

VISION AND PRIORITIES FOR THE CITY OF WILLOWS

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CITY COUNCIL

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Vision for a Thriving Willows

Willows is a thriving and safe community where families want to live, work, and recreate. It will foster a proactive business environment that expands other industries, supports its agricultural heritage, and leverages its recreational attractions.

Council Priorities

Priority #1: Financial Stability

Upon reviewing their priorities, the council emphasized that achieving financial stability is a crucial foundation for addressing all other priorities. The council recognized that new revenue is urgently needed to support essential services, infrastructure investments, and future development. Past council deliberation found that assessing a 1.5% sales tax increase is necessary to create a stable financial base. This focus on financial stability will ensure the city has the resources required to pursue its vision of a thriving community.

Goal 1: Educate the community on the city's fiscal health and the impacts of Measure I

Measure I could have a significant impact on creating a stable financial foundation for the city, ensuring consistent revenue streams to support essential services and future development.

Possible Initiatives:

- Execute the City Council approved Education Action Plan to educate residents on the City's budget and fiscal circumstances, as well as address any factual questions and/or concerns about the sales tax measure.
- Host town hall meetings to engage with the community and address concerns about the City's budget and the tax measure.
- Launch a Speakers' Bureau to talk to civic groups and churches about the City's fiscal circumstances.

Goal 2: Develop a grant strategy to pursue funds

Securing grants can provide the necessary funds to enhance and expand current services without placing additional financial burdens on residents.

Possible Initiatives:

- Hire or appoint a dedicated grant writer to identify and apply for relevant grants.
- Create a grant calendar to track application deadlines and submission statuses.

- Establish partnerships with regional and state agencies to increase the likelihood of receiving grants.

Goal 3: Add to the city's general fund reserve

As the city strengthens its financial foundation, re-building up the general fund reserve creates a financial safety net that can be used for unforeseen expenses and ensures long-term fiscal health.

Possible Initiatives:

- Allocate a portion of annual budget surpluses to the general fund reserve.
- Implement cost-saving measures across departments to free up additional funds.
- Explore revenue-generating opportunities, such as public-private partnerships.

Goal 4: Add an Economic Development Element to the General Plan

Incorporating an economic development element into the general plan ensures that the city has a long-term, sustainable revenue strategy that supports growth and development.

Possible Initiatives:

- Conduct an economic impact study to identify potential growth areas and revenue streams.
- Develop policies that encourage business investment and expansion within the city.
- Create incentives for businesses to set up operations in Willows, such as tax breaks or streamlined permitting processes.

Goal 5: Optimize in-house staffing to improve financial efficiency

Ensuring optimal in-house staffing levels contributes to financial stability by reducing reliance on external contractors, lowering costs, and enhancing service quality through a consistent and dedicated workforce.

Possible Initiatives:

- Conduct a thorough assessment of current staffing levels and identify areas where in-house expertise can replace outsourced services.
- Develop a strategic recruitment plan focused on attracting and retaining skilled local talent to fill key positions.
- Implement training programs to enhance the capabilities of existing staff, thereby reducing the need for external consultants and contractors.

Goal 6: Develop an asset replacement plan for large equipment

An asset replacement plan ensures that essential equipment, particularly within the fire department, is regularly updated and maintained, contributing to public safety and operational efficiency.

Possible Initiatives:

- Conduct an inventory of all major city assets and equipment.
- Create a schedule for regular maintenance and replacement of critical assets.
- Budget for asset replacement over multiple fiscal years to spread out costs.

Priority #2: Economic Development

Economic development aims to create a thriving business environment that attracts new businesses, supports existing ones, and leverages tourism. By enhancing economic opportunities, Willows can increase revenue, create jobs, and improve the overall quality of life for residents. Fostering a vibrant and diverse economy will help Willows overcome economic stagnation and competition from other communities.

Goal 1: Develop a single point of contact for business outreach and development

Establishing a dedicated staff member for business outreach ensures a focused and strategic approach to attracting and supporting businesses, thereby driving economic growth.

Possible Initiatives:

- Hire an economic development officer responsible for strategy, outreach, and business development.
- Create a business support center to assist with permits, regulations, and resources.
- Expand and enhance a marketing campaign to promote Willows as a prime location for business investment.

Goal 2: Leverage existing tourism opportunities

Enhancing tourism can significantly boost local revenue and create jobs, capitalizing on Willows' recreational attractions and agricultural heritage.

