

LAKELAND CITY COMMISSION

Strategic Planning Retreat

April 24, 2026

Day 2

The Lakeland City Commission met at the RP Funding Center for the Strategic Planning Retreat. Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley and Commissioners Chad McLeod, Terry Coney, Guy LaLonde, Ashley Troutman, Mike Musick, and Stephanie Madden were present. City Manager Shawn Sherrouse, Finance Director Mike Brossart, City Attorney Palmer Davis, and City Clerk Kelly Koos were present along with Deputy City Manager Rob Hernandez, Assistant City Manager Ashley Stathatos and all department directors.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

She welcomed everyone to the second day of Strategic Planning. This has been a great opportunity for the team to hear directly from Commissioners. She hoped they heard the Commission's support and better understood the Commission's train of thought. The dialogue has been rich. She hoped the public saw them as being approachable.

Consultant Monica Gould greeted the Commission. They appreciated the hospitality they have experienced. They spent time last night synthesizing Commission comments. She sent a new PowerPoint and handout at 2:00 a.m. and Angel Davis printed that out for the Commission.

Recap and Reflections on Yesterday – Commissioner Dialogue

Commissioner Guy LaLonde: There was a lot to digest yesterday and he is ready to dig in today.

Commissioner Terry Coney: Yesterday was good. He has been on the Commission for 4 months. He reaches out to staff when he has questions.

Commissioner Ashley Troutman's reflection has been on leadership.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden felt the Mayor did a good job talking to colleagues and staff. She enjoyed hearing from Commissioner Terry Coney and Commissioner Ashley Troutman. It would be interesting if staff wants to know why we are saying things. We are on the fly. The team who put this together had months. She wanted to know if staff needed any clarification. She was interested to hear from staff or management about their thoughts about yesterday. She liked the speaker at the beginning and the funnel. She asked when you are making a strategic plan, where do you fit in those innovative things that you cannot see yet?

Ms. Gould responded they create strategic objectives and those can encompass those innovative ideas. The Commission is going to direct staff to go look for something and

they are going to bring back grants and opportunities. She suggested the staff report out to the commission their progress on the strategic objectives.

Commissioner Mike Musick had no thoughts on yesterday. He was ready to get started.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley would like to hear updates on the progress of the strategic plan on a regular basis. She felt if they stayed with every other year, we should meet at least one day to give themselves a report card on how they are doing. Updates could be given at the Projects Update Workshops.

Ms. Gould shared the work they did last night to help move forward with the day.

Strategic Planning Framework

Ms. Gould showed the funnel and definitions.

Infrastructure Recap

Infrastructure Definitions

Option #2 Hybrid Infrastructure Definition (Citizen + Strategy)

Infrastructure is the essential system that keeps Lakeland safe, moving, and thriving—connecting people to neighborhoods, jobs, services, and recreation while strategically supporting growth, resilience, and quality of life for today and future generations.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley liked Option #2 as it was in laymen terms. The consensus agreed.

Proposed Strategic Objectives

1. Build a Safe, Connected and Multimodal Mobility System
2. Strengthen Infrastructure Resilience Through Stormwater, Flooding, and Water Quality Investments
3. Ensure Reliable Utility Capacity and Asset Sustainability to Support Growth
4. Modernize Foundational Systems to Enhance Organizational and Emergency Resilience

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley: The critical part of this is that staff can see where their projects live in these objectives. These are overarching statements and can be representative of all departments.

Ms. Gould asked Chuck Barmby to share the projects that are underway and what projects are not funded.

Shawn Sherrouse clarified Chuck Barmby is going to talk about transportation projects. There are other projects that are underfunded.

Chuck Barmby shared a list of top priorities.

- South Wabash Avenue Extension
- Lakeland Park Center Extension needs \$10,000,000 to finish design and Right-of-Way
- Public Works need \$1,300,000 for resurfacing

Trails & Connectivity

- West Lake Hunter Trail – analyze the overwater option and understand the costs.
- Land on a strategy to connect the northwest neighborhoods to BSP (Bonnet Springs Park).

