



**CITY OF SLATER, IOWA  
MAYOR & CITY COUNCIL GOAL SETTING REPORT 2025-2026**

**Mayor:**

**Taylor Christensen**

**City Council:**

**Shawn Birdsall**

**Craig Conley**

**Sue Erickson**

**Ken May**

**Joel Newman**

**City Clerk:**

**Jennifer Davies**

**Facilitator:**

**Marketa Oliver**

**November 25 & December 3, 2024**

## Introduction

The City of Slater recently engaged in a strategic planning session. In advance of the day-long retreat, the Mayor, Council, and staff leadership team participated in a survey that addressed organizational effectiveness, accomplishments over the past two years, initiatives to be achieved in the next two years, and goals for beyond two years. Full details of the survey results are included in Exhibit 1 of this report. The entire process for the strategic planning session included:

1. The preparation of a questionnaire regarding organizational effectiveness and suggestions to improve it;
2. The preparation of a questionnaire to identify recent accomplishments, issues/trends/concerns, initiatives, programs, and policies, and suggestions to improve organizational effectiveness;
3. Elected and appointed official participation in a day-long planning session; and
4. Prepare a final report for consideration of adoption by the Mayor and Council.

## Goal Setting Work Session

The City of Slater held a work session on November 25 and December 3, 2024. City of Slater leadership in attendance and participating at the meeting were: Mayor Johnny Christensen; Council Members Shawn Birdsall, Craig Conley, Sue Erickson, Ken May, and Joel Newman; City Administrator/Clerk Jennifer Davies; Deputy City Clerk Danielle Wolfe; Fire Chief Brant Stumpfer; Public Works Director Mark Estrem; and Library Director Jennifer Gogerty.

### 1. Major Accomplishments over the past 2 years

#### Identified in the Survey

- Dog Park
- Wastewater Treatment (have not achieved yet) (x7)
- Improved sheldahl relations
- Main Street building/development (x5)
- Tuesday night marketplace
- Funding/planning for new Library/Community Center
- NW Corner of the City Plan
- New Residential Development (x2)
- Sieversl industrial Park (x4)
- Sewer/Water Expansion
- Trailside Development/Grants Secured for it
- Attracting young people in community leadership positions
- Coffee Shop
- Retain staff year after year
- Start GIS mapping/information
- Reasonable growth rate
- No serious on the job injuries
- Progress on sports complex
- Open pool (after being told 15 years ago it would only last a few years)
- Daycare Project
- Pedestrian crossing
- Speed feedback signs
- Light Up Stop Signs

**Discussed/Identified during the work session**

- Wastewater Treatment Plant (\$8 million)
- Beautification/Main Street Lighting
- Dog Park
- Street Resurfacing
- Main Street - Public House
- Housing Development
- Industrial
- Parks Focus
  - Lighting
  - Trail
- Daycare (under construction - county also incentivized)
- Water Tower Repainted

**2. Initiatives, programs, policies to consider within the next 2 years****Identified in the Survey****Planning & Land Use**

- Updating comprehensive plan
- Identify needs (residential, commercial, industrial) for desired growth Master Plan/design work for strategic expansion
- Future Land Use
- Parks and Trails Master Plan (including swimming pool plan)
- Annexation Discussion with surrounding land owners
- GIS Mapping
- Working document to show ideas or plan of a particular property or parcel

**Personnel/Staffing**

- Staffing levels at City Hall (number of employees and expertise)
- Update employee job descriptions (x2)
- Update handbook - nepotism policy (x3)
- Personnel Management: Performance Reviews, Benefits Reviews
- Onboarding process for new employees, new council, and perhaps new residents
- Hiring more staff/more defined roles

**Economic Development**

- Development of empty Main Street area (learn from non-traditional solutions)
- Business Development
- Continue developing Main Street

**Fiscal Management**

- Capital Improvement Plan/Capital Equipment Plan (x3)
- Financial Capability/Feasibility Plan
- Fiscal Responsibility (Accurate budget tracking and monthly reports in council packet, improved cash management, )
- Property Tax Rates
- Grant opportunities
- Water/Sewer Policy Discrimination

### **Policy Direction**

- Improve Communication and Transparency (website, social media, Scoop)
- Promote Slater externally
- Community Event Planning and Scheduling
- Figure out enforcement of existing ordinances before creating additional ordinances

### **Discussed/Identified during the work session (Next 2 years)**

#### **Planning & Land Use**

- Updating comprehensive plan
- Annexation
- GIS Mapping (hydrants located; some curb stops located; and most new mains are in GIS)

#### **Personnel/Staffing**

- City hall staffing
  - Separate City Administrator and City Clerk positions
    - Evaluate Finance/City Clerk role to address records management, accounts payables/receivables, payroll, financial planning
  - Solicit Proposal for Administrative Review
- Update employee job descriptions (x2)
- Update handbook - nepotism policy (x3)
- Personnel Management: Performance Reviews, Benefits Reviews
- Onboarding process for new employees, new council, and perhaps new residents

#### **Economic Development**

- Main Street Iowa?
- Main Street Economic Development Strategy
- Evaluate commercial/industrial tax abatement program
- Farmers Market Refinement
- Promote Slater Externally
- Housing Issues
  - Evaluate Housing Incentives
  - Affordable Housing Strategies
- Food Trucks
  - Noise
  - Parking Location
  - Plaza

