

Organizational Strategic Plan

Town of Ridgway

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Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

The standard strategic planning framework utilized by municipalities includes a community vision, statement of values, organizational mission, strategic goals, objectives and action plans. Variations of the framework occur to meet the specific needs of each organization. The Literature Review provides a comprehensive description of the strategic planning process as applied to local government, citing current sources and examples.

This strategic planning project concerns the Town of Ridgway – a small West Slope municipality. Recent trends in the Town include rapid growth, demographic shifts and constraints in resources to meet the growing demands of the populace. The Town organization has functioned well, but has done so lacking a clear vision to guide the decisions and prioritize its many tasks and projects. While the Town has various planning and budgeting tools in place, it has never endeavored to develop a strategic plan.

The project is based upon a refined model that incorporates the general strategic framework, involving public stakeholder input in the visioning process, followed by internal drafting of goals and objectives, all under the guidance of a steering committee comprised of stakeholders both within and outside the organization. The project was pursued under a rigorous timetable, involving numerous facilitated meetings and workshops.

Results of the process include a list of strategic goals that track with the vision and values of the community, with consideration of the organizations' internal and external attributes and constraints. These goals then provide the template for three-year performance objectives and detailed action plans for implementation in the current year. Use of the plan will prove to be a valuable management tool for the organization, aligning its many functions and systems with community vision, with strategic successes to be measured through performance outcomes.

Introduction

Organizations can function without a clear strategy. It is possible and not uncommon that organizations function by simply responding to demands from their external environments with a degree of success and stakeholder support. Without a clear strategy, however, an organization runs the risk of taking on missions that often times are in conflict, lacking available resources for implementation, and pursued without an articulated sense of purpose (Cohen and Emeric, 2002). In the public arena, reliance becomes placed upon “the intuition and vision of gifted leaders” to accurately define the public interest and manage its many demands (Bryson, 2004, p.14).

The strategic planning project that is the subject of this paper is a client-based project for the Town of Ridgway – a small West Slope municipality that has experienced recent years of rapid growth and demographic change. While the Town organization has functioned well, it has done so in a manner that has largely been reactive to the demands placed upon it. There has been lacking a stated vision to guide the decisions of the organization, and a cohesive strategy to implement these decisions. The organizational strategic plan that is the outcome of this project is a working process that will enable the Town to effectively manage its many systems in a sustainable and measureable framework, creating public value into the future.

This project has direct application to previous coursework within the GSPA program: *Organizational Management and Change* (the project will enable the Town to better address rapid changes that continue to occur both within and external to the organization); *Policy Process and Democracy* (applying the principle that the policy process is incremental over time with outcomes to be evaluated and policies revised as necessary); and *Executive Development Seminar: Leading Change* (the application of strategic planning has proven to be a successful management tool in public administration).

Literature Review

Strategic Planning Defined

Strategic planning may be defined in simple terms as actions taken in the present to meet the future's objectives (Mercer, 1991). More specifically, it may be defined as the basic pattern of current and planned resource allocations and interactions that demonstrate how an organization will achieve its goals (Hofer and Schendel, 1978). Strategic planning typically is characterized as the interrelation of an organization's mission (as defined from public values), its means for accomplishing its mission, and how the mission will be achieved (Moore, 1995). John Bryson (2005, p. 6) describes the process as "a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and action that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it."

Strategic Planning in for Local Government

Strategic planning in the public sector is more complicated than in the private sector. State and local governments have broad responsibilities for providing services and infrastructure that range from such needs as public safety and education to transportation and law enforcement. The numerous working environments in which these many functions occur are interwoven (Gordon, 2005). In the public arena, there is also the citizenry to which the organization serves and is held accountable. The process is one that needs to tie together these many functions in a manner that adheres to the vision of the citizens, producing measurable outputs consistent with strategized priorities.

The strategic planning process in each jurisdiction will vary, dependent upon the characteristics and needs of the community, the personalities and relationships of its leaders and participants, and the nature of the issues to review. There is no single or best approach (Gordon,

2005). An effective strategic planning process is “best implemented not through a perfect system, but through a system that is customized to the needs and organizational environment of the municipality” (Plant, 2008, p.4). The planning process is thus customized to fit the particular needs, resources and constraints of the organization. Still, there are some underlying elements or principles that can be generally employed to establish the strategic planning framework. As noted in Gordon’s (1994) *Strategic Planning for Local Government*, the process in local government generally involves the development of a vision, the organizational mission, environmental scanning, goals, objectives and strategies.

Elements of the Strategic Plan

The flow of the planning process starts with the formulation of the vision, where community stakeholder input is broad, and progresses toward the development of detailed organizational action plans, which are quantified, measureable and always in conformance with the overarching vision. The flow is not entirely one-directional. As action plans are implemented, they must be coordinated with ongoing budgeting constraints and resource allocation, and their success will be the subject of continuous measurement and evaluation. Feedback loops are thus critical to establish the necessary measure of success of the stated priorities and plans. The general strategic framework is depicted in *Figure 1*, Appendix.

Vision and values.

Vision statements for local governments generally articulate the collective ideal community toward which the organization is working. “They may reflect a certain standard of living, the pleasantness of the environment, or the general vibrancy of the community” (Gordon, 2005, p. 29). The entire strategic planning process begins with and must consistently and

continuously relate to the vision statement (Gordon, 2005). The underlying need for the vision is aptly summarized by Plant (2008, p. 32):

[V]ision and Value Statements are fundamental to strategic planning and good management. Thus, reviewing major decisions against these yardsticks is a powerful governance tool. Further, for municipal staff, it allows them to truly understand the objectives of the organization, to make everyday decisions that are consistent, and to buy-in on new directions. The organization is able to evolve without experiencing chaos because its overall direction and intent are clear. Council, senior management and employees all gain a sense of pride in working for an organization that stands for something, and are united by a common sense of purpose.

The strategic framework depicted in *Figure 1*, Appendix, is that of an inverted pyramid, with the vision representing the broadened top of the process, and the action plan representing the narrowed apex at the end of the process. The pyramid is inverted to represent a flow of information that is very comprehensive at the top, encapsulated in the community vision, and very specific at the conclusion, embodied in each detailed action plan. Strategic goals, objectives and plans are continuously monitored through feedback loops as depicted.

Mission.

While vision statements reflect the community ideal, mission statements represent the organizational role in pursuing that ideal (Gordon, 2005). The mission statement is a formal declaration of the organizational purpose (Bryson, 2004). While mission statements may vary in length, they are generally very concise and typically take the form of a slogan or single sentence. Factors to be considered in formulating the organizational mission statement should (a) name the organization, (b) describe the services or products that it provides, (c) delineate for whom the services or products are provided, and (d) describe how they are to be provided (Riddle, 2008).

SWOT analysis.

A SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) is an analytical tool that focuses on external and internal factors affecting the organization. When used as a strategic planning tool, it allows stakeholders to develop a focused understanding of where their organization is now, and what future direction is needed to meet the community vision (Plant, 2008). In order to effectively respond to the constant changes that occur, public organizations must identify and understand these internal and external contexts, so that they can develop effective strategies that account for these factors in a way to promote the public value (Bryson, 2004). This step of the strategic planning process is an information input process where environmental assessments, both internal to the organization (strengths and weaknesses) and external to the organization (opportunities and threats) are carefully explored.

This information is vital to the organization's success and prosperity. As Bryson (2004, p.129) notes, "it is difficult to imagine that an organization can be truly effective over the long haul unless it has an intimate knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses in relation to the opportunities and challenges it faces."

Strategic goals.

Upon completion of the environmental scan and SWOT analysis, the template for the strategic goals is in place. Generally, each trend or emerging issue in the SWOT analysis could be addressed with a correlating goal. Goals usually address long-term issues, and they are tied, as everything else in the strategic planning process, to the community vision. The process of defining the goals may generally mirror the facilitated process of developing the vision, mission and values (Plant, 2008), although more input into this part of the planning exercise is derived at the organizational level, where operational systems and priorities become more integrated,

enabling a system of accountability that will align individual roles within the organization to the goals and objectives that have been set (Plant, 2008).

Goals do not include a great degree of specificity. The number of goals cannot be predicted, and strategic plans for local governments may concentrate on several key goals or a multitude of areas that will represent components of the community focus over a long period of time (Gordon, 2005).

Performance objectives.

Each of the goals identified in the strategic planning process will be followed one or more performance objectives (Gordon, 2005). Objectives are fairly broad but should be measurable, dealing with quantities, dates and task completions. In identifying performance objectives, Bryson (2004) suggests that a process be pursued whereby practical alternatives are formulated, followed by a determination of what barriers may exist to prevent those alternatives from being realized. Upon recognition of potential barriers, action plans can then be developed. While the strategic goals are set by the senior management staff and council, the development of performance objectives and action plans are developed with input from staff (Plant, 2008).

Action plans.

Action plans, also referred to as tactics or strategies in strategic plans, specify the actions needed to address each of strategic goals and associated objectives, who will complete each action and according to what timeline (McNamara, 2009). Considering that strategic goals are general statements, and their resulting objectives are broad but measurable, the ensuing action plans are then where the detailed tactics and steps are fleshed out (Gordon, 2005). This is where the vision becomes action.

These action plans are typically assigned to individuals or groups, taking into account workloads, timetables and resource allocation. They may be prioritized at the municipal level, and integrated into annual performance evaluations to gauge employee performance (Gordon, 2005). In such a structure, it is important that administrators and supervisors understand the plan in its entirety. As Gordon (2005, p.45) notes, “the greater the understanding by those who implement the plan, the better the buy-in; the better the buy-in, the more aggressively and effectively the goals and objectives will be pursued.”

The purpose is to ultimately gain an official decision to adopt the strategic goals and action plans, and for this to happen, it must first address the identified issues with solutions that appear likely to succeed (Bryson, 2004). The plan’s success will also be contingent upon favorable political climate (stakeholder opinion) and potential barriers must be mitigated or avoided (Bryson, 2004).

While strategic goals are typically set with a one to three year timeline in mind, action plans generally range from 90 days to 12 months (Collaborative Connections, 2008). This coincides well with annual budgeting practices, resource allocation and planning, and annual performance evaluations.

The planning process does not end with identification of action plans and performance of those plans over time. Feedback loops and periodic reviews of the strategic plan, and achievements from the plan, are critical. The strategic plan is constantly reviewed and evaluated, and in this sense is a “living document” that has meaning to the organization (Plant, 2008, p. 90). Often times a report of the strategic planning successes to the citizenry becomes the measuring gauge for how the local government is performing, in terms that are meaningful and familiar to the community.

The Town of Ridgway

Town History

The Town of Ridgway is a home rule municipality with a population of slightly more than 1,000 located in southwest Colorado. The Town's heritage is one steeped in railroad and agriculture. In 1889, the Rio Grande Southern Railroad was incorporated for the purpose of establishing a rail link between Ridgway and Durango. The men who brought the rail into the area came with experience in developing new towns. The plat of Ridgway, in 1890, was conveyed from the railroad company to the Town as the original Ridgway Town site. The Town was then named after one of the railroad founders, Robert M. Ridgway.