Long-Term beyond 10 years

- Operations & Maintenance costs for Sun Rail if it comes to Lakeland
- High Speed Rail (Brightline) new station location in Polk County. If it is located in Lakeland, what infrastructure will be needed?
- Waring Road
- Tradeport Boulevard

Commissioner Ashley Troutman: Congestion highlights the need for additional housing and central city new construction supported through the SAIL (State Apartment Incentive Loan) Program. There are areas that can still use more density along the transit route. Transit can help reduce congestion.

Ms. Gould asked how the Commission felt about the Strategic Objectives.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden wanted electric mentioned in one of the objectives.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley liked adding it to the second objective.

Commissioner Terry Coney: The City needs to continually look at the ability to produce power for the citizens. We must continually look for future risks.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde agreed adding it to the second objective. Some citizens watching today do not realize the commission sits on the Utility Committee.

Commissioner Ashley Troutman: If we are going to call LE out he felt it should be under #3.

Shawn Sherrouse reminded the Commission that infrastructure also includes solid waste and parking. These are both enterprise funds. Do you want to call out specifics or keep a broad definition?

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley: Infrastructure is all inclusive of everything we do. She thought there would be a place for all departments in the strategic plan. She did not want to get mired on the specifics. Broader is better on the objectives.

Ms. Gould suggested defining solid waste and parking under #2. She asked the Commission to let them figure out how to add electric, solid waste, and parking to the objectives #2 or #3.

Commissioner Mike Musick wanted to use language that includes all utilities.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley emphasized they wanted electric included in objective #2.

Public Safety Vision Definitions

Option 1: Public Safety Definition

Public Safety in Lakeland is a shared, proactive commitment to preparedness, trusted response, and community confidence—grounded in strong emergency management, effective policing, modern facilities and technology, and coordinated partnerships that protect life, strengthen resilience, and support an exceptional quality of life as the city grows.

Commissioner Mike Musick preferred #1. He liked brevity.

Commissioner Ashley Troutman liked #1 but would like world class.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley liked #1 but add Fire.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde liked #1 but add Fire.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden asked about compliance.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley thought compliance could be included in the metrics.

Ms. Gould will work on the wordsmith.

Discussion on Proposed Strategic Objectives

- Strengthen Emergency Readiness, Coordination, and EOC Capability
- Align Public Safety Capacity with Growth Through Facilities, Coverage, and Workforce Readiness
- Modernize Public Safety Technology and Compliance Systems to Improve Effectiveness and Trust
- Improve “Felt Safety” and Community Confidence Through Visible Partnerships and Prevention

Commissioner Guy LaLonde asked about code enforcement falling under police.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden was excited about objective 4. She liked the idea of the little things.

Commissioner Terry Coney: We get a lot of positive feedback from the crime prevention unit attending the neighborhood association meetings.

Commissioner Mike Musick: Growing up in Pennsylvania they would turn on the fire hydrants in the summer and let the kids play in the water.

The consensus supported the objectives.

Focus Area Deep Dive #3 - Economic Development

Ms. Gould:

- Reviewed Department Priorities
- Reviewed Commissioner Interviews
- Reviewed the SWOT Analysis
- Economic Development Definitions

Commissioner Chad McLeod arrived at 9:22 a.m.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde likes all 3 and wondered if they could be blended. Also, should there be some measurability? He leaned more towards option 1.

Commissioner Terry Coney liked #2. He thinks of college graduates not being able to find jobs in Lakeland. We need to focus on retaining that talent.

Commissioner Chad McLeod would pick #1 if he had to choose. That is where the City had the most influence and could shape the goal.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden liked #3.

Commissioner Mike Musick liked #3 but felt they needed a combination.

