



Renville

COUNTY

Service · Stewardship · Shared Responsibility



Renville County, Minnesota 2015 – 2020 Strategic Plan

Renville County, Minnesota

In Renville County, our long heritage of farming has made us not only world class farmers, but also top-notch small business owners. We know that in today's competitive world, it takes more than just hard work for our families and communities to thrive. It takes diversity, technology, innovation and cooperation and Renville County has it all! Four major highways crisscross the farmland, making trucking our products to their destination convenient. Internet highways connect us and the railroads carry grain east and west. Whether you operate your business from home, down town Main Street or in a field, you are in touch with the world.

Renville County supports its ten communities with over 15,000 residents living in the county. Quality of life means not only opportunities to work, but opportunities for families to interact together and with their neighbors. Local government offers you a chance to help decide the future of Renville County. Join your community service groups and make a difference in your neighbor's life. Volunteer at your children's school and be proud of the education they are receiving.

Renville County has a wide variety of recreational activities for the entire family to enjoy. There are seven county parks located in the county where your family can camp, fish, hike, horseback ride, or just enjoy the scenery on miles of country and river valley roads. The county also has five golf courses where you can enjoy a relaxing round of golf. The history is rich in Renville County- visit the Renville County Historical Museum in Morton, Area Museums or any of the numerous historical markers that dot the landscape. Renville County has something for everyone!

Job development in the County is supported in the traditional ways - the creation of industrial parks, assistance in locating capital and the development of infrastructure. But Renville County also goes the extra mile by working hard to maintain and enhance ways of transportation, telecommunications and exploring new energy sources. All this is combined with rural and small town living that make Renville County a place that people enjoy living and raising a family.

The County Board and staff reviewed the Mission, Vision, and Principles and include these values as the foundation of the strategic plan.

Mission

Renville's County's Mission is to keep and enhance the quality of life for our family of citizens through services, stewardship of resources, and shared responsibility. The condensed version of the Mission statement is: *Service – Stewardship – Shared Responsibility*.

Vision

Renville's County's Vision Statement includes three principles organized from the idea that "Renville County Government envisions a vibrant governmental culture which supports a progressive employee environment through education, training, compensation, and a positive work experience."

- We shall provide quality services at a reasonable and prudent cost to the citizen.
- We shall efficiently and appropriately apply our resources including, but not limited to, technology, telecommunications, transportation, personnel, buildings, equipment and fiscal resources.
- We promote governmental partnerships and alliances which nurture and support the creation of Renville County as a "neighborhood."

The mission and vision statements are supported by five values – *Caring About Quality; Efficiency; Community Input; Respectful; and Ethical Workforce*. Together with nine clear Principles, the County's organizational foundation is vibrant, relevant, purposeful and alive.¹

Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning has a rich history in Renville County dating back at least 10 years when the County completed a comprehensive strategic plan in 2004. A summary of the topics that were priorities a decade ago is a good reminder of how communities and organizations grow, develop and change (and in some instances how they stay the same). A sample list of the 2004 topics include among others: the Hospital; financial resources including grant writing and bonding; health insurance; cell phones; feedlots; building and space; landfill; transportation and county roads; and GIS. The track record is clear and strong as county officials have been disciplined and committed to addressing the issues and challenges identified in the 2004 plan.

On a department level, the Human Services and Public Health departments regularly develop and update strategic plans that guide their client philosophy, their community partnership engagements and their inter-connectively and reporting relationship to the State. Public Health adopted their Community Health Assessment for 2014 which includes many similar comparisons to the county-wide strategic plan.

A common and understandable definition of strategic planning (used in other processes as well) is: "Strategic planning is defined as a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it." The purpose of developing a strategic plan is to assist the County in establishing and keeping a focus on policy decisions that are critical to the future of the organization and the community. Strategic planning is an essential tool to assist the County in its decision-making, management, leadership and communication responsibilities. Once priorities are identified the essential actions that need to occur for a strategic plan to be successful are to make sure roles are clear and to link the plans with resources and staff time. By understanding the value of strategic planning county leaders ensure that their time will be spent on the most important priorities of the citizens of Renville County.

¹ The list of Guiding Principles is found at the end of the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Planning Process

Based on the mission, vision and values, along with past practices, Renville County has a strong history of working together to focus on the day to day and strategic issues facing the county. Yet the County Board wanted to move beyond a singular or topical discussion into a broader and comprehensive discussion of all of the top priorities. Early on in the process the Board desired to develop a plan that addressed the following four outcomes:

- Organize the priorities into a written plan
- Create a consensus based organizational direction
- Determine our role in the county (*steer and drive or sit in the backseat*)
- Identify responsibilities for follow-up and action