The Town experienced many great challenges spanning several decades which threatened its very existence, including the collapse of the silver market (the rail service was used to haul gold and silver ore from nearby Ouray and Telluride), the great depression, two world wars, the demise of the Rio Grande Southern Railroad, and the controversial plans by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to construct a large dam and reservoir that would inundate the town site.

Things started to improve for the Ridgway community in the latter half of the century. The construction of a new state highway (to access Telluride) made the Town a focal point on the map as gateway to the San Juan Mountains. The filming of two prominent Hollywood productions in the 1960s ("How the West was Won" and "True Grit") brought greatly needed recognition to the community. Most importantly, the decision to relocate the planned reservoir north of the Town spared the Ridgway community, prompting a resurgence of residential growth in the 1970s. Ridgway Reservoir was constructed in the 1980s, and is now part of the beautiful Ridgway State Park, enhancing recreation and tourism in the region. The Town started to grow at a rapid pace in the 1990s, surpassing its population of a century ago for the first time.

Environmental Scan

Recent and new trends in the Ridgway community can be identified on many fronts, but can be generally summarized in the areas of land use and demographics, water resources, transportation, community development, local economics, environmental issues, organizational growth and Town infrastructure.

Land use and demographics.

Growth in Ouray County has surged in recent years (see *Figure 2*, Appendix), and the County population has experienced an annual growth rate of 3.0 percent since 1970 (Headwaters, 2008) and 4.7 percent over the past several years (Theobald, 2008). In 2001, Ouray County and its two incorporated municipalities, the City of Ouray and the Town of Ridgway, entered into an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) whereby urban growth boundaries were established around each municipality, within which higher density urban growth would be funneled. The intent was to keep the unincorporated areas limited to a cap of one unit per thirty five acres, preserving the natural beauty that defines Ouray County. The policy has been successful and is widely supported. Most of the growth in Ouray County will occur within the two urban growth boundaries and specifically in Ridgway where developable land is more abundant than in its neighboring City of Ouray which lies within a box canyon. To note, population growth within the Town in recent years has been several times that of the City of Ouray (EPS, 2008).

Even with current land use policies in place, housing units in Ouray County are on the rise and disproportionately so when compared to population growth (see *Figure 3*, Appendix). An emerging demographic trend is that of second home ownership. Second home ownership in the County nearly doubled between 2000 and 2006, and may presently represent about a quarter of all home ownership in the County (EPS, 2008, p. 26). The rapidly increasing property values

in the County, coupled with other factors including the emerging trend of second home ownership, have added to the problem of housing affordability. The median cost of market rate housing has increased significantly in the recent past. In addition to making housing less affordable for those who reside in Ouray County, higher costs impact Ouray County's ability to become more economically sustainable, as many employees simply cannot afford to reside in the County. The median sale price for ownership housing has increased 11.6 percent annually since 2003 from \$255,000 to \$395,000 (EPS, 2008, p.4).

While more recent growth may be impacted by the current economic recession, it is interesting to note that Ouray County's population has shown remarkable resiliency to economic downturns over the years, especially in comparison to nationwide and statewide trends (See *Figure 4. Appendix*). The Town is poised to receive much of the growth that is projected for Ouray County, and the numbers reveal that such growth is destined.

Water Resources

The Town owns its own water supply and delivery system, relying upon surface flows from a mountain tributary several miles southwest of the Town in the San Juan Mountain Range. While the tributary's water yield has been consistently reliable, the Town's reservoir storage of untreated water is greatly under capacity, currently holding approximately 100 acre feet of water while decreed for 750 acre feet. In the 2002 drought year, the Town's water rights could have been placed upon an administrative "call" by the Division Engineer for the Water District. Curtailment of the water supply was avoided, but the Town was notified that measures to augment its water supply were imminent to survive future calls from downstream senior users. Increased storage of untreated or "raw" water will enable to the Town to augment its water rights in drought periods when such calls could potentially curtail the Town's water diversions.

Transportation

Transportation infrastructure remains a high priority for the Town. Highway 62 (Sherman Street) experiences high traffic volumes of commuters traveling between Montrose and Telluride. The highway is in great need of a center turn lane, paved shoulders and pedestrian crossings and linkages. This project has been identified on the Colorado Department of Transportation 2035 Plan (URS, 2008) and is on one of the many eligibility lists for funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (“stimulus funding”). Off highway, there is much need to address the Town streetscape infrastructure. The Town completed its Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element in 2008, identifying many needed improvements and key linkages in terms of streetscape and pedestrian infrastructure.

Community development.

The growth and enhancement of the Ridgway community in recent years could best be summarized by noting the construction of several key facilities -- a community center in 2001, a regional athletic park in 2002, a regional events center in 2003, a library that same year, a new high school in 2005, and a school gymnasium which will break ground in 2009. Commercial development in the Town has been strong, as has residential growth throughout the community. A large river restoration project was constructed in 2004, extending a river trail that now connects with the nearby Ridgway State Park, and the newly create Dennis Weaver Memorial Park. There have been many improvements to the community infrastructure as well, and many new sidewalk and street projects have materialized each year.

Residents of Ridgway are actively engaged in many local issues and projects, and the Town has been actively sponsoring arts, music and cultural festivals that are enjoyed and well attended. There is a genuine and vibrant community spirit.

Economics.

Job growth in Ouray County has been strong in recent years, and has fared better than average in the more recent economic downturn. With the current recession, unemployment in the state is at 7.2 percent (March, 2009), well below the national average of 8.1 percent (Bureau of Labor, 2009). Unemployment in western Colorado is significantly better, reported at 6.2 percent (Colorado Labor Department, 2009).

In terms of types of employment, jobs from business proprietors contributed to 51 percent of new employment from 1970 to 2005, and 45% of new employment since 1995 (Headwaters, 2007). Growth of proprietor employment and income is generally a healthy sign that opportunities for entrepreneurship exist (Headwaters, 2007). Notably, over the last 35 years income growth in Ouray County has outpaced that of the state and the nation (Headwaters, 2007). In the government sector, government jobs as a percentage of overall job share has declined, now half of what it was in 1970 (See *Figure 5*, Appendix). There has been steady employment growth in the private sector, outpacing government jobs by a significant margin.

Revenues at the municipal level are also indicative of steady and healthy economic growth. In Ridgway, general fund revenues (exclusive of utility enterprise fund revenues) have steadily risen over the past several years, although there has been some leveling off in 2008, as shown in *Figure 6*, Appendix. The graphed increases in revenues are a good depiction of the local economy which appears to be thriving as an overall trend.

Environment.

The Town has exercised sound environmental stewardship on many fronts. With regard to habitat protection, the Town recently oversaw a large river restoration project that entailed the

construction of wetland areas and riparian habitat preservation along the Uncompahgre River. The Town's open spaces and natural areas are abundant and highly valued by the community.

In terms of water quality, the Town needs to improve the quality of storm water and wastewater effluent into the river system. There have been some incremental steps toward this goal, but much more work is needed. Since the 1977 Clean Water Act, all municipal dischargers have been required to obtain from the Environmental Protection Agency a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. The Town's wastewater effluent limits pursuant to this permit have been exceeded on some occasions. This is a concern for the community.

In terms of water conservation, the Town has installed significant irrigation infrastructure to provide untreated water to Town parks, school facilities, the County fairground facilities and library. The Town adheres to conservation practices, but does so lacking any formal conservation plan or policy.

Specific to air quality, the Town has few issues, but has been proactive in regulating chimney emissions from stoves and fireplaces. Particulates from gravel streets have been a concern, and mitigation efforts include the incremental hard-surfacing of busy streets.

Other environmental policies include the implementation of a successful "dark skies" ordinance which greatly minimizes light pollution throughout the community, an ordinance incentivizing solar energy infrastructure, the decision for the municipality to purchase green energy blocks, and the Town's conversion to LED holiday lighting. The Town also instituted a curbside recycling service in 2003, and is currently formulating a community composting program and curbside service for yard waste. The Town banned the use of toxic herbicides and pesticides in all Town properties in 2004.

Organization.

In 1991, Ridgway passed its home rule charter under Article XX of the Colorado Constitution and became a self-governing municipality with a council / manager form of government and a seven-person Town Council. The organization has remained small, with long-tenured employees, and considerable expertise and training in critical positions. To note, the Town has an in-house engineer, a GIS-trained Planner, and well-credentialed Town Clerk. The current and projected organizational structure is depicted in *Figure 7, Appendix*.

The organization continues to be challenged with increased demand for services, community projects and multiple policy considerations. As indicated in *Figure 5 of the Appendix*, there are generally fewer staff resources to address these challenges. This has prompted the organization to institute more efficiencies within its operations, with total labor costs over the years largely remaining less than 40 percent of total organization expenditures. The Town has relied considerably upon outside grant funding. From 2004 to 2008, the Town expended approximately \$3.8 million for capital projects, of which \$1.6 million, or 45 percent, was realized from grant sources (see *Figure 8, Appendix*).

Infrastructure.

Demands for infrastructure improvements and services continue to outpace the availability of resources by the Town, creating challenges for the organization. In 2008 the Town completed installation of a new water treatment plant to meet capacity demands of the growing population. The previous plant was unable to meet peak daily demands in summer months, and storage facilities were lacking for surplus reserves. Similar infrastructure needs exist with the Town's water distribution system, as aging polybutelene pipes are experiencing a high rate of attrition, causing costly repairs throughout the community.

With respect to storm water infrastructure, the community is lacking a municipal storm water plan, and drainage improvements consequently occur in a piecemeal fashion and without the benefit of a comprehensive plan. This is becoming a serious issue for the community as more development occurs and with it the creation of more impervious surfaces that collectively increase storm water flows during storm events.

Pedestrian infrastructure has been generally insufficient, but recent efforts to install key sidewalk linkages have seen some successes, incrementally. To illustrate, the Town recently completed a much-needed sidewalk and highway crossing to access the elementary school, and is currently completing a phased sidewalk project extending eastward from the core of Town. Much more infrastructure is needed, however, as pedestrian needs are rapidly increasing throughout the community.

Wastewater treatment and collection infrastructure is likewise requiring significant upgrades. A central lift station east of the river is slated for construction this year, and planning efforts will soon be initiated toward the eventual replacement of the centralized treatment facility, in order to comply with state water quality standards and capacity demands. Improved treatment of effluent through a plant upgrade will likely be prompted by ongoing issues related to water quality standards.

Education.

The Ridgway School District has successfully overseen the approval and construction of a new middle school / high school facility, and more recently has put into place the financing and of a new gymnasium, slated for construction in 2009. The quality of education in the District has improved, and a recent ranking by U.S. News placed Ridgway High School among the top 29 in Colorado (Morse, 2008). There has been good collaboration between the School District and

Town, as evidenced through resource sharing and implementation of the community corps program, whereby local students perform summer community services for the Town.

Negative Trends.