Commissioner Ashley Troutman agreed with Commissioner Stephanie Madden and Commissioner Mike Musick. He liked #3 and the ability to develop the attitude to help people over the hurdle to start their business.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley liked #3 with the system building. They could blend highlights of all 3 into one. She did want the City to look at it to add jobs to our community. Can we paint the broader picture for our team to understand the permitting process ties into the broader picture.

Commissioner Terry Coney: Our staff plays a role in what comes to Lakeland.

Ms. Gould will focus on 3 and blend highlights from 1 and 2 including. The Commission will have the opportunity to review them again later.

Proposed Strategic Objectives:

1. Grow a Diverse, Resilient Economy Aligned with Quality of Life
2. Improve Business Accessibility, Clarity, and Speed-to-Market
3. Leverage Strategic Assets and Partnerships to Drive Long-Term Economic Value
4. Align Workforce, Education, and Economic Strategy to Future Opportunity

The Commission consensus was in support of the objectives.

Ms. Gould asked for Commission comments on Economic Development.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden wanted staff to meet developers halfway and help find a way to make it happen. She felt the City has made strides with things like express permitting. The City has improved technology. Fire has come in line with the State on fire codes. Brian Rewis held a listening forum with developers for specifics on how they could improve. Jason Willey provides a concierge service to new developers. She felt it would be helpful to get feedback from developers who persevered. Her suggestion for communication would be to celebrate a little more about all the things we are participating in. She wanted to see how we can prioritize.

Commissioner Mike Musick: We have a Florida building code but municipalities can tweak it. He has a project starting in Miami Dade. It is a unique building because of the materials. He called the building department down there. They did not get a positive response. It made him not want to do the project.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley: We must create a culture of curiosity. We should want to say, "how may I help you?" and ask what the end game is. How do we cultivate a public service attitude of tell me more? You can then glean more information without having animosity. In our convenience culture, curiosity has fallen to the wayside.

Commissioner Terry Coney: It is important to ask questions and listen to people. It does have to be a collaborative process. Ms. Gould's question was, "is there anything we missed related to economic development?".

Recess at 9:59 a.m. and reconvene at 10:10 a.m.

Focus Area Deep Dive #4 - Culture and Quality of Life

Ms. Gould reviewed:

- Department Priorities – she proposed Workforce well-being and organizational culture move to its own focus area.
- Commissioner Interviews
- Community Sentiment
- SWOT
- Culture Definitions

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley brought up the word culture at her first strategic planning retreat. The City Manager at the time said they were not going to discuss culture but

rather communication. When she originally raised culture, she was referring to the internal work environment with our staff. Maybe this would better be identified as Quality of Life.

Commissioner Mike Musick thinks of culture for employee interactions.

Ms. Gould: In her experience, quality of life is what the citizens understand. Culture should probably be a 5th focus area for employees.

Commissioner Ashley Troutman would choose Option 2.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde: Quality of life speaks to belonging and getting involved. He liked Option 1 but maybe add part of Option 3 that talks about neighborhoods. He always assumed culture is business.

Commissioner Terry Coney: The culture of Lakeland is what enhances the quality of life.

Commissioner Chad McLeod: There is a culture of the city and quality of life is tied to that.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden agreed with Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley about the culture being an internal focus. She liked Option 2 and you could replace culture with Lakeland's identity. She was fine with making this Quality of Life and make culture part of the next focus area.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley would change the focus area to Quality of Life.

Commissioner Ashley Troutman: Quality of Life is something the taxpayers expect. Culture is built by people. He felt culture was a rallying call to people to contribute to improving the culture of life.

Commissioner Chad McLeod: Whatever we call it, it is what is underneath it that matters. He was agreeable with Quality of Life and Culture & Quality of Life. He did see the difference between internal and external culture.

Commissioner Terry Coney: For an exceptional quality of life, there must be an acceptance of all culture.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden liked Option 2.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde liked Option 2 and the title Quality of Life.