Three County Board and staff work sessions were held to develop the working draft of the strategic plan. These meetings were conducted on July 1, August 11, and September 22, 2014. Excellent participation and healthy discussion occurred in each meeting. The five County Commissioners and a significant majority of the county leadership team provided input and participated in the discussions. The work sessions and process was coordinated by an outside facilitator. The planning process included one-on-one discussions with the County Board in advance of the first work session. Several County Board and staff driven considerations supported the motivation and timing for the planning process, including:

- Financial – Focus on ongoing economic and fiscal challenges
- Efficiency – Streamline operations and departments
- Workforce – Staffing and succession planning
- Organization – Strengthen the existing base
- Technology – Determine the county’s role in providing information technology
- Communication – Reaching out to the county residents

The work session on July 1 was designed to identify and highlight the key issues and challenges facing the County; the August 11th session served to develop and discuss each in a more detailed manner, and the September 11th session presented the first draft of the Strategic Plan. As a result of the discussions four comprehensive topics emerged that are developed into specific strategies.

Strategies

Factoring into the development of the strategies were the following variables: 1) background information from the 2004 strategic plan; 2) the spring 2013 organizational study; 3) input from the County Board and leadership team; and 4) the results of the two work sessions. Based on this input, the following four major strategies **Operational Excellence; Strong Workforce; Community Engagement** and **Economic Competitiveness** emerged as the most important priorities of Renville County. (These four strategies align well with what is happening in other Minnesota county governments.) The list is not in any order of importance or priority. Each strategy includes a few brief words (definitional phrase) to augment the intention and meaning.

- 1. Operational Excellence – Strive for efficiency and effectiveness**
- 2. Productive Workforce – Create a strong workplace culture**
- 3. Community Engagement – Involve and educate citizens**
- 4. Economic Competitiveness – Determine the county’s value-added role**

Each strategy is comprised of a series of descriptive *Characteristics* and *Goals*. The *Characteristics* identify qualities and considerations within the strategy. The *Goals* are divided into *Action Steps* with assignments and deadlines to track and monitor progress. Each strategy includes three placeholder goals, but the list can be expanded as necessary to address the overall priorities. Under each strategy is a line for *Other Ideas* that may be considered in each strategy.

The strategic plan is designed to be a guide and roadmap for the County moving forward. The work sessions on August 11 and September 22 provided the County Board and staff an opportunity to develop ideas and ensure that the strategies are consistent with their desires.

Goals

The following 13 Goals are in the strategic plan. The Goals are specific projects and activities that implement each of the strategies.

- Implement lean process studies
- Undertake a GIS assessment
- Prepare a county-wide reorganization plan
- Prepare a professional development plan for department heads and supervisors
- Implement employee performance management
- Prepare a succession plan
- Advocate on behalf of County government
- Inform and educate citizens on County government
- Develop a volunteer services program
- Implement a comprehensive web-based service plan
- Develop a comprehensive strategy around collaboration with other counties
- In partnership with other public and private groups conduct an economic development assessment
- Enhance the use, value and application of technology within the County

Strategy One: Operational Excellence – Strive for efficiency and effectiveness

Characteristics

- Streamline services
- Workflow – business mapping
- Lean processing
- County collaborations
- County organizational structure
- Integrate departments
- Elected or appointed offices
- Application of GIS
- Legislative role

Goals

1.) ***Implement continuous improvement processes***

Action Steps	Assigned	Deadline
a. Create Continuous Improvement Committee to promote CI and vet suggested processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify process for CI education of existing and new employees • Review and suggest CI projects and identify appropriate CI tool and team • Annually report to County Board on CI activities 	County Admin and CI Trained Department Heads	4Q 2018

2.) ***Undertake a GIS Assessment*** **GOAL COMPLETE**

3.) ***Prepare a County-wide reorganization plan***

Action Steps	Assigned	Deadline
a. Explore possible reorganization of A/T, Records Office, Assessors Office and License Bureau <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract with appropriate consultant to facilitate reorganization discussion 	County Board, County A-T, County Recorder, County Assessor, and County Admin	3Q 2018
b. Study probation service options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate County Board on the three available models of probation service delivery 	County Administrator	2Q 2018
d. Review Drainage Related Duties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on process improvements and clarification of distribution of job functions. 	Ditch Inspector, County Engineer, County A-T, Finance Officer, County Administrator	2Q 2018
g. Combine Custodial and Facility Engineer departments	County Administrator	2022

Strategy Two: Productive Workforce – Create a strong workplace culture

Characteristics

- Succession planning
- Implement compensation study
- Training staff
- Knowledge transfer
- Leadership development
- Employee recruitment and retention
- Seamless transfer of authority
- Safe and healthy workplace
- Employee engagement

Goals

1.) Prepare a professional development plan for department heads and supervisors

Action Steps	Assigned	Deadline
a. Identify Training Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MS; AppXtender; Acrobat • Social Media b. Develop Annual Training Schedule	County Admin and Dept Heads	Ongoing annually
c. Develop and Maintain Training Database	County Admin and Dept Heads	4Q 2018

