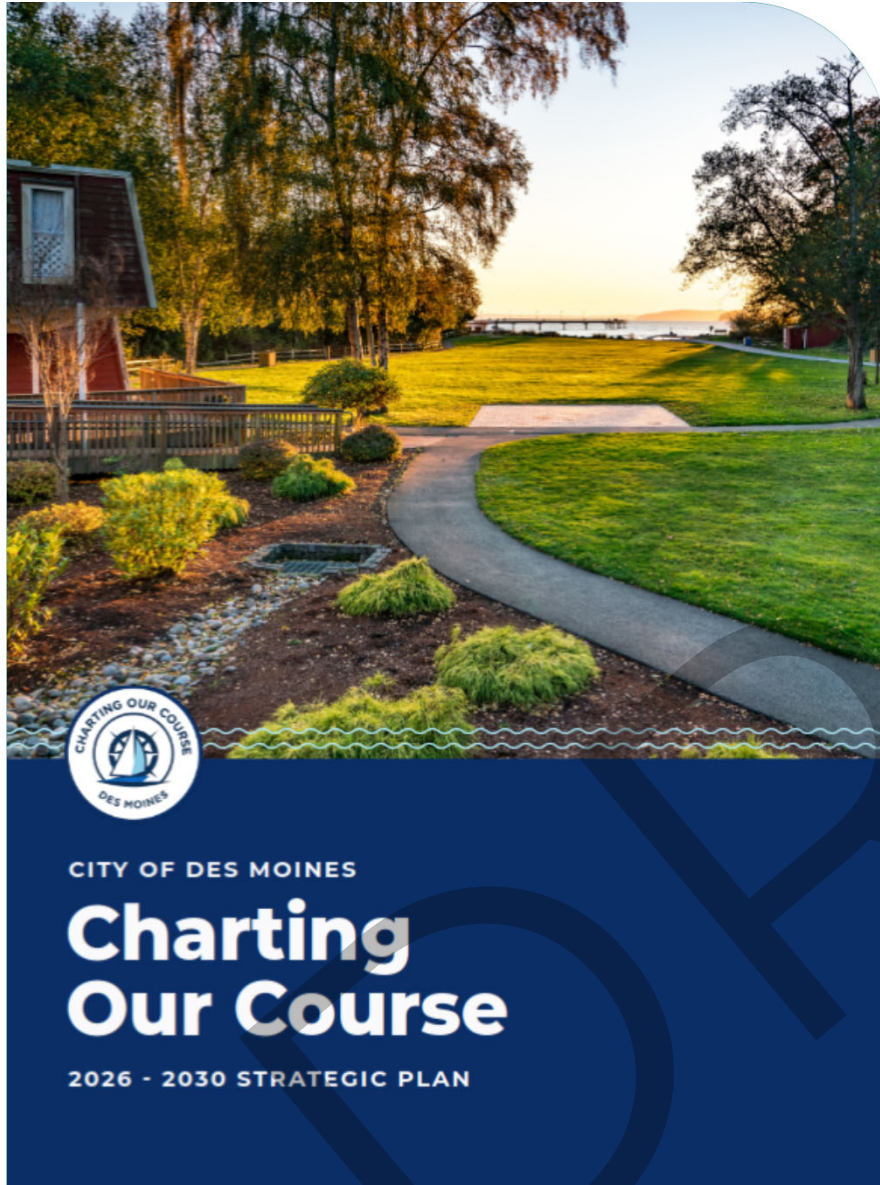
BEST PRACTICE TIPS

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Example of Norms from Other Councils

- **Assume good intent:** Everyone has the best interest of the community in mind.
- **Seek clarity and listen with the intent to understand:** Be curious and ask questions to increase your understanding of others' perspectives.
- **Share your reasoning:** Reciprocate best practices by helping your colleagues understand where your questions and thought processes are coming from.
- **Commit to the final decision.** Accept majority outcomes gracefully. You may explain your "no" vote to constituents, but do not undermine the Council's final action.
- **Focus on the issue, not the person:** Debate ideas constructively. Avoid personal attacks, contempt, and defensiveness.
- **Avoid surprises:** Keep everyone equally informed and in the loop so all parties are operating from the same information.
- **Bring your authentic self:** Share your unique perspective while respecting and valuing the diverse strengths of your colleagues.
- **Have each others' backs:** Support one another individually as people, and collectively as a governing body.
- **Promote civility:** Promote civility during meetings and interactions and do not accept incivility by audience members.

What norms are important to THIS City Council?



Next Steps



Thank you!

Contact: Nancy Hetrick
408 674 3369 / nhetrick@raftelis.com

What do we need to do?

SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION REQUIRES:



Communicating
the Plan and
Results



Defined Roles
and
Responsibilities



Regular
Check-Ins



Activity and
Budget
Alignment



Individual and
Organizational
Capacity