Ms. Gould suggested they look at the objectives and come back to the definition.

Proposed Strategic Objectives

1. Expand Access to Cultural, Recreational, and Community Spaces

2. Strengthen Community Connection Through Placemaking and Programming
3. Preserve and Enhance Neighborhood Character and Identity

Commissioner Terry Coney liked the objectives. An example would be renaming Brooks Park. That renaming gave that community a greater sense of ownership. The atmosphere in that park is different now.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden questioned the word “access”. She was concerned that you cannot safely and easily access all parks. Maybe say “expand access and connectivity.”

Commissioner Ashley Troutman wanted to include how we can tell Lakeland's story, maybe improving on the historical marker program. He also talked about an “in the meantime” access to BSP such as a Squeeze Ride.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden wanted to acknowledge LAMTD's (Lakeland Area Mass Transit District) innovative efforts to provide connectivity. She saw a trolley for parks when she was traveling in Europe.

Commissioner Terry Coney: With connectivity there may be low hanging fruit. We have the roundabout but we are still dealing with that underpass. On Memorial Boulevard and Lakeland Hills, we have crossing lights that help people cross the street. Maybe we could add a crossing light at the entrance of Bonnet Springs Park (BSP).

Commissioner Guy LaLonde: David Bunch advocates for connectivity to BSP. There are points at Prospect Lake Wire Apartments.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley: David Bunch was one of the founding visionaries of BSP. They are continually working to find connectivity to BSP.

Commissioner Ashley Troutman wanted historic story telling in the objectives.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden wanted to see connectivity become park central. Think of the best way for people to get downtown. Identify pathways for real Lakelanders to locations such as BSP or downtown.

Communications: The Path Forward - Communications Director Larry Little.

He has been in this job for 74 days. He has spent a lot of time listening. How does our plan fit into the new infrastructure we are building as a team? His initial audit shows that the state of communications is strong but there are clear opportunities. He is working on a play book, updating the communications plan and the crisis plan. The play book is strategic and tactical. He explained what the plan would be in case of an emergency, starting with a holding statement. Then they will go to the SWIFT (Situation, Why it

matters, Impact, Facts, Takeaway) model where they will create a press release. Anyone could follow this model and produce a press release.

Communication is the responsibility of everyone in this room. We are one city and should have one voice. We do not have a communications problem we have a coordination opportunity. Communications should be in the room from the beginning. Bringing communications to the room in the middle or the end does not work well for this community.

He met with Lakeland Electric (LE), Police and Fire. Where does our work intersect? Communications want to hear what City staff is working on so they can be aware for the media inquiries and maybe run things through legal. Communications is here to support departments and align with one voice for the city.

Digital and Public Engagement - Communications needs an outreach strategy and team to get our youth involved in government. They have improved the employee newsletter and citywide emails. They are going to do quarterly City Manager videos. They are working on ways to communicate with employees with no access to email. Communications is serving as the bridge for this City.

Priorities for Culture and Quality of Life

Commissioner Dialogue:

Commissioner Mike Musick liked one city one voice. That is important in the communication effort.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley: Kudos to the cross-department work and including police fire and LE working together.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde enjoyed seeing Mr. Little out and participating in the community.

Commissioner Chad McLeod asked about the communications role in the strategic plan.

Ms. Gould did not know if communications was a strategic underpinning. How does the City share the good news about what they are doing? The biggest challenge was people being unsure. That goes back to communication.

Commissioner Chad McLeod: Larry Little said some things that are true:

1. Everyone shares a piece in the role of communications
2. Communications should be in the room from the beginning.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley: The rest of the staff are hearing us refer to communications. Every department should be thinking about getting the word out. More is better.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden thought this conversation was leading into the next proposed new focus area.

Commissioner Terry Coney thanked Larry Little for that great presentation. The Communications department is the City's megaphone. It is how we get our message out.

