

Richland County Strategic Plan

2021-2024



COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Steve Carrow

Shaun Murphy-Lopez

Lee Van Landuyt

Donald Seep

Richard McKee

Marty Brewer, Board Chair

Melissa Luck

Gary Manning

Timothy Gottschall

Ingrid Glasbrenner

Danielle Cooper

Linda Gentes

David Turk

Chad Cosgrove

Melvin (Bob) Frank

Kerry Severson

Steve Williamson

Marc Couey

Van Nelson

Peg Kaul

Daniel McGuire

Table of Contents

1: Opportunities and Challenges	2
Focus	2-3
Framework for Decision-Making.....	3-4
2: Operations.....	5
Organizational Structure	5-6
Workforce.....	6
Capacity	7
Growth	7-8
Operational Performance Metrics	8
3: Capital Facilities	9
Mandated Services	9-10
Discretionary Services	10-12
Capital Facilities Performance Metrics.....	12
4: Continual Improvement	12
5: Appendices	xx
Project Implementation Matrix.....	xx
Moody's Analytics 2018 Ratings Change and 2020 Action	xx
Courthouse 2013 Capital Improvement Cost Opinions	xx
Board of Regents Lease & Campus 10-Year Projects List.....	xx

Planning assistance provided by:



SOUTHWESTERN WISCONSIN
REGIONAL PLANNING
COMMISSION

Chapter 1: Opportunities and Challenges

During early 2021, the Richland County Board of Supervisors participated in four strategic planning conversations, facilitated by the Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SWWRPC). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all meetings were held via Zoom. Meetings were open to the public, and invitees included all 21 members of the Board of Supervisors and the County Administrator.

The schedule and topics were as follows:

- January 27 – Core values, stakeholders, mission, and vision
- February 10 – SWOT and PEST analyses and development of strategic initiatives
- February 24 – Organizational capability and goal development
- March 10 – Capital facility investments and plan implementation

SWWRPC also conducted one-on-one interviews with individuals who provided additional input into county issues. Citizen and municipal insight was also acquired through community planning work running concurrent to the strategic planning process. All materials for these meetings are retained in the SWWRPC office and available upon request.

Focus

The defining problem for the Richland County Board of Supervisors is the need to choose which services and enterprises it will financially support. Continuing inherited practices and commitments challenge the ability to plan for future commitments and needs. The county must focus its efforts on the needs of the future.

The current challenge stems from several factors outside of the county's control, including:

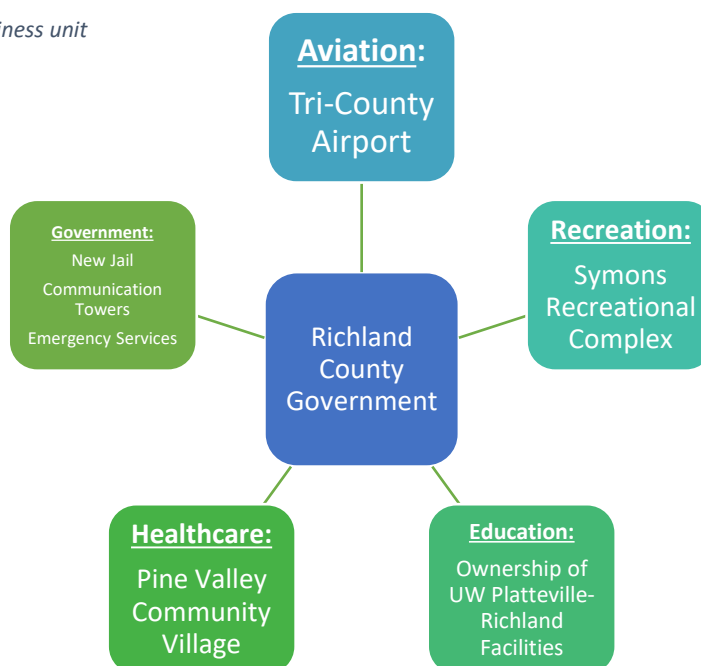
- Stagnating population growth, evidence for which is found in census data, population projections, school enrollment trends, and reports on the county's bond rating (Appendix B).
- State-imposed levy and debt limits.
- Inherited contractual agreements and investments for discretionary enterprises and services.

