

# **MEXICO BEACH, FLORIDA- STRATEGIC PLAN**

## **2015-2018**



DRAFT #1  
June 11, 2015  
Local Government Visions, LLC  
William R. Whitson, Managing Director

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## **Background & Introduction**

**Local Government Visions, LLC** is pleased to have been chosen to work with the City of Mexico Beach to facilitate a Strategic Planning Retreat for the new City Council and staff of the community. Specifically, our company was engaged to draft and deliver a simple, strategic planning document for Mexico Beach. Our scope of work is outlined below:

“This letter is to follow-up on our conversation regarding the need for a contract proposal to provide complete facilitation services for the City of Mexico Beach with my firm (Local Government Visions, LLC). Listed below are the details of the general services that would be performed if we were to enter an agreement. The contract period discussed was to be from May 1- June 1, 2015 unless mutually agreed and extended.”

The agreed to **Scope of Work** would allow for the contractor to perform the following tasks:

- Preparation & Facilitation of two to three 2-3 evening meetings with City staff and the Council. All meetings would be on a mutually agreeable date/time/place and is subject to FS “Sunshine” requirements. Mexico Beach staff would provide for the necessary public notices to be posted.
- Contractor to provide general facilitation services to include ensuring that a Vision, Mission, and Goals document was developed by Council.
- Contractor to facilitate a SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities & Threats) analysis/exercise to be developed by Council.
- Deliver a complete report to the City staff documenting the facilitated meetings and the results achieved by a mutually agreed upon date.

Local Government Visions, LLC was to provide these services for one low flat fee. The meetings referenced in the proposed scope of work took place in three (3) sessions scheduled on June 1<sup>st</sup>, June 3<sup>rd</sup> and June 4<sup>th</sup> 2015. William R. Whitson, Managing Director for Local Government Visions, facilitated the Strategic Planning Retreat for the City. A strategic plan, drafted by the City of Cochran, Georgia was also used as a general concept guide for the type of work product desired by Mexico Beach. All sessions were advertised on the City’s web site and were recorded by City staff and met the requirements of the Florida Open Meetings Law.

## **Scope of Work- Products**

The products generated by the City Council and staff include the following items:

- A Vision Statement: A statement outlining the desired future state of the City in 3-5 years
- A Mission Statement: A statement outlining the reason why the organization exists.
- A Set of Core Values: A statement indicating how the Council and staff wish to conduct the public’s business and achieve the vision, mission and goals of the organization.
- A set of key goals: A statement of the goals the organization desires to achieve in the next 3-5 years that will move them forward in achieving their Vision and Mission.
- SWOT Analysis: An analysis and assessment of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats faced by the organization.

### **Vision Statement- Draft #1 (June 3, 2015)**

“To preserve, protect, and enhance our community’s quality of life creating memories  
for the generations who live, work, and play in our piece of paradise.”

### **Mission Statement- Draft #1 (June 3, 2015)**

“Mexico Beach is engaged in providing residents and visitors thorough quality services, while protecting our natural resources and maintaining our small-town coastal atmosphere.”

### **Core Values Statement- Draft #1 (June 3, 2015)**

- We are accountable to the Citizens of Mexico Beach.
- We are committed to earn, maintain, and enhance the trust of each other  
and the community.
- We conduct our work with integrity in an atmosphere of honesty, transparency, respect, and  
courtesy.
- We strive to exceed expectations and nurture successful relationships with all our partners.
- We are flexible and adaptive to the ever-changing needs of the community: and we encourage  
and support new ideas, innovation, and creative approaches.
- We will manage our resources wisely and provide high-quality services
- We recognize the vital role played by all City staff and will support them in realizing their full  
potential.

**Goals LISTING: 2015- 2018.** The goals outlined in this report have been listed in the original order they were created by the Council and staff. A complete ranking is provided on the last page of this report.

- **GOAL: Establish clear and consistent policies that are implemented in a fair, balanced, and professional manner.**

ACTION STEPS

- Receive input from dept. heads and staff.
- Receive input from citizens through surveys, meetings, committees, and other communication.
- **Review & Update various City policies (Note:** Review history of past Issues as needed. Be conscious not to reinforce previous failures. Limit deviations from policies as much as possible.).
- Evaluate and draw input from neighboring cities. Focus on Best Practices.

