

City of
Lanark

**Strategic
Plan**

November 2006

Created with assistance from
MSA Professional Services, Inc.

INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning is a process by which a municipality can, in a short period of time, identify important local issues and respond to them by establishing short-term community goals and objectives. The final product is a strategic game plan for dealing with the community's top-priority issues. The time-frame for the development of a strategic plan is typically two months; the plan itself usually covers a three-to-five year period.

Lanark's strategic planning process was initiated by City Council member John Huggins, who invited a wide cross-section of Lanark residents to participate in a series of strategic planning meetings. The resulting group of volunteer participants included business owners, students, library board members, law enforcement professionals, and more. At the first meeting, held at the Heritage Building on September 6, 2006 from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m., the group assessed the Village's past and present – a necessary first step to planning for the future. MSA planning consultants presented a summary of past accomplishments, recent successes, and future projects already planned or in progress. The consultants then facilitated a discussion of issues and opportunities the community is facing

At the second meeting, held again at the Heritage Building on September 27, 2006 from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m., the group reviewed their analysis of current conditions and made a strategic plan for the future. This future plan is comprised of a series of specific objectives organized around four fundamental goals. The key to a good plan is clear action steps to implement the plan, and so the group identified implementation strategies, likely advocates that will assist with implementation, and a tentative deadline for each objective.

THE ISSUES

The Strategic Planning Group's primary task at the September 6, 2006 meeting was a SWOT Analysis. The group was asked to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for each of four basic aspects of life in Lanark – *Parks and Recreational, Economic Vitality, Community Services and Housing*.

For the purpose of this exercise, SWOT was defined as follows:

- “Strengths” Present conditions or assets that you like or treasure about the City of Lanark; thing that you would replicate or do more of if you could.
- “Weaknesses” Present conditions that you don't like about Lanark; things that should be reduced, changed, or even eliminated.
- “Opportunities” External factors or future conditions that Lanark could take advantage of to make the City a better place to live and work.
- “Threats” External factors or future conditions that could make Lanark a less desirable place to live and work; things you fear.

Through the SWOT analysis, the group identified between 30 and 40 issues in each of the four main areas. All participants were then given 7 sticky dots and asked to “vote” for those items they think are most important for the City to address. The number in () represents the number of votes the item received. The original SWOT analysis results are provided on the following pages.

City of Lanark
SWOT Analysis
September 6, 2006

- Strengths:** *Things that you like about the City of Lanark that you wouldn't change.*
Weaknesses: *Things that you don't like about the City of Lanark that should be improved.*
Opportunities: *Things that could benefit the City of Lanark in the future.*
Threats: *Things that could harm the City of Lanark in the future.*

After the SWOT lists were created, all participants were given 7 sticky dots and asked to “vote” for those items they think are most important for the City to address. The number in the () represents the number of votes the item received.

Parks and Recreation

<p><u>Strengths:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nice City park • New restrooms • Ball fields at school (3) • Recreation facilities nearby (Lake Carroll) • Snowmobile trails • Scenic area – biking/hiking/hunting • Lanark Community Recreation (LCR) 	<p><u>Weaknesses:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough to do for youth & elderly (5) • Horse programs • Lack swimming pool • Lack of athletic fields (baseball and soccer) and facilities for teens/kids • Small park • Additional park space (1) • Vandalism (4)
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<p><u>Opportunities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County assistance for services • Lands for fields (2) • Expand park (2) • TIF • People • Increased tax base • Skateboard/rollerblading park (6) • Swimming pool (1) • Trails (3) • Organized park district (1) • Place for teens 	<p><u>Threats:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money • Lack of interest • Safety issues (1) • Liability
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City of Lanark, SWOT Analysis (continued)

Economic Vitality

<p><u>Strengths:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• School District financially sound• Medallion Cabinetry• TIF (1)• Leland Street truck route• Population growth• Thomson Prison opening• Local & service businesses• CCEDC – back pocket• Industrial zoned land available (2)• Downtown• Library (10)• Rolling Hills• Grocery store (1)• Transportation (2 main highways)• Railroad• Infrastructure for industrial park & City• Good planning – pro-active	<p><u>Weaknesses:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empty store fronts (4)• Property owners not reinvesting• Cost of land• Lack of natural gas (1)• Lack of marketing (2)• Lack of telecommunications• Lack of local hires at Medallion• Lack of restaurants• Local vision
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<p><u>Opportunities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expansion – Medallion (2)• Thomson prison (jobs)• Entrepreneur & Inventors Club (1)• Business clusters (secondary to main employers) (1)• More education/training• Tourism (3)• Wind Farm• Restaurants – service businesses (3)• Relationship with Lake Carroll (1)	<p><u>Threats:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Available workforce• Lack of natural gas• Cost of land• Lack of marketing/planning (4)• Lack of youth jobs (2)• Down turn in housing market
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City of Lanark, SWOT Analysis (continued)