#### **Fiscal Management**

- Grants
- Develop Estate Giving Policy/Promotion
- Personnel Plan
- CIP
- Borrowing/Debt Management Policy and forecasting

#### **Infrastructure/City Facilities**

- City Hall/Library
- Public Works

### **Other Policy Issues**

- Communications policy and expectations (draft can be found in Exhibit 2)
- Sportsfield Management Policies
- Sustainable Energy
- Upgrade/better use of technology
  - Create common email format for city emails
  - Evaluate bringing on an IT contractor
  - Evaluate financial software
- External Relationships
  - Schools
  - Sheldahl

#### 4. Projects that will take longer than 2 years critical to the City's growth and well-being

##### Identified in the Survey

##### Planning & Land Use

- Annexation Plan/Execution
- Comprehensive Plan
- Recreational Opportunities
  - Develop ties with the biking community/bike tourism (x2)
  - Sports Complex Development/Recreational Development (x4)
  - Keep Ballard Baseball in town
  - Attract Ballard softball to Slater
  - Finish Walking Trail around town
  - Pickleball Courts
  - Fix the Pool

##### Personnel/Staffing

- Employee Development
  - Upgrade skill sets
  - Train new hires

##### Economic Development

- Economic Development Council
- Culture Changes in Government and Citizenry to become reengaged with Slater
- Visioning Project
- Main Street Iowa
- Main Street Economic Development Strategy
- Housing Issues
  - Housing Developments
  - Housing initiatives for seniors (when they do not want to stay in their houses any longer - keep them in Slater)
  - Redevelop Mobile Home Park
  - Trailer Park cleaned up to make northern gateway more appealing
  - Identify other properties to renew in order to make community more appealing to pass through traffic
- Industrial/Commercial Developments
- Keep the Grocery Store

##### Infrastructure/City Facilities

- Sidewalks: evaluate condition of sidewalks and work on strategic replacement in high traffic locations/promote walkability (x3)
- Expand City Cemetery
- New Water Plan
- Linn Street Resurfacing and Expansion (x2)
- Community Center/Library (x4)
- Fire & EMS Buildings (x4)

### **Other Policy Issues**

- Regional Partnerships
  - Develop ties with the biking community/bike tourism (x2)
  - Offer camping opportunities?
  - Develop partnerships with outside expertise
    - Ames Economic Development
    - Iowa League of Cities
    - Surrounding towns
    - MIPA

### **Discussed/Identified during the work session (3-6 years)**

#### **Planning & Land Use**

- Annexation Plan/Execution
- Master Streets Plan
  - Maintenance Plan
  - School on dead end street

#### **Economic Development**

- Culture Changes in Government and Citizenry to become reengaged with Slater
- Visioning Project
- Main Street Iowa

#### **Infrastructure/City Facilities**

- Fire/EMS Building
- Cemetery Expansion
- GIS Mapping
- Water Plant Improvements
  - Make water cleaner
- Increased Soccer and Little League fields
- Nighthawk Field/contractual relationship with the school
- Develop plan for Library/Community Center/City Hall
  - Could TIF bonds be used?

### **Discussed/Identified during the work session (6+ years)**

- Main Street Economic Development Strategy Implementation
- CIP implementation
- Cemetery
- 126th Street

## 5. Future Organizational Effectiveness

- **Timeliness**
  - Respond within a reasonable timeframe (48 hours)?
  - Have expected response times
  - Hold staff meetings with a couple of council members and mayor maybe on a quarterly basis
- **Strategic Outlook**
  - Office procedures seem ruled by the tyranny of the urgent rather than attending to important issues
  - Foster relationships/partnerships
  - Build partnerships with experts
  - Establish goals and objectives (short and long term), prioritize them, then actually do them in an organized team manner
  - Communicate goals to staff and departments. Departments keep goals in mind when working on projects. Projects should support the city goals.
- **Study Session** - have a one work session in addition to one meeting per month or two meetings per month (x2)
- Provide more tangible examples or information regarding topics
- Better education/onboarding of new council/mayor/staff
- Provide elected officials with codes and ordinances
- **Empowerment**
  - Our Mayor and City Council need to trust our staff to do the job that they are hired to do.

## 6. Top Priorities

A number of priorities are outlined in Exhibit 2 on Strategic Planning Goal Sheets. Below are the top priorities identified during the discussion on December 3.

- Update Comprehensive Plan
- Staffing at City Hall
  - Evaluate what position should be added
- Establish communications expectations

## Final Comments

Strategic planning goal sheets were developed during the meeting and are attached as Exhibit 3 in this report. The sheets identify the goals and provide action steps to take towards achieving those goals. The goal sheets are organized by the three top priorities listed above and then chronologically by when the first update on progress towards the goal is due. A draft communications policy is also included in the report, as Exhibit 2.

It is important to note that the prioritization of projects and initiatives is not “cast in stone.” They can and should be modified as new circumstances may occur or new opportunities arise. The goals should be monitored, discussed, and revised as needed on a regular basis. The goals should also be shared broadly with the community and all staff members.