Downward trends external to the organization must also be evaluated for their potential impact upon the organization's future (Collaborative Connections, 2008). The recent economic downturn has resulted in reduced state revenues for transportation funding and other services; local revenues have flattened and construction starts have fallen. Some realization of stimulus funding is occurring in areas of transportation (Highway 62 resurfacing), and possible funding replacement of polybutylene water lines (Colorado Water Revolving Fund); cost of housing and health care has caused overall affordability in Ridgway community to decline, placing a greater need upon affordable housing measures to close the gap (EPS, 2008). Climate change may be impacting the Town's surface water diversions. In 2002, Colorado experienced a harsh drought and there is evidence to suggest that such droughts may become more common (Klein, 2006).

Need for Strategic Planning

With the pressing needs for increased services and improved infrastructure, coupled with the many policy pursuits that have emerged over the years, the Town organization has been challenged to properly prioritize its many tasks. The need for the strategic plan for the Ridgway organization is one predicated upon the need to (a) clearly articulate the community's vision for the future, (b) establish the needed goals and objectives to bring the Town closer to that vision, and (c) define the interrelationship between the many goals and tasks consistent with that vision. The Town needs a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that not only shape what the organization is and what it does, but perhaps more importantly, why it does what it does.

Theory, Method and Data

Refining the Model

The first step in the strategic planning process is to formulate the overall planning methodology. For the Town organization, a relatively streamlined planning process was sought which would utilize valuable community input at the front end and organizational knowledge integrated into the strategic directions. Local governments engaging in strategic planning need to have strong community awareness and involvement in the process at the beginning of the process (Gordon, 2005). The resulting plans need to be embraced by the organization (Gordon, 1993). The approach implemented needed to be (a) simple and effective, (b) deemed to best fit the organization, (c) community based, and (d) able to be completed in a rigorous timetable.

The strategic planning process utilized for the Town was premised upon these considerations. Key internal and external stakeholders should be involved in formulating the strategic vision and strategic priorities (Bryson, 2004). On the internal side, council and staff, not exclusive to senior management, should be involved. Such a structure is not simply a “top-down” system, but rather one that ensures support by all stakeholders (Plant, 2008).

The process that was developed was intended to include significant public input in the visioning process, and a stakeholder input through the entire process from a designated group of individuals comprised of citizens outside the organization and members from within the organization. This stakeholder group was named the “strategic planning steering committee”. The outcomes of the strategic planning process would be subject to review and approval by the elected officials of the municipality, the Town Council. Members of the Town Council would therefore need to have continuous input into the planning process, through structured meetings and through active participation in the steering committee.

The formulation of this process was reached in collaboration with a trained facilitator consulted by the Town (“facilitator”). Facilitation can be quite important at various steps in the planning process, especially during the design of the process and the conducting of group meetings and stakeholders who need to work effectively together (Bryson, 2004). The model used for the Town is diagramed in *Figure 9*, Appendix.

The community environment is dynamic, with a multitude of changes that occur each day. Snowstorms happen, as do broken pipes. Economies thrive, and then falter. In the short time since the Ridgway 2009 budget was adopted, economic factors have emerged that will have profound impact upon the community, prompting considerable public attention and concern. Kingdon (2003) describes these as focusing events. Strategic plans cannot be static. As *Figure 9* depicts, the planning process is a recurring one, with successes monitored, failures analyzed, and various goals and objectives being revised as needed.

Relationship to Other Plans

Ridgway has not been devoid of good planning efforts. The Town has seen considerable efforts toward the development of its comprehensive plan (inclusive of land use, transportation and parks elements). The organization has also put into place a capital improvements plan which helps prioritize important projects and purchases. The comprehensive plan generally speaks to the tangible attributes of the community; the capital improvement plan and budget are financial tools. Though effective, these plans don’t always interrelate, and often times there is lacking a guiding vision to make sense of it all. Strategic plans are much broader in scope, based upon a wide array of values, tangible and intangible, enabling the organization to ‘tie it all together’. The model in *Figure 10* in the Appendix depicts this relationship.

Stakeholders

The process of strategic planning is collective, representing a wide spectrum of participants in the visioning process, enabling the community to define its future. The product of this process is one that is critical to the municipal organization, giving meaning to its objectives and tasks. In order to make the process one that is genuinely collective, while recognizing that the plan itself is an organizational plan, emphasis was placed on initial community input in the development of the collective vision.

The community.

The community at large is identified to be the group of stakeholders that would guide the process initially, addressing the visioning and values component of the model. Ensuring a broad-based group of stakeholders will result in a strategic planning process that would not simply be regarded as one “owned” by the government, but rather a community driven process as a whole.

The steering committee.

The steering committee was assembled to oversee the entire planning process. The committee consisted of 11 individuals, representing various components of the Ridgway community, including Town leadership; Town staff; business and professional services; education and non-profit. The names and representing professions of the committee members are provided in *Table 2* of the Appendix. The resume of the facilitator is attached as *Figure 11* of the Appendix.

The Town Council and staff.

The Town Council oversees the Town organization and is directly accountable to its citizenry. In its role as a policy maker, the Council oversees policy matters in the interest of the

community, and often directs the Town staff to perform research and planning to assist in the formulation of these decisions. In defining the stakeholders of the strategic planning process, the Council was a necessary party.

Care had to be exercised, however, in not fashioning the process as one that is wholly driven by the elected officials. A 2003 survey of municipalities in the United States which had engaged in strategic planning revealed that elected officials and senior managers represented approximately 65 percent of their stakeholders, with much lower percentages for citizens and staff (Plant, 2008, p. 55). Engaging citizenry in the strategic planning process, and actively involving middle management and frontline staff, allows for an enduring plan that will have support both within and outside the organization.

Three members of the Town Council and three department heads of the Town organization participated in the steering committee. The public as a whole had significant participation in the visioning process, while members of the public oversaw the process in its entirety as steering committee participants. All of the planning meetings were public, and Town staff members were apprised of the resulting plans, with opportunity for input. The stakeholders thus included a broad consortium of Town citizens, Town staff and Town Council.

General Timetable

The strategic planning process spanned approximately three months and involved two community visioning meetings, two Town Council workshops, four meetings of the steering committee and two regular Town Council meetings. Between these meetings, there was substantial time devoted to literature review, research, and formulation of the planning elements and drafting of the final plan. The general timeline of the planning process is shown in *Figure 12*, Appendix. The list of meetings conducted in the process is set forth in *Table 1*, Appendix.

Methodology

The strategic process actually commenced with the initial discussion before the Town Council at its workshop on January 19th. Upon formulating the strategic framework and timeline, and with the assistance of the appointed steering committee, the visioning process was undertaken. Articulation of the vision statement sets the tone for the strategic process. To accomplish this, participations are generally asked to describe their preferred future, and workshops are conducted to ensure that the stakeholders are in alignment with each other (Collaborative Connections, 2008).

With regard to the vision and values process for Ridgway, the community stakeholders were solicited for two public meetings by widespread notice and publication (see *Figures 13 and 17*, Appendix). During the first community meeting, the first three questions as provided on *Figure 18*, Appendix, were considered. Attendees were assembled in five break-out groups, each group providing its aggregate responses, which were weighted through a flip-chart and labeling exercise (see *Figures 14, 15 and 16*, Appendix). This is a traditional method that is often employed in the strategic planning process with success, as it draws from a variety of input and then aggregates key outcomes (Plant, 2008).

Outcomes of this meeting were gathered to help formulate the vision and values, as well as strengths and opportunities to assist in the environmental scanning process. The second community meeting was then held to review these drafts. During this second meeting, the attendees also considered a fourth question to help identify weaknesses and threats to the community and to the organization (see *Figure 18*). Summaries of all four questions were then compiled. The steering committee reconvened twice in this community visioning process to review the outcomes and assist in the drafting of the community vision and values.

Concurrent with the visioning process, the outcomes of the environmental scan were aggregated and summarized in two matrixes. The first includes a summary of trends within the organization and community as identified in the environmental scan (see *Table 3*, Appendix), while the second summarizes the organizational (internal) strengths and weaknesses, and external opportunities and threats (see *Figures 4 and 5* of the Appendix). The SWOT analysis serves as a tool to logically connect the strategic goals and objectives to the emerging issues and trends within the community, with due regard to the attributes and constraints of the organization as well as outside factors (Gordon, 2005). It is an input that is critical to the strategic planning process (Gordon, 1993). The completion of the vision and values, coupled with the SWOT analysis, constituted the bulk of the larger community involvement.

At this juncture in the planning process, the organizational mission statement was drafted internally, with input from the steering committee and Town Council. The mission statement highlighted concepts and values that emerged in the visioning process (Gordon, 2005). The organization pursued the drafting of strategic goals and objectives (see *Figure 19*, Appendix). Effective strategic goals are generally drafted in a manner that takes advantage of the strengths and opportunities, at the same time minimizing or overcoming the weaknesses and challenges (Bryson, 2004). Using this methodology, the goals and objectives were prepared and presented to the steering committee and to the Town Council at its workshop on March 18, 2009.

The final steps of the planning process involved the articulate of detailed action plans for the current year, based upon each of the goals and objectives as identified. The action plans were collectively reviewed by the Town staff, and submitted to the steering committee at its meeting of April 6, 2008. The outcomes were then compiled and presented to the Town Council for formal approval at its regular meeting of April 8, 2009.

Findings – the Strategic Plan

Community Vision and Values

The community vision was formulated amidst two community meetings, two steering committee meetings, numerous email exchanges and a Town Council workshop. All of the drafting processes and meetings were assisted by the facilitator. The resulting vision is one based upon significant stakeholder input, and one which accurately reflects the Ridgway ideal. It reads as follows:

Ridgway is a welcoming, community-minded, rural town situated in a beautiful mountain valley. We support learning, creativity and culture. We share a deep connection to the outdoors. We are committed to being economically sustainable and ecologically responsible.

The same processes were used to develop and refine the values of the community. Similar to the vision statement, emphasis was placed on conciseness and accuracy. The values are as follows:

We value:

- *Civility, Diversity and Inclusivity*
- *Creativity, Innovation and Lifelong Learning*
- *Responsible Economic and Environmental Practices*
- *Our Incredible Natural Surroundings and the Opportunities they Provide*
- *A Viable Agricultural Community*
- *Vibrant and Sustainable Businesses*
- *A Pedestrian-Friendly Environment*

SWOT Analysis

The environmental scan as collectively prepared in the community venue was compiled into the matrix of community trends set forth in *Table 3, Appendix*. The matrix is categorized by topics including demographics and land use, water resources, transportation, community development, economics, environment, organization and community infrastructure. It is

followed by two tables collectively consisting of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (*Tables 4 and 5 respectively, Appendix*).

The information contained in these summaries provided the template for the strategic goals and objectives that were subsequently formulated. Good strategic planning involves “finding the best or most advantageous fit between an organization and its environment based on an intimate understanding of both” (Bryson, 2004, p. 125).

Mission Statement

In general, the mission statement articulates the role of the local government in pursuing the community’s vision (Gordon, 2005). The mission statement accurately represents the overall function of the organization – the pursuit of the community interest. It reads as follows:

The Town of Ridgway is dedicated to the well-being and sustainability of our community and the enhancement of our small town character by continuously providing efficient, quality services and exercising sound stewardship of our resources.