Commissioner Mike Musick cautioned there are things going on in the world that we do not know about. There is so much information coming to us. We could have the best communications department in the world and still there will be someone who does not get the information.

Ms. Gould: Communications can help departments communicate their progress on the Strategic Plan.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden: One of the things she considered was the playbook that is strategic and tactical. She thought it was a huge pivot for Larry Little to say that everyone should be able to say something. At least a holding statement. If he arms us with simple tactics, we can do it. Media training for the commission would be a good workshop opportunity.

Proposed New Focus Area: Organizational Excellence and Modernization

Ms. Gould reviewed:
Department Survey Data
Commissioner Interview
Organizational Excellence Definitions – Does the Commission want a 5th focus area?
The consensus was yes.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley liked organizational excellence because it was a stretch goal.

Commissioner Chad McLeod agreed.

Commissioner Terry Coney also liked the title.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde agreed. It is key to the succession planning. It is important that we are 2 and 3 deep in leadership.

Commissioner Ashley Troutman liked it.

Commissioner Mike Musick liked shooting for excellence.

Commissioner Chad McLeod liked the shorter version.

Commissioner Terry Coney liked the shorter version.

Commissioner Ashley Troutman liked the short one because it is repeatable.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde sees others leaning towards the shorter version. He did like the shorter version.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley liked the shorter one; specifics could be underpinned in some of the directives.

Ms. Gould will wordsmith that definition.

Strategic Objectives

1. Build and Sustain a High-Performing, Future-Ready Workforce
2. Strengthen Organizational Capacity Through Planning, Governance, and Performance Alignment
3. Modernize Systems and Practices to Improve Effectiveness and Resilience

Commissioner Dialogue:

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley liked all 3. She wants the teams to take the time to debrief about events or projects to make sure we can improve.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden wanted to see culture included. She wanted the City Manager to have an opportunity to meet with department directors about culture. Maybe there should be a leadership team retreat once a year, to help remind them what it means to work for the City of Lakeland.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley: High performing teams are how people show up. We are here to serve other people as the City of Lakeland. She was open to creating a # 4 objective that focused on culture.

Commissioner Terry Coney: It came to a customer satisfaction point. He felt #3 covered customer satisfaction.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden if we're adding a 4th we could include culture and communication.

Recessed for lunch at 12:09 p.m. and reconvened at 12:52 p.m.

Strategic Plan Structure: KPIs, Reporting, and Alignment

Ms. Gould was hoping to define the structure and the framework. She wanted the Commission to think about what a strategic plan looked like in the future, how they will engage the community differently, what will be the touch points, how will you report on it, and how will it be tied to department performance metrics. Staff will appreciate an understanding of Commission expectations. The Commission may want to workshop

the Vision, Mission, and Values. The consultant will provide revised definitions and objectives.

Where do we go from here? The Consultant will meet with City Management and make sure they are comfortable with the new plan. Once staff reviews, the City has their framework for their recast strategic plan.

Staff will now take the objectives and outline the strategic priorities that are critical. They Will define:

- Who owns it
- Who is enabling it
- What departments are working together to do it?
- What's the deadline?
- How do we measure success?

Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

Why Cities should adopt KPIs

Measuring Outcomes Example

Planning Process & Data Collection

Commissioner Dialogue:

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley clarified that Ms. Gould would work with staff. They were only engaged through this process.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley thought having outside observers would help staff. The Commission has said things in these meetings and outside consultant engagement would cut down on misunderstanding. She would like this to be a more regular occurrence. This would also not put a burden on staff who is already busy.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden: We do not know what we do not know about budget and costs. She was happy to have the Strategic Planning Retreat with two new commissioners onboard. We have done a lot of reorganization with big disruptions such as COVID. She felt they had meaningful content. She felt heard. We have done similar activities. This Strategic Planning Retreat has made her feel the most on the same page ever. If we were going to ever have an outside consultant, now would be the time. She would like to support the City Manager and the Office of Innovation and Strategy (OIS). She would like to codify the strategic plan and give staff clarity.