It is recommended that the City engage in facilitated strategic planning sessions at a minimum of every other year.

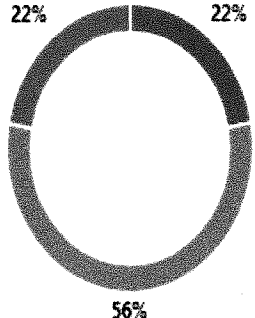
## Exhibit 1: Survey Results



Organizational Questions (each of these would have options to Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree)

1. Our critical organizational priorities have been clearly defined and are being successfully pursued.

- Strongly Agree 0
- Agree 2
- Disagree 5
- Strongly Disagree 2

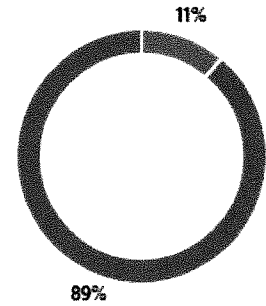


8 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Disagree
2	anonymous	Strongly Disagree
3	anonymous	Disagree
4	anonymous	Strongly Disagree
5	anonymous	Disagree
6	anonymous	Agree
7	anonymous	Agree
8	anonymous	Disagree

2. Elected officials are respectful of each other, even when they may disagree on an issue.

- Strongly Agree 1
- Agree 8
- Disagree 0
- Strongly Disagree 0

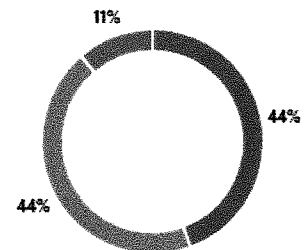


9 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Strongly Agree
2	anonymous	Agree
3	anonymous	Agree
4	anonymous	Agree
5	anonymous	Agree
6	anonymous	Agree
7	anonymous	Agree
8	anonymous	Agree
9	anonymous	Agree

3. The Mayor and City Council understand their roles and are respectful of staff decision making in day-to-day matters.

- Strongly Agree 0
- Agree 4
- Disagree 4
- Strongly Disagree 1

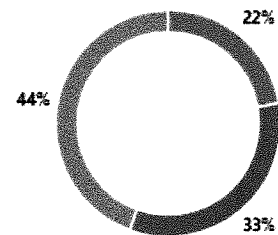


9 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Agree
2	anonymous	Disagree
3	anonymous	Disagree
4	anonymous	Disagree
5	anonymous	Agree
6	anonymous	Strongly Disagree
7	anonymous	Agree
8	anonymous	Disagree
9	anonymous	Agree

4. Staff members understand their roles and are respectful of the democratic process and the Mayor and Council’s policy direction.

- Strongly Agree 2
- Agree 3
- Disagree 4
- Strongly Disagree 0

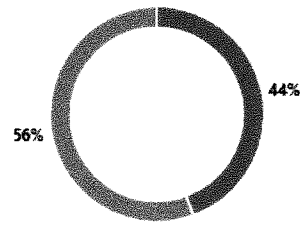


9 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Disagree
2	anonymous	Disagree
3	anonymous	Agree
4	anonymous	Disagree
5	anonymous	Strongly Agree
6	anonymous	Strongly Agree
7	anonymous	Disagree
8	anonymous	Agree
9	anonymous	Agree

5. This City is appropriately responsive to citizen input without letting individuals outside the organization dominate the conversation.

- Strongly Agree 0
- Agree 4
- Disagree 5
- Strongly Disagree 0

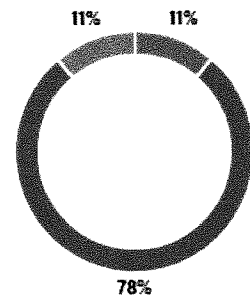


9 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Agree
2	anonymous	Disagree
3	anonymous	Disagree
4	anonymous	Disagree
5	anonymous	Agree
6	anonymous	Disagree
7	anonymous	Disagree
8	anonymous	Agree
9	anonymous	Agree

6. It is okay to admit a mistake or error on an issue in our organization and any such admissions are treated in their proper context.

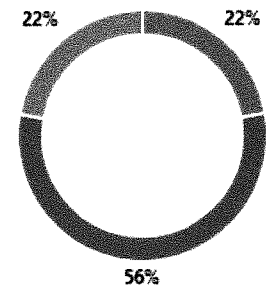
- Strongly Agree 1
- Agree 7
- Disagree 1
- Strongly Disagree 0



ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Strongly Agree
2	anonymous	Agree
3	anonymous	Agree
4	anonymous	Agree
5	anonymous	Agree
6	anonymous	Disagree
7	anonymous	Agree
8	anonymous	Agree
9	anonymous	Agree

7. When our organization encounters challenges we are able to work together to overcome them.

- Strongly Agree 2
- Agree 5
- Disagree 2
- Strongly Disagree 0

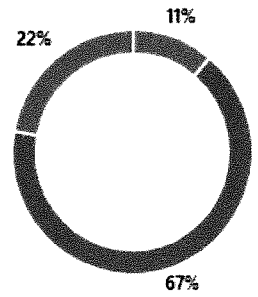


9 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Disagree
2	anonymous	Disagree
3	anonymous	Agree
4	anonymous	Agree
5	anonymous	Strongly Agree
6	anonymous	Agree
7	anonymous	Agree
8	anonymous	Agree
9	anonymous	Strongly Agree