Strategic Goals and Three-Year Performance Objectives

Extracting the numerous issues, challenges and opportunities from the environmental scan produced a list of ten strategic goals, covering a wide spectrum of topics that concern the Town. The goals reflect directly upon the community vision and values. These goals are listed in *Table 6, Appendix*. Each strategic goal is followed by a list of three-year performance objectives, which in turn are followed by a series of one-year action plans. As the goals are translated into objectives and plans, the level of detail is greatly increased. The action plans are quantifiable with descriptions of outcomes, deadlines, and responsible parties for their performance.

The strategic goal performance objectives all track with many of the internal goals that have been established within the Town budget and capital improvement plan, and also within the Town Manager's performance annual evaluation. This is to be expected. Strategic plans must incorporate ongoing programs and levels of effort. As Gordon (2005, p. 65) notes, "the strategic plan of a local government should include existing objectives as well as new goals and objectives." The strategic plan and the budget are inherently linked (Plant, 2008).

It is interesting to note that a few instances have become apparent where emerging trends (both positive and negative) are directly correlated to the outcomes of goals and objectives. For example, the need to address the Town's water resources may be directly tied to growth, but is exacerbated by climate change and drought (negative trends), placing the Town's water diversions at risk of curtailment by more senior water rights. This causes the need for immediate efforts and strategies to evaluate and augment the Town's water supply. Another example is that of the local Town economy. The current downturn in the economy has raised the community's desire for economic sustainability and job opportunity, prompting the stated goal to implement the planned streetscape improvements within the Town's historic core, thereby fostering a more business friendly environment and appeal to tourists and shoppers.

The list of goals and objectives is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to be. It is important to note that the strategic priorities as identified represent the most critical issues at this time, and this prioritization of goals will indeed evolve over time, no differently it has in past years. Framing these goals in such a short-term implementation schedule (three years) ensures that they will be addressed promptly, with new goals to replace them or revised goals to amend them, and all the while with long-term focus upon the vision and values of the community.

One-Year Action Plans.

The Town's fiscal year coincides with the calendar year. Projects and goals that were slated for appropriation in the 2009 fiscal year were identified in the capital improvement and budget process that occurred in the summer and fall of 2009. As such, the identification of one-year action plans as part of the strategic planning process needs to account for what has already been slated for the organization. The action plans nevertheless reflect, in large part, upon the goals and objectives as drafted. Action plans identified for the 2010 fiscal year will be formulated based upon the strategic plan in entirety. As the model in *Figure 10* of the Appendix illustrates, it is all tied together.

The action plans as formulated integrate Town staff at all levels, and generally have application to managerial staff in all departments. A key challenge to implementing a strategic plan is the perception by frontline employees that it will be oppressive or top-down. It is important that all employees view the system in a more positive light "as a useful tool that helps remove barriers to performance" (Plant, 2008, p. 31).

The one-year action plans as set forth in Table 6 are tied to each of the objectives and goals, which in turn are directly linked to the factors and trends as identified in the environmental scan. The action plans are quantities and qualitative, with measurable outcomes and deadlines. They will be utilized as indicators of employee performances.

Some of the three-year objectives and their accompanying action plans are premised upon current opportunities and resources made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act ("ARRA"). Examples include Goal 7.c (weatherization programs through the Governor's Energy program) and Goal #10.c (replacement of water utility lines from funding through the Colorado Safe Water Revolving Loan).

Conclusion

Among the many pressures that local governments face are the rapidly changing trends, demographically, economically, socially and environmentally. Associated with these changes are both challenges and opportunities. Demands for levels of service are not commensurate with availability of resources. The current economic recession has produced new constraints upon budgeting and employment that will be long-lasting. Borne of these challenges, however, are many opportunities to be realized? New technologies will emerge, new information will be exchanged, and indeed new efficiencies will materialize. For local governments, this will likely translate into the ability to do more, and do it faster, smarter and with fewer resources.

The act of strategic planning exemplifies an effort to do things with more efficiency and prudence. It is a means to ensure that the organization is in lock-step with the vision of its constituents, and is operating with a clarified understanding of purpose and priority. The idea of strategic planning has been well accepted as a smart practice by leaders and managers. Gordon (2005, p. 66) describes it as “the new professionalism”, while Bryson (2004, p. 17) defines it as a means for public organizations to embody “the political intelligence”. For the small and vibrant community of Ridgway, Colorado, it is an idea that is timely and well embraced.

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Appendix -- Figures and Tables

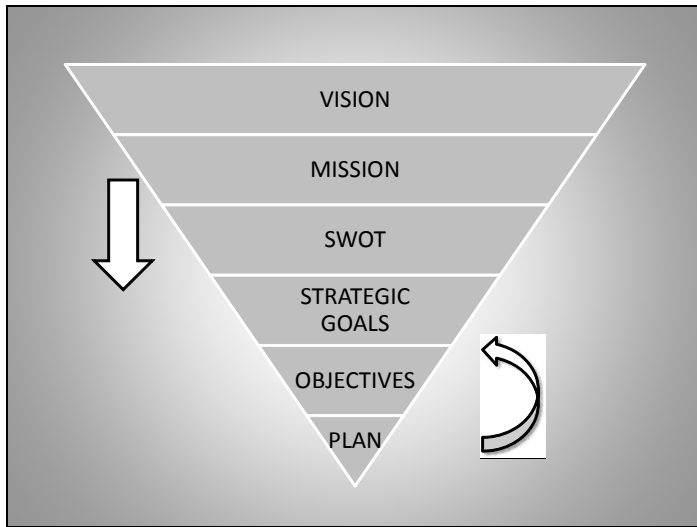


Figure 1. General framework of the strategic planning process.

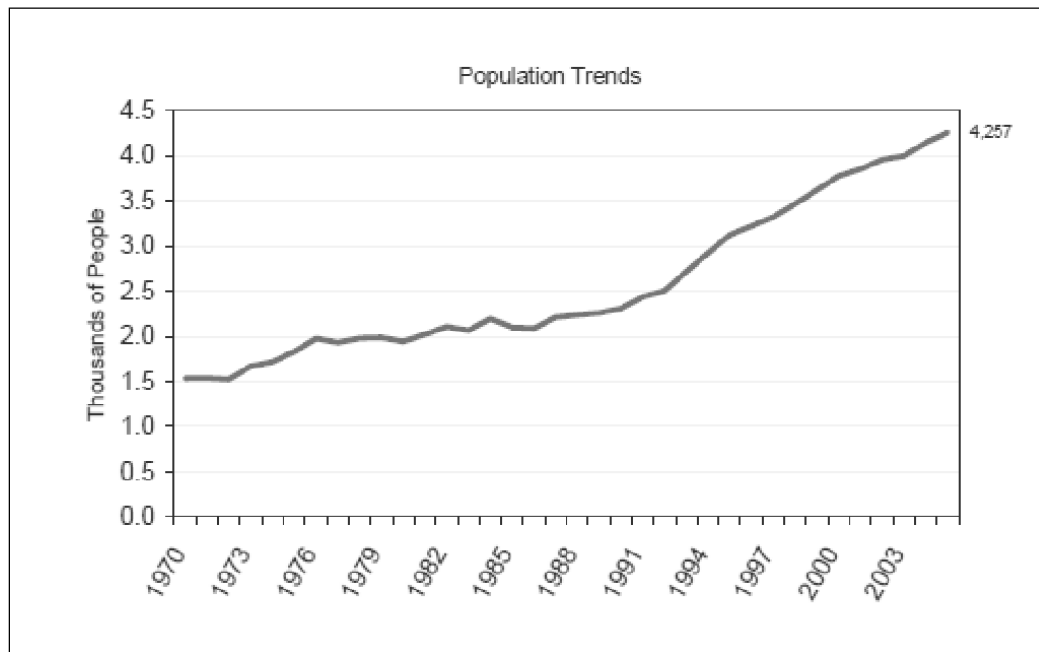


Figure 2. Population growth in Ouray County (Headwaters Economics, 2007, p.2).

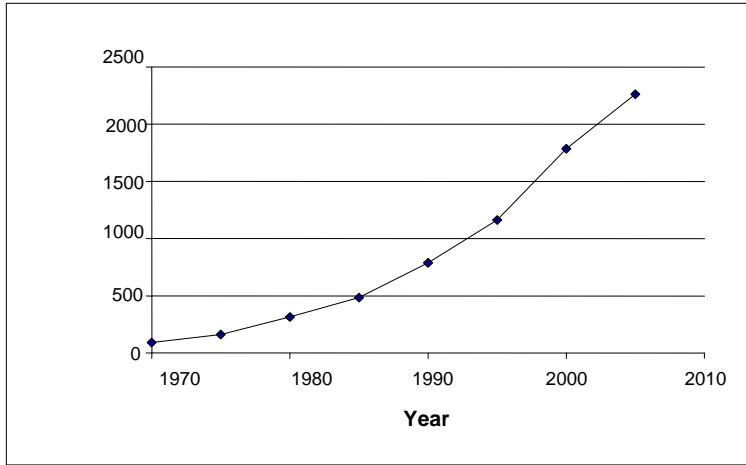


Figure 3. Ouray Residential Housing Units (Theobald, 2008, p.4).

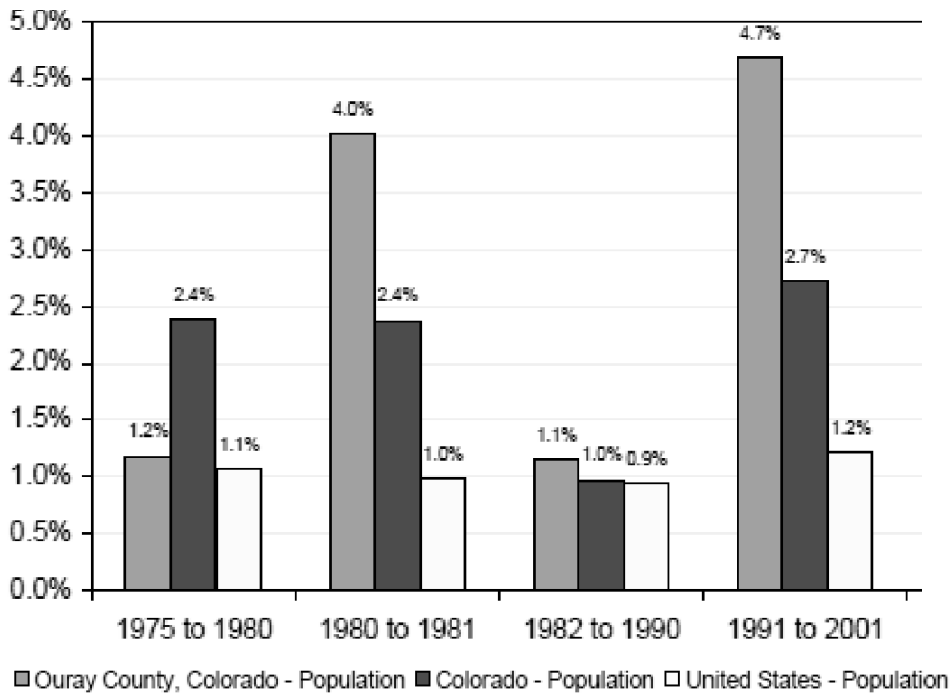


Figure 4. Population growth in Ouray County following recent recessions, annualized percentage change from trough to peak (Headwaters Economics, 2007, p.3).