2.) Implement Employee Performance Management GOAL COMPLETE

3.) Prepare a succession plan

Action Steps	Assigned	Deadline
b. Develop a strategy to attract and retain personnel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize social media • Continue to actively promote benefits of working for Renville county 	County Board, County Admin and Dept Heads	Ongoing
c. Plan for the departure of tenured and experienced personnel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote cross-training • Encourage creation of SOPs • Conduct COOP exercise (Emergency Mgmt) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Report lessons learned, feedback to Board 	County Board, County Admin, Dept Heads & Supervisors	Ongoing 2Q 2018

Strategy Three: Community Engagement – Involve and educate citizens

Characteristics

- Civic engagement
- Survey residents
- Demographic changes
- Safe roads coalition
- Community health
- Volunteers
- Communications and social media
- Informed ambassadors
- Use and role of advisory groups

Goals

1.) *Advocate on behalf of County government*

Action Steps	Assigned	Deadline
a. Review existing county communication tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct focus group to determine usability of our website 	IT, County Admin & Dept Heads	2Q 2018
b. Develop recommendations regarding communication tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share info w/news media 	County Admin & Dept Heads	3Q 2018
c. Create awareness of the positive county activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forward noteworthy items to Admin for posting on Facebook • Utilize Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. 	County Admin & Dept Heads	Ongoing

2.) *Inform and educate citizens on County government*

Action Steps	Assigned	Deadline
c. Identify contractor to develop citizen survey and facilitate distribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend survey content 	County Admin, Dept Heads & County Board	2Q 2018
c. Explore communication opportunities using the web and social media	IT, County Admin & Dept Heads	2018

3.) *Develop a volunteer services program –*

Action Steps	Assigned	Deadline
a. Collectively develop list of needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Services is working on a booklet of local volunteer opportunities 	County Admin & Dept Heads	2018
c. Communicate and promote booklet of local volunteer opportunities	County Admin & Dept Heads	2018



Strategy Four: Economic Competiveness – Determine the county’s value-added role

Characteristics

- Information technology
- Fiber optics
- Economic development
- Web-based services (on-line)
- Public private partnerships
- City-rural differences
- Competitiveness in region
- Hardware and software
- Opportunity cost - investment

Goals

1.) *Implement a comprehensive web-based services plan*

Action Steps	Assigned	Deadline
a. Inventory existing on-line resources and services	IT, Department Heads	2018
b. Develop a list of best practices and possible applications	IT, Department Heads	Ongoing
c. Identify costs and tools needed to implement	IT, Department Heads	Ongoing

2.) *Develop a comprehensive strategy around collaboration with other counties*

Action Steps	Assigned	Deadline
a. Develop a list of existing collaborations	County Admin & Dept Heads	4Q 2018
c. Remain open to ideas and collaborations underway in other counties	County Board, County Admin & Dept Heads	ongoing

3.) *In partnership with other public and private groups conduct an economic development needs assessment*

Action Steps	Assigned	Deadline
a. Determine the role of the County (HRA/EDA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop economic development tax abatement policy • Consider feasibility of TIF districts in townships 	County Board, HRA/EDA Board	2018
b. Enhance the added value of HRA/EDA to economic development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct bi-monthly meetings between Administrator and Ex Director • Joint meeting between County Chair/Vice Chair, Ex Director, and Authority Ex Committee • Increase the visibility of the new Authority office location 	County Board, EDA/HRA, County Admin	2018
c. Identify the economic development activities underway throughout the county	EDA Coord	2Q 2018



4.) *Enhance the use, value and application of technology within Renville County.*

Action Steps	Assigned	Deadline
a. Identify private and public sector opportunities to address technology gaps/needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate conversations to connect additional county communities to the fiber network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Meet with cities to further discuss Broadband opportunities 	County Board, County Admin	2018 2Q 2018
b. Develop and provide training opportunities for county residents – explore grant funding opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online retail and branding • Social Media 	County Admin, IT, RC Schools, and other partners	4Q 2018

Implementation

Immediate short term implementation steps may be driven by final goals and their timeline. Ideas for consideration include:

- Immersion – integrate information into staff daily workflow as the goal(s) may provide
- Financial – incorporate fiscal requirements into budget
- Communication – provide regular formal and informal updates to the Board
 - Present to the county staff once adopted
- Analysis – periodically review progress and status toward your goals

A strategic plan is updated as needed, both informally and formally. It is prudent to officially review and amend the plan as needed and on at least an annual basis as determined by the County Board in partnership with the staff.

Guiding Principles

The following nine guiding principles are critical to our day-to-day activities:

1. Service comes first
2. Respect is our way of life
3. Diligence is essential to our success
4. Innovation is critical to our renewal
5. Quality of service is balanced with available resources
6. Maximization of resources is our goal
7. Informed citizens are necessary for good government
8. Cooperation creates a smooth running organization
9. Accountability is our bottom line

More detailed information on each of the principles is available in the County Administrator's Office.