**NOTE: Council Goal Guidance- (2 #2 votes and 1 #4)**

- **GOAL: Operate with trust; opening channels of communication with citizens, staff and our partners.**

ACTION STEPS

- Subdue personal agendas and work to draft a City Code of Ethics.
- Agree to disagree respectfully (be adults not kids).
- Let staff be part of the solution process. Create a suggestion box program.
- Self-assess and evaluate. (Are you part of the solution or problem?).
- Establish a regular business flow of communications (Suggest a Master Calendar).
- Review & update all Memorandums of Understanding/Agreements (MOU's/MOA's).

GOALS continued.....

➤ **GOAL: Establish a welcoming environment for residents, visitors and staff.**

ACTION STEPS

- Provide clean facilities.
- Be attentive; keep an open mind (everyone deserves a response/answer to their questions).
- Improve the quality of City signage and information.
- Provide unexpected levels of customer service & delight!
- Measure results with surveys (both citizens & visitors).

➤ **GOAL: Improve the financial position of the City.**

ACTION STEPS

- Conduct cost audits/comparisons annually for innovative and creative ways to recover costs.
- Review Impact Fees.
- Review & Update all City contracts.
- Assess the operations of each dept. to ensure adequate staffing.
- Work to establish an aggressive policy for securing grants and external funding.

NOTE: Council Goal Guidance – (4 #1 Votes and 1 #4 vote)

➤ **GOAL: Continuously find ways to be more efficient in the operations of the City.**

ACTION STEPS

- Conduct a comparative analysis of City operations.
- Evaluate joining the Florida Benchmarking Association for additional information & guidance.
- Conduct continued cross training for City staff.
- Ensure staff has adequate tools to accomplish the job.

GOALS continued.....

**NOTE: Council Goal Guidance- (4 #3 votes and 1 #4)**

➤ **GOAL- Maintain and construct new infrastructure.**

ACTION STEPS

- **Develop a Capital Improvement Plan especially for parks & recreation.**
- **Conduct a work plan analysis as needed.**
- **Create a GIS Mapping System for documentation of utilities/infrastructure.**
- **Conduct regular cost benefit analysis for repairs vs replacement.**
- **Adopt and implement proper project management principals.**
- **Develop a regular replacement schedule for infrastructure.**

➤ **GOAL- Support a small-town environment through smart growth development and environmental preservation.**

ACTION STEPS

- **Review Comprehensive Plan, Land Development Codes and adjust accordingly.**
- **Conduct training for Planning & Zoning Board members.**
- **Conduct more Council training on smart growth & environmental protection.**

➤ **GOAL: Work to broaden the future economic base of the community.**

ACTION STEPS

- **Identify new revenue sources.**
- **Work to recover administrative costs for services.**
- **Review all impact fees/application fees/administrative processes.**  
**with an eye towards comparison with other local governments.**
- **Develop an economic development strategy/plan (to include grant writing).**
- **Develop a Marketing Plan.**
- **Evaluate infrastructure to ensure it can support future growth as needed.**

**NOTE: Council Goal Guidance- (1 #2 & 1 #4 Vote)**

➤ **GOAL- Attract and maintain a quality experienced work force for the City.**

ACTION STEPS

- **Develop and implement a plan for the training of all staff including cross training.**
- **Involve staff in meaningful consultation regarding department and organizational change through increased communication and delegation of responsibility.**
- **Work with City Management and Elected Officials to develop a program that recognizes certification/degrees/educational achievements that benefit the City.**
- **Work with City Management and Elected Officials to create an annual merit-based system to reward to reward employees through creative incentives.**
- **Update and maintain an Employee Handbook to guide employees.**
- **Examine the development of a salary study/salary band**
- **Work to create a team environment**

**NOTE: Council Goal Guidance (1 #1 Vote, 2 #2 Votes, 1 #3 Vote & 1 #4 Vote)**

## **SWOT Analysis**

In support of the strategic planning process the Council and staff of Mexico Beach conducted a SWOT analysis (alternatively SWOT matrix). A SWOT analysis is a structured planning method used to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats involved in a project or in a business venture. A SWOT analysis can be carried out for a product, place, industry or person. It involves specifying the objective of the business venture, place or project and identifying the internal and external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieve stated objectives.