"The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do."

- Michael Porter, "What is Strategy?"

The "Business" of the County

Figure 1 – Richland County Long-term capital needs by business unit



In addition to its government function, Richland County is currently in the “business” aviation, recreation, healthcare, and education by way of its support or ownership of facilities used in these sectors (Figure 1). Maintenance debt services expenditures associated with discretionary enterprises compete for the same levy funding as mandatory services, and impact the county’s ability to fully fund its core operations.

The primary causes of the county’s financial issues stem from an inability make hard choices and focus its efforts through intentional action. It must choose which discretionary services to abandon, while simultaneously investing in community and economic development efforts to grow its population and tax base. Failure to focus will result in budget deficits, inability to pay competitive wages, and deferred maintenance of critical functions and facilities.

“At the core, strategy is about focus, and most complex organizations don’t focus their resources. Instead, they pursue multiple goals at once, not concentrating enough resources to achieve a breakthrough in any one of them”

- Richard Rumelt, Good Strategy/Bad Strategy

Strategic Priorities

The following strategic priorities will address the challenges mentioned above, and form the basis for actions recommended in this plan.

- **Effectiveness** – *Implement operational efficiencies* to reduce the costs and free up revenue.
- **Growth** – *Work to increase the county’s population and tax base* fund services.
- **Focus** – *Scale back or eliminate discretionary services* that cannot provide sustainable revenue to cover their costs.
- **Improvement** – *Create a culture of continual improvement* to sustain progress.

Framework for Decision-Making

The county will have to make several hard decisions in the coming years, and it’s beyond the ability of this document to detail each step in that process. However, it can serve as a guide during the decision-making process. Prioritizing future investments should be informed by the following criteria.

Core Values

The county’s *practices must be tethered to its principles* if it is to have some coherent strategy moving forward. Core values form the basis for decisions, since they bind decision-makers to their decisions. The County Board provided the following core values during the planning process:

- **Integrity** – Engage in county work with honesty and transparency in all proceedings. Meet commitments. Value the multitude of experiences on the board and the diversity of opinions this brings to decision-making.
- **Public Service** – Serve the county professionally and with competence. Be efficient and objective in decision-making. Focus on doing work that is relevant to both current and future generations of county residents.
- **Accountability** – Assume ownership of decisions. Be diligent and follow-through on projects. Be responsive to the needs of county residents as a whole, while recognizing the intrinsic value of every person. Make decisions that plant seeds of success for the future.
- **Open-minded** – Govern in a collaborative manner, unbiased by personal interest. Listen to the needs of residents, while being aware of future demands on county services.

Mission and Vision

The following Mission and Vision statements were drafted during the Strategic Planning process. Due to the nature of current challenges facing the county.

- **Mission:** Richland County will think strategically and anticipate the future, ensuring that the decisions made today will have lasting value and provide fiscal solvency. The needs of individuals will be respected while recognizing responsibility to the community as a whole. Vital community involvement in decision-making is encouraged by providing a venue for citizens who care to contribute to the betterment of the county.
- **Vision:** Richland County will be a vibrant place where people love life, enjoy work, and are empowered to raise thriving families.

Considerations

When facing difficult decisions, the county should answer the following questions to prioritize investments:

- For each discretionary enterprise, ask the question: *If we weren't already doing this, would we start doing it today?*
- What action or objective is within the county's *sphere of control*?
- What is the next *proximate advantage* that will allow the county to make progress towards a larger goal?
- What is the *economic return to the tax payer* associated with this project?
- What is the *social or public good* associated with this project, and *would it cease to exist* if funding was cut?
- Are services able to be effectively *provided by another* party or organization?
- *Is the service we're providing mandated*, and if so, *is the means of service provision mandated*? If the means of service provision is not mandated, *is there a more effective way of providing the service*?
- Is the project *a lever for creation of additional value or resources*, or *an impediment to service and innovation*?
- How might the county *premeditate actions of other parties* in order to improve its position?
- For discretionary enterprises, *are both the operational and capital outlays affordable over the next 20 years*?