8. Management has provided good communication to staff and the mayor and council.

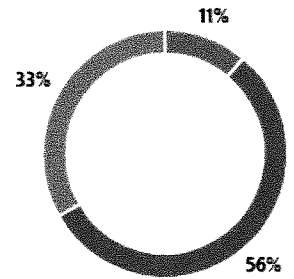
- Strongly Agree 1
- Agree 6
- Disagree 0
- Strongly Disagree 2



ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Agree
2	anonymous	Strongly Disagree
3	anonymous	Agree
4	anonymous	Strongly Disagree
5	anonymous	Agree
6	anonymous	Strongly Agree
7	anonymous	Agree
8	anonymous	Agree
9	anonymous	Agree

9. Our organization supports staff taking the initiative to address important issues.

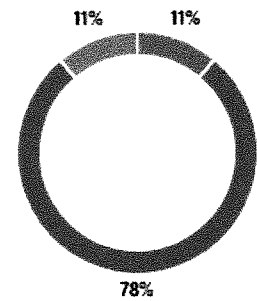
- Strongly Agree 1
- Agree 5
- Disagree 3
- Strongly Disagree 0



ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Strongly Agree
2	anonymous	Agree
3	anonymous	Disagree
4	anonymous	Disagree
5	anonymous	Agree
6	anonymous	Disagree
7	anonymous	Agree
8	anonymous	Agree
9	anonymous	Agree

10. I am confident about the future of our organization and community.

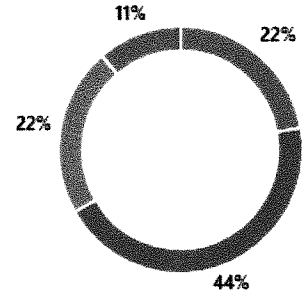
- Strongly Agree 1
- Agree 7
- Disagree 1
- Strongly Disagree 0



ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Strongly Agree
2	anonymous	Disagree
3	anonymous	Agree
4	anonymous	Agree
5	anonymous	Agree
6	anonymous	Agree
7	anonymous	Agree
8	anonymous	Agree
9	anonymous	Agree

11. Management pursues, recommends, and engages in partnerships to benefit the City.

- Strongly Agree 2
- Agree 4
- Disagree 2
- Strongly Disagree 1



9 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Agree
2	anonymous	Disagree
3	anonymous	Agree
4	anonymous	Strongly Disagree
5	anonymous	Agree
6	anonymous	Strongly Agree
7	anonymous	Disagree
8	anonymous	Agree
9	anonymous	Strongly Agree



## Open Ended Questions

**12. Please list ideas that the Mayor/City Council and/or staff could do in the future to improve organizational effectiveness, decision-making process, teamwork and the ability to accomplish the City's stated goals and objectives.**

Answers:

1	note: in questions above, I'm not sure who "management" is. Now back to question 12. City staff could adopt a strict policy of responding to email within a reasonable time frame (48 hours?). There is a long history of non-responsiveness. Office procedures seem ruled by the tyranny of the urgent rather than attending to important issues. At this time there is not a spirit of teamwork between mayor and clerk. That needs to change. As we have more activity before the council, one meeting a month is not enough. Sometimes we need to have longer discussions of an issue. Could we look at one work session and one meeting per month? Historically, Council meetings have had fewer issues to address. We need to look at the reality that Slater is growing and we need to invest more work to guide the growth. Continue the work Taylor and others have started in building partnerships.
2	Better partnership with experts. More tangible examples or information regarding topics. Define goals and plans. Have expected response times. Better education/onboarding of new council/mayor/staff. Provide all elected officials with codes and ordinances.
3	First, we need to determine goals, a plan, and the priorities within those plans.
4	Establish goals and objectives (short and long term), prioritize them, then actually do them in a organized team manner
5	staff meeting with a couple council members and mayor maybe on a quarterly basis.
6	Our Mayor and City Council need to trust our staff to do the job that they are hired to do. Our monthly meetings need to go to two meetings a month. One, is full of just actionable items and the other would be a planning session where discussion and review can take place only. This would be much more efficient and easier on schedules. 8PM - Midnight discussions do not yield profitable ideas and thoughts.
7	Communicate goals to staff and departments. Departments keep goals in mind when working on projects. Projects should support the city goals.