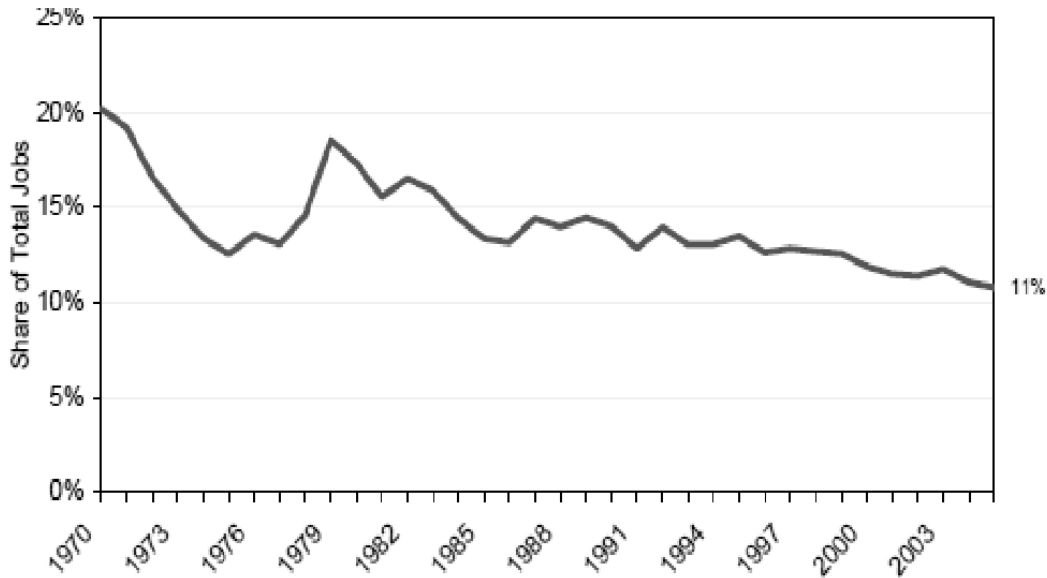


Figure 5. Percentage of government jobs in Ouray County as a share of total jobs (Headwaters Economics, 2007, p.13).

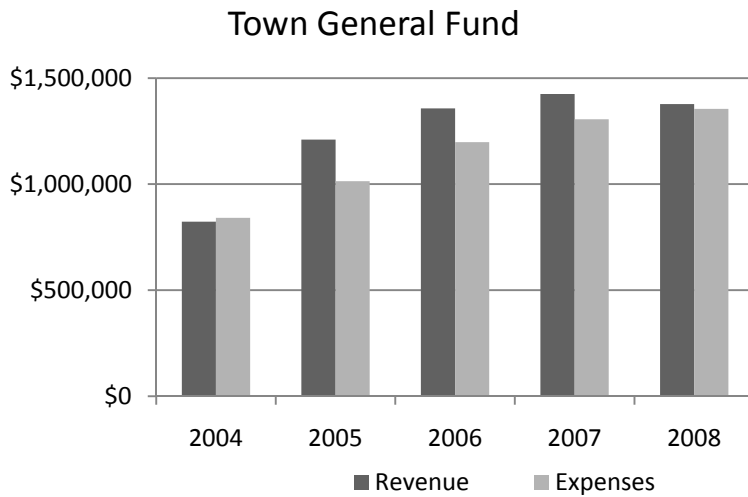


Figure 6. Town of Ridgway general fund revenues and expenditures. The graph illustrates the recent economic slowdown, which commenced in the fourth quarter revenues in fiscal year 2008.

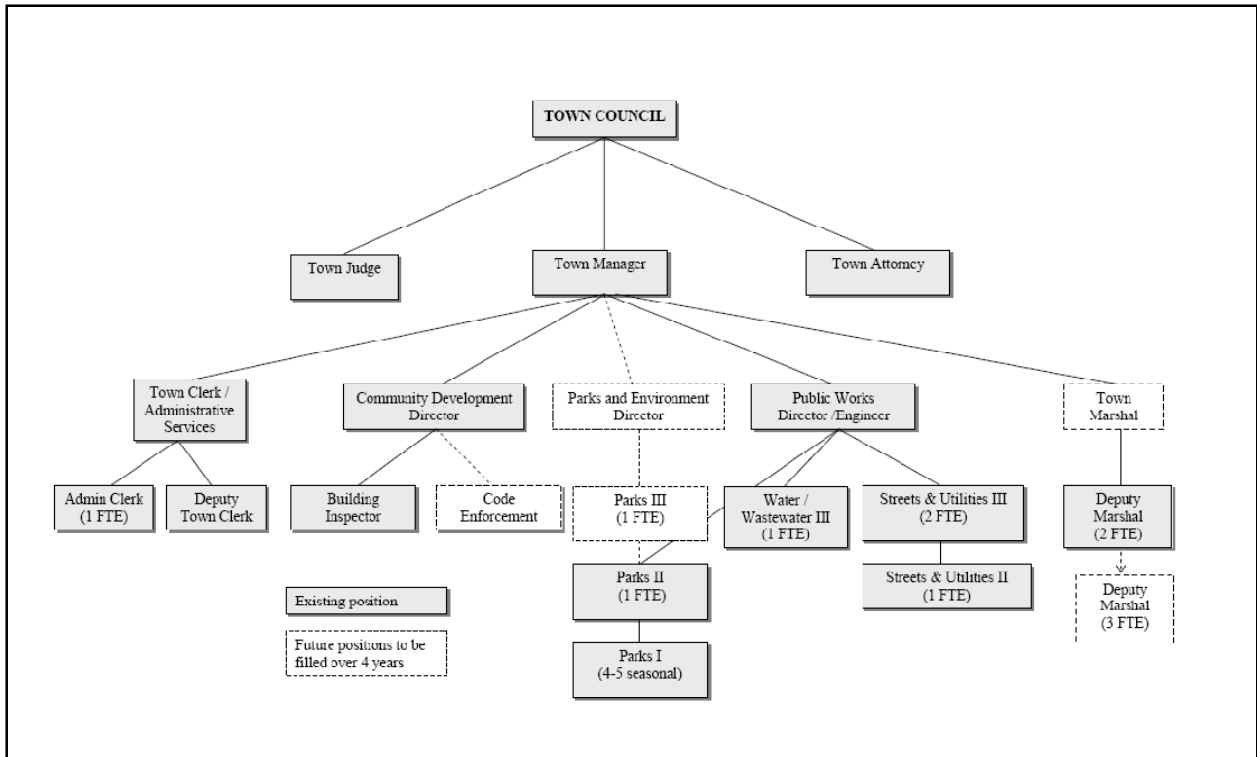


Figure 7. Schematic of organizational structure for the Town of Ridgway.

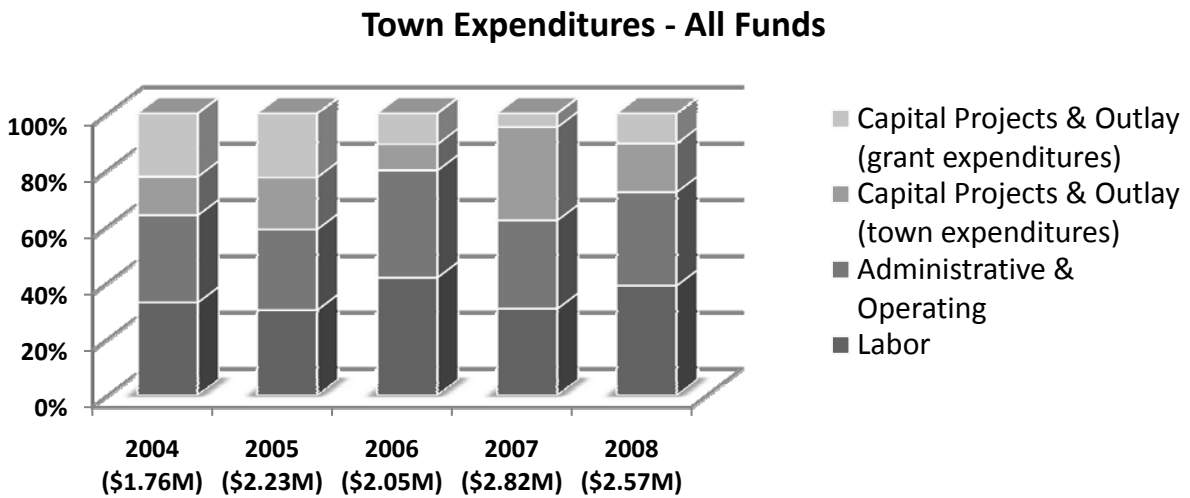


Figure 8. Breakdown of total Town expenditures, depicting (upward) labor costs, administrative costs, capital expenditures, and outside funding.

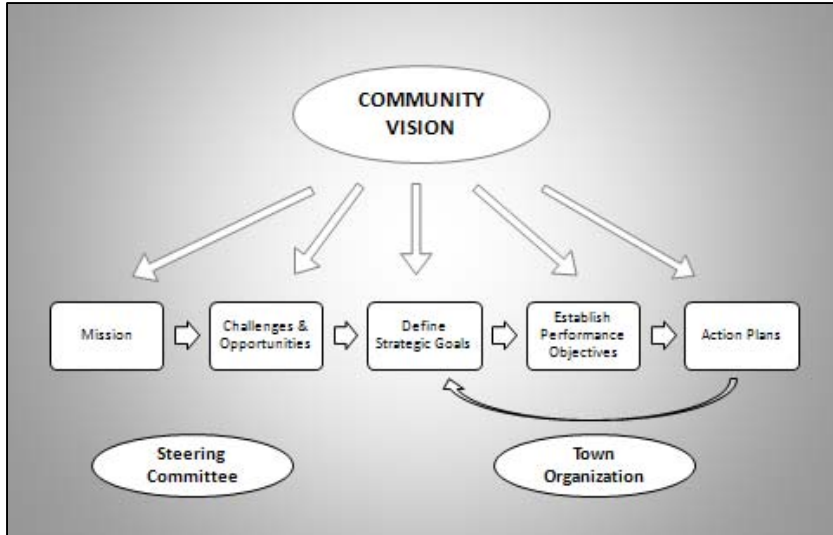


Figure 9. Model of Ridgway strategic planning process, depicting the community vision guiding the development of the overall plan. The model illustrates the input of the steering committee in the front end of the planning process, with refinement of the goals, objectives and plans primarily occurring within the organization.



Figure 10. Interrelation of strategic plans with other Town planning tools, including the capital improvements plan and annual budget. Also factoring into the process are unplanned programs and projects, which are generally introduced by the citizenry and frequently in response to a need or trend.

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AVAILABLE SERVICES

Meeting & Retreat Facilitation	Program Feasibility Research
Strategic Planning	Sustainability Planning
Board Development	Grant Writing

QUALIFICATIONS

Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communications, Regis University (Denver, Colorado) Graduated *summa cum laude*. Post-baccalaureate training in the areas of facilitation, public process, fund raising, and sustainability planning.