Chapter 2: Operations

The County Board made significant strategic decisions in 2019 when they created the positions of County Administrator and Economic Development Director. Recommendations in this chapter build on those initial investments and include projects that were indirectly set in motion as a result of the choice to transition the executive branch of government from an Administrative Coordinator to a County Administrator.

Organizational Structure

The following strategies will enable the county to find operational efficiencies, thereby freeing up revenue and capacity in the form of staff time.

Streamline Organizational Structure

Continue the path that began with the creation of the County Administrator, using this position to centralize and coordinate county operations whenever possible.

Tactics:

- Centralize common county-wide processes and systems under the County Administrator.
- Improve the county's procurement process to be consistent county-wide. Maximize procurement rewards and benefits and identify joint procurement opportunities across departments or with other organizations.
- Coordinate upgrades to the payroll process so it's uniform for employees across all departments or enterprises.

Quality of a service or product is not what you put into it, but what the customer gets out of it.

- Peter Drucker

Improve Financial Practices

Implement the following tactics to improve the county's financial accountability, strategy, and flexibility. Doing so will yield improvements in financial education and also help create a baseline for performance metrics.

Tactics:

- Improve the county's bond rating by targeting improvement opportunities identified in Moody's Rating Action of February 2020 and Rating Change of March 2018 (Appendix B).
- Improve the budget process to implement flexibility, strategic thinking, accountability, and implementation of the Strategic Plan. Specific actions include:
 - Create budget narratives summarizing how new initiatives or improvements implement the Strategic Plan.
 - Define value that could be added with 20% *more* funding, or lost due to a 20% *reduction* in funding.
 - Identify cuts that would not impact strategic planning goals or mandated services.
 - Identify how departments would respond to unexpected cuts or events.
- Develop a capital improvement plan inclusive of facilities, roads, and equipment.
- Analyze the county's indirect rate to capture highest possible amount of grant funding, and establish a metric for productivity and efficiency.
- Increase discretionary and variable revenue source (fines, fees, grants, etc.) as a portion of the overall budget.

Increase Coordination

The county and its municipalities have many over-lapping interests, offering a good opportunity for partnerships that may result in improved service delivery or an overall savings to county residents through efficiencies.

Tactics:

- Engage in joint procurement materials and equipment whenever possible.
- Engage in joint contracting for capital projects to find savings resulting from reduced mobilization fees, increased competitive bidding, etc.
- Explore opportunities to share or contract staffing services.

- Create additional and modern methods to communicate events and initiatives, and to generate direct input from the community. This could include community engagement via a new website or a social media presence.
- Coordinate community develop and land use decision-making in Richland Center among institutional partners such as Richland County, Richland Center, Richland Hospital, and Richland Local School District.

Workforce

County employees are knowledge workers whose value is grounded in the information that enables them to do their job. The county's ability to provide quality services, therefore, relies entirely on the attraction and retention of knowledgeable employees, and the continued acquisition and effective transfer of knowledge.

"We should work to increase the desirability of being a Richland County employee."

- David Turk, Richland County Board Supervisor

Improve employee Pay and HR Policies

The financial cost of turnover is usually minimal compared to the hidden cost of lost productivity during the resulting transition. For this reason, retention of quality employees should be a primary focus to ensure the consistent delivery of high-quality services.

Tactics:

- Obtaining market value for employee wages as determined through the county's 2018 wage study.
- Develop a compensation and classification system for all positions to ensure positions remain market-competitive.
- Develop a uniform performance evaluation process that includes annual reviews, 6-month check-ins, and exit interviews.
- Develop a uniform set of human resources policies and procedures to improve transparency and accountability throughout the organization, including an update to the employee handbook and other related documents.

Develop a culture of support for employees

Non-monetary compensation is also critical to employee retention, since it builds organizational culture that supports employees. There are several ways the county can support these initiatives.

