

# IDENTIFYING STRATEGIC AREAS

## DESCRIPTION

While the vision captures an overall ideal, this step clarifies which economic development areas will be targeted to achieve the vision. Once these categories are established, setting goals for these areas will pave the way for strategizing and monitoring progress.

## RATIONALE

- Focuses on areas of mutual interest and opportunity
- Grounds overall vision in several target areas
- Makes it easier to establish action items

## LOGISTICS

**Duration:** 30-60 minutes

**Format:** small workshop activity

**Key Players:** project team (with additional community stakeholders or council as desired)

**Resources:** flip chart paper, markers, vision statement, Key Facts

## OUTPUT

A breakdown of the vision statement into specific strategic areas, with the option to include goals for each area.

## PROCESS

1. This step works best in tandem with your vision brainstorming and can be done at the same meeting. Record your vision (or collection of agreed-upon words if not finalized) on a whiteboard or poster paper. Discuss some of the common elements that came up when considering where you want to be as a community in 5-10 years.
2. As a group, brainstorm the different factors that need to be in place to achieve this vision. It can be helpful to draw it as a map to visualize. Address the question: **To achieve this vision, what do we need to have in place?** If you like, have the group brainstorm individually or in pairs before discussing as a group. These should be BROAD strategic areas in the vein of "titles". See examples on following page.
3. Once you have generated a list of possible strategic areas to concentrate on, record 2-4 per page on poster paper and post around the room (or let participants vote right on the map if large enough).
4. Provide each participant with three to five sticky dots, and ask them to place them beside the subjects they think are most relevant to address in the LED strategy. Explain that individuals can only place one dot next to a single option (i.e., can't put all of their dots on one option).
5. Discuss results as a group and get an overall sense of agreement on the top 2-5 strategic areas identified; gain general consensus that you will move forward with strategizing around these chosen subjects.



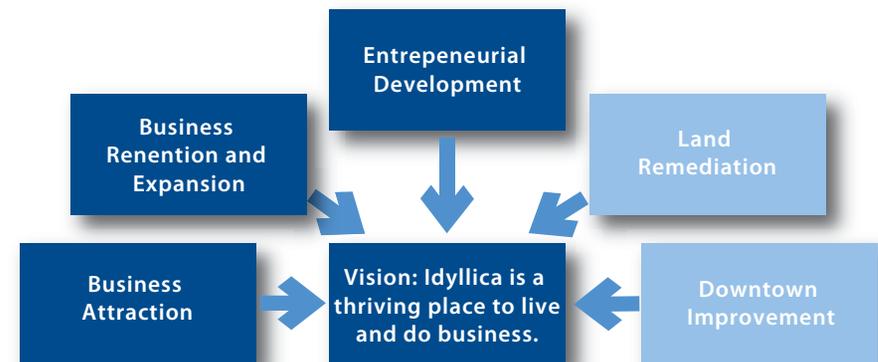


## EXAMPLES OF COMMON STRATEGIC AREAS

- Business Retention and Expansion (BRE)
- Tourism marketing
- Investment attraction
- Sector or cluster development
- Community promotion and marketing
- Area targeting or regeneration
- Downtown improvement
- Skills training and/or workforce attraction
- Community infrastructure
- Entrepreneurial development
- Resident attraction
- Marketing local products

## MAPPING EXAMPLE

Use this simple map (drawn on poster paper or a whiteboard) to discuss what key areas require focus to realize your vision. Record your vision at the centre, and link all brainstormed strategic areas. In this example, the darker boxes were the ones chosen by voting/consensus as the three target strategic areas for this strategy.



## TIPS

- Different participant types (e.g., council and local government staff) can be given different coloured dots to track any differences in rankings.
- Keep in scope – it's better to target just 2-3 areas in a two or three year plan, particularly if you're a smaller community or just starting out your LED program. Focus on the areas that are most actionable and most needed.