High level of written and oral communication skills. Ability to organize information in a concise yet compelling manner.

Ability to work collaboratively across a variety of sectors. Well-developed network of contacts in the education, business and government sectors of the community.

Twelve years of experience helping organizations and programs in rural Colorado build their organizational capacity and achieve real sustainability.

CURRENT & PAST CLIENTS

- The Colorado Trust's Partnerships for Health Initiative (Via CU Centers for Public-Private Sector Cooperation)
- Aspen to Parachute Immigrant Integration Project
- OneTelluride Immigrant Integration Project
- Voyager Youth Program (Ridgway, CO)
- Montrose Memorial Hospital (Montrose, CO)
- Town of Ridgway, Colorado
- San Juan Healthcare Foundation (Montrose County, CO)
- 7th Judicial District Community Corrections Board (Montrose, CO)

Figure 11. Resume of Facilitator used in Strategic Planning Process.

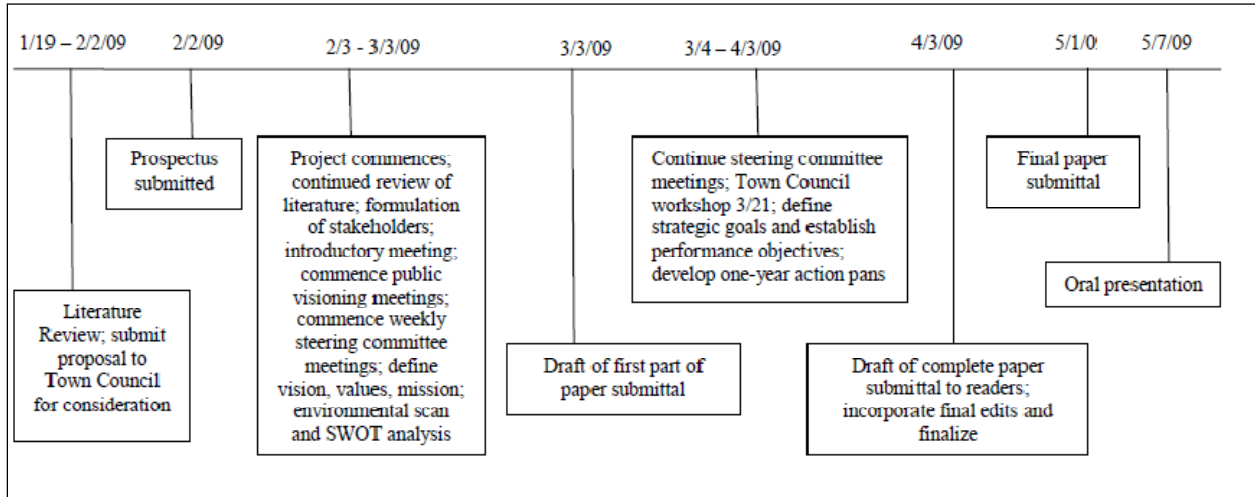


Figure 12. General Timetable of the Strategic Planning Process.



Figure 13. Newspaper Notice of community visioning meeting (Ridgway Sun, 2/18/09).



Figures 14, 15 and 16. Images from Community Visioning Meeting.

Community input drafts vision, values

The Town of Ridgway has a community vision and a listing of shared values. Almost.

Town Manager Greg Clifton said Monday evening a steering committee will next consider input provided by more than 30 people who attended the second of two community vision and value discussions. The Town Council also will review drafts prepared by the committee. "It all should be finalized soon," said Clifton. "This has been a meaningful exercise and it's really been helpful for us."

The first round of discussions, for the purpose of assisting town officials in developing short- and long-range strategic plans, took place two weeks ago. Those at the Feb. 23 session were split into five groups to provide responses to three questions: How would you describe your ideal of Ridgway? What is happening to move the community toward that ideal? What needs to happen in the future to move the community toward that ideal?

On Monday, Clifton and facilitator Noelle Hagan unveiled the initial drafts of a vision statement and a list of community values, summaries as compiled by the steering committee.

The vision statement: "Ridgway is a friendly, community-minded, rural town situated in a beautiful mountain valley. We share a deep connection to the outdoors. We are a safe, pedestrian-friendly community that is supportive of learning, creativity and culture. We strive to be economically and ecologically sustainable."

Hagan asked Monday's group to fill out a feedback form about the vision, and another for the expression of community values. "It's a process for you to refine the draft prepared by the steering committee," she said. "Hopefully, this gets everybody's voice heard."

Seven bullet points were listed under the heading, "We value:" tolerance, respect and support for each other; diversity and inclusivity; a balance of economic and environ-

Continued on Page 3

TOWN OF
RIDGWAY

...Vision for Ridgway

Continued from Page 1

mental sustainability; lifelong learning and creativity; our natural and cultural heritage; the outdoors and its recreational opportunities; and a vibrant business community.

Feedback also came vocally from several people but Hagan said she was "reluctant to get into a mass group edit" of the vision and value drafts on Monday. Suggestions on feedback forms will be reviewed by the committee and council. "We are not making final decisions tonight," said Hagan. "Clearly, this gives us a lot more grist for the mill."

Clifton said the steering committee did a lot of word-smithing in trying to encapsulate the first round of suggestions into a few powerful words. Councilman John Clerk said one of the challenges faced by the committee was to write a vision different from the values statement. And this week's group discussion provided more for the committee and council to ponder in response to a fourth question: What are the barriers to achieving an ideal Ridgway. "This is the injection of reality," said Hagan.

—By Patrick Davarn, news editor

Figure 17. Newspaper article regarding second visioning meeting (Ridgway Sun, 3/11/09).

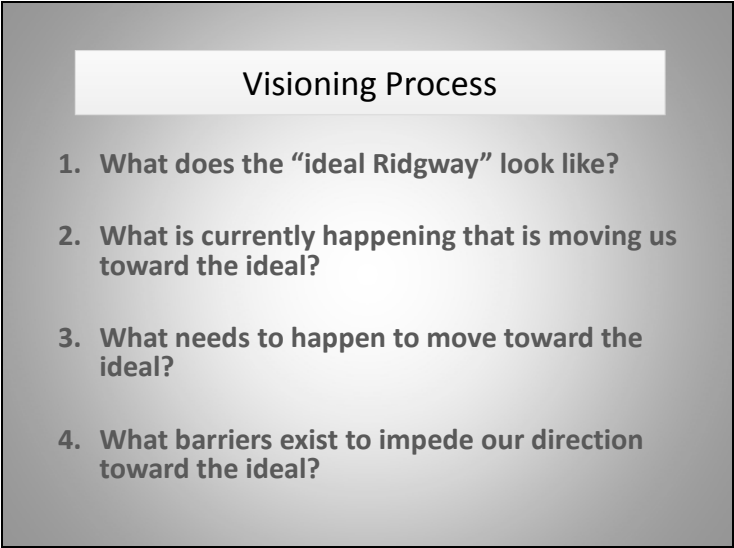


Figure 18. The first three questions of the visioning process were considered during the initial meeting on February 23, 2009; the last question was considered during the second meeting on March 9, 2009.

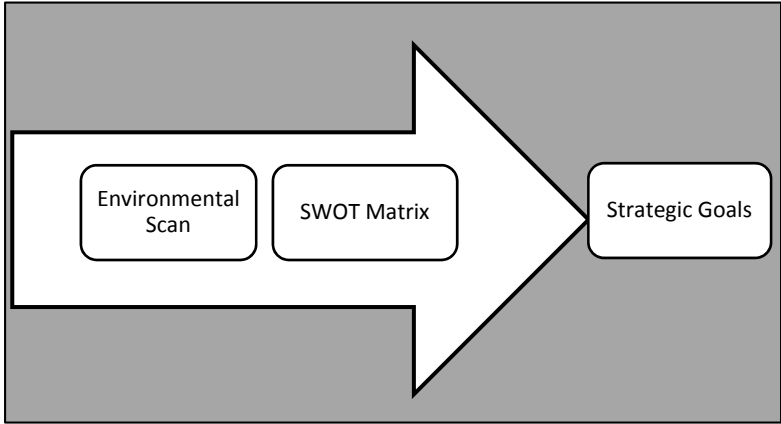


Figure 19. Model depicting inputs into the development of the strategic goals.

Strategic Plan Meeting Dates	
<u>Date</u>	<u>Description of Event</u>
January 19, 2009	Town Council Workshop – Strategic Planning Process Discussed
February 16, 2009	First Steering Committee Meeting
February 23, 2009	Second Steering Committee Meeting;
February 23, 2009	First Community Visioning Meeting
March 9, 2009	Third Steering Committee Meeting
March 9, 2009	First Community Visioning Meeting
March 18, 2009	Town Council Workshop
April 6, 2009	Fourth Steering Committee Meeting
April 8, 2009	Town Council Regular Meeting – Strategic Plan Formally Adopted

Table 1. Dates of meetings conducted during the strategic planning process.

Steering Committee Members	
<u>Name</u>	<u>Profession / Interest</u>
Pat Willits	Mayor, Town of Ridgway, Director of Non-Profit Land Trust
John Clark	Mayor Pro Tem, Town of Ridgway, Business Owner
Rick Weaver	Council Member, Town of Ridgway, Developer
Douglas Bisonnette	Superintendent, Ridgway School District
Kelly Goodin	Director, Non-Profit Corporation
Doug Macfarland	Professional Services - Architect
Sheryle Petit	Business Owner
Lynn Padget	Professional Services – GIS and Web Design
Jen Coates	Town of Ridgway, Planner
Joanne Fagan	Town of Ridgway, Engineer, Public Works Director
Greg Clifton	Town of Ridgway, Manager

Table 2. Strategic Planning Steering Committee Members.

Environmental Scan - Trends

Demographics / Land Use

Recent Increases in growth rate in Ouray County outpacing statewide trends; housing in County expected to double in 25 years (Theobald, 2008); most urban growth will occur in Ridgway, with annual growth rate as high as 5.4% (EPS, 2008); rapid growth and escalating property values means less affordable housing (EPS, 2008); second home ownership increasing and may comprise a quarter of all homes in County (EPS, 2008).

Water

There is a growing urgency to secure and augment the Town's water resources to withstand climate change and periods of drought in which the Town's water rights may be subject to curtailment by senior water rights downstream.

Transportation

State Highway 62 (Sherman Street) through Town is inadequate in terms of turning lanes, shoulders and pedestrian crossings; the highway's capacity cannot meet projected traffic demands over the next 25 years (URS, 2008); community support for hard-surfacing streets and implementing streetscape plan is high, as is demand for pedestrian infrastructure.

Community Development

New facilities include library, high school, events center, community center; significant addition of parks and open spaces, including the Regional Athletic Park, Rollans Park and the Dennis Weaver Memorial Park; community events including arts, music and cultural events have been increasing; youth groups and youth involvement in the community have been successful; community engagement has been high, as evidenced by interest groups, neighborhood projects such as community gardening, fundraising efforts and non-profit involvement. There is a desire to see enhancements to the Historic Business District and generally improve upon the Town's aesthetics while maintaining the small town character.