Tactics:

- Celebrate success and the professional and personal achievements of employees. Recognize new hires, retirements, and year-of-service milestones. Build a culture that supports and celebrates its people.
- Enable and empower departments to develop celebratory or team-building events. Day-long departmental retreats or other benefits can help build culture at a minimal expense.
- Create a total benefits program for employees that highlights total compensation and investment of the county in its employees, inclusive of salary, fringe benefits, and professional development.

Prioritize Service over Staffing

Prior to refilling a vacant position, the county should evaluate workforce needs through the lens of the service being delivered, not the means of service delivery, and implement the most effective means of service provision.

Tactics:

- For each unmet existing service or new service being proposed, evaluate staffing needs using the following analysis:
 - Can we *Build*? – invest in learning and development required to train staff to provide the service.
 - Should we *Buy*? – post the position, offering market-rate pay for a competitive application process.
 - Is there opportunity to *Borrow*? – collaborate with other entities on cost-sharing this position, or contract it out to a consultant for a short-period.
 - Can you *Bridge* the gap? –fill a vacant position through an intentional succession planning process.
 - Should we *Stop* providing this service or position?
-

Capacity

Capacity, specifically the education and training of the Richland County Board and staff to perform their duties, was a common theme during the planning process. Many newer members wanted further education on various aspects of their job. Staff were commended for their subject-matter knowledge, with further training recommendations focusing on the management and human resource aspects of their job.

Invest in Education of County Board Supervisors

The County Board currently consists of several new Supervisors brought on during the onset of the COVID pandemic, and during the planning process they recognized the need for both initial and on-going education on a variety of topics.

Tactics:

- Formalize an on-boarding process for newly elected Supervisors, including:
 - Creation of a mentor program partnering tenured Supervisors with new Supervisors.
 - Hold informal meetings with outgoing Supervisors and their successors to facilitate knowledge transfer.
 - Fund new Supervisors' attendance at annual Wisconsin Counties Association training or conferences.
- Support the attendance by new Supervisors at major Committee meetings, such as attending Finance Committee meetings during the annual budget development process. Create a mechanism to share agendas with all County Board Supervisors in order to facilitate this.
- Support cross-training, collaboration, and peer learning between County Board Supervisors and their counterparts on the boards of outside partners, such as Neighborhood Services of Southwest Wisconsin, Southwest Wisconsin Community Action Program, Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, and the Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board.
- Conduct annual on-going training covering basic concepts of local government, such as the role of counties, county government finances, the role of county boards, elections, and departmental work.

Deepen Staff Training in Leadership and Management

County staff frequently have the opportunity to attend conferences specific to their department. However, further training in management, leadership, and process improvement was identified as a potential growth area.

Tactics

- Sponsor department head training targeted at leadership and management, including Lean process training or UW Continuing Education certifications in Public Management or Human Resources.
- Ensure conference attendance and professional development is aligned with the goals of the Strategic Plan.
- On-going training or education targeted at the evaluation, adoption, and implementation of new technology to improve operational efficiency.

Growth

Economic development and population growth must remain a priority if the county is going to reverse the projected population decline and workforce shortages. Maintaining the funding for the Economic Development Director partnership with Richland Center is critical to this effort. The following strategies are intended to reflect the county's community and economic development priorities.

Maintain investment in Workforce and Community Development

Demographic projections and input from county employers reflect a dire need to grow the overall population, with an emphasis on the workforce attraction. Without a growth in workforce population, there will continue to be significant challenges to business attraction and retention. There will also be limitations on the county's school enrollment and tax base.

Tactics:

- Prioritize new home construction, and development of incentives or programs to attract developers.
- Support workforce development initiatives directed at attracting new residents.
- Support and invest in broadband expansion throughout the county.
- Identify financially sustainable use for the UW Richland campus in the event the current relationship ceases.
- Continue to invest in community and economic development partnerships with a demonstrated return-on-investment.

Support Business Attraction and Retention

In addition to the workforce attraction, the county must prioritize tax base growth through business attraction and expansion.

