

Chapter 1 Summary

A city "...that acquires and preserves open space for wetlands, woods and parks, while limiting development on available vacant property...that protects and values its natural resources," and "that preserves the integrity and character of its history." A community "...with an efficient form of government that is responsive to the residents' needs and that seeks to provide quality services." A community "...with affordable housing that is accessible to all age groups"... "that helps youth and children become involved and respected in the community"... and "that provides affordable opportunities for all ages to come together and participate in a wide range of social, cultural, and recreational programs and activities." A community "...that builds, maintains, and enhances roads to improve traffic flow." A community "...that fosters increased citizen awareness and positive participation in both government and community activities." From the goals of *Speak Up!*

The goals listed above capture the essence of the Rochester Hills Strategic Plan. They are a sampling of the 14 community-wide goals that were defined through *Speak Up!*, a citizen-driven participatory planning process. These goals have been grouped into five Strategic Implementation Areas. Specific strategies and action steps within each of the Strategic Implementation Areas create an intriguing and specific blueprint for the future of the community.

This report describes the goals, Strategic Implementation Areas, strategies, and action steps that comprise the Rochester Hills Strategic Plan.

A. Background

The process started in 1998, when the City of Rochester Hills decided to conduct a strategic planning/visioning program to develop shared goals and strategies for the future of the community. The scope of the program included facilitating a broad-based public participation process and making its results the foundation of the Strategic Plan. The City conducted a national search for qualified firms to coordinate this process and ultimately contracted with American Communities Partnership – a planning and visioning firm with offices in Columbus, Ohio, and New York City – to provide this service.

The strategic planning/visioning program was divided into three major phases. The first—designed to identify key issues and problems in the community—included interviews with leaders and a review of existing documents and studies. The second—the core of the program—consisted of *Speak Up!* the citizen-driven visioning process. The third—designed to translate the *Speak Up!* vision into a strategic plan—included



interviews with institutions and individuals that will play a critical role in the implementation of the Strategic Plan.¹

B. Developing a Common Vision

Speak Up! started in March of 1999 with 300 blank sheets of 24" x 30" flipchart paper. Within weeks, those blank sheets of paper were filled with 1,186 ideas generated by 355 residents who attended seven brainstorming meetings from March 1 to March 15. Each idea was placed into one or two of 14 categories, including education, government, transportation, and environment. These categories – and the ideas they contain – were first discussed at a Community Summit, held on March 29 and attended by 80 residents. At Goal Writing Meetings, held April 26, 27, and 29, over 150 citizens translated the ideas into 14 goals and 75 strategies. During the May 22nd Vision Fair, 300 citizens, including several groups of students, provided a first prioritization of the 75 strategies.²

Residents have shaped the Rochester Hills Strategic Plan over the past year through a lively debate and an extensive public participation process. Hundreds of citizens have participated in *Speak Up!* Every idea contained in this report came directly from input provided by citizens through the *Speak Up!* process. Their participation and commitment throughout the process has made the resulting goals, strategies, and action steps an accurate and realistic reflection of the wishes, dreams, and aspiration of the community.

C. Translating the Vision into a Strategic Plan

The vision developed by the citizens of Rochester Hills is a carefully crafted vision. It is realistic about what the community can afford and is sensitive to the character of the community – a relatively new, landlocked, but fully developed suburban area.

The community engaged in a complex participatory process to develop the vision and strategic plan. Figure 1, page 9, shows how ideas were translated into a vision, and that vision into the strategic plan.

The plan establishes 14 vision goals, which are broad statements of what the community has the potential to accomplish (see Table 1, page 10). The plan also outlines 75 strategies that explain the programs, initiatives, and commitments needed to accomplish these goals. Twenty of these strategies have been identified as key to the implementation of the vision. Each key strategy includes a description of action steps needed for implementation. These goals, strategies and action steps, taken together, set a clear course – a road map for the future of the city.

The 20 key strategies have been grouped into five Strategic Implementation Areas (see Table 2, page 11). This approach allows the

¹ The purpose, methodology, and outcome of the three phases of the program are described in Chapter 4 of this report, Conducting the Strategic Planning/Visioning Program.

² The specific steps involved in the vision program are described in Chapter 4 of this report, Conducting the Strategic Planning/Visioning Program.



community to focus its resources on the strategies that are most critical to achieving the vision goals (see Table 3, page 13). The Strategic Implementation Areas are:

- Land Preservation – Rochester Hills is a relatively young community that has witnessed rapid growth in a short period of time. Currently, the community is 85 percent developed. The vision and strategic plan calls for the careful management and stewardship of the remaining land. It also calls for the careful preservation of the natural features that contribute to the community character.
- Community Enrichment – As the community reaches maturity and the population stabilizes, residents become aware of projects and initiatives that can have a great impact on the quality of life in the community. The vision and strategic plan focuses on several such initiatives designed to bring greater diversity in the community.
- Government Efficiency – Demand for services has increased while revenues remain stable or actually decrease, with adjustments for inflation. The vision and strategic plan promotes greater efficiency in how services are delivered, and in the way government itself is structured.
- Transportation Options – Transportation issues consistently top any list of issues in a community. The level of concern and frustrations are high particularly in Rochester Hills since transportation solutions are costly and impacted by conditions which are outside of the city's capacity to control them. Rochester Hills is surrounded by development on all sides. The vision and strategic plan address how to minimize congestion and improve mobility in the area.
- Civic Leadership – Despite the very good level of citizen participation in the *Speak Up!* process, there is general consensus about a weakness in the civic sector. The vision and strategic plan advocates for sustained citizen involvement in decision making and in the planning and implementation of the vision.