Economic

Sales tax revenues and property tax revenues have increased steadily over several years although the current recession has caused a discernible flattening of revenues in 2008 and 2009; more commercial development is occurring, and more diverse local economy becoming established, inclusive of retail, professional services, lodging and recreation; construction, small businesses, light industrial and non-profit; Town lacks economic development policies, but is committed to building infrastructure to foster a more vibrant business community, focusing on improved streets, pedestrian infrastructure, parking, lighting and aesthetics; Ouray County has experienced healthy growth following economic downturns (Headwaters, 2007).

Environmental

The Town has been focused upon its environmental responsibilities and progressive in its policies. Recent accomplishments the "dark skies ordinance", a ban on toxic herbicides and pesticides on Town properties; the protection of sensitive riparian and wetland habitat, and institution of Town wide recycling program; land use policies and intergovernmental agreements have been implemented to protect surrounding open spaces in Ouray County; policies are currently being formulated to incentivize use of solar energy and promote green building.

Education

Community has benefited by construction of a new middle school / high school facility, a new gymnasium is currently under construction; quality of education in District has improved, and high school is among top 29 in Colorado (U.S. News and World Report, 2008); students have become active in community services; the Town and the School District work collaboratively.

Environmental Scan – Trends (continued)

Organization

The Town organization has remained relatively small but efficient, with labor costs being competitive, and turnover quite low; recent vertical growth within the organization has included an in-house engineer, planner and full-time manager; the organization has relied upon outside funding to implement many community projects; the organization has benefitted from new technologies including GIS and website development, as well as equipment and fleet vehicle upgrades; demands for level of service are increasing and outpacing available resources.

Infrastructure

Aging polybutylene water service lines are in a rapid state of attrition and there is an urgent need for Town wide replacement; the recent installation of new membrane system water treatment plant has successfully increased the Town's treatment capacity; wastewater infrastructure including a new treatment facility needs to be planned; the lack of a Town-wide storm water plan has resulted in some localized flooding during storm events in recent years.

Downward Trends

The recent economic downturn has resulted in reduced State revenues for transportation funding and other services; local revenues have flattened and construction starts have fallen; some realization of stimulus funding is occurring in areas of transportation (Highway 62 resurfacing) and possible water infrastructure (Colorado Safe Water Revolving Fund); cost of housing and health care has caused overall affordability in Ridgway community to decline, placing a greater need upon affordable housing measures to close the gap (EPS, 2008) and alternatives for health care coverage within the organization (health savings plan). Climate change may be resulting in drier conditions and the Town's surface water diversions need to be secured against future calls by more senior water rights.

Table 3. Summary of community and organizational trends.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES	
Internal	External
<p><i>Some Diversity</i> <i>Accessibility of Town Hall</i> <i>Financially Stable</i> <i>Progressive Leadership</i> <i>Efficiency of Organization, Low Labor Costs</i> <i>Technology (GIS, Planning Tools)</i> <i>Good Morale; Low Turnover</i> <i>Improved Fleet Vehicles and Equipment</i> <i>Opportunity for Professional Advancement</i> <i>In-House Capabilities</i> <i>Skills and Experience</i> <i>Continuous Improvement and Training</i> <i>Sound Administrative Policies</i></p>	<p><i>Small Businesses</i> <i>Controlled Growth</i> <i>Some Sidewalk & Road Projects</i> <i>Streetscape Plan</i> <i>Parks Improvements, RiverWay Trail</i> <i>Town Facilities, School, Library, Event Center</i> <i>Dark Skies</i> <i>Support of the Arts</i> <i>Friendly Town Residents</i> <i>Recycling</i> <i>Farmers Market, Community Garden</i> <i>Park & Ride</i> <i>River Corridor Project</i> <i>Mixed Housing / Mixed Use</i> <i>Some Street Pavement</i> <i>Sense of Community</i> <i>Sustainability (green power, LED, solar incentives)</i> <i>Some Affordable housing</i> <i>Some Tourism Promotion</i> <i>Non Profits</i> <i>Youth Programs & Improved Daycare</i> <i>Local Support of Local Business</i> <i>Light Industrial</i> <i>Town Sponsored Events</i> <i>Small Town Environment</i> <i>Intergovernmental Relations</i> <i>Public Trust in Organization</i></p>

Table 4. List of Internal Strengths and External Opportunities.

WEAKNESSES AND THREATS	
Internal	External
<i>Bureaucracy</i> <i>Human Resources – Small Staff</i> <i>Resistance to Change</i> <i>Follow Through</i> <i>Physical Space</i> <i>Lack of Enforcement</i> <i>Funding</i> <i>Costs of Health Care</i> <i>Competing / Conflicting Projects</i> <i>Lack of Equipment</i> <i>Lack of Long Term Gravel Resources</i> <i>Sustainability of Utility Enterprises</i> <i>Aging Workforce</i> <i>“Doing more with Less”</i>	<i>Lack of Funding</i> <i>Demand for Rapid Growth</i> <i>Impact to Natural Resources</i> <i>Housing Costs</i> <i>Limited Job Opportunity</i> <i>Land Speculation</i> <i>Building Inefficiency</i> <i>Energy Inefficiency</i> <i>Traffic Congestion & Etiquette</i> <i>Dust (air quality)</i> <i>Loss of Wildlife Habitat</i> <i>Second Home Ownership</i> <i>Higher Energy Costs</i> <i>Scarcity of Water (Lack of Storage)</i> <i>Muddy Streets</i> <i>State Highway – narrow, congested</i> <i>Colorado Department of Transportation</i> <i>Wastewater Treatment (Water Quality)</i> <i>Lack of Storm water Infrastructure</i> <i>Lack of Pedestrian Infrastructure</i> <i>Flood Risk and Natural Hazards</i> <i>Aesthetics (Lack of Shared Values)</i> <i>Unfunded Mandates State Regulations</i> <i>Increasing Demand for Services</i> <i>State Budget and Allocation of Funding</i>

Table 5. List of Internal Weaknesses and External Threats.

**Strategic Goals, Three-year Performance Objectives
and One-year Action Plans**

Goal #1 – Growth and Development:

Manage growth and development in Ridgway, utilizing land use policies consistent with the Ouray County IGA and the comprehensive plan, within the urban growth boundaries, and in a manner that is sustainable to the community, its infrastructure, and consistent with its small town character.

- a. Prepare and disseminate community survey in preparation of Land Use Element update to Town’s Comprehensive Plan; complete Land Use Element update.

2009 Action Plan

Prior to end of 2009, prepare, disseminate and compile results of community survey in preparation of Land Use Element Update to Comprehensive Plan. The survey will be formulated in house with assistance through Dept of Local Affairs as available. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Planner with assistance by the Town Manager.

- b. Complete Parks and Trails Element of Comprehensive Plan.

2009 Action Plan

By September 30th, complete current draft of Parks, Trails and Open Space Element to the Comprehensive Plan. This will involve continued oversight of Parks and Trails Task Force. Upon completion of draft, the Element will be forwarded to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation to the Town Council. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Manager with assistance by the Town Planner.

- c. Evaluate outcomes and 2009 Study Group Analysis of 2008 Theobald and 2006 RPI Studies in relation to regional land use policies.

2009 Action Plan

By end of 2009, review elements and recommendations of Theobald Study and RPI Findings, for inclusion in Town Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element Update, to be conducted in 2010. This project will be the joint responsibility of the Town Planner and Town Manager.

Goal #2 – Water Resources:

Continue to develop the Town’s water resources in a manner that will sustain existing and future populations within the Ridgway community, addressing storage and collection, healthy treatment, distribution, promotion of conservation efforts and protection of the Town’s water rights.

- a. Pursue preparatory steps toward augmentation of the Town’s raw water supply, focusing on improvements to reservoir, diversion and collection system.

2009 Action Plan

By March, 2009, secure remaining grant funding needed to capitalize feasibility study. Prepare RFP and select consultant engineering firm, with work to commence by June 1, 2009, with final report to be delivered to Town Council prior to end of 2009. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Manager with assistance from the Town Engineer.

**Strategic Goals, Three-year Performance Objectives
and One-year Action Plans (continued)**

- b. Explore means of acquiring additional water rights to help address ongoing growth demands.

2009 Action Plan

By February, 2009, put into place annexation policy related to acquisition of appurtenant water rights with annexed parcels, with in-lieu-of consideration in those instances where appurtenant water rights are severed from annexed properties. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Attorney with assistance from the Town Manager, Town Planner and Town Engineer.

- c. Evaluate and formulate policy related to private use of non-potable Town irrigation water.

2009 Action Plan

By May, 2009 Council Workshop, prepare draft policy for limited commercial usage of existing non-potable irrigation water for Council consideration and implementation. This project will be the joint responsibility of the Town Manager and Town Engineer, with assistance by Town Attorney.

- d. Formulate and enact water conservation incentives; evaluate rate structure to ensure conservation and sustainability objectives.

2009 Action Plan

By May, 2009 Council Workshop, prepare draft outline of water conservation plan, addressing irrigation of Town parks and open spaces, monthly water allocation and rate structure; emergency restriction measures during drought periods, leak detection, and other topics related to water conservation. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Manager with assistance from the Town Engineer and Public Works Staff.

Goal #3 - Transportation:

Pursue the incremental development and improvement of street and multi-modal transportation infrastructure, consistent with the comprehensive plan, with focus upon key linkages and Highway 62.

- a. Pursue preliminary engineering and design of Highway 62 improvements project; complete Railroad Street realignment.

2009 Action Plan:

Obtain initial cost estimates related to design and engineering of Highway 62 improvements by March, 2009; meet with CDOT engineers by May, 2009, to discuss possible Town implementation of necessary engineering and clearances to make project "shovel ready". Evaluate possible in-house construction of Railroad Street re-alignment in 2009, with implementation of project no later than 2010. This project will be the joint responsibility of the Town Manager and Town Engineer.

**Strategic Goals, Three-year Performance Objectives
and One-year Action Plans (continued)**

- b. Construct key linkages of pedestrian infrastructure on Highway 62 and Railroad Street.

2009 Action Plan:

By January, 2009, submit RFP for design and engineering services related to Highway 62 Phase II Sidewalk Project. By March, award contract, with design and engineering to be completed by June, 2009. Construction to commence late summer and concluding in fall, 2009. Total project completion and close-out in 2009. This project will be the joint responsibility of the Town Manager and Town Engineer.

- c. Participate in transit study; pursue enhancements of park and ride facility.

2009 Action Plan:

Actively participate in multi-jurisdictional transit study, slated to conclude in 2009. Recommendations and outcomes of study shall be considered upon completion. Pursue improvements to Park and Ride parking lot with cost-sharing from San Miguel County and other benefitting organizations. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Engineer with assistance by Town Manager.

Goal #4 – Community Enhancement:

Promote and nurture the Ridgway community by implementing the Streetscape Plan, aesthetic enhancement, arts and cultural events, improvements to public facilities, parks and trails.