Tactics:

- Develop a portfolio of incentives to support business growth.
- Identify priority areas in the county for future industrial, commercial, or residential development.
- Identify future land uses for county or municipal-owned land informed by economic opportunities and environmental constraints.

Improve County Identity and Marketing

The greatest unrealized potential for Richland County is the ability to capitalize on its distinctive beauty. Leveraging this asset for growth will support many of the strategies and tactics listed elsewhere in this plan.

Tactics:

- Collaborate with county partners in the development of a distinctive brand for Richland County that will serve to build a sense of identity and pride, and help attract new residents and tourists.
- Create a new website that improve the county's digital presence, and serves both an effective governmental function as well as serving as an attractive "front door" to the world for new businesses, residents, and tourists looking to discover the county.
- Capitalize on the county's natural beauty and recreational opportunities through the investment and marketing of county parks, campgrounds, and recreational opportunities.

Operational Performance Metrics

Implementation of the strategies and tactics above will result in measured improvement to county operations. Some of this improvement is already being measured and has existing targets. Other improvements require the development of targets and collection of baseline data. Recommended performance metrics are below and summarized in Appendix A.

- Meet the 2018 salary schedule commitments for county staff.
- Achieve and maintain a general fund balance equal to 25% of annual operating expenses.
- Maintain the existing Investment Grade rating for the county's general obligation debt, with improvement from A3 across a 5-year period.
- Request annual return on investment reports from funded partners, and monitor to ensure ROI is steady or growing across multiple year periods.
- Develop baseline data on turnover, resulting in a turnover rate and major reasons for staff turnover.
- Increase non-tax revenue as a portion of overall revenue, supported by grants and fees.
- Create a new website.
- Develop of a county recreation plan to guide investment.
- Increase the number of county residents with high-speed internet.
- Create a distinct Richland County brand and marketing platform targeted at tourists and workforce.

Chapter 3: Capital Facilities

County capital improvement needs pose a significant burden to the county's budget due to borrowing limits, debt service that impacts operations, and the competition between investments in mandatory and discretionary facilities. This puts the county in a position to choose between providing funding mandatory services or committed discretionary expenses.

This chapter identifies proximate objectives for large investment decisions, and offers guidance on how to maintain progress over time. It does not identify solutions to all the county's investment challenges, since many of these require information not yet available.

Proximate objective: an accomplishment that the organization is going after right now, and which is close enough at hand to be feasible and achievable

- Richard Rumelt, Good Strategy / Bad Strategy

Mandated Services

These projects are fully integrated into the core purpose of the county, and essential for supporting the effective delivery of mandatory services.

County Jail and Sheriff's Office

The current jail is out of compliance with Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) administrative code, and puts the county at risk from action by DOC inspectors. The Sheriff's department continues to manage in this space and can currently perform their duties, however it's clear that action is needed to address the compliance issues.

Risk of not investing: Failure to comply with DOC requirements may eventually result in a shut-down of the jail.

Existing Options:

- Renovate and expand the existing facility – Studies published in 2013 include a Space Needs Assessment Report, Facility Condition Report, and Concept Design Synopsis and cost for the entire courthouse (Appendix C). These reports identified several structural issues with the existing building, and developed schematic plans for renovation and expansion of this facility at a cost of \$12.85 million, of which \$6.24 million was associated with the Sheriff's office and jail. This estimate *excluded* relocation costs for staff and inmates.
- Construction of a new facility – This option would require approximately 6-8 acres of land and put the county in competition with other land use demands such as business growth and housing development. This option would also require the county to consider how to reuse the existing facility. Construction of a new facility may provide partnership opportunities to co-locate other services in either the new facility or the renovated courthouse.

Estimated cost: Conservative estimates range from \$12.85 million to renovate and \$20 million for new construction.

Proximate objective: Make a determination in the next three years whether to construct a new facility or renovate the existing facility. Include an analysis of partnership opportunities in a new facility or in the vacated existing space. Also include an analysis of available land suitable for use as a jail.

County-wide Emergency Radio Towers

A consultant is currently studying this project, and expected to complete their work in May. These towers are considered critical since they provide support to emergency services. Partnerships may exist to help fund this.