**13. Please list the major city accomplishments over the past two years. These accomplishments could be as large as a street project or as simple as a newly adopted city policy. The items do not need to be in any particular order.**

Answers:

1	Dog park; opening new waste water treatment facility, working (have not achieved yet) on a better relationship with Sheldahl, our neighbor to the south; building on Main Street purchased by city and now working on stabilizing the building and finding a tenant; starting up Tuesday night marketplace in the summer; continued work on funding and planning for a new library/community center; work on new park on NW corner of city; avoiding Dollar General coming to town in a bad location; several new residential developments and a small industrial park. We are beginning to include more younger people in community leadership positions.
2	Public House Coffee Shop opening. Waste Water Treatment plant upgrades. Sievers Industrial Park sewer water expansion. Trailside Development, Grants secured for Trailside Sports Complex.
3	"Water" (sewage) treatment facility
4	RAGBRAI, light industrial park, 321 Main
5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Keep the majority of city staff year after year</li> <li>2. Start GIS mapping/information</li> <li>3. City growth at a reasonable rate</li> <li>4. No serious on the job injuries</li> <li>5. Make progress on sports complex</li> <li>6. Open the pool after being told fifteen years ago it would only last a few years</li> </ol>
6	<p>Light Industrial development</p> <p>Housing developments</p> <p>Acquiring properties and revitalizing Main Street</p>

	<p>Sewer expansion project</p> <p>Daycare project</p>
7	Sewer Treatment facility Push to cross light speed feedback signs light up stop signs

**14. Please list any initiatives, programs or policies that you think the City should consider in the next two years. For example, downtown revitalization, updating employee job descriptions, adopting a policy on open burning, conducting an annexation study, reviewing water and sewer rates, etc. These initiatives, programs, or policies, are those that will address issues, concerns, trends, or opportunities facing the City and do not need to be in any particular order.**

Answers:

1	<p>updating comprehensive plan; we need some master plan design work to look at strategic expansion-- in the next decades some land may come available for residential development and we need to be ready; we need to figure out the right staffing levels at city hall (number of employees and areas of expertise); update employee job descriptions and handbook; develop a spirit of openness and transparency between city staff and the public; encourage development of empty Main Street lots; address parking needs in Main Street area, we could learn to be open to nontraditional solutions.</p>
2	<p>Employee Handbook Update. Employee Job Description Review/Creation, Employee Reviews. Comprehensive Plan Update, Capital Improvement Plan, Main Street Revitalization Plan, Main Street Parking Plan, Capital Improvement Plan, Park and Recreation Strategic Plan (Including Swimming Pool Plan), Bike Trail/Community Connectivity Plan (City loop, main street to bike path, Financial Capability/Feasibility Plan overlay with Comp/Capital Improvement Plan. Community Event Annual Planning and Scheduling, GIS Mapping on all City utilities. Annexation discussion and plan with surrounding land owners. Many other items</p>
3	<p>First, I think we need to have a feel for want/need levels &amp; types (residential, commercial, industrial) of desired growth. Then prioritize them, localize them (zoning), along with feasibility and likelihood of investors.</p>
4	<p>Personnel management (job descriptions, reporting structure, goals &amp; performance reviews, benefits review and education, employee handbook update and education (nepotism policy in specific)), short and long term plans (Comp, Master). separate expense budgets from capital. Create asset list with expected lifecycle, then build CIP and financing plan to support it. Accurate budgeting, plus tracking income and expense against the budget. Additional focus on fiscal responsibility (monthly reports in council packet, improved cash management, address property tax rates, grant opportunities, TIF, responsible contracts that protect the city, etc). Water/Sewer policy discrimination. Improve communications and transparency (website, social media, Scoop) and promote Slater externally to develop new business and grow. Onboarding process for new employees, new council, and perhaps even new residents.</p>

5	<p>1. A working document that you could show ideas or plan of a particular property or parcel.</p> <p>2. Go through code book and get rid of items that are not enforceable, outdated or never looked at</p>
6	<p>Continue developing main street with additional parking especially.</p> <p>Hiring more staff and defining roles more specifically in order to not burn out staff.</p> <p>Figuring out enforcement of existing city ordinances before adding more ordinances.</p>
7	<p>Quit trying to push issues with taxes. If something can't be paid for without tax money, find another way.</p>

**15. Please identify projects that may take longer than two years to accomplish that you consider critical to the City's growth or well-being.**

Answers:

1	Evaluate condition of sidewalks and work on strategic replacement in high traffic locations; develop regional partnerships; develop ties with the biking community—can we offer camping opportunities? Develop a program of reaching out to residents that are not currently involved, thereby strengthening our social capital. Housing initiatives for seniors when they don't want to stay in their houses any longer. Smaller housing units that are zero entry and accessible. Otherwise these people are leaving town. We want them to stay in Slater.
2	Annexation Plan/Execution, Sports Complex Development, Linn Street Resurface and expansion, Community Center/Library & Fire/EMS buildings. These are top of head, many others that I'm sure would be identified after some of the planning we need to conduct.
3	I think that the projects now in-process will take that long to complete. (2 housing developments, 1-2 industrial/commercial developments, recreation development, Library/community center).
4	Comp Plan and Econ Dev council (business council). Culture changes in government and citizenry to become reengaged with Slater; we've lost the engagement/volunteerism that enables small towns to thrive. Visioning project, Main Street Iowa, are bike tourism are all missed opportunities. We need to upgrade our skill set (train and/or new hires) for employees and council to ensure performance and minimize errors and missed opportunities. Where we have no expertise, we need find cooperators (Ames Econ Dev, League of Cities, surrounding towns, MIPA, etc). We currently operate in isolation and refuse to cooperate with any outside entities (we "don't like" Kelley, Huxley, and Sheldahl; we refuse to use outside support even if we're paying for them (Ames Econ Dev; MIPA).
5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New water plant</li> <li>2. New fire/EMS building</li> <li>3. Sports complex</li> <li>4. Community center/ library</li> </ol>