Community Services

<p><u>Strengths:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• County family services• TIF• Golden meals• Community center• Multiple internet providers• Variety of churches (2)• Good school system• Clubs & organizations• Nice post office• Multiple medical services• Professional services (1)• Library (6)• Skilled tradesman• Top notch police department (1)• Rolling Hills• Gordon Jones	<p><u>Weaknesses:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Declining community involvement (4)• Lack of secondary businesses (1)• Small tax base• Lack of natural gas• Lack of fast food restaurants (2)• Lack of marketing (1)• Lack of organized events for older & younger folks (1)• Lack of day care providers
<p><u>Opportunities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Available space for businesses (1)• Positive educational system (1)• TIF• Wind Farm (6)• Improved streets & sidewalks	<p><u>Threats:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deterioration of empty buildings (2)• Community involvement (1)• Lack of marketing/planning• Lack of progressive thinking (curmudgeons) (1)• Threat of change• School consolidation• Lack of fast food restaurants• Lack of natural gas

City of Lanark, SWOT Analysis (continued)

Housing

<p><u>Strengths:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low taxes (1)• Availability• Good maintenance streets/alleys• Good neighbors/pride in ownership• Elderly housing• Low rent housing/apartments• Good water/sewer for growth• New residential development – lots available• Older homes being remodeled• Range of houses types/pricing• Relative affordability• TIF	<p><u>Weaknesses:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of affordable housing (fixed income) (3)• Quality of available housing (need TLC)• Lack of codes to control issues (front yard parking)• Lack of enforcement of ordinances (need teeth)• Lack of assisted living facilities (6)• Lack of higher end apts. (condos)
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<p><u>Opportunities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continued street improvements• Housing rehabilitation program (1)• Lots of fixer-uppers (1)• Space for new subdivision (2)• Condos (1)	<p><u>Threats:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Absentee ownership• Domestic violence• Crime (single mom's & kids vulnerable) (1)• Slow housing market• Few lots available (no room to grow)• High prices (perception)• Cost of land• More jobs than housing
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City of Lanark, SWOT Analysis (continued)

Other

<p><u>Strengths:</u></p>	<p><u>Weaknesses:</u></p>
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<p><u>Opportunities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Market City as retirement community (2)	<p><u>Threats:</u></p>
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THE PLAN: GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

At the September 27, 2006 meeting, the Strategic Planning group reviewed the results of the September 6, 2006 SWOT Analysis. Those issues that received the most votes at the previous meeting were translated into planning objectives by the MSA planning consultants and organized under four broad goals that encompassed all of the key issues.

The strategic planning group affirmed these goals as the guiding vision for the Village:

- ❖ Increase community activities and recreation opportunities for citizens of all ages
- ❖ Improve the safety and appearance of the City
- ❖ Create more businesses and more jobs in Lanark
- ❖ Accommodate the housing needs of all residents

The group then evaluated the list of 32 proposed planning objectives, added several more, and again used “sticky dot” voting to further focus the Village’s energies toward a manageable set of important objectives. After narrowing the field of potential objectives to 13, the group took the final crucial step to make implementation more likely: they set tentative deadlines for action and identified key players to help work toward each action.

The following four goals and 13 objectives are the 2006 Lanark Strategic Plan.

Goal #1: Increase community activities and recreation opportunities for citizens of all ages

Objective 1.1: Create a park district

- Create a committee
- Will need to go to referendum
- Invite townships to incorporate a larger area beyond the City limits

Recognized individuals or clubs to assist: Athletic Boosters – Jeff Blair, Tammy Burkholder, Mark Macomber

Timeframe: 12- 18 months

PROGRESS:
This has not been started.

Objective 1.2: Build a skateboard / rollerblade park

- Organize private fundraising efforts
- Approach local organizations to get involved
- This should be coordinated through the newly created Park District (as more funding is available to help accomplish this objective)

Recognized individuals or clubs to assist: Lions Club, Lanark Community Club – LCC, Lanark’s Women’s Club – LWC, Chamber of Commerce and Church groups

Timeframe: After creation of Park District

PROGRESS:

Some effort has been made, but fallen stagnant.