Risk of not investing:

- Inability to call for backup.
- Delayed response calls.

Estimated cost: \$1-2 million.

Proximate objective: Further action will come once the study is complete in May.

Emergency Services Facility

Planning is underway to co-locate county emergency management services with the Richland Center Ambulance Garage.

Risk of not investing:

- Some delays in response time.
- Barriers to hiring due to the poor overnight facilities currently provided.

Estimated cost: The estimated expense to the county is \$600,000.

Proximate objectives:

- Finalize partnership with the city on land availability, facility design, etc.
- Begin discussion and analysis on the potential re-use opportunities for vacated space in the county courthouse.

Salt / Sand Shed

Preliminary planning is underway for this structure. There is a recognized need for additional storage and preparation for winter operations, but no current impacts to service have been identified.

Risk of not investing:

- Potential groundwater impacts from leaking and failure of the old structure.
- Loss of material from leaking.

Estimated cost: Approximately \$300,000.

Proximate objectives: Determine site, design, and cost.

Discretionary Services

The county needs to make hard decisions regarding its future discretionary spending. The project summaries below provide a series of decision-points and proximate objectives as guides to forward progress on these issues. In making decisions, the county should consider the following:

Priorities:

- Prioritize services based on county need and fiscal impact, reducing, or eliminating services as needed.
- Protect assets from disuse or disrepair to ensure long-term options remain available.
- Reduce expenses and capital investments to bare essentials during the decision-making process.

Core Values:

- Integrity – honor commitments and partnerships, even during planning for change.
- Focus on the future, planting seeds for long-term successes.
- Invest in necessary, non-mandatory services when the private market cannot support the service.

UW Richland

The County Board and county and city residents have expressed the desire for a continued post-secondary educational opportunity in the county. For this to occur, the county will need to take clear steps to work with its existing partner, while exploring other options in case the current arrangement terminates.

Goals:

- Improve the county's position relative to its relationship with the Board of Regents/UW Platteville, and its ability to make decisions about county property.
- Reduce or remove the risk that the county will unprepared for a potential closure of the UW Richland branch.
- Determine with some certainty, the probability that a UW Richland Campus will exist in two years.
- Develop scenarios for the use of these buildings in the event the relationship with UW system ends.
- Protect the county's investment in the UW Campus facilities through selective capital improvement investments, while halting all non-urgent capital improvements until a long-term use is determined.

Constraints and opportunities based on the current lease (Appendix D):

- The current lease extends through June 30, 2042, and "terminates automatically" if appropriations by the legislature are insufficient to permit the continued operation, or if state legislation concerning higher education

in Wisconsin involves a fundamental change in the branch campus program.

- In case of termination, the lease shall be turned over to some educational organization or to the Federal, State, or local Government.
- The county is required to pay for utilities (except phone service), as well as repairs and building improvements, and is in a position to choose which investments should be made based on the long-term future use of the campus.
- All furnishings were provided by the Board of Regents. Ending the agreement with the Board of Regents would require removal or disposal of these furnishings, and would require the next user to provide their own furnishings unless an agreement could be reached with the Board of Regents.
- The county agrees to pay 50% of janitorial costs. Should the agreement end, the county would need to budget for 100% of these costs.

Proximate objectives:

- Separate decisions about the agricultural land from decisions about the buildings. Currently the UW system is leasing the agricultural land to a farmer, taking the profit for their use. County control of this land would provide revenue and opportunities to explore other uses.
- Determine reality and feasibility of UW remaining active on the campus. Push for candid, continual conversations. Discussions with UW should include:
 - A request for the strategy to increase enrollment at the UW Richland campus, including recruitment strategies, target populations, and distinct areas of study.
 - Options for student housing.
- Develop scenarios for alternative use of the buildings to reduce vacancy time in the event the campus closes.
- Establish a capital improvements plan for these facilities, targeted at minimal maintenance needed to keep the buildings viable until a long-term use is determined.

Symons Recreation Center

The Symons Recreation Center appears to have community support and a history of partnerships to support operations. During the planning process, some questioned whether the county needed to own and subsidize this facility or if it could continue on its own under a different ownership and operational plan.