- a. Formulate and enact site development regulations related to commercial, industrial and residential development.

2009 Action Plan:

Draft skeleton outline of site development regulations, identifying needs and objectives, methodology and timeline, with eventual completion of regulations targeted for 2010. The working outline is to be completed in 2009. This project will be the collective responsibility of the Town Manager, Town Planner, Town Engineer and Building Inspector, with input by Town Planning Commission and Town Council.

- b. Formulate events planning strategy related to cultural, arts and music events with consideration of private / public partnerships and oversight committee.

2009 Action Plan:

No action plan for 2009; defer to 2010. Organize and oversee Love Your Valley Festival and Concert in the Park series. This project will be the joint responsibility of the Town Clerk and Town Manager.

- c. Pursue completion of Phase II improvements to Regional Athletic Park; complete drainage infrastructure to Athletic Park; pursue funding for Phase III improvements and completion; conduct planning and design for new park located along Green Street; evaluate alternatives for trail connection in Uncompahgre River Corridor project.

**Strategic Goals, Three-year Performance Objectives
and One-year Action Plans (continued)**

2009 Action Plan:

Athletic Park Phase II and drainage improvements represent a multi-year project. By April 30, 2009, amend GOCO grant to re-allocate funding toward needed drainage infrastructure and defer construction of third soccer field for future Phase III project. Pursue incremental construction of drainage infrastructure in Athletic Park identified in 2008 Geotechnical Report, with prioritization on centralized seep drainage and piping or lining of irrigation ditches, to be completed by May 31, 2009. Monitor bore wells and log data on a weekly basis. Identify future drainage improvements for possible funding and implementation in 2010. Remaining Phase II improvements for Athletic Park to include completion of recreation trail, installation of sewer line to restroom and some landscaping, to be completed in 2009. This project will be the collective responsibility of the Town Engineer, Town Manager, and Public Works Staff.

- d. Perform necessary utility work in preparation of Historic Business District Streetscape Plan; strategize and pursue necessary funding mechanisms for construction of Streetscape Plan.

2009 Action Plan:

Pursue grant funding or low interest loan funding, possibly utilizing ARRA ("Stimulus") funding, for replacement of all polybutylene water services lines throughout the Town. Should funding be secured, implementation of utility replacement to be scheduled to occur over two-year period, commencing in 2009 if possible. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Engineer, with some assistance from Town Manager and Town Clerk as needed.

Goal #5 – Environmental Responsibility:

Implement sound environmental stewardship through sustainable growth and development; employ wise use of resources; promote conservation, green building, alternative energy and protection of habitat and open spaces; pursue and protect good air quality and water quality.

- a. Develop and implement policy incentivizing green building.

2009 Action Plan:

Finalize policy and implementation strategies related to green building and sustainability, to be presented to Town Council for consideration at its July, 2009 workshop, to be performed primarily by the Town Building Inspector with assistance by the Town Planner.

- b. Evaluate feasibility of micro turbine project on Town's water delivery system; explore possibility of large hydro-electric project at Ridgway Dam.

2009 Action Plan:

No action plan for 2009; pursue exploratory information and data collection for consideration in future action planning, to be conducted primarily by the Town Engineer with assistance from the Town Manager.

- c. Institute lighting committee to evaluate Town wide lighting plan; evaluate use of efficient street lighting and work toward regional collaboration with local utility.

**Strategic Goals, Three-year Performance Objectives
and One-year Action Plans (continued)**

2009 Action Plan:

Pursue information gathering and data collection related to street lighting; institute lighting committee comprised internal and external stakeholders; work in collaboration with San Miguel Power Association regarding standardization of street lights; draft lighting plan and policy objectives by end of 2009, with adoption targeted for 2010. Install lighting along sidewalk between community parking area north of library and Hartwell Park by September 30, 2009. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Planner, with assistance by the Town Manager and Town Engineer, subject to input by the Lighting Committee.

- d. Formalize and implement community composting program.

2009 Action Plan:

Formulate program for community composting to include scheduled receipt of yard wastes, Town operated composting facilities, and seasonal curbside services, to be completed by April 30, 2009. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Manager, with assistance by the Town Engineer and Public Works Staff.

- e. Formulate policy and program related to commercial recycling.

2009 Action Plan:

Institute recycling task force to consider policy proposal related to commercial recycling; perform necessary data collection and information gathering in support of proposed outcomes. The review process and proposed outcomes will be completed by March 30, 2010. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Clerk, with assistance by the Town Manager and input by the recycling task force.

Goal #6 – Economic Development:

Foster a diverse and vibrant business community that is locally sustainable and community oriented, inclusive of commercial uses, professional services, tourism, outdoor recreation, light industry, non-profit entities and innovative entrepreneurship.

- a. Examine resource sharing opportunities related to tourism promotion in Ouray County.

2009 Action Plan:

No direct action slated for 2009; continue to participate in exploratory discussions regarding joint municipal tourism promotion efforts; participate and contribute to joint television commercial project with City of Ouray and Ouray Chamber and Resort Association. This will be the primary responsibility of the Town Manager.

- b. Actively promote outdoor recreation tourism in the Ridgway area.

2009 Action Plan:

Participate in planning processes related to single track recreation use on BLM parcel adjoining Ridgway State Park; continue to promote recreational use of river corridor and RiverWay Trail. This will be the primary responsibility of the Town Manager.

**Strategic Goals, Three-year Performance Objectives
and One-year Action Plans (continued)**

- c. Formalize parking policy within Historic Business Core to ensure adequate parking for customers and visitors; pursue the development of centralized parking areas near District.

2009 Action Plan:

*Defer parking policy formulation to 2010. Pursue incremental development and accessibility of community parking area north of Library, install lighting along connector sidewalk. This project will be the joint responsibility of the Town Engineer and the Town Planner, with input by the Lighting Committee (see **Goal #5**); pursue preliminary efforts toward implementation of Historic Business District Streetscape Plan (see **Goal#4**).*

Goal #7- Affordable Housing:

Provide affordable housing to residents utilizing effective and workable methodologies, with the assistance of the Ouray County Multi-Jurisdictional Housing Authority (OCHA) and other regional entities; encourage and support conservation and energy-efficiency methodologies in new and existing structures.

- a. Evaluate for implementation the findings and recommendations from the 2009 OCHA County-wide Action Plan for Affordable Housing to include long and short-term strategies.

2009 Action Plan:

Participate in the completion of the 2009 County Wide Action Plan, as supplement to the 2008 Ouray County Housing Needs Assessment; evaluate findings and recommendations and incorporate outcomes, including both short-term and long-term strategies, in draft Affordable Housing Element to be presented to Town Planning Commission and Town Council by the end of 2009, with policy implementation to follow. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Planner, with assistance from the Town Manager.

- b. Develop an Affordable Housing Element for inclusion within the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

2009 Action Plan:

See Action Plan above. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Planner, with assistance from the Town Manager, and input from the Ridgway Affordable Housing Task Force.

- c. Utilize existing resources for affordability and efficiency such as state-funded home weatherization and rehabilitation programs.

2009 Action Plan:

Perform research regarding available resources and funding to assist in implementation of weatherization and rehabilitation program within Town of Ridgway, including non-profit programs, regional housing authority programs, and stimulus funding through the State's Weatherization Assistance Program. Facilitate the initiation of weatherization assistance within the Town in 2009. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Planner, with assistance from the Town Manager.

**Strategic Goals, Three-year Performance Objectives
and One-year Action Plans (continued)**

Goal #8 - Organizational Development:

Develop an efficient, responsive Town organization, focusing upon forging effective partnerships, providing friendly service, retaining high morale and preserving the public trust.

- a. Institute development of ‘core staff’ to facilitate collaborative issue solving.

2009 Action Plan:

Develop team of core staff members comprised of department heads to meet weekly and provide departmental reports, project updates, and collectively discuss and resolve emerging issues within and external to the organization. Core staff will provide monthly summary reports to Town Council to be included in Council packets. This organizational system will be instituted and administered by the Town Manager by May 31, 2009.

- b. Evaluate use of committee and task force partnerships to assist in various organizational tasks.

2009 Action Plan:

*The use of committee and task force partnerships are occurring on a variety of fronts, including affordable housing, lighting, strategic planning and parking policy. In 2009, additional committee involvement will be structured to explore a commercial recycling program (see **Goal #5. e**). Continued use of such systems will be encouraged as a means to foster community involvement and support, and in effort to make the organization resourceful and efficient.*

- c. Consider improved methods of public outreach and public accessibility.

2009 Action Plan:

Re-design and update Town Website by May 31, 2009, with emphasis on information accessibility, user-friendliness, and creativity. This project will be the collective responsibility of the Town Manager, Town Clerk and Town Planner.

Goal #9 - Safety:

Provide effective law enforcement and emergency response preparedness.

- a. Finalize and adopt inter-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan.

2009 Action Plan:

The Inter-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan was concluded in 2008 and has been adopted by the Town Council. Implementation of preparedness measures and training as recommended by the Plan will be summarized and pursued by the Town organization in 2009. This project will be the collective responsibility of the Town Manager, Town Marshal and Town Engineer.

- b. Improve effectiveness of law enforcement in all areas including code enforcement and animal control.

**Strategic Goals, Three-year Performance Objectives
and One-year Action Plans (continued)**

2009 Action Plan:

Institute regular and effective animal control enforcement utilizing existing law enforcement personnel, with focus upon Hartwell Park, Rollans Park and RiverWay Trail, raising the level of compliance with the Town's leash law to at least 90 percent in those areas in 2009. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Marshal.

Goal #10 - Utility Infrastructure

Institute improvements to water distribution system and wastewater system, inclusive of an upgraded treatment facility; implement municipal storm water plan; ensure sustainable enterprises.

- a. Pursue feasibility study for replacement/upgrade of wastewater treatment facility.

2009 Action Plan:

No action plan for 2009; defer to 2010.

- b. Conduct Town wide storm water plan and create storm water enterprise utility.

2009 Action Plan:

No action plan for 2009; defer to 2010.

- c. Secure funding and implement replacement of water polybutylene service lines throughout Town; pursue replacement of pumping stations east of river.

2009 Action Plan:

Submit application for grant or "loan forgiveness" through ARRA ("stimulus") funding through Colorado Safe Water Revolving Loan, with engineering to be completed by March 31, 2009, and remaining application requirements submitted by April 31, 2009. If funding is obtained successfully, pursue implementation plan to commence in 2009 and continue if necessary into 2010. Develop prioritization schedule for implementation, avoiding construction in the Historic Business District during summer months. Replace all polybutylene lines by end of 2010. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Engineer and Public Works Staff, with assistance from the Town Manager.

- d. Complete upgrade to wastewater lift station east of river.

2009 Action Plan:

Partial funding for project secured through Dept of Local Affairs (Energy Impact Assistance) in 2008. Secure necessary easements for project by April 30, 2008, and post RFP for construction bids by May 31, 2009, with construction to be commenced and completed prior to end of 2009. This project will be the primary responsibility of the Town Engineer and Public Works Staff, with assistance from the Town Manager.

Table 6. Strategic goals, three-year performance objectives, and one-year action plans.