

**Section  
4**

# 2008 Strategic Initiatives

MISSION

**Service is Our Purpose**

EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY SERVICES	FINANCIAL & OPERATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY	PRESERVATION /PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT	RESPONSIBLE ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
<p><i>Preserve, protect and enhance our Community infrastructure assuring efficient and effective core services. Provide services as funding and resources allow; consistent with our mandates and taxpayer support.</i></p>	<p><i>Minimize the direct costs and the social costs of providing services. Assure compliance with Federal and State funding mandates. Maintain excellent bond ratings. Manage County Government and Operations to maximize internal effectiveness and efficiency.</i></p>	<p><i>Preserve and protect our natural resources, wildlife habitats, and open public spaces. Make decisions based upon sustainability, our ability to extend the use of natural resources, reduce waste, and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.</i></p>	<p><i>Encourage positive and responsible economic growth and development. Support families in pursuing financial security and a high quality of life. Assure appropriate balance between agricultural and urban interests.</i></p>

**Strategic Initiatives**

1. Finalize the decisions and policy on the financial and operational arrangements for the County Nursing Home in accordance with the results of an advisory referendum. (Nov. 2008) *(Health & Human Services Board)*
2. Continue to reduce crime in the County by addressing crime trends and by providing public education. Ask law enforcement and judicial staff to identify 2-year priorities and targets. *(Public Safety)*
3. Continue to provide quality services to older adults and persons with disabilities through the Aging and Disability Resources Center of St. Croix County. Fully implement four key areas: volunteers, programs, nutrition, and information/education. *(Council on Aging and Disabilities and Health and Human Services)*

**Strategic Initiatives**

4. Reduce operating expenses County-wide by 5-10% in 2009 budget. *(Finance Committee)*
5. Justify county department staffing levels by showing workload demands and performance measures for 2009 budgeting. *(Finance Committee)*
6. Develop diversified non-levy revenue sources. *(Finance Committee)*
7. Develop cross-training plans (inter-departmental) to achieve efficiencies for 2009. Implement plan by 2010. *(Finance Committee & Dept. Heads)*
8. Continue to address property tax issues, economic development and unfunded mandates. *(Finance Committee)*
9. Continue to use technology to achieve efficiencies, improvements and innovations in County operations. *(Administrative Coordinator, and St. Croix County Management and Staff)*

**Strategic Initiatives**

10. Reduce nutrient and sediment runoff by 20% by 2020. (Land and Water Conservation Committee)
11. Establish public/private partnerships to increase recycling of hazardous waste. Ask primary stakeholders to identify targets and deadlines. *(Planning and Zoning Committee)*
12. Implement policies to utilize existing waste streams of material within the next 2-3 years. *(Planning & Zoning Committee)*
13. Reduce county energy use by 10% by 2013. *(Finance Committee & Building Services)*
14. Increase the use and encourage the development of renewable energy. *(Ag and Extension)*

**Strategic Initiatives**

15. Update the County Land Management Plan taking townships into consideration by October 2010. Use the Planning and Zoning process to identify land for expansion of public parks, trails, etc. *(Planning and Zoning Committee)*
16. In order to promote increased business, the County should participate as a paying member in the "Momentum West" regional partnership by the end of 2009. *(Finance Committee in partnership with the Economic Development Corporation)*
17. County owned land should be rezoned for future sale (south part of Gov. Center and highway commercial part of "County Farm". *(Planning & Zoning Committee)*
18. Continue to execute the 6-year plan for the transportation infrastructure. *(Transportation Committee & Highway Commissioner)*

# Strategic Issues Master List

A **strategic issue** is a fundamental policy choice or change challenge affecting an organization's mandates, mission, product, or service level and mix, clients or users, costs, financing, structure, process, or management.

The identification of strategic issues is the heart of the strategic planning process. The purpose is to identify a set of strategic issues facing the organization and to frame them as questions, concerns, or needs the organization can do something about.

Strategic issues address the "what" of planning not "the how". Consideration of strategic issues shapes the organization's action agenda – its goals, change initiatives, and supporting action plans.

(Source: *Creating and Implementing your Strategic Plan: A Workbook for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* by Bryson and Alston)

## Primary Strategic Themes

Strategic issues for St. Croix County reflected these major strategic themes:

- ➔ Financial and Operational Accountability
- ➔ Effective Community Services
- ➔ Preservation and protection of the environment
- ➔ Responsible economic and community development

**The following sections outline the master list of issues within these four themes that were deemed to be significant to the future of St. Croix County in the 2008 planning meetings.** Some are of sufficient urgency and/or importance that they have been translated to overall strategic initiatives and others may be reflected in goals that are set by Committees and County Departments.

*Please note that the numbers are assigned for ease of reference and do not indicate priorities.*

## Financial and Operational Accountability Issues

1. We must be able to balance our upcoming budget in the face of shrinking revenues and rising costs.
  - The current housing slow-down means flat growth in property taxes over the near-term.
  - We should assure a comprehensive list of services is identified and categorized according to mandated or other classifications.
  - What is the role of taking on debt for financing?
2. Are there ways to fund non-mandated programs and still conform to state-mandated levy limits of 2%?
  - Taxpayers tend to expect the same, improved or expanded services and lower taxes at the same time.
  - Can we look at other revenue sources like fees, grants, etc.?
3. We need a long-range capital expenditure program.
4. County Government needs to eliminate duplication of effort and resources to achieve overall cost reductions:
  - Must eliminate silos and work better across Departments
  - There is no one individual responsible for overall supervision for County Departments.
5. County Board size and structure could be more efficient.

## Effective Community Services Issues

6. The financial and operational disposition of the County-operated Nursing home needs to be decided soon!
  - This is a highly emotional issue with diverse stakeholder groups and polarized viewpoints.
  - 44% of every tax dollar goes to benefits at the nursing home and our labor cost is considerably higher than in comparable facilities.
  - The issue has been studied and discussed for a very long-time and is currently slated for an advisory referendum in the 2008 fall election.
7. We want to continue law enforcement's success in reducing crime by expanding focus to reduction of underage drinking and drug use
8. Promote affordable housing
9. Assure high quality educational opportunities for our youth.
10. Provide positive youth activities and youth leadership development opportunities that recognize the stringent time demands of a commuting population.
11. Provide education in positive parenting skills and child development.
12. Manage technology, the internet, and other media so they are positive influences.
13. Leverage arts, culture, and natural resources to attract young talent to our County.
14. Support trails and parks.
15. We need a better way to communicate the services we provide the community at large.

## Preservation/Protection of the Environment

16. Must assure clean surface water and address water quality and surface run-off problems.
17. Provide farmers assistance in learning about and implementing technologically advanced and sustainable agricultural tools and practices. (bio-digesters, wind power, etc.)
18. Develop specific policies that encourage decreased dependence on fossil fuels and encourage the development, production and use of renewable energy resources.
19. The County needs to take an aggressive policy role in encouraging recycling esp. for computers and electronics. Are there ways to minimize the taxpayer cost of getting rid of waste?

## Economic and Community Development

20. The County owns land that can be sold. There are diverse viewpoints about when land should be sold, how it should be zoned, and the financial aspects of a sale. etc.?
21. We need a long-range plan (with milestones) for attracting new business and retaining existing businesses.
22. We will need to update county land management plans taking Town plans into consideration as well.
23. We will need to conform to state mandated requirements for planning.
24. Facilitate a regional approach to increased economic development and foster cooperation among economic development organizations.
25. Create an environment for business that brings high-paying, high quality jobs and services for residents.
26. Provide assistance to small businesses and encourage their growth.
27. The County will need to move forward mass transit.