Goals:

- Maintain break-even, or net-positive return on county operational and capital funding.
- Maintain facilities to ensure they stay relevant, modern, and distinct from other recreational facilities in the city.
- Evaluate the long-term liability to the county resulting from capital investments or expansion plans.

Proximate objectives:

- Evaluate whether this service could be successful if owned and managed by other partners, and make plans to divest county of ownership of this facility.
- Evaluate the impact of expansion plans future on capital and operational expenses and the county's bond rating.
- Consider assisting with marketing and membership if it can assist with the transfer of ownership.

Tri-County Airport

There was general support for maintaining the airport due to its return on investment to the county. The partnership with Sauk County also provides significant return on investment in the form of payroll from employers using the airport, with minimal investment in the facility relative to overall operational cost. The most urgent issue is to develop a flood remediation plan for the airport to ensure its continued viability.

Goals:

- Reduce or eliminate flood risk to the airport, hangers, and other facilities.
- Ensure the long-term viability of this asset to support county economic development efforts.
- Develop an evaluation process to monitor continued return on investment to the county.

Proximate objective:

- Pursue flood remediation grant funding in partnership with Sauk County.

Pine Valley Community Village

The county completed a significant renovation and expansion in 2016, making an intentional long-term investment in this facility. Support remains strong for the services provided by Pine Valley, and no new action is recommended. It was noted during the planning process that the county ownership of a nursing home informed the 2018 downgrade of county general obligation rating to A3 from A2 (Appendix A).

Goals:

- Protect the county's investment through funded maintenance of an on-going capital investment plan.
- Monitor return on investment of the facility, and determine the ability of revenue to also cover debt service tied to the 2016 improvements.
- Develop a process for evaluating future demand, adjusted for impacts to healthcare funding, population growth, and demographic changes in the county.
- Evaluate whether management, financial, or operational changes could occur to reduce the impact of owning and operating this facility on the county's bond rating.

Capital Facilities Performance Metrics

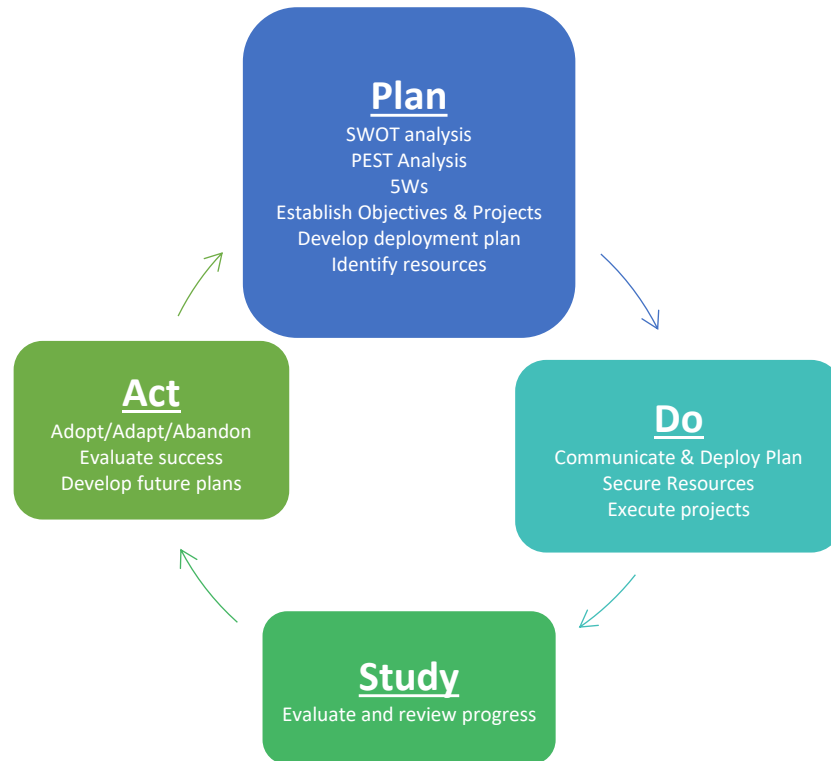
The county must evaluate its investments in discretionary enterprises and services to ensure it can maintain existing commitments and funding for mandatory services. Given this position, traditional performance metrics have been substituted for a summary of the proximate objectives listed above. These should serve as a guide to ensure the county continues forward progress, and they should be updated as new objectives become clear.