Commissioner Terry Coney liked this process. It let the community know that we are working for ways to make life better. We can always go back and readdress this plan.

Commissioner Chad McLeod thought for next steps it was important to take this information and update the strategic plan that we have had, make sure there is a process in place for periodic regular updates, and make sure there is a focus on how to keep the

plan current and report on KSIs. He would keep the consultant onboard to continue the process.

Commissioner Mike Musick just wants to know the specifics about what the City is working on. It would probably be beneficial to engage the consultant to take the plan to the next step. He does not want to feel like we finished these meetings and now everyone is just going back to work.

Commissioner Ashley Troutman agreed that we should engage the outside representative, just like having a financial plan and meeting with your advisor.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde agreed but being budget-minded, he has confidence in staff. He just does not know what that would cost to keep the consultant on board.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley: From a facilitation process there is so much work that goes on behind the scenes. With all the investment, we must perpetuate this investment. Engaging the consultant for the next steps and not burdening an already stretched staff is important. She agreed with Commissioner Stephanie Madden that through this process, she has felt heard. She did not want the plan to just go in a binder on a shelf.

Ms. Gould: The previous plan was not well structured. She would be honored to continue to the next steps. She asked the Commission what they want to measure and what they want the staff to focus on.

Commissioner Ashley Troutman: We talked about economic development today. He would like to see the household income in our community rising.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde: Too many KPIs can muddy the water. He suggested they keep it between 5-7.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden was not sure what we do here. She wanted to interact with departments to determine what we should measure. It cannot come from the top down. She would like a KPI to track creative measures. Who are our co-creators?

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley agreed. They want to open the flood gates for co-creators to come alongside the Commission.

Commissioner Mike Musick: Speaking to the legal team, we bring in a new attorney, we should then see a lift in the outsourcing to other attorneys. The Projects Update Workshops have been helpful in updating us on current activities. That is all he is asking for. He just needed an update - was it a good decision? Do we need to pivot?

Commissioner Ashley Troutman wanted to see a KPI that looks at the activation of City-owned properties. How many properties are giving money back to the tax rolls? Maybe we measure also the number of events we are having in our parks. That signals collaborative partnerships.

Commissioner Stephanie Madden asked how do you measure connectivity? How about when community development negotiates a bus stop or traffic signal. That denotes smart growth because it covers the effects on the infrastructure. We track affordable housing and that has been a big deal to communicate back to the community. Tracking smart growth deployment would be a big deal too.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley: One thing you might measure would be the number of walkers or bikers at the local school. That is a connectivity KPI. The Projects Update Workshops have been very helpful for her. Updates could be made during those workshops, which occur every other month. Those project updates are already scheduled and staff could add the strategic program to their project.

Commissioner Chad McLeod asked Ms. Gould how often she recommended updates.

Ms. Gould said quarterly is best practice. Some cities update monthly. Whatever method you use to track the plan has to be ongoing. She asked the Commission for any final comments.

Commissioner Ashley Troutman: Looking back to the KPIs, look at affordability measurements in the community.

Commissioner Terry Coney thanked the consultants for their guidance.

Commissioner Guy LaLonde thanked the consultant. He thanked staff for all their hard work.

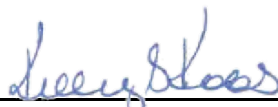
Commissioner Stephanie Madden was hopeful that all the departments would use AI to look for KPIs.

Commissioner Mike Musick was ready for budget.

Commissioner Chad McLeod thanked everyone.

Mayor Sara Roberts McCarley concurred. She appreciated staff and everything they do every day. She was looking forward to staff's feedback on the KPIs. She hoped staff heard that the Commission wants to continue with their commitment with the consultant.

The meeting adjourned at 2:04 p.m.


Kelly S. Koos,
City Clerk