Possible Initiatives:

- Improve freeway signage to attract travelers to local attractions.
- Develop heritage tourism assets, such as a farm antique outdoor museum, to draw visitors.
- Partner with local businesses to create tourism packages that highlight recreational opportunities.

Goal 3: Complete a code update to promote business opportunities

Updating city codes ensures a business-friendly environment that facilitates growth and makes it easier for businesses to operate successfully in Willows.

Possible Initiatives:

- Conduct a review of existing codes and regulations.
- Streamline permitting processes to reduce bureaucratic hurdles for businesses.
- Provide training for city staff to enhance their ability to support business development.

Goal 4: Improve city appearance to attract businesses and visitors

Enhancing the visual appeal of Willows can attract more businesses and tourists, contributing to economic vitality and community pride.

Possible Initiatives:

- Develop a city improvement plan focusing on signage, façade enhancements, and beautification projects.
- Launch initiatives to address and rehabilitate dilapidated buildings.

- Encourage private investment in property improvements through grants or incentives.

Goal 5: Identify and prioritize areas for annexation to support economic development

Expanding the city's boundaries strategically can create new opportunities for business development, housing, and infrastructure, supporting long-term economic growth.

Possible Initiatives:

- Conduct a study to identify key areas for annexation that would add the most value to the city.
- Engage with property owners and stakeholders in potential annexation areas to gain support.
- Develop a comprehensive annexation plan that includes infrastructure development and service provision.

Priority #3: Public Safety

Public safety is a fundamental priority that ensures the well-being of residents through effective law enforcement and emergency services. By investing in the police and fire departments, Willows can provide a secure environment that fosters community trust and stability. Strengthening public safety infrastructure and emergency response capabilities is important for maintaining a safe and resilient community.

Goal 1: Conduct a detailed financial analysis to restore the Willows Police Department

A thorough financial analysis is essential to determine the feasibility and sustainability of reinstating the local police department, which is crucial for maintaining public safety and community trust.

Possible Initiatives:

- Hire a consultant to perform a comprehensive financial analysis and feasibility study.
- Assess the costs of staffing, equipment, and ongoing operations for the police department.
- Explore funding options, including grants and partnerships, to support the re-establishment of the police department.

Goal 2: Right-size and enhance the Willows Fire Department to include 24-hour Advanced Life Saving (ALS) services

Ensuring that the fire department is adequately staffed and equipped to provide 24-hour ALS services and handle emergencies effectively enhances public safety and community well-being.

Possible Initiatives:

- Evaluate current staffing levels and determine the optimal number of personnel required.
- Recruit additional firefighters to meet the city's growing needs.
- Budget for additional equipment and resources needed to support a 24-hour ALS service.
- Invest in modern firefighting equipment and vehicles to enhance operational efficiency.

Goal 3: Enhance visible crosswalks and signage for road safety

Improving road safety through better signage and visible crosswalks enhances the overall safety for pedestrians and drivers.

Possible Initiatives:

- Conduct an assessment of current road safety infrastructure to identify high-risk areas.
- Implement upgrades to crosswalks, including better lighting and high-visibility paint.
- Install additional signage in critical locations to improve driver awareness and pedestrian safety.

Priority #4: Community Engagement

Community engagement seeks to actively involve residents in the city's decision-making processes and promote a positive image of Willows. By fostering a sense of community and improving communication, the city can build public trust and encourage citizen participation. This priority aims to counteract negativity by highlighting positive efforts and achievements, ensuring that the community feels connected and invested in Willows' thriving future.

Goal 1: Launch an aggressive image campaign to promote the positives of Willows

A strong, positive image campaign can enhance community pride, attract new residents and businesses, and improve overall perceptions of Willows.

Possible Initiatives:

- Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy highlighting the strengths and successes of Willows.
- Use various media channels, including social media, local newspapers, billboards and community events, to spread positive messages.

Goal 2: Conduct town hall meetings and engage citizens in city governance

Increasing community participation in city governance ensures that residents' voices are heard and fosters a sense of ownership and accountability in local decision-making.

Possible Initiatives:

- Organize regular town hall meetings to discuss key issues and gather feedback from residents.
- Encourage citizens to attend city council meetings and provide input on important topics.