- Mandated facilities:
 - Jail and Sheriff's Office:
 - Determine whether the existing jail will be renovated and expanded, or if a new jail is optimal.
 - Develop a timeline for the next proximate objective to be complete, such as development of a remodel / renovation budget and timeline, or identification and acquisition of land for a new jail.
 - Emergency Services Building – prioritize timing for the construction.
 - Radio Towers – prioritize timing for the construction.
 - Salt/sand shed – identify site location, cost, and construction deadline.
- Discretionary facilities:
 - UW Richland Campus:
 - Gain control of the agricultural land and determine a long-term use for this land.
 - Acquire a 2-year plan from the UW system outlining how they will make this campus sustainable.
 - Develop scenarios for a post-UW use for the buildings.
 - Develop a minimum capital improvement plan.
 - Tri-County Airport – Secure funding to address the flooding that impacts operations at the airport.
 - Symons Center:
 - Define a distinctive service provided by Symons, compared to city facilities.
 - Evaluate whether operations of this service could be managed by a private or non-profit entity, and progress towards divesting county ownership.
 - Determine long-term liability impacts of facility expansion plans.
 - Determine the annual return-on-investment for the facility, including capital investments.
 - Pine Valley – Continue to monitor return-on-investment and funding needs.

Chapter 4: Continual Improvement

The County Board should use this plan as a “living document” to guide decision-making and measure progress. This chapter outlines how the county can use the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle to embed the plan in county operations and develop a culture of continual improvement.

Figure 2 – The PDSA Cycle



Plan

This is the work completed through the strategic planning process, culminating in this document. It included board engagement, review of relevant data and past planning work, and conducting interviews with key personnel. This process should take place again no later than 2024.

Do

This phase includes plan roll-out and executing objectives. Key aspects include:

- Departmental roll-out – Engage department heads and staff to get input on the plan, and engage them in implementation.
- County-wide initiatives – Implement county-wide initiatives such as updating the HR Personnel Manual, improving the payroll system, developing on-boarding programs for staff and County Board, and improving the budget process.
- Collect baseline data – Develop or finalize the targets and measures the county will use to measure progress towards continual improvement and plan implementation. This includes both the analysis of existing data and collection of new data to be used to measure progress.

Study

Measuring progress requires a team to monitor and manage implementation, and to record progress. Two major steps should be undertaken.

- Develop a Strategic Planning management team to monitor progress and ensure there is continued momentum. It should meet quarterly and be able to connect with all departments and levels of county government. The team should be inter-disciplinary and include personnel from the board, administration, department heads, and front-line personnel with a passion for this work.
- Identify and define barriers to implementation in order to overcome or surmount them when possible. When barriers cannot be overcome, they should be documented to inform future planning work. Common barriers to plan implementation include:
 - Departmental silos.
 - Legacy rules or procedures.
 - Lack of staff time to work on initiatives.
 - Choices or trade-offs are not made. Trying to do everything.
 - Reward and recognition programs incentivize the wrong things.
 - Individual departmental goals or plans don't support the plan, or are in conflict with it.
 - Management does not walk the walk.
 - Parochialism / narrow mindedness.

Act

This phase of the process sets the stage for continual improvement across the subsequent 3-year period. As the county sees progress, documents successes, or meets with barriers on any given initiative, it should look to:

- *Adopt* practices that work and are successful. Formalize them as part of the county's culture.
- *Adapt* good practices that need improvement. This includes surmounting obstacles, finding efficiencies in existing processes, and documenting why things don't work.
- *Abandon* existing practices that don't support progress, and new initiatives that are not the right fit for the county. The Management Team must document the reason for abandonment so they can learn from this and avoid similar issues in the future.