	<p>5. Keeping Ballard baseball in town</p> <p>6. Getting Ballard softball to Slater</p> <p>7. Keeping a grocery store</p> <p>8. Getting rid of mobile home park</p> <p>9. Expand city cemetery</p> <p>10. Finish walking trail around town</p>
6	<p>Community Center/Library</p> <p>Fire/EMS Building</p> <p>Finish Sports Park and add pickleball courts</p> <p>Fix the Pool</p> <p>Trailer Park cleaned up in order to make our northern gateway more appealing. And identify other key properties that we would like to see renewed in order to make our town more appealing to the pass through traffic.</p> <p>Assist in Sidewalk repair and additional sidewalks to make our town a more walking friendly town.</p>
7	<p>City streets and sidewalks</p>
8	<p>FD/EMS building Annex N. Linn, prepare for growth North Pave 500th from 210 North to 320th Pave 320th to 510th Community Center like 3C's. More exercise related vs party room</p>

## City of Slater Communications Policy for City Staff and Elected Officials

### Purpose:

The purpose of this Communications Policy is to establish clear and consistent communication standards between City Staff and Elected Officials (City Council Members). This policy is intended to promote transparency, responsiveness, and accountability while ensuring that City Council Members have the necessary information to make informed decisions in a timely and efficient manner. The policy outlines expectations for email response times, the level of detail required for background information on agenda items, and the overall communication protocol.

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### 1. Email Response:

#### General Email Response:

- City staff should have the goal of responding to emails from City elected officials within **two (2) business days** of receipt.
- **Urgent or Time-Sensitive Emails:** If an issue is urgent or time-sensitive, staff should acknowledge receipt of the email within **24 hours** and provide an estimated timeline for a full response. If the issue cannot be fully addressed within 24 hours, staff should provide an expected follow-up time.
- The response to a substantive email from one council member should be sent to all council members for transparency.

#### Out-of-Office or Extended Absence:

- Staff should set up an out-of-office reply when unavailable for extended periods (e.g., vacation, illness) that includes the date of return and alternative contact information, if necessary.
- 

### 2. Providing Background Information on Agenda Items:

#### Timeliness of Agenda Item Information:

- Background information related to items on the City Council agenda should ideally be provided to Council Members **on the wednesday prior to the Council meeting**. This allows Council Members adequate time to review the material in advance of the meeting.

#### Content of Background Information:

- The provided information should include:

- **Key Facts:** Relevant data and supporting information as well as historical background of the issue.
- **Staff Recommendations:** A clear, concise recommendation from City staff, including the rationale behind it.
- **Alternative Options:** If applicable, alternative courses of action with associated pros and cons.
- **Impact Analysis:** Any fiscal, legal, or community impact that could result from the decision.
- **Funding Sources:** Funding sources should be identified for projects with a fiscal impact.

**Late-Add Agenda Items:**

- For items added to the agenda after the usual deadline, staff will make every effort to provide relevant materials as soon as possible, but at a minimum, will ensure that information is provided **at least 24 hours before the meeting, pursuant to Iowa Code.**

### **3. Communication for Council Requests:**

In the interest of transparency and good communication, Staff should provide information to all elected officials to any substantive question.

**Routine Information Requests:**

- For routine requests (e.g., follow-up questions, requests for data), staff are expected to respond within **five (5) business days**. If the request requires additional research, staff must acknowledge receipt and provide an estimated timeline for the response.

**Complex Requests:**

- For more complex requests that require coordination with other departments or extensive research, staff should provide an **acknowledgment within 48 hours** and an estimated response timeline. If a response will take longer than **seven (7) business days**, staff should provide regular updates on the progress of the request.

**Informal or Clarifying Questions:**

- Informal inquiries (such as clarifications on previous meetings or policies) should be responded to within **1-2 business days**.

### **4. Transparency and Proactive Communication:**

**Proactive Updates on Key Issues:**

Staff should provide the Mayor and Council with an expected timeline for publications, such as the Scoop.

City staff must proactively communicate significant developments to Mayor and City



Council Members, particularly when these may affect decisions or city operations. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Major budget changes or fiscal impacts**
- **Delays in city projects or services**
- **Emergencies or crises requiring immediate attention**

**Follow-up Communications:**

- After Council meetings or discussions, staff will follow up with any clarifications, summaries, or additional context needed within a reasonable amount of time.
- 

**5. Communication Style:**

**Clarity and Brevity:**

- All communications should be clear, concise, and professional. The goal is to provide enough detail to ensure the City Council Member fully understands the issue at hand, without overloading them with unnecessary information.

**Respect and Professionalism:**

- Communications between City staff and the Mayor and City Council Members should be respectful, courteous, and professional. City staff are expected to respond to requests and concerns in a collaborative and supportive manner, upholding the principle of fairness and impartiality.
- 

**6. Regular Check-ins and Updates:**

**Scheduled Updates:**

- City staff should schedule regular check-ins or briefings with the Mayor and City Council or individual Council Members as needed. This may be in the form of written reports, informal briefings, or small group/one-on-one meetings.
- **Weekly or Monthly Reports:** Staff should provide written or verbal updates on ongoing city projects, key initiatives, and upcoming Council items to ensure that Council Members are kept informed.