- **Strengths:** Characteristics of the business/place or project that give it an advantage over others.
- **Weaknesses:** characteristics that hold back or inhibit the business/place or project with some type of a disadvantage relative to others.
- **Opportunities:** Elements that the business/place or project could exploit to its advantage.
- **Threats:** elements in the environment that could cause serious trouble for the business/place or project.



SWOT continued.....

Identification of SWOT elements and factors in the operational environment of the organization is important because they can help form the pathway in later strategic planning steps to help achieve the vision/mission/goals- action steps and or objectives.

Listed below is a brief summary of the SWOT analysis developed by Mexico Beach's senior leadership:

SWOT Analysis- MEXICO BEACH (June 2015)

### **Strengths.....**

- Location
- committed staff
- citizen involvement (young retired citizens with time)
- manageable size
- home town atmosphere
- new water system
- solid financial position
- diverse council
- citizen talent base
- staff cross training efforts
- locally owned and operated businesses
- room to expand
- isolated location free of some external growth pressures faced by other beach communities

### **WEAKNESSES.....**

- staff turnover
- weak employee talent pool to draw from
- inconsistent enforcement of ordinances due to resources
- Preparedness
- lack of follow-up and correction for past mistakes
- lack of clear direction and setting of priorities/balancing limited resources
- lack of unity- too much US vs Them
- challenges paying a competitive wage/cost of living
- seasonal employment base
- lack of City Hall facilities
- lack of proper equipment
- out of date policies and data
- lack of an ability to manage historical public records
- poor market conditions for bidding- lack of qualified contractor talent pool

SWOT continued.....weaknesses

- thin staffing
- no employee awards system and lack of a comprehensive employee suggestion program to maximize resource efficiency
- culture of the organization lacks a commitment to listen to the employee voice of experience.

### **Opportunities.....**

- capitalize on family market for visitors
- more family oriented visitors
- park opportunities- place making
- coordinate effective uses for CDC bed tax dollars
- infrastructure expansion
- Improve grants programs
- very desirable destination
- higher tax base per capita
- Branding

### **Threats.....**

- Federal/state regulation for fishing/dredging etc...
- Sensitive (tourism relies on discretionary spending to a degree/ slow economy = less potential revenue
- Environmental hazards/spills, red-tide etc...
- Weather threats Such as Hurricanes/storms
- Isolated location/barrier to some economic markets
- Terrorism- proximity to Tyndall AFB
- Proper access to waterways
- Seasonal population changes (i., e, smaller population having to support service needs) for seasonal visitors
- Conflicts between status quo and new expectations
- Location demands near isolated beaches may draw wrong criminal element

## **Final Council Goals Ranking**

The goals listed here received priority votes as a general guide for staff. In this way, management and staff will know which goals staff should start working with first. All goals are still important, however, the top 6 goals identified by Council will be where staff begins the implementation process.

- 1) Improve the Financial position of the City.
- 2) Establish clear and consistent policies that are implemented in a fair, balanced, and professional manner.
- 3) Attract and maintain a quality experienced work force for the City.
- 4) Continuously find ways to be more efficient in the operations of the City.
- 5) Attract and maintain a quality experienced work force for the City.
- 6) Work to broaden the future economic base of the community.

## **OTHER GOALS.....no priority votes**

Operate with trust; opening channels of communication with citizens, staff and our partners.

Establish a welcoming environment for residents, visitors and staff.

Maintain and construct new infrastructure.

Support a small-town environment through smart growth development and environmental preservation.

## **Wrap up & Conclusion**

The City of Mexico Beach Strategic Planning retreat was considered a successful step in the right direction. All participants are to be commended for their energy, participation and insights. Now more public discussion and review is appropriate in the process of plan acceptance and adoption. Further evaluation of the action steps to determine duplication, measurability and specific task assignment would be helpful in moving forward on plan adoption and implementation. Now the work begins to expand, clarify and focus the needed energy to move forward on the details of this exciting plan.