Objective 1.3: Expand library and services offered

- Need a larger building – either expand on the current building or build new
- Conduct a community-wide discussion about the future of the library
- Need to identify what the residents want

Recognized individuals or clubs to assist – Library Board

Timeframe: 0-12 months

PROGRESS:

In progress. City Planning Committee, Lanark Public Library and the Friends of the Library are working together toward renovating the building for the new library.

Goal #2: Improve the safety and appearance of the City

Objective 2.1: Improve the appearance of downtown storefronts / repair and reuse empty buildings

- Look for volunteers to implement “Paint the Town” program
- Develop a revolving loan fund or similar funding program
- Organize a committee to spearhead renovation efforts

Recognized individuals or clubs to assist: Chamber of Commerce, Cornerstone Group, City Council

Timeframe: 0-12 months

PROGRESS:

In progress. Chamber has a paint-the-town program to help businesses with supplies to paint or repair storefronts.

Goal #3: Create more businesses and more jobs in Lanark and attract more residents

Objective 3.1: Create a tourism brochure and marketing plan

- Regional effort – send a representative to work with County (CCEDC)
- Incorporate existing information
- Enhance City website with this information

Recognized individuals or clubs to assist: Carroll County Economic Development Corporation, City Council, Chamber of Commerce

Timeframe: 0 to 12 months'

PROGRESS:

Chamber has developed the Lanark brochure. Continually updating and adding info to both City and Chamber web sites as time permits.

Objective 3.2: Increase and expand restaurants and professional services

- Identify and market viable sites (realtor)
- Survey residents to determine needs and wants
- Work with existing business owners

Recognized individuals or clubs to assist: Carroll County Economic Development Corporation, Blackhawk Hills RC&D, City Council, Chamber of Commerce

Timeframe: 0 to 12 months

PROGRESS:

Viability and survey have not been done. Survey could be done on web site to keep cost down. Organizations listed are continually working to attract businesses.

Objective 3.3: Support expansion of Medallion Cabinetry

- Talk with Medallion representatives to determine needs
- Plan and complete extension of Leland Street

- Workforce training – coordinate with school and community colleges

Recognized individuals or clubs to assist: Medallion Representatives, Carroll County Economic Development Corporation, City Council, Local Community Colleges

Timeframe: 0 to 12 months

PROGRESS:
Medallion has closed.

Objective 3.4: Attract businesses that support Medallion

- Talk with Medallion representatives
- Investigate a community railroad spur / dock

Recognized individuals or clubs to assist: Medallion Representative, Carroll County Economic Development Corporation, City Council

Timeframe: 0 to 12 months

PROGRESS:
Medallion has closed.

Objective 3.5: Attract more residents to the City of Lanark

- Marketing plan and promotional materials
- Include –
 - Housing
 - Library
 - Parks
 - School
 - Services
 - Jobs

Recognized individuals or clubs to assist: Chamber of Commerce, City Council

Timeframe: 6 to 18 months

PROGRESS:
Chamber continues to market the community.

Objective 3.6: Create more jobs for the youth in the City

- Compile information about youth employment programs (“Paint the Town” program)

- Talk with employers and ask about current or possible employment opportunities
- Talk with local farmers about current or possible employment opportunities

Recognized individuals or clubs to assist: Chamber of Commerce, Cornerstone Group, Local Businesses, City Council

Timeframe: 0 to 12 months

PROGRESS:
No action taken.

Goal #4: Accommodate the housing needs of all residents

Objective 4.1: Provide assisted living facilities

- Recruit private providers to come and look at community
- Conduct a local feasibility study

Recognized individuals or clubs to assist: Northwest Illinois Community Action Agency, City Council

Timeframe: 6 to 18 months

PROGRESS:
No action taken.

Objective 4.2: Encourage construction of single-family homes.

- Identify land for development
- Consider land in TIF district

Recognized individuals or clubs to assist: Private developer

Timeframe: 6 to 18 months

PROGRESS:
Some land has been identified. TIF establish. Poor market conditions. More marketing efforts needed.

Objective 4.3: Establish a housing rehabilitation program

- Identify programs and available funding sources
- Tri-County Opportunities
- Talk to local banks about low-interest loan program
- Need to identify residents that would be interested in participating

Recognized individuals or clubs to assist: Northwest Illinois Community Action Agency, Local banks

Timeframe: 12 to 24 months

PROGRESS:
No action taken.