**Pre-Meeting Briefings:**

- For particularly complex or important agenda items, staff should offer to meet with Council Members ahead of the scheduled meeting to provide more detailed background and answer any questions.
- 

**7. Emergency and Special Communications:**

**Emergency Communication Protocol:**

- In the case of an emergency (e.g., natural disaster, public health crisis, or urgent policy decision), City staff must immediately notify all relevant City Council

Members by phone, email, or other appropriate means. Regular updates should be provided as the situation evolves.

**Sensitive Information Handling:**

- For sensitive or confidential information, City staff should use secure communication methods and clearly specify whether the information is for public release or confidential.
- 

**8. Review and Amendments:**

- This Communications Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it aligns with the operational needs of the city and remains effective in supporting the communication flow between City staff and elected officials. Any amendments or revisions will be made in consultation with both City staff and the City Council.
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**Acknowledgment:**

By adhering to this policy, City staff and elected officials agree to uphold these communication standards to ensure transparency, responsiveness, and efficiency in City governance.

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This policy sets expectations for City staff to maintain effective, professional, and timely communication with City Council Members, contributing to better decision-making and stronger governance for the city.

**Exhibit 3: Strategic Planning Goal Sheets**

**Strategic Planning Goal Sheet**

Goal: Comprehensive Plan Development

Financial/Policy: Policy with Financial support needed  
Funding Source (if financial implications exist): GO/TIF/Utilities/RUT/LOSST:  
estimate is up to \$50-60K

Community-Wide or Organizational: Community-Wide

Timeframe: Short-term (within the next 2 years) X  
Mid-term (3 to 6 years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Long-term (6+ years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Future (beyond 10 years) \_\_\_\_\_

- Action Steps:
1. Develop RFP for comp plan development. Examples are available from other communities. The RFP should focus on issues of particular important to Slater, such as identifying strategies to promote affordable housing and how to invest the City's LMI funds.
  2. Include funding in FY26 budget.
  3. Hire planning consultants. Ideally, ask PZ and/or Council members to participate in planning consultant interviews. Consultants should be scored on metrics that are outlined in the RFP. The full process is likely to take close to a year to complete.

Impediments? \_\_\_\_\_

Update due? RFP issued by September 2025; consultant contracted by October.

**Strategic Planning Goal Sheet**

Goal: Add a position in City Hall

Financial/Policy: Both  
Funding Source (if financial implications exist): All: Financial investments depends on what position is added.

Community-Wide or Organizational: Organizational with Community-wide Impact

Timeframe: Short-term (within the next 2 years) X  
Mid-term (3 to 6 years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Long-term (6+ years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Future (beyond 10 years) \_\_\_\_\_

- Action Steps:
1. Determine what position to add. Create position description and funding plan to include in the FY26 budget.
  2. Consider hiring a consultant to conduct and administrative review and make recommendation on what position should be added.
  3. Determine salary based on what position is added. (If consultant hired, a salary range should be part of the recommendation.)

Impediments? Diverse view points on how to proceed.

Update due? January 2025

Strategic Planning Date: December 3, 2024

**Strategic Planning Goal Sheet**

Goal: Adopt Communications Policy

Financial/Policy: Policy  
Funding Source (if financial implications exist): NA

Community-Wide or Organizational: Organizational

Timeframe: Short-term (within the next 2 years) X  
Mid-term (3 to 6 years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Long-term (6+ years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Future (beyond 10 years) \_\_\_\_\_

- Action Steps:
1. Review, revise as needed, and adopt policy to set communications expectations.
  2. Draft was provided by Strategic Planning Facilitator.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_

Impediments? \_\_\_\_\_

Update due? January 2025

Strategic Planning Date: December 3, 2024

**Strategic Planning Goal Sheet**

Goal: Organizational Effectiveness: Study Sessions

Financial/Policy: Policy  
Funding Source (if financial implications exist): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Community-Wide or Organizational: Organizational

Timeframe: Short-term (within the next 2 years) X  
Mid-term (3 to 6 years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Long-term (6+ years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Future (beyond 10 years) \_\_\_\_\_

- Action Steps: 1. Schedule study sessions (possibly quarterly on months a fifth Monday).  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Impediments? \_\_\_\_\_

Update due? January 2025

Strategic Planning Date: December 3, 2024

**Strategic Planning Goal Sheet**

Goal: Capital Improvement/Capital Equipment Plan (CIP)

Financial/Policy: Financial  
Funding Source (if financial implications exist): GO/TIF/Utilities/RUT/Grants/Bonds

Community-Wide or Organizational: Community-Wide

Timeframe: Short-term (within the next 2 years) X (but spans min 5 yrs)  
Mid-term (3 to 6 years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Long-term (6+ years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Future (beyond 10 years) \_\_\_\_\_

- Action Steps:
1. Work with Financial Advisor to identify future bonding capacity. Determine how much can be borrowed for GO, TIF, RUT, LOSST, and utilities for borrowings over the next 6 years.
  2. Work with department heads to identify capital equipment and Capital Project needs over the next 5-6 years.
  3. Match projects with funding sources based on established priorities. Make recommendations to during the budget process.
  4. Seek grants to advance projects or expand the City's ability to deliver multiple projects.