These five Strategic Implementation Areas offer a snapshot of what Rochester Hills has the potential to accomplish in five, ten, or even fifteen years. They show "at-a-glance" the many challenges that must be met in order to protect and enhance the values that citizens expressed through their contributions to the vision.

D. Implementing the Strategic Plan

The plan requires a concerted implementation effort with strong leadership coming from government, citizens, and the private and non-profit sectors.

Many of the action steps in this report require direct government action. They call for the city's elected officials to adopt policies, and develop new



Figure 1: The Vision and Strategic Plan At-A-Glance

The Vision and Strategic Plan At-A-Glance

Seven Idea-Gathering meetings generated

1,186
ideas.

These ideas were organized into

14
goals and
75
strategies.

The Vision Fair and the environmental scan identified

20
key strategies.

The key strategies have been organized into

5
Strategic Implementation Areas.

Vision and Strategic Plan

Table 1: Vision Goals

Category	Goal
Activities and Events	A community that provides a highly publicized array of year-round activities and events for the entire community — social, cultural, and artistic — with emphasis on youth, family and senior activities.
Citizen Involvement	A community that fosters increased citizen awareness and positive participation in both government and community activities.
Community Character	An attractive community that preserves the integrity and character of its history, while supporting beautiful, safe and well-maintained roads, parks neighborhoods, commercial developments, and historic districts.
Community Facilities	A community that provides affordable opportunities for all ages to come together and participate in a wide range of social, cultural, and recreational programs and activities through the development and enhancement of community center(s), public parks, pools, open spaces, cultural facilities and historic features.
Economy and Finance	A fiscally responsible community, with low taxes and a strong tax base balanced between businesses and residents, with affordable services, quality roads and attractive and diverse businesses.
Education	A community that designs and maintains a high quality K-16 educational system that is student-centered, responsive to student needs, sensitive to global changes and issues, enriched with technological resources, and that prepares students to succeed in the 21 st century workplace and society.
Government	A community with an efficient form of government that is responsive to the residents' needs; that seeks to provide quality services; that improves communication and community relations; that fosters better communication with neighboring communities; and that establishes better cooperation between residents, council, and the administration.
Housing	A well planned, well maintained, close-knit community with affordable housing that is accessible to all age groups within our community and that is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
Innovations in Mobility	A safe community that has no traffic congestion; with ample and well-maintained sidewalks (with pedestrian and bike paths); with an extensive trail network; with public and mass transit (accessible to senior citizens and wheelchairs) within the city and between neighboring cities.
Land Use	A community that acquires and preserves open space for wetlands, woods and parks, while limiting development on available vacant property to allow for controlled balance through planning, zoning and managed growth with lower density.
Natural Environment	A community that protects and values its natural resources, while simultaneously working to clean up polluted areas, to restore a balance between developed and natural areas, and to provide options for living harmoniously with the wildlife of our area.
Transportation	A community that builds, maintains, and enhances roads to improve traffic flow — using a Master Traffic Plan and resident input; that manages flow with tools such as the placement and timing of lights, signage, turning and two-way lanes; that avoids widening roads or creating boulevards; and that remains mindful of the existing natural beauty of our community.
Services	A community that pursues professional public service growth to meet the needs of all residents, while it strives to maintain affordable living.
Youth	A safe, healthy, and affordable community that helps youth and children become involved and respected in the community with a recreation center, and other well-publicized activity programs and facilities, and with opportunities for mentoring, community service, and feedback on community issues.

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Table 2: Key Strategies Organized by Strategic Implementation Area

	Primary Strategies	Secondary Strategies	Supporting Strategies
Land Preservation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limit and control building (with stricter ordinances and zoning, user and developer impact fees and careful planning) to redevelop the community and manage growth while maintaining the country and small town atmosphere, and preserving and purchasing wetlands. 2. Organize a referendum on a bond proposal to identify and purchase open land, protecting it from development by commercial ventures and saving it as open spaces and wetlands for parks. 3. Implement a ten-year green space master plan that links all natural areas, parks and watersheds, and returns native species. 4. Develop and fund a plan to maintain, preserve and enhance our historic districts, homes, buildings and heritage. 		
Community Enrichment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a drug free community center that provides activities – such as movies, bowling, a playhouse, a stage for local bands, and a dance floor – at affordable rates. 2. Increase the sense of community by creating a partnership between the City and schools that would make school facilities available to the public in a safe environment (pools, fields, classrooms, tennis courts) during after school hours. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Ensure a high standard of maintenance for all facilities within the school system by targeting school buildings that need renovations and maintaining all buildings. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Provide affordable housing to allow lifelong residents to stay in the area in which they were born and raised. 5. Work with other area communities (e.g. City of Rochester) to publish and promote a year-round calendar of festivals and performances. 6. Develop a partnership among businesses, schools, and community to encourage the development of job skills and opportunities for citizens of all ages. 7. Offer a wide variety of classes that provides opportunities for students to become involved in internships and organizations outside of the school system. 8. Develop small neighborhood parks within subdivisions to create a sense of community.
Government Efficiency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Change the City charter to replace strong mayor with city manager. 2. Coordinate and consolidate refuse collection and recycling. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Continue to enhance police and fire services as economically as possible. 	

