

USING SWOT AND TOWS ANALYSES INFORMATION

OVERVIEW

Richmond City Council and its staff participated in a SWOT analysis exercise on February 17th. The SWOT results are included here as a reference only. This document provides information on a TOWS analysis—an additional tool which can be used to support SWOT data.

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis enabled the Council to identify its current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. In other words, it showed what things were helping the Council to achieve its mission and what things were hurting or distracting it from it doing so. The SWOT analysis is an important tool that serves as the foundation and guide for future strategic planning.

TOWS Analysis

The TOWS analysis (the TOWS acronym is SWOT rearranged) takes the SWOT information one step further by evaluating the *relationships* between the four SWOT factors. The primary difference between TOWS and SWOT is that TOWS emphasizes the external factors (i.e., opportunities and threats) while SWOT emphasizes the internal factors (i.e., strengths and weaknesses). The TOWS analysis is used to consider:

- How to use your strengths to take advantage of the opportunities (SO).
- How to take advantage of strengths to avoid real and potential threats (ST).
- How to strengthen weaknesses by utilizing your opportunities (WO).
- How to minimize your weaknesses in order to avoid to threats (WT).

EXAMPLES OF TOWS STRATEGIES

Listed below are a few examples of possible strategic relationships gleaned from your TOWS analysis. These are only examples and are based on certain assumptions. As such, they require further review by the Council for accuracy and clarity. Further TOWS analysis can help the Council establish solid connections between the internal and external factors affecting how they do business.

Strengths and Opportunities (SO)

To do: Create a list of actions that directly enhance the opportunity by using a particular strength.

Strategies:

1. S1-O1, O2 Collaboration: Because the Council is able to coalesce around and navigate challenging issues, it should be able to find common ground on a number of issues with the Administration.
2. S2-O1, O4 Sense of Community: Providing the community with opportunities to contribute their ideas and develop their own businesses brings about a positive sense of community and economic payoff. Being responsive to citizens needs by collaborating with local nonprofits, private sector, etc. increases economic development.

Strengths and Threats (ST)

To do: Create a list of actions around using your strengths to minimize/eliminate your threats.

Strategies:

1. S3-T3 Restriction of Independent Cities: By finding new economic opportunities, the imbalance of services as well as effects of the moratorium are reduced.
2. S4-T1, T4 Communication and Responsiveness: Performance measures should be instituted to ensure Council is making the best use of staff in order increase communication with residents surrounding issues concerning health and wellbeing (including Covid vaccine, public schools, etc.) Additional consideration should be given to senior citizens who may not have access to technology but rely on older more traditional communication methods.

Weaknesses and Opportunities (WO)

To do: Create a list of actions to address the weaknesses holding you back.

Strategy

1. W2-O3 Performance Improvement and Accountability: Improving performance measures, providing training and holding staff to account should be addressed. The Council has identified an opportunity of partnering with other localities to share best practices which may be useful in this area.

Weaknesses and Threats (WT)

To do: Create a list of actions or highlights around what are the riskiest aspects of your business.

Strategy

1. W1-T1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Technology: The ability of the Council to manage and disseminate information to its constituents via various platforms, including social media and traditional methods, in a timely manner is critical to its success with many of its desired initiatives.

NEXT STEPS TO CONSIDER

The SWOT and TOWS analyses are great starting places for determining priorities (i.e., goals). Once priorities are established, they should be shared with the appropriate staff and constituents to ensure transparency and to gather any necessary support materials (e.g., surveys, statistics, etc.) Additionally, priorities should be closely aligned with the Council's mission, vision and values statements—all elements of an effective strategic plan.

	Internal Strengths - S S1. Coalesce and navigate challenging issues (examples: civil unrest, school system funding) S2. Desire to gather community input, make sure all voices are heard-Responsive to constituents S3. Have great assets: how do you harness them for economic development, quality of life, and revenue generation S4. Committed, talented, and experienced individuals on Council S5. Desire to work with Mayor's administration	Internal Weaknesses - W W1. Collective Council communication externally. Need to achieve Council-wide presence on social media, news media, and other outlets. Enhance overall public relations. W2. Need to identify pathway for Council staff to better support Council members in their work. This includes reviewing staff responsibilities, consider restructuring opportunities, conducting internal/external salary analysis, streamlining processes, and creating management structure to lead, set expectations, and hold staff accountable. This should encompass all units reporting directly to Council (not just Chief of Staff). W3. Develop structured and timely training, professional development, and support activities for Council members. This includes annual retreats, new member orientation, and action plan when a new Council takes office after an election (organizational meeting and ongoing). W4. Council needs information in a timely fashion to prepare for meetings, etc. W5. Council should embrace public meeting discussions as it is challenging for nine members to communicate effectively otherwise.
External Opportunities - O O1. Set aside time to develop a Council economic vitality strategic plan that proactively identifies economic development opportunities and actions plans throughout the city. O2. Collaborate with the administration to analyze equity issues city-wide and develop an action plan that rectifies the wrongs of ordinances and practices that are systemically oppressive. O3. Partner with, learn from, and share best practices and experiences with other localities (regionally, Virginia, and beyond). O4. Tie: a. Collaborate with anchor institutions, non-profits, private-sector, and other entities to prevent missed opportunities for the city. b. Identify legislative agenda and strategy to improve partnerships with Federal representatives. c. Prioritize and prepare for new potential issues/projects that significantly impact the community (budget, etc.). Examples include ongoing casino and cannabis initiatives at state and local levels. d. Best utilize the Riverfront Plan to focus on opportunities for community/economic development and eco-tourism.	SO Strategies Strategies that use strengths to maximize opportunities. S1-O1, O2 Strategy 1 S2-O1 Strategy 2	WO Strategies Strategies that minimize weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities. W2-O3 Strategy 1
External Threats - T T1. COVID19 pandemic and its impact to the health and welfare of residents, the local economy, housing, employment, schools, etc. T2. Public schools: a. Budget b. School certification c. Local Composite Index d. Student success T3. The structure of Virginia independent cities (Burden of services not shared with counties, annexation moratorium/landlocked, lack of flexibility) T4. Quality of life issues: a. Health and wellbeing of residents b. Age, condition, location of public housing and impacts on residents c. Food insecurity T5. Lack of wealth and wealth building opportunities in areas that have a significant gap.	ST Strategies that use strengths to minimize threats. S3-T3 Strategy 1 S4-T1 Strategy 2	WT Strategies that minimize weaknesses and avoid threats. W1-T1, 2,3,4,5 Strategy 1

Examples of TOWS Strategies