Goal 3: Partner with the business community to create foot traffic and civic engagement

Collaborating with local businesses and organizations can drive economic activity and foster a stronger sense of community.

Possible Initiatives:

- Work with the Chamber of Commerce and community clubs, such as Rotary Club, to develop joint initiatives and events.

- Create special events and promotions that encourage residents to shop locally and participate in community activities.
- Establish a business support center to assist local businesses and promote economic growth.

Goal 4: Promote community events and enhance quality of life

Community events build pride and strengthen the social fabric of Willows, making it a more attractive place to live and visit.

Possible Initiatives:

- Develop a calendar of community events, such as parades, concerts in the park, and festivals, to engage residents and visitors.
- Use online platforms and social media to promote upcoming events and encourage participation.
- Collaborate with local organizations to sponsor and organize events that celebrate the community's heritage and culture.

Priority #5: Infrastructure Improvement

Infrastructure improvement focuses on upgrading and maintaining essential city services such as streets, sidewalks, lighting, and sewage systems. By enhancing infrastructure, Willows can support current needs and future growth, ensuring a safe and functional environment for residents and businesses. Investing in long-term planning and maintenance of infrastructure is key to supporting the city's development and quality of life.

Goal 1: Implement the community improvement plan for streets, sidewalks, and lighting

Upgrading infrastructure such as streets, sidewalks, and lighting is essential for safety, accessibility, and the overall quality of life in Willows.

Possible Initiatives:

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of current infrastructure conditions to identify priority areas.
- Secure funding through grants and budget allocations for infrastructure projects.
- Develop a phased plan to systematically upgrade streets, sidewalks, and lighting across the city.

Goal 2: Enhance the public works team to ensure effective service delivery

A fully staffed and well-equipped public works team is important for maintaining the city's infrastructure and ensuring timely and efficient service delivery.

Possible Initiatives:

- Recruit additional public works staff to meet the city's growing needs.
- Invest in training programs to enhance the skills and capabilities of the public works team.
- Acquire modern equipment and tools to improve operational efficiency.

Goal 3: Develop Willows as a transportation hub

Positioning Willows as a transportation hub and “dry port” may boost economic development, improve accessibility, and attract businesses and residents.

Possible Initiatives:

- Enhance railway infrastructure to support commercial transportation.
- Improve commercial truck accessibility to facilitate the movement of goods.
- Collaborate with regional transportation agencies to integrate Willows into broader transportation networks.

Goal 4: Implement the sewage repair plan

A reliable and efficient sewage system is fundamental for public health and sustainable growth.

Possible Initiatives:

- Secure funding through grants and budget allocations to support an overhaul of the city’s sewage system.

Priority #6: Quality of Life

Quality of life initiatives aim to enrich the community by providing diverse recreational activities, well-maintained parks, and community events. By focusing on these areas, Willows can create a vibrant and attractive environment for residents of all ages. Enhancing recreational opportunities and community amenities will contribute to a higher standard of living and overall community satisfaction.

Goal 1: Hire a full-time Recreation Director

A dedicated Recreation Director can enhance the range and quality of recreational programs, contributing to the community's overall well-being and attractiveness.

Possible Initiatives:

- Develop a job description and recruitment plan for hiring a full-time Recreation Director.
- Expand existing youth and adult recreational programs and introduce new activities based on community interests.

Goal 2: Open the city pool to create a community hub

Reopening the city pool provides a focal point for community activities, promoting health, wellness, and social interaction.

Possible Initiatives:

- Allocate funds for the maintenance and operation of the city pool.
- Organize swim lessons, water aerobics, and other aquatic programs to maximize pool usage.
- Host community events and activities at the pool to foster community engagement.

Goal 3: Enhance the maintenance of city parks

Well-maintained parks provide essential green spaces for recreation, relaxation, and community events, enhancing the quality of life for residents.

Possible Initiatives:

- Develop a maintenance schedule for regular upkeep of park facilities and equipment.
- Invest in new park amenities such as playgrounds, picnic areas, and sports facilities.
- Engage community volunteers and organizations in park beautification projects.

Goal 4: Expand youth and adult activities

Offering a variety of activities for all age groups promotes physical and mental health, fosters social connections, and enriches community life.

Possible Initiatives:

- Partner with local organizations to offer a diverse range of classes, workshops, and events.
- Create a community events calendar to keep residents informed about upcoming activities and opportunities.