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Table 2: Key Strategies Organized by Strategic Implementation Area (con't.)

	Primary Strategies	Secondary Strategies	Supporting Strategies
Transportation Options	1. Widen roads at intersections and lengthen left and right turn lanes; Establish center turn lanes in lieu of widening roads and creating boulevards.	2. Develop a convenient and reliable community/inter-community mass transit system that incorporates the current system and learns from previous experience. 3. Complete the network of bike paths to connect with other communities.	
Civic Leadership		1. Require citizen votes whenever public land is to be leased by private business.	2. Hold "true" town meetings to encourage genuine two-way communication.

Vision and Strategic Plan

Table 5: Summary of Key Strategies for the Community Enrichment Strategic Implementation Area (con't.)

Key Strategy	Goal	Who Should Take the Lead	Who Should Become Involved
4. Provide affordable housing to allow lifelong residents to stay in the area in which they were born and raised.	Housing	Planning Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Council • Department of Planning • Developers • Mayor • Older Persons Commission • Property Owners • Renters
5. Work with other area communities (e.g. City of Rochester) to publish and promote a year-round calendar of festivals and performances.	Activities and Events	A task force of organizations throughout the region that produce special events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Volunteers in Rochester Hills • Rochester Hills City Council and other Municipalities • Community Organization Resource Exchange • Community Foundation of Greater Rochester • Non-profit Organizations in Rochester Hills and the Region
6. Offer a wide variety of classes that provides opportunities for students to become involved in internships and organizations outside of the school system.	Education	The <i>Speak Up!</i> Implementation Committee, in collaboration with the Avondale and Rochester Community School Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens • Rochester Hills City Council and other Municipalities • Parent Teacher Associations • Private Sector • Rochester-Auburn Hills Community Coalition • Rochester Community Schools Foundation • Youth
7. Develop a partnership among businesses, schools, and community to encourage the development of job skills and opportunities for citizens of all ages.	Economy and Finance	The <i>Speak Up!</i> Implementation Committee, in collaboration with the Avondale and Rochester Community School Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens • Rochester Hills City Council and other Municipalities • Parent Teacher Associations • Private Sector • Rochester-Auburn Hills Community Coalition • Rochester Community Schools Foundation • Youth
8. Develop small neighborhood parks within subdivisions to create a sense of community.	Housing	The <i>Speak Up!</i> Implementation Committee and a task force assembled by this Committee to implement the creation of public "pocket parks"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Council • Department of Planning • Developers • Mayor • Planning Commission • Property Owners • Subdivision Associations

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Table 6: Summary of Key Strategies for the Government Efficiency Strategic Implementation Area

Key Strategy	Goal	Who Should Take the Lead	Who Should Become Involved
1. Change the City charter to replace the strong mayor with a city manager.	Government	City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Charter Commission • Mayor
2. Coordinate and consolidate refuse collection and recycling.	Services	City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens • Community Development and Viability Committee • Mayor • Public Services Department
3. Continue to enhance police and fire services as economically as possible.	Services	City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Community • Citizens • Community Development and Viability Committee • Fire Department • Local Hospitals • Mayor • Oakland County Sheriff's Department

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Vision and Strategic Plan

Table 7: Summary of Key Strategies for the Transportation Options Strategic Implementation Area

Key Strategy	Goal	Who Should Take the Lead	Who Should Become Involved
1. Establish center turn lanes in lieu of widening roads and creating boulevards; Widen roads at intersections and lengthen left and right turn lanes.	Innovations in Mobility Transportation	City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens of Rochester Hills • Department of Planning • South East Michigan Department of Transportation
2. Develop a convenient and reliable community/inter-community mass transit system that incorporates the current system and learns from previous experience.	Innovations in Mobility	City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departments of Planning • Elected Officials from Adjacent Municipalities • Planning Commissions • Representatives from Local Metropolitan Planning Organizations
3. Complete the network of bike paths to connect with other communities.	Innovations in Mobility	City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Planning • Mayor • Planning Commissions

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Table 8: Summary of Key Strategies for the Civic Leadership Strategic Implementation Area

Key Strategy	Goal	Who Should Take the Lead	Who Should Become Involved
1. Require citizen votes whenever public land is to be leased by private business.	Government	Citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
2. Hold "true" town meetings to encourage genuine two-way communication.	Citizen Involvement	City Council, working closely with the <i>Speak Up!</i> Implementation Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens of Rochester Hills • City Council • Mayor • Relevant City of Rochester Hills Departments

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