Impediments? \_\_\_\_\_

Update due? March 2025 for FY26 Budget

Strategic Planning Date: December 3, 2024



**Strategic Planning Goal Sheet**

Goal: Software

Financial/Policy: Financial  
Funding Source (if financial implications exist): All Sources

Community-Wide or Organizational: Organizational

Timeframe: Short-term (within the next 2 years) X  
Mid-term (3 to 6 years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Long-term (6+ years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Future (beyond 10 years) \_\_\_\_\_

- Action Steps: 1. Evaluate different financial softwares.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
2. Compare financial investment.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
3. Include estimated funding in FY26 budget and present options to Council by end of FY25.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Impediments? \_\_\_\_\_

Update due? June 2025

Strategic Planning Date: December 3, 2024

**Strategic Planning Goal Sheet**

Goal: Information Technology Enhancement

Financial/Policy: Financial  
Funding Source (if financial implications exist): All Sources

Community-Wide or Organizational: Organizational

Timeframe: Short-term (within the next 2 years) X  
Mid-term (3 to 6 years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Long-term (6+ years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Future (beyond 10 years) \_\_\_\_\_

- Action Steps:
1. Develop RFP to IT providers, identifying the City's goals, including creating common email addressing formats, managing Cybersecurity, etc. Examples are available from other communities.
  2. Interview and evaluate vendors, making a recommendation to the City Council for contracting for services.
  3. Include estimated funding in FY26 budget and present options to Council by end of FY25.

Impediments? \_\_\_\_\_

Update due? June 2025

Strategic Planning Date: December 3, 2024

**Strategic Planning Goal Sheet**

Goal: Explore possibility of participating in Main Street Iowa

Financial/Policy: Policy with Financial Implications

Funding Source (if financial implications exist): GO Bond/RUT/Utilities

Community-Wide or Organizational: Community-Wide

Timeframe: Short-term (within the next 2 years) X

Mid-term (3 to 6 years) \_\_\_\_\_

Long-term (6+ years) \_\_\_\_\_

Future (beyond 10 years) \_\_\_\_\_

Action Steps: 1. Connect with Main Street Iowa staff at the Iowa Economic Development Authority to research what the program offers and what responsibilities the City would have.

2. Schedule presentation for elected officials to learn more during a regularly-scheduled study session.

3. Determine whether or not to proceed and budget accordingly in FY27.

Impediments? \_\_\_\_\_

Update due? by December 31, 2025

Strategic Planning Date: December 3, 2024

**Strategic Planning Goal Sheet**

Goal: Explore the adoption of Commercial/Industrial Abatement Policy to incent Commercial/Industrial Growth

Financial/Policy: Policy with Financial Implications from short-term revenue loss  
 Funding Source (if financial implications exist): NA (it would be revenue not collected in the short-term; but ideally leads to a better mix of valuation in the long term.

Community-Wide or Organizational: Community-Wide

Timeframe: Short-term (within the next 2 years) X  
 Mid-term (3 to 6 years) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Long-term (6+ years) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Future (beyond 10 years) \_\_\_\_\_

- Action Steps:
1. Research Iowa Code related to Urban Revitalization.  
Research abatement policies of other communities.  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Develop information about financial impact of abatement.  
Abatement for actual value added from improvements or additions to commercial and industrial properties for three years at 100% or on a 10-year sliding scale, beginning at 80% abatement in the first year. The development of a revitalization area should be discussed and developed in consultation with legal counsel.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Add to Council agenda for discussion and additional direction.  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Impediments? \_\_\_\_\_

Update due? March 2026

Strategic Planning Date: December 3, 2024

**Strategic Planning Goal Sheet**

Goal: Establish a debt policy

Financial/Policy: Policy  
Funding Source (if financial implications exist): NA

Community-Wide or Organizational: Organizational

Timeframe: Short-term (within the next 2 years) X  
Mid-term (3 to 6 years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Long-term (6+ years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Future (beyond 10 years) \_\_\_\_\_

- Action Steps: 1. Research best practices. (GFOA; Other comparable communities, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
2. Confer with City's financial advisor on policy.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
3. Present to council for adoption.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Impediments? \_\_\_\_\_

Update due? by April 1, 2026

Strategic Planning Date: December 3, 2024

**Strategic Planning Goal Sheet**

Goal: Annexation

Financial/Policy: Policy  
Funding Source (if financial implications exist): NA

Community-Wide or Organizational: Organization

Timeframe: Short-term (within the next 2 years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Mid-term (3 to 6 years) \_\_\_\_\_  
Long-term (6+ years) X \_\_\_\_\_  
Future (beyond 10 years) \_\_\_\_\_

- Action Steps:
1. Identify landowners of high priority annexation areas identified in the comprehensive plan.
  2. Establish relationships and determine what goals the City can collaborate with them on.
  3. Ask them to sign annexation petition when the timing is appropriate.

Impediments? \_\_\_\_\_

Update due? December 2027

Strategic Planning Date: December 3, 2024